



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

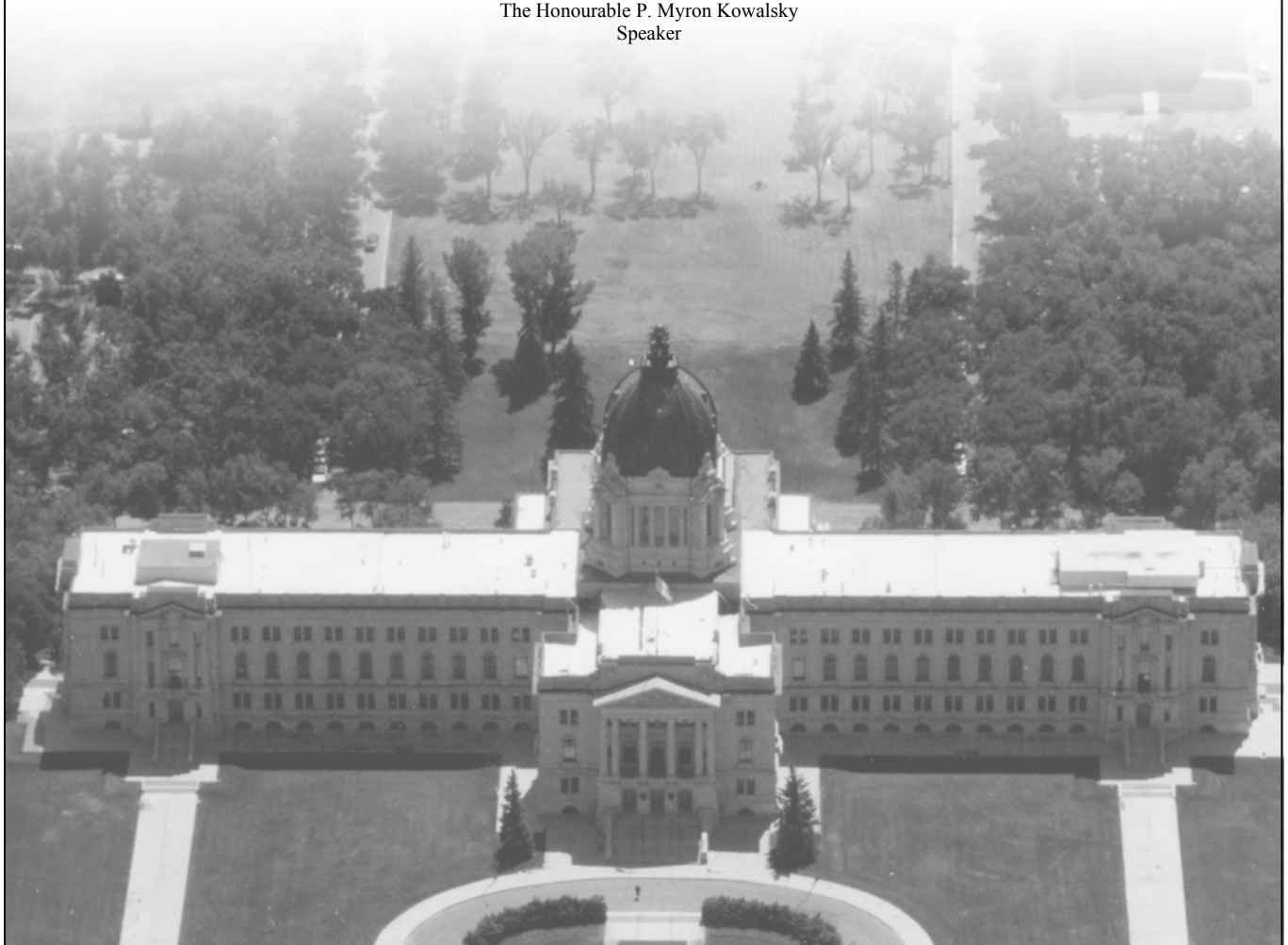
Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**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: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again today I rise to present a petition on behalf of constituents from the area of Cypress Hills. The prayer reads as follows:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition today is signed by individuals from the communities of Climax and Frontier.

I so present.

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

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here that citizens want public hearings on . . . before the closures and layoffs in Saskatchewan health care system take effect:

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 Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition from constituents opposed to the possible reduction of health care services in Wilkie. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Wilkie Health Centre and special care home maintain at the very least their current level of services.

Signed by the good citizens of Wilkie and district, I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again in the Assembly today to present a petition on behalf of residents of west central Saskatchewan concerned with the loss of health care facilities. And the petition 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 Kerrobert Hospital is not closed or further downsized.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals from the towns of Kerrobert, Denzil, Luseland, Cactus Lake, Major, and Compeer, Saskatchewan.

I so present.

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

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition to save the Luseland and Dodsland ambulance services. The prayer of this 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 will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of signatures on this petition from the communities of Dodsland and, I believe, from Plenty as well. And I am pleased to present this petition on their behalf.

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 No. 35 south of Weyburn. 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 Radville, Ogema, Bengough, and Ceylon.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional papers nos. 97, 128, 165, 166, 167, 182, and 201.

**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: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on Human Services to report Bill No. 43, The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods 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. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

THIRD READINGS

**Bill No. 43 — The Safer Communities
and Neighbourhoods 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. 43 be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — 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. 10, The Administration of Estates Amendment Act, 2004 with 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 Committee of the Whole on this Bill. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. When shall the amendments be read a first and second time? I recognize the minister.

FIRST AND SECOND READING OF AMENDMENTS

**Bill No. 10 — The Administration of Estates
Amendment Act, 2004/Loi de 2004 modifiant la Loi
sur l'administration des successions**

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — I move that the amendments be now read a first and second time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the minister that the amendments be now read a first and second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First and second reading of the amendments.

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

THIRD READINGS

**Bill No. 10 — The Administration of Estates
Amendment Act, 2004/Loi de 2004 modifiant la Loi
sur l'administration des successions**

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

The Speaker: — Leave has been requested for a third reading. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. It has been moved by the member that this Bill 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'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Human Services to report Bill No. 53, The Securities Amendment Act, 2004 without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall Bill 53 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 of Justice has requested leave to waive consideration of Committee of the Whole of Bill 53. 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. 53 — The Securities 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. 53 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'm instructed by the Standing

Committee on Human Services to report Bill No. 34, The Psychologists Amendment Act, 2004 without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall Bill 34 be considered in committee? I recognize the Minister of Health.

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

The Speaker: — The Minister of Health has requested leave to waive consideration of Committee of the Whole on Bill 34. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 34 — The Psychologists Amendment Act, 2004

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — 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 Health that Bill No. 34, The Psychologists 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'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Human Services to report Bill No. 49, The Vital Statistics Amendment Act, 2004 without amendment.

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

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

The Speaker: — The Minister of Health has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bill 49. 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. 49 — The Vital Statistics
Amendment Act, 2004/Loi de 2004 modifiant
la Loi de 1995 sur les services de l'état civil**

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — 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 Health that Bill No. 49, The Vital Statistics 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.

The 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 Arm River-Watrous.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice I shall on day no. 58 ask the government the following question:

To the SaskTel minister: are any of the employees and/or owners performing contract work for SaskTel to locate searching for underground lines current employees of SaskTel?

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

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 58 ask the government the following question:

Also to the minister of SaskTel: can the minister please provide what changes in service fees there have been for telephone installation and hook-up charges for the year 2003?

And a similar question for the calendar year 2004.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — Members of the Assembly, I have an honour . . . it's my honour at this time to make an introduction. We have several guests in the Speaker's gallery today. They are all here to participate in a tea in honour of Barb Tomkins, who will be completing her 10th year as Saskatchewan's Provincial Ombudsman.

And with her today are also many members of her family, several members of her family, as well as friends and colleagues. And I would like to introduce several of them now

and ask them perhaps to give a wave as I introduce them.

First of all there's Barb's husband, Kirk Rondeau; and Barb's daughter, Meaghan Rondeau; Barb's son, Andrew Rondeau; Barb's daughter, Anna Rondeau; Barb's mother, Gerry Tomkins; Barb's brother and sister in-law, Jim and Lynn Tomkins; Barb's brother, Don Tomkins; let's see, Penny Tomkins, who's a sister in-law and married to Barb's brother, Gerry, who couldn't be here today; and of course, Ms. Barb Tomkins herself. Could we please give a warm welcome to this group.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I also want to introduce the Provincial Ombudsman from Manitoba, who is here, Mr. Barry Tuckett, and the Provincial Ombudsman for Alberta, Mr. Gordon Button and Barbara Button are here. Welcome to our neighbouring ombudsmen.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — And a special welcome to all of the friends and colleagues of Barbara who came here today as well.

I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to formally introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, the Provincial Ombudsman, Ms. Barbara Tomkins, and I ask all members to join me in extending our deepest appreciation to Ms. Tomkins as the end of her term draws here.

Barbara Tomkins was appointed to serve her initial five-year term as Ombudsman on July 17, 1994. She was reappointed in 1999 to a second five-year term. The Ombudsman is an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly and plays an important role in ensuring that government remains responsive to the citizens of Saskatchewan.

Under Ms. Tomkins' leadership, the focus of the Office of the Ombudsman has been on fairness rather than specific compliance in delivery of government services. The number of complaints received by this office has risen steadily over the years and the office was streamlined both to handle the increase and to more quickly address all complaints.

Throughout her tenure the work of the Ombudsman has reflected her commitment to real and lasting change. Ms. Tomkins made significant strides in reducing the backlog of complaints in the office, improving office morale, and providing leadership to the employees in the Office of the Ombudsman.

She introduced an early intervention methodology to the resolution of complaints, which allows the office to address the immediate concerns of complainants separate from the formal process. This intervention methodology included the introduction of mediation as a mechanism to promote mutually acceptable resolutions.

Barbara Tomkins has shown herself to be a capable Ombudsman. She has performed her duties in a professional

and judicious manner, and all members of the Assembly and the citizens of Saskatchewan owe her our thanks.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join me in wishing her all the best in her future endeavours.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you and the member from Saskatoon Meewasin for their kind words in honouring the work of outgoing Provincial Ombudsman, Barbara Tomkins. There is no doubt that the Ombudsman's office has shown great commitment to its vision and mandate, and this is no doubt related to Ms. Tomkins' absolute dedication to seeing this carried out.

But I can honestly tell the House that I'm not at all surprised for this because I had some significant first-hand experience with this many years ago when I dealt with Ms. Tomkins in an earlier life. I first met Ms. Tomkins in 1988 when I was Chair of the Saskatchewan Legal Aid Commission. Ms. Tomkins at that time was the area director for the Estevan office. This office was a one-lawyer office, which meant that she practised absolutely by herself. And it was during her time as area director and mine as Chair of the commission that she developed a significant practice of ignoring my instructions and putting her clients' needs and clients' directions first. The fact that I signed her paycheque seemed to matter not one whit to her.

(13:45)

Thinking that perhaps I should do some investigating to see if it was just maybe a miscommunication on my part or a misunderstanding, I did some checking around and I contacted some judges in the area. And it seems that I was not alone. They had surprisingly similar stories about Ms. Tomkins. They said that she had a great desire to put clients' wishes ahead of their needs — their needs for adjournments, their needs to get out of the court house. And that she was absolutely focused on one issue, and that was the needs of her clients.

It seems, Mr. Speaker, that Ms. Tomkins had absolutely no fear for authority and quite a significant lack of respect for authority. And frankly, I admire that and I can't imagine better qualifications for an Ombudsman.

Somebody with a strong legal background, she is deeply committed to the principles of fairness and equity and has no problem standing up to those people who are in positions of authority. I think that these characteristics will come in handy throughout her life and certainly were of significant benefit to her in her role as Ombudsman.

When I heard that she was putting her name forward and was being considered for the job earlier, in 1994, I had no problem in trying to make some calls and do some lobbying on her behalf. At that time we were in the same political situation we are now, so lobbying from somebody with my particular political background wasn't particularly beneficial, but I did as

much as I could behind the scenes, Mr. Speaker.

Here we are, a decade later, and I take a great deal of pride in saying personally to Ms. Tomkins, thank you very much and best wishes in the future. And would ask that all members rise and thank Ms. Tomkins. Under her tutelage the Office of the Ombudsman has grown in stature and has done a great deal for all the citizens of this province.

Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege today to introduce to you and to all the members of this Assembly, a number of guests who are seated in your gallery. These guests are partners in the prairie conservation action plan, known as PCAP. And they are here to mark Native Prairie Appreciation Week which will be observed June 20 to 26.

Mr. Speaker, you and my esteemed colleagues will recall that it was the members of PCAP who in 2001 encouraged the Government of Saskatchewan to adopt the needle-and-thread grass as Saskatchewan's provincial grass emblem.

Mr. Speaker, these same members of PCAP have worked tirelessly to preserve Saskatchewan's native prairie environment and to ensure that our native plants, birds, and animals enjoy their original habitat.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's native rangelands are worthy of preservation for many reasons. Native prairie is one of the most endangered landscapes in the world. Saskatchewan is fortunate enough to have retained nearly 20 per cent of its original acreage of native prairie.

Native prairie has many environmental, cultural, recreational, economic, and intrinsic values.

Native prairie is home to hundreds of species of fauna and flora. In fact many of Canada's endangered species are called . . . call native prairie home.

Native prairie is essential to the protection of fragile lands and the proper function of watersheds, and they are enormous carbon sinks.

Native prairie is a major cultural significance to many of Saskatchewan's First Nations, and provide many recreational opportunities for hikers, naturalists, hunters, and others.

Prairie rangelands provide an integral forage resource for Saskatchewan's livestock industry which includes over 3 million head of all classes of cattle alone.

Mr. Speaker, I feel we owe PCAP a great deal of thanks. We are enjoying, and future generations of Saskatchewan residents will enjoy, the native prairie environment because of the excellent work accomplished by members of the prairie conservation

action plan. Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to say that PCAP's work has received national acclaim.

And, Mr. Speaker, I recognize that this is a long introduction. I beg leave to complete it, given the value of their work.

The Speaker: — I thank the member for his consideration. He's requested leave for an extension on the introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and members. This year PCAP was awarded with the national Countryside Canada Award presented by Wildlife Habitat Canada and the Canadian Federation of Agriculture for accomplishments associated with PCAP's 998-2003 plan. This award recognizes efforts undertaken to improve wildlife habitat through stewardship programs that promote best management practices and voluntary conservation efforts.

Mr. Speaker, in 1999 PCAP introduced a week-long celebration of our native prairie and called the week Native Prairie Appreciation Week. The purpose of the week is to raise awareness of the importance of native prairie to Saskatchewan's agriculture and environmental sectors. During this week a two-day workshop and field tour is led by the Society for Range Management in co-operation with several other PCAP partners. This year, Mr. Speaker, the field tour will be of the Moose Mountains in southeastern Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, PCAP is chaired by the Saskatchewan Stockgrowers Association and is composed of several environmental, wildlife, and agricultural organizations, and some of their representatives are here today.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to this House, Ms. Karyn Scalise — and I would ask them to stand please. With her today are — and I would ask you to stand as your name is called — representing the Saskatchewan Stockgrowers Association, which serves as PCAP's Chair, are general manager, Sheila Fishley and Sara Pettigrew; Michael Champion, representing Ducks Unlimited Canada and the Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan Incorporated; Etienne Soulodre of the Society for Range Management, Northern Great Plains Section, Prairie-Parkland Chapter; Dr. David Gauthier of the Canadian Plains Research Centre of the University of Regina; Bill Houston of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration; Mary Brick of Saskatchewan Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization; Ann Gerry of Saskatchewan Environment; Tom Harrison of the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority; and Shelley Heidinger of SaskPower.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all my colleagues in the Assembly to welcome the members of the prairie conservation action plan and to express our thanks for the tremendous work that they are doing. Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to rise as well on behalf of the official opposition to extend our welcome to the members of the PCAP, prairie conservation action plan.

I am, as well, a steward of several hundred acres of native prairie and I have a sign at the end of my driveway that I'm very proud of that indicates that I'm part of that plan. I think that there's nothing more important in preserving our heritage than to preserve the original appearance of the Saskatchewan grasslands, and I'm very appreciative of the work these people have done.

And I hope that all members will join me in welcoming them to our Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would be remiss if I didn't note that Dr. Deborah Parker-Loewen is also in the gallery with us today, if she could give a wave. And no doubt in support of our Ombudsman's event today, but you'll have to wait your turn to have all those glowing comments about yourself. So thank you very much. Would my colleagues join me in welcoming her today as well.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly, I'd like to introduce 20 grade 4 students sitting in the east gallery. And they're from the Spruce Ridge School in Estevan. Mr. Speaker, they're accompanied by teacher, Ms. Barlow, and they have chaperones, Ms. Kirk, Ms. Hagen, and Ms. Wrubleski. And also accompanying them, Mr. Speaker, is Christie Mehler who is visiting from Australia.

Mr. Speaker, I had the chance to meet with this group of young men and women earlier and I can assure you they had lots of questions — and some tough questions. So I would hope that they enjoy the proceedings here this afternoon and I would ask all members to welcome them to their Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Legislative Assembly a group of nine students seated in the western gallery. The group is from Ranch Ehrlo and they work in conjunction with Herchmer School, Herchmer Community School — a fine school in the riding of Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

They are accompanied by their teachers, Paul MacDougall and Christina Kaluza. They're giving us a wave there. That's great. I look forward to meeting with them after question period to have a bit of a visit and maybe a juice and we'll see you very

soon.

So I ask all members to please give them a warm welcome to their Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Chisholm: — Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to you and through you to this Assembly to introduce 20 grade 6 students from Cut Knife Elementary School. They, with their principal, Mr. Len Dupuis, are seated in the east gallery. They are accompanied by parents Grant Wasmuth, Maria Tyler, Sherida Carlton, Virginia Thomas, and Maureen McDonald.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that we all welcome our visitors to their Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to join my colleague and welcome the guests from the Ranch Ehrlo Society. And in the students that are up there, I notice that they're Aboriginal students and . . .

(The hon. member spoke for a time in Cree.)

Just to point out that one of the things that I think is very important, Mr. Speaker, that we often want to say to Aboriginal guests is to be proud of your heritage, work very hard, go visit as many people as you can, and to say that we're very proud that you are here today to share with us the Assembly.

I'm very proud of the fact, as an Aboriginal person, that we have many Aboriginal people coming to join us, to visit us here in the Assembly. So keep up the good work and welcome once again. Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Twin Rivers Health Care Foundation Golf Tournament

Mr. Chisholm: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to commend Twin Rivers Health Care Foundation on their very successful 12th annual golf tournament, hosted by the Mervin and District Golf Club.

I had the opportunity to participate in the tournament along with some 90 other golfers. The weather was exceptional. The hospitality was exceptional. The food was exceptional. The golf score, while not exceptional, was tolerable.

The Mervin golf course is in great shape and, Mr. Speaker, if you or the members of this Assembly are in this beautiful area, I would recommend you take time to play the course.

In the 12 years this function has been held, over \$71,000 has been raised for local health services. This year's proceeds have been earmarked for the instruction of first aid care and . . . first aid and CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) for grade 12 students of Cut Knife, Neilburg, Maidstone, Lashburn, Hillmond, Paradise Hill, St. Walburg, and Turtleford. The remainder will be used for future equipment at the Riverside Health Care Complex in Turtleford.

Please join me in congratulating Karen Simons, community development coordinator for the health region and all of the volunteers for hosting this very worthwhile function. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Video Series Launched

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member from Saskatoon Nutana and I recently attended the launch of a video series entitled *A New Life in a New Land: the Muslim Experience in Canada*.

The premiere was sponsored by St. Thomas More College in Saskatoon, hosted by the University of Saskatchewan president, Peter MacKinnon, and attended by numerous diplomats, including representatives from Indonesia, Libya, Iran, and Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Speaker, this video series aims at promoting greater understanding of the cultural and religious lives of Canadian Muslims and highlighting their contributions to society both in Canada and abroad.

The series, created by producer Michael Milo and the university's division of mediaology and technology, is comprised of three documentaries: *The Mosaic — Muslims and the Multicultural Fabric of Canada*; *In Faith and Practice — The Religious Lives of Canadian Muslims*; and *A Warm Welcome — The Contributions of Five Muslims and Their Families to Canadian Life*.

(14:00)

The series will be used for educational purposes in schools internationally and will air on the Saskatchewan Communications Network, VisionTV, and Canadian Learning Television.

Mr. Speaker, this series is particularly timely in the charged atmosphere following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. It helps break down barriers and negative stereotypes of the Muslim community by focusing on everyday people and their daily lives, and in so doing strengthens Canada's unique multiculturalism, one of our country's greatest strengths. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Biggar.

Ribbon Cutting Ceremonies in Cando

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday, June 7, I have the pleasure of attending the grand opening and ribbon cutting of a teen support centre and a new additional to the Cando Community School. Invited guests assembled at the teen support centre, a block west of the Cando school.

Welcome was brought by Sandi Gardiner, Chair of the teen support centre and superintendent of pupil services for the Biggar School Division. A very moving prayer was given by a Mosquito First Nation elder and a smudging was also shared with the guests. An address and ribbon cutting was done by Minister Crofford.

Comments from students, teachers, and elders show how they were very encouraged by the opening and how important that daycare is to the teen mothers who have many obstacles trying to get their education, and how reassuring it is to know that while they are away at classes they know their children are in a very safe and supportive environment.

The morning activities moved to the new addition of the Cando school, where a Red Pheasant First Nation elder gave an opening prayer and a smudging. The school assembled in the gym where *O Canada* was sung in Cree by grades 3 to 7 students. The morning also included a family song sung in Cree by grade 1 and 2 students.

The morning wrapped up with drummers from Cando led by invited guest drummers performing a round dance, where everyone in attendance took part.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, Cando Community School is truly a small school with a big heart.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Provincial Track and Field Championships

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last weekend high school athletes representing every region of our province gathered in Saskatoon to compete in the annual Saskatchewan High Schools Athletic Association Track and Field Provincial Championships.

These highly competitive student athletes were at the disadvantage of having to participate in their events in 25-degree heat on Friday and Saturday, but still managed to break 17 provincial records.

Mr. Speaker, 10 of these records were broken by the team from Saskatoon who were the eventual winners of the overall team titles. Athletes representing northwest Saskatchewan distinguished themselves as the most improved team, Mr. Speaker.

Among the many winners from last weekend's competition, there are three Aboriginal athletes from northern Saskatchewan that I would like to especially mention.

First of all, Kris Georges is my next door neighbour from Ile-a-la-Crosse, won first place in senior boys shot put. Mr. Speaker, he was mere inches away from a provincial record. Charmane Naytowhow, from Meadow Lake or from Montreal Lake, sorry, finished first in the senior girls javelin.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to say that my niece Sheylee Belanger of Ile-a-la-Crosse, currently going to school in Meadow Lake, won first place in the junior girls discus event, Mr. Speaker.

I'm very proud to say that these individuals are provincial champs, and we're all very proud of them. Mr. Speaker, I congratulate these three winners for their hard work and dedication to their sport, and I also want to recognize the teachers, coaches, officials, and volunteers. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Long-Term Care in Davidson

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night, I attended a large town meeting held in Davidson. The issue being debated was the recent announcement that 10 long-term care beds would be closed at the Davidson Health Care Centre. This along with the great concerns about related cuts to the front line and support staff has most residents in Davidson clearly worried about their future.

There were about 300 people in attendance, including mayors, Reeves, councils, along with long-term care patients, health care staff, and town residents. I had the opportunity to address the crowd to echo the concerns of local residents, urging them to contact the Minister of Health about these health care cuts in Davidson.

I also expressed my disappointment that my invitation to the Minister of Health and the Chair of the Human Services Committee to attend this community meeting went unanswered.

Representatives from Heartland Health Region cannot fully explain to the crowd why their community has been hit so hard by these bed closures and job losses, only to infer that the cuts came from the minister's office.

At the end of the evening, it was clear to all in attendance that the Health minister should give the health region the authority to reverse these cuts or at least delay the cuts and send the Human Services Committee to Davidson to consult with all the interested parties for their input.

I would ask that the members join me in thanking the organizers of this meeting for their efforts to save their community. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Opening of Chaplin Nature Centre

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this past Saturday, I had the opportunity to attend the grand opening, or rather, the official hatching of the Chaplin Nature Centre.

This event celebrated the completion of a 2,200 square foot expansion to the existing centre and the installation of displays featuring endangered species and a large mural showing shoreline habitat and shorebirds that use the Chaplin Lake.

Mr. Speaker, the Chaplin area has been designated a hemispheric shorebird reserve and the Chaplin Nature Centre is considered to be a world-class facility, attracting visitors and eco tourists from all over the world.

The Saskatchewan Watershed Authority played a major role in this endeavour, along with other partners including various conservation agencies. Also the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority and the Chaplin and Quill Lakes tourism committees produced a Saskatchewan birding trail guide, which fits quite nicely with the Chaplin project, Mr. Speaker. And this booklet has been distributed across Canada and the United States.

This government is very pleased to be able to work in partnership with rural communities across our province. Eco tourism projects such as this are tremendous opportunities for employment and economic development in rural areas. The leadership of local business owner, Clem Miller, and the many volunteers in Chaplin and the surrounding area will ensure that this project is a continuing success story for Chaplin and for Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Worries in Saskatchewan

Mr. Kerpan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, hockey season is finally over, and here we are on June 9, Mr. Speaker, and Saskatchewan ought to be filled with hope and enthusiasm for the summer.

Most of the province has had some rain. If you listen to some people — job numbers aren't all that bad, businesses are flourishing, accomplishments of young people. And yet, Mr. Speaker, people in Saskatchewan are worried.

People in Davidson are worried about the closure of long-term care beds, Mr. Speaker. People in Climax are worried and nervous about the fact that their hospital may close. Property owners right throughout Saskatchewan and SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) is worried about the effects of high taxation on property owners. And people in Radisson, Mr. Speaker, are worried about the closure of their school, just as people across the province are worried about amalgamations of school divisions.

Mr. Speaker, not long ago in the budget it was rumoured and people were worried that the NDP (New Democratic Party)

were going to try to steal summer by not opening the parks on time, Mr. Speaker. Of course that changed, as we know.

But, Mr. Speaker, something far more important than the parks is at stake here, and that's hope. I believe that the people of the province feel that this NDP government has stole one of the most important things that they could have, and that's hope for this summer and hope for the future. And Mr. Speaker, in my way of thinking, that's a sad thing. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melfort.

Awareness of Crystal Methamphetamine Problem

Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Speaker, last night in Melfort 250 people attended a public meeting to raise awareness about crystal meth. The RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) say meth is a growing problem in the Melfort area and throughout the province. They say it's important to educate people about the dangers of this drug and the signs to look for if you think your kids are using meth.

Mr. Speaker, last night's meeting involved the RCMP, the schools, public health, and correction officials. And I commend all of these people for taking action to try to educate the public. But, Mr. Speaker, to the Deputy Premier, this is kind of an ad hoc group that has sprung up in the Melfort area. Shouldn't the provincial government be coordinating these kinds of efforts in all parts of the province?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Learning.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to hear that there was such good co-operation among public agencies at last night's public meeting. Certainly crystal meth and other types of drugs are a problem in the provincial community, and we're aware of that. I am pleased to advise the Assembly today that the Department of Education . . . or Department of Learning has updated its Web site and has put new resources on there for parents and teachers. It's available at sasked.gov.sk.ca.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melfort.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Speaker, over the last few days the minister has really been trying to downplay the extent of the crystal meth problem, and even suggesting that the Leader of the Opposition shouldn't be talking about it. At last night's meeting the RCMP said crystal meth is a growing problem, and we need to talk about it. The RCMP said meth is quickly becoming one of the biggest substance abuse problems after alcohol and marijuana. The difference is meth is a lot more dangerous. It's a lot more addictive. And parents have a lot less information about it. Mr. Speaker, parents need to know the signs that their kids could be using meth, and most simply don't. Will the provincial government be producing and distributing information for parents about crystal meth?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Learning.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — In fact, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what I just said the province has done — has produced a series of information on how parents can talk to their kids about this kind of drug, as well as other drugs.

I'm pleased to hear today that the opposition is admitting that in fact there are two other significant threats to young people — that being marijuana usage, which is a growing problem in the system, as well as alcohol which continues to be a major problem. The members opposite surely also recognize that of course solvent sniffing is a continuing problem in many of our communities and needs to also be addressed.

So the comments that the member references in terms of my concern with the approach the Leader of the Opposition took was not in fact with raising the issue. The concern is about the type of language that's used. I think that the more respectful approach the member is using today does elevate the debate, and again I think is appropriate and is addressing an issue that we all need to work on co-operatively.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melfort.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Speaker, last night's meeting was a real eye-opener for most of the people there. Most people don't realize how dangerous meth is. Most people do know how to tell if their kids are using other drugs like marijuana. But meth is different. The signs are different. The symptoms are different. And most parents know very little about this deadly drug, and notwithstanding what the minister has said about posting information on the Internet, every parent doesn't have easy access to the Internet in order to acquire this information. The minister keeps saying we shouldn't just focus on meth; all drugs are dangerous, and I agree. But the fact is, there's a real lack of information for parents about this particular drugs, and that's why we're raising it.

Mr. Speaker, will the government put together a plan to educate parents specifically about crystal meth — how to recognize if their kids are using it, and what to do if they are found to be using this drug — not only on the Internet, but by direct correspondence if necessary?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Learning.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I have no particular problem with this suggestion. I think that in fact that this is an important initiative that we should do more on. Parents play an important role and are often the best way for making sure that drug usage among young people is kept down. Certainly any of the information that I've read on this says that parents can be the most effective if they're listening to concerns of their children and are able to talk to them about it. We need to make sure that information is available.

I do also agree it should be available on the multi-channel basis, and we will take a look at how to make sure that information is distributed. Again I do reiterate that there is, starting at grade 4 in our school system, work is done by the teachers and the

education system to make sure young people are aware of healthy choices and how to deal with not only the threats of new drugs — whether that's designer drugs or in this case crystal meth — but also how they can be aware of problems of other much more readily available substances, like staying away from glue sniffing or from alcohol.

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

Emergency Room Issues in Saskatoon

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Health. Yesterday the Saskatchewan Party was advised that a 66-year-old woman with a heart condition had been lying on a gurney in St. Paul's Hospital emergency room for three days connected to a heart monitor. Jackie Sands-Harwood is a diabetic and needs regular snacks to keep her blood sugar in check.

Mr. Speaker, dietary needs are not provided in the ER (emergency room), so Jackie Sands-Harwood had to consistently request staff to bring her food and to be disconnected from her heart monitor whenever she needed to use the washroom.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Minister of Health also received this information yesterday. Can he explain why patients are waiting three days in St. Paul's ER before they can get a hospital bed?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the issue in many cases involves very specialized equipment that's required. It's not just the hospital bed, and I think that in a number of these cases that have been raised the issue is getting into a facility which has very specialized equipment. The important thing is that the person is in the hospital and is waiting for the particular specialized equipment. And, Mr. Speaker, the important thing is that people are also working with her to make sure she gets that particular help.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:15)

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

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well it would be nice if she could wait in a bed instead of a gurney. You know we continually talk about the challenges, and I understand there are challenges. But what the people of Saskatchewan are looking for from this Health minister is leadership and solutions. I understand that Jackie Sands-Harwood was moved to a room at 2 a.m. this morning. Why does it take action from either the opposition or a Member of Parliament before this government takes action?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the people who are taking

care of our Saskatchewan residents in the facilities make sure that they work at these things to the best of their ability. This particular situation I think involves some very specialized equipment, that if equipment was then available for that patient, then it's moved forward.

But I think also the important thing here in this place is what is our responsibilities as members of this legislature. Our responsibility is to pass a budget that provides money for health care. It's also to act together to be part of a national discussion around how we fund health care, and it's very appropriate that we have debates around the policies about how we get health care money, and we're going to continue to do that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our responsibility also is, as Minister of Health, CEO (chief executive officer) of the organization, to take direct involvement and make sure these changes happen.

When patients can't be transferred out of emergency — and it would be a good thing to know if facilities or beds were available at other facilities — it prevents other emergency cases from coming in. And cases must be rerouted to other hospitals.

The review being done by Saskatoon ERs is long overdue. But it doesn't solve the problems of today. Who are being housed in ER? Patients, because of no beds. Does the minister believe that it's acceptable to have a heart patient lay in the emergency for three days?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the facilities that we have in our major hospitals in the province include many specialized beds, many places where monitoring can take place of patients who have special needs. And practically, we have to allow them to use those resources. One of the advantages of having people close to emergency areas is that there is 24-hour coverage and ability to monitor very closely. Ideally we'd like to get them into other parts of the hospital but also have that facility, but there are some challenges there.

Mr. Speaker, we end up continuing to work with our health authorities to try to get the right balance, the right mix of what services we have in this province. And clearly at the University Hospital in Saskatoon, at our facilities here in Regina, we have to balance those against the request for services in smaller communities and other parts of the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister is the head of this organization. This has been going on way too long. He needs to get directly involved and make this process happen. This lady was not lying in a bed for three days,

monitored. She was lying on a gurney, and there is a difference.

The problems at Royal University Hospital are well-documented, and when Dr. Witt tried to address them, he got fired. Now it appears that other Saskatoon hospitals are having similar problems. What specific action is the minister taking today to address the immediate concerns of patients like Jackie Sands-Harwood and their families?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the member from Melfort — who is the critic for Health from the Saskatchewan Party and has been for many years — made a very strong statement to Mr. Fyke almost four years ago now, saying that the role of the provincial minister, provincial government was not to micromanage the health care in the health regions across this province.

The goal is to get the resources and to make sure that the services are provided on a broad basis. But day in, day out, and specifically this morning, the member opposite — a new member to this House — has specifically asked for political interference in the care that's going on. And, Mr. Speaker, that's not appropriate.

Mr. Speaker, we need to continue to work with the 30,000 employees in our health care system in this province to make sure that they do their jobs well, and we're going to continue to do that. We're going to make sure that the budget's passed. We're going to make sure that they have the appropriate resources to provide the care that's necessary.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Demand for Saskatoon Food Banks

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Community Resources and Employment. Mr. Speaker, the Saskatoon Food Bank is reporting its usage numbers are higher than any other time in the agency's 20-year history. In the first five months of this year, the food bank handled 102,000 kilograms of food. That's a 65 per cent increase over the same time last year.

Mr. Speaker, the number of children utilizing the food bank has spiked from 4,200 to 6,000. Former NDP cabinet minister and food bank director, Bob Pringle, says, "What is more basic than hunger?" He further goes on to say, "This is a sign Saskatoon is moving toward absolute poverty proportions."

Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain why the demand for food banks in Saskatoon and the province continues to grow when this NDP government said food banks would be eradicated in its first term?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Community Resources and Employment.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I

certainly share with Mr. Pringle the concern that our poorest families have adequate resources in order to eat, but I would also mention that we support a wide range of programs to support low-income people, including outreach programs into the schools to make sure that children are fed. The food bank is one source.

We did make a conscious decision, Mr. Speaker, in Building Independence to try to move many families out of poverty and into work. And during that time, there's been a 41 per cent reduction in the number of families on assistance because today we provide additional benefits through extended health benefits, the Saskatchewan Child Benefit, the Saskatchewan employment supplement, and we now serve more than 10,000 families who are actually working poor. And so we've made some choices about how to support families. But I agree that there is an issue here that we need to look at closely.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, six years after the Saskatoon Food Bank opened, the member for Saskatoon Greystone chastised the former administration for accepting, and I quote, "The immortality of food banks in our province."

That member said the NDP was committed to ending the need for food banks in this province. He said and I quote:

I believe that cannot be . . . that can be accomplished in the first term of our office. I do not only want to see the lineups at food banks dramatically decline; I want to see a celebration at the end of our first term in which the food banks announce that there is no longer a need for them to exist in the province of Saskatchewan.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it's almost 15 years later. The Saskatoon Food Bank is saying it can't keep up with the growing demand for food. To the minister: when will this government's actions start matching its words? And what is this government going to do now to end the need for food banks in Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Community Resources and Employment.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the things that we do in the Department of Community Resources and Employment is we talk to recipients of assistance to determine what their priorities are. And they've told us a range of things — everything from employment to housing.

And in this budget, recognizing that housing was taking some of the food money out of people's pockets, we've announced a \$10 million increase in the shelter allowance in the form of a shelter supplement, which we're working with community groups to identify how we can also enhance the quality of housing in the community tied to that shelter supplement. And that will begin in 2005.

In addition I've asked for a meeting with the directors of food banks, both in Regina and Saskatoon, as well as the people who

run programs like the REACH (Regina Education and Action on Child Hunger Inc.) program in order to look very deeply at this issue as to what the best way to target resources to this problem is.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, it is this government that tells people that are on social assistance to go to the food bank. And, Mr. Speaker, it is this government that for over 20 years has not increased the food allowance for people on social assistance.

Mr. Speaker, we know that this problem is not isolated to only Saskatoon. Former NDP cabinet minister, Bob Pringle, has said that, and I quote, "Hunger in Saskatchewan has become a provincial crisis." Pringle says it has become clear that the provincial government have, and I quote:

Either forgotten about the emergency needs of people or they don't comprehend the magnitude of the situation or they've chosen to ignore it.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister address Mr. Pringle's concerns today in this Assembly? Has the NDP forgotten about these needs? Do they understand the magnitude of the problems, or has the NDP chosen to ignore the issue? Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain to the children and to the families what her government is going to do to address this growing and serious problem?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Community Resources and Employment.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased that the member opposite has discovered this issue because certainly it wasn't spoken to in their platform. In fact when they were identifying where they would get their money for tax cuts, this was the department that was targeted for reductions.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Now I would say, Mr. Speaker, in this budget we added an additional 4.6 million to include supports for people who are disabled, for whom a job is a desired option but not necessarily easy to achieve. We extended the employment supplement, the Saskatchewan Child Benefit, to reach a much broader range of low-income families. We recognized the pressures from the cost of shelter.

And I would have to say, Mr. Speaker, that today a single parent with children, who has managed to benefit from Building Independence, has 2,000 more dollars a year in their pocket than they did before.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Renovations at Grenfell Tower

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Learning.

In 2002 the NDP moved SaskEnergy from one downtown office building, the Grenfell Tower, to another downtown office building, the Wascana Oil Building. The NDP's excuse for that multi-million dollar government office shuffle was that Grenfell Tower was just too expensive for SaskEnergy, but that didn't stop the NDP from moving part of the Department of Learning into Grenfell Tower. And according to information obtained by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation yesterday, the NDP spent \$3.4 million to move in and renovate Grenfell Tower.

Mr. Speaker, if Grenfell Tower was too expensive for one of Saskatchewan's largest Crown corporations, why did the NDP spend 3.4 million taxpayer dollars to move the Department of Learning into that expensive space?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Learning.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm surprised the member didn't ask me this when we were discussing this in estimates the other night. We had a long discussion about estimates, and what we said . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well the member appears to be shocked that this was then raised by the taxpayers federation.

What in fact happened, as I explained in estimates the other night, that we had amalgamated from seven buildings down to three different sites. Given some of the specific issues around the Department of Learning — not the least of which is the Provincial Library and the weight of books, those kind of issues, and the book bureau — there were additional costs in terms of doing the renovation. So the renovation did end up costing about \$6 million. About half of that was spent dealing with Grenfell; half of that was spent dealing with the Parkway Campus. And I think we've discussed it; this is an issue which is many years old, and the member is aware of that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, the questions were asked in estimates, but the answers were very incomplete.

Mr. Speaker, SaskEnergy moved out of the Grenfell building because they said it was too expensive. SaskEnergy officials said the heating needed to be upgraded. They said the air conditioning needed to be upgraded, and they said the cost of those renovations made the building unaffordable. So SaskEnergy moved out, and the NDP promptly spent 3.4 million taxpayer dollars to move the Department of Learning into the same office space that was too rich for SaskEnergy.

Mr. Speaker, why does the NDP government have \$3.4 million of taxpayers' money for the Education department office renovations, but not a single dime for reducing the education portion of property taxes for Saskatchewan families?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:30)

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Learning.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Well once again the question is not only inflammatory but misleading because this government in fact just put a great deal of money into dealing with mitigating property tax issues, not the least of which was \$18 million new this year that the member opposite voted against — \$18 million more.

It's interesting, and the members opposite may be interested to learn that the department . . . this government, this NDP government has added \$125 million to the education system since the 1999 election — \$125 million that those members voted against. So when they say that the government has not acted to put money into education and make it a priority, when they . . .

The Speaker: — Order please, members. Order, please. Order, please. The Minister of Learning.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — When the member opposite says that we have not put money into support keeping property taxes down, when he says the government has not made education a priority, he is absolutely 100 per cent wrong.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, the minister wants to know why I voted against this budget. Well I'll tell him why I voted against this budget. Because 2 per cent increase in funding for the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina is not acceptable, Mr. Speaker. That's why I voted against this . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, no money for the U of S (University of Saskatchewan) for the academic health sciences building, no money for the laboratory building, wait till 2007; that's why I voted against it.

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation was forced to acquire the information on the office moves through a freedom of information request, after the government refused to release the information voluntarily. That freedom of information request, on top of the \$3.4 million the NDP spent to move the Department of Learning into the old SaskEnergy building, the NDP also spent \$2.6 million to move other parts of the Department of Learning from one Regina office building to another Regina office building.

Mr. Speaker, why does the NDP willing to spend 6 million taxpayers' dollars moving around the Department of Education offices, but has no room in the budget for reducing education property taxes for Saskatchewan families?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Learning.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I'm prepared to allow the expenditure to go ahead because we're not going to have our employees working in buildings where asbestos is falling. We're not going to have them working in buildings that don't meet fire code. That is why we approved the expenditure.

And I will say to the member opposite, he prefaced his question with a long ramble about why he wouldn't support the budget because it doesn't put money into pet projects of his. I can tell him this: more money for the U of S, more money for the U of R (University of Regina), 125 million over the last five years to the K to 12 system, that that member and that party voted against. They may believe that trickle-down and tax cuts is going to fix everything. But I can tell them it won't fix the education system. It won't fix health, poverty. It is not going to fix the problems in health care, and the members opposite should be aware of that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, I'd encourage the minister to read his own briefing notes because they don't say anything about asbestos. Mr. Speaker, I have a copy of the briefing note in my hands. The minister should be able to pump out the NDP line on these multi-million dollar office shuffles. After all, his officials have drafted this briefing note complete with talking points so the minister won't be lost for words, so the minister won't be lost for words when the public found out just how much money the NDP government has blown on totally unnecessary office moves.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister read this briefing note so he can explain to the people of Saskatchewan why the NDP government has lost millions of dollars from unnecessary office shuffles, but falls short of funding priorities like the delivery of education directly to students?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Learning.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has the briefing note because I released the briefing note. That's why the member opposite has it. Maybe he should read the talking points, and I would encourage him to read the background so he is better aware of this.

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order please, members. The Minister of Learning.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — The member opposite says that we have not put money in. I do not know how more times I need to tell him that since 1999 this government has added \$125 million to the education budget — \$125 million to deal with better education for our children, to deal with property tax cuts, to make sure that there's student financial resources available, to make sure our universities can do the research available. That's why young people support this government. That is why people

support this government, and that is why this government supports education.

I encourage the member opposite to get past his politics and get on the same agenda with Saskatchewan people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Crown Management Board.

New Partnership to Provide Bursaries to Aboriginal Students

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to announce that Crown Investments Corporation has formed an exciting new partnership with First Nations University of Canada and the University of Regina.

The partnership will provide bursaries to Aboriginal students who pursue their degrees through these institutions. The purpose of the bursaries is not only to help provide students with a university education, but also to prepare them for possible employment and careers in Saskatchewan's Crown corporations. Mr. Speaker, CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) will provide the funding for the bursaries up to \$2 million over the next five years. The U of R and the First Nations University of Canada will provide the administrative support for the program and support for students who receive the bursaries.

This bursary program is part of a larger and longer term strategy that was announced last fall by the Premier. CIC and its subsidiary Crowns have committed \$20 million over the next five years to prepare young people and Aboriginal people to fill the anticipated employment shortfall in our Crowns. About half the people now employed in our Crown sector will retire by 2017. We need to replace those people with highly skilled and educated employees.

Saskatchewan Aboriginal people are a growing segment of Saskatchewan, and many are pursuing a university education. We want our Crowns to be an employer of choice for them when they complete their studies. Many Aboriginal students need financial assistance to do this, and so we are pleased to offer these bursaries.

The bursaries are open to undergraduate students at First Nations University of Canada or the University of Regina or its federated colleges. These students must be status or non-status Indians, Métis, or Inuit who have resided in our province for the past 12 months. These students must have a satisfactory academic standing in previous studies, and they must be registered in 12 credit hours each semester. Students must also demonstrate financial need, and also leadership and community involvement.

Bursary recipients will receive \$2,500 per semester. They will also be able to re-apply every year for up to five years as long as they maintain a 60 per cent average. We hope to take in up to

34 new students every year for a total of about 165 students over the next five-year period.

Our Crowns will work with the bursary recipients during their studies. They will provide opportunities for summer jobs and co-op work study placements. We hope these students will seek full-time employment in one of our Crowns after they receive their degrees.

Mr. Speaker, this is an excellent program. We would encourage all Aboriginal students to apply for the bursaries. July 1st is the deadline for applications for the fall semester. We look forward to working with First Nations University of Canada and the University of Regina on this partnership. We also look forward to working with the students who receive the CIC bursaries. We believe that these students will make a great contribution to our Crowns and to our province in the years to come.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Saskatchewan Party has always encouraged this government to focus on education and training for Aboriginal youth. We are pleased to see that this is starting to happen. This bursary program is a good opportunity, and we encourage all eligible students to apply. In a few years young Aboriginal people will become the new workforce of this province, and it is incumbent upon this government to plan and provide educational and employment opportunities for our future workforce.

We applaud the efforts of the First Nations University and the University of Regina for being partners in this new undertaking by the Crown Investments Corporation. Today's youth hold the key to the future. We wish the bursary recipients, as they embark on a new journey of knowledge, and hope that they will pave the way for many others to follow in their footsteps. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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. 494 and 495.

The Speaker: — Responses to questions 494, 495 have been submitted.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, to facilitate the work of the Standing Committee on the Economy and the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies, I move the House

do now adjourn.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Government House Leader that this House do now adjourn. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

The Assembly adjourned at 14:41.

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CABINET MINISTERS

Hon. L. Calvert
Premier

Hon. P. Atkinson
Minister of Crown Management Board
Minister Responsible for Public Service Commission

Hon. J. Beatty
Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation
Provincial Secretary

Hon. B. Belanger
Minister of Northern Affairs

Hon. E. Cline
Minister of Industry and Resources

Hon. J. Crofford
Minister of Community Resources and Employment
Minister Responsible for Disability Issues
Minister Responsible for Gaming

Hon. D. Forbes
Minister of Environment
Minister Responsible for the Office of Energy Conservation

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Hon. M. Sonntag
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