



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

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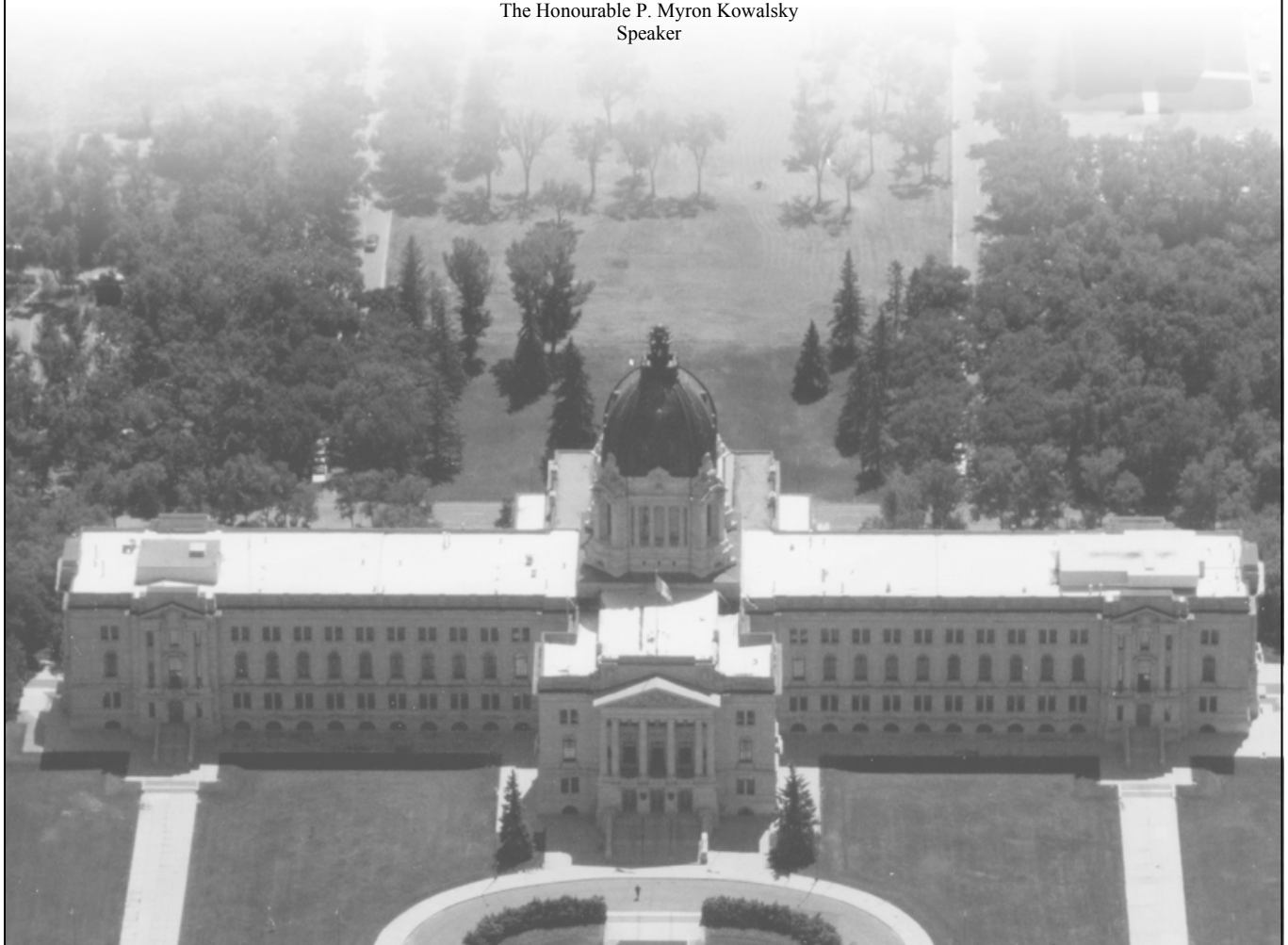
**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

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(HANSARD)

Published under the  
authority of

The Honourable P. Myron Kowalsky  
Speaker



**MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN**

Speaker — Hon. P. Myron Kowalsky  
 Premier — Hon. Lorne Calvert  
 Leader of the Opposition — Brad Wall

<b>Name of Member</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>	<b>Constituency</b>
Addley, Graham	NDP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Atkinson, Hon. Pat	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Bakken, Brenda	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
Beatty, Hon. Joan	NDP	Cumberland
Belanger, Hon. Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornerud, Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
Borgerson, Lon	NDP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
Calvert, Hon. Lorne	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
Chisholm, Michael	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
Cline, Hon. Eric	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Crofford, Hon. Joanne	NDP	Regina Rosemont
D'Autremont, Dan	SP	Cannington
Dearborn, Jason	SP	Kindersley
Draude, June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
Forbes, Hon. David	NDP	Saskatoon Centre
Gantfoer, Rod	SP	Melfort
Hagel, Glenn	NDP	Moose Jaw North
Hamilton, Doreen	NDP	Regina Wascana Plains
Harpauer, Donna	SP	Humboldt
Harper, Ron	NDP	Regina Northeast
Hart, Glen	SP	Last Mountain-Touchwood
Heppner, Ben	SP	Martensville
Hermanson, Elwin	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Higgins, Hon. Deb	NDP	Moose Jaw Wakamow
Huyghebaert, Yogi	SP	Wood River
Iwanchuk, Andy	NDP	Saskatoon Fairview
Junor, Judy	NDP	Saskatoon Eastview
Kerpan, Allan	SP	Carrot River Valley
Kirsch, Delbert	SP	Batoche
Kowalsky, Hon. P. Myron	NDP	Prince Albert Carlton
Krawetz, Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
Lautermilch, Eldon	NDP	Prince Albert Northcote
McCall, Warren	NDP	Regina Elphinstone-Centre
McMorris, Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
Merriman, Ted	SP	Saskatoon Northwest
Morgan, Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
Morin, Sandra	NDP	Regina Walsh Acres
Nilson, Hon. John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
Prebble, Hon. Peter	NDP	Saskatoon Greystone
Quennell, Hon. Frank	NDP	Saskatoon Meewasin
Serby, Hon. Clay	NDP	Yorkton
Sonntag, Hon. Maynard	NDP	Meadow Lake
Stewart, Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Taylor, Hon. Len	NDP	The Battlefords
Thomson, Hon. Andrew	NDP	Regina South
Toth, Don	SP	Moosomin
Trew, Kim	NDP	Regina Coronation Park
Van Mulligen, Hon. Harry	NDP	Regina Douglas Park
Wakefield, Milton	SP	Lloydminster
Wall, Brad	SP	Swift Current
Wartman, Hon. Mark	NDP	Regina Qu'Appelle Valley
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**PRESENTING PETITIONS**

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Cypress Hills.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to present a petition on behalf of constituents of the area of Cypress Hills concerning the cutback in service that has been recommended for the Border Health Centre. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary actions to ensure that the Border Health Centre in Climax remains a 24-hour facility.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition has been signed by individuals from the communities of Frontier, Claydon, Bracken, Eastend, Shaunavon, Val Marie, and others.

I so present.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Thunder Creek.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with the possible downsizing or closure of the Craik Health Centre. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to ensure that the Craik Health Centre is not closed or further downsized.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals from the communities of Craik and Bethune.

I so present.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Indian Head-Milestone.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition to present on behalf of citizens around the Claybank area in hoping to save their brick plant. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reconsider the decision to reduce funding for the Claybank Brick Plant.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by people from Avonlea and

Moose Jaw.

I so present.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy.

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of constituents of Weyburn-Big Muddy who are very concerned that citizens who alert and advocate for the public should be protected against actual or threatened loss of employment, income status, or other rights and privileges. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to introduce and support whistle-blower legislation.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And the petition is signed by residents of Midale, Assiniboia, Ogema, Weyburn, Ceylon, and Bengough.

I so present.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Wood River.

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise with a petition from people from the North that are extremely concerned about the Environment office in Cumberland House closing, and the reduction in environmental services throughout the province. And the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reverse its decision to reduce Saskatchewan Environment's presence in northern Saskatchewan, including the reduction in forest fire fighting services and the closure of Environment offices.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed in total by the good citizens of Cumberland House.

I so present.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Arm River-Watrous.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here with citizens that are opposed to reductions in services to Davidson and Imperial health centres.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Davidson and Imperial health centres be maintained at their current level of service at a minimum of 24-hour acute care, emergency, and doctor services available, as well as lab, public health, home care, and long-term care services available to users from Davidson, Imperial areas and beyond.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens from Hanley, Davidson, Bladworth, Saskatoon.

I so present.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Biggar.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce a petition from the citizens of Radisson who attended a meeting last night that are concerned about the closure of the Radisson School. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Radisson School fall under the two-year moratorium on school closures, and allow the community and school division the opportunity to consult on alternatives to the closing of the Radisson School.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens of Radisson and district.

I so present.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Mr. Speaker, once again I rise in the Legislative Assembly to present a petition on behalf of citizens of west central Saskatchewan concerned with the loss of ambulance service. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to ensure that the Dodsland and Luseland ambulance services are not discontinued.

And as is duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed completely by the citizens of the great town of Plenty.

I so present.

#### READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

**Deputy Clerk:** — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and are hereby read and received:

A new petition concerning a reduction in the education tax, that being sessional paper 195;

And addendums to previously tabled petitions, being sessional paper nos. 47, 63, 97, 106, 145, 166, 167, 180, 182.

#### NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 52 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: in the year 2003 how many patients went to Slim Thorpe detox centre in Lloydminster for treatment of gambling addictions, and what was the cost of the treatment of these patients?

I have a similar question for the year 2000, 2001, and 2002.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Melfort.

**Mr. Gantefoer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 52 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: in answer to question no. 392, it was indicated that the Regina Qu'Appelle Regional Health Authority awards contracts to private physiotherapy clinics for outpatient physiotherapy based on 17 categories. What are the 17 categories?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Arm River-Watrous.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 52 ask the government the following question:

To the SaskTel minister: how many companies do the locate searching for underground lines for SaskTel? And could you please provide the names of these companies and if contracts were tendered or not?

Thank you.

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Cut Knife-Turtleford.

**Mr. Chisholm:** — Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to you and through you to this Assembly, to introduce 27 grade 7 students from Lashburn High School. They are seated in our east gallery. They are accompanied by their teachers, Tracy Doering and Ali Hunter. Also joining this fine group are parents and chaperones Barb Farrell, Shirley Jack, Laurie Benko, Donna Colley, Bobbi James, Dorothy Hollinger, and Jeff Leonard. I ask that we all welcome our Lashburn visitors to their legislature.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Estevan.

**Ms. Eagles:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all members of this Assembly, I would like to introduce a constituent of mine, seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. It's Dwayne Kocoy from Estevan. And Dwayne has been the news director for CJ 1280 radio for the past 15 years in Estevan, and has done an excellent job, I might add.

And Dwayne will soon be moving to Regina, in fact at the end of this month. And so Estevan's loss will truly be Regina's gain.

And I would like to ask you and all members to join me in welcoming Dwayne to his Assembly.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

#### Vision for Saskatchewan

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last evening 1,000 enthusiastic people gathered in Regina to hear the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party and the next premier of this province lay out his vision — a vision built upon hope and opportunity for Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition spoke of an innovation agenda. This innovation agenda will drive the economic policy of our government after the next election. Our universities are the hubs of innovation and must play a huge role in building this province. Without proper educational infrastructure in play, innovation and the opportunities that come with it will be lost in our province.

Innovation Place, VIDO (Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization), and the Canadian Light Source at the U of S (University of Saskatchewan), the information technology cluster, and the Petroleum Technology Research Centre at the U of R (University of Regina) are all good starts. But all this work will be for naught if we do not properly fund post-secondary education in Saskatchewan.

The Leader of the Saskatchewan Party, unlike members opposite, gave a commitment to our post-secondary education institutions. From these centres of learning the seeds of innovation are planted and greatness will be allowed to grow.

Our leader said there is a right time for governments to get their priorities straight, to provide infrastructure to Saskatchewan businesses instead of investing in dot-coms. There's a right time for innovative social and health care policy and a right time to begin waging a battle against crystal meth and other addictions. There's a right time to build an enterprising and entrepreneurial economy. And that time is now, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Moose Jaw North.

#### Tourism Awareness Week

**Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Speaker, it's Tourism Awareness Week here in Saskatchewan, and over 600 special events are planned to take place across the province this week alone, among them the launch of a photo contest for residents and visitors; an RV (recreational vehicle) tour by members of Tourism Saskatchewan to promote tourism awareness; and Saskatchewan Tourism Education Council recognition dinners saluting individuals who achieved national recognition in tourism professions.

Here in Regina, nationally certified travel counsellors will be at the Southland Mall, Thursday to Saturday, to help vacationers plan their Saskatchewan holidays. And Tourism Saskatchewan staff will be on hand tomorrow, June 2, at the Regina Farmers Market to distribute travel guides and answer travel questions.

Saskatoon will be celebrating Tourism Awareness Week with events like the Northern Saskatchewan International Children's Festival and the SPASM Festival of Contemporary Art.

Mr. Speaker, tourism is a booming industry here in Saskatchewan, generating over \$1 billion in travel expenditures alone. It's also an export industry — did you know that? — about \$488 million in 2002, making tourism the fourth largest export industry in the province. Mr. Speaker, tourism directly supports 22,000 jobs in the province — 60,000 indirectly. It's growing and it's destined to boom next year in our centennial year here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join in recognizing everyone involved in the tourism industry here in Saskatchewan who will let people know, from culture to cowboys, there's a whole lot of stuff to see and do here in Saskatchewan, the Land of Living Skies.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Arm River-Watrous.

#### Dedication of Monument at Dundurn

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past Friday afternoon, I had the honour of attending a groundbreaking and dedication service at the town of Dundurn. It was the opening of a new historic monument being built at the town exit by Highway 11. This monument is a part ... a series of iron sculptures already erected along Highway 11 to commemorate the Louis Riel Trail. This one entitled The Bone Gatherer was also built by noted Saskatchewan artist Don Wilkins of Girvin. So far in place there is a life-size two-wheel cart and horse and then to follow is one more; one more piece will be added later this summer.

The community has also put great efforts towards developing flower gardens and lawn and flag displays, lighting and signage to enhance the scene. The service was attended by about 100 people, including a group of schoolchildren who did a fine job of singing "O Canada" and a number of other songs.

Mr. Harold Empey did a fine job as program MC (master of ceremonies) and the list of speakers included the mayor, Debbie Ehmann; the RM (rural municipality) of Dundurn reeve, Fred Wilson; Blackstrap MP (Member of Parliament), Lynne Yelich; myself; Major Kately of the Canadian Armed Forces at the Camp Dundurn.

Following the service, the dignitaries were shuttled to the Dundurn Museum for their annual opening there.

I would like to thank the local resident, Mr. Wayne Olyniuk, owner of the horse-drawn buggy, for the ride there. It was very enjoyable.

I would ask that all members join me in congratulating the many Dundurn organizers, volunteers, and groups like the Communities in Bloom and the Dundurn Lions who helped make this new historic monument a reality. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Saskatchewan Rivers.

#### **Team Saskatchewan Chef de Mission Contingent Complete**

**Mr. Borgerson:** — Mr. Speaker, the Team Saskatchewan chef de mission contingent for the 2005 Jeux du Canada Games has been completed with the appointment of Janice Morin as assistant chef de mission. I know that Janice will fit perfectly into this role; she was the Prince Albert Grand Council chef de mission at the Saskatchewan First Nations Winter Games and is a respected member of the Saskatchewan sporting community. Janice is the first person of Aboriginal descent to be appointed to this post.

As well, Mr. Speaker, Ross Lynd will be returning as Team Saskatchewan's chef de mission for the 2005 Games. Mr. Lynd has already served in this capacity for the '93 Summer Games in Kamloops, the 2001 Summer Games in London, Ontario, and the 2002 Winter Games in Bathurst/Campbellton. In all, Mr. Lynd has participated in nine Saskatchewan Games, three Western Canada Summer Games, seven Canada Games, and has spent more than 40 years in sports as an administrator, coach, participant, and volunteer.

(13:45)

Mr. Speaker, rounding out this excellent team is Rob Kennedy. Mr. Kennedy is also a volunteer and he will be an assistant chef de mission for the 2005 Games. Mr. Kennedy has been with Sask Sport Inc. since 1998, where he is now the manager of high performance sport development. I'm sure his strong background in a number of coaching and program capacities will be a welcome addition to the team.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating Janice Morin, Ross Lynd, and Rob Kennedy on their appointment to Team Saskatchewan and in wishing them all and all members of the Team Saskatchewan every success at the 2005 Canada Games.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy.

#### **Weyburn Students Win Band and Choir Awards**

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, winning awards is nothing new to the band and choir students of Weyburn Junior High and the Weyburn Comprehensive School. This spring is no exception. One hundred and seventy band and choir students from the Weyburn Comprehensive competed at the Performing Arts Consultants Music Festival three weeks ago in Minneapolis, Minnesota. They made up six

groups.

Mr. Larry Balog is the band director and Colleen Weimer directs the choir. The jazz band received a gold rating for a mark over 90 per cent. The concert band and three choirs received silver ratings for between 80 and 90 per cent, and the grade 10 choir received a bronze. While in Minneapolis, some of the groups had the honour to perform at the Mall of America. As well, student Kaila Weimer received the Outstanding Individual Award for Accompanying Excellence.

And, Mr. Speaker, just last week the Weyburn Junior High Band participated at MusicFest Canada in Montreal. They won the honour to participate when they received a triple-A standing at the Downtowners Optimist Festival earlier this spring. The Junior High Band performed three pieces of contrasting style and achieved gold on each of these performances. This is the highest level of musical excellence one can achieve.

Mr. Speaker, the band also performed in the sight-reading competition. They were given a piece they had never performed or seen before. They were allowed five minutes to practice and then played it through. The Weyburn Junior High Band also received gold for this competition under the direction of Scott Adelman.

Mr. Speaker, congratulations to students and directors for these major accomplishments, and well done.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Eastview.

#### **Senior Activity Centre at John Lake School**

**Ms. Junor:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Motion, a strategy initiated by the Saskatoon Health Region in 1999, is now a province-wide movement aimed at making Saskatchewan people the healthiest, most physically active in Canada. As part of that worthy goal, dozens of parents recently came out to install a playground specially designed to keep students in grade 5 to 8 in motion. This playground is called the Senior Activity Centre and it's being built at John Lake School in my constituency of Saskatoon Eastview.

Mr. Speaker, this project began six years ago when parents saw the need and began raising the necessary funds and awareness in support of the project. And last fall the Saskatoon Public School Division provided the funds required for the playground to proceed. It's an investment of time, effort, money, and creativity that will pay a lifetime of dividends to the community.

Mr. Speaker, John Lake School is a leader in providing awareness and activities that will keep students healthy for a lifetime. Every day you can see the staff and students beginning their day with a 1-kilometre walk around the schoolyard, and the school regularly holds In Motion Emotion Promotion Commotions that allow students to experience new and different kinds of physical activities.

Mr. Speaker, I thank all the concerned parents who were

involved in getting the Senior Activity Centre built, and particularly Louise Humbert who is a member of the provincial In Motion group and a very active parent at John Lake School.

As well, Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank school principal David Katzman, Daryl Lesychyn who is the school's In Motion leader, and Ann MacLellan who was the Senior Activity Centre installation leader, for their dedication and hard work on behalf of the students of John Lake Elementary School. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Humboldt.

### National Transportation Week

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. June 3 through to the 13th is National Transportation Week across the country, a period set aside to raise awareness of the vital role played by all modes of transportation — road, rail, air, water, and pipeline — in the economic and social development of our country.

At the same time the transportation industry itself is also encouraged to find greater efficiency and a better utilization of resources, with particular emphasis on safety, accessibility, energy conservation, and the environment.

This year's theme is Transportation Accessibility and Innovation. And here in Saskatchewan, with our thousands of kilometres of road and rail and our vast expanse of living skies, how we might more effectively and efficiently use all of these to move people, goods, and services remains an ongoing challenge and a top priority for all levels of government.

Efficient and effective means of transportation in all forms, Mr. Speaker, contributes to the provincial economy and improves our quality of life no matter where we live in Saskatchewan. It's our view that while our climate and terrain may prove to be imposing, they are not impossible. Our sparse, stagnating population and dwindling tax base can also be turned around. In doing so we would see additional resources made available for funding for essential services such as improving our transportation network across the province.

I ask all members of the House to recognize National Transportation Week with a special thank you to all of the dedicated men and women working in the transportation industry.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### ORAL QUESTIONS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Indian Head-Milestone.

#### Severance Package for Former Deputy Minister

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour.

On August 19, 2002 the Premier appointed Christine Tanner to the position of deputy minister of Labour. Earlier this spring,

just 18 months after she was hired, Ms. Tanner's employment with the NDP (New Democratic Party) government was abruptly terminated. Not only was it terminated, but she was given a severance package worth a total of \$151,000, Mr. Speaker.

My question to the minister: first of all, why was Ms. Tanner's employment as deputy minister of Labour terminated? And even more, why did the NDP pay Ms. Tanner more than \$150,000 worth of severance for only 18 months of work?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Labour.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would say to the member opposite, I would feel it rather inappropriate to discuss employment issues and human resource issues within the House. There has been a number of questions that have been asked, written questions and in estimates, on the severance package that was paid to Ms. Tanner and at the ending of her employment. I will say to the member opposite that the termination of the contract was mutually agreed to.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Indian Head-Milestone.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, the minister won't talk about why Ms. Tanner was terminated. But no wonder she was mutually agreed on \$150,000 termination . . . severance package for only 18 months work. Mr. Speaker, the severance package included 10 months of salary at \$10,000 per month, \$5,000 in career assistance, and up to \$42,000 in something called future relocation expenses. The termination package added up to over \$150,000.

Mr. Speaker, why won't the minister explain why Ms. Tanner was terminated? And will she please explain if she doesn't feel that \$150,000 for 18 months work is a little exorbitant?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Labour.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Mr. Speaker, the severance packages that are offered are based on standards of age of the former employee, the length of service with the Government of Saskatchewan, the qualifications, and their opportunity for re-employment. That's standard practice, Mr. Speaker, based on employment and common law.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Indian Head-Milestone.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, in addition to \$104,000 of severance and \$5,000 in career assistance, the NDP has also authorized the payment to the former deputy minister of over \$42,000 for something called relocation expenses.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister confirm that the NDP is paying the former deputy minister of Labour more than \$42,000 to

move out of Saskatchewan?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Labour.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Mr. Speaker, Ms. Tanner moved here from the Northwest Territories to commence employment and when that didn't satisfactorily work out for both parties, an agreement was reached in the severance package. It's based on employment law and common law. And if Ms. Tanner finds employment and would need help for relocation, that's part of the package.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Indian Head-Milestone.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, day in and day out we have people leaving this province. Hopefully the government isn't planning on paying each one of them \$42,000 to move out of our province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this spring the NDP has eliminated more than 500 positions, firing more than 100 government employees. Some of these employees have been with the government, employed with the government for over 20 years, but none of them received the severance package that Ms. Tanner has. Ms. Tanner received 14 months of salary for just 18 months of work.

My question to the minister is: is this not setting a double standard, one for appointees by the Premier and one for the rest of the workers in Saskatchewan?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Labour.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Mr. Speaker, there are many things that are taken into consideration when severance packages are negotiated, as I said — age, qualifications, re-employment opportunities, service with the Government of Saskatchewan. And when you get into some levels of job classifications, the job security issue also plays a part in the severance package that's allowed.

When the member opposite talks about the number of workers in Saskatchewan that have had job changes — maybe their jobs have been terminated — it depends on the benefits that are there. The severance packages quite often are laid out in contracts and agreements. And, Mr. Speaker, all considerations have been given and this is a common solution.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Thunder Creek.

#### Investment Losses

**Mr. Stewart:** — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister Responsible for Investment Saskatchewan. Last month, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool sold its Heartland pork group assets under protection from creditors to Stomp Pork Farms Ltd. The NDP government had 2.2 million taxpayers' dollars invested in two of the Heartland hog barns.

Mr. Speaker, how much money did taxpayers lose on yet another failed NDP business gamble?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Investment Saskatchewan.

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Mr. Speaker, it has been part of the policy of this government for several years to try to diversify the agricultural sector, which has included trying to raise the number of both hogs and beef that are raised in Saskatchewan. And it's correct that the Crown Investments Corporation, whose portfolio is now part of Investment Saskatchewan, made some investments in pork production.

Mr. Speaker, many other people invested in pork production as well. Some of those ventures were not successful, but overall as a result of investments by the private sector and the policies of the government, the number of hogs being produced has gone up from 1 million to 1.8 million. We've been part of that effort.

These investments have not been successful, along with those of the Wheat Pool. But, Mr. Speaker, the policy of building livestock production in Saskatchewan was the right policy and continues to be.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Thunder Creek.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Mr. Speaker, the NDP government has gambled and lost hundreds of millions of dollars on dozens of bad investments over the past decade, investments like the NDP's gamble in the hog industry.

In the case of the NDP's failed investment in Heartland Hog Barns, taxpayers have lost as much \$1.8 million. But that same NDP government is closing the hospital in Herbert and closing long-term care beds across the province to save a few dollars.

Mr. Speaker, why does the NDP have millions of taxpayers' dollars to lose on high-risk business ventures when that same NDP government is pleading poverty when it comes to funding health care in Saskatchewan?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Industry and Resources.

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Mr. Speaker, it is not yet known how much of the money invested in Heartland will be lost by Investment Saskatchewan, but I acknowledge the member's point that it's quite conceivable that the \$1.8 million investment will in fact be lost.

But what I do want to say to the House, Mr. Speaker, is that the opposition is very good at identifying some instances where government investments have resulted in losses. But what we don't hear, Mr. Speaker, is we don't hear them getting up and talking about the government investments that have made good returns for the people of the province, Mr. Speaker.



We don't hear them talking about the fact that over the last 10 years the Crown corporations and Crown investments, Mr. Speaker, have returned, I believe, something in the neighbourhood of \$1.5 billion to the taxpayers, Mr. Speaker.

So yes, Mr. Speaker, there are some failures, and we have to acknowledge that. But are there successes and do we believe in Crown ownership of some assets? Yes, we do, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

(14:00)

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Arm River-Watrous.

#### Closure of Long-Term Care Beds in Davidson

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on May 18 the Minister of Health assured me that no current residents would be moved out of their long-term care beds at the Davidson Health Centre. But, Mr. Speaker, that's not what the CEO (chief executive officer) of the health region is saying. Heartland Health Region CEO, Gene Motruk, said while some of the bed closures would be done through attrition, some will have to be transferred.

Some people may have to be transferred, Mr. Speaker. That's a complete contradiction to what the minister said in this very House. Mr. Speaker, why is the minister saying that no seniors will be forced to move, while the health region CEO is saying seniors will be moved?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, in each community the residents there and the people who are there will be working with the local management around how to provide space for people. And I know that the member opposite has some of his family that are involved in this particular institution and so he's very concerned about that. And so I will remind the people in the Heartland Health Region to work very closely with the people there to make the transition that's necessary in that particular wing in Davidson in a straightforward manner.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Arm River-Watrous.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Well many of the ... they're also my constituents that are going to be moved out of there. You know, Mr. Speaker, this whole plan makes absolutely no sense. Do you know how much the NDP is going to save by closing 10 beds — a question we'd asked — and kicking seniors out of their homes? They're going to save \$100,000. That's all they're going to save by moving seniors and spreading them out hundreds of miles away.

We just heard how the NDP government is spending \$150,000 to pay off a deputy minister they wanted to get rid of, but they can't find \$100,000 to keep 10 long-term care beds open in Davidson. Mr. Speaker, where are the NDP priorities? Why is

paying off a deputy minister more important than keeping long-term care beds open in Davidson?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, I would remind the member that the issue in that particular facility is that the wing in question no longer meets the standards for care of people. And this is a concern, that as we have the ability to take older facilities out of the system we do it by removing those facilities that aren't up to the standards that we build now.

But, Mr. Speaker, there's no question that it's a challenge to find dollars, and every \$100,000 — in fact every dollar — counts in our health care system. And we have to encourage everybody throughout the whole health system to look very carefully at how all of the dollars are spent because this is extremely important — to make sure that we have the most expensive care with some of the highest technical costs as well as the local care in long-term care. And we're going to do that, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Arm River-Watrous.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Mr. Speaker, every day in this legislature the Minister of Health tells us his job is about making choices. Well here's the choices the NDP has made. They spent \$75,000 to run an ad about equalization. They're spending \$140,000 to try to justify the Premier's phony-baloney utility rate. They spent \$150,000 to get rid of a deputy minister. They routinely lose millions of dollars in hog barns and potatoes and US (United States) based dot-coms and yet they don't have \$100,000 to keep seniors in their homes in Davidson.

Can the minister please explain to seniors in Davidson Health Centre why all of these other things are more important than keeping those seniors in their beds?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, there are many hundreds of millions of dollars that are spent on long-term care in this province. And that is a challenge for all of us because we need to find the resources to do that. And, Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House are very concerned about how all of those dollars are spent, but more importantly for us is that we want to make sure that the people, the residents, the patients, get good care.

And we have to continue to look at how we're doing things to make sure that we'll be able to sustain this kind of a health care system five years from now, 10 years from now, and 20 years from now. And that's what we're doing, Mr. Speaker. We're working and we're going to work very hard for all the people of Saskatchewan.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Arm River-Watrous.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well the minister in committee, Mr. Speaker, in committee said that no senior, he assured me and the people of Davidson that no senior would be moved out of their beds, where now the CEO of the health said that ultimately . . . He has said that it was the NDP who made the decision to close these beds. And he said, I quote: “We sent a number of options to the government and this is the one they selected.”

Well, Mr. Speaker, what were the other options that were sent in and why is the CEO saying now that people will be moved out when you gave your word in this House that no members would be moved out of their beds, Mr. Speaker?

And will the minister commit to coming to Davidson and explain why he’s chosen the option to close down the long-term care beds and to move seniors out of the town of Davidson?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, the people who are operating our health care system in Saskatchewan are caring people; they’re concerned about how these things happen. And the plan is to work with those residents and make sure that they get an appropriate spot within that facility. And that is the plan, and that’s going to continue.

And, Mr. Speaker, what we all have to recognize though is that there will be some changes and there will be some movement. There will be people moving from older facilities to newer facilities. They may end up with some changes where they move to another community. But as it relates to this particular facility, the plan is to move with a transition and we understand that that’s what’s going to happen.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

#### Spending Priorities in Heartland Health Region

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Health wants to talk about challenges, so let’s talk about challenges. The Heartland Regional Health Authority is challenged to cut long-term care beds. It’s challenged to fire employees and it’s challenged to cut ambulance services.

But it appears it’s not challenged when it comes to seeking tenders for new office space. The Saskatchewan Party has received information about the tender for 5,900 square feet of new office space for the regional health authority. And this tender is coming at a time when the region is being hit with a number of cuts to health care — 10 long-term care beds in Davidson, the closure of the ambulance service in Eatonia, and pending closures of other ambulance services in Luseland and Dodsland.

How can the minister justify cutting emergency services to the

region and all the while the Heartland Regional Health Authority has a tender out for brand new office space?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, I don’t know about the exact tender that’s out there but what I do know is that every regional health authority is looking very carefully at how they can get the best value for the dollars that they have. And my assumption would be that they have examined their office space needs and are sending out a tender to see if they can’t get a better deal than they have now.

And that’s one of the challenges, Mr. Speaker, is when the health authorities are operating, we encourage them to make the best use of their dollars. And often that is a public tendering policy. And so, Mr. Speaker, they have work to do in the caring of patients and individual facilities. They also have work to do in providing the broad administrative skills and other parts that are needed, and we’re going to continue to support both of those things because they all relate to the health of Saskatchewan people.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the people of the Kindersley constituency and the people of Saskatchewan, they expect leadership when it comes to health care. And notwithstanding the small mindedness or small members of the present government, that responsibility lies with the Minister of Health.

The current board of the Heartland Health Region Authority has told me that they were unaware of tenders being put forward for new office space. They were not supportive of hiring more administration at the cost of cutting beds, staff, and emergency services.

When is the minister going to stand up and take responsibility for his job and answer to individuals with results such as a real service like keeping the ambulance in Eatonia, rather than his results of the longest health care waiting lists in the country, blaming the federal government, blaming the health boards, hiring more administration, and seeking new office space?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, I think that the tone of that question and the attitude of that type of a way of dealing with issues reflects the challenges we have in this province.

Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we want to move forward; we want to work with the people; we want to work with the resources that we have. We have 173 million more dollars for the health care budget in this year. Members opposite have voted against that and they’re going to probably vote against the final budget when it’s here. But all of those things, but especially the attitude that we hear there, reflects some of the challenges we have in this province, is that people are tearing apart the institutions that we built.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the reality is that people in western central Saskatchewan aren't being listened to and haven't been listened to for a decade by that NDP government.

Why is the minister unaware of what's happening in these health regions? Why is there a tender being put out for a new building when the current building has three years left on its lease, has more than sufficient space, and it is no way unsuitable as an office space for the health region? Why is this decision being made when the ambulances are being cut from 16 to 11?

Mr. Speaker, the challenges for the residents of Luseland, Doddsland, and Kerrobert is, if they have a heart attack, are they going to live? Because they don't have an ambulance to get to them in time. Kerrobert fire chief says cuts to ambulances in the area means "we will lose lives."

When is the minister going to stop talking about challenges, start dealing with the real issues facing people, and make sure that ambulance service is provided to the communities of west central Saskatchewan instead of building new office spaces?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, I had an opportunity to spend quite a length of time with the mayor of Kerrobert and the mayor of Luseland and the mayor of some of the other communities that are in that member's constituency. And we had a very reasonable, rational discussion about the challenges that they have there, but also the opportunities. And I think the important thing is that we all work together around the opportunities, around how we can build to provide a solid base for the economic development that we know is happening in west central Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Health, and the people working within the Saskatchewan Health and in the Heartland Health Region, that's one of the key factors that we're taking into account as we try to use the resources that we have in the most effective way to provide health care in that region.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

### Combatting Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Health. Last year this government met with a group of concerned professionals who know that the issue of fetal alcohol syndrome is affecting the lives of people from babies right through to adulthood. This government promised to draw up a framework of cognitive disabilities for the people of this province. That was nearly nine months ago, Mr. Speaker.

When is this government going to outline their plan to deal with the issue of fetal alcohol syndrome in our province?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, as was announced, we have dollars for this in our budget plan this year and we encourage the members opposite to support this budget as we move forward. We are doing some very specific things in various parts of the province.

We have the consultation that's happened across the province related to the document that the member is concerned about and that document is going to go forward. But the most important part is that we are working with the people who are involved with this particular issue, both in some of the community organizations in Saskatoon and Regina, but also most importantly with some of our First Nations and Métis leaders throughout the province, because this is an issue that we have to deal with in a careful way.

Mr. Speaker, I'm a member of the what's now called the Western ministers responsible for fetal alcohol syndrome. And we had a meeting just last week about this and we are proceeding with some of the national issues because this, this becomes an issue where we in the Western Canada have much more information about how to deal with it, but where most of the research is done in Eastern Canada. We're trying to make sure that we get that research done here in Western Canada.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, to the minister. Fetal alcohol syndrome is an issue that affects every government department — Health, Learning, Justice, Community Relations, and the other departments in other ways. During the budget, this Minister of Finance announced the government plans to address the needs for a diagnostic centre here in Saskatchewan. Specifically, Mr. Speaker, when is this government going to deal with the issue and accept the responsibility that this province needs diagnostic centres for FASD (fetal alcohol spectrum disorder) in Saskatchewan?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

(14:15)

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, as I said before, we do have specific funds in the budget and I ask the member to support the budget as we move forward. But, Mr. Speaker, we also are working and building on the solid strengths that we have in this province around diagnostics. We know that we have more resources in Saskatoon than in Regina. We know we have many challenges throughout the North.

But we also, Mr. Speaker, are very proud of the work that

we've been able to do with our Kids First program which comes right across the whole of the province. And that goal there is to work very diligently to prevent kids being affected by alcohol because this is a 100 per cent preventable disease and that's a key part of what we have to do.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, it's not a difficult question; all we need to know is when. We heard that there is money in the budget and we know that this government has talked about it for five years. So when are we going to have a diagnostic centre?

Besides that, Mr. Speaker, we have a number of our judges — Judge Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond has been advocating for a number of years that young people involved in the justice system are not getting the help they need in our correctional centres. The judge has been asking for a support system outside of incarceration to deal with individuals affected by FAS (fetal alcohol syndrome). This government has supposedly been working on this issue for years.

Mr. Speaker, when is this government going to implement a support system for those individuals who have been affected with a condition that is preventable?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, the Kids First program, as many people know, includes trying to identify those kids at risk and so you can prevent this 100 per cent preventable disease. But it also deals with those children who are affected and their families, and that is something that we're working very diligently on. We're also working with other groups within Saskatchewan who are looking at setting up specific diagnostic aspects of this. We're also working with the First Nations people who are very concerned about some of these things and have some very good plans and good ideas.

And, Mr. Speaker, all of these things are necessary because this is not a simple problem to deal with. But it's a problem that we're going to deal with in a collaborative, positive, community way and we will be doing . . . This is happening right now and we will continue to do that with the resources that we have available in this budget. I urge the members opposite to do something positive, vote for the budget.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### Bill No. 70 — The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2004

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 70, The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read the first time.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 70, The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried.

**Deputy Clerk:** — First reading of this Bill.

**The Speaker:** — When shall the Bill be read a second time?

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — Next sitting, thank you.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a first time and ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### WRITTEN QUESTIONS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Regina Dewdney, the Government Whip.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am extremely pleased this afternoon to stand on behalf of the government and table responses to written question no. 456 and 457.

**The Speaker:** — The responses to 456 and 457 have been submitted.

### GOVERNMENT ORDERS

#### SECOND READINGS

#### Bill No. 65 — The Agri-Food Act, 2004

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at the end of my remarks I will move second reading of The Agri-Food Act.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's producer-led agricultural agencies have done an excellent job of benefiting their industries and this province's producers through research, market development, and extension services. These agencies require increased flexibility to enable them to take a stronger leadership role in the development of those industries. This flexibility requires effective legislative tools to allow them to more easily establish and administer their plans.

Recent consultations with industry have shown that the current Agri-Food Act has worked well over the last several years, but have also identified a number of changes that would improve the application of the Act. The proposed Bill will effectively address the agencies' needs through alternative check-off mechanisms and governance models, and provide a greater

range of powers from which to choose. Mr. Speaker, the Government of Saskatchewan bestows significant powers upon these agencies in allowing them to collect check-offs from the producers. In addition, marketing boards have the capacity to restrict entry into their sectors.

In light of these powers it is essential that agencies are accountable, not only to their producers, but also to their supervisory body, the Agri-Food Council, and to the people of Saskatchewan. The proposed Bill will refine and enhance the powers of the council and of the government providing proactive and substantive tools to guide agencies in ways that promote industry growth and development, and to ensure a higher standard of accountability. The Bill will provide government the ability to intervene in the event there is need to protect the public interest.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill also recognizes that an effective grievance process and appeal body is necessary to ensure accountability of the agencies to their producers. To this end this Bill gives The Agri-Food Act Appeal Committee more appropriate powers that are consistent with those in other jurisdictions. These powers will also allow for more efficient use of resources as they limit trivial, frivolous, or vexatious appeals.

Many of the proposals for this Bill are the result of consultations with numerous stakeholders. Among those consulted were current agencies established under The Agri-Food Act, the Agri-Food Council and agri-food appeal committee, Lilydale Cooperative, industry groups considering forming an agency under the Act, and other interested producers. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all of the stakeholders, all of the stakeholder groups who provided us with input throughout this process.

We believe that this Bill will benefit agricultural producers in Saskatchewan and contribute to growing our agricultural sectors through increased research and development activities. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I move that The Agri-Food Act be read a second time. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister of Agriculture and Food that Bill No. 65, The Agri-Food Act, 2004 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Wood River.

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well just having a look at this Bill, it looks like it's a complete rewriting of the current Agri-Food Act. Mr. Speaker, this is a very important Act as it deals with the marketing of agriculture in this province.

When it comes to supply-managed marketing in our province there's a great many differing views, and we must take time to hear those views before proceeding too far down the road with this legislation. Some people in our province have raised concerns of late about how hard it is to become one of the lucky few allowed to participate in certain supply-managed industries. We need time to compare this new Act with the one it is replacing, and it's a very long Act and so it'll take a fair bit of

time.

As legislators it's our duty to listen to these people, as well as those who are making the decisions for the supply-managed marketing boards today. This Bill does appear to bestow more powers onto those very boards, so we need listen to producers both inside and outside the current supply-managed marketing system.

Mr. Speaker, there's a couple of items in the minister's address that just raised a flag with me. And where the minister said the Bill will provide government ability to intervene in the event that there's a need to protect the public interest, I would like to hear more on that because I would think that passing a Bill would be in the public's interest, is the reason that the Bill is going forward, and if the government is proposing the Bill, why is new legislation now that they can intervene? And I think that we need to ask some questions on that particular aspect of the Bill.

The other flag that was raised, Mr. Speaker, and it says and I quote:

These powers will also allow for more efficient use of resources, as they limit trivial, frivolous, or vexatious appeals.

Now who is going to determine if an appeal is trivial, frivolous, or vexation? I would submit that somebody launching an appeal would not think that it is frivolous or they wouldn't be doing it, so I don't understand why this is in here and who is going to determine whether it's vexatious, or frivolous, or trivial.

So, Mr. Speaker, because of the lateness in which this Act has been introduced into the legislature, it would not be prudent to allow this Bill to pass with undue haste given its importance. And I believe that had the government wanted it passed through all three stages, surely it would have introduced the Bill long before this late stage of our sitting. And given that we do have a fall session coming up, it would be a prime opportunity to take the next few months to take a closer look at this Bill because it is so important to the people, and because I don't really believe that we should be rushing through this. So with that said, Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn debate.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member for Wood River that second reading debate on Bill 65 be now adjourned.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried.

Debate adjourned.

#### **Bill No. 66 — The Cattle Marketing Deductions Amendment Act, 2004**

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture and Food.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker,

at the conclusion of my remarks I will move second reading of The Cattle Marketing Deductions Amendment Act, 2004, An Act to amend The Cattle Marketing Deductions Act, 1998.

Mr. Speaker, The Cattle Marketing Deductions Act, 1998 was established with the encouragement of Saskatchewan cattle producers to provide for the eventual implementation of a national check-off for the cattle industry. The intention was that cattle producers in all provinces of Canada would participate in a national check-off. The purpose of the check-off is to provide funding for a national cattle agency that would undertake research and marketing and serve as the national voice of cattle producers.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to say that Saskatchewan was an early participant in the concept of the check-off. Saskatchewan producers encouraged the Government of Saskatchewan back in 1998 to prepare the legislation so that they could immediately take advantage of the new national check-off when it was introduced.

I'm pleased to say that the national program is now finally coming together with all provinces onside. And as with all things developed over a period of time, there are some new ideas and some proposed changes.

Mr. Speaker, back in 1998, The Cattle Marketing Deductions Act anticipated that each province would collect check-off funds on sales of cattle which originated in other provinces. The idea was that each of the provinces would remit the national check-off funds to a national agency but would remit the provincial check-off to the cattle's province of origin. That was the plan. But, Mr. Speaker, plans change.

The provinces and national agency have now proposed that all check-off funds will be submitted to the national agency for redistribution to the provinces. In other words, the national agency will return the provincial check-offs to the province of origin. This is the reason for the proposed amendments to the Act today. The previous Act did not provide for check-off funds to be returned to other provinces via the national agency. The amendments will provide for this change.

Saskatchewan producers have said they would like to participate in this new procedure for provincial check-off funds. They believe the new procedure will be of value because it will streamline operations and may produce more revenue for beef research and development in Saskatchewan.

As such, the Government of Saskatchewan now wishes to enter into an agreement with the national agency to cover the administrative procedures of collecting and distributing the national check-off.

The changes proposed to the Act here today are merely administrative, dealing with language and changes to collection procedures that were not anticipated when The Cattle Marketing Deductions Act was proclaimed in 1998.

The proposed amendments do not change the intent of the current Act but provide for administrative procedures to support the agreements between the provinces and the national agency.

(14:30)

Mr. Speaker, the benefits of the amendments are quite apparent. Saskatchewan cattle producers will have the support of a national agency responsible for research and marketing, and Saskatchewan cattle producers will be part of a national agency which will serve as a national voice for all Canadian cattle producers.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I would like to emphasize two points so that there is no misunderstanding and no confusion. First, I would like to say that the amendments are not increasing the check-off fee. The current national check-off fee is \$1 per head sold, a fee established by the producers in 1998. And this fee will remain until producers decide to change. Second, the producers' check-off dollars and accumulated interest are maintained in a special trust fund for the cattle industry.

Mr. Speaker, cattle producers in Saskatchewan support the check-off and the concept of a national agency. These producers and their organizations have provided valuable input in the preparation of the amendments to the Act. I would like to express my appreciation for this participate . . . pardon me, for this participation to the Saskatchewan Cattle Feeders Association, the Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association, and the Saskatchewan Livestock Association.

Mr. Speaker, and members of the Legislative Assembly, I encourage you to adopt The Cattle Marketing Deductions Amendment Act, 2004. Therefore I move that The Cattle Marketing Deductions Amendment Act, 2004 be read a second time.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister of Agriculture and Food that Bill No. 66, The Cattle Marketing Deductions Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready? I recognize the member for Wood River.

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, once again we have an important piece of legislation being introduced at a very late date in session, so it's doubtful we'll get all the work done that is necessary before we adjourn in a couple of weeks.

Mr. Speaker, just going through this, the original check-off Bill passed in 1998 in preparation for a national check-off program which the minister now tells us is in place, and the check-off was to raise funds for more research in the cattle industry. And isn't it ironic, Mr. Speaker, when we're dealing with producer-funded check-offs, it seems to go quite well, but at the same time we have a government that's cutting diagnostic services and other services that are important to livestock industries.

Just looking at this, the monies raised by both the provincial and national check-off will be remitted to a national office, with the provincial portion then being sent back to each province. The minister says that the intent of this Bill is to allow for this administrative procedure to take place. But it's quite a large piece of legislation, so we as legislators need to take time to

properly review it and talk to key stakeholders to ensure it is serving their and the province's best interest.

Again, given the date, it would be best if we took this up in the fall when everyone has had adequate time to review the legislation and some proper consultations. And we trust that's okay with the government because if there was a sense of urgency with this piece of legislation, surely they would have introduced it long before now.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn debate.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member for Wood River that second reading debate on Bill No. 66 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried.

Debate adjourned.

**Bill No. 68 — The Assessment Management Agency  
Amendment Act, 2004**

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the minister for Government Relations.

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of Bill 68, The Assessment Management Agency Amendment Act, 2004. Mr. Speaker, the Department of Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs, amongst other things, is responsible for the legislative framework that governs how property values are assessed and how property taxes are levied in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, my officials and I take this responsibility very seriously, and we all recognize that there has been considerable debate lately about property taxes and how they should be lower. That debate will continue, Mr. Speaker, and I acknowledge that.

Today however, I want to address the other side of the property tax coin, Mr. Speaker, and more specifically some changes we are proposing to make the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency, or SAMA, as it is more commonly known.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments being proposed in this Bill are designed to strengthen and stabilize Saskatchewan's property assessment system by making some fundamental changes to the funding and governance of SAMA. As well, in order to further strengthen the integrity, transparency, and accountability of the assessment system as a whole, amendments are proposed to the assessment roll confirmation and quality assurance process.

The amendments presented today are consistent with the recommendations of the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education. The commission identified the need to achieve greater stability within Saskatchewan's assessment system. The structure and funding of Saskatchewan's property assessment system are key

elements of this issue that need to be addressed.

Mr. Speaker, SAMA is responsible for three major functions: one, the developing and determining of assessment policy; the assuring the quality of property assessments province-wide; and three, for much of the province, undertaking the actual assessment valuations.

Mr. Speaker, our government and all the stakeholders in the property assessment system agree that there needs to be a clear delineation of SAMA's roles and responsibilities. Without this, one set of objectives may override another, with the ultimate goal of fairness and equity in the property assessment system not being achieved.

The education sector has a strong interest in ensuring a stable assessment system and quality assessments, but does not presently contribute financially to that system. This interest relates to both school property taxes and the distribution of Saskatchewan Learning's foundation operating grant among school divisions.

Mr. Speaker, as a result of amendments being introduced in this Bill, I am pleased to tell you that the education sector will now provide annual funding to SAMA — 750,000 will be provided in '04-05, with an additional increase of \$875,000 in the following two years, for a total annual incremental amount of 2.5 million by 2006-2007. Mr. Speaker, this funding recognizes the critical interest that the education sector has in making sure that Saskatchewan's assessment system yields accurate, predictable, and consistent results.

In recognition of the greater involvement of the education sector, this Bill will also change the governance structure of SAMA to provide a more balanced representation between the education and municipal sectors and government. Governance changes in the amendments reflect the relative financial contributions from all the parties involved with the assessment system. With the education sector providing a direct financial contribution to SAMA, there is a logical expectation of greater participation in SAMA's governance.

Mr. Speaker, the result of these amendments is that the SAMA board will increase from nine members to eleven members. Specifically, Mr. Speaker, another representative from boards of education and two more government representatives will be added to the SAMA board of directors. The additional provincial nominees will allow for a broader range of interests to be represented on the board, not just those of local governments. There will be no change to the municipal sector's representation on the board.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments also discontinue the seat on the board that has been occupied by a representative of the Saskatchewan Assessment Appraisers' Association. This was done for a number of reasons, Mr. Speaker, but primarily to ensure that no real or perceived conflict of interest situations arise at the SAMA board. To date, the assessors' association has always been represented by an employee of SAMA. Mr. Speaker, this has had the potential of setting up a conflict of interest, especially where budget and labour relation items were being addressed at the board. The assessors' association will still provide input to the board through SAMA's advisory

committee structure.

Mr. Speaker, I move now to the topic of how assessment valuation services are provided. Municipalities currently have the authority to determine who will provide them with their assessment valuation service. Amendments are proposed which will ensure that any affected boards of education have the opportunity to give their approval before a municipality decides to change its assessment valuation service provider. This will ensure that all local partners in the property taxation system agree with the choice of an appropriate assessment valuation service provider, which in turn helps to ensure that consistent, fair, equitable and quality valuations will be determined.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I will address the topic of the quality of property assessment in Saskatchewan. Quality assurance is a key part of ensuring the integrity, transparency, and accountability of the assessment system as a whole. The issue of quality of assessments is of course very important to anyone who has to pay property taxes, Mr. Speaker, but it is also especially important in regard to ensuring a fair and equitable process for the distribution of the education foundation operating grant which uses the assessment data as a critical component of the funding formula.

The proposed amendments to the legislation will help to ensure the quality of assessments that are prepared in the province. They restructure the assessment role confirmation and quality assurance processes. The primary audit will ensure that all assessing jurisdictions are being assessed at a uniform provincial level of value and equity. This is important for the education foundation operating grant distribution. The secondary audit will ensure assessments are being made in accordance with the relevant legislation, manual, and assessment practices. These changes are in addition to the current assessment appeal process that permits individual property owners to appeal their assessments.

Mr. Speaker, these governance and funding changes were announced as part of the province's 2004-05 budget. Consultations on the amendments have been undertaken in the intervening time in order to refine the wording and intent of the provisions.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to move second reading of Bill 68, The Assessment Management Agency Amendment Act, 2004.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister of Government Relations that Bill No. 68, The Assessment Management Agency Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

I recognize the member for Carrot River Valley.

**Mr. Kerpan:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's no surprise in this House that some Bills certainly get the blood flowing more so than others. So when I was first . . . looked at this Bill and looked at the title of the Bill, and I looked at it, and it's the Assessment Management Agency Amendment Act, I thought — holy mackerel — that's going to be a real

heart-stopper in the Chamber, until I really started to look at it, Mr. Speaker. And there is certainly a lot more to the Bill than originally meets the eye.

As my colleague from Wood River said a few minutes ago in respect and regards to two other Bills, it's doubtful that this Bill is really a high priority with the government given the fact that it's brought to the Assembly so late in the session. So it's very likely that we're going to ask for more time to look at it and study the ramifications and the Bill.

Mr. Speaker, in his opening remarks the minister acknowledged full well the debate that rages on in Saskatchewan — and in particular rural Saskatchewan — when it comes to the assessment and the rate of taxes that are paid on property taxes, certainly in rural Saskatchewan. A huge debate in this Chamber not so long ago, Mr. Speaker, a group of representatives from SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) in fact came and showed their displeasure with the government's lack of action on acting on a promise they made during the election campaign of last fall to lower that rate. Mr. Speaker, it would not be a surprise to me to see that group of SARM back here again in the very near future to bring a similar message.

So, Mr. Speaker, I looked at the Bill, and I thought, well perhaps these are a lot of technical changes and perhaps some housekeeping changes, and in fact that might actually make some sense. And perhaps there are some of those things in the Bill, but I just wanted to give the Assembly an example of what I found just going through the Bill on a very short time.

They talk about changing the name of the . . . or the recognition of the Saskatchewan school board trustee . . . school trustee association to the Saskatchewan School Boards Association, which of itself has already been done, Mr. Speaker, and that's a good thing. I'm not at issue with that. That group of individuals certainly asked for that, the Assembly to change and recognize them under a new name, and parties on both sides of the House certainly agreed to that.

There are some other things that they didn't ask for that they did get from the government in the budget. And some of those things certainly we, on this side, are going to have a lot more to talk about and to question as time goes on.

(14:45)

But, Mr. Speaker, one other thing in here . . . and the minister also alluded to it during his opening remarks in his introduction on second reading on this Bill. And I want to quote from some of the explanatory comments about this Bill. And I quote, and it says:

Commencing January 1, 2004, school divisions will provide funding for SAMA's assessment valuation services through a requisition system parallel to the one currently established for municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, I guess the question that comes to my mind is, does the Minister of Learning know about this? Does the Minister of Learning know that he's going to . . . that out of his budget is going to come someplace in the neighbourhood of \$1 million dollars a year to provide funding?



Mr. Speaker, I always . . . Whenever socialists come up with a new plan, Mr. Speaker, I got red flags that seem to come up all the time. And I'm concerned obviously when I see that because what the government's going to try to do, what this socialist government is going to try to do, Mr. Speaker, is they're going to try to slide another one past the people of rural Saskatchewan by saying to them, well look, we're providing \$1 million in funding this year to help with the assessment services for property tax in Saskatchewan . . . coming out of the same pockets, Mr. Speaker, out of the same taxpayers' pockets, coming out of the school divisions.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder how that's going to go over in rural Saskatchewan — but not only just rural Saskatchewan, but in Saskatchewan everywhere — when taxpayers of this province realize the extent and the damage that they're going to cause by implementing a Bill like this.

The minister also talked about adding two more members to the board. Mr. Speaker, when I see government, any socialist government that wants to make itself bigger, I always have concerns with that because rather than being leaner and more efficient and more economic, this government is turning into a bloated member of its former self.

So, Mr. Speaker, I do have concerns with this Bill. And I know members on my side do as well when we initially talked about this Bill. We were just handed this Bill within the last 24 hours, Mr. Speaker, and certainly I'm expecting, as this party, as the official opposition has more opportunity to go through it, we're going to find a lot more issues that the taxpayers of the province will have — will have — some real serious concerns about as we go through it. And we intend to do that certainly over the next few weeks and months. And in order to do that, Mr. Speaker, we are going to look, spend some time in consulting with people in Saskatchewan about the contents of the Bill. And at this time, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move that we adjourn debate on this particular Bill.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member for Carrot River Valley that second reading debate on Bill 68 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried.

Debate adjourned.

**Bill No. 67 — The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation  
Amendment Act, 2004/Loi de 2004 modifiant la Loi de 1997  
sur la réglementation des boissons alcoolisées et des jeux de  
hasard**

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Investment Saskatchewan.

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to introduce the amendments contained in Bill No. 67, the alcohol and gaming amendment Act, 2004. The Alcohol

and Gaming Regulation Act, 1997 provides the statutory basis upon which the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority, commonly referred to as SLGA, regulates gaming and the distribution and consumption of alcohol in our province.

Mr. Speaker, most of the amendments contained in this Bill either formalize long-standing SLGA corporate policies into clear legislation or are housekeeping amendments that provide clarity to a number of regulations already contained in the Act. I will, Mr. Speaker, first address some of the more significant amendments contained in this Bill.

The first, Mr. Speaker, pertains to bans from casinos. The amendments contained in this Bill will ensure that all casinos in the province have the statutory authority to ban people whose presence in the casino is undesirable for reasons such as treating casino staff inappropriately or attempting to cheat at casino games.

As you may be aware, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan casinos have always been able to ban individuals from their sites. The concern though, Mr. Speaker, is that not all Saskatchewan casinos are able to effectively enforce the ban. Currently it is a summary offence to break a ban at casinos Moose Jaw and Regina, but not at the four Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority casinos or exhibition casinos. This Bill will make it a summary offence to break a ban at any Saskatchewan casino.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill also provides individuals who have been banned from casinos with an independent review mechanism. The Bill identifies the SLGA commission, a quasi-judicial body independent from government . . . I should say, it is . . . The full name is the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Licensing Commission, Mr. Speaker, which is a quasi-judicial body independent from government. And it can, under this Bill, hear appeals from people who would like their ban lifted and who either feel they were unfairly treated or they've now paid their dues and should be allowed back in the casino.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill will also ensure that individuals continue to have the ability to enter into self-ban agreements with casino operators — in other words, people that may realize they have a problem with gambling and want to have an agreement to be banned from the casino.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to speak about gaming registration. This Bill will make SLGA the first gaming regulator in the country requiring some of its employees to be registered. Legislation already requires gaming suppliers and people who work in the Saskatchewan gaming industry to register with SLGA, in order to ensure that they possess good character and have suitable training and experience.

Similarly, Mr. Speaker, this Bill will ensure that the board of directors and employees of the indigenous gaming regulators are registered. This change will help facilitate the eventual transfer of the regulation and licensing of on-reserve charitable gaming to the indigenous gaming regulators.

Mr. Speaker, amendments in this Bill also make it possible for the eventual introduction of an electronic application system for commercial liquor permits. Specifically, the Bill will remove the requirement that commercial liquor permit applicants sign a

statutory declaration before a Commissioner for Oaths. This change will allow commercial liquor permit applicants to eventually apply for a permit via the Internet. Mr. Speaker, this is part of the government's e-business strategy to allow people to do more of their business via the Internet with government. The internal application review process will continue to ensure the accuracy of the information provided.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to briefly speak about some of the minor amendments contained in this Bill that will simply formalize existing policy and practices at SLGA into legislation. This Bill includes an amendment that authorizes SLGA to provide grants in lieu of property taxes to municipal governments. Again, SLGA already provides grants in lieu of taxes to local municipalities where it operates liquor stores.

This Bill also clarifies SLGA's ability to lease the slot machines it operates in Saskatchewan casinos.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill will also clarify the sale of brew pub products through SLGA is permitted. Again, Mr. Speaker, numerous Saskatchewan brew pubs already sell their products through SLGA to businesses other than their own.

There are also amendments in this Bill, Mr. Speaker, clarifying that home beer and winemaking kits can be legally sold in Saskatchewan.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the Bill clarifies that liquor permits can be issued for public vehicles such as limousines or tour buses. Again, SLGA already issues special occasion permits to some transportation companies.

So then, Mr. Speaker, the intent of this Bill overall is to clarify a number of regulations within the Act and to also formalize a number of SLGA policies into legislation.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move that Bill No. 67, The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2004 now be read a second time.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister of Industry and Resources that Bill No. 67, The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready?

I recognize the member for Indian Head-Milestone.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill No. 67, An Act to amend The Alcohol and Gaming Regulations Act is really quite a thick piece of legislation. There are a number of issues as I was going through it. There are many, many different aspects to this piece of legislation that deal with the way liquor and gaming is regulated and controlled in our province.

The minister just gave the short second reading speech as to some of the impacts of liquor and gaming on the province, and some of the changes that they are looking at making regarding this subject.

It was interesting to hear the minister talk about banning people

from casinos, and that perhaps they had the ability to, but there was really . . . to follow it out and to make sure people were banned, it seemed to be tough to do, so they're strengthening the legislation, which is quite interesting.

It's interesting to think that this government, with the Premier that's in place right now, the member from Riversdale, would be putting through a piece of legislation that would strengthen the gaming legislation when you look at some of the statements that that Premier has made in the past. This Premier was adamant that gaming should never come into this province. We have got statement after statement that when he railed on against the Devine government for even considering the introduction of gaming into our province. Now he's a Premier that is living off the very profits that gaming puts back into our economy.

And I would like the Premier to stand up and defend some of the words that he said in this Assembly. One quote here — the government is:

. . . so desperate for cash, (that it) thinks it can find a cash bonanza in that field by going directly into gambling and looking for revenues through gambling, Mr. Speaker, I say . . . you, (are) . . . they're (very) mistaken.

That was the Premier's words in 1989 when it came to gambling. And since that time we have seen an NDP government come into this province and do nothing but expand the amount of gambling that is done in this province. They have expanded the number of VLT (video lottery terminal) terminals every year in this province and we've seen another expansion in this recent budget. We've seen the expansion of casinos throughout the province, with four run through the First Nations, through SIGA, Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority; we've seen three casinos now, or two casinos, run by the provincial government itself.

We have seen nothing but expansion of gambling and the absolute need for gambling money for this government to operate. Another quote that the Premier said:

I am not particularly happy when we fund . . . valuable social program(s) on the funds of gambling.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that is, that statement rings of hypocrisy when you see the position that our government is in right now. Our government continues to expand gambling for the very reason to support some of the social programs that we enjoy in our province. Some of the revenues from gambling I am . . . no doubt goes into supplying social programs that we receive and value in our province.

But let's listen to what the Premier said about gambling and the need for gambling to fund social programs:

I am not particularly happy when we fund . . . valuable social program(s) on the funds of gambling.

You know he's been 100 . . . it's been a 180-degree turnaround for this Premier once he's been in the chair. Because all we've seen since the Premier's been in the chair is the expansion of gambling and the need for more gambling to be able to prop

this government up.

And it's against, I would say, the very beliefs of this Premier. At least it was against the very beliefs of the Premier in 1987 when he spoke of not wanting to see our social programs funded through gambling. It was the belief of the Premier in 1989 when he said that the government is sorely mistaken if it feels it can find a cash bonanza in gambling. And, Mr. Speaker, now that he's in the Premier's chair, that's exactly what has happened. Here's another statement:

... I'm not entirely happy with the lottery and ... the overall growth of gambling we've seen across our province (in 1987).

He's not happy with seeing the expansion of gambling in 1987, but in 2004 it's the best thing that they've got to come up with. In fact I would say, I would hazard a guess that that is the only piece of economic development that they have in their tool kit right now is the expansion of gambling to try and increase revenues because that is all they seem to be able to do.

(15:00)

They don't ever talk about growth and attracting industry. They try and buy their way into industry which has certainly failed, Mr. Speaker. But it has done nothing to ... They've done nothing but expand gambling and that seems to be their growth industry.

Now this piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, talks about the very thing. It talks about some of the problems that we see in our casinos. We see people that should not be in our casinos and the casinos are not able to deal with them appropriately. And so now we're having to see this government — who was so opposed to gambling, who was so against gambling, who said it would be the scourge of our society if we let gambling come into this province — now strengthening the legislation so that it can control the gambling even further.

Mr. Speaker, there are many more statements made by the Premier in *Hansard* in this legislature in the '80s, late '80s, which speak with great passion. I'll admit that he spoke with great passion against gambling, that he felt it was going to cause all sorts of social problems in this province. And then, once again, we see that what they've done is expand gambling in the last provincial budget. They've allowed more VLTs into our province, Mr. Speaker. And I mean I'm not necessarily standing for or against expanding of gambling, but what the Premier stood for was the exact opposite of what he is saying today, Mr. Speaker.

Now the Minister of Learning, the member from Regina South, is saying, take them out of local hotels. Why doesn't he ask the person sitting right in front of him what he thinks of that? Why doesn't he ask the Premier with such moral convictions? And he stood in this House and railed against the Devine government about gambling and the absolute, the problems that gambling will cause in this province. And now the minister for Regina South, the Minister of Learning, is saying that it's a good thing. He's challenging us to take them out of small-town hotels.

All I'm saying is, to that minister, ask the Premier what he thinks about gambling in this province now. And we'd love to see him get on the record and make a few statements about gambling because really his government is absolutely dependent — absolutely dependent — on the revenues of gambling.

They say that VLTs are the cocaine of gambling because VLTs are extremely addictive and people get playing them and playing them. Well I would say that this government is absolutely addicted to the revenues of gambling, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, and when the Premier stood in this House and said he would not want to see our social programs funded through the proceeds of gambling and then do the exact opposite and fund social programs through the funding of gambling, is pure hypocrisy, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill talks about a number of other things. It talks about allowing liquor permits through the Internet and commercial liquor permits, people to apply on-line. And we think that's probably a very good idea.

I was interested to hear one of the statements where the minister talked about allowing liquor permits for limos and buses. And, Mr. Speaker, I'll have to say that's probably a good idea.

I remember a number of years ago when I was on the hockey trail that we were really wishing that we could have had some of the tour buses that we were on licensed for alcohol because, because they weren't licensed for alcohol, we were unable to have any alcohol on the bus.

So but now, Mr. Speaker, I wish I was about 20 years younger and playing competitive senior hockey and going on some of the bus trips — we used to travel around the province with SHA (Saskatchewan Hockey Association) — that we could get a liquor permit for the bus, for the tour bus, so that if we wanted to have a beer on the way home that we would be able to do it because certainly we were unable to do it through years past.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of changes in this legislation that we would support. But I would say that just any legislation that comes forward dealing with gaming from this government makes us scratch our head when you hear of how passionate the Premier spoke in years past.

Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn debate on this piece of legislation.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member for Indian Head-Milestone that debate on second reading of Bill No. 67 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried.

Debate adjourned.

**Bill No. 64 — The Post-Secondary Graduate Tax Credit Amendment Act, 2004**

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Learning.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to speak about an amendment to a piece of legislation designed to assist and encourage post-secondary graduates in starting their careers here in Saskatchewan.

Our NDP government is committed to increasing the post-secondary graduate tax credit during . . . the election campaign and we reannounced and made this so in the 2004 budget address. I am particularly pleased to present the amendment to the Act which will increase the tax credit from \$350 to \$1,000 by 2007 through a phased-in approach.

When fully implemented, this credit will allow graduates to shelter over \$9,000 in income from tax after graduation to better assist them in managing their transition from school to work.

Mr. Speaker, The Post-Secondary Graduate Tax Credit Act needs to be amended to effect the changes which were announced. In addition, the Act will be amended to take care of a minor housekeeping issue or, to make it clear, the credit will be issued in the taxation year in which the individual graduated.

The tax credit is an initiative of this government's CareerStart program, which includes other initiatives such as our Green Team summer employment program and the youth entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan program. Our goal is to keep post-secondary graduates in the province. Mr. Speaker, the graduate tax credit is an innovative benefit designed to do just that by rewarding post-secondary graduates. It encourages Saskatchewan graduates to stay in the province and it encourages out-of-province graduates to come to Saskatchewan to establish their careers. This tax credit is the first of its kind in Canada. It was first implemented in 2000 and of course is now being enhanced through this legislation.

Our NDP government has made a commitment to the people of Saskatchewan to make this province ready for the next generation and to create future opportunities for our youth. The graduate tax credit is an initiative that serves that commitment and is an example of this government's commitment to post-secondary education.

I want to very briefly outline the specific changes incorporated in amending the Bill, which include a new section that outlines the formula to be used in calculating the increased amounts of the graduate tax credit for each of the taxation years from 2004 through to 2007. Again, at the end of that time period, the tax credit will be \$1,000 by 2007. The amendment to this Act will come into effect on assent, but are retroactive to January 1, 2004. We've implemented this retroactivity in order to make sure that we can accommodate the full 2004 tax year.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill reflects our government's ongoing commitment to our province's post-secondary graduates. It reflects the NDP's belief that Saskatchewan is a great place to live, to work, and to raise a family. And this Act will further help young people who have obtained a post-secondary

education to do exactly that.

I am therefore pleased to move, Mr. Speaker, that Bill No. 64, The Post-Secondary Graduate Tax Credit Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a second time.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister of Learning that Bill No. 64, The Post-Secondary Graduate Tax Credit Amendment Act 2004 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Batoche.

**Mr. Kirsch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I welcome the opportunity to speak to Bill No. 64. If Saskatchewan is to survive, it is on the minds of our youth. Our youth have to be well-educated to enter in today's workforce. We have to adjust to upgrade our education system to reach out and match the needs of today's industry. Industry is already saying that they can see a shortage coming in the abilities and qualifications of our workforce.

At today's cost of education, our young people are struggling to get enough money to go to tech school or to university. We must give these students any break we can. After all, they are the future of this province — yes, and even the future of Canada.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, in order to let the members have a chance to speak to this Bill, at this time I would move to adjourn debate.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member for Batoche that second reading debate on Bill No. 64 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried.

Debate adjourned.

**Bill No. 69 — The Public Inquiries Amendment Act, 2004**

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

**Hon. Mr. Quennell:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading on The Public Inquiries Amendment Act, 2004.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill amends The Public Inquiries Act to provide the commissioners of a public inquiry and their legal counsel the same legal immunities and privileges as those enjoyed by a judge of the Court of Queen's Bench in performance of his or her duties. Impetus for this amendment came from legal counsel for the Commission of Inquiry Into Matters Relating to the Death of Neil Stonechild.

Mr. Speaker, the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and Quebec all currently have public inquiry legislation which, by way of reference to a superior court judge, creates an equivalent specific level of immunity protection for commissioners of inquiry. New Brunswick

provides immunity for all actions of a commissioner except those taken with actual malice or wholly without jurisdiction.

Mr. Speaker, it has long been understood that in the event a civil action was brought in Saskatchewan against a commissioner for actions taken within the scope of their appointment, executive government would identify and hold free from harm any commissioner facing such legal action. Nevertheless, there is considerably more certainty provided by an express legislative provision such as this.

By expressly stating that a commissioner and commission counsel have the same privileges and immunities as a judge of the Court of Queen's Bench, any issue of the need for identification with the attended expense of such court proceedings is removed.

Mr. Speaker, this amendment is consistent with the policy of this government that commissioners to a public inquiry and their legal counsel must be free to operate without concern that their report or other actions will in any way form the basis of a personal action against them.

We are also aware that the Uniform Law Conference of Canada is finalizing its proposal for a uniform public inquiries Act that would include such immunity for commissioners and for their legal counsel.

Mr. Speaker, the government agrees the policy intent of the amendment as raised by counsel to the Stonechild inquiry and we would invite all members of this Assembly to support this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of an Act to amend The Public Inquiries Act.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 69, The Public Inquiries Amendment Act, 2004 be now read the second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

I recognize the member for Melville-Saltcoats.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think there is minor changes to this Bill and we're following the lead of some of the provinces that already have gone there.

Mr. Speaker, the lateness of the time in this session really is going to force us to adjourn this in a moment. But it's going to also take time to look this Bill over and maybe possibly may not even be dealt with until the fall session, Mr. Speaker.

But it gives, as the minister said, the commissioners power to compel attendance of witnesses and really provides commissioners with the same privileges as Court of Queen's Bench judges. And that's . . . As I said, Mr. Speaker, it seems to be minor changes following the lead of other provinces and I don't believe we have a problem with it. But as this point, I would like to adjourn debate.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member for

Melville-Saltcoats that second reading debate on Bill No. 69 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried.

Debate adjourned.

## ADJOURNED DEBATES

### SECOND READINGS

#### Bill No. 41

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Quennell that **Bill No. 41 — The Contributory Negligence Amendment Act, 2004** be now read a second time.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Cannington.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, this Act deals with an important legal consideration as to who pays damages in cases where a plaintiff has gone to court and has been awarded damages against a defendant or group of defendants. And it deals with how that allocation of liability and any compensation is distributed to the plaintiff.

Mr. Speaker, it . . . And particularly it deals with in situations where one of the defendants is insolvent and unable to pay their portion of the liability. And basically, it looks, from this legislation, that if there is one insolvent individual in the liability suit, then the plaintiff can go after the individual that he believes has the funds available to pay the entire amount of the liability and that defendant then in turn must try to recoup that liability loss relative to the percentage that has been awarded to each defendant as for their portion of that liability. But the problem is that redistribution, excluding the defendant that is liable, is not then distributed based on each additional defendant's portion of the liability.

(15:15)

So let's say you have a defendant A at 50 per cent, defendant B at 25, and defendant C at 25 per cent. Defendant B is insolvent and therefore can't pay. So now the plaintiff would get the full damages from defendant A, let's say, because defendant A has the ability to pay the full amount. Defendant A can then go to defendant C, but he can't go on it based on the same distribution of 50 per cent and 25 per cent equalling the full amount — so two-thirds for A and one-third for C. He can only go after C to recover the 25 per cent that was originally found liable for C. And so it means that the first defendant you can find with the money will pay a disproportionately large portion of the liability, if one of the defendants is liable . . . is, excuse me, insolvent.

It also, it looks to me in this piece of legislation, allows for the cases where the plaintiff themselves may be one of those people or organizations held responsible for part of the liability fault. So let's say the defendant . . . the plaintiff is 25 per cent liable

for the injury, defendant A is 50 per cent, and defendant B is 25 per cent responsible. If B is insolvent, the defendant goes after A. But B, the original plaintiff even though partially responsible, is not responsible then to pick up any portion of the proceeds that were not paid by B. So again, it goes back to A being entirely responsible for the 75 per cent of the cost.

And I recognize someone on the other side there from Saskatoon who thinks he's Canadian and keeps saying eh. Oh no, there's an American with uh huh.

So, Mr. Speaker, this law seems to have an application which causes a great deal of difficulty to whomever the plaintiff can find to be the first one with the funds available to pay any damage awards. It seems that even though the first . . . the one with the money may only be 1 per cent liable, but may actually at the end of the day ensure 100 per cent of the liability costs, if the other defendants aren't solvent.

Now there is a good reason that the plaintiff should not bear the entire cost of any losses if all of the . . . if some of the defendants are insolvent, that they should recover that portion which any defendant who is solvent is able to pay and forego the entire amount that any insolvent defendant cannot pay. But there needs to be a better proportioning of the liability, and the plaintiff themselves, if they have been found partially liable, needs to bear that proportional loss the same as the other members that may be affected by the claims against them.

And there has been a number of recommendations that have come forward in this piece of legislation from some of the associations that might be affected by this type of legislation, Mr. Speaker, dealing with The Contributory Negligence Amendment Act. And some of those recommendations are as I was trying to describe, Mr. Speaker, that the proportionality of the losses should be better distributed. And one of the recommendations that they have come forward with states that the proportionate or modified proportionate liability scheme does not adequately recognize the interest of the plaintiff inherent in the principle of joint and several liability. And this is what this is an adjustment to.

And I see our friend the Attorney General is listening quite closely to what I have to say, trying to understand if I know anything about this. And he says that I'm doing not bad perhaps. He's not sure about the listening closely part. Well, he was either listening closely, Mr. Speaker, or he was sleeping with his eyes open. So I'm sure he would prefer to think that he was listening closely . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes.

Mr. Speaker, this does cause some concerns for people who are in professions where liability is a great deal of concern such as engineers, such as any of those kind of areas where you could normally end up in a litigious situation, Mr. Speaker, because of the way that this is being redistributed.

Mr. Speaker, one of the areas that this seems to be to me a potential concern, Mr. Speaker, is when it comes to dealing with the insurance companies and how they get to apportion the liabilities. Because while an insurance company may be held responsible, Mr. Speaker, for the liability, my concern is that it's then turned around — let's say in the case of motor vehicles, an award based on a fault in the automobile rather than

a fault caused by a driver. And even though the insurance company such as SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) may be holding the liability for that, that they can turn and then redistribute it amongst perhaps the mechanic who worked on the vehicle, the manufacturer of the vehicle, and those type of individuals or corporations that may be involved.

And it seems to me it could be a means by which the insurance company can redistribute the liabilities that they would have to face because they can turn around and then, you might say, subcontract that liability, Mr. Speaker, back to the manufacturer or to the mechanics or to the dealership that may have worked on that vehicle. And I think people buy liability insurance so that that doesn't happen, and that's why they're paying the premiums to the insurance companies.

So I think when this gets into Committee of the Whole, that's one of the areas that I think we need to explore to see what relationship there is between the insurance companies and this type of Bill where it comes to determining the negligence and who has to pay the plaintiff; who are the defendants and who has to pay the plaintiff for any damages that are awarded.

It also seems, Mr. Speaker, if you are going to be an irresponsible person and cause situations for which you might be liable, that you'd better be doing that if you're insolvent, Mr. Speaker, because then you won't be held responsible and anybody else that may have been somehow involved in this will have to bear the full responsibility, even though they may only have a very, very small portion of the responsibility placed on them.

I guess in that situation, you have to assume that the person, that someone in this scenario has the funding wherewithal to pay a liability claim against them, and they may be the only one and they become fully responsible for it while they may not have anywhere near the majority of the responsibility; may be very, very limited in their responsibility but bear virtually the entire cost.

And I think there needs to be some mechanism looked at here to ensure that there isn't an unfairness. There is an unfairness if the plaintiff automatically loses out on anyone that is insolvent, but there's also an unfairness if one of the parties has to pay the entire claim regardless of their amount of liability even if their amount of liability is very, very small, Mr. Speaker.

Because this is a very complex issue, Mr. Speaker, there are groups who wish to make their views known to the opposition on this, need to be given time to do this even though time is short. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I would move adjournment of this debate.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member for Cannington that the second reading debate on Bill No. 41 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried.

Debate adjourned.

**Bill No. 54**

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 54 — The Tobacco Control Amendment Act, 2004** be now read a second time.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Carrot River Valley.

**Mr. Kerpan:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the socialist Government of Saskatchewan is addicted. Mr. Speaker, the Government of Saskatchewan is addicted to taxation. And they're addicted to taxation that they get from the revenue on tobacco products, on gambling, on alcohol, and so on and so forth, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this government is really no different than any other government in Canada or North America or perhaps even around the world. Most governments are, most governments are addicted to what many people would call the sin taxes — alcohol, tobacco, perhaps gambling in jurisdictions where gambling is allowed.

And I wanted to . . . I'm really glad, actually, to have the opportunity to get up and speak about Bill 54 because I've had a lot of people who have called me about the Bill, a lot of people who live in the constituency of Carrot River Valley and certainly a great many people who have a lot of concerns about the Bill. And I want to voice some of their concerns, Mr. Speaker, and I want to voice some of mine.

Mr. Speaker, before I go any further, I want to make it very clear to this Assembly here today that the words that you'll hear today from the member from Carrot River Valley come from an ex-smoker. Mr. Speaker, I'm not a smoker and I must say that I did smoke probably more than my share of cigarettes in the time that I've had already and I've had 18 months that I haven't smoked. So the remarks come from what people might call also a reformed smoker. They're apparently some of the worst, Mr. Speaker.

But what I'm saying, Mr. Speaker, is that I think this government is really taking a two-faced approach to this issue, to the issue of smoking. On one hand they're saying, in response to some jurisdictions and to some interest groups, that, oh gosh, smoking is the worst thing in the world and we have to stop it; therefore we're going to implement a public ban on smoking. That's on one hand.

On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, on the other hand, Mr. Speaker, they're saying, well smoking is bad and we're going to ban it in public places right throughout the province. They're also saying — I'm sure they're saying — I hope people keep smoking because we really like those dollars that come into the government coffers that come from smoking. And there's no question in my mind that they do.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, some people might say, some people might say, Mr. Speaker, that how can they on one hand, any jurisdiction, whether that be a city or a province or a club for that instance, ban smoking and yet really still reap the benefits in tax dollars that they get from governments at all levels,

whether that be municipal, provincial, or federal.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's interesting and it's important to note also that the Saskatchewan Party's approach to this Bill, Bill No. 54, is a sensible, well-thought-out approach in the fact that we are not taking a party position on this particular issue, but we are allowing, of course as we always do, our MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) to go out and consult and to listen to and develop a consensus from within each . . . they're each in their own constituencies, and then vote accordingly.

And I think that's the proper way. And I hope that the government MLAs on the government side take that very, very same approach to this Bill because it is a very democratic, proper approach to this kind of thing.

Mr. Speaker, I was in as a Member of Parliament in Ottawa when the cigarette smuggling issue was a big factor there in the mid-'90s. And what happened was that a number of the Mohawk Indian Nation reserves, they were bringing cigarettes through from the United States and able to sell cigarettes in the province of Ontario far cheaper than anybody could buy them in stores or wherever they happened to purchase their cigarettes.

Again the government took a weak-hearted approach to solving this issue. What they did, instead of trying to stop the smuggling, which in itself is an illegal activity, they were afraid to try to stop the illegal activity. In fact, those of us in our caucus at the time met with the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) from the area, and the RCMP from the area said that they had no intention of going on to the reserve to stop the smuggling because they were afraid of armed confrontation. And they told us that.

(15:30)

So the governments, the government there, their solution to solving the smuggling issue was to lower the taxes on cigarettes in Ontario so they effectively put the smugglers out of business by selling cigarettes cheaper than the smugglers were. So they took a backhanded approach to solving an issue. Was it an issue? Certainly it was an issue. Should it have been stopped? Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. But it was a two-faced approach to solving an issue, very much the same way that this government is taking a two-faced approach to solving the issue of tobacco use.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to stand here today and promote or say that the use of tobacco or tobacco products is safe. I won't. I agree with every group, all the health groups who are saying that smoking is a danger to your health. I don't think there's much argument about that from anybody, regardless of which side of the fence you are on this issue. My argument, my debate on this Bill, Mr. Speaker, is how we as society are best able to handle and to put an end to tobacco use — not only in Saskatchewan but right across our country.

I had the opportunity to speak to a hotel operator from Tisdale, Mr. Speaker. His name is Gene Zazula. And I got to know Gene Zazula fairly well over the years and he probably said it the very best. He probably, in his words, said how to handle this issue the very best. He said if the government of this province

wants to stop the use of tobacco, if they are prepared to put in force a ban on the use of tobacco products in public, then they ought to ban the use of cigarettes — period — everywhere in Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, I can't argue with that. That's a reasonable point.

I know that Gene is not a smoker either but I also know that he's very concerned about the future of his business and his hotel after January 1 if and when this Bill takes effect. He's right. And again the way he meant that, I believe, is that he believes again that the government is using a two-faced approach to solving the issue.

Mr. Speaker, I think a better way may have been to use education to stop the use of tobacco products in this province. If you look at . . . and those of us who are smokers will well remember in the not-too-distant past when we were able to, smokers were able to get on an Air Canada flight, for instance, and light up. You know, everybody says, well that's a long time ago. Really, Mr. Speaker, it's probably within the last 20 or 25 years.

Many people who smoke or even went to theatres will remember the smoking loges in the theatres where smokers were allowed to smoke. But through the use of education, with our young people and with our adults, Mr. Speaker, those things have all fallen by the wayside. And well they should have, well they should have.

Now no longer can you smoke in many public places — in skating rinks and hockey rinks, in most of the public places where children frequent.

Mr. Speaker, that was an effective, effective lobby, an effective education program. And I'm saying to you, Mr. Speaker, I'm saying to this Assembly today, that perhaps we were on the right track by using education as the process rather than a heavy-handed government approach telling the people what is best for them.

Mr. Speaker, I really liken this issue — this Bill 54, the banning of smoking in public places — I liken that to gun control issue, Mr. Speaker. I know that it's a bit off topic, but I'm going to draw a similarity here in saying that in both cases what it was, it was a heavy-handed government saying to Canadians, to people in Saskatchewan, we know what's best for you; you do what we tell you to do and things will work out well.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we're tired of that in Saskatchewan. We're tired of governments telling us, listen to us, do what's best, we'll tell you what to do. You know, you pay the tax; we tell you. You, you know, do the things that we say and everything's going to be fine.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the record's not very good. The record's not very good from this government, nor is it good from many of the past governments in Saskatchewan or in Canada for that matter.

There's no question in my mind, Mr. Speaker, that we ought to move ahead with the banning of smoking in places where children are involved, where children could frequent. And I'm speaking and thinking of places like restaurants perhaps, like

sports facilities.

In the government's Bill I know that what they're saying is that each individual municipality could in fact ban smoking from even outdoor facilities such as football stadiums, baseball fields. Mr. Speaker, I don't have a problem with that. That's not an issue with me because that should be in fact up to those municipalities.

Where I have the issue, Mr. Speaker, is with people who own establishments such as hotels, pubs, bars, sports bars, and so on and so forth where children are not able to go to, where adults, people of majority, make the decision on their own that they will either go to or not go to. And that's their decision to make.

Mr. Speaker, that's the issue that I have with this Bill. And I know that if you talk to people who own these places, they will tell you that that is their issue as well, that they want to have the ability in their own establishment to either have smoking or not.

Members opposite say, what about the workers involved in those places? And you know what? Excellent point, Mr. Speaker. That's an excellent point because obviously people have the right to work in a safe environment, and that's a concern. Certainly one way around that again, I believe, is that people who . . . oftentimes people who work in a smoking establishment are smokers themselves. Not always — not always, but quite often. So people know if they're going to work, if they get a job at hotel X in the bar where there's smoking, they will have the opportunity to either (a) work there or not work there.

Mr. Speaker, there's also just one more issue that I want to talk about and that is the issue of private clubs. And, Mr. Speaker, I believe if you look at clubs — private clubs such as the legions in this country — it's very difficult, and it's going to be difficult for me or for any member here to say to one of our World War II veterans, who's perhaps 75 to 85 years old, that he or she can't have a cigarette in their own club if they want to.

Those are issues, Mr. Speaker. Those are the issues that I've talked about. Those are the issues that I'm hearing in my constituency. I ask members from both sides to listen, to study the issue, and to make their best decision based upon the facts that they receive from their constituency.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to have the opportunity to stand here and talk more about this. I know we as a party will as we go on and this Bill goes down the path. However, Mr. Speaker, at this point in time, I would like to move adjournment on this Bill No. 54.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member for Carrot River Valley that second reading debate on Bill 54 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried.



Debate adjourned.

**Bill No. 49**

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 49 — The Vital Statistics Amendment Act, 2004/Loi de 2004 modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les services de l'état civil** be now read a second time.

**The Speaker:** — The question before the Assembly is the motion moved by the Minister of Health that Bill No. 49, The Vital Statistics Amendment Act 2004 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Question.

**The Speaker:** — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried.

**Deputy Clerk:** — Second reading of this Bill.

**The Speaker:** — To which committee shall this Bill be referred? The Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — I move that Bill No. 49, The Vital Statistics Amendment Act 2004 be referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister of Health that Bill No. 49 be referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — The motion is carried. This Bill stands referred to the Committee on Human Services.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services.

**Bill No. 14**

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Sonntag that **Bill No. 14 — The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, 2004** be now read a second time.

**The Speaker:** — The motion before the Assembly, it has been moved by the Minister of Highways and Transportation that Bill No. 14, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Question.

**The Speaker:** — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — The motion is carried.

**Deputy Clerk:** — Second reading of this Bill.

**The Speaker:** — To which committee shall this Bill be referred? I recognize the Government Deputy House Leader.

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you. I move that Bill 14, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, 2004 be referred to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Deputy Government House Leader that Bill No. 14 be referred to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried. This Bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and ordered to be referred to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies at the next sitting.

**Bill No. 50**

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Higgins that **Bill No. 50 — The Labour Standards Amendment Act, 2004** be now read a second time.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly pleased to be able to enter into the debate on Bill No. 50, An Act to amend The Labour Standards Act. This Bill as the minister has said during second reading deals basically with two issues. It amends The Labour Standards Act, section 44 which amendments deal with compassionate leave and harmonizing provincial legislation with that of federal legislation so that workers can access compassionate leave due to family illnesses. And certainly we on this side of the House don't see this as a problem at all. We would support that type of an amendment.

But whenever amendments are made there's . . . the minister said there is very little cost. Well there is additional cost to the EI (employment insurance) fund and both employers and employees contribute to that fund and . . . but however those additional costs I would suspect the EI fund, the employment insurance fund, would certainly be capable of funding compassionate leave. And so therefore, as I said, we certainly would be supportive of that amendment.

The second amendment, Mr. Speaker, deals with the structure of the Minimum Wage Board. One of the amendments calls or requires the Minimum Wage Board to bring forward minimum wage recommendations to cabinet every two years rather than under the current system of every four years. We did consult

with stakeholders on both sides of the issues. There aren't any, we found there aren't any major concerns and if we have a growing economy and economy that's more vibrant, Mr. Speaker, I think it's been the experience in other jurisdictions that minimum wage isn't such a large issue because there are more jobs available, there's more competition for labour services that are offered in the workplace, and therefore fewer people working at minimum wage.

And that is the challenge for this government, Mr. Speaker, to . . . And it's been the challenge that they have not been as successful with as many people in this province would like them to be in generating more jobs and more quality jobs, so therefore, as I said, minimum wages wouldn't be such a large issue.

The other recommendation dealing with that whole area of minimum wage takes the regulation-making ability from the minimum wage boards and places it with the cabinet. The minister said in their second reading speech that Saskatchewan is the only jurisdiction that has the old system and we are now moving and making our procedures more in harmony with the way things are done in other provinces. And I certainly have a number of questions around that, Mr. Speaker, but I'm sure we can discuss those with the minister in committee.

So, Mr. Speaker, at this time I would move that . . . We have no other concerns and I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that this Bill moves to committee.

**The Speaker:** — The question before the Assembly is the motion moved by the Minister of Labour that Bill No. 50, The Labour Standards Amendment Act, 2004, be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Question.

**The Speaker:** — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried.

**Deputy Clerk:** — Second reading of this Bill.

**The Speaker:** — To which committee shall this Bill be referred?

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — I move that Bill 50, The Labour Standards Amendment Act, 2004, be referred to the Standing Committee on the Economy.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Deputy Government House Leader that the Bill No. 50 be referred to the Standing Committee on the Economy. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — The motion is carried. This Bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on the Economy.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on the Economy.

### Bill No. 53

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Quennell that **Bill No. 53 — The Securities Amendment Act, 2004** be now read a second time.

**The Speaker:** — The question before the Assembly is the motion proposed by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 53, The Securities Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Question.

**The Speaker:** — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried.

**The Deputy Chair:** — Second reading of this Bill.

**The Speaker:** — To which committee shall this Bill be referred?

**Hon. Mr. Quennell:** — Mr. Speaker, I move that The Securities Amendment Act, 2004, be referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that this Bill 53 be referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — The motion is carried. The Bill stands referred to the Committee on Human Services.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to the Committee on Human Services.

(15:45)

**Deputy Clerk:** — Committee of Finance.

**The Speaker:** — I now leave the Chair for the Assembly to go into Committee of Finance.

## COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

### General Revenue Fund Health Vote 32

#### Subvote (HE01)

**The Chair:** — Committee of Finance. The first item before the committee are the consideration of estimates for the Department of Health starting on page 77 of the Estimates book. And I

would recognize the Minister of Health to introduce his officials.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am pleased to have with me this afternoon the deputy minister Glenda Yeates to my immediate left. And then, to her left, Bert Linklater who's the executive director of the regional accountability branch. Behind Bert is Max Hendricks who's the executive director of the finance and administration branch. Beside him is Doug Calder who's the director of the specialized services unit in acute and emergency. Behind me is Duncan Fisher, the assistant deputy minister and beside him is Roger Carriere who's the executive director of the community care branch.

And I'm pleased to have these officials with me this afternoon. Look forward to the questions.

**The Chair:** — Administration (HE01). I recognize the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Swift Current.

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman of committees. Just have some specific questions regarding my constituency and concerns there. Specifically they relate to the changes that have been announced in the Cypress Health Region as a result of the minister's announcement of May 18. The minister will know of course that the Government of Saskatchewan has approved a new . . . its share of the funding for a new hospital in Swift Current — something that the community is grateful for, something certainly that I as the local MLA as well am grateful for.

There have been concerns expressed to me by front-line health care workers, and just by folks from the region, that the new hospital will have fewer beds. Those concerns were expressed some time ago prior to any other changes, and I had a chance to meet with the management in the district who are always so very forthcoming with information and willing to accommodate these requests for information. And they went over a bit of the plan for the hospital and I think have been working with front-line staff to improve the plan. And frankly the concerns about the number of beds being reduced really had dropped off, but they're up again in the wake of the changes that are being anticipated for Herbert for example.

And the minister will know — or perhaps the minister will know, officials will know — that from time to time beds in Herbert have been utilized by the hospital in Swift Current when they needed that excess capacity. And I think the announcement in Herbert, or regarding Herbert, has now exacerbated I think the . . . or let's say highlighted the concerns previously on the number of beds in the Swift Current hospital.

And I would like the minister to comment on that, to provide some insight from the department's perspective because I do . . . I'm personally concerned if we do have fewer beds in the new hospital when it comes on line and then fewer beds in the region and the surrounding facilities. What will be in place to deal with what might be shortages when the hospital in Swift Current needs to take advantage of beds in the region to accommodate the patients?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Thank you for that question. I think the member's correct in that the management of the Cypress Health

Region have been working with staff and with the doctors in the whole area to make sure they get the right mix of services for the people of that area. And my understanding is that they're working at those numbers and trying to provide a right balance between in-patient care service or the hospital beds, the ambulatory service which relates to emergency, and day surgery and ambulatory clinics, and then how those fit in a broader way.

And the whole area I think also raised questions around the role of the long-term care beds in the area, and I'm not sure if the member's asking questions specifically as it relates also to the long-term care bed capacity.

But I guess what I would say is that they look at the traditional usage of the beds in the present Swift Current hospital and surrounding areas as they develop their plan around the new services that they need. But they also recognize that the ambulatory clinics — the ones that do the day surgeries, those kinds of things — have changed the nature of the usage of beds, so they're accommodating, I think presently they're looking at in-patient beds, around 87 beds, but there'd probably be 18 beds that are sort of day beds or ambulatory care beds, and those ones are sometimes one patient, sometimes maybe two patients a day or more that would use those.

But then there's the other issue of the surrounding communities . . . (inaudible) . . . after care and sometimes getting space into long-term care. And if the member's interested, I can talk more about that and sort of the demography, the ages of that particular area.

**Mr. Wall:** — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, I have an additional question but before I do that, the House Leader and Health critic asked me . . . gave me really one job to do to lead off, and that was to thank the officials for coming today. And I forgot to do that, so he's busy filling out his performance evaluation now of myself. So I want to welcome them here to the Assembly. Thank you for coming this afternoon.

I guess the follow-up question would be this. I agree that the region has been doing some significant planning for some time. And now with these changes coming in the region, I'm sure that . . . I guess, has the planning changed and is there some contemplation now that those 87 beds might be . . . there might need to be a need for more beds for the new hospital. I guess I would express this on behalf of constituents and health care professionals in Swift Current.

There is this fear that we — or this concern, not to overstate it — that's this concern that we're going to have a brand new hospital in Swift Current, something that the community and the region has worked hard for; to the government's credit, something that they have approved. And I think there's this concern that we will now build, we'll have this brand new health care facility to service the entire southwest region, and heaven forbid that we would build it under capacity, below what the basics are needed. So they did the planning for this 87-bed region, I would assume prior to the finalization of this announcement from . . . by the minister, by the government on May 18. We are losing six, a reduction of seven acute care beds in Herbert, and this does represent fewer acute care beds, the new hospital versus the old one.

So I think that's the question. Is the region now, with the approval of the department, looking at rightsizing that proposal? And does that include maybe revisiting the number of beds that are . . . that could be approved in the new facility at Swift Current?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — I appreciate that question and it is one that is part of the thinking as they've gone forward with the planning. And the challenge is to get that right balance, which is I think what the member is talking about, to make sure that there are the acute care beds or the overnight beds in the hospital such at a capacity that's necessary, as well as recognizing the changes around the day use and many procedures that don't require as long a stay in the hospital. And that in fact includes most all of the kinds of procedures that happen.

And so when they've been working as a region, covering that whole area, they factor in what they see as some of the longer term usage. And this is the question around Herbert and what kind of things were happening there, has been part of their thinking for, I think, for a while in the sense of trying to make sure that there's good use there, good use of services, but recognizing that it's part of a broader structure.

So I think that practically the questions that the member's raised will be included as they continue their discussion. I think at this stage they've already thought that they've included that. If there's some other issue that shows up, I'm sure that they'll consider that. But I think it is something that's been part of their long-term planning.

**The Chair:** — I recognize the member for Humboldt.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I have a question for the minister concerning a constituent of mine. He is a husband and father of young children. He's a farmer and he's suffering from Marfan syndrome, which is a rare disease.

The cost of his equipment and medication is over \$1,000 a month. And I've written the minister's office expressing the concerns of this constituent, because the difficult thing that he's facing is that he derives his income from his farm and when the calculations are done to determine his benefit eligibility, items are included in his income that are not actual cash dollars that he has at his disposal to spend on medical expenses — or living expenses for that matter. Nor are they liquid assets that can be sold for cash without jeopardizing the operating capacity of his farm.

The minister replied to my letter on May 3, and said that determining income, the drug plan relies on income information that's provided by Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, and does not take into account additional items such as assets.

I have a copy of a response that this gentleman received from Community Resources and Employment on his assessment for assistance for his equipment. And it lists his income at 46,823. But there's a capital cost allowance that is added to that of 15,137, and there's also an option inventory adjustment of \$27,250. They subtract electricity, heating, and telephone, and they state his income at \$92,029.

I can assure the minister that that's not at this farmer's disposal. He does not have \$92,000 at his disposal this year or any year, and that the capital cost allowance and the optional inventory adjustments aren't money that he has at his disposal.

Now I'm sure the minister can understand and sympathize that medical costs of over \$1,000 a month are quite onerous for this farmer. And his other option is to not use the recommended equipment, and it will jeopardize his health.

So I'm asking if there's other options, if there's any way to look at this gentleman's assessment to . . . You know, perhaps the way it's done, he's falling through the cracks. I understand his situation's rare. And so is there any options that we can offer this gentleman? Because he's literally going to go broke trying to stay functioning.

(16:00)

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Thank you for the questions. From the description it appears that there's an application that's been in the Community Resources and Employment department. So it isn't directly related to Health. But I think practically, it must have related to some kind of income support from that side. And then what happens is the Health programs come and help out with families depending on their level of income.

We have income-based special support coverage and this is available for anyone who has Saskatchewan health coverage. And it's available when an individual or the family's drug costs exceed 3.4 per cent of the total family income. And there's adjustments that are made for numbers of children in the family. So there may be some help on that side.

But without sort of more specifics and actually having the information from a different department, which I don't have here, I'm not sure I'd be able to respond. But we do have some specific assistance around the drugs side. And then as far as the other equipment, I would have to have some information about what the equipment is.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Would the minister's recommendation be that this gentleman . . .

**The Chair:** — Order. Why is the member on his feet?

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Chair, I would ask for leave of the committee to make an introduction.

**The Chair:** — The Government House Leader has requested leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — That's carried. The member may proceed.

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Seated in the Speaker's gallery is a former resident of Wakaw, Saskatchewan. He is here today to do some work with the Department of Finance, to visit with officials in the Department of Finance. He is the Jarislowsky-Deutsch Professor of

Economic and Financial Policy at Queen's School of Policy Studies, and he is also a senior scholar of the Institute for Research on Public Policy. He is an author of many articles and monographs and book chapters on a wide range of Canadian policy issues including equalization. And I would ask the members to join with me in extending a very warm welcome to Professor Thomas Courchene.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Chair:** — I recognize the member for Humboldt.

## COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

### General Revenue Fund Health Vote 32

#### Subvote (HE01)

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. If I'm understanding the minister then probably the best thing that this gentleman could do is contact his department directly with the information and it would be looked at through there.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Well I found the copy of my letter that's gone back to this individual, and basically it says what I told you before. But it also adds the fact that based on the information that the department had around the program for the paraplegia program, they just didn't have sufficient information to see whether he qualified for that.

And so practically, I think that would be important to get that extra information because clearly there's . . . We should see if we can figure out some assistance for this man and for his family. So if you could provide that information, we'll forward it to the appropriate place, and maybe there are some remedies in the other department.

Practically, how it works is that Community Resources and Employment does the financial profile of a family, and then figures out where they fit on a scale and which programs would come into place. But some of these other programs in Health are provided even though there is . . . it doesn't matter what your income is.

**The Chair:** — I recognize the member for Arm River-Watrous.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Going back to May 18, I was under the impression — so were the residents of Davidson and area — that with the six beds that were now occupied, that they would not be moved in the next . . . till that wing was . . . till they were down to 32 residents or 30 residents. And six people were in that wing would not be moved. That was the impression that I got and the area got, from comments you'd made on May 18. Has anything changed since then?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — The information is that the movement will be by attrition or by opening up as people no longer require space and that . . . so nothing has changed since May 18.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. The reason I brought it up is because that was the understanding I got, and the staff was very upset. And then May 18 I took the *Hansard* and give that to them, and that assured them and the residents that nothing would happen.

But since then in the *Davidson Leader*, there was an article by the CEO that said that he would be looking at moving people, but he would consult with families. And when the moves came, he said some would go through attrition, but some would be looking at being moved. Now maybe he was misquoted; I don't know. But that stirred up a lot of fear.

Right now, as we're speaking right now, there's a demonstration in front of the Davidson hospital right now. Some of the administration is down there meeting with some of the staff. And I know that there's a group of seniors that were doing a demonstration out front right now as we go. That's how much fear and uncertainty is out there. So that's why I'm trying to get this set at that. So I thank you for that comment, and I will pass that back to the residents.

But one of the other concerns that they talked about, that the CEO did talk to the residents about, was possibly shutting down the emergency services from — they call it I believe a lockdown — from 12 midnight to 7 a.m. There's also rumours of that floating around right now. Is that happening too?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Chair, to the members, as far as I understand there's no change to the cover that's provided in the community as it relates to, I think it would be, the 24-hour response, that that plans to continue as they have had. So that's the information I have.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And that's why we've talked about having a meeting out there. I would like the Human Services Committee to come out there so the people can ask these questions because right now, do you know how many calls I'm getting to my office on this, on this particular issue of the different information that's coming out and in articles, in the newspaper?

Then we'll have . . . I'll bring out some stuff from *Hansard* out there, trying to set the facts straight or hoping that . . . The people basically . . . That's one of the reasons why I think it would be good for the committee to go out there — so the people can ask questions. So you can explain to them what is exactly happening out there because right now, they don't know. And with that uncertainty that's happening out there, that just creates more turmoil and more fear of what's happening. You have to remember that, you know, a lot of the families that have loved ones in there are very worried that they could be moved hundreds, hundreds of miles on that.

Do you know right now what the staff reductions will be, because that is apparently what he's talking about today to them. And now, if there isn't going to be any bed closures at this particular time, why do they need immediate staff reductions?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll answer both questions that the member's raised. The first question is about how the local community can get the information. And

practically, that information should come from the Heartland Health Region and the senior management people and the board people. And I understand that they are out there, and that's how they should get the answers.

It's one of the challenges that you have from a provincial perspective . . . is not to get involved in all of these issues there. And I quote to the member the brief that was filed by the member from Melfort on behalf of the Saskatchewan Party to the Fyke Commission. And there's one sentence in there that's really important. It says, "Provincial micromanagement of health district operations must be avoided."

So I think there's agreement on both sides of the House that we shouldn't get into all of those kinds of things. But I do have some information. It's about three jobs that are involved and that they have to give notice about this, and they try to give as much notice as possible as the transition takes place. So I assume that's probably what the discussion would be at a local level.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well the information that they're getting from Heartland is different than the information that's coming out of here. And that's probably why the problem is arising and probably why Human Services Committee should go out there and meet with them people.

You talked about micromanaging. Well where did . . . who made the decision to close them, the 10 beds? The CEO made the statement that it came from the government at that end. Now I would call that micromanaging. He also talked about he'd submitted several options. Do you know what the other options he submitted instead of closing them 10 . . . that one particular wing in Davidson?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — As I've explained before, the local health authority looks at all of the different options, depending on the amounts of resources that are available in a particular region.

And what happened last week was that various options that were presented, given the amount of resources that were available, were sort of laid forward. And from provincial perspective, we said well these kinds of things probably can happen given what's happened in a particular community and the particular facility that's involved. Other places it involved the actual usage of some facilities that was quite low, so there were some changes like that.

But it's really a process of going back and forth between the Department of Health officials and the regional health people. And the challenge this time was how to manage with the resources that we had to try to maintain services in every community across the province that had services, but recognizing that some of those would have to change and in some cases be reduced, some cases be increased.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Mr. Chairman, so I take it the order to close the beds came from your department, not from the CEO. He submitted you two or three options — option one, maybe option two, option three — and you chose a particular option and told him to implement it. Is that how that works?

(16:15)

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — It's not an order. It's a discussion about this is the amount of money that you have in your Heartland Health Region, and then they end up looking across the whole region and saying well, if we have that amount of money, these are the kinds of things that would happen.

Now there are . . . that's a continual process, and it's been going on for many years based on changing usage, changing demography, changing populations in certain part of the communities. And it will continue for the next 5, 10, 20, 30 years as we move forward, a continual discussion about that.

But practically, there were some kinds of changes that were approved in the overall process to go ahead, and what happened in Davidson was one of those that were approved.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Mr. Chairman, that's just what I was getting at, that the approval came from your department after you submitted the options.

One of the other questions that are being raised out there is they're cutting staff, cutting beds. And I get this a lot at the office, are you . . . They are telling me that the administration got an 8 per cent raise last year. Can you talk a little bit about that? And is there any cuts to administration with a reduction of front-line services?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Some of the very specific questions you ask are questions that Heartland Regional Health Authority would have and be able to answer more directly.

But one of the things that's happened with our announcement around how we work with the resources that we had was that it includes some facility closures. It includes administrative changes around programs, and that means basically having some fewer jobs in some of that side. And all those different parts are part of what's going forward.

What's happening now is — with the final dollars amounts that each of the regional health authorities have, which is \$13 million more than what we had on March 31 — the boards are finalizing their budgets for the end of June. And so some of those administrative changes and others will be fitting in with the facility changes.

But I'd like to point out one of the real challenges for the Heartland Regional Health Authority and basically have demographic information around the changing population in that whole area. And so the covered population, using the health statistics for 2003, last year was 44,660. And unfortunately it's been dropping down so that the previous year it was a couple thousand more. In 1996 it was almost . . . well, 4,000 more. If you go back to 1986, it was 12,000 more. So the numbers of people being served in the region are less, based on the demographic information.

And so one of the challenges becomes how to provide the services across a broad area. And that's the specific, one of the very . . . you know, one of the challenges we have for the whole province. But Heartland Health Authority, we know from looking at all of the health authorities, seems to meet these challenges first — of all of the areas in the province. And so, you know, as a result they've come up with some pretty

innovative solutions and ideas that we were able to take to other places, but they also end up meeting problems that nobody else has had any experience dealing with. And they then need to work with local communities to figure out how to do that.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well that's where some of these committee meetings and public meetings would probably come in handy. And they have had a public meeting in Davidson at that where they can maybe talk about this.

As for the changing demographics, you're talking about population as is area. Well the province has always been the same size. We've always had to deal with area when dealing with people getting the services there. And as you close more and more hospitals, more and more wings, that makes it harder and harder. That makes people having to travel more. As more closures happen, you're going to find more people going to Saskatoon — it's an hour up the highway — as it gets harder and harder to use your facility in your local town or down the road at that end.

But getting back to the original question. For administration costs do you . . . If there's a bump up in the . . . not costs, of administration salaries, do you have to approve? Does that approval come from your department before it comes in effect?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — The salaries of admin people, if they're within collective agreements, which some of them are, then those agreements would be in place. As far as the CEOs' salaries, theirs effectively, the ranges have stayed the same. There's no change in those kind of ranges for the CEOs.

For the bargaining, the sort of the mandate of 0, 1, and 1 over the next three years is there. My understanding is that administrative savings are approximately just over \$100,000 that they're doing in the Heartland Health Region, as well as some of these facility changes that are happening in parts of the region.

But they're continuing to look at the costs everywhere throughout the system. And I know earlier I had some questions around the request for proposal for office space. Well their present lease for the regional head office expires in September. And so effectively they're setting out proposals for office space which would probably include their existing space, but to see where they can get the best deal because they're trying to make sure they keep their costs in line.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, the \$100,000 you save in administration, I guess, is what it would take to keep them beds open in that wing, which is unfortunate, but at that as I say, you will be creating a waiting list in Davidson for a number of years.

Another question that's been posed to me from the area there is board members. Davidson effectively, I don't think, has a member. Are they all appointed, and how do you go about appointing a member to a particular health region board at that end?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — The board members are appointed usually after application by people. There's an ad that goes in the paper when there's a vacancy, and then people apply. And we end up

with a process of sort of looking at the numbers and trying to get that balance with the geography and with skills that are required.

Now that we've had boards in existence for a while, they are giving messages saying, well we could use a person with experience in human relations or legal or accounting or those kinds of things. So those are factors. We try to keep a gender balance. We try to get First Nations and Métis representation across the board. So those are all factors there.

And I think the member . . . I'm not sure where the closest member is to the Davidson area, but I think it's probably somewhere between Davidson and Outlook. But yes, so there's an attempt to do that.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess the biggest concern that I had was the moving of the residents, and you assured me that that's not going to happen. If you'd have said that in question period, we probably wouldn't have had to go through four questions in question period at that end of it. But I will be passing this on to the residents in the area.

I know that they are against closing the wing. But the worst scenario would be to move them six people out on the road because they're . . . I've talked to the nurses, staff there. I mean, when you move people, they just seem to go further downhill. They're in unfamiliar surroundings. Family isn't there. That's probably the hardest thing to do to a person that's been in a particular home for a number of years — to move him to a strange location. It just seems to send them downhill.

So with that I'd like to thank you for your answers today and I will pass it on to another member.

**The Chair:** — I recognize the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Minister, I have some questions dealing with services that were being provided at the Ituna Pioneer Health Centre. I was contacted by constituents from the Ituna area who were quite concerned about the curtailment of certain nursing services at the Ituna centre, and I was provided with a copy of a memo that came from the Sunrise Health Region which . . . To condense what the memo said, basically that the only nursing services as of April 1 that could be provided at the health centre were nursing services to long-term care residents because the centre is part of the long-term care facility there in Ituna. Or else . . . And they have a doctor that attends a clinic three times a week. And so if the doctor is there and nursing services are required, of course then that would be certainly acceptable, or if the doctor orders nursing services.

And it's my understanding, Minister, that prior to April 1, that individuals could walk into the clinic and have their blood pressure monitored, their blood glucose, have dressings changed, and those sorts of things, without those services being required or being prescribed by a doctor. And the residents of the area are quite concerned about what the rationale is behind the reduction in nursing services when . . . You know, they're asking, well what's changed? You know, as far as they can see, everything is in place that has been in the past. And why now

have we got these severely reduced nursing services?

In fact, the memo does state that if an emergency situation presents itself at the clinic, that the nurse on duty is to call an ambulance and only administer first aid. And I would think in the past, you know, more than merely some simple first aid was administered. And they would like answers to that, Minister.

(16:30)

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — I don't have any specific information about the Ituna situation and we'll look to find something for the member and I'll maybe get that just to you directly.

But I think practically, it's probably . . . You know, it may relate to how the services are provided across the area. But I don't have any specific answer for that particular concern and possibly if you later could give me a copy of the memo, then we'll get more information for you.

**Mr. Hart:** — I guess, Minister, I failed to mention in my question, in my remarks that the memo does state that . . . Well I'll just simply quote from the last sentence and that perhaps may be of help to you:

All health services provided at Ituna now and in the future will be in accordance with provincial legislation and professional medical and nursing guidelines. Your co-operation is expected and appreciated.

So I guess the question is: has there been some changes in legislation that are effective April 1 or perhaps have services been provided out of that particular centre that, by legislation, shouldn't have been?

It just seems, I guess to myself and also to the residents, that if you have a registered nurse at a clinic . . . I mean, why can't that individual monitor someone's blood pressure or blood glucose or perhaps change dressings on an injury and those sorts of things? Those are the questions that the residents and myself would like answers to.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Thank you for that further information, but I think we'll still have to follow that up, because there are a number of questions. And clearly, some people in the community perceive a change, whether there has been one or not. And so we should figure out what it is. Okay?

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Minister. I have an extra copy of the memo and I'll be happy to send it over to you, if one of the Pages could pick up the memo and take it over. And I would certainly appreciate a response and I will pass it on to the citizens or residents of that area.

Another issue that I'd briefly like to discuss with you, Minister, is something that has been brought to my attention by another constituent and that has to do with the Saskatchewan Association of Licensed Practical Nurses. I recall, two or three sessions ago, this legislature passed legislation allowing the licensed practical nurses to be a self-governing body. And as such, at their annual general meeting this past April in Prince Albert, they passed a resolution which, among other things, dealt with annual licensing requirements.

And one of the, as I understand it, new proposals in their resolution was to require all LPNs (licensed practical nurse) as of May 1, 2006 to complete a medication administration program or basic equivalent. And the reason why this particular resolution from the SALPN (Saskatchewan Association of Licensed Practical Nurses) annual meeting came to my attention is that I have a constituent who has been a licensed practical nurse for 26 years — a licensed practical nurse in good standing, doesn't see any job change, and is certainly concerned about this requirement.

Now if it's my understanding — and you can correct me if I'm wrong — if this is a self-governing body, I guess this is certainly within their prerogative to require that of their members. However, there is a footnote to the information I have been provided that the Minister of Health has to approve changes, I understand, and they only become effective once the minister approves them and it's gazetted. I was just wondering if you could perhaps explain the involvement, your involvement in . . . the Department of Health involvement in this and what your views on this proposed change in their bylaws from your vantage point, what your opinion would be of those proposed changes.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Thank you for raising that question. It is one where I have received letters about it, and questions. The process is exactly as you've outlined, and that's how we set up our professional legislation which is that bylaws are proposed and then forwarded to the department for final approval by the department which comes in the form of the minister's signature. We're in that process now. It's just arrived at the department. They're looking at it and we have received a number of questions and comments about this as it relates to exactly the question that your constituent has raised. And so it'll be under consideration over the next couple of months, I'm sure.

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Minister, for that response. I guess I would offer an observation and certainly I have no medical qualifications, and I guess it would be more in the form of a question or . . . Is it possible to give consideration to those individuals who have been, you know, in this case a licensed practical nurse for over 25 years to perhaps have some exemptions from . . . some of those people who are perhaps, you know, getting towards the end of their professional career and who are members in good standing and have, you know, served the residents of this province for a long time in a very effective way. And I'm wondering if perhaps that may be a consideration.

And as I said, I certainly have no medical background to offer a knowledgeable, an informed opinion on that. And so I would just merely put that out as a question and a suggestion.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — I'm sure that we'll be happy to consider grandmothing clauses, effectively what you're saying, as part of this process. And there are quite a number of different factors that relate to the profession, so we have to be very careful and end up in fairly detailed discussions with professions when they bring forward these kinds of amendments. But we will be doing that.

**The Chair:** — I recognize the member for Melfort.



**Mr. Gantefer:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And welcome to the minister and officials. I know that you've been officially welcomed by our leader after I gave him a bit of a poke. But certainly I also want to welcome you, and especially the deputy minister. I think this is the first time that we've been able to communicate across the floor.

Minister, we have a whole number of issues that still need to be explored in our Health estimates, and I'd like to touch on a couple of them today that I think are kind of topical and sort of timely.

The first one relates to the tobacco legislation that's on the floor of the House. And I know it's legislation and we should be considering it in that venue. But the question that I have for you while your officials are here is, how do you interpret and understand the applicability of what we're . . . and I say we're attempting to accomplish because I think that this is an issue that is non-partisan and really sort of transcends issue of partisanship.

But one of the concerns that I have is the issue of respecting the jurisdiction of First Nations and what the department is doing to deal with the issue of jurisdiction with First Nations community reserves. And if the minister would bring us up to date on how he sees this legislation applying in the case of First Nations.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — As the member well knows, this is an area where we're trying to work co-operatively and deal with what is really the issue — which is a health issue — especially as it relates to young people and their use of tobacco. I have met with a number of the chiefs, including some of the leadership in the FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) around this particular issue, and it becomes a challenge because each First Nation has the ability in their area to provide rules for their communities. But practically, this legislation is legislation that would apply across the province.

But we want to do that, work with the First Nations as we move forward in this and recognize some of the concerns that are there. We know that on some First Nations they're way ahead of us; they already have totally smoke-free facilities, buildings, activities. Others are . . . And it's very similar to our municipalities in the province, where some have the legislation in place — Moose Jaw, for example — whereas other places don't. And so our goal is to make sure that the legislation is a positive effect on the young people right across the province and that we respect the jurisdictional issues that are there.

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Minister, and I understand that individual bands would be the properties that have urban reserves, and on these urban reserves are potentially casinos and other economic development entities; facilities, if you like. Does the minister envisage the situation where First Nations, because of the jurisdiction that they have, may consider having bars or other establishments there that would be exempt from the tobacco legislation?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — My understanding is that the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority has agreements with all of the SIGA casinos that they would abide by provincial laws, and we anticipate that this fits that way. I know that the Yorkton legislation is coming into place over the

summer, and my understanding is that the community's been working well with the casino there to make sure it fits in with the local community's rules.

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Thank you, Minister. And one final question is in terms of responsibility for enforcement. I understand that the regional health authorities through their public health officers will be tasked with enforcement of these regulations. Will there be a similar type of arrangement with these First Nations facilities and properties, or will there be a separate arrangement made with the bands in the First Nations community themselves?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — That's a very good question, and it's been part of some of the initial discussions. We know for example that the First Nations University of Canada has developed a new public health inspector education program. We know that these are the people that are providing the enforcement across the province along with some of the federal tobacco enforcement people.

And our goal is to work, and to have a system that supports some jobs in the First Nations communities around this particular issue, but it's still in the early stages around how to do that. But we have this program of training people that we think will be of value, not just in the First Nations communities, but right across the province.

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Thank you. The other topic that I want to touch on in the time we have left, Mr. Minister, is yesterday we had most of the board of directors from the Saskatchewan Emergency Medical Services Association at the legislature, expressing their concern about the viability and future of their industry and the fact that they're very concerned, representing both the contract and the public providers of EMS (emergency medical services) services in the province.

Mr. Minister, they have indicated that one of the great problems they have with the proposed changes to their Act is the fact that in order for them to operate their businesses, particularly contract operators, in order for them to go to their lending institutions or financial institutions to capitalize and purchase new equipment — a new ambulance, new equipment for those ambulances, or training programs that have to be capitalized — they need to have a reliable long-term mechanism for the maintenance of their long-term contracts in relationship with regional health authorities because they really have no other clients to deal with.

Minister, have you had an opportunity to initiate some discussion with them to get to more understanding about the issues that they are raising in terms of their concern about the financial impact that the legislation may make on their ability to maintain their facilities and their capital equipment? And as well as what negative impact that this legislation may have on their net worth of their businesses, if you like, because without the long-term contracts the viability and value of their businesses would be diminished?

My question is, is it the minister's intent and the department's intent to re-open negotiations with this group of people, as terms of the viability of their industry, recognizing that their budget comes really through regional health authorities and that

they then enter into contractual relationships with the EMS system? Is the department going to potentially have some discussions with the EMS system?

(16:45)

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — The purpose of bringing forward this legislation is to increase the transparency and the accountability because we have many questions in the legislature in the various places around how we are spending health dollars. So that's the main goal.

A specific question that the member asked, officials with the department have met with the SEMSA (Saskatchewan Emergency Medical Services Association) executive in March. I met with SEMSA executive on April 1, so I know, you know, clearly from the members what their particular position is on this.

The SEMSA executive or members have been invited by the EMS working group, which is effectively the people in the . . . a joint working group of the people in the regional health authorities together with some of the people in Saskatchewan Health, to get together on June 15 to talk about the kinds of service agreements and contracts which address some of these issues.

But I think what we have to remember, this is about having the ambulance industry be part of the overall structure of the regional health services, and to have similar kinds of information provided there as we get from many of the other health care organizations that are part of our provincial system.

**Mr. Gantfoer:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and I appreciate and I know that the department has met with SEMSA and you've met with SEMSA earlier on in the spring.

But I know that you have, and I have a copy of the letter that came from Robertson Stromberg Pedersen, specifically Mr. Ken Ziegler with that firm, dated March 30 of this year, which is after your meetings, where the gentleman attaches his concerns re the proposed changes to The Ambulance Act. And again talks about particularly what this will mean in terms of the financial impact on these agencies.

And it also goes on to say that SEMSA supports initiatives that will streamline the rules and regulations governing the industry, so that there is public statement or a statement to yourself through this gentleman about their commitment to improving the Act and the accountability and transparency, and the issues that you've articulated.

I am also in possession of the reply that you gave to Mr. Ziegler on May 7, and also in receipt of a copy of a letter dated May 18 that was again addressed to you by Ms. Shirley Antonini who is the executive director of SEMSA, in response to your reply. So I do recognize and acknowledge that there is communications going back and forth. But there doesn't seem to be any listening and really understanding of the issues, because in both the letter from Mr. Ziegler and the letter in reply to your response by Ms. Antonini, they again articulate their concerns about what this legislation is doing and how it will affect the financial viability of their industry.

And while you correctly articulate that there's been meetings and there's been correspondence that I am mentioning here, there doesn't seem to be a meeting of minds or an understanding of the issues that they articulated. What SEMSA is not talking about is how services will be delivered, but how they can have a long-term, reliable contractual arrangement that they can count on. I think it is said pretty well, without the value . . . in the letter from Shirley Antonini, in her response she says, and I quote:

Without the value of the ongoing contract and the "right to earn a living" through EMS, the subsequent value of . . . EMS enterprise is severely lessened.

So I mean these are issues of concern and there doesn't seem to be a real understanding and an appreciation, I guess, of the issue that SEMSA is raising. And I want to know if the minister is going to undertake to take some time to really get to the bottom of the issue that SEMSA is articulating?

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — I think that what I would like to say is that the issue here is not that we don't understand the position or we don't understand the letters that are there — in fact we understand them very well. But it's really about a balance and how . . . in the public accountability of the health care system and negotiating the contracts that are needed in the ambulance industry.

There's a comment about the difficulty in getting capital. Well there are other contracted agencies that require much more capital than the ambulance services, that operate with the kinds of open and accountable contracts that we're anticipating that we will get with the ambulance industry. And that includes some of the addiction services, some of the mental health treatment centres, extendicare, other groups like that that operate . . . that already are now the health care organizations which are in The Regional Health Services Act.

I think that the issue here is that with more accountability, more transparency, some of the issues that appear to be there in the ambulance industry will be much more easily resolved because if there are requirements for further dollars in a particular area, well it will be that much clearer that that's there.

So one of the challenges that we have is just how to continue also with the whole issue of providing greater services and I mentioned earlier some of the challenges in this particular area.

And my predecessor, as the minister of Health, was presented with a resolution from the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities that effectively asked for exactly the change that's being proposed here because they were concerned, through the SARM organization, that there should be more competition and efficiency in the ambulance industry.

So practically what we're trying to do is respond to some of the requests that have come to us from communities across the province through SARM. We're trying to deal with the kinds of questions that we have around the overall costs of the system. And all of these things require some balance and we're trying to get that balance.

I agree with the member that the way you get there is through

conversation and through discussion. And I think there's much discussion, but there's certain points where frankly we don't agree with the perspective of part of the SEMSA organization.

They actually represent both the private operators and some of the other operators, but . . . so we understand the position but we encourage moving forward into looking at, well what can the service contracts be in the long term which will allow us to meet the specific needs of the services that are provided and the patient or citizen needs.

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Mr. Minister, I find it strange, and I'm not questioning your motivation in terms of increasing the professionalism or the transparency and the accountability of this segment of the health care system; I think everybody acknowledges that that is a goal that's worth working toward.

SEMSA acknowledges that these are goals worth working towards — that a greater professionalism, a greater accountability and transparency of the system is certainly something that they support and have articulated publicly that they are willing to work towards with the Department of Health to arrive at a solution.

But what you have decided is that, in their opinion, that they have got their future viability as a viable organization in jeopardy because of the way that you have changed or propose to change the Act and they're left out in the cold.

And I remind the minister, last session I believe the paramedics legislation was brought forward and there was a single basic question raised about that legislation, that the industry wanted by and large.

The Saskatoon fire department raised a concern about how this was going to impact on a small part of the industry, and the minister put that legislation on hold pending discussions surrounding finding a consensus about how to move forward. And the paramedic industry, the paramedic profession very much wants that legislation to move forward, and the department is not interested in sponsoring it or moving it forward until consensus is achieved.

Here we have a situation which affects by and large the same industry, and you have a great deal of concerns raised about this legislation by the organization representing EMS workers, and the minister seems to be determined to move forward with it irregardless of trying to find a consensus as how to address those concerns.

And so my concern is, is why we cannot take the time and that the department would commit to make a real effort to try to find a way of accommodating the concerns of the Emergency Medical Services organization and the concerns they raise because they're real, they're meaningful, and they're very concerned.

And what we don't need at this time is to destabilize the EMS system as we move forward with undue haste to meet some expectation of SARM two or three years ago or ten years ago. You said it was a previous minister.

I am just suggesting that this industry is too integral to delivery

of services for us to destabilize it and for the department not to make every effort to try to accommodate the concerns of the industry. And so I don't think that that's unreasonable and I would invite your response and commitment to in a meaningful way and a departmental way to work out, or attempt to work out again a solution to this difficulty, with the industry.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — The member talks about destabilizing the industry. Well practically, the regional health authorities operate the majority of the EMS services in the province, so there's not an issue there as it relates to the private contracts. But the regional health authorities have no interest in destabilizing the system, nor does the Minister of Health, or anyone in Saskatchewan Health.

But what we are concerned about is making sure that there's accountability and understanding of how the dollars are spent, and that we end up having service contracts and we end up having the ability to send out requests for proposals if in fact there are some challenges with services.

One of the issues that we have does relate to the ability to find or obtain other services if the services aren't provided to the best way possible, and there's some real challenges in doing that. This will correct that.

The member also talked about undue haste in dealing with this, and the way this legislation works is all the existing contracts will continue — some of them have another three, four, five years in them — so this will take place over a number of years, and so practically that will happen.

The other point around the paramedics act is when one is dealing with professional legislation, where you're talking about how you interrelate with other professional groups, there are more challenges in sorting out how that's done.

As it relates here, we're working with the ambulance operators. We have a fundamental disagreement about one area around the long-term portion of these contracts and we have set out a principled position, and we urge the members to work with us as we go forward with a new scheme of providing ambulance contracts in the province.

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister, I recognize that it is getting near the time when we have to leave this discussion, so I would like to thank you and your officials for being here today to answer questions in estimates and look forward to our next opportunity to explore many of these issues in the health care estimates.

**The Chair:** — I recognize the Deputy Government House Leader . . . oh.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — I would just like to thank the members opposite for their questions and we'll provide some of the answers that we didn't have today, and especially want to thank all of the people who are here with me today, but most importantly all of the people who work in the health system across the province.

(17:00)

**The Chair:** — I now recognize the Deputy Government House Leader.

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Chair. I would move that the committee rise and report progress . . . report progress, okay.

**The Chair:** — The Deputy Government House Leader has moved that the committee report progress. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — That is carried. It now being past 5 p.m., this House stands recessed until 7 p.m. this evening.

The Assembly recessed until 19:00.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS</b>	
<b>PRESENTING PETITIONS</b>	
Elhard .....	1327
Stewart .....	1327
McMorris .....	1327
Bakken .....	1327
Huyghebaert .....	1327
Brkich .....	1327
Weekes .....	1328
Dearborn .....	1328
<b>READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS</b>	
Deputy Clerk .....	1328
<b>NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS</b>	
Draude .....	1328
Gantefoer .....	1328
Brkich .....	1328
<b>INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS</b>	
Chisholm .....	1328
Eagles .....	1328
Van Mulligen .....	1352
<b>STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS</b>	
<b>Vision for Saskatchewan</b>	
Cheveldayoff .....	1329
<b>Tourism Awareness Week</b>	
Hagel .....	1329
<b>Dedication of Monument at Dundurn</b>	
Brkich .....	1329
<b>Team Saskatchewan Chef de Mission Contingent Complete</b>	
Borgerson .....	1330
<b>Performing Arts Consultants Music Festival</b>	
Bakken .....	1330
<b>In Motion</b>	
Junor .....	1330
<b>National Transportation Week</b>	
Harpauer .....	1331
<b>ORAL QUESTIONS</b>	
<b>Severance Package for Former Deputy Minister</b>	
McMorris .....	1331
Higgins .....	1331
<b>Investment Losses</b>	
Stewart .....	1332
Cline .....	1332
<b>Closure of Long-Term Care Beds in Davidson</b>	
Brkich .....	1333
Nilson .....	1333
<b>Spending Priorities in Heartland Health Region</b>	
Dearborn .....	1334
Nilson .....	1334
<b>Combatting Fetal Alcohol Syndrome</b>	
Draude .....	1335
Nilson .....	1335
<b>INTRODUCTION OF BILLS</b>	
<b>Bill No. 70 — The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2004</b>	
Van Mulligen .....	1336
<b>ORDERS OF THE DAY</b>	
<b>WRITTEN QUESTIONS</b>	
Yates .....	1336
The Speaker .....	1336
<b>GOVERNMENT ORDERS</b>	
<b>SECOND READINGS</b>	
<b>Bill No. 65 — The Agri-Food Act, 2004</b>	
Wartman .....	1336
Huyghebaert .....	1337

<b>Bill No. 66 — The Cattle Marketing Deductions Amendment Act, 2004</b>	
Wartman.....	1337
Huyghebaert.....	1338
<b>Bill No. 68 — The Assessment Management Agency Amendment Act, 2004</b>	
Taylor.....	1339
Kerpan.....	1340
<b>Bill No. 67 — The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2004/ Loi de 2004 modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la réglementation des boissons alcoolisées et des jeux de hasard</b>	
Cline.....	1341
McMorris.....	1342
<b>Bill No. 64 — The Post-Secondary Graduate Tax Credit Amendment Act, 2004</b>	
Thomson.....	1344
Kirsch.....	1344
<b>Bill No. 69 — The Public Inquiries Amendment Act, 2004</b>	
Quennell.....	1344
Bjornerud.....	1345
<b>ADJOURNED DEBATES</b>	
<b>SECOND READINGS</b>	
<b>Bill No. 41 — The Contributory Negligence Amendment Act, 2004</b>	
D’Autremont.....	1345
<b>Bill No. 54 — The Tobacco Control Amendment Act, 2004</b>	
Kerpan.....	1347
<b>Bill No. 49 — The Vital Statistics Amendment Act, 2004/ Loi de 2004 modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les services de l’état civil</b>	1349
<b>Bill No. 14 — The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, 2004</b>	1349
<b>Bill No. 50 — The Labour Standards Amendment Act, 2004</b>	
Hart.....	1349
<b>Bill No. 53 — The Securities Amendment Act, 2004</b>	1350
<b>COMMITTEE OF FINANCE</b>	
<b>General Revenue Fund — Health — Vote 32</b>	
Nilson.....	1351
Wall.....	1351
Harpauer.....	1352
Brkich.....	1353
Hart.....	1355
Gantfoer.....	1357

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