



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

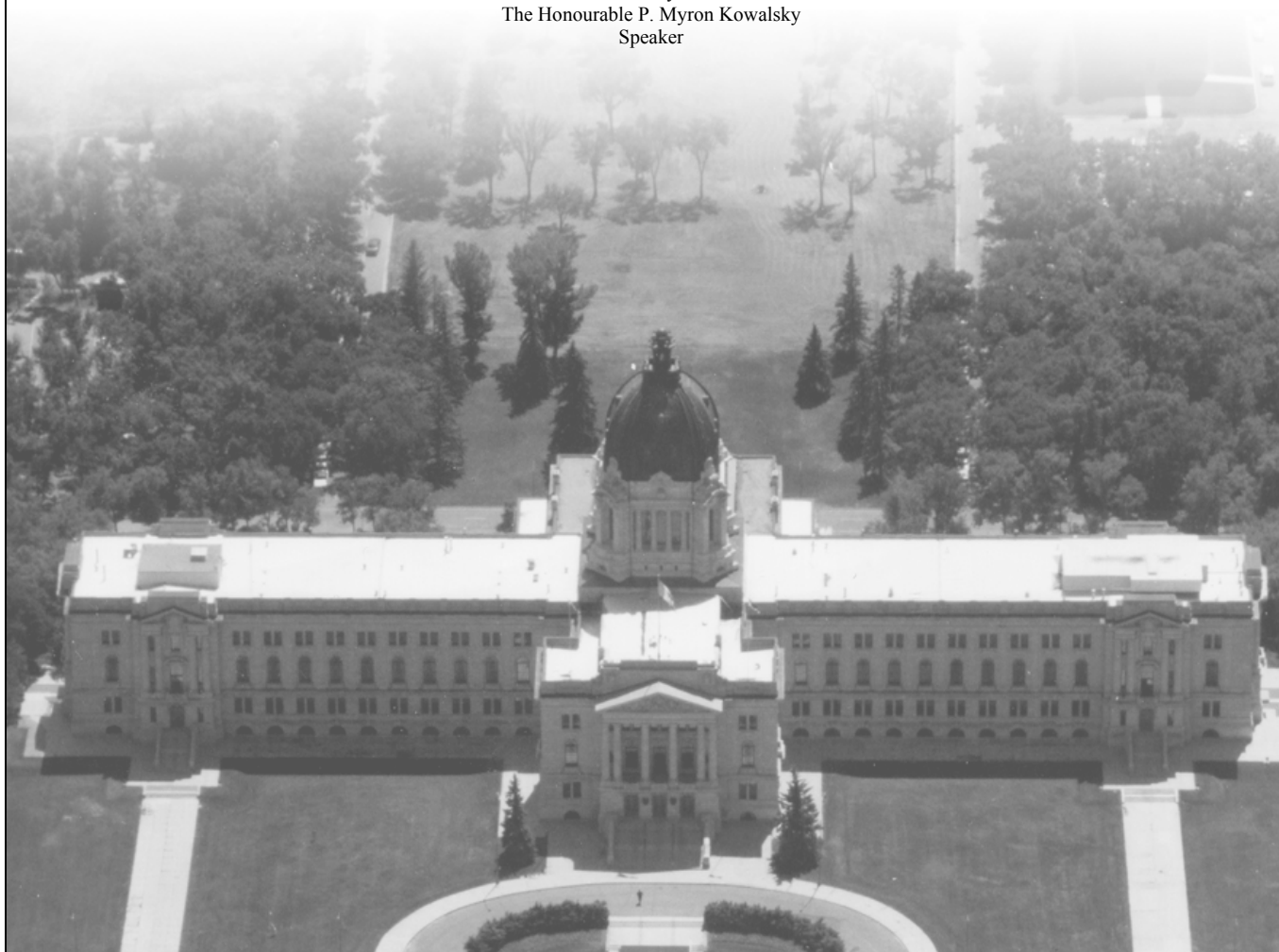
of the

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 10:00.

Saskatoon, and Moose Jaw.

Prayers

I so present.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

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

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In a continuation of the petitions I have presented to the House over the last several weeks concerning health care opportunities in the community of Climax, I present the following petition:

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here calling for local representation of the Davidson Health Care Centre to the Heartland Health Region Board, signed by many citizens at the meeting that was held on Tuesday. I'll read the prayer:

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.

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 residents of Davidson and area have local representation on the Heartland Health Region Board and further, that the Minister of Health halt the decision to close 10 long-term care beds and cut staff until all interested parties are fully consulted and their input received by the government committee.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by citizens from the communities of Frontier, Climax, Bracken, and Val Marie.

Signed by citizens from Davidson and Bladworth and Girvin and Craik, and many of the surrounding communities around there.

I so present.

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

I so present. Thank you.

Mr. Hermanson: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have another petition to save the Luseland and Dodsland ambulance services. And, Mr. Speaker, the constituents are concerned because these ambulances provide life-saving services for residents in those areas. The prayer reads:

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Biggar.

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.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also would like to present a petition from constituents opposed to the closure of the Radisson School. The prayer reads:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition are from the communities of Dodsland, Plenty, and Stranraer.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And I'm pleased to present this petition on their behalf.

Signed by the good citizens of Radisson and district.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Estevan.

I so present.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I stand today to present a petition on behalf of citizens concerned about the beer discount structure, and the prayer reads as follows:

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to reinstate bulk beer discount structure cancelled in the recent provincial budget.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I rise in the Assembly to present a petition on behalf of residents of west central Saskatchewan concerned with the loss of ambulance service in their area. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

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 Eatonville ambulance services are not discontinued.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is signed by citizens of Estevan, Midale, Arcola, Oxbow, Redvers, Lampman, Regina, Rosetown,

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

Mr. Speaker, I see from the names on the petition that this petition is signed by the best farmers in the province from the good town of Eatonia.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

First petition for a rebate program for education tax and rural property, sessional paper 202;

A petition concerning Eatonia ambulance services, sessional paper 203;

A petition concerning equitable treatment for Saskatchewan within the equalization program, sessional paper 204;

And addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 107 and 182.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melfort.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 60 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: how many acute care hospital beds were in operation on March 31, 2004 in the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region?

And also to the minister on Health: how many radiation machines for treating cancer patients are in operation in the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region; how old are they; how many hours do they operate per week; and how often is maintenance required and scheduled?

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

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice I shall on day no. 60 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: in 2004 were there any increase or decrease in administration personnel at the Heartland Health Region; if so, what was the change?

And also a similar question for 2003.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are a number of visitors here today and they're going to be formally introduced by those MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly).

I, though, would like to take the opportunity to introduce a familiar face to this Assembly. Mr. Speaker, joining us behind the bar is the former member for Kindersley, Bill Boyd. And I know members will want to welcome Bill back. We certainly do.

He's agreed to Chair a campaign for a certain political party whose fortunes are looking better and better each day, I think, Mr. Speaker.

And we just want to encourage all members to join with me in welcoming Bill back to the Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Yorkton.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I too, on behalf of the government, want to welcome Mr. Boyd to the Assembly. We know that during the time that he spent here, he was a very colourful member in many of the speeches that he provided and a very able and capable Agriculture minister.

An Hon. Member: — Critic.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Or critic, sorry. I should have said, Mr. Speaker, a wannabe minister.

But he was a very capable and able critic; did a wonderful job, Mr. Speaker, I think, in making sure that the work of the Saskatchewan Party moved forward at a time when the Conservative government in this province was on the brink of expiring. And Mr. Boyd did a wonderful job, I think, in rebuilding that, probably to the extent that, to some degree, we worry about it from day to day, Mr. Boyd.

So welcome to the Assembly. And hopefully, you got your crop in, in your part of the world.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Hon. Assembly, two gentlemen from the Southwest — Mr. Al Kildaw, mayor of Herbert and Mr. Bruno Miller, reeve of the RM (rural municipality) of Excelsior.

These two gentlemen are here this morning representing the delegation from the Cypress Health Region concerned with closure of the Herbert hospital and the downsizing of the long-term care facility in that community that serves so much of the Southwest.

I hope that all members will welcome these two gentlemen here this morning.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, 47 grade 6, 7, and 8 students from North Park Wilson School in Saskatoon Meewasin — the little school with a big heart.

With the students are Mr. Steel, a grade 7 and 8 teacher; Mr. Wihak, a grade 6 and 7 teacher and vice-principal; parents, Mr. Snook, Mr. and Mrs. Olbort, Mrs. Harder; and Mrs. Yelland, a teacher associate.

As I will be listening attentively to the members opposite in the Assembly today, I unfortunately will not be able to meet with the students and they will be spared my remarks on parliamentary democracy. Nonetheless I hope they enjoy their visit to the Legislative Building and I hope all members welcome them here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to introduce to you and through you to the legislature, a group of people that travelled up from Davidson-Kenaston area today to watch the proceedings. They can give a little wave as I call their name. Mayor Jim Cross from the town of Davidson; deputy reeve from the RM of Willner, Alf Richardson. And then accompanying them is Amber Greene, Val Krpan, Gloria Cool, Janna Low, and Dave Nykiforuk. And also from the town of Kenaston, Dennis and Marge Karpan.

I want to welcome them here today to their legislature, and I hope they enjoy the proceedings that are taking place. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour for me today to be able to stand and introduce to you and through you to all the members of this Assembly, a rather large contingent of constituents from Cypress Hills and maybe even a few from Wood River. It depends on exactly what side of the line they live on. But these roughly 50 people got on a bus this morning at about 5 or 5:30 and drove to Regina in the rain to be here to witness the debate today on the opposition's motion about public hearings on the closure or the downsizing of service in health communities . . . or health facilities in their community.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think the fact that they would get on a bus that early and come here to participate as observers in this debate shows how serious they are about their concerns for their community.

I would like all members in this House to welcome them enthusiastically.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Estevan.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all members of this Assembly, I would like to introduce a young lady that is seated in your gallery.

Mr. Speaker, Amber Klatt is working as a constituency assistant in my Estevan office for the summer. Amber has taken two years of political studies at the University of Saskatchewan, and this fall she will be attending Renaissance College at the University of New Brunswick at Fredericton studying for her bachelor of philosophy in leadership and joint majoring in political science.

Amber, if I could just ask you to stand so people can see where you are. And, Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members to join me in welcoming Amber to her Assembly. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Coronation Park.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and, through you, to all members a friend of mine seated in the west gallery: Gunnar Passmore, who's a sheet metal workers' representative and an advocate for all people of Saskatchewan in his job of course for working people, who's a social activist, sometimes golfer, and a good friend of mine.

I ask all hon. members to join me in welcoming Gunnar Passmore to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Young Entrepreneurs Silver Spade Awards in Saskatoon

Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night I had the pleasure of attending the Young Entrepreneurs Silver Spade Awards gala in Saskatoon. Also in attendance were the members from Saskatoon Silver Springs, Saskatoon Eastview, Saskatoon Massey Place, and Saskatoon Fairview.

Mr. Speaker, the Silver Spade Awards gala is an event from the Saskatchewan Young Professionals and Entrepreneurs, an organization of ambitious, dedicated, and committed young leaders who are excited about Saskatchewan as a place to live, work, and have fun.

The evening was filled with youthful exuberance and excitement which blended well with the entrepreneurial ambition and enthusiasm. I had the privilege of sitting with a family that included one of the nominees, Michael Swedja, from Intec Controls. His spouse, parents, and siblings were also part of our group, and the pride at that table on Michael's behalf was overwhelming.

Three awards were handed out last night, Mr. Speaker. The Young Professional of the Year Award went to Trina Heal of

Deloitte. The Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award went to Brian Hnatiw of Ecol Laser, and Mentor of the Year Award went to Kent Smith Windsor of the Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce, who is likely no stranger to most of the people in this House and is certainly not someone that's regarded as a young entrepreneur because he's older than most of us. But he has given an incredible amount of hard work and dedication to young businesses that have started up, and I was pleased to see that he was recognized.

(10:15)

Mr. Speaker, if it was possible the future of Saskatchewan could be condensed in a group of people that would illustrate just how promising our future can be, it was in that room last night in Saskatoon.

I ask all members of the House to recognize the hard work and commitment that those nominees and participants went through. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Saskatchewan Air Show

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Air Show will once again take flight Sunday at 15 Wing in Moose Jaw. And as they are every year, the Snowbirds will be the stars of the show.

The air show began in 1971 as a place for the Snowbirds to show off their aerobatic skills. Unfortunately the show took a two-year hiatus due to security and insurance issues following the events of September 11, 2001, but they're back.

Mr. Speaker, many of the regular acts will return this year including the CF-18 Hornet and F-15 Strike Eagle. There will also be performances by water bombers and the SkyHawks, Canada's parachute team. Throughout the day over 40 aircraft will be on display, including two American F-16s. And this year the Snowbirds will close out the show with a new act.

Mr. Speaker, the Snowbirds have been thrilling audiences since 1970, and in that time it's estimated they have performed for over 100 million people. Based at 15 Wing, the team performs approximately 70 shows a year at over 50 locations around North America and the world.

Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge all the good folks involved with the Saskatchewan Air Show. I'm confident that the Snowbirds will once again be the star act in our Saskatchewan Air Show, a true Saskatchewan institution. And, Mr. Speaker, the sun will be shining.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Estevan.

Tim Hortons Children's Foundation Camp Day

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Tim

Hortons Children's Foundation Camp Day was held on Wednesday, June 9, and I had the pleasure of working a shift at Tim Hortons in Estevan. Sharing my shift were SUN 102.3 radio personalities, Carrie Senchuk and Craig Picton, as well CJ 1280's morning man, Cal Gratton. And we were kept quite busy making and serving coffee and cleaning tables. And I might add, Mr. Speaker, that these folks were just awesome to work alongside.

All money from coffee sales on this day is designated to send less fortunate kids to camp. These camps are located throughout Canada and the United States. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating Tim Hortons; the franchise owners, Dennis and Joanne Willows; and the staff for their generosity which raised over \$1,400 to send kids to camp. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Regina Artists Receive National Recognition

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, before I begin with my member statement today I'd like to send special wishes to my father-in-law, Cliff Morin, who is ill and has the first opportunity to see me at work in the legislature.

It gives me great pleasure today to recognize two Saskatchewan artists who have recently made a name for themselves on the national stage. Bill Pelletier and Willi Daechert are two Regina painters whose work was featured in the month-long exhibition at the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa. The exhibition, called *Mindscapes*, features works of art by people affected by mental illness.

The exhibition was organized in part by the Canadian Mental Health Association. I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge one of the Regina branch's board members, Chris Kelly, who encouraged these two artists to enter their work. Mr. Speaker, mental illness, art, and creativity have shared a close relationship since brush first met canvas.

The work of Mr. Daechert and Mr. Pelletier reminds us of how art can cross boundaries and create understanding between people. The works they have created — Mr. Pelletier's is entitled *Electric Skeleton*, and Mr. Daechert's is called *Trapped* — are powerful examples of the strength of the human spirit. They also serve as valuable reminders of the danger of assumptions and the importance of recognizing the contribution every person makes to society.

These two works are on display this week at the Regina branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association on Albert Street.

I ask everyone to join me in congratulating Willi Daechert and Bill Pelletier on their achievement and in wishing them every success in the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

University of Regina Spring Convocation

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had the honour of joining people from across the province and across the world at the 30th spring convocation of the University of Regina earlier this week. Some 1,601 students convoked from the university this spring, and I might add 65 per cent of the graduates were women.

The university honoured a princess, a scholar, a poet and a francophone champion each with an honorary Doctor of Laws degree. Her Royal Highness, the Princess Royal was awarded the degree to recognize her charity work with children from around the world.

Four exceptional professionals were also honoured at the convocation ceremony. Jeanne Shami, an English professor, and Peter Leavitt, an aquatic ecology researcher, both received an Excellence in Research Award from the university's alumni association. Jeffrey Pfieler, a psychology professor, received the Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching Award. And Mary Cronin received an Excellence in Public Service Award for her work with child literacy programs.

I'd also like to recognize one special student, Raegan Bernhardt, an engineering student who won the university medal for the third consecutive year with a grade average of a whopping 96 per cent.

I would like to congratulate all University of Regina graduates on their convocation and commend them for their hard work, study, and dedication to pursuing higher education. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Moose Jaw Students Awarded Certificate of Merit

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a group of very determined grade 7 and 8 students at Prince Arthur Elementary School in Moose Jaw have helped make Saskatchewan a healthier place to live. Recently the grade 7 and 8 students of Ms. Lucie Delgarno and Mr. Dave Osberg were awarded their certificate of merit from the Canadian Medical Association and the Saskatchewan Medical Association for their role in the smoke-free campaign that resulted municipal non-smoking bylaws in Moose Jaw.

Mr. Speaker, many people had a role in passing this bylaw, but the teachers and students of Prince Arthur Elementary School were at the heart of this achievement. Last fall, the grade 7 and 8 students of Ms. Delgarno and Mr. Osberg visited the mayor of Moose Jaw to ask if he could make all indoor places smoke free. They gathered 3,600 signatures, and with the help of the People for a Smoke-Free Moose Jaw, they presented a petition to city hall.

Mr. Speaker, the effort and commitment of these students resulted in a referendum during the fall election that proposed a ban on all smoking in public places. On October 22, 2003, the

referendum passed with a 2:1 margin.

Mr. Speaker, the actions of these students show that a small group of very committed people can make a positive difference. I'm sure my colleagues will join me in congratulating these grade 7 and 8 students at Prince Arthur for their ongoing accomplishment and acknowledging their commitment to making Moose Jaw a healthier community for everyone. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Postmaster Celebrates 25th Anniversary

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House today to talk about a remarkable life service by Mrs. Lee Cole to the Canada Post office at Loreburn. In June the community of Loreburn is coming out to congratulate Mrs. Cole on 25 years of service as postmaster in Loreburn. In fact, Mrs. Cole states her actual 25th anniversary with Canada Post was back in December 19, 2003, when 25 years before, in 1978, she began to fill a position at the post office. Later on, in July 4, '79, the post office position was given to her full-time and was named postmaster.

Mrs. Cole states that she took the job as a way to bring in off-farm income to help the family farm, much the same way as it is often in the case today. Indeed the Cole family has deep roots in the Loreburn area, with her husband's grandparents homesteading in the area a century ago — an event that was celebrated last August in Loreburn. And I'll add that Mrs. Cole also has deep roots in Bladworth, where she was born and raised.

Mrs. Cole indicated that she is retiring from the post office within the next five years and expressed some worry that the town post office may close at that time. The post office is a central place of gathering information and staying connected with others in the community. "I hope that the post office doesn't close when I retire," states Mrs. Cole.

I would ask that all members join me in congratulating Mrs. Lee Cole on a quarter century of service to Canada Post and the people of Loreburn. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

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

Public Consultation on Health Facilities

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Later today this legislature will vote on a Saskatchewan Party motion. It's a pretty reasonable motion, Mr. Speaker. It calls for an all-party committee to hold public hearings in every community that is to be affected by health care closures as a result of the NDP (New Democratic Party) government's budget.

People from many of these communities have travelled here today from places like Davidson and Climax and Herbert; and there are obviously other communities affected, including Foam Lake and many others across our province. They're asking MLAs to come to their communities and meet with the people in those communities to discuss closures, perhaps to propose options, before these closures take place.

I wonder if the Premier will commit today to support that motion, to support the Saskatchewan Party motion and travel to these communities, consult with them directly before the closures occur.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, we in Saskatchewan have been working and looking at health issues across the province for quite a number of years. We've had some very focused discussions on those with Mr. Fyke coming to our province and then working and building on the Action Plan for Saskatchewan Health Care.

What happened in all of that process is we had to look at how do you provide a balance between access to communities right across the province with the highest, most expensive technical kind of care that happens in our tertiary care hospitals. And this is a challenge for a province like Saskatchewan.

What we have done on a consistent basis for the last number of years is provide more and more dollars into health care. This year, it's \$173 million more, giving us about \$2.7 billion.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes there are choices that have to be made across the province. There will continue to be discussions through the regional health authorities around how we make decisions in communities. And, Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to make changes. We're going to continue to work and make a better health care system for everybody.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And the minister is right; choices do have to be made, most assuredly. But it seems reasonable to think that those choices could be improved, the decisions could be better, with the input of communities that will be affected by these changes.

That minister will know, Mr. Speaker, that many communities who thought they might be on this list, that was mercifully shorter than what everyone anticipated, but communities who . . . some communities who are on this list and came to this Legislative Assembly actually were proposing alternatives. They were proposing specific alternatives to enable them to continue to provide the health care services they were providing — including raising money; including taking over, I think, the operation of some facilities.

So, Mr. Speaker, what we're asking for here, what the community's asking for, is very reasonable. They're asking for

MLAs, their elected representatives, to travel to their communities and to consult with them directly before these closures take place.

Yes or no — will the minister agree that that is a reasonable request and will he support our resolution later this day?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons that we've been able to provide access across this province is because of the ingenuity of the people who are working within the health care system, working within local municipalities, villages, towns because everybody looks at, how can we provide this service in our area.

Mr. Speaker, the regional health authorities and their management have been meeting with many communities across the province as they try to sort out how to use the resources they have to provide the health care that's necessary. I know that many of the MLAs who are in this Assembly have also been meeting with these communities to try to understand how those things work. And, Mr. Speaker, I think that's the place where this kind of discussion should take place.

And, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work with our regional health authorities as they provide the health care across the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, these communities know that there is a commitment on the part of their MLAs to be heard and to deal with this issue. What they don't know is whether or not there's a commitment from this NDP government to listen to their concerns and their potential alternatives on this issue.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, yesterday we saw the government trivialize the concerns of rural Saskatchewan. The Premier wouldn't talk to them. The minister responsible threatened them. The NDP staffers mocked them, Mr. Speaker, mocked them because the staffers didn't feel their crowd was sufficient enough.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier has an opportunity to set a different tone today, a different tone than what was, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, a fairly arrogant tone yesterday. He has a chance to do better than that on behalf of these communities concerned about bed closures. And he can do that by asking his MLAs to support our resolution so that their elected representatives and, more importantly, a committee representing their government, can travel to each of these communities before the closures take place. Will the Premier support that resolution?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(10:30)

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I haven't met with groups from all of the communities that have been affected, but I have met with many of them and I know that the officials and boards from the regional health authorities have gone to public meetings in many communities. And I know that people are working hard to try to figure out how to provide services as we move forward.

One of the challenges, Mr. Speaker, is that many of these services in some of these communities are not being used to their fullest extent, and we need to get the resources to the places where people require those services. So, Mr. Speaker, it's trying to balance the requirements for service in a particular area with the actual resources that we have. That's an ongoing process.

There will continue to be change. We've had change in our health care system for 50 years; I think for the next 50 years that's going to be there. We'll do it with the officials and with the senior people and the doctors and staff who are working on this.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Closure of Herbert Hospital

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. After 12 years of NDP health care mismanagement, the Premier campaigned during last fall's election on a promise to rebuild the NDP's crumbling health care system. Nowhere in the NDP platform did the Premier mention his plan to cut health services and close hospitals. But that's exactly what the Premier did as soon as the election was over.

Mr. Speaker, there are representatives in the legislature today from the Herbert area. Will the Premier explain to the people of Herbert and southwest Saskatchewan why he broke his election promises and slammed the door on the Herbert hospital?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, what has been done by this government to preserve health care and build health care across the province has been very open, very direct. And also we have been improving it. Mr. Speaker, in our action plan of December 2001 we set out very clearly the fact that there would have to be changes in communities. And if you read on page 35 of that document you can see it says:

Over time, communities may find it necessary to look at other options due to factors such as:

- difficulties in retaining a minimum number of physicians and nurses;
- a shrinking population;
- ability of other nearby hospitals to admit more patients;
- disruptions in providing 24/7 services due to lapses in staffing, particularly during the summer or holiday week-ends;
- declining levels of service volumes; or

- ability to better meet local needs through other kinds of service delivery.

Mr. Speaker, you look at all of these changes, they will fit into these categories.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, if the minister would read on in that report he would run into a chapter that talks about consulting with communities before any such changes were made. And he knows it very well.

Mr. Speaker, that Premier never mentioned during the election campaign that he planned to close the Herbert hospital and reduce the number of acute care beds in Swift Current as well. No wonder nobody in the town of Herbert or the Herbert area trusts a single word this Premier says.

Now the Premier is asking health regions to come up with another \$20 million in cuts and that would mean more long-term care beds closed, more seniors kicked out on the street courtesy of a Premier that nobody in Saskatchewan can trust.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health has been making excuses for the Premier's actions for months. Will the Premier get out of his seat and explain to the people of Herbert and area why they should trust him after he broke his word and slammed the door on the Herbert hospital?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I know that my colleagues, and I know that I listen very carefully in all the communities that I go to visit across the province and when they come here to visit with delegations, because we are concerned about the care that's provided in some of the areas of the province where the population is sparse.

But we also, Mr. Speaker, listen very carefully when they talk to us about making sure we spend their resources as carefully as possible. So, Mr. Speaker, in this budget we've increased the amount for health by \$173 million so that now our health budget is 44 per cent of all the dollars that we spend on service in our provincial budget. And, Mr. Speaker, we end up having to make some hard choices but we also are very concerned that people will have access to care, both in their local areas but also the very expensive care that's required in the cities.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Closure of Long-Term Care Beds in Davidson

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Premier. We all know last fall the Premier went around the

province promising better health care, but nowhere in his NDP platform did he mention a plan to close hospitals, to cut jobs, to cut long-term care beds. But right after the election that's exactly what he did.

Well today there's a number of people up here in the gallery from the Davidson area to get an explanation of that. Yesterday we all know the Premier didn't go out and address the residents out there on the steps, but I'm hoping today — today — that he will explain to the people from the Davidson area why he's cutting 10 long-term care beds in Davidson, why he's cutting jobs, and why he's creating a waiting list in the town of Davidson.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has asked questions about this issue for quite a number of days now and practically, one of the discussions that happened with the Davidson facility — and the mayor himself confirmed this in the newspaper a few weeks ago — was that when the new wings were built on the Davidson hospital, there was a recognition that eventually the old wing, which was not up to standards, would be closed and that it would proceed in an orderly fashion.

And, Mr. Speaker, that discussion happened many years ago and it's continuing now. That orderly closure of that particular wing is going ahead. And, Mr. Speaker, it will be done in a way that makes sure that the present residents are treated well.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Brkich: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the people at Davidson, the senior citizens of Davidson and area — in fact everyone in this province — is quickly finding out that you just can't trust this Premier or this NDP government. You can't trust the Premier on keeping his election promises. You can't trust the Premier when he says he won't kick seniors out of their beds. And you definitely can't trust this Premier or his NDP government when it comes to health care.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier's habit of saying one thing and doing another means the people at Davidson will have fewer long-term care beds, and sick senior citizens who currently occupy these beds may be out on the street.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier explain to those seniors why they should trust his word on anything? Will he at least explain to the people in the gallery why should they trust his word? Will he at least support the motion?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. I just caution members not to be involving members of the gallery in their statements. The Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the member from Melfort, who is the opposition party critic for Health, was asked by a reporter on April 30, "Is the Sask Party categorically opposed to any closures or conversions?" He said:

No, we haven't said that; we said that we would look at all of these issues on their merits, that we would look at the statistics. If there are incidents and cases where it can be clearly identified that the facility is not being utilized, that there are no waiting lists, indeed that there are significant vacancies of use, then we think that those decisions might be the right decisions and the community should be involved in understanding that it is the right decision.

Mr. Speaker, we are going forward, providing information to communities, working with the regional health authorities, and making sure that we use our health dollars to the best effect possible.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Emergency Room Service at the Border Health Centre

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Speaker, my question too is for the Premier. Last week I introduced to the Premier and his NDP government two young people from southwest Saskatchewan whose lives may have been saved because of timely emergency medical attention they received at the Border Health Centre in Climax.

Mr. Speaker, that's the same health centre where this Premier and his NDP government have decided to cut back hours of emergency service.

A group of concerned citizens from Climax and the surrounding area are in the gallery today, Mr. Speaker. They've come to let the Premier know that they don't support his NDP government's decision to cut health services to their families and their communities. Mr. Speaker, will the Premier explain to these families from southwest Saskatchewan why his NDP government doesn't think they deserve to have access to timely emergency health services?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the regional health authorities, working with the staff throughout their regions, and in this case the Cypress Health Region, have been looking at how to provide care in some of the areas that are clearly on the edges of our province. And, Mr. Speaker, they work hard to make sure that they can provide some of the emergency care that's necessary and also balance it with some of the access to other services.

This is a challenge as the communities change, as the ability to get staff changes. And, Mr. Speaker, I think that the solutions will have to come working with the local doctors and with the local people there and working with Cypress Health Region. I know that they are working on this. I know that the community

is working on this.

I appreciate the fact that they come here. I know when a group came last time I was very pleased to meet with them. And, Mr. Speaker, we'll continue to do that, but we have to do it in a orderly way.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Speaker, just a few moments ago the Minister of Health referred to consulting with communities. I assume that that would mean in their communities.

Mr. Speaker, the community of Climax has a doctor. They have nurses. What we're talking about is cutbacks in hours of service. Mr. Speaker, the Premier may be aware that communities like Climax and Frontier are isolated places a long way from major health centres, even like Swift Current or Regina or Saskatoon. The people of those communities rely on quick access to emergency services provided by the doctor and the nurses right at the Border Health Centre today.

And these people, the people in the gallery, took the Premier at his word when he said during the last provincial election that he would strengthen health services. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the people of Climax found out what thousands of families in Saskatchewan are finding out for themselves — that you can't trust anything this NDP government says.

Will the Premier stop hiding behind his Minister of Health and explain directly to the citizens of Climax, Frontier, and surrounding area why his NDP government thinks their communities deserve to have their already minimal health services cut even further?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the language that the member used doesn't assist in getting this problem solved.

What has to happen, Mr. Speaker, is that the people who are organizing the health care for the Cypress Health Region, or for any other health region in the province, have to continue to work with the doctors, with the nurses, with the other people in the community, with the mayors and the RM councillors and other people to sort out what can work best in their particular community. And, Mr. Speaker, it depends on the statistics, as the member from Melfort says. It depends on the usage; it depends on what kinds of things are there to make sure that we're using our health dollars to the best purpose possible.

The members opposite, including the member who has just raised the question, talk about the very expensive care that we need in the cities and for some situations, but they also need to recognize that the costs are shared right across the whole system.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Métis Nation of Saskatchewan Elections

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, in 2001 there was a huge problem with the Métis election. In fact in committee just a few days ago, one of the minister's officials called the election a disaster.

Over the last few months I have heard from many Métis people who were worried that it could happen again. On March 9 I wrote a letter to the minister raising these concerns, and the minister wrote back saying that the federal and provincial government had provided \$100,000 to ensure a fair Métis election in 2004.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, the Métis elections were held on May 26 and the results are still being disputed. Yesterday one candidate was declared president, and a few hours later another candidate was declared elected.

Métis people deserve to have an election process they can trust. What is the minister doing to address the problems in the Métis election?

The Speaker: — I recognize the minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member raises, I think, a very legitimate concern, and the hon. member and myself have had a number of discussions on this very issue.

We have, as of this morning, still received word from the chief electoral officer from the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan that the official results still see Mr. Doucette as the president. There's an appeal process that clearly is allowed through the bylaws of the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan. I suspect there will be a number of challenges yet over the next period of time, but as it stands now, currently Mr. Doucette is still recognized officially as the newly elected president of the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Funding for Repairs to Diefenbaker Bridge

Mr. Wall: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this week we had the opportunity again to travel to the great city of Prince Albert and actually view the Diefenbaker bridge, which is currently under repair — no thanks to the government, Mr. Speaker. The taxpayers of the city of Prince Albert are picking up the tab for repairing that bridge even though there is a longstanding agreement signed between Tommy Douglas, then premier, and the people of Prince Albert to share the costs of maintaining that bridge.

(10:45)

Mr. Speaker, the mayor and the Saskatchewan Party is . . . we're still hopeful that the Premier will do the right thing and keep that promise, keep that agreement. And I understand that officials from the city of P.A. (Prince Albert), mayor and

council, will be requesting a meeting with the government officials — maybe even the MLA who's chirping from his seat — to further deal with this issue, to ask again for the government to keep its end of the bargain.

Yes or no — will the Premier agree to meet with the mayor of Prince Albert when that meeting is requested?

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

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thanks again, Mr. Speaker. Well on this issue, as I've indicated before a number of times, we've had a very good working relationship with the city of Prince Albert. Mr. Speaker, I think it's evidenced by the fact that through the Prairie Grain Roads Program, Mr. Speaker, we accessed some \$693,000 — a significant portion of the cost — and directed it already to the construction, to the repair of the road across the bridge, Mr. Speaker.

Having said that, I have also indicated in every response — both inside the House and outside of the House — that the dialogue continues with the city. I want to, as well, acknowledge the assistance provided in those discussions by the MLAs from that area, Mr. Speaker, who have also assisted in the communication, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am confident, as I've said before, that we will find resolution in working in partnership with the city of Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Public Consultation on Health Facilities

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that the minister is acknowledging the work of the MLA for P.A. Northcote because not very many people I've talked to in P.A. over the last number of weeks are acknowledging the work that that member is doing on this issue.

I didn't hear the yes-or-no answer to the question. And, Mr. Speaker, I think it's indicative, frankly, it's indicative of what is wrong with this government. This Premier had no problem in travelling to these . . . to the communities that we're talking about today to make promises in the last election campaign. He had no problem travelling to SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) to make them a promise, going to communities to promise to keep facilities open in terms of health care, to improve health care. He had no problem telling people that he would continue to cut taxes.

But, Mr. Speaker, we can't get him up out of his chair to explain why these promises are broken. How come, Mr. Speaker, the Premier was willing to go across the province and say what he would do, and now that he's broken those promises, he won't get out of his feet and defend his record and support our motion to go to these communities and meet on this important issue?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier. Order.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, we've had an illustration again here today of how the opposition has much more interest in partisan politics than finding solutions to the problem and issues that face the communities and the people of Saskatchewan. What we hear is an ongoing partisan attack. And fair enough — I guess that's how they choose to do opposition.

On the question, Mr. Speaker, which we've been debating this morning on health care. When we laid out our action plan we set before the people of Saskatchewan a very consistent and clear plan for the direction for health care in the future. That plan indicated there would be changes, yes, changes even in some local facilities.

But what the opposition leader today does not want to mention in this House is what this government has been about in this very session, where we have announced for the people of Swift Current, by the way, other communities in the province, new diagnostic equipment in CT (computerized tomography) scans; where we have announced to the people of southern Saskatchewan a new MRI (magnetic resonance imaging); where, Mr. Speaker, we have put in place \$173 million — new dollars — for the provision of health care for the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we have a plan. We're following that plan and we're building quality health care for the people of Saskatchewan everywhere.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Premier characterizes the questions today as partisan. That's what he said — partisan politics. Mr. Speaker, when there are people who are visiting the legislature today, who are watching, watching proceedings on TV, watching this issue, who want, Mr. Speaker . . . What do they want? Is it that radical? They want to be consulted before facilities are closed. That's what they want. They want to have a sense that their government is listening to them.

And so that's the questions that we're asking this morning. We're saying, will this government support a motion that says, before those closures happen, the Premier needs to have the courage to send out the appropriate committee and do that consulting? Maybe there are alternatives out there that can be proposed. Certainly in fairness and just out of respect, there would be . . . just eminent good sense in going out to those communities before those closures happen.

And so, Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding all the rhetoric from the Premier, yes or no, does he agree that it is fair and meet and right for elected officials to be consulting with those communities before those closures happen in those communities?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition well knows and members of this House well know that the Minister of Health has conducted regular meetings even with some of the folks who are here in the gallery this morning. There has been ongoing discussion between the minister, the department, the communities. Even more significantly, there is ongoing discussion with the district health authorities who make important decisions on a local level. We trust those decisions. We trust those communities working together to make those decisions. If there are alternate ideas, of course the health districts and regions are anxious to listen to them and find options.

Mr. Speaker, but what is missing from this debate, what is missing from this debate is any clear statement from the Saskatchewan Party about health care. I asked the Leader of the Opposition this morning, does he adopt the policy of health care that he sees in his colleagues in British Columbia, for instance, where their answer, where their answer to health care is to simply slash the wages of the health care providers? Is that the solution of the Sask Party to find resources? Or is it the solution of the Sask Party to do what the Government of Ontario has done, which is layer on a huge health care premium on the people of Ontario?

Mr. Speaker, we have important, important decisions to make in this province and in this country, and what we need is an informed debate by people who care about the future of publicly funded and publicly administered medicare in Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Saskatchewan's Credit Rating

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure today to announce that Standard & Poor's rating service has raised the province's credit rating to AA minus from A plus positive.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — We are delighted with the improvement, Mr. Speaker. In the early 1980s, Saskatchewan had a remarkable A plus plus rating. We have been rebuilding our credit ratings since it began a slide in the 1980s, and are very pleased with the progress we've made. Today's rating marks the first time since 1985 that Saskatchewan has had a AA credit rating from both major US (United States) . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — I would also like to note that this is the 11th credit rating upgrade since 1991. Standard & Poor's notes that this rating reflects the province's diverse economy; still moderate, tax-supported debt burden; and the adoption of prudent budgetary policies.

Standard & Poor's, Mr. Speaker, also acknowledges this credit rating comes in the face of the many challenges facing the

province of Saskatchewan over the past several years — challenges such as the issues in the agricultural sector and perennial spending pressures in health care, both of which necessitate ongoing cautious spending management.

The steady credit upgrades this province has achieved are good news for Saskatchewan. This particular upgrade will open up additional portions of the world capital markets for R-bonds. It will also provide new opportunities to ensure our interest costs are the lowest possible.

Today's upgrade confirms that we are addressing peoples' priorities in a responsible manner. It is a vote of confidence in this government's budget and balanced financial management approach. We are committed to continue improving our fiscal situation in the near term so that our credit rating continues to improve.

This province's economy is performing well. It is growing and we remain optimistic. From this government's perspective, the future of this province continues to look very bright. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Canora-Pelly.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, while today's news is good news for all of the people of Saskatchewan, when we look at the kinds of things . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — I've indicated to the Minister of Finance, as we've had many discussions over the last couple of months regarding concerns about equalization, while we've talked about interest rates in the entire country and in North America, there are changes that have occurred that are positive for the province of Saskatchewan.

One of the changes, Mr. Speaker, is most . . . that affects this province greatly is of course the interest rates. And I noted, Mr. Speaker, in the preparation of the budget documents by the Minister of Finance, that he's indicated that short-term interest rates, which are expected to be at about 2.9 per cent for this year, have had a dramatic effect on the cost of servicing the public debt. And I note in the article this morning from Standard & Poor's, that it suggests very clearly and I quote from that article. It says:

The ratings are also supported by the province's . . . adoption of prudent budgetary policies such as the new summary financial plan and the routine use of conservative economic assumptions . . .

You know, Mr. Speaker . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — We've stood in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, we've stood . . .

The Speaker: — Order please, members. I would like the

member . . . Order please, members. Order. Order. Member for Canora-Pelly.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know I listened to the member from Saskatoon Nutana over the last number of years in Public Accounts Committees state every reason why this province should not move and get with the terms of other provinces and move to summary financial budgeting. She had an excuse. She had a reason why this province shouldn't move forward.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that the Minister of Finance finally listened to the people of Saskatchewan, listened to the Provincial Auditor, and moved to summary financial budgeting because that's one of the reasons why Standard & Poor's has changed the rating for the province of Saskatchewan today. That's one of the reasons, Mr. Speaker. And the Minister of Finance can look directly at that document.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one of the other concerns, one of the other concerns that Standard & Poor's brings in their announcement this morning is this, it says:

(The) Risks to the province's economy are associated with the modest population decline in the past several years.

Mr. Speaker, let's look at those two things. Let's look at interest rates and let's look at population.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if we continue to have a position in this province where the population continues to decline, if there is a sudden turn in the interest rates, if there's a sudden turn back to the 9, 10 per cent interest rates — heaven forbid that we ever move in that direction — Standard & Poor's says that our economy is subject to those kinds of changes, that we will see a drop in those rates, Mr. Speaker. I predict that this is a very volatile economy that we have in this province.

So, Mr. Speaker, while today's news is good for the province of Saskatchewan, Standard & Poor's has identified some of the things that create a situation in this province where we need to move forward.

You know, Mr. Speaker, in the preparation of the document, the budget document, the very document of the Government of Saskatchewan . . . makes reference to the improvement in the North American economy. It makes reference to the improvement of the Asian economy. It makes reference to the fact that we anticipate a better harvest condition. Mr. Speaker, in all of those concerns, they're not directly related to the policies of this government. There's someone else that is controlling the economy of this province.

We hear from the Finance minister how we need to change equalization. We need to change equalization to the point, Mr. Premier, that the situation in this province is that we will be a have province, that we won't have to rely on Ottawa. We don't have to allow on the economic conditions of other ones.

Mr. Speaker, I commend Standard & Poor's for looking at the economy of this province, but the debt of this province continues to increase, and it will be a problem in the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(11:00)

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Members of the Assembly, order please. Order, please. Order.

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Ruling on a Point of Order

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day, I wish to bring down a ruling. Yesterday the Government House Leader raised a point of order regarding a statement made by the member for Saltcoats. The Government House leader said, and I quote:

. . . the member imputed that the Premier personally benefited from tax increases by — in the member's words — by putting the money in his pocket.

I have reviewed *Hansard* on this matter and find that the member for Melville-Saltcoats did indeed use the words:

He raised our taxes, put it in his pocket . . .

This statement alone can be interpreted several ways. On one hand, the fact that it caused disruption in the Assembly indicates that several members felt the statement was offensive. On the other hand, when the Government House Leader and the Opposition House Leader spoke to the point of order, both House leaders acknowledged that there was no attempt on the part of the member for Melville-Saltcoats to imply wrongdoing.

It is also on record that the member for Melville-Saltcoats later clarified his intent with the following statement:

. . . but I know the Premier had no personal gain.

When ruling in a case like this, the Speaker is obliged to take into account actual words said and the effect of the words used. I accept the statement of both House leaders and the member for Melville-Saltcoats that the words used were not meant to imply wrongdoing on the part of the Premier. I also wish to emphasize that it is unparliamentary for any member to state that another member put money in his or her pocket.

I refer members to Marleau and Montpetit, page 522:

Remarks directed specifically at another Member which question that Member's integrity, honesty or character are not in order.

I therefore rule the line, "put . . . in his pocket" is personally directed and therefore out of order, and I ask the member for Melville-Saltcoats to withdraw that statement.

I recognize the member for Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there certainly was no intent on my part that the Premier had any personal gain by raising the PST (provincial sales tax) by 1 per cent. And I apologize to the Premier and to the House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 2 — Proposed Inquiry on Health Care Facilities

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by Mr. Gantefoer.

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

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's time the government got its head out of the sand and stopped pretending that everything is fine, and begin to fix the problems in health care. The last time this NDP government engaged in health reform, it fired 500 nurses and closed rural hospitals, putting loads on Regina and Saskatoon that are unacceptable and creating the longest waiting lists for surgeries and diagnostics in the country.

Now this government is asking regional health authorities to cut an additional \$20 million out of their budgets. This cannot be done without reducing services, closing facilities, and cutting programs.

So the question for the minister is, which facilities will be closed? What programs are going to be cut? What services will he reduce? And how much longer are people in this province going to have to wait for surgeries or diagnostics? Mr. Jim Fergusson stated that the budget for the Saskatoon Health Authority won't even keep up with the status quo. So what programs, Mr. Speaker, are going to go?

Over this session, we in the opposition have demonstrated the state of health care in this province. People have come to the legislature in desperation to get help for serious medical conditions. Some of them have been ridiculed by the members opposite for their trouble. Some of them have been chastised by government officials for embarrassing the government in the media, and all the Health minister can do is talk about challenges.

Everyone in this province knows there are challenges, and the majority of these challenges have been created by this NDP government's neglect. The people of Saskatchewan demand leadership, Mr. Speaker. They want solutions, not more excuses.

It's easy to identify the problems. We have the longest surgical waiting lists in Canada, with people waiting as long as three years for surgeries. We have a shortage of urologists in Regina. We have a bureaucratic maze where patients get little direction from the health district as to how to navigate their way through it. We have a severe nursing shortage that is being managed by overtime, which only burns out nurses and forces them into early retirement, further exacerbating the problem. We have ERs (emergency room) that are jammed to capacity and no staff

to manage hospital beds. We have people laying in gurneys in emergency rooms for in excess of three days. And now this NDP government wants health care regions to cut back.

How about managing the province's finances? How about setting some priorities, Mr. Speaker? How about some leadership out of this mess that the NDP government has created?

Roy Romanow said it's time for action, and governments need the political will to do the right thing, to know what's right, and to not act is unforgivable. Even Romanow acknowledges that his NDP government made huge mistakes when it made changes to health care by closing hospitals, firing nurses, and now this government is doing the same thing all over again.

November 14, 2003, the Regina *Leader-Post*, Romanow has admitted the deep-cuts to provincial health care services in the 1990s were a mistake. Romanow also admitted that his government was wrong to slash enrolments in nurse training programs. It was the NDP, Mr. Speaker, that created this huge mess that we're faced with now. This government has no one to blame but themselves.

The NDP has slashed and burned health care. And now that they realize the colossal damage they've created, all they know how to do is the same — to repeat the same old mistakes over again. So this government continues to make the same mistakes, but we all know that this government can't be trusted to make things right. This government put us where we are now with the longest waiting lists in the country.

Here's this government's track-record on health care: the longest surgical waiting lists in the country; longest diagnostic waiting lists with in excess in some cases of two years for an MRI; horrendously long waiting lists in emergency rooms; a mass exodus of nurses and other health care professionals; a College of Medicine going on probation, the first entire college in Canada to risk losing its accreditation; longest strikes of health care workers in this province's history; and — then this government says it cares about workers — shortages of nursing education seats due to the NDP's decision to cut them back in 1996 to 180 from 364.

People are dying on waiting lists, Mr. Speaker. This government tries to deny these realities but we talk to people who work in health care every day and they tell us the stories of how this government threatens to fire them if they speak up, how this government puts out gag orders to staff to try to cover up what is really going on as a result of the poor decisions that have . . . made and continues to make.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP have had 12 years to work out a plan for reforming health care and yet the system continues to deteriorate with the longest waiting lists in Canada for surgeries and diagnostics. Decisions the NDP made in the '90s that drastically reduced the number of nursing education seats has created a domino effect. In many cases there is not adequate nursing staff to administer care to acute care beds, so acute care beds are closed. In other cases the patient ratio to nursing staff is dangerously increasing, making it more difficult to provide quality care.

When acute care beds are closed, patients from emergency can't be admitted. Backlogs in emergency rooms occur and hospitals go into code burgundies, deferring to other ERs. As a result, surgeries are cancelled. The NDP's decision to cut nursing education seats and fire nurses when it closed hospitals has created the longest surgical waiting lists in Canada.

This government's commitment has amounted to little more than lip service. For 12 years the NDP have done nothing more than create more problems by making poor decisions and using band-aid solutions for a health care system that is in critical condition.

Why should anyone trust the NDP now? We have seen what the last reforms this government implemented have done to our health care system. This NDP government has only one thing in mind, and that is to preserve its power by deception — by deceiving the public, Mr. Speaker, about the realities in our health care system.

Lorne Calvert is destroying medicare. To know right . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I think the member knows why I brought him to order. That is, he should not be using the names of any members here by name except use . . . he should be referring to titles or constituencies.

The member for Thunder Creek.

Mr. Stewart: — The Premier is destroying medicare. To know right and not act is criminal. This government has let health care implode. It's crumbling before our very eyes. Tommy Douglas must be rolling over in his grave.

The Minister of Health continues to say that everything is fine. Well he might be able to convince himself with his words, but his words give little comfort to people with family members on Saskatchewan's waiting lists.

When people come with health care concerns, they're ridiculed by this NDP government. The Health minister says in the House that he'll meet with people, and then refuses to. He sends a staffer down to tell them that the minister doesn't get involved in individual cases. He doesn't care, Mr. Speaker. The only thing he cares about is protecting his seat and creating the illusion that everything is fine in health care in this province.

Doctors and nurses are frustrated because they can't provide adequate patient care with the resources they are given and that's why many are leaving the province, compounding the problem. The only planning this government does is to develop creative ways of rationing health care.

What makes sense is to get people diagnosed as quickly as possible, treated as quickly as possible, and returned to work as quickly as possible. SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) and WCB (Workers' Compensation Board) realize that, and that's why they send people out of the province. That's why they are now paying for MRI services in the province. But if you don't fall under SGI or WCB, you wait 22 months or more.

That's how this government rations health care, Mr. Speaker. It figures that as long as everyone waits 22 months then it's okay

because people are all waiting about the same length of time. Mr. Speaker, this is simply unacceptable. This government's performance is unacceptable.

And what did this government do during the election? Well, it made some convenient omissions in the NDP platform. Did this NDP government tell the people that taxes were going up? No. Did this NDP government tell people it was closing long-term beds? No. Did this NDP government tell people it was making further cuts to health care? No.

What are the government's plans to deal with the increasing demand for long-term care beds with our aging population, Mr. Speaker? Our young people are moving to Alberta in masses. Is this the NDP's plan to force our seniors to move to Alberta as well?

We ask the government to listen to the words of Roy Romanow who admits that the cuts he made to health care in the 1990s were too deep and a mistake that we are paying for now.

Public consultation, Mr. Speaker — people in the system, people in the community know the effects of these cuts best. This government ought to talk to them and come up with a plan that will work before they make changes. Public hearings before closures or conversions of facilities and changes to services, Mr. Speaker, that's what's required here. Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I support the motion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to get up to discuss this motion. And like the Leader of the Opposition had mentioned, you know, it's a very basic motion. It's a motion that deserves respect that the government should be looking at, and I can't understand why the government wouldn't support this motion.

(11:15)

The motion deals with a legislative committee to come out and meet with these people. We changed the rules last year. We changed the committee structure up here in this House. And I think that was one of the things that I can remember the Premier was saying in November, or December when he made the announcement, that it would allow more input, more consulting from the people, in legislation, in budget process, in different things, in Committee of Finance, into estimates.

And I can't think of one piece of legislation that's passed through this House this session that is probably more important than closing long-term care beds, moving seniors. It's more . . . (inaudible) . . . out there that affects everybody out there. It affects the seniors; it affects the staff. It affects the families of everybody that worked there, the families that have seniors in that home.

Mr. Speaker, it affects a whole community at that. And I think that this government owes it to the people to go out to these communities. Because that's what we're asking in this motion

that's going to be debated here today, is that the people can actually ask the officials, the people that are making the decisions, or the committee, and offer some input into why these closures are happening, why these job cuts are happening. And I can't think of another reason why this government would use not to go through it. That's what this committee was set up for. It would allow to travel out to these affected areas at that end of it.

You talk in my area — there's 12 affected areas — but I'll talk a little about how it affects my area. On Tuesday there was a meeting of 300-plus people. And that was on very short notice. But that was pressure from here, questions we asked here. The CEO (chief executive officer) finally came out. He didn't want to. He met with the staff. He met with the mayor and the reeves on the side.

But, Mr. Speaker, at that end, I think there's enough public pressure put on here he finally had a public meeting. But we wanted the people that are actually making the decisions to come out there. Because he had hinted at that meeting that the decision was made up here in Regina. He submitted a couple of proposals. But he said, I didn't know which one they propose, or chose, till the day before the announcement. And he says, I did not do anything at that end.

The Speaker: — Why is the member from Wood River on his feet?

Mr. Huyghebaert: — With leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The member from Wood River has requested leave for introductions. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The member may proceed.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank my colleague from Arm River-Watrous for interrupting his speech. But I'd like to introduce to you, Mr. Speaker, and through you to the rest of the Assembly, a group of 36 grade 4 students in the east gallery that are from Assiniboia Seventh Avenue School. Mr. Speaker, they are accompanied by their teachers Bill Lothian, Paula Fondrick, and Cindy McSorley.

Mr. Speaker, I haven't had a chance to meet with this group yet, but I will shortly after. When they're done in the gallery, I'll go out and meet with them. I'm sure they're going to have an awful lot of questions. And what we're doing right now, we're debating a private member's Bill on health care, so I hope you enjoy it and I'll be speaking to you afterwards.

And I wish all members would welcome them to their Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

ADJOURNED DEBATES

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 2 — Proposed Inquiry on Health Care Facilities (continued)

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also want to join with the member from Wood River to welcome this school group here today, and I hope they find these proceedings entertaining.

Talking a bit about . . . I'll talk a bit about the facility that's in Davidson. You know it was built in 1965, not, not 1905, like the minister almost sounds like when he gets up and says, well it's way out of code. Well there's some doorways that are a little small.

There was a question asked at that meeting, well how much would it cost to widen the doorways? And of course he . . . you know I . . . he said, I don't know. But those are basic solutions that could've been evolved from the community, that could be looked at to see to maybe make, out of 10 rooms, make 6 rooms; or just widen the doorways.

There isn't a lot of change, when he talks about this old wing. It was built in 1965, Mr. Speaker. It's in very good condition. I know that because I've been there, toured it. There is facilities are probably a lot older than that with smaller rooms that are being used throughout this province, unfortunately.

But they can still be used, Mr. Speaker, and there is a need. The thing is, there is a need for them beds there. There is a need to keep that wing open. There is a need to do the renovations there. They're talking about saving \$100,000. That's what they're going to save by basically shutting down a whole wing and creating a waiting list in Davidson, for \$100,000.

You could probably do some small renovations in there just to make the doorways a little bigger, probably for 5 to \$10,000, and keep them residents in there. And you have a waiting list. The people, that was brought up at that meeting on Tuesday, got up constantly and saying, talking about their parents, relatives, people they know that are going to need the home in them, in the next few years.

You know, and it's really sad, because I talk about that building being built in 1965; that building was built in 1965. The residents that built it, that raised the money, they're just starting to go in there now. A couple of them need it, and they were the people that raised that money there, that helped build that facility, and now they can't use it. And that, Mr. Speaker, saddens me. You know that . . . they will be moved out of that community.

One of them was Mr. Elmer Laird, and I know he was a big push when that was built in '65. He stated, you know, I'm 80 years old; I may need this facility. I don't have, he said, immediate family to look after me. He says, I want to have some friends around me. And he says, now if something happens to me in the next few years, I will be moved out of there because the CEO cannot . . . All he could talk about was, well we've got a few beds open at the far end of the health

region. That's 3 to 400 miles away, Mr. Speaker.

You know so he says, well we're just going to close these and if you need them, well you can move them there. These are people we're talking about, human beings, not product — not grain that can be okay, we have some storage at the far end of the land, we don't have to bring it to the home quarter. We're talking about people here, Mr. Speaker, at that end of it.

You know people that . . . And there was a lot of misinformation with that meeting on Tuesday, and they still didn't get a lot of answers. And even before that there was a lot of misinformation.

The Minister of Health talked about a quote in the *Davidson Leader*. Well there was also another quote in *Davidson Leader* from the CEO, that said he would be talking to the six people affected — their families — when they had to be moved out. So that shows me either he was wrong and misquoted at that, or he was going to move them six people out of there. And maybe the pressure from here, raised here, maybe is keeping them there. We don't know. But right now he said at the meeting, oh, they would not be moved out. But what about three, four months down the road?

And there was also job loss — I asked in committee — I think the member said probably three or four full-time equivalent jobs. Well right now I think there's some staff here today. I think they informed me that probably close up to six are going to be affected, possibly seven people are going to be affected with the job cuts and the job losses there.

An Hon. Member: — Ten, ten, Greg.

Mr. Brkich: — They're up to ten now I hear. There could be as many as ten. So that's the information that's coming out there. They don't know that. And right now that community, that makes them very angry that this government isn't listening to them. That they're getting one story from here in Regina, getting another story from the CEO of the Heartland Region.

And I think that's what this motion basically speaks to. This committee, where the decisions are made that affect that community, should go out there and meet with them so that it's on record, so that it's set straight, because they're getting basically two different stories out there. And right now the people out there don't trust the CEO out there because there has been so many different stories and he's changed kind of how they're going to do things out there.

So they're scared that this summer that all of a sudden he's going to move them people out of there. They're going to be gone, Mr. Speaker. They're going to move them out of the community. That the job cuts will be greater than the minister had announced here; that there's going to be more cuts.

There's also the fear of, I believe the minister had said there's still \$20 million yet to be absorbed by health districts. How is that going to affect out there? Is there going to be more services cut out to Davidson, to the area?

They said that they would increase home care. You know what they're doing in Davidson right now? You know what they did

a couple of months ago? Home care only operates Monday to Friday now — Monday to Friday. After they make the announcements, that was about . . . they made that announcement about three weeks before they made the cuts. They changed home care, Monday to Friday.

Well like one resident or one person got up and said, if you need home care Monday or you need it Tuesday, you need it Saturday and you need it Sunday, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Brkich: — So they're just chipping away at the basic health care in this province, Mr. Speaker, the foundation of what this province and the people are paying taxes for. I mean if nothing else, they look at their last years that the people that they love will be looked after and respected in their home communities — and when this government is chipping away at that one year at a time — and they're scared that the facility's going to be gone.

And if the cuts keep going on and the closures keep going on, what is going to happen to health care in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker? And that scares the people out there. And that's why I think this committee . . . And that's what we're debating here, this motion for this committee, a moratorium be put on the job cuts, the bed closures, the facility closures put on hold at least until this committee can go and talk to each affected community so the communities can come up with ideas.

At that meeting on Tuesday there was many people that come up and spoke to the mike and come up and said, you know, how can we help to . . . what changes do we need; maybe we don't need as much here. These are the people that work in these facilities that are making . . . that are saying this, that we can work together to keep these beds open. You know, how can we help to keep these beds open?

The people, all they want is their input. And there is a lot of good input. They were the ones that built that facility, Mr. Speaker. They were the ones that put the money into it in 1965 — the equity, the sweat to build that.

Another thing is when they went to the big health districts, there was no . . . Or nobody represents, represents the area of Davidson, you know. And I think that's wrong. I think each facility should be able to at least have one person from that hospital, from that long-term care should be at least on the board, so at least the people in the area have a say on that board that goes on there.

And basically they've felt they've been left out. And this is one way that this government can correct that, Mr. Speaker. They can send this . . . They can put a moratorium on these closures, on these cuts, and send this committee out to meet with the people, to listen to them, to listen to their ideas, to come back with recommendations to this legislature, to the budget. That's a basic motion when you look at it, at the end here, is:

. . . that this Assembly strongly urges the Government to place a moratorium on all health care facility closures and conversions until such time as this inquiry has been completed and a . . . (sustainable) report presented to the

Assembly pursuant to Rule 133 . . .

(11:30)

With that, Mr. Speaker, I urge this government, I urge the Premier, with the questions that have been raised, the people . . . even the minister — I'd asked him to come Tuesday to Davidson and wish he'd have come or at least sent some staff there to see the questions and the people that were out there and the questions that were asked. And basically a lot of them weren't answered.

This is a vast, underpopulated area, Mr. Speaker. But not only is it large, it's also really quite isolated by geography, by natural features, by international borders. We're bound by the US border on the south, their Frenchman River Valley which is large and very difficult to cross to the north, and with impossible distances to the east and west.

The CEO, he couldn't answer some of them because it wasn't in his priority. And he says, I'm getting directed from the government; I only get so much money and that's it. And then he said, I present them several proposals and they pick one, he said. And when asked what the other proposals was, he says, well I can't release that, he said, that's in the government hands right now and that.

Well if you go west from there, the first large community you're going to come to is Maple Creek, and that would be in excess of 100 miles. Beyond that, Medicine Hat. If you go east, the first large community you're going to come to is Swift Current; again, roughly 100 miles.

So there was a lot of questions that were asked that night that he could not answer, that that board could not answer, that this inquiry . . . they can ask an inquiry. They can make a report with that and bring it back to the legislature.

The Border Health Centre district is home to a manufacturing plant that employs about 155 people, two large compressor stations, and the Talisman oil fields. Now all of these companies involve high hazard work areas which legally require the provision of a medical facility in close proximity. Emergency services have to be available at all times. In fact the manufacturing plant, Honeybee Manufacturing in Frontier, operates from 7 a.m. to 2 a.m. most of the season. When they get real busy, they work around the clock.

So with that ending, Mr. Speaker, I urge the Premier to vote and let his MLAs to vote for this basic motion, to vote for democracy. We set this . . . We changed the rules in this House, this legislative rules in this House, and I think that's one of the things that was allowed for, for more input into these committees from people that is affected by this legislation, Mr. Speaker.

The Border Health Centre district is primarily inhabited by young families and elderly citizens, including three Hutterite colonies in immediate proximity. They're all prime users of health care services, and are especially in need of emergency health care provision.

With that, I urge him to do that — to respect democracy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In addition, the elderly population is further handicapped by the difficulty many of them have arranging transportation to travel to neighbouring communities if they needed medical services out of the immediate area. In reality, Mr. Speaker, those elderly citizens would most likely have to move from the community of Climax, from the community of Frontier, or Val Marie and Bracken, if the facility in Climax suffers further reductions in hours of service.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today in this House with mixed emotions. I'm pleased to be able to speak on behalf of the constituents of Cypress Hills and some from the constituency of Wood River as well. But I'm disappointed, Mr. Speaker, that I have to be doing this today. I'm disappointed that it has come to this — that we would have to stand in this House and beg for consideration of service cuts that are proposed for the community of Climax and Frontier and the surrounding rural area.

Right now, Mr. Speaker, there is only one ambulance in the entire area that serves that community, serves that vast area, serves that number of people — one ambulance located in the community of Frontier. And to make matters worse, Mr. Speaker, to rub salt in the wound of this situation, the Minister of Health and the NDP government just recently introduced The Ambulance Act, which will make it more difficult to maintain ambulance service for the people of that remote area.

Mr. Speaker, on a daily basis for the last month, I have presented a petition in this House on behalf of the 700 or more people who have signed, concerning their worries with the government proposal about cutting back services at the Border Health Centre. Day after day I presented the petition and read the prayer. But, Mr. Speaker, as part of that process, I'm unable to give some of the background information that attends or accompanies that petition. I'm going to use some of the information on the petition as a basis of my comments today.

Mr. Speaker, this is a situation that is deteriorating rapidly. And it's done by design; it is not done by accident. Mr. Speaker, these kinds of actions are not only unacceptable, they're intolerable.

Mr. Speaker, the Border Health Centre serves the communities of Climax, Frontier, Bracken, Orkney, Val Marie, and Claydon, plus surrounding areas for a total population of approximately 1,800 people. The area served is 125 kilometres long and 50 kilometres wide, with an excess of 4,000 square kilometres.

Mr. Speaker, the community of Climax, serving that whole area, currently has a doctor. They've been very successful over the years in having doctor services provided, medical services through professional practitioners. And right now they have a doctor. They have enough nurses to maintain the facility's operations. If the hours of service are reduced any further, the community is in threat of losing whatever medical services they have.

This whole situation, Mr. Speaker, becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. You cut back hours of operation. You limit services by stealth, and pretty soon the doctor who is there can't continue to perform his duties. Then the government or the health district says, you don't have a doctor; you can't maintain your operation — and find a legitimacy in closing it.

Mr. Speaker, that is unacceptable. It's completely unacceptable, especially from a government who prides itself in its history of having originated and provided the very health system this province takes such pride in. Mr. Speaker, this government may look back on its history with pride, but it won't be able to look forward with any significant pride, as it continues to undermine the services of health care provision to remote areas, to small communities, to those people who are most vulnerable and in need of service as the years go forward.

Mr. Speaker, there was a rural hospital committee report, written in 1974 by a committee of three who were struck to look at the delivery of health care services in these remote and small communities. And if the minister would go back that far, he would find in rereading that report that the conditions and the rationale, the justifications for having a 24-hour emergency health care facility in the town of Climax are as relevant today as they were 30 years ago. In fact, Mr. Speaker, maybe more so, because even though the population has dwindled, the need is just as great and maybe greater. Mr. Speaker, nothing has changed in terms of need.

Those arguments summarize the petition that I have been presenting to the House on a daily basis over the last month.

But, Mr. Speaker, there is some other things that I want to address as part of our comments in favour of the official opposition's motion today. I want to talk about the effort that the people have gone to in the community of Frontier and Climax to make sure that awareness is part of this campaign, to make sure the government is aware. They have undertaken letter-writing campaigns, telephone campaigns. The mayors of the two most immediately affected communities have been here as part of a delegation before. We've had a youth group come and watch the proceedings here, and presented petitions for me to present on their behalf. We have a delegation of 50 people in the gallery, in your gallery today to see how the government responds to their concerns.

The people of the community have undertaken everything they can to bring awareness to this issue. Mr. Speaker, the part of the equation that's missing is how the government and the health district at their behest is responding to the people of that area.

Now I will give the minister his due. He offered to meet with the delegation when they came here previously. And they spent some time together. But, Mr. Speaker, when the minister stands in the House and says repeatedly that there is a consultation process that is undergone, that everything is being done in their power to find a suitable solution to the difficulties of health care provision and the budgetary limitations, let me tell you what consultation really amounted to, Mr. Speaker. Zero. Zero, Mr. Speaker.

The day the delegation was here from Climax and Frontier, a week or 10 days ago, the health district showed up in the

community of Climax to tell the people there what was going to happen. By any definition, Mr. Speaker, can that be called consultation? Is that consultation, Mr. Speaker?

What has happened since? The health district entertained a delegation at their meeting. Could they give them an answer? Would they give them an answer? No, they delayed and postponed.

Mr. Speaker, this process of consultation has been a one-way street. And there's no sense offering consultation after the decisions are made, before you've heard any alternative options presented by the people whose lives are affected. And I'm sure that the people in the gallery today, the people who have been here on behalf of their communities have had ideas that they would gladly present to the government that would help salvage the delivery of health care services in their communities.

Has the government listened? Have the health districts listened? No, Mr. Speaker. You can't call that consultation; it's an abuse of the definition.

Mr. Speaker, if these people in the gallery and the citizens of that immediate area are concerned today, they have reason to be concerned. This particular cutback in service is just the latest of a number of cutbacks in service.

The health centre in Climax used to be a 24-hour, 7-day-a-week hospital, and then it went to a health centre. Then it went to a health centre that only operated five days a week, and on weekends they had to bundle patients up, put them in an ambulance, and truck them to Shaunavon over some of the worst roads in the province.

Mr. Speaker, we're talking about a facility today that operates 24 hours a day, four and a half days a week. And now, the hours of operation are being cut back to 8 to 4, five days a week. Mr. Speaker, emergencies do not happen neatly between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, as part of the local community's representation to the health board, health district, they presented this submission, this brief. It's substantive. It is very conclusive about justifying the need for that facility. But what it also contains is no less than four or five, maybe half a dozen, written testimonials from people whose lives were saved because of the access to emergency services at times other than the neatly packaged 8 a.m. to 4 or 5 p.m. scenario.

Mr. Speaker, this is what emergency service is about. It's about providing it in a timely, in an immediate way when incidents happen. And if we're going to pretend that we're able to provide emergency service in the community of Climax for the people of that region, it's got to be available more than eight hours a day.

Mr. Speaker, the loss of the health care services in the community is sad enough, but it's just one of a long list of cutbacks to service that have happened to the community of Climax, to the whole southern region. Rural Climax and Frontier and Val Marie, that area is no different than rural communities all around the province. But, Mr. Speaker, when you're that remote, when you're that isolated, cutbacks of any

kind are felt much more specifically and urgently.

We've seen reduction in school services a number of years ago. I've already talked about the cutbacks to health care services.

Mr. Speaker, this government gutted the highways budget to the point where the people of Climax were among the first in the entire province to get their own picks and shovels, their own tractors, and repair their own roads. Mr. Speaker, if you're not going to provide health care services, the very minimum the government needs to provide is transportation and safe highways.

Mr. Speaker, the community suffered the loss of RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) services just recently.

Their rail line is under threat; at one time, it was going to be abandoned. A short-line rail has come in and taken up business activity there, but there's some concern about where that effort is going to go. And as I mentioned earlier, now ambulance service is again under threat.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to comment briefly on how ill-advised these kinds of decisions are. Premier Romanow led his own emasculation of health services in Saskatchewan and after some consideration of the impact that that had had, he offered these comments.

In the November 14 edition 2003 of the *Leader-Post*, Mr. Romanow "admitted the deep cuts to provincial health-care services in the 1990s were a mistake." Romanow also admitted that his government was wrong to slash enrolments in nurse training programs.

I want, I want you, Mr. Speaker, and the members of the House to pay particular attention to this next comment. He also said that the NDP "pushed the costs out of the government's pockets and right into the pockets of farmers and business people and nurses."

That is especially true in small town Saskatchewan. Mr. Romanow said, "I don't take any pride in this but it's now reduced to basically those at the very bottom (the very) end of our scale, the very poorest." And I might add my own words, the very most remote. Those are the people who are bearing the costs of those health care cut decisions.

It was the NDP that created this mess that we're faced with today and this government has no one to blame but themselves for the cost and the impact. Mr. Speaker, if we don't learn from our mistakes, we're doomed to repeat them; and the government is in jeopardy of making the same mistake again.

Mr. Speaker, Climax was known as an NDP stronghold. At one time people who ran for the NDP Party could guarantee support from the community of Climax. When I first moved there that was understood. Mr. Speaker, in the last election the NDP counted no more than 26 votes in the community of Climax. Mr. Speaker, it's not because they were enthralled with the Sask Party candidate. It wasn't because of the wonderful personality of the Sask Party candidate. Mr. Speaker, the turnaround in the polls in Climax are a direct result of the disillusionment of the people of that community with the policies of this government

over the last 12 years.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Speaker, I know an 80-year-old man who, when I first met him, said, I have been an NDP member all my life; I just found out that Tommy Douglas is dead because this government doesn't care about health care. That was his first response on meeting me. Mr. Speaker, a government that doesn't remember where it came from certainly can't understand where it's going. And this government has failed the people of rural Saskatchewan. They continue to do so. And if they proceed with this move in Climax, I can guarantee them the NDP votes will be counted on one hand after the next election.

(11:45)

Mr. Speaker, this is unacceptable behaviour on the part of this government. Their philosophy is to provide equity, equality for all people. Why are the people of the most remote part of rural Saskatchewan, save the far North, why are their lives any less important?

What about the principle of equity? What about the principle of fair treatment?

This is the government who prides itself in defending the weak, the defenceless, the vulnerable. The vulnerable are the ones that are going to be most immediately impacted by this decision — the elderly in the communities of Climax and Frontier.

Mr. Speaker, this is unacceptable; it's unconscionable. And I will be moving . . . or voting with the opposition in favour of the amendment we have been asked to support here today. I am asking the government members to support this private member's motion because it's important not only to their integrity, but to the future of health care in the community of Climax.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I certainly caught most of the words of the member for Cypress Hills, and I've heard of what else was said by the member for Arm River-Watrous and the member for Thunder Creek, and it is very likely beyond my ability to add or detract from anything that they have been able to say here today.

I think members of this House have heard a very, a very reasoned argument in favour of the motion that's presented here before members of the Assembly today. I think they have also heard a little bit of the, of the emotion, frankly, that surrounds . . . that is the basis, the underpinning for the motion that is presented here today, that we have the opportunity to support.

Mr. Speaker, I guess it's fair to say that those in public life, whatever their affiliations might be or whatever level of government, understand that leadership is not necessarily an easy thing, that there are significant challenges that come with leadership at all levels. Mr. Speaker, leadership is not always

about simply acting, however, making decisions. Certainly that's a large part of it; certainly that's an important part of it. But sometimes leadership is about ensuring you have all of the information — every single bit of available information that you can possibly have to make a decision, a wise decision.

And that is particularly important, I think, for people that occupy seats in this House or in any other elected capacity. That is what our constituents, that is what the taxpayers expect of us and should be able to demand of us, all of us — that we are doing everything we can possibly do to ensure that the information is presented to those who make decisions before those decisions are made.

And I'd like to talk about that just for a minute. I frankly don't want to belabour the point much because I think we should vote; I think we should vote fairly soon on this, frankly. I think this resolution should be passed and we can move on and get on with the work that the motion calls us to do, which is to meet — get out and meet with those folks that are affected by it.

But I do want to address for a minute the kinds of information I think that legislators will need, that communities would need before we could make these decisions, before we could close beds — for which there are waiting lists, mind you, Mr. Speaker, let's not forget that. Many of the beds that we are talking about today that we are proposing to close, there are waiting lists behind them. They're not empty; they're not abandoned; they're not forgotten. There are waiting lists. They're occupied, and there are lists of those who need them.

So before we decide to close them, before the NDP government decides to close them, let's consider the information we might want to have. Mr. Speaker, let's, let's consider what was referenced actually in the NDP's own Throne Speech this session. And I remember it well. I think members on this side of the House will remember a reference in that Throne Speech to the need for the government of the day, this government, to ensure that all of the health care dollars we currently spend in Saskatchewan — some 40-plus per cent of the budget — are being spent most effectively.

It sounded a lot to me like something we talked about in 1999. I think we . . . I think it was called a value-for-money audit is what we talked about in that campaign, and it was openly mocked by the government of the day, by the NDP. But I saw that concept appear again in public debate in an NDP Throne Speech, and we were grateful for that. We thought, that is a step in the right direction.

There is a interesting piece of information that the Deputy Premier, who's chirping from his seat, should want before he decides to close a bed. He should be determined to find out that every health care dollar that we spend in the province is being spent in the most effective way — that's getting to the front-line delivery of health care in the best possible way, Mr. Speaker.

Before, before we begin to close the beds, let's make sure in Saskatchewan, let's make sure in Saskatchewan — as apparently the Throne Speech committed to do, but now they have forgotten of it because we haven't heard a word of this since the Throne Speech; we haven't heard a word of it since the Throne Speech — but let's be absolutely convinced, Mr.

Speaker, that there are no dollars being unnecessarily diverted to activities in our health care system that should be directed to health care delivery.

Because we're not talking about cutting administration here, Mr. Speaker. We're talking today about closing beds that are occupied. We're talking about taking away health care services in a remote part of the province, taking away emergency health care services, Mr. Speaker, which of course should be a concern to every resident of the Climax area but not just from a health perspective, Mr. Speaker — and I'm sure the member covered it — but also from an economic standpoint as well.

Because, you know, there is a pretty exciting company called Honeybee Manufacturing down there and they are in large measure helping a remote rural part of this province survive because of what they have risked and what they have invested. And due to the fact that they employ a large number of people — thankfully, Mr. Speaker — due to that fact, there are health implications for their operation as well, Mr. Speaker, and the government officials are there to remind them of it. Occupational health and safety officials are there to remind that business, those entrepreneurs, that there needs to be access to health services, there needs to be certain standards in their business. And as far as I know, that very solid business in the province of Saskatchewan honours those standards. And now they have questions: what more will be required of them if the government does close down or reduce the emergency services that are available there?

We aren't talking about cutting back on administration in the health care system with this resolution, as the government seemed to imply they might do in the Throne Speech. We are talking about beds. We are talking about emergency care. We are talking about the health of Saskatchewan people. And doesn't it seem meet and right and eminently reasonable then, that legislators here in this place should go to the communities that are affected and look them in the eye and determine potentially, Mr. Speaker, if there are alternatives — affordable, doable alternatives that will maintain health care in those areas?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — That's the kind of information we need as well. We don't just need an independent review in this province that will tell us if we are indeed using the health care dollars — the precious health care dollars — that we have most effectively. That's one very, very important part of it. I would say that we'd probably need to find out before we close down a health care bed in the province of Saskatchewan.

But there are other more local bits of information that might be available, that might improve this process and lead to a different decision, and I would suggest to you that kind of information we can garner, we can gather when we meet with the communities that are affected.

Those communities that perhaps know better than anybody in this Assembly, they know better than anybody in this Hon. Assembly what may be possible, and the impact of a closure in their community or several closures . . . or what happens to those that are on the waiting list or what happens to other communities that aren't talked about as much, frankly, since the

government made the announcement.

I'll give you a good example. In the community of Herbert, those health care facilities, they don't just provide health care facilities for the people of Herbert and area. Often they're there to help out the Swift Current Hospital. When the Swift Current Hospital needs to send someone out to recuperate and they're out of beds, the Herbert hospital is there. The people of Herbert are there. I don't think they'll be able to be there in the future after the government's decision is made.

Do all the members on that side of the House know that? Maybe they do; maybe they don't. But if they don't know it, shouldn't all of us — not just members on that side but members on this side of the House — shouldn't we all get the information, all the information and then make a decision on behalf of the taxpayers and those who need the health care system, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — We've seen communities come forward. We've asked the minister to meet with them, and I would suggest to you that he has met with them. I think reluctantly so, but he has met with them to be sure. And I remember one community in particular. I think they were proposing some very specific measures that they would undertake themselves if their health care facility was to be closed. I think it was one of the communities represented by the member for Kindersley. And they had some pretty specific ideas how they could fill the gap if the government left them a gap. They were willing to do that.

How many other communities, how many of those communities affected by this decision and by this motion are also wanting to have that discussion? And isn't that a discussion worth having?

Mr. Speaker, we've had it in this province for 100 years where communities have come together and said, you know what? Maybe we can't do this individually. Maybe we can't do it in the way we've always done it, but maybe there's some innovative way we can come together and get this job done. That's how this province was built. And I would suggest to you that's also the foundation for the motion that we're proposing today. Maybe those alternatives exist. And wouldn't we want to move heaven and earth and turn over every single stone and find out if an alternative solution like that exists here in Saskatchewan today?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — And so, Mr. Speaker, I do encourage. I even understand . . . I know I wasn't here, but I understand members opposite have been listening carefully, and I thank them for that. I understand that some have even come across to congratulate various members on their speech, on their discussion. And you know, I congratulate them for that as well.

But I encourage them to support the motion, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't reverse the decision that they've made, even though some would say that that's actually probably the step that needs to happen. It doesn't do that. It says, Mr. Speaker, it says to all of us in this House, let's do our job; let's do our job. Let's go to these communities where we are going to . . . where the

government's going to take decisions that will impact them forever and let us find out directly from them of the impact and maybe of potential alternatives, maybe of solutions.

That's our job, Mr. Speaker. And I encourage all members of the House to vote to do our job. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to start my remarks this afternoon by thanking the members opposite for their comments. I think that you very eloquently shared the views of your constituents, and I think that's very, very important.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition talked about leadership. And I have to agree that leadership is part of what this is all about. But leadership is about having to make decisions and not simply trying to be all things to all people at all times.

Unfortunately governments have to make decisions. And they have to make those decisions based on the information provided to them by the professionals who run the systems, Mr. Speaker. And it's the responsibility of those professionals — in this case the regional health authorities, the doctors, the professionals in their communities — to talk to the people in the communities and to understand the services required in those communities.

Mr. Speaker, we've seen day after day, the opposition advocating for spending literally hundreds of millions of additional dollars each year. But at the same time they're also advocating and promising hundreds of millions of dollars in tax cuts. It doesn't add up, Mr. Speaker.

Governments do not make tough decisions like this with any idea that people are going to necessarily thank them, or necessarily are going to be happy. Mr. Speaker, they make these decisions because they have to make decisions based on what's better for the entire province and is better for the systems in which we all must rely upon, both in the short-term and in the long-term, Mr. Speaker.

The government now spends \$2.7 billion on health care. We added an additional 173 million new dollars this year alone. The cost of health care spending is rising at about 2.5 times the rate of GDP (gross domestic product) growth.

(12:00)

Mr. Speaker, we all wish — we all wish, on both sides of the House — that we could maintain every single service from now into the future. But, Mr. Speaker, that's not possible. With health care costs rising at 2.5 times the rate of economic growth or GDP growth, Mr. Speaker, we cannot do that.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is not a challenge faced by the Government of Saskatchewan alone. Every single jurisdiction in Canada is facing the exact same challenge. And every single government in Canada is faced with making the same very difficult choices. These are not choices we would choose to

make if we didn't have to. And, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite can say whatever they want and chirp whatever they want, Mr. Speaker. But this is a very serious issue when every single government in Canada is forced with making these types of choices. This is not a Saskatchewan problem. It is a Canadian problem, and it is a problem faced by all Canadians, Mr. Speaker. And we wish that these difficult choices were not have to be made, but they do, Mr. Speaker.

We need to balance accessibility of service with affordability, with the types and design of service that can be made available to all Saskatchewan citizens. We need to also balance the expectations and demands with resources across the entire province. And, Mr. Speaker, we can't make these choices based on today only. We must make those choices based on delivering these services for our children and our grandchildren, Mr. Speaker. Choices that have been made over the last number of years to put the fiscal house of Saskatchewan back in order haven't been to the benefit of the government. They have been to the benefit of future generations in the province, Mr. Speaker.

Today, today, Mr. Speaker, we heard of a credit rating upgrade. That's not to the credit of the government alone, Mr. Speaker. It is to the credit of every citizen in this province. It's the citizens of this province that have worked with the government to ensure that we can put our fiscal house back in order so that we pay less money, less interest rates, Mr. Speaker, and less money on interest. That money then can be . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. I ask that members allow the debate to proceed unimpeded. The member for Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, I know that every single member on this side of the House thanks the citizens of this province for the hard work and some of the hardship that they've endured in order to put our fiscal house back in order. But, Mr. Speaker, not doing that would have left a much more dire situation for future generations, our children and grandchildren. And, Mr. Speaker, tough decisions need to be made. They're not popular; we don't enjoy making them. But, Mr. Speaker, we have to make those decisions.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we've heard about the issue of consultation. Mr. Speaker, regional health authorities represent local people and the areas in which those decisions are made. They present options, Mr. Speaker, and they make decisions. We as a government must respect those decisions; we have to understand that the local people understand what's best for their communities. And, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, those who do not like the decisions can make . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order. Order. Order, please. Order. The member for Regina Dewdney.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, I heard the members opposite referring to people who work in the communities in which they're talking about as puppets. Mr. Speaker, those are caring, compassionate people in those communities. It's offensive to people who are working on behalf of people in this province to be called puppets.

And, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, by their tone and referring to members of regional health authorities as puppets, need to examine why their approach to this particular issue is the way it is. Mr. Speaker, those people are as caring about their communities as the members opposite are about their constituencies or, for that matter, as the members of government are about delivering quality health care in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, it doesn't please the Minister of Health, the Premier, or any member of the government that we have to make these tough choices. We have to make these tough decisions, but they need to be made.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to refer to the Action Plan for Health Care and from criteria that were established after extensive hearings throughout the province of how we would face challenges in health care with an ever changing demographic and face in rural Saskatchewan. Something we wish wasn't occurring as well, but we all know that communities in rural Saskatchewan are continuing to change. We all know that services in rural communities are continuing to change.

And, Mr. Speaker, I just want to quote from the Action Plan on Health Care:

- . . . we all know that our province and the delivery and health care, will continue to change. As well, people will continue to make choices to seek care in larger centres. Over time, communities may find it necessary to look at other options due to factors such as:
- difficulties in retaining a minimum number of physicians and nurses;
 - a shrinking population;
 - ability of . . . nearby hospitals to admit more patients;
 - disruptions in providing 24/7 services due to lapses in staffing, particularly during the summer or holiday week-ends;
 - declining levels of service volumes; or
 - ability to better meet local needs through other kinds of service delivery.

Mr. Speaker, all those things are occurring in rural Saskatchewan, not all to the negative though.

I'd like to remind members opposite that just 20 years ago in rural Saskatchewan, ambulance services were provided largely by individuals that had basic first aid and CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation). Today, ambulance service is provided by qualified emergency medical technicians — far better trained, far better able to deal with those types of serious issues that face individuals in their homes and in the back of the ambulances en route to a health care facility.

And, Mr. Speaker, even as we talk today, new technologies are developing new equipment that even provide greater skills and abilities for these very same people. Now, Mr. Speaker, that's going to continue to change, as is rural Saskatchewan and is the face of the entire province. And we have to accept that those changes are going to occur, and we have to accept that we are going to have to make decisions as those changes do occur.

Mr. Speaker, the members on this side of the House have

listened to the members opposite. We share their anxiety about those communities. It's not that these decisions were made out of any disrespect for those communities, those families, or the people who live there. Mr. Speaker, we care, as the members opposite care. And, Mr. Speaker, at this time, I would take my seat. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I see that there are no more people that arise to speak so I will be putting the question forthwith.

But before I do, I want to refer back to a statement made — it's a procedural item — a remark made by the member from Thunder Creek who used the words deceived or deceive in reference to members of a House. And I've had in the intervening time an opportunity to double-check the meaning of the word in *Oxford* which is to mislead purposely. And I've double-checked in Beauchesne's. The use of that word has been declared unparliamentary several times.

So I would like to bring that to the member's attention that the use of the words deceive or deceived aimed at a member or at a group of members is unparliamentary, and before we proceed further I would request of that member from Thunder Creek withdraw those words.

I recognize the member for Thunder Creek.

Mr. Stewart: — I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The motion before the Assembly is the motion moved by the member for Melfort, seconded by the member for Wood River:

That pursuant to rule 133(1), The Standing Committee on Human Services shall hold an inquiry and make recommendations regarding the future of health care facilities throughout Saskatchewan, and that the committee shall:

- a) obtain from the Department of Health a comprehensive list of all health care facilities scheduled for closure or conversion;
- b) hold public meetings away from the seat of government in order that the fullest representations may be received without unduly inconveniencing those desiring to be heard;
- c) hold at least one public meeting in each community with a health care facility scheduled to be closed or converted;
- d) have the authority to send for persons, papers, and records, and to examine witnesses under oath;
- e) have the authority to receive representations from interested parties and individuals; and
- f) have the authority to engage such advisors and assistants as are required for the purpose of the inquiry;

And that this Assembly strongly urges the government to place a moratorium on all health care facility closures and conversions until such time as this inquiry has been completed and a substantive report presented to the Assembly pursuant to rule 133(4).

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.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — Those in favour of the motion say aye.

Some Hon. Members: — Aye.

The Speaker: — Those who oppose the motion say no.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — I believe the nos have it. Call in the members for the standing vote.

The division bells rang from 12:12 until 12:15.

(12:15)

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion moved by the member for Melfort, seconded by the member for Wood River. Will the members take it as read?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Those in favour of the motion, please rise.

Yeas — 28

Wall	Toth	Elhard
Heppner	D'Autremont	Krawetz
Draude	Hermanson	Bjornerud
Stewart	Wakefield	Morgan
McMorris	Eagles	Gantefoer
Harpauer	Bakken	Cheveldayoff
Huyghebaert	Allchurch	Brkich
Weekes	Kerpan	Merriman
Chisholm	Dearborn	Hart
Kirsch		

The Speaker: — Those opposed to the motion, please rise.

Nays — 29

Calvert	Addley	Lautermilch
Hagel	Van Mulligen	Serby
Atkinson	Cline	Sonntag
Crofford	Prebble	Forbes
Wartman	Belanger	Higgins
Thomson	Nilson	Beatty
Hamilton	Junor	Harper
Iwanchuk	McCall	Quennell
Trew	Yates	Taylor
Morin	Borgerson	

Clerk Assistant (Committees): — Mr. Speaker, those in favour, 28; those opposed, 29.

The Speaker: — I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

The Speaker: — Government orders . . . no, I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I would ask for leave to move to government orders.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has requested leave to move to government orders. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

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: — The question before the Assembly is the motion proposed by the minister for the Crown Management Board that Bill No. 35, The Crown Corporations Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Second reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — To which committee shall this Bill be referred? I recognize the minister for Crown Management Board.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you. I move that Bill 35, The Crown Corporations Amendment Act, 2004 be referred to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the minister for Crown Management Board that Bill No. 35, The Crown Corporations Amendment Act, 2004 be referred to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

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

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: — The motion before the Assembly is the moved . . . has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 41, The Contributory Negligence Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Second reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — To which committee shall this Bill be referred? I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Bill No. 41, The Contributory Negligence Amendment Act, 2004 be referred to the standing committee on human resources.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 41, The Contributory Negligence Amendment Act, 2004 be referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. Bill 41 stands referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services.

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

Bill No. 54

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

The Speaker: — The motion before the Assembly has been moved by the Minister of Health that Bill No. 54, The Tobacco Control Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion's carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Second reading of this Bill.

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I move that Bill No. 54, The Tobacco Control Amendment Act, 2004 be referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Health that Bill No. 54 be referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Bill No. 55

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 55 — The Regional Health Services Amendment Act, 2004** be now read a second time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Health that Bill No. 55, The Regional Health Services Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Question has been called. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Second reading of this Bill.

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I move that Bill No. 55, The Regional Health Services Amendment Act, 2004 be referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Health that Bill No. 55 be referred to the Standing Committee on

Human Services. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly do adopt that motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

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

Bill No. 66

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Wartman that **Bill No. 66 — The Cattle Marketing Deductions Amendment Act, 2004** be now read a second time.

The Speaker: — The motion before the Assembly has been moved by the Minister of Agriculture that Bill No. 66, The Cattle Marketing Deductions Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Second reading of the Bill.

The Speaker: — To which committee shall this Bill be referred? I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 66, The Cattle Marketing Deductions Amendment Act, 2004 be referred to the Standing Committee on the Economy.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Agriculture that Bill 66 be referred to the Standing Committee on the Economy. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

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

Bill No. 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: — The motion before the Assembly, it has been moved by the Minister of Learning that Bill No. 64, The

Post-Secondary Graduate Tax Credit Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Second reading of this Bill.

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I move that Bill No. 64, The Post-Secondary Graduate Tax Credit Amendment Act, 2004 be referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Deputy Government House Leader that Bill No. 64 be referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. Bill 64 stands referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services.

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

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

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Second reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — To which committee shall this Bill be referred? I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — I move that Bill No. 69, The Public Inquiries Amendment Act, 2004 be referred to the standing

committee on human resources.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 69 be referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

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

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: — The motion before the Assembly has been the one moved by the minister for the Public Service Commission that Bill No. 60, The Public Service Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt that motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Second reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — To which committee shall this Bill be referred? I recognize the minister for the Public Service Commission.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I move that Bill 60, the Public Service Amendment Act, 2004 be referred to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the minister for the Public Service Commission that Bill No. 60 be referred to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. This Bill 60 stands referred to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

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

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: — The question before the Assembly, it has been

moved by the Government House Leader, the Minister of Finance, that Bill No. 61, The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Second reading of this Bill.

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

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 61, The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Amendment Act, 2004 be referred to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Government House Leader that Bill No. 61 be referred to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

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

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 Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure today to rise in the Assembly to speak to Bill No. 68, An Act to amend the Assessment Management Agency and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

Mr. Speaker, this deals with SAMA (Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency); it deals with the assessment. Obviously it affects property in the province, and the assessment around this is also affecting how school boards are going to be funded.

Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to speak to this today. Yesterday we had a large delegation come to our legislature from SARM and one of the members there was a cow-calf operator and told me that the SAMA had reassessed his pasture land by an increase of 42 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, something not only is wrong with this Bill but it's

extremely wrong with this process. The member was . . . the individual I was speaking to was from my area. Mr. Speaker, the province of Saskatchewan has been aware of the BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy) crisis, we've been aware of the drought. It happens that for this cow-calf producer both of these things couldn't have hit harder. And on top of all of the problems facing agriculture, all of the challenges farm families are facing, SAMA comes along and through some misunderstood process reassesses that pasture land and increases the assessment and the taxes thereby by 42 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, that's absolutely unacceptable. It begs the question on how such a grievous error could have occurred.

Farm families, Mr. Speaker . . . I know this individual and where he farms and I don't know how one would be able to assess pasture land in that particular area, where there has been no rain for five years, at any higher level than the previous assessment. What would look better to an assessor? It's mind-boggling, Mr. Speaker, that such a grievous error could occur.

(12:30)

Mr. Speaker, we've seen from time to time in this legislature around property tax . . . And this is essentially what SAMA (Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency) is dealing with. They're dealing with the essence of how those taxes are levied, because those taxes, Mr. Speaker, are levied relative to the questioned worth or the assessed worth of the property.

And we've seen this NDP government download and download and download for over a decade onto the backs of property owners. It's a horrible way, Mr. Speaker. It's unprogressive as a matter of taxation. It's true we have to have taxes levied from somewhere. But there is no correlation necessarily, Mr. Speaker, between taxing a property and having the ability to pay.

It's an anachronistic system that hasn't been addressed by this government for pure partisan reasons. It's because, by and large, the members on this side happen to represent rural constituents, and the members on the other side represent urban constituents, where it is still significant, but it is not taking such a big ability out of their gross incomes as tax on — specifically education tax — on property. In rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely unacceptable.

Again yesterday the Premier has said the status quo is not on. He told SARM this on more than one occasion, and he said that on more than one occasion in this House. And yet his actions speak entirely different.

Yesterday the minister on Intergovernmental Affairs had the gall — had the gall, Mr. Speaker — to scold individuals from SARM that came out to voice concern over the property taxes they were facing. And he told them that if they weren't quiet, they wouldn't be heard at all. Mr. Speaker, it was a horrible, disgraceful display of arrogance. It's just been demonstrative of this current NDP government and what they really feel about rural people in this province.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of problems around Bill No.

68. One of the particular problems on assessment has to do with the way that individual municipalities will either use a government assessor from SAMA or a private assessor. And the long and short of it, Mr. Speaker, is that this particular Bill will change the ability, the oversight of those assessors to the school boards.

It's going to pit communities against communities. They have RMs that may have children that go to different towns. And it's once again we see very poor vision from this NDP government on how to solve very serious issues.

Mr. Speaker, I know that there are a number of members on this side of the House who need time to review this Bill, who intend to speak to this Bill because there are a lot of affected parties. And the status quo on this Bill, Mr. Speaker, is not on. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I would move that we now adjourn debate on Bill No. 68.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Kindersley that debate on Bill No. 68, second reading, 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. 65

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Wartman that **Bill No. 65 — The Agri-Food Act, 2004** be now read a second time.

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

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure today to speak to Bill No. 65, The Agri-Food Act. Mr. Speaker, this is a very important piece of legislation and we want to go on record to say that Bills this important and this voluminous should not be brought before us so late in the session. It's been a common practice of this government to leave its most important Bills for late in the session, and it's a practice that must and should end if the government wants the legislature to work effectively and properly.

That being said, we have been in contact with some of the agencies affected by this legislation and we understand that those agencies do want this Bill to proceed. It is not their fault that the government is unwilling or unable to get these Bills to this Assembly in a timely fashion, and they should not be affected by uncertainty just because this government can't get its ducks in a row.

We understand that this Bill is necessary to provide greater clarity for those development boards and commissions who operate a check-off system among their producers. We are led to understand that more legislative clarity is needed to ensure those check-offs operate in a proper fashion. This Bill will also give those agencies more flexibility as to how they use the money they collect, through giving them the ability to provide

loans to individuals or corporate entities to conduct research and industry development.

The Bill certainly does empower marketing boards to a greater extent than now is the case, and that might be of some concern to those producers operating in a unregulated environment outside of the supply-management quota system.

There has been concern particularly among unregulated egg producers that there is a movement to lower the legal limit of the birds that they're allowed from the current 299 to that . . . Mr. Speaker, the minister has provided me a letter that states that the government will not be lowering that limit. That threshold is not dealt with in this legislation, but it's dealt with in regulations. And the commitment from the minister, which we appreciate very much, is that the government has no intentions to change that. We trust this minister's word in that regard.

Many in our province do not think the supply-managed system, as mandated by the federal government, serves our province well necessarily in terms of growing agricultural industries. However the fact is that the system is here and we have to work within it unless and until changes are made at the national level.

The debate over the merits of supply management, Mr. Speaker, while important, are outside of this Bill, although the Bill does very much affect how that system will operate within our province. There are a great many questions to be asked about the powers enumerated in this Act and how they will affect individual producers. Too much of the detail once again is going to be left to regulations written after this Bill is passed. And that does cause us concern.

We have concern as well over the appeal process that is set up under this Bill. It appears to give the appeal committee wide powers to dismiss appeals before hearing anything. We will need more clarification on that, Mr. Speaker.

This is a very long Bill and certainly we will be taking time in committee to get the minister on record to address many of the concerns we have. But hopefully they can be addressed in committee, Mr. Speaker, and accordingly I'd move this on to Committee of the Whole.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion moved by the Minister of Agriculture that Bill No. 65, The Agri-Food Act, 2004 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Second reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — To what committee will this Bill be referred?
I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 65, The Agri-Food Act, 2004 be referred to the Standing Committee on the Economy.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Agriculture that Bill No. 65 be referred to the Standing Committee on the Economy. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt that motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

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

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, 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: — Motion is carried. This House stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30 p.m. I wish all members a safe journey home.

The Assembly adjourned at 12:39.

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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
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Hon. E. Cline
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