



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

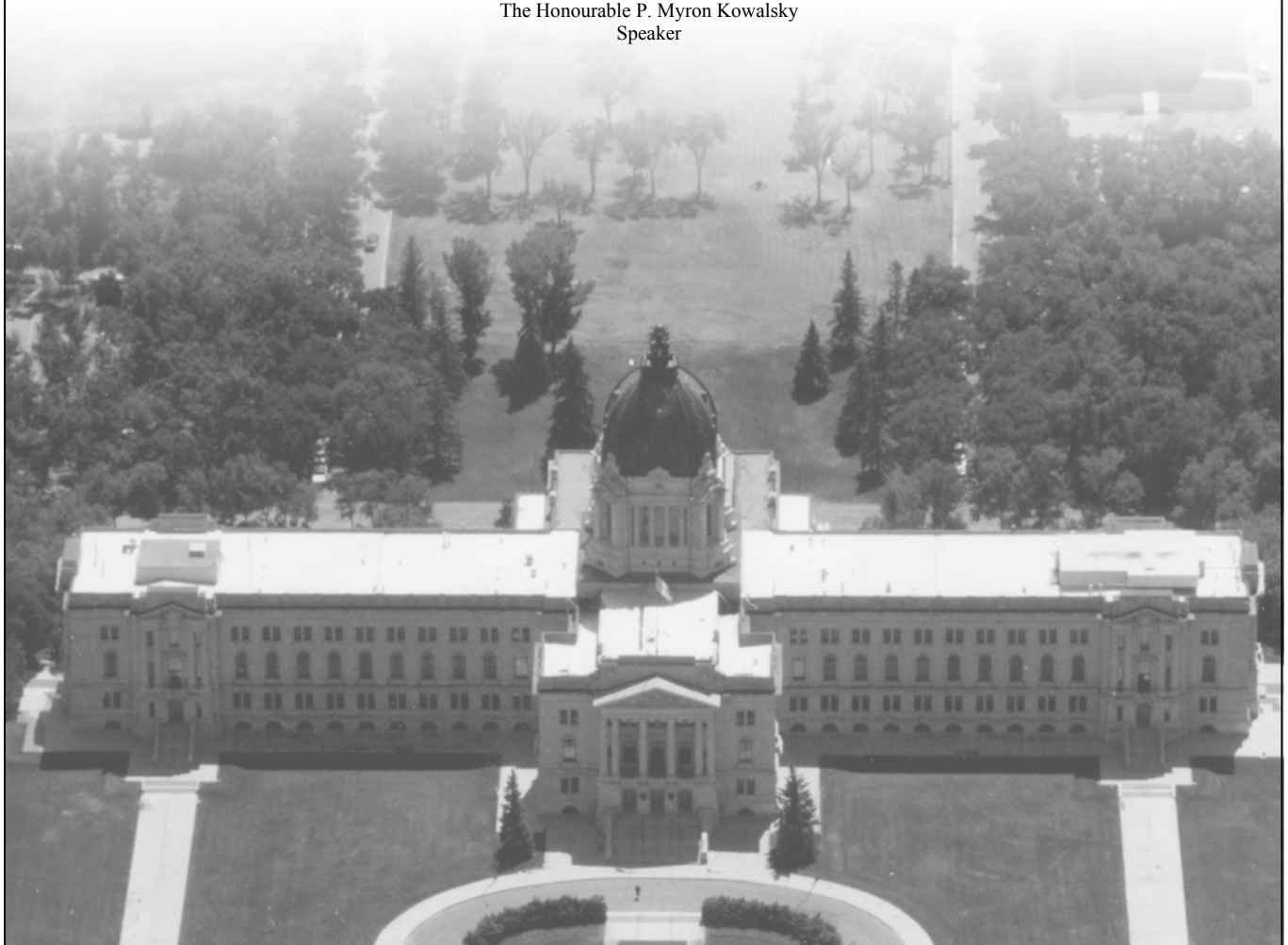
Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(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

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
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: — Mr. Speaker, in keeping with the petitions I've been presenting for the last several weeks, I'd like to present another one on behalf of my constituents. 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 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, the petition is signed by individuals from the communities of Eastend, Shaunavon, Frontier, Bracken, and Climax.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Rosetown-Elrose.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition from people who want to save the Luseland and Dodsland ambulance services because these services provide vital life-saving services for the residents in those areas. Mr. Speaker, the prayer of the petition 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 Dodsland and Luseland ambulance services are not discontinued.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of signatures on this petition. And they are from the communities of Dodsland and Plenty and Ruthilda. And I'm pleased to present this petition on their behalf.

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 Aylesbury.

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 about the deplorable state of Highway 35. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to make the necessary repairs to Highway 35 north from the United States border in order to prevent injury or loss of life and to prevent the loss of economic opportunity in the area.

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

And the petition is signed by residents of Ogema, Glasnevin, Viceroy, and Regina.

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 want public hearings on closures and layoffs in the Saskatchewan health care system.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government through the legislative Human Services Committee to hold public hearings in each of the communities affected by the changes recently announced by the Minister of Health prior to those bed closures, facility closures, and layoffs taking place.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens from the town of Davidson, I so present.

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

Mr. Kerpan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise today to present a petition on behalf of citizens who are concerned with the possible downsizing or closure of facilities without the public consultation of the government. And the prayer reads, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government through the legislature's Human Services Committee to hold public hearings in each of the communities affected by the changes recently announced by the Minister of Health prior to those bed closures, facility closures, and

layoffs taking place.

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

Mr. Speaker, signed by the most good citizens of Kenaston, Saskatchewan.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I rise in the Assembly to present a petition on behalf of residents of west central Saskatchewan concerned with health care and specifically 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 by citizens of Kerrobert, Denzil, Major, and Luseland, Saskatchewan; along with Cactus Lake and Hardisty, Alberta.

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 urging the Standing Committee on Human Services to hold public hearing in regions affected by recent changes to health care delivery plans;

And addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 166, 167, 180, and 182.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Human Services.

Standing Committee on Human Services

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am instructed by the Standing Committee on Human Services to report Bill 38, The Credit Reporting Act without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall this Bill be considered in Committee of the Whole? I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bill No. 18, The Credit Reporting Act. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. When shall the Bill be read a third time? I recognize the minister.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 38 — The Credit Reporting Act

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — I move this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 38, The Credit Reporting Act be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of this Bill.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Human Services.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Human Services

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on Human Services to report Bill 40, The Fatal Accidents Amendment Act, 2004 without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall this Bill be considered in Committee of the Whole? I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice has requested leave to waive consideration of Bill 40, The Fatal Accidents Amendment Act, 2004. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. When shall this Bill be read a third time? I recognize the minister.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 40 — The Fatal Accidents Amendment Act, 2004

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — I move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 40, The Fatal Accidents Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of this Bill.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Human Services.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Human Services

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on Human Services to report Bill 51, The Limitations Act without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall The Limitations Act be considered in Committee of the Whole?

I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill.

The Speaker: — It has been requested by the Minister of Justice that leave ... has requested leave for a waiver of consideration of Committee of the Whole. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. When shall the Bill be read a third time?

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 51 — The Limitations Act

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — I move this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 51, The Limitations Act be now read a third time and passed under its title.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of this Bill.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Human Services.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Human Services

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on Human Services to report Bill No. 52, The Limitations Consequential Amendment Act, 2004 without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall this Bill be considered in Committee of the Whole? I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill.

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration of this Bill in Committee of the Whole. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. When shall this Bill be read a third time? I recognize the minister.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 52 — The Limitations Consequential Amendment Act, 2004/Loi de 2004 sur les modifications corrélatives découlant de la loi intitulée The Limitations Act

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — I move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 52, The Limitations Consequential Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of this Bill.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of Intergovernmental Affairs and Infrastructure.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Infrastructure

Mr. Harper: — Mr. Speaker, I've been instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Infrastructure to report Bill No. 44, The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 2004 without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall this Bill be considered in

Committee of the Whole? I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has requested leave to waive consideration of Committee of the Whole of Bill No. 44. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. When shall this be read a third time? The Government House Leader.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 44 — The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 2004

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Government House Leader that Bill No. 44, The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of the Bill.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Infrastructure.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Infrastructure

Mr. Harper: — Mr. Speaker, I've been instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Infrastructure to report Bill No. 45, The Planning and Development Act, 2004 without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall Bill 45 be considered in Committee of the Whole? I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has requested leave to waive consideration of Committee of the Whole of Bill No. 45. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. When shall this Bill be read a third time?

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 45 — The Planning and Development Amendment Act, 2004

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move this Bill be read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Government House Leader that Bill No. 45, The Planning and Development Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of this Bill.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Infrastructure.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Infrastructure

Mr. Harper: — Mr. Speaker, I've been instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Infrastructure to report Bill No. 46, The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2004 without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall Bill 46 be considered in Committee of the Whole? I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has requested leave to waive consideration of Committee of the Whole on this Bill. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. When shall this Bill be read a third time? I recognize the Government House Leader.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 46 — The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2004

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Government House Leader, that this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt that motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of this Bill.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 56 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for SGI: how many severance packages worth \$100,000 or more were given out to employees who left the corporation in the year 2002? Can the minister please provide how much each of these severance packages were worth.

I have similar questions for the years 2003 and 2004.

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. 56 ask the government the following question:

To the Highways minister: on Highway 44 from Davidson west to the junction of Highway No. 19, will the speed limit be raised from 80 kilometres to 90 kilometres? If not, why?

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Southeast.

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 56 ask the government the following question:

The question is to the Health minister: can the minister please provide the details of the consulting contract signed between the Saskatoon Health Region and Jim Fergusson. When was the contract signed? When does the contract expire? What are the financial details of the contract? And further to that, can the minister please table a copy of the contract.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great privilege today, and pleasure, to introduce to you a gentleman who is visiting our Assembly as part of the Midwest Legislative

Conference exchange. Representative Stephen Buehrer from the great state of Ohio is with us today, and I want to talk just a little bit about Representative Buehrer.

He was first elected in 1998, and is coming up for re-election for the second time in November of this year. He is with the Republican Party, and they are the majority party in the State House in Ohio.

He serves as the Assistant Majority Floor Leader in the Ohio General Assembly. He's had that position since 1999. But more importantly, Mr. Speaker, he co-chairs with you the Midwest-Canada Relations Committee, which is a subcommittee of the Midwest Legislative Conference.

He also has other responsibilities in the legislature. He's the joint legislative . . . Or he's part of the Joint Legislative Ethics Committee. He's the Co-Chair of the motor vehicle fuel tax task force, which is something that we might show some interest in if he's prepared to share that information. He's a committee member of the Council of State Governments, and as I mentioned earlier, Co-Chair of the Civil Service Review Commission in 2001, and served on the criminal justice task force in the year 2000.

(13:45)

Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to add that the Midwest Legislative Conference has become an important organization for the province of Saskatchewan. As members will know, it is an organization comprised of 11 Midwestern US (United States) states. But we have a role to play in that, Mr. Speaker. All 1,550 Midwestern state lawmakers, as well as provincial parliamentarians representing the affiliated provinces of Saskatchewan and Ontario, are eligible to participate in that organization. I believe Manitoba has just recently taken out an associate membership as well, and we hope to be seeing participation from them in the future.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask you and all members of the Assembly to welcome Representative Buehrer to the House today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly, also another visitor from the US. We have Representative Dale Grubb from the state of Indiana with us. Mr. Grubb is the Democratic Caucus Chairman in Indiana, which is the majority party. He also serves on the Agriculture Committee, the Natural Resources and Rural Development Committee, Interstate and International Cooperation Committee.

He's a member of a number of organizations and I think the one that I find most significant, he's a member of the US Air Force Reserves, Mr. Speaker.

He's also a farmer by profession, Mr. Speaker, and represents a rural constituency. But the one item on his bio that I do find

interesting, he has 7 children and he has 16 grandchildren. He has served in the House for 16 years. And I'm wondering if there's any correlation between those two numbers, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to ask you to welcome Representative Dale Grubb to our Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have an introduction from our American friends today. To you and through you to the Assembly, Senator Kevin Coughlin, state Senator from Ohio. He's a member of the upper House there. He is in his eighth year in the Ohio legislature.

He was first elected in 1996, served for four years in the House of Representatives, before moving on to the Ohio state Senator . . . to the Ohio State Senate. The senator will serve as the Chair of the Council of State Governments Midwestern Legislative Conference when we host it next year for the first time in Canada, in Saskatchewan, in Regina.

And he is also married, Mr. Speaker, with a wife, a young three-year-old daughter, and we're happy to say another child on the way.

And so I'd ask all members to welcome the Senator to enjoy the proceedings today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — At this time, members, it's my pleasure to introduce three members of the support staff that have come with the elected representatives from the Midwest. First of all it's my pleasure to introduce in the Speaker's gallery, Mr. Michael McCabe, who is the director of the Midwestern office in Chicago. He is responsible for managing the staff, providing secretariat services to the Midwestern Legislative Conference, and all other association duties. Mr. McCabe, if you could give a little wave.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — And with Mr. McCabe is Ilene Grossman, who is no stranger to this Assembly. She is the assistant director for planning and development for the Midwestern office. She manages the 13-state Midwestern Governors Association and staffs the Midwest-Canada Relations Committee for the MLC (Midwestern Legislative Conference). And we welcome Ms. Grossman back.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Seated between them is Phyllis Grubb, who is wife of Representative Dale Grubb, who has just recently retired from the US federal Department of Veteran Affairs. And welcome to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Douglas Park, the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government members I, too, want to extend a warm welcome to the legislators and support staff from the United States. We look forward to hosting the legislators tomorrow.

I might say, Mr. Speaker, that although our jurisdictions are organized differently in terms of the institutions and governments that deal with the issues that confront us, nevertheless there are many common issues that we have, social and economic challenges. And we look forward to the opportunity to exchanging points of view with our visitors from the States.

And again I would ask all members to join with me to extend a warm welcome to our visitors.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Greystone.

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly, three people who are in the west gallery. The first is Lisa Meck, who is a summer student in my office. And, Lisa, if you'd just give a little wave. And she's recently joined our staff for the summer and I'm very delighted to have her working in the office.

And she's joined today by her parents, Diane and Darrell Meck, from Stockholm, Saskatchewan. If they'd just give a little wave as well, and we want to warmly welcome you as well. And I'd ask all members to join me in giving a very, very warm welcome to our three visitors. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly two individuals seated in the western gallery. The first is Solomon Cyr and the second is Melissa Gamble. Solomon is a friend and a constituent of mine from the fair riding of Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

And I'd first met Solomon when he was active with the Rainbow Youth Centre as a peer counsellor. Since then he's participated in the Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board as a youth representative, and most recently, Mr. Speaker, he was a Saskatchewan finalist in the *Canadian Idol* contest. So he can really belt it out, Mr. Speaker.

So he takes all those interests and he still has time to pay very close attention to the political affairs of our province and of our country. So I'd like to ask the members to give a warm welcome to Solomon and Melissa, and to make their stay here a welcome one.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with pleasure that I introduce to you and through you, seated in your gallery, Mr. Vern Hoyt, who is our president of the Saskatchewan Party constituency of Regina Dewdney, who's visiting the Chamber today and I hope will enjoy the proceedings.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you to the rest of this Assembly, 38 grade 12 students from the school Winston Knoll Collegiate, which is in the Regina Qu'Appelle Valley constituency.

They are accompanied by Krystal McPherson, teacher; by Heather Findlay, who is an intern — and maybe we'll get Krystal to wave first, just so people will see her, and Heather — and Julie Makinak, who is a teacher; and Marnie McMillan, also a teacher.

And I'll probably be in trouble for doing this, Mr. Speaker, but I also would like to introduce to the House in this assembly of 38 grade 12 students, a young woman who is a special friend of our son, Dan, and of our family. I would like to introduce Ally Waters to you. Thank you very much. All, welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Lakeview.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the legislature, seated in your gallery, eight students from Sheldon-Williams Collegiate, accompanied by teachers Noleen Novik and Michelle McNabb. And they're here today to participate in understanding how democracy in Saskatchewan works. So I ask all members to welcome them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Massey Place.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, several distinguished guests who are active in the forestry industry and are visiting Saskatchewan to explore some business opportunities here. And I'll ask each of them to give a wave as I introduce them.

Firstly we have Dr. Bob Graham, who is the chairman and CEO (chief executive officer) of Ensyn Group Inc., out of Ottawa. We have Mr. Tom Gale, who is president of Tembek Resources and he's from Longueuil, Quebec. Also Mr. David Boulard, the vice-president of Ensyn from Ottawa, and the Hon. Frank Oberle, who you may recall was the federal minister of

Forestry, Science and Technology, from Prince George, British Columbia. And also with them is Mr. Tony Baumgartner, who works for our Department of Industry and Resources.

And these two companies, Mr. Speaker, are part of Canada's world-leading and innovative companies. And Ensyn is a very innovative company active in the chemical bioproducts and petroleum industry. Tembek is a very major player in value-added forest products.

And, Mr. Speaker, I met these gentlemen earlier today, will be meeting again later today between the time the House adjourns and the hockey game, and I would like all members to join me in welcoming them to Saskatchewan and the Legislative Assembly today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Batoche.

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Saskatchewan Party I also would like to welcome these members because forestry is a new fledgling industry in Saskatchewan, about half of our province is forestry, and we'll welcome any . . . And thank you for being here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

60th Anniversary of D-Day

Mr. Kerpan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, June 6, was the 60th anniversary of D-Day. Canada celebrated along with the United States of America, Britain, and many other allied countries that were involved. And yes, Mr. Speaker, I do say celebrated. We celebrated the heroism, the selflessness, and the beginning of the end of the Second World War.

We also remembered the far too many that were left behind in this battle, as well as many other battles in that war and all the other conflicts that Canadians have served in.

Mr. Speaker, we here in Regina also commemorated D-Day by hosting Her Royal Highness, Princess Anne. As the Colonel-in-Chief of the Regina Rifles, Her Royal Highness was on hand to oversee the change of command of her regiment and a parade of past and present members outside this Legislative Building.

Mr. Speaker, it was very heartwarming to witness the veterans of D-Day and other World War II actions on parade here. With some members of the Regina Rifles approaching 90 years old, we watched as they stood at attention for a very long time on some very warm and some very hard pavement. And, Mr. Speaker, one could detect pride and honour in their steps. It was also nice to see the homage paid to these men by the crowd of onlookers.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all those involved for organizing and supporting this demonstration of remembrance. We as a country and as a people will not forget the sacrifices that so many made so that we might live in freedom today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Wascana Plains.

Princess Royal Visit to Saskatchewan

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This weekend the Princess Royal visited Saskatchewan. The focus of her visit was the 60th anniversary of the D-Day landing in Normandy. The Princess is Colonel-in-Chief of the Regina . . . Royal Regina Rifles, one of the first Canadian units to land on the Normandy beaches.

In Regina, Her Royal Highness attended numerous events and ceremonies commemorating D-Day. These included a parade with the Regina Rifles and a provincial dinner hosted by the Premier in honour of the 60th anniversary of the Normandy landings.

Her Royal Highness also found time to attend a riding demonstration at the Regina therapeutic riding facility, visit the palliative care centre at the Pasqua Hospital, and attend an open house at the Regina Humane Society.

The Princess Royal also received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from the University of Regina. This degree is the first ever conferred on a member of the Royal family by a Saskatchewan university and the first for Her Royal Highness in Canada.

Her Royal Highness travelled to Saskatoon where she presented recipients with Saskatchewan Protective Services Medal awards at King George School and to the Battlefords where amidst other activities she attended a First Nations event at Sakawew School and visited Pe-Ta-Pun Head Start program for preschoolers.

Congratulations to all those involved in those communities who made this whirlwind tour a reality. Mr. Speaker, as her busy schedule makes clear, the Princess Royal is strongly committed to public service. In total, she is president and patron of over 220 organizations including president of Save the Children Foundation. Her good work and selflessness is a fine example for all of us to follow.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melfort.

Relay for Life in Melfort

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Relay For Life provides an opportunity to contribute financial support to the fight against cancer. Mr. Speaker, an equally important component of this event is the chance to show support by celebrating with the survivors and honouring those who have

lost the battle. This growing event demonstrates the considerable will to fight this terrible disease, the increasing number of victories, and hope for the future.

My wife Carole and I were privileged to participate in the northeast unit Relay for Life held in Melfort this past weekend and I can report it was a successful event on every level. Our region's total came to slightly over \$179,000 raised by 64 relay teams and assisted by 450 volunteers.

(14:00)

It was a beautiful summer evening with great musical entertainment that continued until 7 in the morning on Saturday. We were surrounded by the comradeship of relay teammates. Emotional memories were highlighted by 2,900 luminaries and 227 survivors greeting each other. Mr. Speaker, it was an unforgettable evening for all.

Mr. Speaker, and members of the legislature, please join with me in congratulating the manager of the northeast unit cancer office, Pat Dolo, the survivor Co-Chairs, Wayne Garinger and Janel Fidyk, as well as the chairperson, Joanne Forer and her organizing committee and volunteers who made such a successful and memorable event for everyone. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Walsh Acres.

Gay Pride Week

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, we are a province that celebrates diversity and values the inclusion of all people, no matter what race, religious background, or sexual orientation.

This week is Gay Pride Week in Regina and this year's theme is Viva la Pride. It's a celebration that empowers and supports the diverse community of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, and two-spirited people.

Mr. Speaker, the year 2000 saw Regina hold the first annual provincial pride parade. And in June 2001 the province officially declared Gay Pride Day in Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, it was this government that expanded the Human Rights Code to include sexual orientation.

Mr. Speaker, Pride Week kicked off Saturday with a barbecue at Kiwanis Park. On Wednesday the city of Regina will officially declare Pride Week in the Queen City with the raising of the rainbow flag in front of the city hall. Other events held throughout the week include a choir concert at St. Paul's Cathedral and a colourful pride parade held on Saskatchewan Gay Pride Day, Saturday, June 12.

Gay Pride Day also marks the end of Regina's Gay Pride Week and the beginning of Gay Pride Week in Saskatoon. This week is an opportunity for people from across the province to show their support for and solidarity with the gay community in Saskatchewan.

I ask all my colleagues to join me in recognizing the Gay Pride Committee in Regina and the Saskatoon Diversity Network for its efforts in increasing and creating awareness and understanding on this important issue.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Remembering Ronald Reagan

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is with great respect and honour today that I remember the life of Ronald Reagan and the many accomplishments he brought forth over his 93 years.

On February 6, 1911, Ronald Wilson Reagan was born to Nelle and John Reagan in Tampico, Illinois. Following high school, he attended Eureka College where he studied economics and sociology, played on the football team, and acted in school plays. After his college years, he became a radio sports announcer. A screen test in 1937 earned him a contract in Hollywood, and over the next 20 years he appeared in 53 films.

His first marriage was to Jane Wyman, with whom he had two children, Maureen, who passed away in 2001, and Michael. In 1952 he married Nancy Davis, and the two had two children, Patricia Ann and Ronald Prescott.

In 1966 he was elected governor of California by a margin of 1 million votes and was re-elected in 1970. Ronald Reagan won the Republican presidential nomination in 1980, and Reagan won with 489 electoral votes to 49 for President Jimmy Carter, and on January 20, 1981 took office.

A renewal of national self-confidence by 1984 helped Reagan win a second term with a record number of electoral votes. Through skilful dealings with Congress, Reagan obtained legislation to stimulate economic growth, curb inflation, increase employment, and strengthen national defence. Reagan saw the North American economy GDP (gross domestic product) increase by 147 per cent over his eight-year term. He declared victory over the Cold War, and by doing so paved the way for freedom and democracy to rule. This caused Soviet socialism to crumble under the weight of inept logic, corruption, and beliefs against the basis of human freedom.

I hope all members will join me today in acknowledging this giant of a man and a great leader who laid the foundation for global democracy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Dewdney.

Saskatchewan Economy

Mr. Yates: — Well, well, well, Mr. Speaker, more good news for the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Yates: — Saskatchewan had the highest employment ever

for the month of May, up 3,700 jobs from last year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Yates: — This is the fourth straight month of year-over-year job growth, and Saskatchewan has the second lowest unemployment rate in the country. Plus, according to a recent forecast by Scotiabank, the Saskatchewan economy is very healthy.

Drilling intentions in Saskatchewan are upbeat and natural gas output is expected to rise. The potash sector continues to do well, building on record sales in 2003.

Construction on Saskatchewan's third major uranium mine is expected to begin over the next two years and exploration activity, including possible diamond prospects, remain upbeat.

That is not the only good news, Mr. Speaker. The new ethanol plant in Lloydminster, along with a 150-megawatt wind power project, both planned for the near future, will make huge contributions to Saskatchewan's economy.

The Canadian Light Source synchrotron in Saskatoon is scheduled to open this fall and will provide significant spinoff activity for the province. And, Mr. Speaker, according . . . Mr. Speaker, record seeding intentions point to a return to average crop productions this year.

All this, Mr. Speaker, leads to a stable retail sales growth, increased employment, and most importantly for Saskatchewan families, a projected annual increase in after-tax household income expected to average more than 3 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, contrary to all the negativity heard from the other side of the House, this government's plan for a green and prosperous economy is doing well.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Out-of-Province Medical Referrals

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a little over an hour ago, we received word that Saskatchewan Health has finally approved funding for the cost of Kathryn Wipf's first treatment at the Mayo Clinic a week from today. They'll make a decision on coverage for subsequent treatments following this first one, apparently.

Mr. Speaker, while this is very good news, it does beg a question: why did the Wipfs have to go through all of this? Isn't there something seriously wrong with the out-of-province review process?

A need to review that out-of-province approval process is clearly there. Will the minister agree to that today?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the out-of-province approval process has been in place for many years. And as indicated last week, the request for the information went on last Tuesday, I think, June 1, and by Friday the matter was resolved.

And, Mr. Speaker, what we need to recognize is that there are many challenging files. But the ones that require out-of-country coverage are the most challenging medical files that we have. I think it's appropriate that the medical doctors, working together, sort out these particular issues because that's the way that we want all of our Saskatchewan people to get their appropriate medical care.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, even though Mr. Wipf is relieved today that Kathryn's treatment — her first treatment — has been approved, he says that he is disappointed that his family had to go through all of this. Here's what he says, and I quote, Mr. Speaker:

My understanding was that if physicians or specialists in Canada state that they can not help us . . . and there is help available somewhere else . . .

I don't really think it's up to the patients to go after this.

I mean, I don't think that a patient should have to go through this much trouble . . . to get results, like we have.

Mr. Speaker, John Wipf did everything he was asked to do on behalf of his little girl. But why did they have to go through the ordeal that they went through to get the approval they received word of earlier today?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, as I indicated last week the normal approval time for these procedures when they go out of country, if it's . . . (inaudible) . . . is within 48 hours. And on some cases, the more complicated . . . they involve professionals from Saskatchewan but also for other Canadian provinces because we first seek whether there's a possibility in another province in Canada.

And, Mr. Speaker, that particular process is brought forward by the physicians for any particular patient that's involved, and we rely on the physicians and others to be working very carefully. Mr. Speaker, I think that those appropriate steps have been in place for a long time; the physicians that work in this area know that. And we need to continue to allow the professionals, the medical doctors to make these decisions.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, that's fine. Except that there are still a lot of questions. On May 26, the NDP provided us with a copy of their out-of-province approval process. Here's what it says, and I quote:

In order to be considered eligible for out-of-province approval . . . A written request by the patient's attending specialist is required.

Within this request, confirmation regarding the medical necessity of the service . . . And that the service is not able to be performed in Saskatchewan . . . Is requested.

Well Mr. Wipf got all of that as you know, Mr. Speaker. But what he heard most recently before he heard of the approval for that first treatment was that cost might play a part in the decision — that they waited for estimates from the clinic stateside before a decision can be made. Will the minister clarify what role cost has to play in the out-of-province approval process?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, what we do on behalf our patients, our Saskatchewan people who require out-of-country procedures, is we first want to make sure that whatever treatment they're seeking will be effective for them and will provide the assistance that's there. So what we do, Mr. Speaker, is ask for a course of treatment for the proposed treatment plan, along with the cost, so that we know that whatever they're going to do will be effective to help that particular patient.

And so, Mr. Speaker, this is a part of the process that has been there for many years, and it relates to the effectiveness of the treatment. Cost is a factor in that, but it's the effectiveness and how we can provide the good care for our Saskatchewan people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, we asked a written question of the government on this very issue — what are the determinants in terms of approval for out-of-province treatment? And cost or any reference to cost wasn't there. And the minister may want to clarify why that information wasn't provided to the House when it was asked for.

Mr. Speaker, part of the problem is — in this case especially — is the way that the government treats people. Apparently the letter approving Kathryn's treatment went out on Friday, but no one bothered to tell Mr. Wipf. No one would return his calls. In fact when he finally did get a hold of Dr. O'Carroll from the out-of-province unit, Mr. Speaker — that was this morning — even then he wasn't told that his daughter's treatment hadn't been approved. In fact he was taken to task, he offered to us, for having this issue raised in the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Premier to stand up then and tell this Assembly if he is prepared to apologize to the Wipf family if this is, in case, the truth; if in fact the Wipf family were taken to task by officials of this government for raising this concern in the Legislative Assembly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the appropriate procedure for informing the people involved is to inform the doctors involved, and the doctors then talk to their patient about this. And that is the way that these are normally done. Mr. Speaker, that's an appropriate way to deal with this because we want to make sure that the professionals are involved.

And, Mr. Speaker, as I've said before, it's always a challenge when these issues are raised in the House by the opposition first before they raise them with my office. We knew about this case from before, but the member opposite has raised a number of cases where I've politely requested that he contact our office. Now if, Mr. Speaker, the member is planning to do this more, maybe I should instruct my officials in my office to phone his office every morning and say, well do you have another particular case like this or not?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, what the Minister of Health should do is instruct his officials to treat the people of this province who have serious health concerns with the respect that they are due, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — That's what he should instruct his officials do to. And I have that basic question for him now today. Will he determine whether or not the Wipfs today were treated poorly; were disrespected by officials with his department when they were waiting for this basic information? And will he explain to the House why it is they waited till today to find out what the result of their inquiry would be when the letter with the approval was dated June 4 and no calls were returned to the Wipfs? Will he explain that to the House?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:15)

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, as I explained before, the process is that the information will go to the doctors of the patients involved and that's in fact what happened. And, Mr. Speaker, all the professionals in our province in various places, whether they work in Saskatchewan Health or in the regional health authorities or in doctors' offices, work to provide the most professional advice that they can in all situations. And when those kinds of communications are not appropriate, we have appropriate professional bodies involving all of our health care workers to deal with those particular kinds of issues.

Mr. Speaker, it's always a challenge to provide care when people are in some very trying situations, and I know that all of the people in the province do their best to provide the best care that they can.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for

Kelvington-Wadena.

Crystal Methamphetamine

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, last week the Saskatchewan Party pressed the government for answers on the growing problem of crystal meth in Saskatchewan. Parents and teachers and students need a central place where they can get information on this dangerous drug.

On the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Use Commission Web site, you can find comprehensive information on crystal meth for teachers, for parents, and for students — in fact, there's a separate Web site specifically for teens dealing with this issue.

These are the resources the teachers need in the classroom and the frequently asked questions for parents. Mr. Speaker, will the Premier today commit to making crystal meth specific information available to teachers and parents and students by the start of next year?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Learning.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, over the last several days we have advised the Assembly that there are a number of different drug threats that we want to make students and young people aware of, that that's an integral part of the health curriculum starting as early as grade 4, that we do in fact make sure that this is part of it.

There are a number of specific drugs that people are made aware of and concerns about how to deal with those on the government's Web site including marijuana, alcohol, club drugs. I can assure the member that we can add to that the crystal meth drug as a list of it, but really this one-off perspective is, I think, missing the point.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, the point of this whole issue is the fact that crystal meth is the largest issue that's facing young people today when it comes to the new type of drugs. It's something that's scaring people right across Canada and the United States. And this government has an opportunity to finally take a lead and do something first, instead of being the first in something like the longest waiting lists. We should be ashamed of ourselves if we don't take an issue on education and do it today.

Mr. Speaker, according to the Saskatoon police, 90 per cent of people who use crystal meth get hooked the very first time they use it — the first time, Mr. Speaker — and that's why this drug is so unique.

In the year 2000, Saskatoon police reported zero occurrences of crystal meth. In 2003 there were 58 occurrences and 47 charges dealing with the drug. In the first two weeks of the year 2004, there were 10 occurrences and 8 charges.

Mr. Speaker, police in Saskatoon are worried about this steep

increase and they recognize the need for more public education beyond what they can do themselves. When is this government going to address this issue of the growing problem with crystal meth?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Learning.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Well certainly the member opposite is plowing familiar ground, as we've spent much of last week discussing this issue in the Assembly and talking about this in conjunction with other serious threats that young people face.

The member is obviously incorrect when she says that this is the single largest drug threat to young people. She knows that and members know that, and I think anybody that listened to CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) Radio this morning and the situation in Lloydminster would know that. So I think it's unfortunate that she stretches the point in order to make a larger point.

Certainly drug usage of any type is a concern. The government has taken appropriate action, as has every government of every stripe, to deal with this issue. I can assure the member as I did last week that as this drug becomes more widely available that certainly we'll add this to the list of other drugs that parents and people should be concerned about. And that's a commitment I made last week. That commitment stands this week.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, what we on this side of the House is asking the government is to ensure that they make this an awareness issue, a proactive issue. Let's not deal with it after the problem becomes so horrendous that we don't know where to turn any more.

Mr. Speaker, we've heard people say that if we talk about the issue, kids will want to try it, and that's a ludicrous statement. One anti-drug Web site notes, you don't need to fear that by introducing the topic of drugs, you put ideas into your children's heads any more than talking about traffic safety will make them want to jump in front of a car.

Talking about crystal meth, discussing the risks and symptoms and the long-term effects, will give the kids the information they need to make an informed decision and they're going to be less likely to try the drug. Ignorance is going to cause a lot of problems in children in this province.

Mr. Speaker, why is this government refusing to address the specific issue of crystal meth for children in Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Learning.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I honestly don't know what else I can say so the members opposite get the point. We will deal with

this issue. We have said that we are dealing with this issue just as we are dealing with the issues of every other type of drug threat that young people face.

Well the member opposite was renowned a couple of years ago for saying drop everything and deal with the ecstasy problem. Well now let's forget about ecstasy, get on and deal with the crystal meth problem. What is important to happen here is that parents and teachers have information available to them to deal with the drug threat.

Frankly the concern that I raised last Thursday was not about talking to young people about the drug threat. It was about the type of language that's being used. I don't think that it behooves anybody in this House to talk like a drug dealer and say, oh we're talking about points, and the amount of money it costs, and all of that; what we should talk about is the threat and the risk. And where they get the recipe from, well that's not useful.

What is useful is the approach that we have taken through the health curriculum within the school system to make sure that there is information available for teachers and to make sure that information is available for parents . . .

The Speaker: — The member's time has elapsed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that there isn't anybody in this House or in this province who will think that we're looking like drug dealers on this side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, what we're talking about is being proactive. This government is clearly happy to be in first place when it comes to things like the longest waiting lists and crime incidents. But why don't we try and be first when it comes to being proactive and dealing with an issue?

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to meet with several high school principals and vice-principals in Saskatoon last week, and they all agreed that they wanted, and they needed, more information. Mr. Speaker, they know how to deal with students who are drinking or smoking pot, but they don't know much about crystal meth. The principals highlighted the need to be proactive on the issue of crystal meth before it becomes an epidemic, like it is in other provinces.

Mr. Speaker, when will this government undertake to develop a curriculum specifically geared to crystal meth for the children of this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Learning.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — It's illogical to develop a curriculum specifically designed to one drug, whether that is crystal meth, whether that is GHB (gamma hydroxy butyrate), whether that's Rohypnol, whether that is ecstasy, whether it is marijuana.

What is important is that we deal with the lifestyle choices, and that we deal with making sure teachers and parents have available to them the information to talk to young people about it.

I'm going to review for the member opposite, so the next time she is talking to parents and teachers she will know this. In grade 4, there in the health curriculum is avoiding dangerous situations including saying no to smoking, alcohol, and drugs. In grade 5, there is a significant discussion in the health curriculum around peer pressure. In grade 6 it's drug addictions and gambling; grade 7, alcohol and other drugs; grade 8, family and community violence issues; grade 9, safety at school, at home, and in the community. In the grade 11 curriculum there is the life transitions, community issues, and ethics. Just last week we introduced for grade 10 a new wellness curriculum to focus on these issues as well as others.

The members opposite should know that this is a problem that needs to be dealt with in a holistic way and that is what we have done.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Southeast.

Severance Package for Health Region Former Chief Executive Officer

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. Last week we found out Saskatoon Health Region CEO Jim Fergusson was resigning. The Chair of the health region told the media Mr. Fergusson resigned because, and I quote:

His heart wasn't in it and that he had come to the end of his string.

Mr. Speaker, there is no evidence that Mr. Fergusson was fired from or was terminated by the health board. He simply chose to quit because his heart wasn't in it. But even though it was Mr. Fergusson's personal choice to resign, he was given more than \$66,000 in severance, Mr. Speaker. And then he was immediately rehired by the Saskatoon Health Region on a one-year consulting contract.

Mr. Speaker, how much money will Mr. Fergusson be paid over the one-year term of his consulting contract on top of the \$66,000 of taxpayers' money that he has been paid for quitting his job as CEO?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Fergusson served the health system in Saskatchewan for many, many years, and the last eight years in a leadership role in our biggest health authority in the province. And he has been able to provide good advice and good work for a long, long time.

As part of that particular employment, he entered into agreement with the Saskatoon Health Authority, and now he has decided to move on and he has negotiated with the

Saskatoon Health Authority an appropriate end to that contract. And, Mr. Speaker, that contract is a total package for Mr. Fergusson.

And, Mr. Speaker, we support the Saskatoon Health Authority in moving on with a national search for a new CEO for Saskatoon.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Southeast.

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan, most people know that when you quit your job, your paycheque stops. In Mr. Fergusson's case, his paycheque doubled because he continued to get severance and he continued to receive this contract that he entered into.

Last week we asked the minister about this contract. The minister refuses to give this legislature or the people of Saskatchewan an answer. It leads you to wonder what the minister is covering up.

Mr. Speaker, every dime paid to Mr. Fergusson on both of these contracts is taxpayers' money. The \$66,000 in severance Mr. Fergusson received for resigning as CEO because his heart wasn't in it any more is . . .

The Speaker: — Order please. Order please, members, order. Would we allow the question to be put? The member for Saskatoon Southeast.

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, repeat, every dime paid to Mr. Fergusson is taxpayers' money. The \$66,000 in severance Mr. Fergusson received for resigning as CEO because his heart wasn't in it anymore is taxpayers' money, Mr. Speaker. And so is the money that will be paid to Mr. Fergusson for his consulting services over the next year.

Mr. Speaker, taxpayers have every right to know. Will the minister come clean and tell the people of Saskatchewan just how much money the NDP has decided to pay former Sask health region CEO, Mr. Fergusson, for consulting services over the next year?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, my learned friend has many years of working in the legal profession. And I think he understands the importance of employment contracts and the fact that it's appropriate to negotiate terms of contracts in a way that reflects the kind of work that's being done, the challenges of the work that's being done.

Mr. Fergusson has served Saskatoon Health Authority for many years. Mr. Fergusson entered into an arrangement to end his employment with the . . . as CEO of the Saskatoon Health Authority.

We're supportive of the Saskatoon Health Authority as they

move forward to recruit a new CEO who can provide good leadership in that particular health authority. And, Mr. Speaker, we support the work that's being done in the Saskatoon Health Authority.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Public Meeting on Davidson Hospital Bed Closures

Mr. Brkich: — During the last provincial election the Premier said closing beds and hospitals was not on the NDP agenda. But what did they do after they get elected — close long-term care beds and cut jobs.

And ten of them beds were cut in the town of Davidson — and jobs — a quarter of the beds were cut there. Mr. Speaker, you don't have to remind the people of Davidson this Premier hasn't been keeping his election promises.

Well tomorrow night the people of Davidson are having a public meeting to talk about what can be done to save the community from the NDP's devastating health care cuts. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll be there. Does the Premier and the Minister of Health have the decency or the courage to join me tomorrow night?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, there will be appropriate times for the Minister of Health and others to go and visit these communities, and I will do that. But practically, Mr. Speaker, there was a headline in the paper a couple of weeks ago. And this is a paper I think that the member opposite reads regularly. It's called the *Davidson Leader*.

And the headline is, "Bed closures were expected". And what it talks about is the fact that the mayor of Davidson, Mr. Jim Cross, had an inkling last fall that there were some challenges around the particular beds at the Davidson hospital. So, Mr. Speaker, what has happened across the province is that we have asked everybody to look carefully at the kind of services that are provided and to make sure that we're using the dollars in the best way we can on a province-wide basis. That's what we're going to continue to do as the years go forward. And, Mr. Speaker, I ask all the members opposite to vote for this budget and get us some health care dollars.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:30)

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

Mr. Brkich: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the mayors of both Davidson and Girvin have written to the NDP's Chair of the Standing Committee on Human Services expressing serious concerns about the NDP's decision to close the long-term care

beds in Davidson. In a response on behalf of the NDP government, the NDP MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) for Saskatoon Eastview said and I quote:

The role of the Heartland Regional Health Authority is to make the decisions regarding health care services in all their communities.

But in that same paper that he's quoting from, the CEO of the Heartland Health Region says, the NDP government made the decisions to close those 10 beds in Davidson.

Well, Mr. Speaker, will the Premier and the Minister of Health go to the meeting and explain why they broke their word to the people and why they've decided to close 10 long-term care beds in Davidson?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated before, we're continuing to look very carefully at all of the information that comes from a particular area. As I've indicated the particular beds at that facility are ones that no longer meet the code and so the goal is to actually use some of the newer beds that are there.

And I think that, Mr. Speaker, what we continue to do is look very carefully at how the whole health care system works. There will be changes. There will be new ways of providing care and, Mr. Speaker, we are going to continue to provide the best care that we can for all of the people of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 71 — The City of Lloydminster Act

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 71, The City of Lloydminster Act, be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Government House Leader that Bill No. 71, The City of Lloydminster Act 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.

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

Bill No. 72 — The Traffic Safety Act

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Government Insurance.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 72, The Traffic Safety Act be now introduced and read for the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Highways and Transportation that Bill No. 72, The Traffic Safety Act 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? I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

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

Bill No. 73 — The Traffic Safety Consequential Amendment Act, 2004/Loi de 2004 sur les modifications corrélatives découlant de la loi intitulée The Traffic Safety Act

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Highways and Transportation.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 73, The Traffic Safety Consequential Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read for the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Highways and Transportation that Bill No. 73, The Traffic Safety Consequential 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? I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

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 Government Whip.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and table responses to written questions no. 486, 487.

The Speaker: — Responses to 486 and 487 have been submitted.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

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

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and to move, at the conclusion of my remarks, second reading of Bill No. 70, An Act to amend The Income Tax Act, 2000.

At the outset, Mr. Speaker, I declare that The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2004 will be treated as a confidence vote, as it is an integral part of the 2004-05 budget.

Mr. Speaker, in my 2004-05 budget address, I described the fiscal challenges that our government is facing and how we are meeting those challenges. I noted that health care and education are the two greatest priorities for Saskatchewan people, and I described what we are doing to ensure the necessary funding to support these priorities, including reallocating existing spending and enhancing revenues.

The revenue measures included in the 2004-05 budget were difficult choices, Mr. Speaker. We pursued them only after reviewing all expenditure options.

Mr. Speaker, elements of Saskatchewan's personal income tax system have been automatically indexed to the national rate of inflation since 2000. In 2004 Saskatchewan's family tax credits and income tax brackets were also indexed to inflation. I note, Mr. Speaker, that for 2004 Saskatchewan was one of only five provinces to index its personal income tax system. I further note that New Brunswick no longer indexes its personal income tax system, and Quebec now provides only partial indexation.

As I announced in the budget, Mr. Speaker, beginning with the 2005 taxation year, Saskatchewan's income tax system will no longer be automatically indexed to the national inflation rate. Instead we will announce the annual indexation factor each fall. This Bill implements this change.

Please note, Mr. Speaker, that the national rate of inflation is expected to remain around 1 per cent for the next three years. Mr. Speaker, this measure will ensure a fair balance between providing inflation protection for taxpayers and responding to

the government's fiscal pressures. This Bill also enhances the Saskatchewan sales tax credit and the investment tax credit for manufacturing and processing.

Mr. Speaker, some weeks ago I discussed in this House our government's decision to increase the rate of the provincial sales tax, PST, to 7 per cent. To ensure that the PST rate increase is applied fairly, its impact on lower-income residents will be mitigated by enhancements to the Saskatchewan sales tax credit. The Saskatchewan sales tax credit is a non-taxable benefit paid out quarterly in conjunction with the federal goods and services tax credit.

Mr. Speaker, the enhancement to this credit will increase the maximum annual credit for families to \$350 for the 2004 benefit year, which begins July 1, 2004. This is more than a 30 per cent increase from the 2003 benefit year maximum of \$264. This program will now provide \$34 million in annual non-taxable benefits to lower-income Saskatchewan residents.

Mr. Speaker, in conjunction with the increase to the PST rate, the rate of the investment tax credit for manufacturing and processing assets is being increased to 7 per cent. The investment tax credit was introduced in 1995 to encourage investment and employment in this sector. The credit is intended to offset the PST payable on the acquisition of production assets. The credit has been a significant factor in promoting capital expansions in Saskatchewan's value-added sector. Mr. Speaker, this Bill also includes several technical clarifications and corrections to references to the federal Income Tax Act to assist the Canada Revenue Agency in its administration of our tax system.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I want to reiterate that the budget, portion of which are implemented with this Bill, is part of a long-term vision for growth and opportunity in Saskatchewan. We are working to preserve vital public services while also ensuring fiscal stability and sustainability. This Bill in particular demonstrates our balanced approach to funding the revenues necessary to fund essential services while also protecting low-income earners and families. Mr. Speaker, I will be pleased to answer questions concerning the amendments to The Income Tax Act, 2000 when discussing this Bill in committee.

Until then, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2004.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 70, The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

I recognize the member for Canora-Pelly.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make a few comments about Bill No. 70 as indicated by the Finance minister. Mr. Speaker, this is a fairly extensive Bill. I look at a Bill that contains over 17 clauses and has a lot of technical information.

As the minister has indicated, there are a number of changes

that are being made but of a technical nature, and they need to be made because of compliance with various changes at the federal level of government and whether or not we are changing certain terminology. When we look at those changes, Mr. Speaker, we don't have any problem with any of those.

However, Mr. Speaker, the most significant change in this Bill is the change from indexing of personal exemptions. Mr. Speaker, it's not too long ago when I recall the then minister of Finance, the member of Saskatoon representing Saskatoon Massey Place, who stood in this Assembly and said that this was a tremendous move for the province of Saskatchewan in that we were not longer going to have to worry about whether or not the exemptions that people face will keep up with inflation. He stood in this Assembly, and he bragged about the fact that Saskatchewan was now going to look at the personal exemptions on an annual basis based on the cost of living.

Mr. Speaker, I looked at the platform of the New Democratic Party, and it's interesting how the New Democratic Party chose not to talk about certain things in the election. Well, Mr. Speaker, this is one of the things that they did choose to talk about, and I want to quote from page 14 of the New Democratic Party platform, and it says this:

We've worked hard to ensure Saskatchewan has Canada's fairest provincial tax system. Now we need to ensure that inflation can't allow unfairness to creep back in.

Mr. Speaker, I think that's a promise. That's a promise to indicate to people of Saskatchewan that the plan that you've bragged about, that you've talked about, that you've ensured that those personal exemptions would be there for the people of Saskatchewan, that that was a promise. And what we see in Bill No. 70, Mr. Speaker, is a broken promise.

We see the complete reversal of that plan. Mr. Speaker, I want to share a couple of numbers with you so that I think people have a better understanding of what has happened to individuals.

Mr. Speaker, I asked the Minister of Finance to supply the times that the various pension plans . . . And people in the province need to be aware that there are many pension plans, some of which have automatic indexing and others that do not. Mr. Speaker, there are a number of individuals, about 8,000 people in the province of Saskatchewan, that belong to the Public Service Superannuation Plan, the SaskPower, SaskTel, Workers' Compensation Board, and the Liquor and Gaming Authority superannuation plans. They do not have automatic indexing.

Mr. Speaker, this year April 1, 2004, the adjustment for those pensions, the indexing of those pensions was zero. Last year on April 1, 2003, the adjustment was 1.2 per cent. Mr. Speaker, the adjustment on April 1, 2002, was zero. Now, Mr. Speaker, let's take those three numbers — zero this year, 1.2 per cent last year, and zero the year before that. You have a total increase of pensions to these individuals — to these 8,000 people — of 1.2 per cent over that same three-year period.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let's take a look at the cost-of-living adjustment. For this year, the cost-of-living adjustment, which

is the average of Regina and Saskatoon, is taken to be 2.3 per cent. Last year, Mr. Speaker, in 2003 that cost of living index is 2.8 per cent. And the year before that, 2002 it was 3.1 per cent. Add those numbers up, Mr. Speaker, and you have over that period of three years, you have an inflation percentage of 8.2 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's very clear why we hear from people who belong to the various superannuated pension plans, their contempt for what the government has done. You see that they are . . . They have had a pension increase over three years of 1.2 per cent, while cost of living over that same three-year period has increased by 8.2 per cent, a difference of 7 per cent.

(14:45)

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would venture to say that you ask any person belonging to these pension plans — these 8,000 people — and say, over a three-year period your ability to purchase products, the money that you have within your grasp is going to drop by 7 per cent. I don't think too many people would have been happy, Mr. Speaker, but that's exactly what the government said. The NDP, in their platform, their election platform said we are happy to have introduced the exemptions and we're going to continue with that.

Mr. Speaker, the people that I've talked to from the pension plans at least were aware that even though they want to have an automatic indexing of their pension plans, they were at least grateful for the fact that this government had chose to implement an automatic indexing of the personal exemption.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we see that example this year. We see that last year's personal exemption was \$8,000. The inflation rate, as I indicated to you, last year was 2.8 per cent. So an additional 2.8 per cent of \$8,000, if you look at your tax form this year, Mr. Speaker, for the year 2004 you will see that your personal exemption is now \$8,264. It has risen by \$264.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if we apply that same percentage of cost of living of 2.3 per cent for the next year, we should have seen pension exemption . . . I'm sorry, the personal exemptions increase by another \$190. Now what that would have meant for people who are on fixed pension incomes is that they didn't see a cost-of-living adjustment to their pensions, but they would have at least seen, have been able to see that there was some savings on the income tax. And they're tremendously upset with that, Mr. Speaker.

A political party that promised, that bragged and said, we will ensure that exemptions remain indexed on an ongoing basis . . . And as I indicated; a quote directly from the platform that said, we must ensure that inflation does not reduce the purchasing power of individuals. What we see in Bill No. 70 is the exact opposite.

Mr. Speaker, when we start to look at comparing ourselves to other states and other provinces, it's very interesting to note that Alberta is now . . . now has a personal exemption that's well over \$14,000 because it has automatic indexing. And as we move through a 3.1 per cent cost-of-living adjustment and a 2.8 and a 2.3, that exemption in the province of Alberta is over \$14,000. Here we sit in Saskatchewan for next year; that

exemption will remain at \$8,264.

Mr. Speaker, I asked the Minister of Finance whether or not a change like this would be expensive. Is it something that's worth \$100 million to the province of Saskatchewan, \$75 million? And the best, Mr. Speaker, that I think I was able to gather from the minister and his officials that if we look at this \$190 increase to a personal exemption and we look at not only the basic exemption but the spousal adjustments and the child adjustments as well, we're looking at somewhere between 15 and \$18 million. That's the change that has been made.

People believed that this government was campaigning on a promise that the personal exemptions would continue to be indexed. And the result is that this government said, well we're not going to talk about those matters during election, but now that we've found out the cupboard is bare . . . oops, Mr. Speaker, sorry. We were the government so we knew that the cupboard was bare. Now they're coming back to the people of Saskatchewan in Bill No. 70 and saying, now we're not going to continue to implement adjustments to the personal exemptions.

Mr. Speaker, I think this is wrong. This is a plan, an about-turn by the government in what it campaigned on and I think that this government should reconsider its plan. And therefore I move that we adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Canora-Pelly that debate on second reading of Bill No. 70 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. 64

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Thomson that **Bill No. 64 — The Post-Secondary Graduate Tax Credit Amendment Act, 2004** be now read a second time.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with pleasure today that I rise in the Assembly to speak regarding Bill No. 64, the post-secondary graduate tax credit Bill. This legislation, Mr. Speaker, in essence will increase the graduate tax credit from \$250 this year to up to 1,000 by the year 2007. And we on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, think that this is a move in the right direction. However, we do have some concerns with the Bill as a whole.

The increase this year will actually not go all the way to \$1,000 — it will double from \$250 to 500. In 2005, this will go from

500 to 675; from 2006, from 675 to 850; and from 2006 into 2007 to the maximum of \$1,000.

And, Mr. Speaker, a tax credit is a good idea. It is something the Saskatchewan Party had in its platform with regards to trying to keep young individuals in the province after they graduate from a post-secondary institution such as SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) or the University of Saskatchewan or the University of Regina. It becomes exceedingly necessary, Mr. Speaker, when young persons today are very flexible and they're very able to move, as we see with the great number of lost young persons who exit the province on an annual basis seeking better economic opportunity.

That's why, Mr. Speaker, part of the concern around this Bill is the speed at which these tax credits are being implemented. Two hundred and fifty dollars — the difference of it in one year making the difference between whether someone's staying here or not for a job — while it's a step in the right direction, it's really a drop in the bucket.

This government has continually misread the economy. They failed to understand how you create jobs. They've tried to use the government as the engine of the economy and it's been a dismal failure. We've seen the lowest job creation records in the last 10 years.

We've got the member now from Athabasca trying to discuss economic policy in the House and we see as a minister what credibility he has on these issues for the number of questions that he answers on a regular basis.

Mr. Speaker, we see that one of the largest aspects of retaining individuals is, number one, having an opportunity and a career for them to go to. The member from Athabasca again is discussing this at length knowing how well his particular riding has done in job creation, knowing how well the unemployment rate happens to sit at Athabasca — knowing, Mr. Speaker, that again he represents them, without doubt speaking well on their behalf for the number of post-graduates he has and how many they're able to retain in that riding.

Mr. Speaker, the . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. The occasional heckle is fine but a second speech during the Assembly is rather disruptive. The member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I know that we all gain from the learned experience of the member from Athabasca but again I will say that the problem with this legislation is that the movement on it is much too slow. It is not going to get us going in the direction that we so desire. It's not going to retain persons the way it should.

And it is a shame, Mr. Speaker, that this is a government that didn't expect to form government once again, that failed to have the fiscal books in order, that has failed time and again in creating jobs and careers in this province, and has failed the young people of our nation, Mr. Speaker, by having to export so many young people from Saskatchewan because they've had to leave, not because they've chose to leave.

Mr. Speaker, on that note, I know that we have a number of members on this side of the House that would be eager to discuss Bill 64, the post-secondary graduate tax credit. And at this point I would move that we adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Kindersley that 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. 60

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Atkinson that **Bill No. 60 — The Public Service Amendment Act, 2004** be now read a second time.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to rule 44, I wish to declare a personal interest in this Bill, therefore will not be voting on it, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with pleasure that I rise today to speak on Bill No. 60 in the Legislative Assembly. We have some concerns around this particular piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker — specifically that the clause in section 31, it's repealed and replaced with a clause that deals with employee classification.

This is something you know quite a bit about as the former critic that, Mr. Speaker, that we know that classification in the province under the Public Service Commission a number of years ago was simplified. I believe it's down to a very small number from a very large range of classifications.

The real concerns that we have, Mr. Speaker, are that this present government made a statement with regards to wages in the public service on a freeze of 0, 1, and 1. Mr. Speaker, the concerns around this is that there are a number of public sector contracts which have come to fruition and need to be renegotiated — I believe there are 30 outstanding — and whether the government is going to commit to its 0, 1, and 1 is very questionable when we look at this government's record on how it's kept its other promises. We very much suspect that it will waver from this 0, 1, and 1.

It will be interesting to see what the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses has to say with that increase of zero this year, 1 per cent next year, 1 per cent the year after. The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation I'm sure will be very interested in the negotiation process around that 0, 1, and 1 as well.

And what we believe, Mr. Speaker, is that there's a good possibility under Bill 60 that what this government will try to do is mirage the 0, 1, and 1 and cause reclassification to be able

to significantly increase contract payments by giving a different classification for what is in essence the same work.

We have to look at the government's record on keeping its promises in other areas — in health care, in not firing civil servants, in not raising the PST. And with this, Mr. Speaker, it is a number . . . The people of Saskatchewan have come to expect nothing less from this present government.

So it is with great concern that we will be looking at this piece of legislation. Because we do believe there is a strong possibility that there will attempt to be masked negotiations to cover up the real 0, 1, and 1, and that to break with that intent and cover it through reclassification by bumping people's jobs classifications so that they would get the equivalent of a 3 or 4 per cent raise. And we have no doubt that the scruples of this current Premier, that the scruples of the current government would allow such a situation to occur.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I know that we have a number of MLAs on this side of the House that are very interested in speaking to Bill No. 60, An Act to amend The Public Service Act, 1998. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I would move that we adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Kindersley that debate on this Bill 60 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion's carried.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 35

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Atkinson that **Bill No. 35 — The Crown Corporations 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, Bill 35 is one of those Bills that is sort of a Jekyll and Hyde situation; it has some good things in it and it has some things that we don't find to be quite so happy about, let me say.

One of the issues that the minister talked about in her second reading address was about hiring Aboriginal and Métis youth in the upcoming future, that by the year 2017 there's a possibility that half . . . There could be a 50 per cent turnover in the Crown corporations, and that it was important to bring Aboriginal and Métis youth, First Nations youth, into the workplace, into the Crown corporations, and give them opportunities in that area.

Mr. Speaker, I would agree. That is very much a large part of what is needed in Saskatchewan to help drive forward the economy of Saskatchewan, is more participation from First Nations individuals, Mr. Speaker. They are a growing force in our society. They are an untapped workforce that gives us an economic advantage, Mr. Speaker, if we can take advantage of

that opportunity with the unemployment levels that are prevalent across Saskatchewan amongst the First Nations young people, Mr. Speaker.

There is an opportunity here for businesses, for Crown corporations in this particular case, Mr. Speaker, to bring on board the Aboriginal youth into their employment, to aid them into learning the skills that are necessary to participate in a workforce in Saskatchewan. We have excellent educational opportunities across Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, for all of our youth, be they Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, but it's important that they also have an opportunity for employment.

(15:00)

And we see too many of our youth, Mr. Speaker . . . and today if you go and talk to the young people in the universities, 50 per cent of them are looking — if not higher than 50 per cent — are looking outside of Saskatchewan for employment, Mr. Speaker. And we need to create opportunities here in Saskatchewan for employment here.

Now in the minister's statement, she's looking at . . . it looks like this. I'll quote her:

New training and mentorship programs are being developed, and these programs will provide quality careers by filling more than 1,000 jobs in our Crowns through internships and retirements.

Mr. Speaker, talking about Aboriginal youth. That's important, Mr. Speaker. That's an identifiable group that we have in our society in Saskatchewan that certainly needs opportunities for advancement. But, Mr. Speaker, there are also other identifiable groups, and I noticed that the minister failed to identify or to recognize them.

Now I talked earlier to the minister under SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) — excuse me, not SPMC — PSC, Public Service Commission, when she was before the Assembly in committee about the programs that the minister is putting in place or has already in place with this government to promote people that are from identifiable minorities to participate in our workforce, particularly within government and the Crowns, but also Mr. Speaker, in other work areas.

And I'm surprised that the minister failed to mention any of those other identifiable minorities, Mr. Speaker, in this piece of legislation because it's not a piece of legislation that says specifically, this is an affirmative action program for the Crown corporations for Aboriginal and Métis youth. It's simply the title of the Crown is . . . The Crown Corporations Amendment Act, Mr. Speaker, of which the opportunities for Aboriginal and Métis youth, First Nations youth, are part of the program that this government is putting forward.

And I would like to encourage the government to make sure that those opportunities are available as well to other identifiable minorities, Mr. Speaker, and not simply limited to one group — in this case the First Nations youth. The First Nations youth are certainly a very, very important part and need to be brought into the economy, Mr. Speaker, need to have opportunities to be employees, but they also, Mr. Speaker, need

to have opportunities to be employers.

And, Mr. Speaker, in listening to the minister's remarks, there seemed to be little if any emphasis on the development of entrepreneurial skills for Aboriginal youth. Rather, it was in making them employees of Crown corporations.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, while being an employee is a very, very worthwhile life skill, Mr. Speaker, and part of our economy; being an entrepreneur, being an owner, being a creator of employment and opportunities for employees is equally if not of more importance, Mr. Speaker. Because while the Crown corporations in this province and government itself represents 40 to 45 per cent of the economy, the jobs in this province, Mr. Speaker, are created not by government. They are created by small businesses and entrepreneurs across this province.

And that's where the opportunities lie, Mr. Speaker, and the minister's comments failed to recognize that.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the minister, in a program like this, while it's worthwhile within a Crown corporation to identify a group to provide opportunities for, there are other groups that also need that opportunity.

But more so, Mr. Speaker, I believe it would have been important for the minister to have indicated support and training for others as well in a different direction other than just being an employee, but to direct and to provide training and encouragement to be an entrepreneur, Mr. Speaker; because it's the entrepreneurs of this province that pay the taxes, Mr. Speaker, along with the employees.

One cannot exist without the other. They have to work together, Mr. Speaker, to provide for a prosperous economy in Saskatchewan. And the minister is only talking about one-half of the partnership between employer and employee, Mr. Speaker. And both of them need to play a role, Mr. Speaker.

And it seems to be a habit that this government has, especially when it comes to the Crown corporations. They believe they are the be-all and the end-all, the beginning and the end of the economy in Saskatchewan. And while, Mr. Speaker, they do play a very large role, they are not the only employer in Saskatchewan.

The minister talked about making the Crown corporations the employer of choice, Mr. Speaker, and I think that was a very unfortunate choice of words — that the Crown corporations should be one of the employers that a person looking for employment would take a look at, but certainly not the only employer.

Mr. Speaker, when you make that kind of a statement from a government minister, it seems to be setting a tone and a direction that doesn't encourage people to come to Saskatchewan. It doesn't encourage them to invest in Saskatchewan.

And that, Mr. Speaker, leads to the other part of this Bill that I think needs to have some discussion, that the government seems to be setting an attitude — and it's an attitude that this

particular government has had for a long time, and it's an attitude that this government has shown and emphasized since its creation — that if it can't be done by government, then it should be done by a Crown corporation; if it can't be done by a Crown corporation, then it shouldn't be done in Saskatchewan at all. And that's a very, very poor attitude, Mr. Speaker, and it keeps people from investing in Saskatchewan.

One of the areas that the minister talked about was the need for the Crown corporations to promote investment in Saskatchewan, that it was their role to promote the economy, their role to promote investment in the province.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the Crown corporation, in promoting investment in Saskatchewan, is promoting investment in the Crown corporation and the Crown sector. It's not broad investment across the entire province. I guess, according to the minister, if the Crown corporation role is to promote the economy and investment in Saskatchewan, why do we have a Department of Economic Development? Shouldn't therefore the Crowns be fulfilling that role, according to the minister, so why do we have another department doing the same thing?

I guess the question has to come down, Mr. Speaker: is the role of economic development, the promotion of the economy in Saskatchewan, the promotion of investment in Saskatchewan, is that the role to be fulfilled by the provincial government, paid for by the taxpayers of Saskatchewan? Or is the role to be fulfilled by the Crown corporations where only the ratepayers of the Crown corporation pay the bill for economic development in this province?

If that's the case, Mr. Speaker, then is it not also the case that the rates then charged by the Crown corporations — SaskPower, SaskTel, Sask Energy — those Crowns that pay a dividend to the government, are their rates therefore not indirect taxation to fulfill a role that is being carried out by the provincial government through the Department of Economic Development?

Mr. Speaker, if that's the case then we have hidden taxation taking place by this government to promote the role of the general government, Mr. Speaker, rather than the role of the Crown corporations. And that's not appropriate, Mr. Speaker.

If the government wants to tax people to carry out a social function of government such as economic development, then they have the right to do so. And they should do so if they want to provide that promotion. But it's not appropriate and proper to charge additional rates through the Crown corporations to provide an economic development function that should be carried out by the province, Mr. Speaker, not by the Crown corporations. And that seems to be what this minister is trying to do.

Actually what this minister is trying to do is to justify that very action retroactively, Mr. Speaker, because the Crown corporations invested money in the Future is Wide Open campaign. They paid something like \$2 million already I believe it is, and they received, the number that I do remember hearing, was somewhere a little better than 100 return phone calls for their multi-million dollar campaign, Mr. Speaker.

I hope that the Crowns get a better investment on their other investments, Mr. Speaker. But when you take a look at the record of the previous ministers for Crown corporations, their investment record outside of the province would indicate that a return of 100 on a number of millions of dollars runs about par with the rest of the millions of dollars they've invested. In fact is, Mr. Speaker, in a good many cases they have lost their entire amount of money.

So maybe a return call number of 100-plus return calls for the multi-million dollars is actually a good return in comparison to their other returns, Mr. Speaker, through the Crown corporation investments outside of Saskatchewan.

Actually as my colleague says, it's certainly a lot better investment return than they got from SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company), where they lost \$28 million.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is an attempt to make legal their Future Wide Open campaign that was paid for by the Crown corporations when they did not actually have the authority to do that, Mr. Speaker. So this campaign has been ongoing for approximately 18 months or so now — two years — and was being done without the proper authority, the proper legislative statutory rules in place that allowed that to take place.

So it's almost like Paul Martin going back and making all of the money that went through the Liberal ad campaigns and businesses in Montreal, legal. That's basically what the attempt is to do, Mr. Speaker, is to make something that was not allowed under the current legislation possible for the government to do and make it that way retroactively.

That's wrong, Mr. Speaker. The Crowns should not have been investing in that program when they didn't have the proper legislative authorities to do so, but we have seen that kind of thing happen before. I think if you take a look back, Mr. Speaker, a few years ago people might remember the term, Channel Lake, where the president at the time, Jack Messer, was involved . . . had the SaskPower involved in gas arbitrage which was not permitted under the legislation for SaskPower, but he went ahead and did it anyways and lost more than \$10 million, Mr. Speaker.

In that particular case it was never made legal. Mr. Messer lost his job. In this particular case, what the minister is trying to do is now to justify the actions that they carried out and the money that they spent over the last couple of years, and make it retroactive, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if it's not permitted to do, why did the minister allow it to happen?

Our Provincial Auditor is looking at this very issue right now and is going to issue a report on the actions of the Crown corporations. And I think it's very important that, before this Bill becomes law, that we give the Provincial Auditor the opportunity to make that report and determine whether or not the government's acted illegally, whether they acted improperly, or whether there is some other reason why this particular change needs to take place to deal with the Future's Wide Open campaign, Mr. Speaker.

Therefore at this time I would move adjournment of debate.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Cannington that the debate on Bill 35 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. 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 Saskatoon Southeast.

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to this Bill today. I've had the opportunity to spend some time looking at this Bill and I've also done some consultation with the members of the bar in this province.

I understand some time before there was drafts circulated by the department or discussion with the department and various members of the private bar and, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Trial Lawyers Association presented a very substantial paper opposing the provisions of this Bill.

By way of background, Mr. Speaker, it used to be that under the existing legislation, if any one of the defendant parties to an action was capable of satisfying the judgment, the innocent plaintiff would have the right of recovering all of that. It was joint and several liability is the legal term that was used.

This Bill significantly waters down that and allows for an apportionment between the solvent parties to the action and may very well have the effect of precluding an innocent plaintiff from recovering under judgment.

This Bill will help insurance companies, and may well help municipalities, may well help railway companies.

The ultimate classic situation, Mr. Speaker, that could arise on this would be a situation involving a railroad accident where there was largely the operator of the motor vehicle responsible. Courts would sometimes hold that the railway was 1 or 2 per cent liable because of improper signage or a sign that had been knocked down. And in cases where there was very profound or tragic injuries, the damages could often be 1 or \$2 million particularly to innocent victims in the vehicle. And the courts were able to require the railway companies to pay very substantial sums because of this.

(15:15)

As a result of this, this is not going to be the situation any more. The advice that should be going out to these people is that they

would be well advised to carry their own liability insurance. Municipalities, railways should all carry insurance so that they're not, as well as plaintiffs, should carefully consider the fact that their rights may be somewhat significantly reduced. I think that's an imperative that people consider as they go forward.

And I realize that this legislation is brought forward by the government with a view to bringing our legislation into compliance with what takes place in other jurisdictions and we're trying to move forward with having consistent legislation across the country.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is a very profound and very significant change from what the legislation was prior to this being introduced, so it's my hope and expectation that the members opposite and the department will ensure that members of the public and members of the Law Society are made aware of this and are able to adjust their financial planning accordingly.

Mr. Speaker, we are still engaged in some ongoing discussions on this and we're not as such prepared to allow this to go forward to committee at this time.

Mr. Speaker, I would move adjournment of debate at this time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Saskatoon Southeast that the 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. 69

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Quennell that **Bill No. 69 — The Public Inquiries Amendment Act, 2004** be now read a second time.

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

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to speak on Bill No. 69, The Public Inquiries Amendment Act. Mr. Speaker, when the minister introduced this Bill, and it's quite a small Bill in size, but I think there's an awful lot of content to it.

And, 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 performing of his or her duties. And, Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that this has come forward from legal counsel for the commission of inquiry into matters related to the death of Neil Stonechild.

Mr. Speaker, generally accepted practice of commissioners of public inquiries and their legal counsel must be, and I quote:

Free to operate without the concern that the report or other actions will in any way form the basis of a personal legal action against them.

And the minister had spoke in his second reading debate that it's 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. And, Mr. Speaker, this is . . . it puts more meat to the Bill by . . . There's more certainty provided by the Bill as legislation, as express legislation provided in this Bill.

But it comes to wonder . . . It makes me wonder if it's long been understood that in the event of a civil action that the executive government would stand, jump in, why today, why now is this Bill so urgent and pressing vis-à-vis five years ago, two years ago or today?

And if it is strictly because of the Neil Stonechild inquiry, then I would also just have to think about the David Milgaard inquiry, and there's probably other inquiries that have been brought forth in the last number of years. And why all of a sudden, right now?

I know this legislation adds a certain level of assurances and avoids need for such a matter to be taken through the courts at taxpayers' expense. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm quite pleased and encouraged with the direction that this legislation is taking since the commissioners of public inquiries and their legal counsel must be allowed to pursue their objectives without worry of subsequent civil action. And this Bill actually, Mr. Speaker, makes the inquiry process much more open and accountable.

Mr. Speaker, any time there's a perceived miscarriage of justice or wrongdoing on the part of public officials it's important that all sides be heard and a full and factual accounting of events be reported.

With that being said, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, the Bill is relatively small by nature but as we've seen in previous Bills, some previous Bills there's some reading between the lines, if you wish. There's some other clauses in the Bill that have a different meaning outside of what the Bill . . . Bill's initial intent. And there's a few examples that we've seen in the last week or so that this has happened.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we would like to just have a little bit more discussion with some interested people on this Bill and have a very close look at it again to see if there's any hidden agenda within this Bill. So at this time I would like to adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Wood River that 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.

Bill No. 61

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen that **Bill No. 61 — The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Amendment Act, 2004** be now read a second time.

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

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I understand this . . . It's my pleasure first of all to speak to Bill 61, Mr. Speaker, The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Amendment Act, 2004.

As I understand this legislation, Mr. Speaker, it puts in place provisions that will allow for extra pay for MLAs who perform extra duties. And those would be MLAs, Mr. Speaker, beyond those MLAs which currently do receive allowances over and above regular MLA pay.

And as I understand it, Mr. Speaker, it would include such MLAs as the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the Deputy Opposition House Leader, the Deputy Government House Leader, and Third Party House Leader, Mr. Speaker, in fact if there was a third party in this legislature. I think that most people would not have much problem with MLAs or any other persons who performed extra duties receiving extra pay, Mr. Speaker, and I wouldn't either.

But there is a dark side to this legislation as well, Mr. Speaker, a side of this legislation that's anti-democratic in fact and which . . . Part of this legislation would alleviate the need to call a by-election within a six-month time frame in the case of a vacancy that occurs 36 months after the last election, Mr. Speaker.

And we in the opposition are gravely concerned with this legislation, and particularly, Mr. Speaker, section 40.3 which basically eliminates the long-standing NDP government commitment to hold all by-elections within reasonable time frames.

Twelve years ago, Mr. Speaker, the NDP government under then Premier Roy Romanow introduced legislation that required that any seat that was vacated in this Assembly not remain vacant for any more than six months. Back then the NDP government cited several examples during the previous Conservative government where seats were left vacant for well over a year, Mr. Speaker.

And I think that all of us — and maybe not all of us in this Assembly, I can't speak for those on the other side, Mr. Speaker — but generally speaking the people of Saskatchewan would agree that it is simply wrong to let people remain unrepresented in this Legislative Assembly which exerts so much control over their lives for any more than six months.

Now the current Premier is turning his back and watering down that commitment made by the previous NDP government under Mr. Romanow. It should be of interest to all members and to all people of this province that those seats that were left vacant for so long during the Devine administration, that each and every one of those seats was an affront to democracy. And, in fact,

each and every one of those seats were vacated after the 36-month mark of that government.

Had the provision before us today been in place then nothing would have changed. Therefore one can only take from this now that the current Premier believes that it's okay to leave seats vacant as long as has been done in the past, and even longer, Mr. Speaker.

I don't believe any of those seats that were left vacant for more than six months during the previous . . . or the Devine administration remained vacant for more than a year. And under this legislation, Mr. Speaker, seats could remain vacant for two years. It's clearly anti-democratic, undemocratic, and unacceptable.

This opposition does not agree that the Premier should be leaving seats vacant and people unrepresented for up to two years. This is totally unjustifiable, it's hypocritical, and it's undemocratic. And I move that the matter be adjourned.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Thunder Creek that debate on Bill No. 61 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 Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Taylor that **Bill No. 68 — The Assessment Management Agency Amendment Act, 2004** be now read a second time.

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

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to get up and make a few comments on this particular Bill. It's a fairly comprehensive Bill. It has lots of amendments in it. It's fairly thick so it has taken us some time to go through it.

I know that it's going to make quite a bit of changes on SAMA's (Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency) operation, administration. And also there's some legislation here dealing with how funding is doing on the school boards.

You talk about assessment out of my constituency. There's been quite a bit of controversy over it, especially in my northern part of my constituency, which is in . . . a lot of the assessment will come on school . . . comes out of the school division out of Saskatoon.

And I know I've had quite a few letters dealing with the recent increases on assessment to property there, how they're using some of the property, the acreages just outside of Saskatoon. And then you get further south to Dundurn where there'll be acreages, and they will be assessed the same way, and come in quite high. And they feel that their property still doesn't sell for

that high as a property does right around Saskatoon, so they feel they shouldn't be quite assessed as high. So there's been . . . in fact I know they even had some tax meetings — that was a couple of years ago — dealing with that same issue.

And also talking about SAMA, also talking about the increases on pasture, there's been a significant increase on the tax, the way it's been assessed on pasture land and even farm land. And we talk about even . . . And that's why there's been such a push out in rural Saskatchewan for people for some relief on the tax end of it when it comes to assessment and to the tax, property tax on it, on the school end.

And with the Premier having made the promise that he would look at it several years . . . two years ago, the people took him at his word before the election, and I know right now are quite disappointed in that because the increase in taxes out there is a significant portion on farm land and pasture land out there. And also, just not . . . It's in towns, it's in cities too that the people are concerned about the increase on school tax — property tax — out there.

And with the value of farm land basically either dropping or just staying the same, farm income dropping, but they're seeing their tax bill going up on this end. They don't mind paying the extra tax if you're getting the money back from the productivity or . . . but when you see your income dropping but you see your expenses going up on the other side, it makes it very difficult at that end.

(15:30)

And there's also . . . I notice they talk quite a bit in this Bill, but they don't talk about the appeal process in there, and I think there should be some changes to the appeal process in this particular Bill because I know that getting back . . . you get further south in my constituency, there was . . . I had dealt with a constituent where he has an acreage and they were using the selling of acreages around Saskatoon because in this particular RM (rural municipality) there wasn't many acreage sales. So if there's only two or three in three, four years, they will go outside the RMs and look at what's being sold province-wide. And he feels that in his area that he was assessed too high. And also his house wasn't fully finished at that, so he doesn't have the full value of his house at that.

And yet they were taxing him like that house was fully finished, the upstairs was fully finished, and the yard fully landscaped as it were outside of Saskatoon. So he had quite a high assessment. I know he was dealing in the appeal process, and he had quite a bit of trouble with it. And he would like to see them do more . . . (inaudible) . . . the appeal process to do more on individual housing, the house . . . look at the particular house and also look, even if there is only a few sales in that area, in that RM, look at that. Don't automatically just lump everything in with the province because in certain areas property is worth more.

You get out in our RM and if you're a long ways from the highway and your nearest town is, like, 20 miles away or 30 miles, which I'll have in a lot of parts of my constituency, property on acreages isn't worth that much to resell. Not like if it's five miles out of Regina or five miles out of Saskatoon, that property is worth quite a bit more in the resale end. And when

you're being taxed the same rate as they're being taxed out here, it causes quite a bit of trouble out in rural Saskatchewan.

And also there's some proposed changes on the way the annual funding is to SAMA and at that end. And I know some of the cities — and I don't have the number of them — but I know that we'd met with a couple of cities that have hired their own assessment agency because basically they just weren't happy with what SAMA was doing out there with the assessment that was coming in, and the different categories.

So I'm hoping that this Bill, that's something that has to be addressed in this Bill is . . . why are these towns looking outside of SAMA and going to a private agency. So, you know, maybe that is a way to go instead of trying to pour money into this one because I know that there's \$750,000 going into SAMA this year, in this fiscal year with 875,000 in the next two years, for a total of 2.5 million so far that I've read from the Bill. That's quite a bit of money to go out there, when that money could be maybe going to addressing tax relief out there instead of just actually . . . just going into administration and into the bureaucratic red tape, and maybe not even addressing the problems that are out there. You're just adding to them that way.

So I know we have this Bill out to a number of agencies and a number of people that want to look at it. So right now with that, I would like to adjourn this Bill for now.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Arm River-Watrous that debate on Bill No. 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.

Deputy Clerk: — Committee of Finance.

The Speaker: — I do 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, found on page 77 of the Estimates book. And I would invite the Minister of Health to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you. I'm pleased to have with me this afternoon Glenda Yeates, to my left, who's the deputy minister. To her left is Bert Linklater, who's the executive director of the regional accountability branch. Behind Glenda is Duncan Fisher, the assistant deputy minister. Behind me is Lawrence Krahn, the assistant deputy minister. And to Mr.

Krahn's right is Mike Shaw, the associate deputy minister, and to my immediate right is Max Hendricks, who's the executive director of the finance and administration branch.

The Chair: — Administration (HE01). I recognize the member for Melfort.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and welcome this afternoon to the officials with the Department of Health. This afternoon I would like to cover a topic briefly, and then my colleagues have some questions on a number of other topics.

Minister, this pertains to Nirvana Villa, which is in Melfort. It's assisted living complex that is operated by the Kelsey Trail Health Authority. As a result of the budget really process, the Kelsey Trail Health Authority is of course looking to find ways to reduce their expenses, and one of the ways that they have decided to implement is a decision to rather drastically increase the fees for staying at the Nirvana Villa assisted living complex.

This complex has been operated by the health authority for number of years, and the rental is currently, I believe, at something like \$870 . . . \$875 a month. And the project that has been outlined to residents is by September 1, 2004, this monthly rent will be increased to \$1,075. And November 1, 2004, the rent will be going up to \$1,250. And it says that there will be a further projected increase for April 2005.

And the concerns are really on a number of fronts. The first one is, there are residents in that facility whose sole source of income is their pension. And with these rate increases they are very concerned that they will have sufficient funds available to manage their affairs. It's not just the rent for the assisted living as the minister, I know, would understand. They also have personal effects. They have medications. They have other expenses that they have to meet and obligations that they have to meet.

And so, Minister, I wondered firstly what the justification is for this kind of an increase. I recognize that some increases are warranted in terms of inflationary costs for these kinds of facilities. But this seems to be a rather significant and burdensome increase to have people face, especially when they have minimal means of finding resources to meet this kind of an increase.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — This particular facility is, as you said, assisted living. And assisted living is not part of the overall health system in the normal course. And it's not normally operated by health region, and there may actually be a somewhat separate organization even here. But the fees that are charged for this assisted living has been somewhat lower than is common across the province. And so the plan here is to bring the fees more in line with other assisted living residences right across the province.

And I think that that's the simple answer. They're looking at all of the things they do. There clearly, the health authority's role is to look at the services that are normally provided by the health authority. The intention here was that the operation would pay for itself in the sense of providing the services. And so I think the answer is as simple as that.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Minister. I appreciate the rationale for the authority looking to move to a break-even cost or to get more in-line with other areas. I understand in information that we received from the Kelsey Trail Health District that, for example, in Rose Valley where there's assisted living and its community and health district facilitated the rental as \$1,025; Carrot River 850 to \$1,000; Codette somewhere around \$1,150, where this has been at \$875. And certainly they probably on retrospect probably should have been moving up in sync with inflation over the last number of years, and I accept that.

The problem is that all of a sudden the adjustment comes, and it's very, very severe. And it doesn't really give residents a lot of time, particularly if they're on fixed incomes, if they're on pension incomes, in order to plan to make adjustments to their income because that's pretty much out of their hands. Their income is fixed by pension requirements and to, over the course of a very short period of time, attempt to make this kind of adjustment is very, very difficult for some. And some are worried that they'll have to leave the home because they just don't have enough money in order to do this. And they've sort of made the commitment to be there. Their health situation and personal situation is such that they require this support in their livelihood.

And the question is, is over and above the health authority's reason for justifying the rent changes, is how do people cope with that dramatic a rent increase in a very short period of time? And what's going to happen to them if they find themselves short of income in order to meet those rental increases?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — It's my information that the regional health authority will work with individuals who do have some challenges around some of the things that happen. There may be some other opportunities or other facilities that are available. But I think practically they'll try to work with the individuals involved.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's sort of troubling. In a newspaper article in the *Melfort Journal*, Tuesday, June 1, the headline story is, "Seniors hit hard with rental increase in Nirvana Villa." The last paragraph says and I quote,

Gordon Denton, (the) CEO of the . . . (Kelsey Trail Health Region) said that they discussed options at the board meeting, but have yet to come up with any answers for those who cannot afford the new rental increase.

And, you know, certainly families have contacted my office and said, you know, mom is in a real dilemma and is now very, very worried about what's going to happen to her because the pension income she has is her only income. Some of these families are able to help their parents out, and that's fine so far as it goes. But there are other family circumstances where the family situation is such that they simply can't come up with an extra \$200 to help mom with her costs involved with this.

(15:45)

And so, Minister, that's where . . . just sort of saying that trying to work something out is not really great assurance to these

individuals that they're going to be able to stay in this assisted-living facility, and there's a lot of anxiety and a lot of worry. I mean, I'm sure the minister understands that we're talking elderly people who have a very high anxiety level about worrying about the simple necessities of life.

So I wonder if the minister can give any concrete assurance to these individuals that indeed they're going to be able to stay in their home and not have to change facilities because of this dramatic increase in rentals.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the . . . what I can say is that the people with the health authority are intending to work with those individuals who have challenges with these changes, and they haven't obviously found all the solutions yet. We'll have to work with each of the families.

But I guess what I have to remind ourselves about though is that this is a service that is outside of the health budget and outside of the health system, but it has been operated by this particular health authority on a cost recovery basis, and so they need to make sure that it does do that so that they can provide other needed health services.

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

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Minister, and to your officials, thank you. I have a number of questions today, and I'm going to start with two specific cases because I've heard the minister mention that he would prefer I bring them directly to his office, so this is pretty direct. So I'm going to have . . . I'm going to ask if you will give me some idea of what these constituents should do for their specific problems.

I have one gentleman who's had some blood work ordered in February, and the test came back indicating he had a liver problem, and then there was ultrasound set up for March 17. The results came in at the end of March, and it showed there was a blockage in the liver. He saw a specialist in Saskatoon on April 7 and set up for a biopsy on May 3, and they still don't have any results. And they've now been told that their June 8 meeting has been changed to June 18, and for all the time this man has been living with yellow jaundice. He was taken to emergency in Chilliwack, and the doctor who attended him there said he couldn't believe he'd been not treated for yellow jaundice and said that the long waiting list we experience were unacceptable.

I'm wondering what the minister would tell me, that I should talk to my constituent about and ask him. Do you have any idea where I should go next with this constituent?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I guess what I would say to the member is that this is a very difficult forum to resolve this kind of a situation. It clearly is one that the person should talk to their doctor about. And this is an example of where the family doctor working together with the specialist can provide the information that's appropriate.

And so it's . . . If there's more information that the member wants to send me later, well I can do that. But practically this is one where the patient should work with their own doctor.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'm going to send you over the information that I have. And I'm sure that if you have an opportunity, or your official has an opportunity to speak to the family, you'll understand their frustration about the waiting list, the length of list, and their worry about the real issue.

Another constituent has received a letter from a neuro-ophthalmologist that she had an appointment with, saying that her appointment was cancelled as the doctor was moving out of the area. And he was the last specialist in this area. And so she was wondering what to do next. She's had two retina strokes and gone for four follow-up appointments and still doesn't really know where she can go next.

The minister's office had said that they would consider paying for out-of-province visit but not expenses. Can you give me some indication on what . . . if there is any opportunity for the expenses, the costs involved in going out of province for treatment, is it something that your office considers?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think this is also a case where the person needs to work with their general practitioner, to work with the specialist. That's the normal way that it's done. But practically, the way the system works for out-of-province referrals is that there needs to be confirmation that the treatment for this particular person is out of province. And then we'll pay for all of the medical expenses that are needed wherever they have to go, but we don't pay the travel expenses.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Again I'm going to send you the information over the specifics and perhaps you can look at them in more detail.

Mr. Minister, I would like . . . I have a few questions around the issue of home care. And it appears from speaking to individuals around the province that there is different standards of home care. In some areas people are allowed, do get home visits, and I know that happens a lot in rural Saskatchewan.

But I understand here in Regina there is times when people don't get the visits to their home; they're expected to go to an office somewhere. And an individual that I'm dealing with has had breast cancer surgery. And the day after she came out of surgery she was expected to go down to the local clinic. And I'm sure the minister's aware of the location of this clinic — it's beside the A & W. And at times it's very difficult to find a parking spot.

Now I'm wondering if there's different standards around the province for a determination of when you actually will have somebody coming to your house to provide the care that you're needing, and when you are expected to actually leave your bed and go see the specialist outside of your home.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I appreciate that question. It's in Regina they have set up a home care office, and it's been there for a number of years on south Albert Street. And effectively what it was there was to basically replace people having to go to the emergency ward. You know, years ago people would be requested to come to the emergency ward for various kinds of treatments that were needed. And so, this was set up to replace that. They try to make sure they assess patients who are able to

go there and if somebody, I think, feels that they're not able to go there, they will send somebody out to their home.

But many times people prefer to go there because they have expertise in certain kinds of things that people need of a more of a home care nature, as opposed to going to a hospital.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, could you explain if the criteria involved in determining whether someone should leave their home to go to this office or if somebody comes to see them, if the patient's wishes are involved at all?

I know that the person that I was involved with said that it was very difficult, in fact physically very hard on her, to leave just less than 24 hours after she had had this major surgery.

And I know in Saskatchewan, and I'm not sure if in any other province, but in Saskatchewan having a mastectomy is day surgery and it's something that's a traumatic experience. And yet one day later, this person was expected to get out of bed and go find a place in the A & W parking lot to see somebody about this issue. It seems to me that, in this case, you're better off in rural Saskatchewan than you are in Regina.

Could you tell me if the patient's needs or wants are involved in making this determination?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the simple answer to your question is that the services are based on needs, but they do try to accommodate the wants and wishes of individual patients.

And so, practically, they assess whether a person can come to the home care clinic that's set up. And if that's a possibility, then they would, you know, probably make that arrangement. But clearly, if there were some other issues, those would . . . they try to take those into account as well.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, the young lady that I had spoken to said that she had this idea . . . she was told that the age of the patient made a difference as well, and because she was not an elderly person that it was going to be possible for her to go out. I'm thinking that this is the type of thing where staying in your bed after major surgery like this is something that would have been better in the idea of a wellness model, to allow this to happen. There has to be some appreciation of the actual desires of the patient.

And is the age of the patient a criteria in determining whether they should be able to go to this centre or whether the nurse will come to them?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the answer is it's the assessment of the need, but for an elderly person age is a factor that ends up having to be taken into account. If a person is younger, there may be less concerns about the ability to get around on their own. But clearly the assessment is on the need for the person.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, was I wrong in my belief that in rural Saskatchewan or in different health regions in the province there would be different criteria about whether the patient would actually have help coming to their home or whether they would be required to go out? Is it up to the individual health districts or is it a provincial policy?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the answer is that the standards across the province are the same but how those standards are met can vary in different areas depending on what resources there are.

In Regina they have this special clinic; in other parts of the province they may not have that so a person might have to actually go to the hospital to have similar care or there would be some home care option or there may be some other option. So in that sense there may be some variation of how the service is provided, but the standards across the province would be similar.

Ms. Draude: — I would imagine that . . . I don't have anybody out in my constituency that's had a similar situation but I'm not aware of anyone that's had to leave their bed after an operation to go to a facility, so it would appear that there are different standards or requirements in different health districts.

Mr. Minister, I'd like you to give me your government's stand on the First Nations MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) that was proposed by the Muskeg Lake First Nations.

(16:00)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I'm not sure of the specific issue that the member is asking about but in the assessment of what MRI facilities we need in the province, in our budget plan for this year we've included the expansion of MRI in the Regina area because that's where some of the biggest need is. But we've also been able to extend the hours of use of the three existing MRIs. What we're trying to do is assess the need for MRIs in the public system across the province.

The Muskeg Lake proposals over a number of years have identified some of the things that they would like to do in the health area at their particular facility and those kinds of discussions have been ongoing around that. The specific question around the MRI, I think, relates to what is the overall requirement in the long term for the public health system. And at this point we have a plan to go forward the way we are.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, I'm sure you're aware that the Muskeg Lake had actually indicated that they were willing to put in an MRI before the budget and had thought that there would be some co-operation with your government to be able to use the facility. And yet instead the government determined to put in their own. And obviously it meant that they were . . . they felt that there wasn't any co-operation when it comes to working with them and using the equipment that they would be willing to put in.

Is this a jurisdictional issue or is it an area where you have any plans to work with this, with the First Nations to ensure that there would be MRI coverage for people if they would be allowed to put up an MRI or if they would determine to put up an MRI on the reserve?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I think the basic issue for us is the need in the overall system and how we can provide it through the public health system.

One of the challenges that comes with MRIs or other highly

technical equipment that are set up outside of the system relates to the medical personnel and the ongoing operating costs, which primarily relate to the specialists and others who are involved.

And we have been in discussions with the people at Muskeg Lake around some of those kinds of issues because we end up running the facilities in Saskatoon now and we've had challenges getting sufficient personnel to run the machines that we already have. We've given bursaries; we have some people that have finished or are in the process of finishing their courses, and we're hoping and we're planning to have them allow us to expand the hours of the existing equipment that we have in the province plus the new MRI. It's a challenge because we're operating in a national situation where many . . . there aren't sufficient of the technologists and the radiologists to do all of this.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, then if I hear you, one of the main concerns was that there may not be enough professionals to operate the MRI?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the main question we have is the need, and it was clear that in Regina was the greater need. But in the long term, we are concerned about staff and the staff that we have in our existing facilities, and we're wanting to make sure we have a full complement to use the existing equipment that we do have.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, one of the pieces of legislation that was brought forward this year was the tobacco legislation. And I know you're aware that it caused a bit of a kerfuffle about the jurisdiction about . . . on-reserve. Can you tell me what you consider the jurisdiction issue for the tobacco legislation on-reserve?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the issue around tobacco legislation is one where we have to look at what's the reason that we're doing all of this. It's basically related to the health of the public, especially the health of young people.

I know that many of the chiefs of the First Nations and other leaders in the First Nations are very concerned about the health of their young people in the same way that we are concerned about the people for . . . the health of the people for the whole province — and I know talking to the federal ministers of Health, their concern on a national basis.

I think our goal is to try to move forward with legislation that works on a federal basis, on a provincial basis, on a First Nation basis, on a municipal basis. And that's what our ultimate plan is. And there are quite a number of ways that you can do that, but primarily it involves trying to sort out how we can do these things together because there appears to be a common goal for all of our legislation, and that's to reduce and eliminate the use of tobacco.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And I know that the chiefs that I've spoken to agree with you wholeheartedly when it comes to the issue of denormalizing smoking. And that isn't the issue that they were concerned about.

What they had discussed and brought to my attention was the fact that there wasn't any approaches or discussions of coming

to the table and bringing forward legislation that the two . . . that everyone could say, I agree to this, and feel like we're part of the solution — not having problems built up between First Nations people and ourselves.

It probably would have been an issue that could have been a joint issue, that two leaders could have sat at a table and had a press conference and said, you know what, in Saskatchewan this is something that all people will benefit from and it's legislation that we agree with. They are just asking for respecting the jurisdiction. And it was an issue that I think First Nations people were disappointed in when they didn't have the opportunity to say, we agree with it, let's sit down together and talk about the issue as two groups of people that are concerned about smoking in this province.

So I think that I'm speaking in tune when I say that denormalizing tobacco smoking is the goal of all of us. And it's just a matter of making sure that it's done in a way that's acceptable to everyone. What kind of forward planning did you do when it came to working with First Nations people to ensure that they would be on board when this legislation came forward?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I guess what I would want to do is correct the statements that were just made in that they're not accurate. We have been meeting — and I have personally been meeting — with a number of the chiefs over the last year. We met with one of the vice-chiefs of the FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) around this particular topic. I've talked to some of the chiefs of some of the grand councils about this. And what we are trying to do is work together to figure out how to move forward with this whole area of legislation.

It's always a challenge to get all of the communities working together. But I think that there is a common goal of dealing with and working towards the reduction of the use of tobacco in our province, and we're going to be moving forward with that.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, what I was suggesting is that there should have been a working together and a solution determined before the legislation came forward, and then the issue wouldn't have been something that seemed like it was divisive. It would have sent the message that everybody agreed that smoking is not . . . is harmful.

Mr. Minister, the last issue I wanted to talk to you about was MACSI (Metis Addiction Council of Saskatchewan Inc.). The issue was brought forward last spring and the report was requested by the Provincial Auditor, and we're expecting that report later this fall. And I'm wondering if . . . When speaking earlier I learned that it may not be a public report, and it would basically be up to your discretion and up to your department whether the report would be made public. What is your decision on this issue?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The forensic audit is currently underway, and it's being supervised by the Provincial Auditor, working together with the forensic auditor. We expect it to be completed at the end of August. And practically, I think the Provincial Auditor will include a report of his finding in his report this fall.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Just to clarify then,

will the report only be made public through the Provincial Auditor's finding, or will the actual report and the forensic audit that is being done independently be open to the public?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — At this point I am not sure we can answer that question, because it will depend on what the report finds and what the advice of the lawyers are, and clearly the Privacy Commissioner is involved in this as well.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, I would hope that the decision on whether the information is made public isn't determined . . . the determination isn't what the report says. Because regardless of what the report says it should be something that the public have a right to see, that there was a forensic audit and the Provincial Auditor is involved.

So the final determination should be . . . whether it's privacy I could maybe even understand, but not what the report says. So maybe you could clarify.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think what I said before is that the findings will be put forward — and I think that's what you were talking about — as the report. So very clearly, whatever they find will come forward as the report of the Provincial Auditor, and he'll put that in his report. But the actual full detail of the report, I think that sometimes becomes more of a challenge.

The Chair: — I recognize the member for Lloydminster.

(16:15)

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and Mr. Minister, and greetings to your officials. Mr. Minister, the last time we had a chance to talk about the issues in my constituency, we were talking about the closure of the hospital in Paradise Hill. And we phrased that . . . And if I could just take a moment just to kind of summarize my thoughts at that point. We were talking about what we could do, what you could suggest to the people in that Paradise Hill area — in fact that whole region — how we could work together to make sure that we're not handicapping or jeopardizing a growing and a youthful population and making sure rural revitalization is an ongoing commitment. And we talked about some of the other things that are happening, the closing of the hospital being one.

Since then, Mr. Minister, the people of Paradise Hill have had a chance to discuss this with the Prairie North Health Region, with I think the Chair and certainly the CEO, Mr. Fan, and maybe they've talked a couple times.

And as you know from your experience, the people in that community are very protective of the services that they have and have come to Regina a couple of times I think to meet with you and your officials before. And just last weekend we spent some time talking about this again. So I guess my question will be based on this preamble.

From the day of the announcement and the backgrounder to the announcement, I think it said that Paradise Hill Hospital would be converted to a health service centre — is that the right word, health service centre? — and that ongoing services would be normal, I think, to a normal health service centre. And I think we talked about visitation, physician visitation, X-ray, lab, and

maybe home care offices, that kind of thing.

I want to make sure that the people of Paradise Hill understand that this is not just a closure and everything's going to be closed down, but a conversion to a health services centre with normal health service centre activities going on — similar to, for instance, what goes on in Turtleford, what goes on in St. Walburg. I think they would be looking for nothing less than that. Would that be a fair comment?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — It's my understanding, which is the same as your understanding, that some of the officials from the Prairie North Region went up to that area to talk to the community about what kinds of options are there. And I think that's an ongoing discussion and that it will be informed by the actual services required in that community.

One of the big challenges that we've had at this facility is the extremely low utilization rate of the existing facilities. But clearly there are some other services that are being used and we need to design an overall service package that provides the services that are being used.

Mr. Wakefield: — Yes, thank you, Mr. Minister. I think that's the kind of response that they're willing to . . . These people understand that the utilization was not up to what is an acceptable level. But they don't want to see this thing closed and the doors locked and it just go away.

And so the normal services provided in a health centre would be the kinds of things, including observation bed, maybe palliative, maybe respite, but in order for a physician to come there, and with other normal services, there needs to be at least a nurse equivalent. And that's I think the discussion that these people are presently having.

So from the understanding that I have of a health service centre, that in fact is what you in your announcement, or your officials referred to when there was going to be a re-designation of Paradise Hill. And if that's the case that would be good news for the Paradise Hill community because there would be ongoing facility usage. There would be maybe a different way of doing things.

And I've got another question later to that. But the ongoing . . . utilizing both the facility, what's needed in the community and also some professional help to make sure that it does in fact . . . it is relevant and sustainable.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I can think that that is really the answer, is what is a sustainable long-term service for that area and what kinds of services will they require there? I mean one of the challenges, as we all know, relates to the fact that the Lloydminster facilities are so close many people will head that direction. And clearly our transportation systems are quite different than they were quite a number of years ago.

So practically I think the goal is to work together with the community and get the right mix of services.

Mr. Wakefield: — Yes, thank you, Mr. Minister. I think that is what the community also wishes. In discussion this last weekend I think there were several people actually in the

facility in observation, recuperative. And I think it was in conjunction with what was made available to them from a . . . in a practical way from the hospital in Lloydminster. They were able to be transported there and observed and carry on.

And again, the critical point from their point of view is that if there isn't a single RN (registered nurse) or nurse equivalent, the physician that is there or one that they're trying to recruit, it's going to be very difficult to keep that continuity.

And so I know you've directed what you can do to the health region. I've tried to offer some suggestions. It's not certainly my mandate to tell them what or what they shouldn't do. But I'm certainly trying to encourage them to put some positive suggestions on the table so that it can be utilized in this facility which has some life in it yet, is there in that community.

So I thank you for those comments and I'm going to share them with that community.

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

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Minister, I have several different areas that I would like to question you about today. And first of all, I would like to ask you about an incident that happened in my riding where a gentleman attended surgery at Weyburn hospital, for dental surgery and subsequently received a letter and a bill for four hundred some dollars. When he questioned this, he was informed that this was common practice and that he would have to pay the fee and was informed by the Sun Country Health District that, in fact, dentists had been notified of this and should've been charging.

I have a letter from the dentist informing the patient that, in fact, they were never notified and so had no opportunity to advise their patients accordingly. And yet the health district is saying that this charge will stand. Could you please comment?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I'm not certain about the circumstances that have been raised, but the basic rule is, if it's not insured for the physician as a service — or the dentist in this case — then it's not insured in the hospital and so the hospital will charge the patient.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and I appreciate that answer. The concern and the reason that I'm raising it is that the dentist, according to his information, was never notified, had no opportunity to inform his patients that indeed if they did go for surgery that they would be charged. And now after the fact, the health district is saying well, that's too bad, but you are going to have to pay.

I think this is not fair. The patient did not have the opportunity to know that they would be receiving this bill, and I would appreciate if the minister would look into this and act accordingly.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — If you can provide us with some of the information, perhaps later then we'll take a look at that.

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Minister, I appreciate that and I will provide you with the information.

On another issue, I have a young lady in my riding who has three small children. She's a professional person. She has been doctoring since last October. She has been informed that she has a pre-cancerous position; that she does need surgery in order to prevent her condition from becoming cancerous. She has now been told that she . . . the earliest possible time when she can receive treatment is in August. I did contact your office, Mr. Minister, last week with this information.

The lady was then phoned by your office and informed that her options were to call the surgical co-ordinator who then called the lady in my riding and was told that she could go on the Sask surgery Web site. And failing that, that she could look into the Government of Alberta's Web site to see if they had anything available and was not made clear who would pay for it, if in fact she could find something in Alberta.

I find this very alarming. I did contact her this afternoon. She has heard nothing further. She is very concerned because of course, she has an opportunity to have surgery before it becomes . . . her condition becomes cancerous, has been advised as such. And if she cannot receive this — which obviously she cannot; she's been advised that she cannot — the earliest she can have this surgery in Saskatchewan is in August.

Will the government please provide an avenue for her to go elsewhere for this surgery.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the challenge is that this particular person is very concerned and we want to have a system that helps these people sort out how they get these things. And so practically, we'll have to take a look and make sure it's raised in the appropriate places.

One of the challenges comes, is that it's the family doctor working together with the surgeon, that they will set up some of the procedural steps. And part of what we're trying to do overall on a broader basis is make sure that individual patients have some information about the whole . . . how the whole system works so that they can understand if there are some other options.

But our goal, as we've said before, is to have these people who have been assessed by their doctors make their way into surgery as quickly as possible. So I appreciate you raising this one and perhaps we can get back to you about this particular patient.

Ms. Bakken: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. And as you've indicated on many occasions, that if we would call your office, that then, that would be the appropriate method. And that is in fact what I did, and this lady was basically sloughed off and told to phone the quality coordinator and then was told to phone a help line to see what the wait-list was. That's not good enough.

She is a young mother. She needs this surgery in order to prevent her case from becoming cancerous. She's been told that by her specialist. The reason she cannot access care faster is because there is not appropriate time . . . or operating time for her to do this.

And I would ask the minister, and I will be contacting you again after this, to please make arrangements for her to go elsewhere

for this care if it cannot be provided in the province.

(16:30)

I'd like to move on to another issue and it is the prevention program for cervical cancer. Women across the province are receiving letters advising them that they should indeed go for an examination, which is good. However, they are concerned about how this process is handled. How many hands does their personal information go through prior to them receiving letters of this kind?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The question is, what is the process involved? Effectively the test is done in the general practitioner's office and it goes to the lab, and the lab sends the results to the general practitioner and to the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency which then . . . they have the screening program there. And those are effectively the places that it goes. Then the letters are sent out from the screening program at the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and I appreciate the answer.

I guess I'm wondering if the answer was that simple, why that answer was not given to this lady. She wrote a letter, actually to the Chair of Human Services Committee, cc'd to our office in May of this year, indicating that she received the letter last October indicating to her that she needed to look into having this procedure.

At that time she did contact your office and the Premier's office, and was unable to get any answers from either office. She then contacted her MLA and expressed her concerns about the fact that her private health information was being passed on to an organization without her permission. Her MLA wrote a letter to the Minister of Health, yourself, passing on her concerns. But her MLA was then unwilling to assist her any further.

The response that she received back from your office was unsatisfactory. And she said when she tried to get further answers from your office she was told that you did not have time — the minister did not have time — to deal with this issue and that the minister's office would take her name and phone number but not to expect a phone call back from the minister. This was back right following the election, and is now writing this letter and wondering, wanting information which she was unable to access from your office at the time.

I'm wondering why there would not have been a straightforward answer given to this lady, or something made public so all women across the province would have had this information, because I'm sure many others have inquired of the same.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the information from the Cancer Agency is that they have talked publicly about this process of how it works, but also they are working together with the Privacy Commissioner who is looking at the various steps in this particular process. There is a method whereby women can opt out of the system and there are a number of women who have done that.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, for that explanation. I guess, and that was what my question was about, is why was she not given that information? It's a simple, straightforward answer. She could then, you know, like it or dislike it and question that, but not to even be given an answer is not appropriate.

I'd like to move on to another area, Mr. Minister, and that is the whole area of addictions in the province of Saskatchewan. And first of all, I'd like to ask you about the mattress detox centre in Saskatoon that for some time been talked about for several years, and if you could update the legislature on where this is at today.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I'm assuming the member's asking about the detox facility that's attached to Larson House, and my understanding is that the construction of this 12-bed brief detox facility is now completed.

All of the partners who are involved in the development of this detox centre will be meeting over the summer now to develop all the necessary protocol. So that's police and health authority and various others making sure that the staffing requirements are agreed upon, the job descriptions, how the whole operation is going to be administered. It's anticipated that the centre will open and accept its first clients within the first two weeks of September.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And that's certainly good news. Is the province going to be funding the ongoing operating expenses, or how will that be funded?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The funding for this facility will go through the Saskatoon Health Authority, so it'll be part of their overall budget. And it's anticipated that they'll be working still with some of the partners that they have, but it's also anticipated that they have built this into their ongoing budget for the Saskatoon Health Authority.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Further on the whole issue of addictions, in Lloydminster there is a facility called the Walter "Slim" Thorpe Recovery Centre. There has been concern about the lack of funding and the lack of beds that are available at this facility.

It was raised in the Alberta legislature some two months ago because of the shared funding of beds between Alberta and Saskatchewan, and my understanding is that Saskatchewan funds two of the beds. In the article that I read it indicated that the major problem, and I'd like to quote from . . . the director actually said that:

"Turning people away is the most stressful part of my job," . . . She refers those she can't find beds for to other centres or to other counseling and addictions programs . . . Those answers are difficult for those fighting addiction . . . "They say, 'My God, I'm looking for help and you're not giving it to me.'"

"Sometimes it's too hard to say no and I squeak them in."

The director indicated that in the month — and this was written in March of this year, this article — that they turned some 90

people away that were requiring services.

I'd like the minister, if you could indicate to the legislature, the availability of beds in the province of Saskatchewan and what is being done to address concerns like this, where in this one city in our province, 90 people are being turned away a month?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you for this question. It's not as simple to answer as you might think. But effectively, if the question is about what kind of services we provide across the province, the basic goal is that we try to provide community services as the main task, but we also have the addiction services beds available when necessary.

And I think if I can give you the numbers, maybe this will help explain what's happening. We have detoxification beds in the province and this doesn't . . . well the total number is 75 beds across the province. We have in-patient beds, which is a total of 164 across the province, and then we have two long-term residential services and those are 21 beds. So there's a total of 260 beds across the province.

But there are 50 community-based outpatient service facilities for youth and adult clients that are in the regional health authority. So the first sort of response is to deal with them through the community-based outpatient service facilities, but we do have these other beds available as well.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Well when I speak to people across the province that are involved with helping people with addiction, the one thing that I continually hear is that there is a lack of beds. There's a lack of detox beds, so the mattress detox in Saskatoon certainly will be a welcome addition there. But it is an ongoing problem. Where are the 75 detox beds located at in the province?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well there are two beds at the Lloydminster "Slim" Thorpe facility. The Angus Campbell facility in Moose Jaw has 20 beds. The La Ronge Health Centre facility, which is part of the La Ronge Health Centre, has 4 beds. Regina Detox has 25. The Saskatoon Larson Intervention House has 18, and the Prince Albert facility has 6. So that's a total of 75.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. The other issue that we hear a lot about — or was indicated to me — is that none of the beds are earmarked as specifically for youth, that there is not a separate facility. At one time in the province of Saskatchewan we had a separate facility for youth, White Spruce. And in speaking to addiction counsellors and so on, they indicate that it is important to have a separate facility for youth.

Is there any plans by this government to have a facility that is directly related just for youth and to address their specific concerns?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — There is a facility at the Calder Centre for 12 youth beds. They are designated youth beds, but the emphasis . . . and that's in Saskatoon. But the emphasis across the province is to try to work with young people in the community as much as possible, and so that is the emphasis that's there in about the 50 centres across the province. But

there are 12 designated youth beds at the Calder Centre in Saskatoon.

(16:45)

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I guess the other issue is that people that work in the addiction field indicate that when people are crying out for help and that they've decided that they want to do something about their addiction, they need to have the care and the help at the time — and it's an ongoing problem trying to find a place for people to actually access that care — and that they do need an in-patient treatment facility in order to help them, that staying in the community is often not the answer because they need to be removed from their surroundings and from their environment in order to have the opportunity to kick their addiction.

And so this is very disturbing that in this one facility in Lloydminster that in February — and the indication from the director is that March was going to be no different — that up to 90 people were turned away and were not receiving help.

And I'm sure that you have talked to Justice and to police officers across the province who will indicate to you that upwards of 80 per cent of all crimes in the province are directly related to addictions.

And so if we address the addiction problems, that we would certainly be a long way to reducing crime, we would go a long way to alleviating a lot of the health care costs in emergency, and the ongoing cost of health care because of people suffering from addictions.

The director of the centre in Lloydminster indicated that with \$20,000 from each province, Alberta and Saskatchewan, that they would be able to provide two more beds which would go a long way to helping them with their waiting lists that they have of people trying to get into their facility.

Is there any indication . . . could you indicate if that is going to be funded and if you are going to have more access to beds in the Lloydminster facility?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — At the Lloydminster facility I did mention there were two detoxification beds. There are also five in-patient beds there that are specifically ones that are designated, and that the Prairie North Health Region is responsible for that area and they have been working with the Alberta health region on the other side which is headquartered in Camrose. And I know that they try to look at how they can provide the kind of facilities that are needed in that whole area.

And so practically, I would assume that the various facilities that are involved there would be working with both sides of the border. It has a few more complications but practically they have been able to provide some of the good services over a number of years.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I hope that there will be a positive conclusion to this request then.

On another area of addiction services in the province, the Dr. Sinclair Jamieson Memorial Foundation, which provides

outpatient addiction services in Moosomin, has been in operation since 1989. They received \$10,000 from the Pipestone Health District originally. And then in the last three years they received it under child action plan because their major program is one of education and prevention with students in Moosomin schools, as well as schools in Wapella, Rocanville, and Sakimay First Nation.

And they were under child action for three years and have now been advised that they will no longer be receiving funding. Mr. Minister, it's very important that we educate our young people in the schools, as we've been speaking the last few days, about the whole threat of meth, crystal meth and how it's affecting young people and the need to be proactive in this area. And I am wondering why this money would be cut.

And when this happened, then they did approach the regional health authority asking them if they would be willing to fund this program, and were told by members of management of the health district that if they were looking for money that they might as well go home that the meeting was over, when they met with them.

And this organization indicates, as we all know, that a community-based organization is a most financially cost efficient and most feasible of providing these kinds of services. And when they're being offered, why would the government not look at funding the very nominal amount that they require in order to carry on this most worthwhile project for children in the schools at Moosomin and area?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the answer is that this particular organization has been providing some of these services but they're similar services to what the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region has been providing, and they have decided that they would go ahead and provide the services through the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region. And that's the best explanation that I have.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Well that brings up a very interesting issue and it's one of a grave concern across the province by people that have provided addiction services to many people for years. And their willingness and their knowledge of the whole addiction field has been disregarded in the last few years.

And there's been a total movement away from community-based organizations being able to provide these services at a very cost-effective means, and a movement to put addiction services under mental health and to move to a harm reduction model, which certainly, my understanding is, in some cases it is warranted. But in most cases if you speak with people that work in the field of addictions, they believe that the 12-step program and one of abstinence is the superior way to go and is the real way of helping people in our province.

And it's my indication that on a letter written from the then minister of Health about four or five years ago, that harm reduction was being looked at but was in no means the model. My understanding now is that that is the format that the government is taking. And I would like you to comment on the now use of this model at St. Louis, where the driving rehab program takes place, and how the department justifies using this

model when people are there for being rehabilitated for drunk driving.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The various methods of treatment that are used within the health system are the ones that are recommended by professionals within the field. At the facility at St. Louis, they have continued with the abstinence, 12-step model but they also have other forms of treatment depending on the assessment of the particular person that comes into that facility.

And it's based on the professionals who are involved looking at the latest evidence. And clearly, there are some debates around what's the most appropriate method of doing it. But at that particular facility, they offer more than one method of treatment based on their assessment of the particular client that comes into their facility.

Ms. Bakken: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. And I guess I'm confused because my understanding is that one of the staff members that was employed at St. Louis has been relieved of her job because she promoted the 12-step program as opposed to the harm reduction, and that that facility is being closed for some three weeks in order to put the harm reduction program into place. I stand to be corrected. That is the information that I have received.

And there certainly is great concern amongst people that work in the addiction field in this province of the move to go away from a 12-step program. It's also my understanding that in Regina, at the facility that used to be called Myers House, that also the 12-step program is no longer one that is sanctioned and promoted. And I'd like a comment on that.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The specific question about Regina, is that about . . . Are you asking about the Regina recovery program or the Regina Detox Centre, or which facility is it?

But I think practically with all of the facilities there are, they're using more than one type of treatment based on the professional assessment of the clients and then designing a specific program for each client.

The Chair: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — I move we report progress.

The Chair: — The Government House Leader has moved that the committee report progress on the consideration of estimates for the Department of Health. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That is carried. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — I move that we recess, Mr. Chair, until 7.

The Chair: — Thank you, Government House Leader. The Government House Leader has moved that the committee recess until 7 p.m. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That is carried. This House stands recessed until 7 p.m.

The Assembly recessed until 19:00.

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