



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

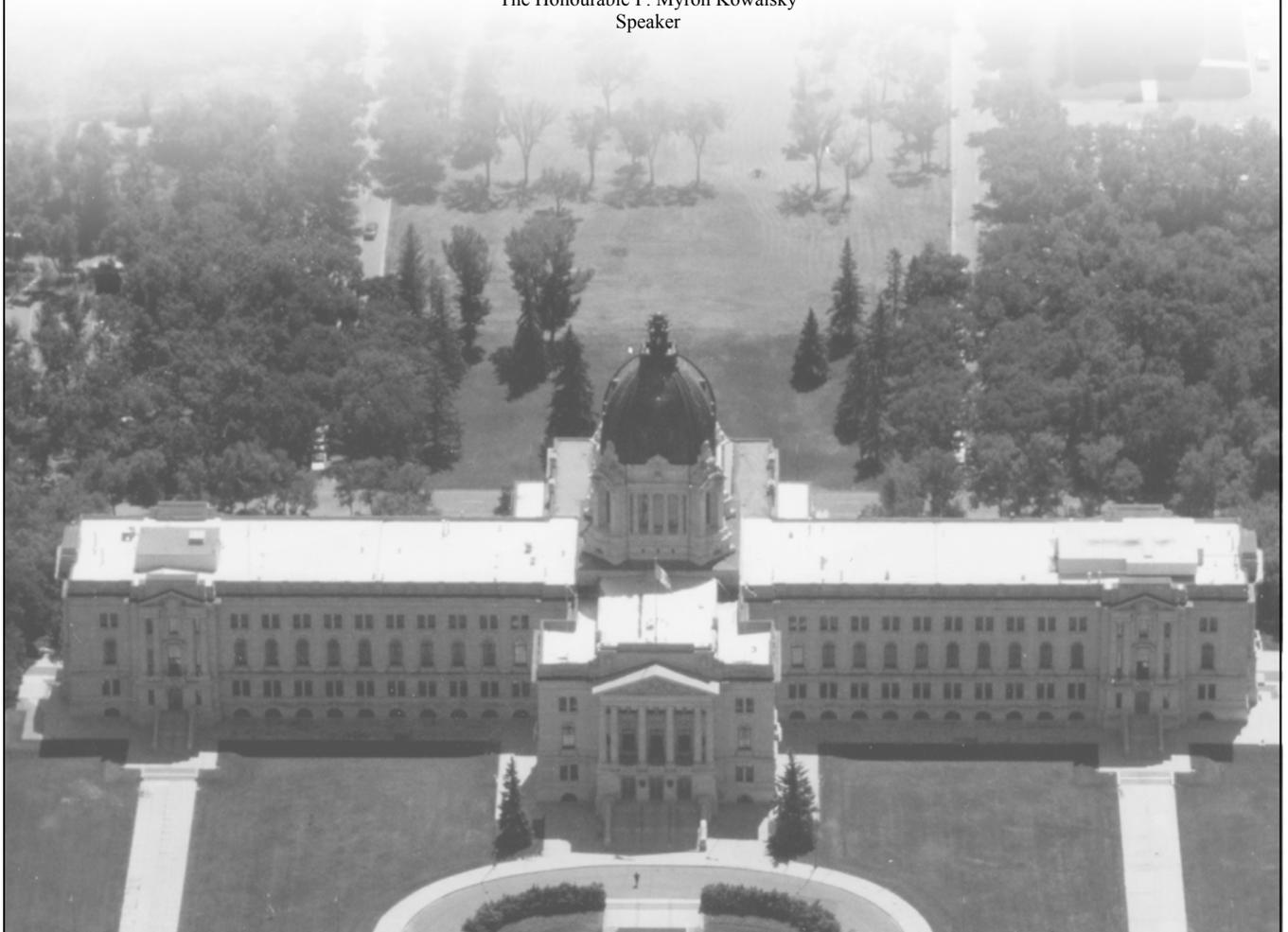
Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**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.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Moosomin.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition this morning regarding SAMA (Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency), and how the assessment management agency funds itself. And I read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take all necessary action to reverse changes recently made that require the education sector to contribute to the cost of SAMA, as this added burden for school boards will ultimately lead to higher property taxes for Saskatchewan residents.

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

Mr. Speaker, I present this petition signed by the good folk of Moosomin and Wapella.

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

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a similar petition signed by residents from the community of Frontier. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take all necessary action to reverse charges recently made that require the education sector to contribute to the cost of SAMA, as this added burden for school boards will ultimately lead to higher property taxes for Saskatchewan residents.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition to present. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take all necessary action to reverse changes recently made that required the education sector to contribute to the cost of SAMA, as this added burden for school boards will ultimately lead to higher property taxes for Saskatchewan residents.

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

This petition, Mr. Speaker, comes from the Stoughton area.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Swift Current.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of residents of Saskatchewan concerned about the SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company) scandal, and who could blame them, Mr. Speaker. The prayer of their petition reads as follows.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to hold an independent judicial inquiry into the SPUDCO scandal.

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

Mr. Speaker, the petitioners today are from the communities of Emerald Park, Warman, Saskatoon, Eston. I so present.

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

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I have a petition. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take all necessary action to reverse changes recently made that require the education sector to contribute to the costs of SAMA as this added burden for school boards will ultimately lead to higher property taxes for Saskatchewan residents.

The people that have signed this petition are from Wadena, Hendon, and Clair. I so present.

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

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition signed by residents of Saskatchewan who are concerned that, with regards to the Boughen Commission, the provincial government has chosen to ignore the report and are picking at pieces of the recommendations to the detriment of the entire report. Mr. Speaker, the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to reverse the decision to force the amalgamation of school divisions in Saskatchewan and continue reorganization of school divisions on a strictly voluntary basis.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of signatures on this petition from a number of communities including Zealandia, Rosetown, Herschel, Wiseton, and Fiske. And I'm pleased to present this petition on their behalf.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition

today to deal with the underfunding of the CAIS (Canadian agricultural income stabilization) program by the provincial government. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to ensure that the CAIS program receives adequate provincial funding, the funding formula is changed to ensure equal access to compensation, and that the provincial government contribute funds to the latest BSE assistance package released by the federal government.

The signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Dysart, Cupar, Punnichy, and Leross.

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

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today regarding funding for the CAIS program. I will read from the prayer:

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 CAIS program receives adequate provincial funding, the funding formula is changed to ensure equal access to compensation, and that the provincial government contribute funds to the latest BSE assistance package released by the federal government.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by good citizens of Cupar, Southey, and Lipton, and Edenwold. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, have a petition regarding the forced amalgamation of school divisions. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to reverse the decision to force the amalgamation of school divisions in Saskatchewan and continue reorganization of school divisions on a strictly voluntary basis.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good people from Montmartre, Candiac, and Kendal. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Estevan.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again today I rise to present a petition on behalf of constituents of mine who are very concerned about the centralization of laundry services in the Sun Country Health District, and the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take

the necessary action to ensure that public consultations are done prior to changes to the health care services in Sun Country.

And this is signed by citizens of Estevan and Bienfait. I so present. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Humboldt.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition with citizens concerned about the SAMA requisitions for school divisions, and the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take all necessary action to reverse charges recently made that require the education sector to contribute to the cost of SAMA as this added burden for school boards will ultimately lead to higher property taxes for Saskatchewan residents.

And as duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And the signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from the city of Humboldt and the towns of Muenster, Carmel, and Fulda. I so present.

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

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present petitions on behalf of citizens of the constituency of Weyburn-Big Muddy who are very concerned about the deplorable state of Highway 35 south of Weyburn, and the prayer reads:

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

And these petitions . . . there's hundreds of names on these petitions from citizens of Saskatchewan, all across Canada and the United States. I so present.

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

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I rise with a petition to oppose SAMA requisitions for school divisions, and the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government take all necessary action to reverse changes recently made that require the education sector to contribute to the cost of SAMA as this added burden for school boards will ultimately lead to higher property taxes for Saskatchewan residents.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by the good folks of Admiral,

Cadillac, and Shaunavon. I so present.

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

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition here with citizens that are opposed to forced amalgamation of school divisions:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to reverse the decision to force the amalgamation of school divisions in Saskatchewan, continue reorganization of school divisions on a strictly voluntarily basis.

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

Signed by the good citizens from Kenaston, Hanley, and Hawarden. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present a petition from constituents opposed to reduction of health care services in the town of Wilkie. The prayer reads:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

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

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

Mr. Kerpan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present a petition on behalf of residents of the province of Saskatchewan who are opposed to forced amalgamation. And the petitioner reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to reverse the decision to force the amalgamation of school divisions in Saskatchewan and continue reorganization of school divisions on a strictly voluntary basis.

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

Mr. Speaker, signed by the good citizens of Holdfast.

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

Mr. Chisholm: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition regarding the gross underfunding of the CAIS program. And it reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to ensure that the CAIS program receives adequate provincial funding, the funding formula is changed to ensure equal access to compensation, and to contribute funds to the latest BSE assistance package released by the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the fine folks from Maidstone, Lloydminster, Waseca, and Lashburn areas.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Assembly today to present a petition on behalf of citizens of Saskatchewan concerned with the forced amalgamation of school divisions and the loss of autonomy and deterioration of Saskatchewan education for students. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to reverse the decision to force the amalgamation of school divisions in Saskatchewan and continue reorganization of school divisions on a strictly voluntary basis.

Mr. Speaker, I have a number of petitions here. They're signed by citizens from Kerrobert, Kindersley, La Ronge, Saskatoon, Luseland, Dodsland, Major, and Coleville, Saskatchewan. I so present.

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

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be able to present a petition on behalf of citizens concerned with this government's lack of funding to the CAIS program. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to ensure that the CAIS program receives adequate provincial funding, the funding formula is changed to ensure equal access to compensation, and that the provincial government contribute funds to the latest BSE assistance package released by the federal government.

As in duty bound, your petitioners pray.

Signatures to this petition, Mr. Speaker, come from the communities of Kelliher, Leross, and Lemberg. I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed, and pursuant to rule 14(7) are hereby read and received:

A petition calling for public consultations with respect to health care services in Sun Country, that's sessional paper 667.

And addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 106, 637, 638, 647, and 666.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

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

Standing Committee on Human Services

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Human Services to report Bill 31, The Miscellaneous Statutes Repeal (Regulatory Reform) Act, 2004 without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall Bill 31 be referred to the Committee of the Whole? I recognize the Minister of Justice.

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

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bill 31. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 31 — The Miscellaneous Statutes Repeal (Regulatory Reform) Act, 2004

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

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of this Bill.

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

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

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

Standing Committee on Human Services

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Human Services to report Bill No. 62, The Statute Law Amendment Act, 2004 without amendment.

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

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

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

(10:15)

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 62 — The Statute Law Amendment Act, 2004

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

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill 62 be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of this Bill.

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

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

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

Standing Committee on Human Services

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on Human Services to report Bill No. 63, The Statute Law Amendment Act, 2004 (No. 2) without amendment.

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

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

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice has requested leave to waive consideration of Committee of the Whole of Bill 63. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. When shall this Bill

be read a third time?

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 63 — The Statute Law Amendment Act, 2004 (No. 2)/Loi de modification législative de 2004 (n° 2)

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

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill 63 be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of this Bill.

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

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

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

Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Infrastructure

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee of Intergovernmental Affairs and Infrastructure to report that it has considered certain estimates and to present its report. I move, seconded by the member from Melville-Saltcoats:

That the second report of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Infrastructure now be concurred in.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Chair of the Standing Committee on Infrastructure and Intergovernmental Affairs, the member for Regina Northeast, seconded by the member for Melville-Saltcoats:

That the second report of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Infrastructure be now concurred in.

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.

Motion agreed to.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 74 ask the government the following question:

To the Premier: did the Deputy Premier request legal advice from the Department of Justice regarding documents filed on October 17, 2003 in the SPUDCO lawsuit alleging that the Saskatchewan Party committed to settle the SPUDCO lawsuit if it became government, by lawyers with the firm Olive Waller Zinkhan & Waller? If so, what was the monetary cost to the Department of Justice and how many hours were billed for this legal advice?

I so present.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the House, visitors that we have in the west gallery. Mr. Speaker, there's 18 grade 12 students. It's their social studies class that is here from Riverview Collegiate in Moose Jaw. The students are accompanied by their teachers, Ms. Delisle Fathers and Mark Pitman.

Mr. Speaker, this is the high school I attended, my daughters attended, and it's also the high school that the Premier of the province attended, so it's a good high school. You can't find better. It's so, gee . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Anyway, the quality of the students at Riverview is extremely high, so I'm very pleased that they're here today to visit. I hope they enjoy the proceedings of the House and we'll get together after for a bit of a discussion. I'd like all members to please welcome them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all my colleagues in the Assembly six people who are seated in your gallery. These are people who are working hard on a daily basis to improve lives and to build a caring and sharing spirit in our community. They're from the United Way of Regina and I'd ask that they stand when I introduce them so that members can recognize them.

First we have Shelley Smidt, United Way of Regina's 2004 cabinet Chair; Sheri Rowley, 2004 loaned representative, who comes from SaskTel and is assigned to the provincial account; Devin Cherneski, 2004 loaned rep from Sask Crop Insurance; we have Joseph Dojack, he's the labour staff representative to Regina United Way; Gail Quinney is the 2004 loaned rep from Sask Labour, the Status of Women; and also Deanna Schmidt

from cabinet secretariat, on the executive council of the United Way committee. I'd ask all members to give them a warm welcome to their Assembly this morning.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Chisholm: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Gordon and Gill Churn, who are seated in the Speaker's gallery. Gordon and Gill farm in the Lilydale district south of Maidstone. As our province prepares to celebrate 100 years, so also in 2005 Churn farms will celebrate its 100th year as a third-generation family farm. I would ask that we all welcome Gord and Gill Churn to their Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, a guest in your gallery who has travelled the furthest distance to observe our proceedings today. She's literally come from the other side of the world.

Her name is Chlorie Bottrell and she is a Rotary exchange student who comes from a small community near Melbourne, Australia. If she'd stand we'd recognize that she is also near the end of her stay in Canada, judging by the number of buttons and pins that she's collected here.

Chlorie will be staying here in Saskatchewan — she's hosted by the Moose Jaw Rotary Club — until she returns in January to her home community where she'll finish her grade 12 and make her future back home.

While here, she's acquired a number of characteristics consistent with Saskatchewan citizenship. She's attended the annual classic between the Huskies and the Rams at Taylor Field here, and so she thinks she knows who the good guys are in the national final tomorrow.

And she also tells me that she's a Saskatchewan girl now because she was at Agribition earlier this week and she got herself one of those good, solid belt buckles. So she's taking that home with her.

I ask all hon. members to join in expressing a warm welcome to Chlorie Bottrell who is here visiting from Melbourne, Australia.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce through you to all members of the House someone who is no stranger to this House, the former member from Last Mountain-Touchwood who is seated behind the bar on the government side, Mr. Dale Flavel. It's certainly nice to see him

here visiting and I certainly hope he is enjoying his retirement.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, to you, through you and to all members of the Assembly I'm going to take this proud moment as a mother to introduce to you two very special constituents of the constituency of Regina Walsh Acres. Perhaps they can stand up so we can actually see them over the railing. We have seven-year-old Sheridan Morin — and no, we're not related but isn't that a coincidence — and my daughter, Morgan Morin. And I'd like to welcome them to the Assembly today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Hon. Assembly, a gentleman seated in the east gallery, Mr. Rod Haugerud, mayor of Craik. Mr. Haugerud is a very good mayor and an innovative mayor and he's doing great things in the community of Craik.

And Mr. Haugerud was a Liberal candidate in the last election, and I see he's sitting with another notable Liberal candidate. I hope that all members of the Assembly will welcome Mr. Haugerud today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to, for the public record, recognize Jeanette Shanks in your gallery. Jeanette is actually related to a large family in my constituency, the Norton family, and they're a very gifted, athletic family. They're well known for their hockey prowess and certainly some of the many, many accomplishments they've also made in other sectors.

But I want it on the public record that she challenged me to a walleyball game several days ago, Mr. Speaker, and not that I was afraid of her, but I had a hockey game to play, because I want to keep up with the Nortons in the North. So I want it on the public record to recognize her for her walleyball skills and to say that I'll be accepting her challenge next week. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of government members in the House, I too want to extend a very warm welcome to Rod Haugerud, who has really provided outstanding leadership in the community of Craik. I know that many members on this side of the House have had an opportunity to visit the multi-purpose facility that

he has built there. And under his leadership and the leadership of the citizens of Craik, Mr. Speaker, I think today we've got one of the most innovative buildings anywhere in Saskatchewan, and one of the greenest buildings in the province and I would say in all of Canada, Mr. Speaker.

So I know members will want to add their voice to those of the official opposition in welcoming Rod here and thanking him for the excellent leadership that he has provided.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Suellen Beatty Presented with Meritorious Service Medal

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to recognize the achievements of a Saskatoon Silver Springs constituent, Suellen Beatty. Today Governor General Adrienne Clarkson is presenting Suellen Beatty with the Meritorious Service Medal.

As the CEO (chief executive officer) of Sherbrooke Community Centre in Saskatoon, Ms. Beatty has made a significant contribution to the development of innovative long-term care. The award was created in 1991 and recognizes a deed or activity performed in an outstanding and professional manner or of an uncommonly high standard that brings considerable benefit or great honour to Canada.

Suellen was instrumental in developing the Sherbrooke village model. The village arrangement allows 10 residents to live together in houses which are attached to the rest of the facility by an internal street. The houses take on the personalities of those who live there and honour their different cultures and traditions.

The village concept was born out of answers to the question: if you had to live in long-term care, what would you want it to be like? The village model allows the person the comforts of home with the benefits of community and compassionate long-term care. Families, residents, and staff are very happy with the new method of providing care.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all my colleagues in the Assembly to join me in congratulating Suellen Beatty on receiving the Meritorious Service Medal at Rideau Hall in Ottawa today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

2004 United Way Campaign

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since 1935, the United Way in one form or another has been a concerned, active participant in the growth and development of the city of Regina. The goal of the United Way is clearly stated — to improve lives and build community by engaging individuals and mobilizing

collective action. Mr. Speaker, most of us know the United Way best through the annual fundraising campaign. In their 65-year history in Regina, the United Way has raised over \$45 million to help improve the quality of life for the people of this city.

But the United Way is much more than a fundraising organization, Mr. Speaker. As a trusted member of the Regina community, one that is tightly woven into the very fabric of our city, the United Way is able to bring diverse individuals and organizations to the community table providing an opportunity to build consensus on social issues and helping to influence the shape of our community, it will take into the future.

Mr. Speaker, United Way can build community because it's very much of the community. It is run by a volunteer board of directors assisted by a small staff and accomplishes all that it does thanks to the generous efforts of literally thousands of volunteers.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all my colleagues to join me in acknowledging United Way CEO Vic Huard; Chair of this year's campaign, Shelley Smidt; Dan McMurty, Chair of the United Way Board of Directors; and all the volunteers, individuals, and organizations that make up the United Way, who work together to make Regina a healthier and stronger community. We thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Health Care

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Health minister stood in this Assembly with wild accusations against the Saskatchewan Party. I can't believe that the minister accused us of wanting to privatize health care services because we've been pointing out the problems in our health care system and asking him to fix them.

We have stated publicly that we support publicly funded, publicly administered health care. And I will say it again for the record of this Assembly. The Saskatchewan Party supports publicly funded, publicly administered health care.

(10:30)

The real issue here is that this minister does not have the political will to address the problems in health care. And the people are suffering on waiting lists and some even dying because of the long waits. As Yvette Switzer said yesterday, Saskatchewan is the birthplace of medicare — shame on this government for letting the system erode so badly over the last decade. In order to fix a problem, you have to admit that there is one and you have to listen to what people who are users of the system are telling you.

Mr. Speaker, it's time that this Health minister gets his head out of the sand, starts listening to the concerns of Saskatchewan people. And if he's not prepared to do that, then he should resign and let someone else take over that portfolio that actually cares about the people it serves.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Souls Harbour Mission 15th Anniversary

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, last Sunday I had the pleasure of attending and participating in the 15th anniversary celebrations for Souls Harbour Mission here in Regina. Souls Harbour is aptly named because staff and volunteers of the mission work with many partners and volunteers to provide safe haven for the members of our community in need. Not a day goes by, Mr. Speaker, where Souls Harbour doesn't reach out to someone with kindness, with a good, nutritious meal, with warm clothes, or with a little help for finding their way in the world.

Mr. Speaker, as recounted at the celebration by her daughter-in-law, Bonnie, Gerri Carroll opened the Souls Harbour Mission in 1990 with a prayer, a coffee pot, and a few wooden milk crates for chairs. What started out with Gerri Carroll's desire just to feed the people, 15 years later, along with its kids' programs, employment programs, and other services, the mission serves 70,000 meals a year, and sandwiches on Sunday.

In his remarks at the event, Donovan Carroll, Gerri's son, cited the inspiration that the mission draws, from the challenge of St. Francis of Assisi — preach the gospel always, and when necessary, use words . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . And I thank the members opposite for their approval.

Mr. Speaker, the actions of the Carrolls and the volunteers of Souls Harbour have told a powerful story and make a powerful challenge to anyone who believes that one person can't make a difference.

I ask my colleagues to join me in thanking Gerri Carroll and everyone involved in the Souls Harbour Mission for 15 years of exemplary and inspirational service on behalf of the people of Regina. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Highway 35

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Highway 35 is what greets visitors from the United States as they cross the border at the Port of Oungre, south of Weyburn. Highway 35 used to be a highly used route for tourists. That is before the NDP (New Democratic Party) government allowed it to deteriorate into an unsafe condition. The once vital tourist route is no more. The customs officer at the Port of Oungre told me this summer that people actually ventured down the road only to turn back. Many state that they will never travel this highway again.

The United States is a dominant market for Saskatchewan exports — 57 per cent of Saskatchewan exports flow to the United States and 47 per cent of these exports are by truck. Mr.

Speaker, Highway 35 is a vital link to this flow of goods. But, Mr. Speaker, business and local people have been forced to use alternate routes because they refuse to subject their vehicles to the pounding they take from this highway. And even more serious, is the danger this road poses. Sadly the people who live adjacent to Highway 35 have no choice but to use this unsafe highway.

Mr. Speaker, what is the NDP's answer to this unsafe, deplorable highway? They turned it back to gravel. From the southern part of the province, where millions of dollars in oil revenue flow into the government coffers, we now have a gravel road as the entrance point into the United States. This is not acceptable.

Citizens in the area have given me petitions signed by hundreds of people from Canada and the United States expressing their disgust with the state of Highway 35. Highway 35, Mr. Speaker, is a major north-south route. The NDP government should treat it accordingly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Saskatoon Youth Action Now Holds Youth Forum

Hon. Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Youth Action Now is a multicultural project unique to Saskatchewan. It's a youth-driven project aimed at the province's young people in multicultural activities. Sponsored by the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Saskatchewan Provincial Council, and the Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan, Youth Action Now provides opportunities for Saskatchewan's young people to gain valuable skills and experience. And most of all, Mr. Speaker, it fosters cross-cultural understanding and helps promote a greater sense of community.

Last weekend Youth Action Now held a Saskatoon youth forum at Bedford Road Collegiate in my constituency of Saskatoon Centre. Participants from Bedford Road, Walter Murray Collegiate, Joe Duquette High School, Mount Royal Collegiate, L'École canadienne-française, and St. Joseph High School attended three workshops designed to meet specific program objectives. These objectives are focused on increasing multicultural awareness on a local as well as a global level, and highlighting opportunities that are open to young people through involvement in cultural activities.

Participants also took part in a multicultural showcase featuring First Nation dancer, Lorin Gardypie, the Saskatoon Celtic Dance Association, the Afro-Caribbean Cultural Association, and the Saskatoon Fencing Club.

Mr. Speaker, the Youth Action Now project is an important initiative, both in terms of building healthy individuals and healthy communities. I ask my colleagues to join me in wishing the Youth Action Now project every success in promoting multicultural awareness and understanding. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cannington.

Saskatchewan Party Dinner in Calgary

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night in Calgary, the Saskatchewan Party held its leadership dinner, the largest ever leadership dinner that the Saskatchewan Party has ever held outside of Saskatchewan — largest and growing, Mr. Speaker.

This dinner was organized by expats of Saskatchewan and was supported by many of the 280,000 Saskatchewanians in Calgary and, Mr. Speaker, the wannabe Saskatchewanians. Our leader, the member from Swift Current, gave an excellent speech which generated enthusiasm and a desire, Mr. Speaker, to return to Saskatchewan and continue to build the dream that was started 100 years ago but which has been put into abeyance by the government opposite for the last 60 years, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, these people are looking forward to an opportunity to return to Saskatchewan when the environment here is welcoming of people who have the dreams and aspirations to build this province. Many of the people in attendance, Mr. Speaker, last night were former and current political people, many from both provincial politics in Saskatchewan and Alberta and from federal politics. In fact, Mr. Speaker, there was one notable person there — a former NDP MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly), former NDP deputy minister, Dwain Lingenfelter.

Congratulations to the Saskatchewan Party for a job well done.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Ruling on a Point of Order

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Before we proceed with question period, I wish to address a point of order from Thursday's question period.

Having reviewed *Hansard*, I confirm that some remarks made by the MLA for Saskatoon Southeast were out of order. Specifically on page 1911 of *Hansard*, left-hand column, the MLA for Saskatoon Southeast made remarks implying corruption on the part of another member.

All members are to be considered as honourable. Remarks which reflect negatively on the character of another member are unparliamentary. Accordingly I do now request the member from Saskatoon Southeast to withdraw the unparliamentary remark referred to and apologize to the House.

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, the remark is withdrawn and I apologize to the Speaker and to all members.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I thank the member.

ORAL QUESTIONS

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

Changes to Labour Legislation

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think people in the province would agree that right now at this point in our history, now more than ever, we need a government, Mr. Speaker, with a long-term vision and plan to build an enterprising and entrepreneurial economy in the province of Saskatchewan. That's what we need. That's what we need.

What do we have instead, Mr. Speaker? We have a government that is going to introduce to Saskatchewan's labour legislation something that they call additional hours of work, Mr. Speaker, something that we like to call government-directed hours. They're going to proclaim this part of an Act that is 10 years old that would make us unique on the continent, Mr. Speaker, that would absolutely devastate our current business community and our chance to attract more investment from outside of the province of Saskatchewan.

Question to the Premier is simple: will he stand in his place today and commit that his government will not only refuse to proclaim this regulation for government-directed hours, but they'll take it off the books completely?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, when we talk about young people finding jobs in this province, and we need to look at other ways of accommodating that and improving the quality of jobs within this province, Mr. Speaker, I will not apologize for opening the discussion and engaging the people of this province in how do we achieve this. Mr. Speaker, the additional hours piece is part of that puzzle and I will not apologize and I will not commit to not doing anything.

Mr. Speaker, we have ideas here and if the Leader of the Opposition is afraid of being first in anything, Mr. Speaker, where would this province be? We would have no medicare, we would not have drive-throughs at fast-food restaurants, we wouldn't have ATMs (automated teller machine), Mr. Speaker, and we would not have occupational health and safety laws.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, did I hear that right — that the minister is now saying that were it not for the CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) there wouldn't be drive-through restaurants in the province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, bring on the election. I mean I can't believe that, Mr. Speaker. Here is the . . . here is an opportunity though for this NDP government to stand up and say without any equivocation that they reject this notion of government-directed hours, that not only will they, Mr. Speaker, refuse those who are urging they be implemented and proclaimed.

A simple question to the minister: will she stand up now and tell Saskatchewan businessmen and women who create jobs for young people, for part-timers, that they will wipe this provision off the books of the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, this government is not afraid to broach unique and progressive ideas that will improve working conditions in this province. Mr. Speaker, when the Leader of the Opposition has to go to Alberta for money and ideas, well that's his problem. But the people of this province will continue to work on innovative issues and do good work on the problems that affect this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, we were in Alberta last night. We were meeting with people from this province who are interested in growing the economy of Saskatchewan. They're interested in investing in the province. And I noted something when we were there — we were only there for a short time — but notwithstanding the fact, Mr. Speaker, that they have never had a CCF government in Alberta, they had drive-through restaurants, unbelievably. They had them. They were all over the city of Calgary.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, this provision, this provision if it's proclaimed, would make us unique in North America; she's right about that. Sometimes it's important not to be first if that first means that it will hurt our ability to attract new investment, if that first means it will devastate the employers of this province and therefore prevent them from hiring the people that need part-time work in Saskatchewan. If firsts do that, we just ought not to do them. And that's the question to the Premier, since the minister refuses to answer the question, as the province would like.

Would the Premier just stand up and say that this is nonsense, this notion of government-directed hours, and that he'll wipe it off the books of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, the people of this province have never been afraid of being first at anything. And here we have the Leader of the Opposition who comes from one of the first health districts that was ever established, long before medicare.

Mr. Speaker, if the people of Anaheim, Saskatchewan had been afraid of taking a chance and not being first, there wouldn't be the industry and development there is in that area.

Mr. Speaker, this province will continue to look at progressive ideas that will improve this province for the opportunities of young people and working people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, we have a chance; we have an opportunity. If we get the fundamentals right in Saskatchewan, if we get a government that understands that we need to fix the fundamentals in our economy, we have a chance not just to, as the Premier says, be in and out of equalization, be needing welfare, be needing assistance from time to time. The Saskatchewan Party believes if we get those fundamentals right with that kind of vision, we can be a permanent member of the have provinces. We will be, Mr. Speaker. The Premier doesn't agree. He thinks we'll always need assistance and maybe in part he thinks that because he knows what his government is planning. Planning to, Mr. Speaker, kill investment in Saskatchewan and hurt our ability to create new jobs with things like government-directed hours.

(10:45)

I ask him, Mr. Speaker, to stand in his place now and send the right signal to those who will create jobs in Saskatchewan. Tell the people of the province that this provision will be wiped from the books of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition wants to talk about long-term planning for the province and the people of Saskatchewan. It's long-term planning that results in the kind of headlines we're seeing in the national papers today. Right here in the *National Post*, national paper of Canada, a headline that says "Welcome the new 'have' province."

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, this province did not become a have province and it will not remain a have province by destroying the rights of working people. It did not become a have province and will stay a have province by giveaways, tax giveaways to friends. And I tell you, Mr. Speaker, it did not become a have province by going off to the city of Calgary and Alberta for your ideas. It became a have province by the work and the ideas, the vision and the planning of Saskatchewan people who believe in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Oh, Mr. Speaker, how much really does this Premier believe in his province? When he came back after having his equalization concerns addressed sitting on more oil and gas revenue than he budgeted for, Mr. Speaker, the media asked him what he thought about the future of Saskatchewan, whether or not we could be a permanent member of the have province club. Do you know what he said, Mr. Speaker, and this is a, quote, he said Saskatchewan will always be, quote, "in and out of equalization." And that's his view of the province, Mr.

Speaker. That we'll always need assistance, that we'll always need welfare, Mr. Speaker.

The article he quotes today has an interesting point, Mr. Speaker. The article highlights that there is a lot of work to do to get us to be permanent members of that club and I quote, it says:

Taxes are higher there, as one might expect in a socialist province

Yet the brain drain flows east to west in this part of the Prairies, a flight of professionals adding to an Alberta workforce which is already the youngest (and) richest and healthiest in the country.

Mr. Speaker, to the Premier, answer this question: will he send the right signal to those who create jobs? Will he scrap this government-directed hours provision, wipe it from the books of the province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I wonder last evening when the Leader of the Opposition was in Calgary, Alberta getting some policy ideas and consulting with his former colleagues from the Devine government, I wonder if he bothered to note, as this *National Post* article does today that, quote:

Saskatchewan is now the only have province that doesn't charge health . . . (care) premiums.

I wonder if he knows that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, we did not become a have . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. I urge . . . Order, please. I urge members to continue with the debate but to stop the yelling match. Order, please. I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you this Premier and this government doesn't take the view that's expressed by the Leader of the Opposition in the *Leader-Post* in September of this year when the Leader of the Opposition said, get this, Mr. Speaker, what the Leader of the Opposition said. He said, "We've shipped out our best and brightest people."

That's what he thinks. That's what he thinks of the young people who are attending Riverview Collegiate in Moose Jaw today, who are attending the University of Regina, the University of Saskatoon. He says we've shipped out our brightest and our best. That's his view. I guess that's why he goes to Calgary for his ideas, to sit down with his former colleagues in the Devine government for ideas. Mr. Speaker, we build from the people of Saskatchewan, from the brightest and the best in the world who are right here in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Day of Recognition for the Right Honourable John George Diefenbaker

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, the Premier's taken the opportunity to announce and declare Tommy Douglas day in Saskatchewan, and while that's all well and good, that still leaves one giant in the history of Saskatchewan politics officially unrecognized. I'm speaking of the man who served as prime minister of this country from 1957 to 1963, the Right Honourable John George Diefenbaker. Later today, Mr. Speaker, I will introduce a Bill calling for Diefenbaker day. My question to the Premier is: will you support this Bill?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, many of us, many of us . . . Mr. Speaker, many of us grew up when John Diefenbaker represented the people of Prince Albert, when Mr. John George Diefenbaker served the nation of Canada as our prime minister, when Mr. John George Diefenbaker led the opposition in Ottawa. We are proud of this native son of Saskatchewan, of Borden and Wakaw, of Prince Albert. And, Mr. Speaker, this government, this Premier will be very supportive, very supportive of the motion or the Act or the idea brought forward by the opposition that we should celebrate in Saskatchewan a John George Diefenbaker day.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I agree. I'm glad the Premier agrees with me, and I believe the centennial year, the 100th year celebration, is a perfect year to have a John George Diefenbaker day on September 18, 2005. My question, Mr. Speaker: will the Premier call on his government to pass this Bill in the current session of this legislature?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, to be absolutely clear, it does not require a Bill. It does not require an Act of the legislature, we have a variety of ways. I have now designated a day in the year that we will name as the T.C. Douglas day. A day can be designated clearly without an Act of the legislature, unless the member is requesting that we create a statutory holiday. I don't believe he's doing that. If it were to be a statutory holiday, of course, we would have an Act of the legislature.

While we are speaking, of course, of great sons and daughters of the province of Saskatchewan, I encourage everyone to be dialing CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) as soon as

question period is over to vote for the greatest Canadian, Thomas Clement Douglas.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company Litigation

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, once again the NDP government gets caught abusing power, abusing the public trust. But the Premier sloughs it off and no one takes responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, someone made these decisions. Someone in the NDP decided to make these false allegations in court. Just like someone decided to conceal the Con-Force agreement for six years. Just like someone in the NDP decided to conceal the fact the NDP was selling GMO (genetically modified organism) potatoes. Just like someone made the decisions that cost taxpayers \$35 million. Yet no one over there has ever taken responsibility. Mr. Speaker, that's exactly why we need a public inquiry so, Mr. Speaker, then we will find out who is responsible. Mr. Speaker, why won't the Premier hold a public inquiry? What is he hiding?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for SaskWater.

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Speaker, let me make it clear as I have before in the House, but to repeat it again. We have had a thorough airing of all matters with respect to SaskWater's involvement in SPUDCO. And, Mr. Speaker, we have had the Provincial Auditor in the spring of 2000, examine this matter in depth, Mr. Speaker, and ascertain, Mr. Speaker, that the government acted lawfully with respect to the investments that it made, which was, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition's number one concern with respect to this matter, Mr. Speaker.

We have had a thorough review of this matter by the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) and they have closed the file on this matter, Mr. Speaker. We have had a thorough examination of this matter in this Assembly, and I have answered the questions of the members of the opposition with specificity, Mr. Speaker. And there have been many other opportunities to air this issue, and there is no need for an inquiry.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite talks about a thorough airing. Mr. Speaker, there are things that the Premier is hiding. He refuses to tell us. We have asked questions through the freedom of . . . (inaudible) . . . He refuses to tell us how many hours their NDP law firm put in on this case. He has refused to tell us what the hourly rate of this firm was, billing the government.

We have asked this in a written question. The government refused to answer. We asked this in a freedom of information request, Mr. Speaker. The government refused to answer, claiming solicitor-client privilege. Mr. Speaker, over the past two years alone Olive Waller Zinkhan & Waller, the firm, has billed taxpayers \$680,000 on the SPUDCO case. And in the end, that firm lost 8 million more taxpayer dollars.

Mr. Speaker, why won't the NDP tell us how many hours that firm billed on this case? Mr. Speaker, what are they hiding? If the minister wants to come clean, let him give us an answer.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for SaskWater.

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, first of all we have provided members opposite with detailed information on all the legal expenditures associated with SPUDCO, and we have provided an itemized breakdown of the costs incurred, Mr. Speaker, both with respect to Olive Waller law firm and also with respect to all the other expert witnesses, Mr. Speaker, on this matter. And members opposite know they have that, Mr. Speaker.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, members opposite have now asked more than 300 questions on SPUDCO in this Assembly, written questions. And we have provided the answers, Mr. Speaker. We have thoroughly answered the questions to the very best of our ability, Mr. Speaker, and we will continue to do so.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, the minister stands up and out of one side of his mouth says, I've given you complete answers, but yet in writing, there's the refusal to give the answers. Mr. Speaker, if you do the math, Olive Waller Zinkhan & Waller was billing the taxpayer over \$1,500 a day every day for the past two years on this case. That's a huge amount of taxpayers' money, so we just want to know how much was the NDP's law firm billing the taxpayer; how many hours did they bill on this case; and what was the hourly rate?

Mr. Speaker, the Premier said he would answer all the opposition's questions about SPUDCO. Why won't he answer this question, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for SaskWater.

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I just want to remind members opposite, because they like to criticize the Olive Waller law firm, and, Mr. Speaker, I tell you, the government and the taxpayers of this province were being sued for \$102 million, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, thanks to the work of government and thanks to the representation of Olive Waller, Mr. Speaker — thanks to that work, Mr. Speaker — the final settlement was \$7.9 million, Mr. Speaker, less than 8 per cent of what we were being sued for, Mr. Speaker. And I think Olive

Waller represented us well. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I don't want to get into a debate with the member opposite over whether we got value for those legal fees or not. That's a separate issue for another day, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, another day we'll have that debate. Today we're talking about the legal bills. Mr. Speaker, taxpayers deserve answers. The NDP's supposed crack legal team questioned the plaintiffs for 57 hours, nearly 300 . . . for 57 days, nearly 300 hours of questioning. They asked them over 50,000 questions. Mr. Speaker, in the history of this province there has never been such a lawsuit.

Mr. Speaker, in the end the government lost. Mr. Speaker, I have never heard of such a case. It really seems that the NDP was using its unlimited access to taxpayers' money to try and grind and pound these producers into submission. It didn't work and the taxpayers ended up paying an \$8 million settlement, Mr. Speaker, and on top of that a \$1.8 million legal bill.

Why won't the Premier answer this question? What was the hourly rate the NDP lawyers were billing the taxpayers?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for SaskWater.

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, that there were significant amounts of money spent on this case by both sides, Mr. Speaker.

The plaintiffs in the case, Mr. Speaker, spent \$3.2 million on their legal fees, Mr. Speaker. They spent \$3.2 million on their legal fees. And, Mr. Speaker, I make no apology at all on behalf of government, that taxpayers were being sued for \$102 million; we decided to mount a vigorous defence, Mr. Speaker. We spent \$1.8 million in legal fees, Mr. Speaker, and the final settlement, Mr. Speaker, was less, Mr. Speaker, than 8 per cent of the amount that the plaintiffs were seeking.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(11:00)

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

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, for the past two years this NDP law firm has billed the taxpayers over \$1,500 a day. And what did they do to earn this money? They stalled the case past the election. They launched two ridiculous counterclaims, both of which were thrown out by the judge.

One of those counterclaims contained false allegations against

the Saskatchewan Party. The other contained false allegations against the plaintiffs and their accountants. They dragged this case out for four years. They asked the plaintiffs over 50,000 questions and in the end they lost, because the NDP was dead wrong about SPUDCO.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP is hiding behind solicitor-client privilege. Well in this case the client is the taxpayer, and the client deserves a complete accounting of where their money went. Mr. Speaker, why is the Premier hiding this information from the taxpayers of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for SaskWater.

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I repeat again, and I'll be pleased to table these documents again after the debate in question period today. But taxpayers have received a very, very detailed breakdown of how that \$1.8 million was spent, Mr. Speaker, some two pages of detail, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, I think that members opposite should be reminded of the fact, Mr. Speaker, that we have now as a result of the investment the government made, yes money was lost and we apologized to the taxpayers of the province for this. But we have in the Lake Diefenbaker area today, seven potato storage sheds, Mr. Speaker, that have facilitated an expansion in potato acreage of more than 5,000 acres. Value-added, Mr. Speaker, of \$3,000 per acre, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, those sheds are full, Mr. Speaker, and they build on the investment that was made in irrigation and the investment that was made in the John George Diefenbaker . . .

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

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, if this kind of litigation is what the NDP use to kick off new business initiatives in this province. I wish they'd go to another province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, in written question no. 785 of this session, we asked the government about any outstanding lawsuits related to SPUDCO. The government listed three lawsuits. Mr. Speaker, one of those is an action against former NDP cabinet minister, Carol Teichrob. The answer notes that she is being sued personally and not as a member of government.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is: who is paying the legal bills on this case? And if it is the government, how much has this cost to date, and who is the law firm that is defending that action?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for SaskWater.

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Speaker, with respect to the lawsuit in question, I will get back to the member with more details. But to the best of my knowledge at this point in time, I'm not

aware, Mr. Speaker, that there has been a payment by government with respect to the lawsuit, Mr. Speaker. This is a question that I will be examining in more detail, Mr. Speaker.

I promise, first of all, to get back to the member with additional information. And secondly, Mr. Speaker, I will have to weigh the matter of whether or not government is involved in any way in this lawsuit, Mr. Speaker. I will examine that and get back to the member.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Why is the member for Regina Lakeview on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Will the member speak to his point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in question period, the member for Melfort made these comments:

Mr. Speaker, for three years Jim Williamson's family wrote this government repeatedly begging for somebody to be done, somebody to listen. They didn't get a response, Mr. Speaker — not a letter, not a phone call, nothing.

Mr. Speaker, the first contact was made on October 11. The response by letter went back on October 18, 2001. A person in the health system contacted, as a result of that contact, on October 19 and has been in contact with his family ever since.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the member opposite apologize to the House for misleading the House and also . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. The point that the member has raised cannot be regarded as a point of order. It is a point of debate.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

SaskTel International Awarded Contract in Mozambique

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure today to announce an important achievement in the impressive history of SaskTel International. The Mozambique Telecommunications Company has awarded SaskTel International a contract worth \$6.2 million to complete a rural network infrastructure project in Tete, a northern province in Mozambique.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, this is SaskTel International's 11th contract in Africa, and with this being the first contract in Mozambique, SaskTel International is now strongly positioned for any future business the region has to offer.

Over the past 11 years, SaskTel International has completed 10 stand-alone projects to improve communications in east Africa totalling more than \$58 million in contracts, Mr. Speaker.

Today's announcement is another reminder that SaskTel International is about much more than just investments. Since 1986, SaskTel International has assisted in generating, Mr. Speaker, \$476 million in revenue — 476 million in revenue — from its three lines of business: software solutions, project management, and investments. Mr. Speaker, that's a net income — a net income — of \$116 million that would not otherwise have entered the province of Saskatchewan's economy, Mr. Speaker.

SaskTel International, Mr. Speaker, SaskTel International's ability to deliver world class network consulting and project management services across the globe continues to bring vital revenue back home to Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, projects like the one I'm announcing today demonstrate that Saskatchewan is a technology leader. Our people and their skills are in demand around the world. Over the next 14 months, seven SaskTel International employees will work on site in Mozambique to complete this network infrastructure project.

Mr. Speaker, SaskTel International provides a good return for the people of Saskatchewan, posting a profit for the 13th consecutive year — a profit for the 13th consecutive year. I congratulate SaskTel International on this new contract and on its continued success in selling Saskatchewan know-how to the rest of the world.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was listening with some interest as the minister gave his ministerial statement concerning new investment by SaskTel International. As he indicated . . .

An Hon. Member: — Contract.

Mr. Elhard: — I'm sorry. Contract. I'll rephrase my language, Mr. Speaker. The Mozambique Telecommunications Company has awarded SaskTel International a contract worth \$6.2 million to complete a rural network infrastructure project in a northern province in Mozambique.

Now if I heard the minister correct, this is SaskTel's 11th contract in Africa, with this being the first one in the country of Mozambique. And there had been quite a number of projects done in east Africa to improve communications.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it's hard to argue with SaskTel International providing that type of service to the people of Africa. There is a considerable need for telecommunications capability in Africa, and we would laud the intent and the purpose and the goal of this particular effort by SaskTel International.

However, Mr. Speaker, it does raise considerable concern among the people of Saskatchewan when they hear of SaskTel International moving overseas, while there are many, many areas of this province that still do not have cell coverage. There are many other areas of this province that have inadequate cell coverage. And in fact, Mr. Speaker, if you're driving west on the No. 1 Highway, even though that is the primary transportation route in this province, there are a number of blackout points or blank points in cell coverage between Caronport and Swift Current. So we can't even conduct consistent and continuous telephone conversations over Saskatchewan's cellular network without interruption. And, Mr. Speaker, we think that there is plenty of opportunity for SaskTel to improve its performance right here in the province, as well as its work internationally.

Mr. Speaker, the minister in his ministerial statement indicated that this is a reminder, this particular announcement is a reminder that SaskTel International is much more than just investments. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's true. Much of SaskTel International's story is about investment losses. And while SaskTel International might have generated a fair dollar in revenue and profit that have come back to this province, what the minister has not said in his statement today is how much more we might have had without the vast number of dollars lost in these investments in North America and around the world.

And just so that, just so that the minister doesn't forget, I'd like to recite some of the investments that have been made on behalf of SaskTel, that have ended up costing the taxpayers of this province a considerable amount of money.

There's an investment in Persona Inc., which is a money-losing cable company based in Newfoundland, which does provide services here in Saskatchewan but hasn't generated any profit for CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan); Retx.com, an Atlanta-based company, in which at least \$26 million was lost recently; Tappedinto.com, a Nashville-based company where we saw losses of \$2.4 million; Clickabid.com, a failed Internet auction business, cost the taxpayers in excess of \$2 million; Soft Tracks Enterprises, a wireless electronic payment company with losses accumulating to the people of the province to the amount of \$2.2 million. And we've got Navigata based in British Columbia, a telecom that has cost taxpayers oh, probably in excess in of 25 or \$26 million to date, Mr. Speaker.

So while we understand that these investments have been horrendous on the record of the government, we do think that SaskTel International, as a consulting player, is doing the right thing in Africa, and we applaud this type of work. If they would just stick to consulting and less investing, we'd all be better off. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 203 — The Recognition of John George Diefenbaker Day Act

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

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 203, An Act to Recognize the Contributions of John George Diefenbaker be introduced and read a first time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Arm River-Watrous that Bill 203, The Recognition of John George Diefenbaker Day Act be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

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

Mr. Brkich: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and table a response to written question no. 834.

The Speaker: — Response to 834 has been submitted. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I stand today on behalf of the government and convert for debates returnable questions 835 and 836.

The Speaker: — Questions 835, 836 have been converted to orders for return (debatable). I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to table a response to written question no. 837.

The Speaker: — Response to 837 has been submitted. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to convert for debates returnable questions 835 through 853 inclusive.

(11:15)

The Speaker: — Questions 835 to 853 inclusive have been converted to orders for return (debatable). I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I stand

today to answer on behalf of the government written questions 854 through 857 inclusive.

The Speaker: — Responses to 854, 855, 856, and 857 have been submitted.

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

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

Canadian Agricultural Income Stabilization Program

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure that I enter into this 75-minute debate. Mr. Speaker, at the end of my remarks this morning, I will be moving the following motion. And the motion reads:

That this Assembly acknowledges the hardships that Saskatchewan producers have faced over the last few years with drought, BSE, grasshoppers, and early frost, and that in order to prove its commitment to rural Saskatchewan for agricultural support, this Assembly calls upon the government to fully fund the Canadian income stabilization program for 2003 and to continue to lobby the federal government for fair and equitable funding formulas for agricultural programs.

And Mr. Speaker, when I move that motion at the end of my remarks, they will be seconded by the member from Humboldt.

Mr. Speaker, the CAIS program, Canadian agricultural income stabilization program is available to all agricultural producers regardless of the type of farming they carry on or the type of commodities they produce. Participants in the CAIS program select a particular level of protection for their operation, based on previous reference history of their farm, and that in turn, Mr. Speaker, is based on an average of the five previous years with the best and worst years eliminated.

Participants in the program place the necessary deposit to secure the selected protection level which they can choose, and ranges from 70 to 92 per cent of their established reference margin. Requirement of the deposit raises some current concerns that some producers may not be able to afford to enter the program.

Mr. Speaker, producers are under extreme duress these days, and the program deposit requirement is a major concern. Program payments come from this deposit and government contributions. Thus the government states and contends that the deposit is not a premium because the deposit still belongs to the producer. Fair enough — call it what you like, Mr. Speaker. I don't think producers care; that's not the point.

The point is that producers must come up with this money, this cash money up front to participate in the program, and many of them are just unable to do so. It's unusual and in fact precedent setting for producers to be asked to make a cash payment to enter into a federal-provincial, cost-shared agricultural program, and this provision of the program must be changed.

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, that while this government fights hard — and we support them in this — to change the funding

formula, we haven't heard anything from them about the prepayment provisions from producers. It seems, Mr. Speaker, that when it comes to making payments that may impact upon their budget, they're fast to come to the debate. But when issues are discussed that only affect agricultural producers in this province, we don't hear much from this government.

In the program, Mr. Speaker, payments are triggered when a producer's current year's production falls below their established reference margin. And the program, Mr. Speaker, is cost shared between the federal and provincial governments on an agreed to — agreed to, Mr. Speaker — 60/40 basis, thus supposedly giving all provinces equal access to the program.

In 2003 the Government of Saskatchewan limited its contribution to something in the neighbourhood of 25 per cent of the province's initially promised 40 per cent share of the CAIS payments. And in doing that, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan government, this Saskatchewan NDP government capped its expenditures for the CAIS program for the year 2003 at \$99 million. And this of course means that in the 2003 production year, eligible producers would receive only about 70 per cent of the full payment under the CAIS program that would be eligible to producers in every other province of the country, Mr. Speaker.

And some provinces may not be able to offer the same assistance to producers due to differing provincial contributions to the CAIS program. For example, Alberta has gone above and beyond the required provincial contribution while other provinces, except Saskatchewan, have simply paid the required provincial contribution of 40 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, producers are able to obtain access with a minimum deposit of one-third of the determined deposit, thereby guaranteeing access to the program for producers with limited funds. However many producers will not be able to come up with that down payment, Mr. Speaker, and they want to hear this government lobbying the federal government to eliminate that provision.

Saskatchewan producers have had a rough time. This year due to adverse weather conditions, many areas of Saskatchewan experienced growing periods comparable with those normally experienced at the 60th parallel. Yet the Minister of Agriculture refuses to pay fully into a program that the province negotiated.

At first this NDP government delayed signing on to the program, demanding increased caps, and then they said that — after the government gave them everything they wanted — they said that . . . well they mused about suing the federal government, Mr. Speaker. That would help in the negotiations, I'm sure. Then they said, after they got over that one, then they said that we don't have the funds; we don't have the money.

Mr. Speaker, recently this provincial government has stumbled and bumbled their way into nearly \$1 billion of federal government generosity and additional oil and gas revenue and some savings through no good management of their own, from low interest rates, strong Canadian dollar, and virtually no forest fires in the last season. And now everybody in the province knows, every sensible person in the province knows that this government can easily fund the CAIS program without

eliminating anything else. Now they say that they won't do it because they're in the process of renegotiating the funding formula with the federal government.

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, they have no intentions of fully funding the CAIS program. They have no intentions of ever fully funding the CAIS program for the Saskatchewan producers. They don't . . .

It's payback time, Mr. Speaker. Producers, rural Saskatchewan, agricultural producers, and rural Saskatchewan people in general did not and do not support this NDP government, this vindictive NDP government that now says well, then we won't fund the CAIS program either. We'll fix you.

Mr. Speaker, in a news release from the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan, APAS, President Terry Hildebrandt said and I quote:

This kind of attitude is unacceptable and does not build value for the agricultural industry. Funding for agriculture, the province's largest industry which provides 40 per cent of the jobs in this province is an investment in the economy and not a waste of money. Saskatchewan producers need an agriculture minister who is willing to champion the cause of agriculture, not one who uses them as leverage to change an agreement they made previously with the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Hildebrandt went on to say, and I quote again:

If producers accept the minister's example of not paying as a negotiating tactic, it would logically follow that not paying property tax is a method to achieve a reduction in education tax on farm land. It's unacceptable for our government to promote a strategy like this.

Mr. Speaker, this government agreed to the 60/40 funding formula when they signed on to this agreement in the first place — at long last, I should say, they signed on to it. Producers had been waiting for months for this government to finally do so. They did. They're out of excuses.

And right now, this Agriculture minister is using Saskatchewan producers as cards in a game, a game with the federal government, and he uses the card game analogy, Mr. Speaker, in answers to questions from the media. And unfortunately, agricultural producers are the ones who are suffering because of it. In the Agriculture minister's card game, it's time that the Premier shuffled the deck and replaced the Minister of Agriculture, who isn't playing with a full deck and who treats hard-working agricultural producers as discards.

Mr. Speaker, by the NDP's refusal to fund a formula that they signed on to, it just adds to the list of things that show you cannot trust this NDP government. And in rural Saskatchewan the list is long and growing.

Mr. Speaker, let's examine for a minute the impacts, the economic impacts of the BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy) crisis that we're embroiled in and have been for some 18 months now. Since the first case of BSE, the total economic contribution of Canada's beef industry has dropped

from 30 billion Canadian to 23.7 billion, and that's a loss of \$6.3 billion to the industry, Mr. Speaker.

Prior to the worldwide ban on Canadian beef products, Canada was the third largest exporter of beef in the world. In 2002 this beef export market was worth about \$4.1 billion, with a trade surplus in beef totalling 3.2 billion for that year. Saskatchewan's beef exports from January to April 2003 — the first quarter of 2003, the year when BSE occurred in May of that year — were worth approximately \$23 million per month, second only in Canada compared to Alberta's roughly 50, or slightly more than \$50 million a month during that period.

Despite the ongoing BSE crisis, Canada continues to import beef into our country, although the Canadian government has refused to issue, as they normally do, any supplementary beef import quotas.

Mr. Speaker, agricultural producers in Saskatchewan have been devastated this year by a cold, late spring, cold summer, and an unusually early and severe frost. In my area, Mr. Speaker, there was a severe killing frost on June 24. And my area is between Regina and Moose Jaw, and many areas of the province were more severely affected than we were: severe frost on June 24 which set crops back, cold weather following that, and a killing frost that ended the growing season on August 20 with temperatures of minus 8. Mr. Deputy Speaker, August 20 destroyed many crops completely and caused devastating damage to both quality and quantity.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, producers cannot go on without a fully funded CAIS program. And at this time I wish to move the following motion. I did read the motion in, Mr. Speaker. I wish to move that motion and I'll defer to my colleague from the constituency of Humboldt, who is the seconder.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(11:30)

The Deputy Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Thunder Creek, seconded by the member for Humboldt:

That this Assembly acknowledges the hardships that Saskatchewan producers have faced over the last few years with drought, BSE, grasshoppers, and early frost, and that in order to prove its commitment to rural Saskatchewan for agriculture support, this Assembly calls upon the government to fully fund the Canadian agricultural income stabilization (CAIS) program for 2003; and continue to lobby the federal government for fair and equitable funding formulas for agricultural programs.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Humboldt.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to point out to everyone in this Assembly right now that the importance of this debate is not about an agriculture risk management program. The importance of this particular debate is not even about an untrustworthy government or an incompetent minister.

The importance of this debate that we're having here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that we're talking about hard-working men and women in our province. We're talking about the pillars of our small communities. We're talking about compassionate people who endlessly volunteer their time to make their community, and subsequently our entire province, a better place to live.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're talking about parents and grandparents. We're talking about families who are going to find it very difficult to fund Christmas this year. And we're talking about the children. We're talking about children who may no longer be able to take piano lessons or participate in sports programs.

Mr. Speaker, we're talking about farm families, and just as tragic, we're talking about families beyond those who work the land. We're talking about producers of farm magazines, people who work in feed shops, clothing store owners, machinery dealerships, grocery store workers; and the list just goes on and on and on. And that's what's important about this debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But the actual debate, the debate will be about an enormous injustice being served on all of those people. It's about a government, it's about a government that has completely abandoned a sector of our society and that sector, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is rural Saskatchewan.

The debate is about the competence of a minister — a minister who's completely forgotten what's important about his job. He's too busy playing cards, as the member who spoke before me talked about, Mr. Speaker. He's telling the producers of this province not to worry, because he's holding his hand close. What he really doesn't want to admit to them is he is holding a handful of jokers and the time to stop playing this game with the producers in our province is now. We're dealing with lives out in rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that has been the pattern of this NDP government for over a decade. They came into power and they snubbed the producers of this province by tearing up their GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) contracts. They promised year after year they would replace those contracts with a safety net program. And they did absolutely nothing until the federal government took it out of their hands, took away the responsibility, and they designed the disastrous AIDA (agricultural income disaster assistance) program.

And do you know where the NDP's Agriculture minister was at that time, Mr. Deputy Minister? Well Eric Upshall, he cared about the families in the province, the farm families of our province so much that he went to Mexico. The program was designed in his absence and that program was an absolute, complete disaster and it was scrapped after only two years.

That's when the federal government designed CFIP (Canadian farm income program). The member from Yorkton's chirping away. And don't worry, we'll get to his turn and what he had to contribute to the farm families of this province because he definitely had his time to do what he could, and he failed them as well.

You know when they decided to introduce CFIP, which is considered the son of AIDA, you would have thought the NDP government would have learned their lesson earlier with the disaster of AIDA — but no, they didn't, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The minister that time, Mr. Lingenfelter, stormed out of the negotiations and he left the producers of our province out on a limb. It was another negligent minister and another disastrous program for the producers of this province.

So let's move on to the next Agriculture minister, the one who's sitting in his chair chirping away, very glad to speak now, but he sure wasn't speaking on behalf of the producers when he was minister of Agriculture. The member from Yorkton, the member from Yorkton is quite busy chirping away.

You know what? The first thing that he decided to attack was the crop insurance program. He increased the premiums of the program by as much as 200 per cent. He dropped spot loss hail. He did everything to devastate the program — gutted it, made the coverage less effective.

And then when it came time to negotiate the details of the existing program that we're talking about now, the CAIS program, he was busy running around blaming the federal government. He was blaming the producers of the province. He was blaming the opposition, he was blaming anybody he could think of for the challenges that this province was facing, but he didn't participate in the designing of the program. He refused to sign the agreement of intent to negotiate a program and he refused to sign it until much of the detail was already done.

But after the CAIS program was designed in his absence, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's interesting to know there was an election looming. That's when the member from Yorkton finally showed some initiative that he was actually going to stand up for the farm families of our province and he insisted at that time — because there was an election looming; let's not forget that — that the payment cap should be raised and the negative margin should be recognized. And we all know the member from Yorkton will do absolutely anything to get re-elected. So he finally put forward some initiatives for the farm families of the province and the federal government agreed. They agreed to his proposal and they made amendments to the CAIS program, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But unfortunately for the producers of this province, we already . . . you know, the election had already taken place and now we have our present Agriculture minister and a present Premier who was finally elected by the people. The election was over and there was no longer any reason for the NDP government to disguise their disdain for rural Saskatchewan .

The first insult that this minister chose to give, Mr. Speaker, he decided to not live up to their obligation of a signed agreement for the final year of the funding for CFIP. To him, agriculture producers were not a priority and signed agreements obviously are meaningless to this government.

But that's not all. He further gutted the crop insurance program while he jacked up the premiums even more. And then he refused to sign the amendment to the CAIS program, the amendment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that his own colleague had negotiated when the pressure was on for him to get re-elected

because there was an election campaign on the go.

The next minister, the minister we have now, refused to sign that amendment and he cried poverty, he cried poverty. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it just never ends. It just goes on and on and on. The NDP continue to back out on their word. They continue to break contracts. They continue to ignore signed agreements, and they continue to blame everyone else for their blatant attack on rural Saskatchewan. And they've always, always justified these unethical practices by pleading poverty.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they've had a \$900 million windfall and it's time to face the ugly truth. The NDP does not now and has not ever given a rat's you-know-what about the farmers in this province. They give lip service and absolutely nothing more.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they whine and they snivel about there being an un-level playing field in the global markets, and yet the most un-level playing field that we have is right here in our country from province to province. No other province did not live up to their agreement.

They have deceptive messaging by saying that we pay more per capita for our producers than any other province, and that's not fair. It's indeed difficult, but how much do we pay to the fishery, to the fishing industry? How much do we pay for the auto industry? How much do we pay per capita for the airplane industry? None — none. Other provinces have their industries they must support, and it's time we started supporting our own.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I move the motion or second the motion brought forward earlier, I just want to remind everyone once again, the importance of this debate is not about inadequate farm programs, and it's not about the ethics of our NDP government. It's about farm families, hard-working men and women and children. It's about the rural families that own or work for companies that supply the agriculture industry. They deserve better.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to second the motion put forward from the member from Thunder Creek.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture, the member for Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — I'm very happy for an opportunity to once again address the issue of CAIS and the funding that we provide for our agricultural programs.

I think it's very important in this debate, and I agree with the member opposite who just finished speaking, that this is about farm people. It is about farm families who have faced very, very difficult years and difficult circumstances across this province. It has been so hard with the years of drought, there are some who have not been able to maintain, who have been driven out of business by the circumstances, Mr. Speaker. And there are others who are struggling just to survive. We know that. We understand that there is a great deal of anxiety and suffering in the rural community. It is not just restricted to farms. It begins with the poor farm economy but it expands throughout the rural

community, and there are many people who are hurting and who are worried and whose businesses are suffering, Mr. Speaker. We recognize that.

And I think if people clearly listen to what has been said from the very beginning of this process since I have been minister and previously, we do want to provide the supports that will enable people to successfully be a part of this industry. We want to make the investments that will help this industry move forward to a very prosperous future, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there are also I think a number of distortions that have been thrown out as if they were facts, Mr. Speaker; pieces of comments taken out, put in public that are direct attacks upon our government, upon me personally. And, Mr. Speaker, I recognize the tactics of the Sask Party in this whole process to try and continue to drive a wedge between urban and rural Saskatchewan, between rural Saskatchewan and our government, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, I think it's very important that people know very clearly the facts of what has happened and how we have worked to try and make sure that we have programs that not only provide the necessary investments and support for farmers and rural people in Saskatchewan but also are affordable for all the people of Saskatchewan, the taxpayers of this province. This is essential.

Mr. Speaker, in the critic's speech just earlier, he referred to the deposit that farmers are expected to pay in the CAIS program and indicated on the record that this government was silent, that this minister was silent on this.

I need to put on record very clearly that when the federal-provincial-territorial ministers met, I led the charge to have that removed and, Mr. Speaker, in that action and in that work that was done in Prince Edward Island, we were able to get the deposit, instead of moving up to the two-thirds that it was supposed to move up to, we got it held back to the one-third for another year and the date extended to March 31. I believe I also indicated that in the media and in the House. So the member should have been aware of that and I'll just accept the possibility that he forgot or didn't hear.

But, Mr. Speaker, very clearly we led the charge on trying to get that removed. We still are pushing to have the deposit removed. Mr. Speaker, we don't see any sense in it. We have made that case. The federal minister said clearly that he would move as far as he could this year but there needed to be legislative change in order to remove that. Mr. Speaker, we are pushing for the legislative change to have that deposit removed. That, Mr. Speaker, is what the situation is. Those are the facts about what happened. I think the critic needs to know that.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, with regard to our position on CAIS, I have said, and I think our government says very clearly that we do not want our farmers in this province to be disadvantaged against farmers anywhere.

(11:45)

Our position has clearly said that we want CAIS to be fully funded. But, Mr. Speaker, when we have looked at the numbers,

they are a far cry from the numbers that were given to our government when we were asked and coerced and pushed to sign onto the program. The numbers that we were given told us that we would be able to put in \$100 million a year over five years, and that would be enough to cover the costs of this program.

Well, Mr. Speaker, big surprise for us. We signed it. We got going on this program. And when the numbers started coming in March, we found that those numbers were far, far above what they had first been told to us, Mr. Speaker. They were up in the neighbourhood of 250 million to 360 million a year, and still those only guesses, Mr. Speaker. To sign on and say, yes, we're fully funding CAIS at that point would have been basically to sign a blank cheque.

Today, Mr. Speaker, the range of numbers has changed, but we still do not have the final numbers for '03 CAIS. The application period will end in November. After the application period, there will be a period for processing those. At that point we will know what the cost for '03 CAIS is.

But, Mr. Speaker, to re-emphasize that from the very beginning we have been pushing, struggling to try and get 100 per cent of the funding for CAIS. There is no question about that. We have been unequivocal. But what we have been saying very clearly is that the way it is structured right now on a 60/40 base, it is absolutely unfair to the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker — unfair to the urban people, unfair to the rural people, unfair to the farmers of this province, Mr. Speaker, because it draws so much per capita out of our tax dollars. Mr. Speaker we have to address that inequity. We have been addressing that inequity, and we will continue to.

I would like to refer, Mr. Speaker, to the spirit that we want our federal government to continue to think about and to engage in. In section 95 of the Canadian Constitution, there is reference clearly under the constitution to the issues of equity and fairness. Under section 15 of the constitution, it calls for equality before and under law and equal protection and benefit of law. Under section 36 of the constitution, it calls for equal opportunities for the well-being of Canadians, promotion of economic development to reduce disparities, and commits to equalization payments as a means to help achieve this where provinces would have a reasonably comparable levels of service and taxation. That is with regard to equalization. But I can tell you that agriculture is not one of the factors that goes in to equalization.

Mr. Speaker, there is reference in some of the comments earlier to industries that other provinces have, that they are responsible for. Well, Mr. Speaker, if we talk about fisheries, if we talk about the automotive industry, if we talk about Bombardier, we see significant one-off federal dollars going in to make a difference in those provinces, making payments that will help those industries.

Mr. Speaker, we are asking for the same kind of thoughtful recognition that sticks with the spirit of this nation for equality across the nation. That is what is there in our equity proposal. We are asking for a cap on the amount that any province would have to pay, that no province should ever have to pay more than three times the provincial per capita average.

I want to ask you, how does it make sense that we in this province would be paying somewhere for a CAIS program, somewhere between 100 million and \$360 million which comes out to somewhere between \$100 per capita and \$360 per capita? How is it that we who are producing the food for this nation, for this world, should be expected to pay that kind of a cost where the people who are consuming that food — the people of Toronto, the people of Vancouver, the people of Calgary and Edmonton — are paying \$35 per capita on average across this country? How does that make sense? Why should the producers of this province be faced with such a huge inequity?

It is wrong. It must be restructured. I'm glad that's in the motion, and that's what we're working for, Mr. Speaker, to get equity in this. And I tell you that we are pushing as hard as we can for full funding of CAIS. That was what the . . . excuse me, Mr. Speaker, that is what the meeting I had with the federal minister yesterday was about. We are still pressing for full funding, and we want to also make sure that there is investment in the future of agriculture, and we will continue to push for that investment in the future of agriculture.

We do not want to always be simply in primary production. We want investment in value-add. Our producers want investment in value-add, and our rural communities need that kind of investment. We have an ACRE (Action Committee on the Rural Economy) report that leads us and moves in that direction.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to push in that direction. We want 100 per cent funding for the farmers and the people of this province, and we want equity in the formula. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Bjørnerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the motion today and the underfunding of the CAIS program by the NDP government.

I just want to make a couple of comments that the Minister of Agriculture touched on, and he touched on the urban-rural split as if blaming the Saskatchewan Party for trying to bring that about. I just want to remind that minister, and in fact I want to remind every member on that side of the House, in 1991 . . . and we go back to them cancelling the GRIP program.

But there was some other things that helped cause that rift between urban and rural Saskatchewan — something like 52 hospital closures in rural Saskatchewan. That caused somewhat of a rift out there. We also have school closures. We have crumbling highways. Why would the people in rural Saskatchewan be happy? They aren't happy with that NDP government, and I don't think they're about to become very happy with them not funding the CAIS program, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that minister asked the federal government to remove the cap when the new programs were coming in. He asked them to accept negative margins. And it took a while, but

finally they agreed to those things. And what did the NDP government do at that point? They still wouldn't fully fund the program. So they got what they wanted. And he's saying today, well we want this, we want that from the federal government. The federal government has no respect for this NDP government because every time they try to do something for Saskatchewan and Saskatchewan farm families, this government finds a way to renege on their responsibility and will not back the farmers of Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

He even went so far, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at one point — I believe it was on the BSE money — that minister and that government was going to sue the federal government. They're going to put extra dollars into Saskatchewan. They're going to give extra dollars to our farmers, and his response to that was, let's sue the federal government. Well, Mr. Speaker, with that kind of an attitude we are never going to get any respect and any agreement from the federal government to really help Saskatchewan farm families.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity here about, oh, about a week ago, with my colleague from Last Mountain-Touchwood, we went to, we had the opportunity to go to an APAS meeting. And it was a good meeting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because there was a number of farmers there, probably 50, 60 farmers there, and they all had the same story but to a different degree. They talked, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about crop insurance to start with, and the inadequacies of crop insurance. Some of the farmers talked about the quantity of grain they got . . . is fairly good in a number of areas, but the quality is terrible. In fact, the quality is so bad they don't know if they'll even be able to sell it, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

They talked about auction sales in the southeast corner of the province where my colleague from Estevan comes from. Already, there's 70 auction sales lined up for that corner of the province. It just goes to show the disaster that's out there in rural Saskatchewan.

They talked about . . . A number of them felt they were going to get a crop insurance payout, Mr. Deputy Speaker, probably would amount to maybe \$100 an acre. That sounds good, Mr. Deputy Speaker, except for the problem they have. They've got \$170 cash, a number of them, into this crop — cash out of their pockets for chemical, fertilizer, fuel. Doesn't even count depreciation and things like that on machinery. And crop insurance is going to pay 100, and their costs are \$170 an acre. They can't keep going like that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

They talked about the values of grain. They talked about crop insurance, the values that crop insurance is valuing some of these frozen crops. Lentils, for an example, crop insurance has valued lentils that are froze at 42 per cent of no. 2. But the farmers out there are saying that that's a myth; that isn't going to happen. The number they're hearing is 17 per cent. Big difference on the payout that they should get to what they're going to get. They talked about the quality on all of the grains that crop insurance has valued and felt that the value that's being put on them is too high. Durum, for an example, talked about that and the values being too high.

And the Ag minister talks about lobbying the federal

government for more money, and we agree with that. That should be an ongoing process because the federal government should get up to the plate and pay more for Saskatchewan. But until that happens, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the farmers of Saskatchewan need that minister and that government to stand behind farm families. They can't keep going on.

They talked, Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Deputy Speaker, today I heard, on the radio this morning, farm income is down 40 per cent from what it was. Well now, that's bad enough alone but think about that. We've gone through a number of years of drought in this province. We've had a number of other problems in this province — number one being that NDP government. But now, we're down another 40 per cent. And the Minister of Agriculture has the nerve to say that it's not fair to Saskatchewan taxpayers to help farmers. He says it's throwing money in a black hole.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is not throwing money in a black hole. That money goes right around and right back into the economy. We're talking, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about paying fertilizer bills, chemical bills, fuel bills, taxes — both education and municipal. Education tax, a lot due to this NDP government and the rate . . . they're a way up there, more than they should be.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they cannot continue out there in rural Saskatchewan. Farm families are going under, and not just one by one. The ones that we talked to the other night in Neudorf, there's many of them talking; they're not sure if they can go through to another year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I found it interesting today in question period, the Minister of Labour was bragging about the CCF and all the wonderful things Tommy had done, and when the CCF was in, all these things that happened. She even went as far as to say that if we hadn't had the CCF, we would not have drive-throughs at fast food restaurants. How far can that government on that side dream, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

The next thing you know, she's going to be taking credit for the horse and buggy. Or she might even take credit for us actually getting to the point where we had outhouses with buildings around them. I remember locking my grandfather in the outhouse one time, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And when he was hollering for somebody to come and let him out, I don't remember him saying a word about this CCF-NDP-built outhouse. He just thought it was the outhouse on the farm, Mr. Speaker. So they can take credit for all the things they can dream about, but they're not reality, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

If they want to take credit for something substantial, put money into the CAIS program. Fully fund the program for 2003, and the farmers of Saskatchewan will not be rich but they may be able to survive to another year. We can't stand going on with a government like this and not having this government stand behind our farm families.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've had calls, and I know other members here have had probably more calls this fall from farm families in trouble out there than we've ever had before. And that's mainly because we not only have a problem with BSE and low cattle prices. We also have the frost now on the grain side. And

I know in my farming days, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if grain prices were down, usually cattle prices were up, and you could find a way to survive and get through.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's not the case this year. Both sides are down, and farm families need the help of this NDP government. And I'll admit they certainly need the help of the federal government, and that's where we agree with this Agriculture minister. We have to continue, continue to lobby Andy Mitchell and the federal government for more money, but until that happens we need that Ag minister and that government to step up to the plate. We cannot continue to go as we have.

I go back to last spring's budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A government that says they help farm families. Let's just remind this government of some of the things they did last spring. They closed 22 rural service centres. They closed health facilities in rural Saskatchewan. The elimination of the fuel tax on retail sales, a 20 per cent reduction on the rebate of farm fuel purchases, \$700,000 reduction for funding the Prairie Diagnostics — all these things are out of rural Saskatchewan, and all these things have hurt farm families in this province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the calls we get are from farmers that need help out there. And they don't need it next year or the year after for this year. They need it now.

The minister said it's like throwing money into a black hole.

An Hon. Member: — No, I did not.

(12:00)

Mr. Bjornerud: — The minister says he did not. I wish the minister would get up and be consistent, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because this money is not going to sit still. This money is going right back into the economy and there isn't a better time of year for that government and that minister, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to change their mind. We won't mock them for changing their mind, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If that minister would stand today and say, we've changed our mind; we'll fully fund the CAIS program — we will applaud them.

Because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this money is not disappearing into thin air. Christmas is coming. These farmers haven't got money to even buy groceries in some cases. I've had farmers phone in that can't even pay their power bill, especially now that that government's raised power rates — higher in rural Saskatchewan, I might add.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if that minister and that government wants to help farm families, it would be a perfect time, before the end of this session, to say, we lobbied the federal government; we did what we could and we're going to continue to; but until that happens we will fully fund the 2003 CAIS program.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Nutana.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you. As a member of this legislature that comes from a rural farm family, I wanted to add my voice to the public policy goal of a fair and equitable funding formula for the Canadian agricultural support program that will ensure a long-term, sustainable safety net for agricultural producers.

Mr. Speaker, it's been over 30 years that people in this country have been talking about a national agricultural policy. And for those of us who were at the University of Saskatchewan in the early 1970s, we argued for a national agricultural policy then and we're arguing for a national agricultural policy now.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to a fair and equitable solution that does not punish our producers or the taxpayers of Saskatchewan. The current flawed cost-sharing provisions in CAIS means that Saskatchewan taxpayers are expected to pay four or five times more than what taxpayers in other provincial jurisdictions pay to fund their share of the program. This clearly puts Saskatchewan at a disadvantage with respect to other jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, Canada was founded on the principle of equality and fairness, a principle that's enshrined in our constitution. And this legislature should call on the federal government to make sure that all Canadians, all Canadians share fairly in the CAIS program. No longer are the challenges mainly weather and insects. Much of the challenge facing our producers is rooted in international trade barriers, unfair subsidization of foreign products, low currency exchange rates — well beyond the scope of any provincial jurisdiction.

In this environment it is the responsibility of the federal government to properly fund agricultural support programs. And this is particularly the case for damage to our agricultural sector that is caused by low commodity prices resulting from unfair levels of agricultural subsidies provided to agricultural producers in the United States and in the European Union, or the damage caused by the closure of international borders due to the BSE crisis.

In almost every country in the world, it is an accepted principle that agricultural assistance is the responsibility of the federal government and it is not shifted to local governments that face the added pressure of the fiscal stresses associated with a downturn in their local agricultural economy. It is not fair. It is not equitable to expect any provincial government to be hit twice for a matter that is properly and morally the collective responsibility of all Canadians.

Now I know, Mr. Speaker, that the opposition has difficulty understanding intellectual arguments, but maybe they should pay attention. In countries like Ireland, France, or the UK (United Kingdom) — and I've had an opportunity to visit that jurisdiction this fall — agricultural support is provided by the European Union. Our neighbour to the south recognize this principle so that in the United States individual states are not burdened with the cost of farm safety nets available to their producers. And we ask that this well-accepted international principle be recognized in the country of Canada.

The challenges to our industry are, for the most part, well beyond the border of Saskatchewan or any individual province

and so they must be addressed at the national and international level.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan farm families are tough. They face the adversity in the form of drought, frost, BSE, not to mention lingering low commodity prices coupled with higher input costs. They produce food and agricultural products that sustain and nourish not only Canadians, but also people around the world. And nowhere in Canada is the activity of agriculture and farming more concentrated than in the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, we have 3 per cent of the national population, and we have approximately 40 per cent of the agricultural land in our country.

We are not being unreasonable as policy-makers in asking that the federal government place a reasonable limit on the unfair burden that the 60/40 cost-sharing requirement places upon provincial taxpayers. Farmers across Canada should be on an equal footing. Taxpayers across Canada should be on an equal footing.

It is not fair that the Saskatchewan . . . that in Saskatchewan the per capita contribution for just the provincial portion of CAIS is \$156 compared to the national average of \$35. On top of this inequity, Mr. Speaker, the federal government is contributing less than \$27 in the mix. This is only 43 per cent of the total CAIS funding on a national per capita basis.

Where is the equity in this? How can we justify such an unfair formula to Saskatchewan taxpayers, and more importantly how can we ensure that the long-term, stable funding arrangement is in place that will protect our agricultural producers not just this year, not last year, but years to come?

The continuation of this burden to provincial taxpayers would result in provinces having large agricultural industries relative to their tax base becoming increasing less competitive in the tax structure. Accepting this unfair arrangement would not be in any of our interests, and it would undermine the long-term viability of our agricultural sector in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, our government is working to get the best deal it can for Saskatchewan producers in the same way that we worked to ensure equity in Canada's equalization system. From this experience, we know how we can be successful.

I would invite the members opposite to join together with us on behalf of all Saskatchewan producers, on behalf of all Saskatchewan taxpayers, so that together we can effectively lobby the federal government to do the right public policy thing. The members opposite suggest that we should use this one-time funding as a short-term band-aid. This would not solve the underlying inequities and affordability problems with the current approach forced upon us by the federal government.

What happens next year or the year after or the year after? Do we cut health care? Do we cut expenditures in education? Do we disadvantage our future youth? Do we stop paving roads which would harm our rural economy? No, Mr. Speaker, obviously not.

Mr. Speaker, we can't go down that road. We have to stand up for our agricultural producers and negotiate a fair deal with our

federal counterparts. The people of Saskatchewan need to take a stand with the federal government, and we need to resolve the issue quickly. To give in now for expediency — and I know there are politicians that are into expediency — would be to send the wrong message to the federal government and it would affect the competitiveness of not only our farmers but our entire economy, not only this year but for years to come.

Mr. Speaker, the situation facing our farmers is no less than a disaster that . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. There seems to be a lot of private conversations that I would ask the members to take behind the bar. The member for Saskatoon Nutana has the floor. I recognize the member for Saskatoon Nutana.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, the situation facing our farmers is no less than a disaster that requires a commitment at the national level. When a fire rages through regions, or storms or floods devastate communities, the federal government is there to provide assistance that is so desperately needed. We ask for no less. We are starting to get our message heard on the national stage. A one-size-fits-all approach to cost sharing is a problem not only here but in other provinces with a large agricultural basis as well.

Mr. Speaker, having said that, I want to make it clear that we have not forgotten that arguing over who pays for what does nothing to help the real and very immediate needs of our farm producers. While we negotiate with the federal government for a fair funding formula, we are also continuing to provide much-needed agriculture support.

Our budget, Mr. Speaker, was increased 5.2 per cent from 252 million last year to 264 million this year, and I don't believe that includes the BSE money. We have a strong and fully funded crop insurance program that continues to support our producers. And since May, Mr. Speaker, of 2003 we have devoted 85 million provincial dollars to help our livestock producers deal with the effects of trade embargos due to BSE.

We've committed \$99 million for our 40 per cent share of the costs associated with the 2003 CAIS. We provide over \$100 million a year in fuel tax relief for our agricultural industry, and we've committed to addressing the issue of property tax fairness. And this year we have budgeted \$55 million in property tax relief for the next fiscal year and another 55 million is committed for the year after. And, Mr. Speaker, we continue to support the Canadian Wheat Board rather than work to undermine it.

Mr. Speaker, it's time for the opposition to stop the rhetoric. It's time for the opposition to stop saying to urban residents, you have to pay for this. That's how we get to the rural-urban split. Mr. Speaker . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — The member's time has expired.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm honoured to stand today to speak to this issue of the CAIS program and government's underfunding of the program. I, like the minister opposite, come from a farm background and she had indicated that it was important to her to add her voice and to make sure people knew that they cared.

Well you know what the people of Saskatchewan, especially our farmers, needed? We needed the minister to go to the cabinet table and add her voice at that time for the demands for money for farmers. To do it here, in the Assembly, is great. It's standing up and showing the world that you care. But what we really needed to do is to have it done at budget time so the money was in their pockets when it came time to address the needs that they have as farming people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the minister talked about the money and what they were doing for farmers. But I think she failed to mention that in the last two years — for two consecutive years — there's been \$40 million less in the Agriculture budget in Saskatchewan. That is not helping the farmers of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, when we stand up here and discuss the issue of agriculture, we're not just talking about the farmers. We're talking about all the citizens of this province because everybody is affected. And everybody is betrayed by the government who doesn't keep their word.

Mr. Speaker, the federal government, when they planned to scrap all the previous agriculture programs which were supposed to be helping producers in a crisis — crisis situations like droughts and killer frosts and other inclement weather or lower commodity prices or unfair subsidies or trade disputes — they were hoping that they would design a program that was going to help in all these crisis situations. But it never does.

Farmers are always told the latest program will ensure coverage, but the reality is the programs always have some sort of flaw in it and the government's plan never really extends to meet the real crisis. And then they say they don't have the funding to meet their commitments or they just refuse to pay a portion.

Farmers learned the hard way in Saskatchewan, in the early '90s, that a contract with this NDP government is worthless. I think every farmer in Saskatchewan remembers the GRIP program and what this government did to them. They determined it was going to cost the government too much money, so they refused to pay it.

Mr. Speaker, right now, the minister opposite is talking about Alberta and what they've done for their farmers. They have paid their CAIS commitment and they've given farmers even above what the commitment was. And you know what? Even Manitoba has paid their farmers. The Manitoba government actually kept their word to their farmers.

We have CAIS and this government's refusal to pay 30 per cent of its 40 per cent commitment, saying it's not fair. The NDP Agriculture minister believes that fully funding the CAIS program would be like throwing money away. That's the kind of statement that the farmers in Saskatchewan remember is when their Minister of Agriculture indicates that supporting

them — more importantly, keeping his word — would be throwing money away.

(12:15)

Mr. Speaker, the Agriculture minister has lost touch with farmers — if he ever really was in touch with them — because what is happening on the farm today isn't something that can be understood if you just sit behind a desk and talk to the people that come in. You've got to be living in their boots. You've got to be the person who picks up a power bill and sees that they can't even afford to pay that when the government decided to up the power bills. It's the necessities of life that they're looking at right now and this government doesn't have . . . doesn't understand what's happening in this community.

I don't see how there can be any future for the producers of this Saskatchewan if more farmers are forced to sell out and leave the province. I almost wonder if it's just part of the government's big plan, like the amalgamation of school districts and the amalgamation of health districts. Is it the overall plan to have fewer farmers and fewer functional communities with the services.

I certainly agree that we should be encouraging the federal government to fairly spread the cost of the program over Canadian provinces, but in the meantime, who is going to be helping our producers? We have to go after the feds but we have to . . . in the meantime farmers need to know that they can trust the government to keep their word. This government has not kept their word and, Mr. Speaker, it's not because the government can talk about a lack of money.

We've moved from a have-not province to a have province which is, of course, wonderful for all of the people of Saskatchewan. Of course, this change is as a result of unbudgeted windfalls due to higher oil revenues and equalizations program. It's got nothing to do with good management or planning; it's got everything to do with what's happened is beyond their control.

So we now have \$900 million that the government wasn't expecting in their budget in March and not one penny of it is budgeted towards the farmers that are still the backbone of this province. And this government now say they can't afford to pay their share of the money that they committed to when they signed into the CAIS program.

Mr. Speaker, I'm really not surprised that they can justify this decision when they're the same government that claims to be the champions of the poor, yet they haven't raised the basic adult rate for social services recipients since 1989. At that time someone was allowed \$195 a month to pay for their basic needs and today, 24 years later, they're still allowed \$195. This is from a social . . . a government that's supposed to be caring about the poor, the one's that are supposed to be the heart of our province, and they are not looking at the people who are most needy.

And you know what, Mr. Speaker, at the same time we have farm families that are going to be slipping into that same category, because this government is not recognizing what their job is and seeing what their job is.

Mr. Speaker, many producers have had current concerns about negative margins and the caps on payouts under the original program, so the government refused to sign on. Under pressure, the feds addressed this issue and Saskatchewan signed the agreement. Then the NDP government let the producers down and refused to pay their 40 per cent share. Basically what they said is, whoops, we got what we asked for; I've changed my mind. Maybe that should be the motto of this minister. It's too late to agree; I've changed my mind. It's been happening way too often for our farmers.

This is absolutely reprehensible in a year when many farmers saw their bumper crops killed by a frost in mid-August. This on top of BSE and two years of drought is having a huge impact on farm families when it comes to their discussions with their bankers and with the people in their community.

Mr. Speaker, besides the money that the government is not . . . the employees . . . the producers are not getting from the CAIS program that the government is not funding, they are also finding many that aren't getting . . . they're asking for their money back again. We've had people that are saying the CAIS . . . getting a cheque one day, and two weeks later they get a letter saying that they have to pay it all back again.

Mr. Speaker, the government has been saying that they don't have the money to supply, to pay for our producers for the CAIS program, and yet they have made decisions that cost us, the province and our farmers lots of money. The \$35 million they spent on SPUDCO, they lost on SPUDCO; \$25 million on Navigata, that was money that the people of the province deserved; \$24 million on a dot-com in Atlanta; \$16 million on Coachman Insurance in Ontario; \$6.4 million on Persona; 8 point million dollars on Ag Dealer. The list goes on and on, Mr. Speaker. The government has money. They make decisions every day on how to spend the money, and yet it seems like our farmers are never on the list of people that deserve the money.

Mr. Speaker, I've heard a number of the speakers across the way talk about the spirit of the nation and relying . . . and why they're doing actually what they're doing with farmers, and they're talking. What we need to realize is that farmers are relying on this government. They trusted this government. They relied on them to keep their word. And that's something that we have not heard from this government.

We've never been able to rely on the government to keep their word. When they go to their bank with a piece of paper that said we've got our CAIS commitment and then the government changes their mind, they say I can't give you all of that, bankers don't accept that. They don't accept apologies or excuses. What they really need is a government that cares about rural Saskatchewan and cares about farmers, and the farmers need to be able to trust them. That's what we're not seeing from this NDP government, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The time has now elapsed for the debate portion. We now turn to the question and comment portion of the 75-minute debate. I recognize the member for Yorkton.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, my question will be to the

member of the opposition, the critic of the opposition from Thunder Creek.

Mr. Speaker, last year we had an election in Saskatchewan and we were, of course, looking for agricultural farm policy in it. I just heard the Leader of the Opposition travelled across the province in his Volkswagen tour this summer and, Mr. Speaker, he came back and said there was a great big storm in Saskatchewan — Mr. Speaker, a great big agricultural storm.

And then we saw next, Mr. Speaker, the Enterprise Saskatchewan document and in the Enterprise Saskatchewan document we were looking for some agricultural farm policy. And I want to know, Mr. Speaker, from the member of the opposition, the critic, tell me what is in your document in the Enterprise Saskatchewan that addresses itself specifically to what, Mr. Speaker, you're going to do for farm . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. I would ask the member from Yorkton to phrase all his questions through the Chair. I recognize the member for Thunder Creek.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member . . . I appreciate the question and the member will have a look at our agricultural policy after our policy convention in early February.

But I'll tell you — listen up and I'll answer that question — and I'll tell you what we're not going to do. We're not going to do this, Mr. Speaker. We're not going to increase the PST (provincial sales tax) without providing any relief for property tax and farm land. We're not going to close 22 of Saskatchewan's 33 rural service centres. We're not going to eliminate the farm fuel tax rebate on gasoline and propane bought at retail outlets, and we're not going to have a 20 per cent reduction in the rebate on bulk farm fuel purchases. We're not going to cancel livestock and horticultural facilities and incentive programs, and we're not going to reduce funding to Prairie Diagnostics by \$700,000 — the people who test for chronic wasting disease. And we're not going to cancel the farm family opportunities . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. The member's time has elapsed. I recognize the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Agriculture. Mr. Speaker, this week the rural municipality of Ituna Bon Accord held a special meeting to deal with the serious agricultural situation in their municipality. And they passed this resolution, and it reads:

That due to excessive summer rainfall and the severity of early frost this year and the damage cost to the grain and oilseed sector along with poor cattle prices, the rural municipality of Ituna Bon Accord No. 246, make application to Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food that the rural municipality be declared a disaster area for 2004.

And that resolution was carried unanimously, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. If his negotiations fail with the federal government to change the funding formula for the CAIS program, will he assure the producers in the Ituna RM

(rural municipality) and all farmers across this province that his government will fully fund the 2003 CAIS program?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate again an opportunity to address this because we have said from the very beginning that we are pressing for 100 per cent funding for CAIS.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize that in some areas there has been severe impact from the frost and people there are in need. So to this point, Mr. Speaker, we have been providing the payments for CAIS at a pro-rated amount, that's an initial payment of 70 per cent. When we get the final numbers in, Mr. Speaker, we will know exactly what needs to be paid and we will make a decision.

And I can tell you there is a commitment of this party, this caucus, and this minister to make sure that we provide the full support that we can provide for the people of this province, the farmers of this province, Mr. Speaker. We recognize that and we will be there for our producers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the member from Saskatoon Nutana. She ended her speech with urban people should not be expected to fund agriculture programs. Does the member from Saskatoon Nutana believe the farm families contribute nothing to the economy? Does the ag industry not contribute anything to the provincial coffers that help fund programs for both urban and rural people?

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I listened very carefully to the member from Saltcoats. And he said that urban people should pay for this; that's what I clearly heard him say, Mr. Speaker. And what I wanted to say is I don't have that view. My view is that the federal Government of Canada should pay for this and agricultural policy is in the purview of all Canadian taxpayers — not just urban taxpayers, as the member from Saltcoats clearly said in this debate.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, recognizing that we have committed \$100 million to CAIS, recognizing that we have been pushing very, very hard for full funding from the federal government, recognizing that we have been calling upon the opposition and others to support the equity proposal that we have put forward, I would like to know from the opposition critic why it is that they continue to support the federal government ignoring the huge economic challenge, ignoring the huge economic challenge to our farmers and our taxpayers in this province. Why do they support the federal government's position over the position of our taxpayers and our farmers in this province? How can they justify that to the people?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question. Clearly that is not the case at all. We are on record as supporting the government's position on changes to the funding formula, but the funding formula is not likely going to be changed for the 2003 year CAIS program.

And meanwhile, meanwhile, agriculture producers are nearly starving. They're losing their farms; they're losing their families. And we are in support of the position of changing the funding formula, but this government in the absence of that has a responsibility to agriculture producers to help them out of this crisis.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this morning on the radio I heard the Minister of Agriculture commenting on the 40 per cent drop in income for farmers, and he said after two years of drought and on top of that BSE, it was a horrendous blow to agriculture.

I agree; it was. The NDP does not, though, keep its word that they have made to the people of Saskatchewan, to the farmers of Saskatchewan. The Deputy Premier went to Ottawa and said that you have to fund CAIS better and cover these areas of negative margins. And Ottawa agreed.

My question to the federal . . . excuse me, to the Minister of Agriculture: will the Minister of Agriculture ever keep his word and commitment to agriculture producers to fully fund the province's share of CAIS for 2003?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I actually really do appreciate the question because it is my full intention and my commitment to do everything possible to get full funding for CAIS for the producers of this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to note that recognizing the difficulties that our producers have faced and are facing today, we have come through, Mr. Speaker, in the BSE issue, with \$40 million for the BSE program. Mr. Speaker, we have come through with the \$150 million CAIS cash advance to try and make sure that the funding is there in the meantime, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, we have been making the initial payments out of CAIS for those whose forms are complete in the process.

(12:30)

Mr. Speaker, we have been there, are there and, Mr. Speaker, the negotiations that we have been engaged in are in every attempt to get CAIS fully funded. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Yorkton.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the member from Humboldt. In the document Enterprise Saskatchewan, the opposition are talking about, Mr. Speaker, about not, not providing any funding for public investment to grow our economy. And for rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, I want to know from the member opposite, we have investment today in the corporation of Big Sky. I ask the member from Humboldt, should we be removing our investment that we have today in Big Sky — who support barns in Humboldt, who support barns in Kamsack . . . or support barns in Canora — Mr. Speaker, should we be removing that investment today based on your strategy of growing rural Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Humboldt.

Ms. Harpauer: — I thank the member opposite for that question. I think the one thing we need to remove is the Minister for Agriculture but . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — I really appreciate that the Deputy Premier has spent so much time reading such a fabulous document. But what he didn't notice in that document was . . . he said agriculture policy in that document, but it is included.

But we take for granted in this province, what we shouldn't have to write in a document, what we shouldn't be doing — what this government does all the time — is breaking our word.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Time for the debate has elapsed. Why is the member for Saskatoon Southeast on her feet? Eastview, sorry.

Ms. Junor: — With leave to introduce a guest, please.

The Speaker: — The member for Saskatoon Eastview has requested leave for introductions. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The member may proceed.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In your gallery, I'd like to introduce to you and to all the members of the Assembly, someone who is very important in my life, my son Sean Junor. He's here from Montreal and part of a national tour promoting his book, *The Price of Knowledge*. So I would like all members to welcome him to our Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Why is the member from Regina Qu'Appelle on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — To ask a question if I may, Mr. Speaker. Are we still engaged in the debate and the questions?

The Speaker: — The member is out of order.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

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

Motion No. 5 — Government's Commitments to Saskatchewan

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on the accomplishments of this government — positive accomplishments of a government with direction, vision, and a plan for the people of this great province.

Mr. Speaker, our government has a plan and we are implementing that plan. Our province is looking toward a bright future and despite tremendous hurt that has been inflicted on our farmers and ranchers — three and four years of drought, international subsidies, closed borders, frost, and crop in the field — despite the challenges our producers have borne, there's an economic and social momentum in Saskatchewan today that has not existed for a quarter century.

Mr. Speaker, at the conclusion of my remarks, I'll be moving the following motion, seconded by the member from Regina Wascana Plains:

That this Assembly commend the government for meeting its commitments to the people of Saskatchewan in a prudent, responsible, and timely fashion.

Mr. Speaker, this government is on a move implementing its plan. Our government made a promise to the people of Saskatchewan. A promise of the lowest cost package of utilities — phone, electricity, natural gas, and car insurance. A promise to be lower than anywhere else in Canada. And, Mr. Speaker, we are delivering.

Mr. Speaker, this December, Saskatchewan citizens will be receiving . . . \$137 rebate will appear as a credit on the SaskTel residential phone bills as this government keeps its commitment to having the lowest cost bundle of basic utility services in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, that's what we stand for. We stand for Crown corporations that are publicly owned — Crown corporations for the people of Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, our government is also not stuck, but we are building. This government promised and we're delivering, a renewed federal-provincial home repair program providing more than \$20 million during the next three years for renovations to older homes. The programs will support low-income homeowners, facilitate easier home access for seniors and persons with disabilities, upgrade affordable rentals for families and students, and support emergency accommodation for victims of family violence. Mr. Speaker, the CMHC (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation) housing renovations program was signed in February 2004 and extends to March 31, 2006.

But, Mr. Speaker, we are not stopping there. We're looking for

the future and expanding the century affordable housing program to provide 2,000 new homes over the next five years. We're building 2,000 new affordable homes for seniors and low-income families. Since January 2004, 330 new housing units have been started or committed that have received funding from the centenary affordable housing program.

Mr. Speaker, unlike the members opposite, we are building this province and are not bogged. We have a plan and a direction. And, Mr. Speaker, while it appears that the other side hasn't a direction and are bogged down, as I had mentioned, this government through its publicly owned SaskTel system is keeping its promise to expand high-speed Internet from 74 per cent of Saskatchewan's population using wireless technology to 86 per cent.

Every community with more than 200 people will be covered by the wireless high-speed Internet. That's 159 more communities including the North, Mr. Speaker. Another 1,500 Saskatchewan businesses and farmsteads within a 30-kilometre radius of these communities will receive this service. Mr. Speaker, this is the best coverage in the entire world.

Mr. Speaker, on the labour front, we have promised and will deliver to the people a minimum wage that'll have a regular review of the minimum wage — and we have kept that promise. We will regularly review the minimum wage rate and keep it from being eroded by a rising cost of living. And we won't introduce, Mr. Speaker, a two-tier system that discriminates against young people and new employees.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to further read in some of the other accomplishments which have been implemented.

In revenue-sharing grants to municipalities, a further 10 million increase in unconditional revenue-sharing grants to municipalities for a total of 85 million each year, Mr. Speaker. The 2004-05 provincial budget include a 10 million increase in revenue-sharing grants to urban, rural, and northern municipalities — 1 million to northern municipalities with 178 allocated as unconditional grants and 822 allocated for northern water and sewer; 1.6 million for rural municipalities; 7.39 to urban municipalities, with 5.35 million allocated to cities and 2 million, Mr. Speaker, to towns, villages, and resort villages.

And there is more, Mr. Speaker, more for health where we are on track and ongoing. Increasing nursing training spaces. During the next two years, we're adding 100 more training positions for registered nurses in Saskatoon and Regina, increasing the annual enrolment in Saskatchewan's nursing education program to 400 students. We doubled capacity in the practical nursing program. And during the next two years, 60 more training positions will be added to Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies. On track and ongoing, Mr. Speaker. The 100-seat expansion includes 50 seats by September 2005 and 50 seats by May 2005 for the second option.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, let me tell you about new child care spaces. We'll provide 1,200 new licensed child care spaces supporting a total of more than 8,600 across the province, Mr. Speaker. We are ongoing in this.

Increased occupational health and safety inspections. This year,

we're adding six occupational health and safety inspection officers to increase workplace safety and inspections to reduce workplace injuries, Mr. Speaker. We've completed this, Mr. Speaker.

I see I have everybody's attention, Mr. Speaker, so I guess I will continue.

An Hon. Member: — Rapt — rapt attention.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Rapt attention, right. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, we've hired four new occupational health officers; increased on-site inspections from 3,000 to 3,242; reviewed 300 health and safety programs in higher workplaces; increased the number of workplace occupational health and safety committees to 4,056 . . .

An Hon. Member: — A promise kept.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — . . . an increase of 211 over 2002-03. Mr. Speaker, as the member says, a promise made, a promise kept.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, there is more; there is more. Mr. Speaker, there's compassionate leave legislation, consistent with new federal legislation, will ensure Saskatchewan workers can provide compassionate care for gravely ill or dying child, parent, or spouse without putting their jobs or income at risk. Employees will be able to draw up to six weeks employment insurance for this, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the amendment to The Labour Standards Act was passed in the spring 2004 session, clarifying the jobs that employees who are receiving EI (Employment Insurance) benefits are protected while receiving these benefits.

Mr. Speaker, what's important to people, and many people in my own constituency, is a safe and secure community. To that end, Mr. Speaker, we have put in, on an ongoing basis we're giving police and social workers the tools to eliminate abuse of children and youth in the sex trade. We're hitting hard at those who would exploit children and we're providing new safe houses and counselling services for victims of abuse.

Building on the success of Regina auto theft strategy and the North Battleford youth crime project, our government will continue to partner with RCMP and municipal police forces to develop innovative crime reduction strategies. We'll help police officers and justice officials use the tools of the new criminal justice Act to target and get tough with chronic offenders.

During the next four years, Mr. Speaker, we'll target funding for 40 additional police officers to develop innovative, community-based crime reduction strategies building on Regina and North Battleford pilot projects. These strategies are already outpacing Ontario boot camps, Mr. Speaker, in cutting down on the number of repeat offenders.

Mr. Speaker, it's an important Act, The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act. The Act provides a means for using civil remedies to shut down residential and commercial buildings

and lands that are habitually used for illegal activities.

In March 2004, Mr. Speaker, The Pawned Property (Recording) Act was proclaimed. This provides a framework for electronic reporting system for pawnbrokers to report pawned property they receive to the local police in June 2004.

The target approach, Mr. Speaker, to crime reduction focuses on a small percentage of offenders, usually young offenders and young adults, who are committing a significant percentage of crime. Projects underway include the successful Regina auto theft strategy and crime response programs in North Battleford and Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, there is so much more that I could go on for a couple of days, actually. But at this time I would like to move a motion which will be seconded by the member from Regina Wascana Plains:

That this Assembly commend the government for meeting its commitments to the people of Saskatchewan in a prudent, responsible, and timely fashion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(12:45)

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Saskatoon Fairview and seconded by the member for Regina Wascana Plains:

That this Assembly commend the government for meeting its commitments to the people of Saskatchewan in a prudent, responsible, and timely fashion.

I recognize the member for Regina Wascana Plains.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, much has been said over the last number of weeks from the opposition about promises made and promises kept. And today I can tell you that unlike the Saskatchewan Party . . . who has conventions that are held without any public scrutiny, that don't want to develop policies, and that tell the public of Saskatchewan it's our job to oppose rather than propose anything, that, just elect us and you'll be surprised and it will be a pleasant surprise, Mr. Speaker.

Well the public in Saskatchewan don't trust those kinds of platform promises that are made when they can't read exactly what's on the minds of the opposition. Unlike the New Democrat Party, from year to year, who have policy conventions that are held within public . . . full public purview and development of platform happens over many, many months and discussions with many, many people to develop an open, forthright and honest platform to be presented to the people to be voted upon. And it was this side of the House that the people in the last election said they trust and they want to govern for four more years in this province, Mr. Speaker.

What did they vote on? Well the first point was that we would make Saskatchewan the most affordable place to live and raise a

family. As the member from Fairview says, we're well on the way to keeping that promise to the public of Saskatchewan.

Number two, to provide the best public health care in Canada. Number three, build a green and prosperous economy and, number four, build a future here for young people.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it's obvious that we've made plans, set down the foundation to keep those promises. Many, many of those promises made have been promises kept. But the truth is obvious. The true test of a campaign commitment is to measure performance over a term, to present to the people promises over a complete term.

The Saskatchewan Party's major campaign promises, many of them spread over 10 years and even some promises about the education property tax relief, were promises made that they wanted to keep over eight years. And then there were many, many other promises that they made that said, well we'll deliver on those when we can afford them. Or how about, we don't deliver on them, we'll contract out our decision making to third party groups in Saskatchewan who will make decisions on behalf of you, the people of Saskatchewan, those who aren't elected and those who can't be held accountable.

On our promises made and promises kept today, I really want to start off with quoting Don Martin, who today wrote in the *National Post*. Now these are Don Martin's words, quote, not mine, but he says:

But — yeeow! — check out those . . . (budget) biceps. The flatland is no longer flatlining on the balance sheet.

Don Martin's words, Mr. Speaker:

The latest update posted earlier this month shows a nice mix of one-time spending, tax relief (tax relief — promise made, promise kept), debt repayment and rainy day savings . . .

Mr. Speaker, he's even talking about rainy day savings being important to the province of Saskatchewan. Does that sound like a Fiscal Stabilization Fund or what? Well it also talks about . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. I'm having difficulty deciding who's words are coming from where. But I do believe that the floor belongs at this time to the member from Regina Wascana Plains.

Ms. Hamilton: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the floor once again. What does Don Martin say? This is "all bottom-lined in fiscal black," Mr. Speaker. And he says:

. . . most shocking of all is the revelation that lowly Saskatchewan has emerged seemingly from nowhere to become a "have" province, joining an exclusive club of two occupied, until now, by the economic powerhouses of Alberta and Ontario.

Well, Mr. Speaker, promises made to community in Saskatchewan, promises kept. The reality is, Mr. Speaker, when you promise to build a green and prosperous economy you

don't rely on just what people of Saskatchewan are saying about New Democrats. You talk about what we're saying about ourselves. We ask other people. And the reality is that in Saskatchewan, despite two years of drought and BSE, the Saskatchewan economy is one of the top performers in the country.

Who says that, Mr. Speaker? Well the Bank of Montreal and the CIBC (Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce) both say we have the fastest, real economic growth in Canada last year. And the Conference Board of Canada and the Royal Bank both placed us in second despite opposition claims that Saskatchewan's economic performance is at or near the top with 11 credit . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Despite what the member's opposite are saying, Mr. Speaker, our performance, our performance is at or near the top with 11, 11 credit upgrades since 1995.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Eleven credit upgrades since 1995. Not only that, Saskatchewan is one of the most successful trading/exporting jurisdictions in the world. And we didn't get to be this way by accident. No we didn't. We get to be that way by planning, by presenting a sound plan to the people of Saskatchewan, making promises, and then keeping those promises, Mr. Speaker.

And says, John Treleaven, president and chief executive officer of STEP (Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership Inc.), we're very good at what we do in Saskatchewan. Well, if people in Saskatchewan believe we're very good at what we do, and other people who are third-party validators believe we're very good in what we do, why can't we get from an opposition who says we should be open for business, and the future's wide open, the future's here. Why can't we get them to stop calling down Saskatchewan with gloom and doom stories here in the Assembly day after day?

When you listen to the members opposite, nothing's right, Mr. Speaker. But when you hear from other people you know, you know Saskatchewan was at or near the top in economic performance in 2003. Both the Bank of Montreal and CIC say we're the fastest, real economic growth in Canada last year. KPMG report, Mr. Speaker, says our business climate is competitive with other provinces and with other countries. A KPMG report tells people that we're doing very well in reducing regulations and supporting businesses and reducing the small business tax rate in Saskatchewan.

And what does that give us in Saskatchewan? A competitive business climate. I'm not certain that's what those members opposite told people in Calgary last evening, Mr. Speaker.

Saskatchewan is now one of only two provinces in Canada that doesn't charge an income surtax, a payroll tax, or a health premium, Mr. Speaker. Can you imagine what those initiatives mean to the people of Saskatchewan and the money that they're able to keep in their businesses or keep in their homes to future the province of Saskatchewan and our economic growth.

Last year we registered the highest average annual employment in our history. In June and July we had more than half a million

people working for the first time ever. Over the 1994-2003 period, Saskatchewan's real GDP (gross domestic product) per capita increased at an average annual rate of 2.3 per cent. And Saskatchewan's productivity, the real GDP per employed person, was tied at third highest among the 10 provinces in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, we're there. We're keeping our promises. We're making our commitments. It must be a very difficult couple of weeks for the opposition in this province when they can't see that, when they can't put on a happy face for Saskatchewan and sell this province to other people and tell those people our future's wide open and our future is here, Mr. Speaker, because promise made on economic growth, promise made. On a green and prosperous economy, promise kept, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Do you know that Stats Canada last year projected total investments in Saskatchewan will exceed \$6 billion for the eighth consecutive year? Investment is \$1.7 billion higher than in 1991. Well, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite say, and I've said too, despite very difficult times with BSE where will our Premier go next week? He's going to speak to the President, Mr. Bush, about our problems, and we're getting very good response.

Many of us were at the midwestern legislators conference last year. Many of the opposition joined us. We went there to talk about the BSE crisis and to talk about opening the borders. And we worked together to pass resolutions. Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. I just ask everybody to just hold it for a minute and just . . . Order, please. The member for Regina Wascana, please.

Ms. Hamilton: — So there at the Midwestern Legislative Conference we were able to band together and get a resolution passed by midwestern legislators to open the borders — working together, working in a positive way to get a green and prosperous economy moving for the province of Saskatchewan.

How can the members opposite with their faces in solemn repose go out to the people of Saskatchewan and not tell them about the year's announcement of \$95 million investment in biofuels industry in Lloydminster? Is the member from Lloydminster out talking about that investment in a green and prosperous economy for this province? We won't hear from the gloom and doom opposite.

Will they talk about the small business tax was reduced to 5.5 per cent on January 1 and will be reduced further up to 5 per cent . . . further 5 per cent in January 1, 2005 — half of what it was when we took office in 1991, half. No, those members opposite won't be talking to small businesses and saying what a competitive tax climate we've got. They'll be talking gloom and doom. And then they'll wonder why businesses wouldn't flock here under a Saskatchewan Party government because they wouldn't trust what they have to say.

Northern municipalities in our province need a lot of our help, and looking at how we can assist their communities to grow and be green and be prosperous. But northern municipalities have

received an increase of \$825,000 towards funding safe drinking water and infrastructure in their communities.

Now that's in opposition to members who stood in this House, members of the opposition who stood and voted against having more people in place to look at clean and safe supplies of drinking water in the province, to have more inspectors out there to do that. They're the ones who stand up and talk about voting against many, many initiatives in this Assembly that have furthered the green and prosperous economy.

There's so much more that we can talk about. Because when we talk about the positive things happening in Saskatchewan, and when I go out to public meetings, I find one or two people there who have come home to Saskatchewan.

They've heard the message of the future's wide open and your future is here, and they're coming back to Saskatchewan. Why are they coming back to Saskatchewan? Because there are opportunities here and they know that they have the most affordable place to live and raise a family anywhere in this country. And of course, this past week we've just announced that we will keep our promises on the lowest bundle of basic utility rates anywhere in this country.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Anywhere in this country, Mr. Speaker. For young people, for young people, Mr. Speaker, the list does not stop and young people know that. They're in a positive mood.

You know, I've never been so proud of a group of young people as the Premier's youth advisory council that came to speak to us. Men and women from across this province who said things like, Mr. Speaker, I've been involved in parks advisory groups, I've been involved in volunteerism, they've been involved in the economy, and they're investing in this province, and they will stay here . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It now being past the hour of 1 o'clock, the House stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30 p.m. I wish everyone a pleasant weekend.

The Assembly adjourned at 13:00.

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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

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