



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

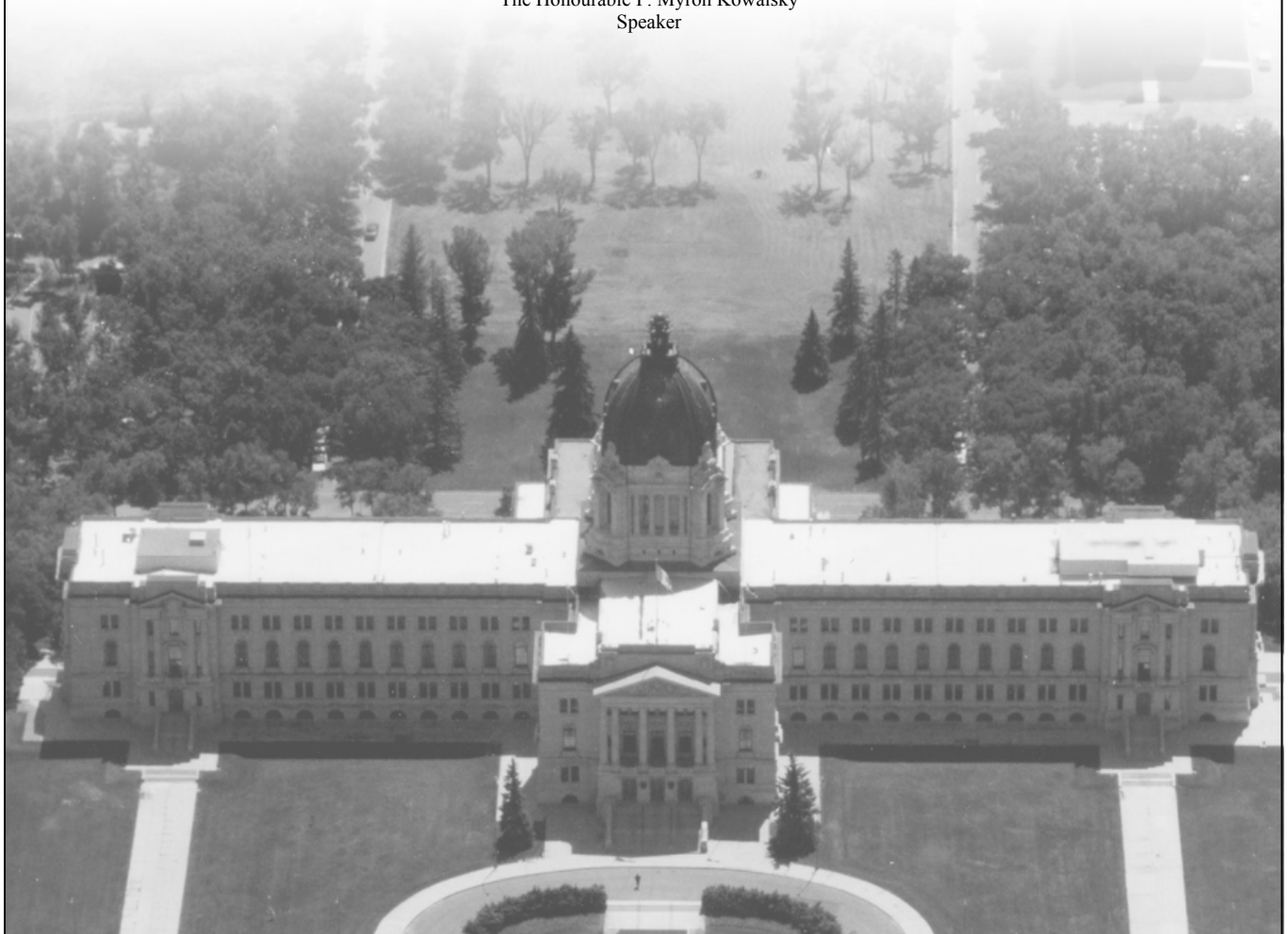
Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of

The Honourable P. Myron Kowalsky
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

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

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand here today to present petitions on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan regarding school amalgamations. The petition 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.

These petitions, Mr. Speaker, come from the good citizens of Killaly.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Swift Current.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of constituents concerned about the forced amalgamation of school districts in the Southwest:

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 Swift Current and continue reorganization of school divisions on a strictly voluntary basis.

And, Mr. Speaker, the petitioners today are from the communities of Wymark, Success, and the city of Swift Current.

I also present a petition on group home spaces in Swift Current. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of people from the Kyle area to talk about the forced amalgamation issue:

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 the reorganization of school districts on a strictly volunteer basis.

I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Rosetown-Elrose.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have another petition to halt the forced amalgamation of school divisions. Amongst their concerns are that the size of the proposed school division is far too large to retain any local input into the education system. The prayer of the petition 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, these petitions are primarily from the community of Rosetown, although I also have signatures from Harris, Zealandia, and Sovereign. And I'm pleased to present this petition on their behalf.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member from Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also 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 reverse the decision to force the amalgamation of school divisions in Saskatchewan and continue reorganization of school divisions on a strictly voluntary basis.

The signators, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Bangor, Waldron, Grayson, Dubuc, and Broadview. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Thunder Creek.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, as well, rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with the forced amalgamation of school divisions. And 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 is duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals all from the community of Craik. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Indian

Head-Milestone.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition to present regarding forced amalgamation of school divisions, which I think it's quite obvious there's a lot of people stand against. 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 amalgamation of school divisions in Saskatchewan and continue reorganizing of school divisions on a strictly voluntary basis, Mr. Speaker.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

This petition is signed by people in the Rosetown area.

And while I'm on my feet, I also have a petition to present regarding the Claybank Brick Plant. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Estevan.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I stand today to present a petition on behalf of citizens of this province who are very concerned about the forced amalgamation of the 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 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.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is signed by residents from Grenfell. I so present. Thank you.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Humboldt.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have another petition today to present with citizens that are very concerned with the government not funding the new hospital in Humboldt for a number of years. 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 fulfill their commitment to the people of Humboldt and area in providing the funding necessary for a new hospital in Humboldt.

And the signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from Jansen, Englefeld, Lanigan, Anaheim, and Humboldt. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy.

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of constituents who are very concerned about the

forced amalgamation of schools. And 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 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.

And the petition is signed by residents of Willow Bunch, St. Victor, and Scout Lake. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to present a petition on behalf of parents in my constituency of Saskatoon Silver Springs regarding a much needed elementary school in the Arbor Creek area of Saskatoon. The prayer of the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to implement an allocation of financial resources to build an elementary school in Arbor Creek.

Mr. Speaker, the petitioners today live on Kenderdine Road, Mulcaster, Hogg, Horlick, and Wright crescents in northeast Saskatoon. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Wood River.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also on behalf of the citizens of Saskatchewan have a petition to halt the forced amalgamation of school divisions. And the petition 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.

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

Mr. Speaker, this also is signed by the good citizens of Killaly. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to present a petition on behalf of Saskatchewan citizens who are very concerned about this government's plan to force the 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.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signatures to these petitions, Mr. Speaker, come from the communities of Melville, Grayson, and I am particularly pleased to be able to present the petition that was signed by the good citizens of Meadow Lake. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Southeast.

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition dealing with the growing problem on crystal meth. I will read the prayer, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to implement a strategy that will deal with crystal methamphetamine addiction and prevention and enforcement and treatment.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by citizens residing in Saskatoon Southeast, Saskatoon Greystone, and in particular Saskatoon Riversdale.

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 as addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 180, 637, 715, and 718.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly some guests seated in your gallery. We have a group of school trustees who have travelled the icy highways of Saskatchewan to meet with members of the opposition caucus this morning. They are, and I'd ask them to rise as I introduce them: Dell Schick, Daryl Harrison, John Tresco, Ron Yarotsky. Back behind I believe is Larry Caswell, Michael Halyk, Marion Kreiser, and Shannon Fenn.

I would ask all members of the Assembly to welcome these school trustees to their Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Regina South.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to join the members opposite in welcoming the trustees who are joining us today in the Assembly. I'm certain

that they shared a number of different perspectives with the members of the opposition and I trust that they too will enjoy their time here in the Assembly today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Regina Walsh Acres.

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to welcome today three people who are participating in the Saskatchewan legislative internship program who are seated in your gallery, and I welcome them to the legislature and hope that their experience with the internship program is a positive and rewarding one.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Yorkton.

Saskatchewan Elocution and Debate Association Finals

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last Saturday I had the pleasure to attend and judge the Saskatchewan Elocution and Debate Association finals held at the Yorkton Regional High School in my constituency, where 110 students debated.

The association is a non-profit organization and promotes speech and debate activities for students grades 6 to 12 at our provincial schools and our two universities. For 31 years, our province's young debaters have built their public speaking skills, fine-tuned their arguments, and competed throughout the country at national debating competitions. Our students have won and have been recognized for their outstanding debating skills, Mr. Speaker, and our students are coached by dedicated and hard-working educators in our province.

The topic of Saturday's debate was the Canadian federal electoral system, and every student who participated did a wonderful job. Mr. Speaker, following the debate, students and their families attended the banquet and awards ceremonies.

In May the national debate seminar for division 3 will be held in Halifax. And congratulations go to Jason Cote and Dylan Hardy of Saskatoon; Megan Burns and Francois Schira of Saskatoon; Sian Barr and Hailey Michalishen of Melville; and coach Mauri Ingham of Yorkton who are representing Saskatchewan.

Saskatoon will host the national debate for division 4 in April. Saskatchewan will be represented by Whitney Skinner of Yorkton Regional High School; Jordan Rudderham of LeBoldus in Regina; Jennifer Wang of Walter Murray in Saskatoon; Iain Ireland and Megan Bollinger of Walter Murray of Saskatoon, who will debate in French.

Mr. Speaker, every student who participated in this competition did exceptionally well. And no doubt the Saskatchewan students, Mr. Speaker, who are going to the nationals make all Saskatchewan residents proud of their centennial. I want to

congratulate all the students, Mr. Speaker, the educators for the wonderful job, the regional high school for this event. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Humboldt.

Rural Women's Achievement Awards

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The rural women of our province are indeed remarkable for their strength, their fortitude, their leadership abilities. They are not just the backbone of the family unit, but they're also the pillars of the community. They are the volunteers, the organizers, the workers, the coaches, the mentors, and the list just goes on and on.

Mr. Speaker, March is the month of recognition of rural women, and appropriately on March 12 I had the honour of attending the third annual Rural Women's Achievement Awards in Humboldt. There can be no doubt that all of the women that were nominated were winners, and I'm sure that the judges had a very difficult time deciding who would actually be the recipient of the various awards.

Mr. Speaker, the Education Award was presented to Elsa Hancock of Watson; the Arts and Culture Award to Jakobina Keyser of Wynyard; the Agriculture Award to Guenette Bautz of Meadow Lake; the Volunteer Award to Sandra Kun of Humboldt; the Business Award to Shirley Seidel of Humboldt; the Sports Award to Carol Oleksyn of Humboldt; and last, but not least, the Woman of the Year Award was given to Mary Kehrig of Humboldt.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to not only congratulate the winners, but to also thank all of the rural women of our province for their endless contributions to their families and to their communities.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[13:45]

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatchewan Rivers.

World Water Day

Mr. Borgerson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today is World Water Day. This day was recognized by the United Nations General Assembly and adopted as a resolution on December 22, 1992.

Mr. Speaker, on this day we celebrate by raising the public's awareness of the importance that water plays in all aspects of life. It is a precious resource, a miraculous liquid that makes all life possible.

Mr. Speaker, on this day I would like to highlight the important work that this government is doing to ensure that water remains a sustainable resource for future generations. We have recently

embarked on the strategy that will look at how to conserve our water. And we are continuing with our safe drinking water strategy which will define the steps that we need to take to make sure our water resources are used in the most sustainable way possible.

Mr. Speaker, one of the objectives of the safe drinking water strategy is reduced consumption of water, reflecting our broad commitment to both water quality and quantity issues. This commitment to water conservation will play a significant role to ensure our commitment to a green and prosperous economy and to overall human health.

So it is on this day, Mr. Speaker, that we give blessings for our abundant supply of water, which constitutes almost 7 per cent of the fresh water in Canada. It is a public trust, an essential part of our . . . [inaudible] . . . And, Mr. Speaker, if we each save a little, together we will save a lot.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Indian Head-Milestone.

March Designated Red Cross Month

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. March is Red Cross month. In times of conflict and disaster and in peace time, the Red Cross helps the vulnerable in the communities across Canada and throughout the world.

During March, which is Red Cross month, the Red Cross is encouraging Canadians to get to know the programs and services they offer throughout the world. Building community participation is one of our key strategies for helping vulnerable people. Training teams of disaster service volunteers, reducing and preventing relationship abuse and bullying through education, teaching water safety and first aid, and fundraising locally and large-scale disasters are some of the examples of how the Red Cross mobilizes people in the community to help their own people within their communities.

Mr. Speaker, just recently in February 15, Badger, Newfoundland experienced a devastating flood. The Red Cross volunteers providing shelter, food and clothing for more than 1,000 people, this is just a recent example. And of course we all know the examples in Southeast Asia with the tsunami, and the Red Cross was there for those people as well. So whether it's internationally, nationally, or locally the Red Cross is in every community to help the most vulnerable.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Southeast.

Teaching Treaties in the Classroom

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for a number of years now the Office of the Treaty Commissioner has been working in partnership with the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, the Government of Canada, and the Government of Saskatchewan to educate Saskatchewan students about the

treaty relationship between First Nations and non-First Nations.

One of the education tools the Office of the Treaty Commissioner uses is a kit entitled *Teaching Treaties in the Classroom*, a resource binder developed by all the partners, including Saskatchewan Learning, that is designed to help students learn about the treaty relationship as a first step toward understanding the role of our treaties in our history, in our society today, and in our future — and a giant step in addressing racism.

Mr. Speaker, this initiative is part of a made-in-Saskatchewan process intended to foster understanding between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in this province. This is one reason why the Office of the Treaty Commissioner was recently singled out in a United Nations report as an example of using innovative, community-based educational programming to fight racism.

Mr. Speaker, *Teaching Treaties in the Classroom* currently focuses on grades 7 to 12, but a module for kindergarten to grade 6 is being prepared and will soon be in place.

Mr. Speaker, a recent evaluation of the program showed that while the uptake by teachers is very high, we need to move beyond a quick overview to working more intensively with the teachers to translate the learning into practice for the classroom. To further this initiative we were . . . and yesterday it was announced that the province is providing 100,000 to the Office of the Treaty Commissioner to increase awareness about treaty issues.

Mr. Speaker, this government recognizes the relationship between education, respect, and social harmony. And I am extremely proud the role that this government has played and will continue to play in supporting the activities of the Office of the Treaty Commissioner. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Estevan.

Kidney Health Month

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to speak today in support of the month of March being recognized as kidney health month. Saskatchewan has been a leader in kidney disease treatment and transplants, and as such we should always be proud of the progress that has been made in this area.

I am reminded of the Baltzan brothers, who were the two leading surgeons in Saskatoon whose commitment and dedication to kidney disease patients, led to Saskatchewan being at the forefront of treatment for kidney diseases. However we must be mindful that more needs to be done. There are a great number of patients in this province who depend on kidney dialysis machines in order to maintain a quality of life. Those machines and the professionals who operate them are their lifeline.

Mr. Speaker, in my own constituency of Estevan, people

recognize the importance of dialysis and therefore have the funds necessary to purchase a dialysis unit for St. Joseph's Hospital. Sadly the patients in the southeast corner of the province must continue the very trying commute to Regina to receive dialysis because of the shortage of the health care professionals needed to administer this treatment.

We must all be grateful for the research and technology that led to the development of diagnostic and treatment equipment, but we must never forget another essential component, which is an adequate number of health care professionals. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Saskatchewan's Centennial Celebrations

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's centennial celebrations are all about people and the collective pride we have in this great province. And it is plain to see, Mr. Speaker, the centennial spirit has captured the hearts of individuals and community groups all across Saskatchewan.

I'm very pleased to share with the Assembly today that just three months into our centennial year, Saskatchewan residents have already planned more than 2,005 events.

Mr. Speaker, Miller Elementary School in Melville had the honour of submitting Saskatchewan's centennial event number 2,005. The school celebration planning is already well underway and will be showcased on May 30 with special programs, including oratory about pioneer themes, a potluck dinner, creative dance presentations, and a family ball game.

Students and staff will also be preparing special messages to be included in a time capsule as part of the community centennial plans.

Mr. Speaker, the Miller Elementary School celebrations differ in detail from other centennial celebrations, but they also share common characteristics like showing pride in the province, making connections to the community, connecting and learning about Saskatchewan's heritage, and of course having fun while they're doing it.

Congratulations to the students and staff of Miller Elementary School for doing their part to help Saskatchewan celebrate 100 years of heart. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Canadian Agricultural Income Stabilization Program

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, across Saskatchewan producers are trying to make some important decisions in advance of seeding. They're trying to do

everything they possibly can to make this year better than last year, but there's a problem.

Many producers we are hearing can't get credit. The banks don't know when or if the Government of Saskatchewan, the NDP [New Democratic Party] government, will live up to its contractual commitments on CAIS [Canadian agricultural income stabilization program]. They're asking for more collateral from farmers because they can't believe the government's empty promises, Mr. Speaker.

The authors of this uncertainty on the farm today is the Premier of the province of Saskatchewan and the Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, the question to the Premier is simple. Will the Premier commit to fully funding the 2004 CAIS program?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there are many reasons why producers are facing a difficult time this year. It is not one factor or two. There are factors of low commodity prices where producers are asking, what should I grow that is going to give me at least a basic return that will cover the cost of production. There is the US [United States] dollar relative to the Canadian dollar, which has impacted heavily on the commodity prices.

Mr. Speaker, there are a variety of conditions that are impacting. But I can tell you this; we have stood by our farmers in the past, and we will stand by our farmers in the future. Mr. Speaker, we want to make sure that this sector of our economy again is a leader and productive. And we will do what is necessary to make sure that happens. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, there are a number of issues affecting producers, affecting agriculture in the province of Saskatchewan. That's why you have a Farm Safety Net. That's why you have the Canadian agriculture income stabilization. As imperfect as it is, that's precisely the point.

It took until December 2004, after playing games with the lives of farm families, for this government to finally agree to fund 2003. The government seems to be indicating, this NDP government seems to be indicating they will simply not fulfill their share of the commitment for CAIS 2004.

Mr. Speaker, we believe in a pretty simple proposition when it comes to agriculture programs. If you sign on for the program, you sign the cheque, Mr. Speaker. Now more than ever, producers need to hear that basic commitment from this Premier and that minister. Will he give them that today?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's very easy to sit on the other side of the House where you are not accountable and promise to sign any number of cheques, blank cheques; it doesn't matter. We'll give you all, whatever you want. Just ask us, we'll sign the cheque, they say from that place where they don't have accountability.

We have accountability, Mr. Speaker. We cannot sign blank cheques. And when we found out what the numbers were or as close to them as we were going to get for 2003, we came through.

Prior to that, Mr. Speaker, we made it very clear that we would follow through on our commitment to 100 million, and we would make those cheques available on a pro-rated basis once the forms were in and completed, Mr. Speaker. That, we did. And by the end of the year, Mr. Speaker, when we found out the real numbers, we came through and we funded it completely. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, this NDP government negotiated changes to that very program, negotiated changes to CAIS which the opposition supported. They got the changes from the federal government. They knew when they signed on then, after those changes to the program, it was a 60/40 program.

Notwithstanding whether 60/40 is right or wrong in terms of a funding formula, that minister and that Premier negotiated that agreement. We're asking them to keep their commitment to Saskatchewan producers, to stand today — right now when farmers are having difficulty getting financing, getting loans to carry on with seeding because of uncertainty — to at least remove that little bit of uncertainty that is under their control, to keep their commitment and fund CAIS. Will he not commit to that today?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Well, Mr. Speaker, when you negotiate and sign on to an agreement and you're told that that agreement is going to cost you \$100 million, and you agree to make sure that you've got that in place, and then they come out and they tell you, well now that we've got this agreement together it's going to cost you another 150 or \$250 million. Mr. Speaker, that's not an agreement that we can sign. We cannot sign a blank cheque.

The federal government has not come through for the farmers of this province. The federal government has not come through for the people of this province. And, Mr. Speaker, it's time they came through. We are paying 10 times — 10 times — the provincial per capita average to fund the CAIS program. We are

paying more than three times the provincial per capita average of any other province, Mr. Speaker, to fund our agriculture programs. We are there. We have been there, and we will be there in the future, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

Support for Agriculture

Ms. Draude: — This government's procrastination in supporting their portion of the CAIS program last year adversely affected farmers in Saskatchewan. Leonard Moroz, a farmer in the Wishart area, was out \$7,500 from last year's program. That money would have paid his taxes and the payment on his swather, which he had to give up because the money did not come in on time.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Moroz questions why the Minister of Agriculture refused to fully commit to funding for the 2003 CAIS program until the end of the year, the decision that delayed timely payments for his farm. Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Agriculture commit to fully funding the 2004 CAIS program today and not hold farmers hostage again this year?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I said, the federal government does provide the numbers for this program and the federal government is ultimately accountable for the way that this program will be paid out. It's a 60/40 base today. That, Mr. Speaker, is wrong; 60/40 base does not work for the people of Saskatchewan. If it doesn't work for Saskatchewan where we have 43 per cent of the arable land in the country, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't work for Canada. And it doesn't work for Canada. Every other Agriculture minister across this country is saying the same thing, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to funding this, we came through in 2003. At the beginning of the year we told people that we would pro-rate until we got to the end of the year; that amount of money they were able to work with. They are able to work with it again this year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[14:00]

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, the Ag minister said that government stands behind farmers. I have yet to hear one farmer make that comment in Saskatchewan. In fact their comments are that this government never stands behind farmers.

Mr. Speaker, we all agree that the federal formula is not fair for Saskatchewan, but it's the best one the farmers have and the Saskatchewan government has at this present time, and at the same time that government, that minister, are holding our farmers for ransom. When will that minister get to the table and when a program comes out sign on and back the farmers of Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think the group of farmers that the member opposite is talking to are a very different group from the ones that I'm speaking with.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard from many farmers how much they appreciate what we are doing. Yes, there is need for more, there is absolutely no question, Mr. Speaker, but when they look at the numbers and when they look at the commitment that we have had to try to make these programs work and to pressuring the federal government, they know that we are there working with them, for them, to try and get a better deal for all of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to do that.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, I have no idea where that Ag minister is talking to farmers because it certainly isn't in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we're also hearing rumours that there may be a federal cash injection for farmers this spring. And why we bring it up now is that the need is there and the need is needed very quickly. We need that money instantly because farmers have no idea, many of them, how they're going to get money to put this crop in. So I ask the minister, do you know, Mr. Minister, is there going to be a cash injection from the federal government this spring?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at this time we have no confirmation from the federal government. We have heard rumours, as have the members opposite. We have pressed to try and get a commitment to more funding from the federal government for this spring. We have outlined what the situation is, Mr. Speaker, and it is our hope that the federal government will come through, recognizing the grave difficulty that many producers in this farm . . . in this province are facing, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is our hope and our trust that the federal government will come through for people who have been faced by such heavy impacts. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member from Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to make the Agriculture minister somewhat aware of what our Saskatchewan farmers are saying. They're telling me that diesel prices are up about 15 to 20 cents a litre this spring from last year. Fertilizer prices are going up. Chemical prices are going up. We still have the BSE [bovine spongiform encephalopathy] — border closed. We have increased crop insurance costs from this government. Low grain prices, poor quality grain out there.

The stress on farm families is growing, and they can't take much more, Mr. Speaker. Last year's bills have not been fully paid off at this point. Many farmers are telling us that. And now they're expected to go out there and plant this crop. It's just about an impossibility. They need help. They need help very quickly, Mr. Speaker.

If this government ever wanted to get behind farmers, it would get on the phone and get a hold of the federal government, find out what is coming down the tubes, and break it out — tell our farmers what is actually coming so they can finally rely on something that this government finally does.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the member opposite does outline a number of the factors which are crucial this year. And as I also mentioned earlier on, there are other factors which are also impacting. I mean people are going through and they're looking at how can we decide what crop to produce when we can't get the cost of production out given today's prices.

There are so many things that are impacting on this industry today. And, Mr. Speaker, we do need that injection from the federal government. We are pressing for that injection. And, Mr. Speaker, knowing the federal government, if they're going to come out with it — and I hope they do — they're going to want to take all the credit themselves, Mr. Speaker. You can hardly blame them. But whoever takes the credit I don't really care, Mr. Speaker.

What I do want is to make sure that the funding is there to help the producers of Saskatchewan. And if the federal government takes the credit for it, so be it. I want the funding there.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the big question I think that many farmers are saying out there — and they're hearing the same rumours that we are — there may be a federal injection of money. They say it's very much needed out there.

But the other question they're asking, Mr. Speaker, is what is that minister and that government going to do if the federal government does come out with a cash injection and says that it has to be cost shared by that government.

Budget day tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, are they going to put money in there just in case a program like that comes about? Are they going to finally, just once, stand behind farm families in Saskatchewan instead of holding out until fall, be right at the table, assist the federal government and help our farmers in Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the member opposite noted, budget day is tomorrow. Mr. Speaker, I think our record speaks very clearly that we have been there for farmers in the past. And, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to be there for our farmers in this province, providing what support we are able and struggling with our federal government to try and get a better deal for the farmers and for the people of this province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Wood River.

Renovation of Government Offices

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well it's obvious that the farmers, the three biggest problems they have is summarized in the words, NDP.

Mr. Speaker, the government keeps telling us that they have no money for teachers. They just say that they have no money for the CAIS program. They have no money for low-income tax breaks. But, Mr. Speaker, they have millions of dollars to play musical chairs with government employees in Regina — \$15 million to renovate the Department of Finance on College and Albert and move workers out of downtown Regina, just weeks after committing \$11 million renovating the old Bay building. What sense does that make?

Mr. Speaker, the NDP government says it has no money for teachers, no money for farmers, no money for low-income earners. Why do they have \$26 million for office renovations?

The Speaker: — Order, order. I recognize the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm a little surprised at the question from the member from the opposition because all of us realize that maintaining the assets of the people and the taxpayers of Saskatchewan is a priority — whether it is the envelope of buildings that need to be upgraded, whether it's to address occupational health and safety, whether it's to address space requirements, Mr. Speaker. These are assets of the people of Saskatchewan, paid for by the taxpayers of Saskatchewan, and we'll maintain those assets, Mr.

Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Wood River.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well, Mr. Speaker, it's obviously a question of priority. There's more money for renovating offices and office space than there is for people in the province that need it.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that one of the renovations taking place over at the Department of Finance is a fancy new boardroom. Mr. Speaker, last week we learned that the new president of SaskEnergy spent \$560 to hand rub a desk and \$11,000 to move the entrance to his office. This week, we hear the NDP may be spending thousands more on a new boardroom in the Finance building.

Mr. Speaker, is the minister putting a new boardroom in the Finance building? How much will it cost and what's wrong with the old one?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for Saskatchewan Property Management Corp.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, there's been a number of articles that have been done on the building at 2350 Albert Street that the Department of Finance resides in. There's a number of problems with the envelope of the building, with the energy efficiency. That building was one of the first skyscrapers, Mr. Speaker, in Regina. It is at an important location, and we need to invest the money into it to re-life the building so that the health of that building is retained and that there is a good space, and a healthy space, for those employees to reside in.

And I will tell the member opposite that that is an outrageous amount of money that he is speculating is being spent on a boardroom, and that is inaccurate.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Canora-Pelly.

Negotiations with Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Labour. Last spring the NDP government decreed a 0, 1, and 1 wage mandate for all public sector employees. The NDP government says it respects the working people of this province, but in reality the NDP is dictating the outcome of collective bargaining before negotiations even start.

Let's review what our unions are saying. Bob Bymoen of SGEU [Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union] says the NDP is undermining collective bargaining and that:

Zero, one and one through the budget process is not acceptable for any government, anywhere, anytime.

Murray Wall of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation says teachers are not prepared to accept the contract that is dictated to them by the NDP. His quote is:

Collective bargaining is just that, it's bargaining, it's not a mandate.

Does the Labour minister believe she is upholding the spirit of collective bargaining by dictating the results of negotiations before even sitting down at the table?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for Community Resources and Employment.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As Chair of the Public Sector Bargaining Committee, I want to reiterate what the discussion was that we had with all of the unions at the beginning of the budget period containing the 0, 1, and 1.

What we discussed is the need to bring the overall sustainability of the budget into line with actual revenues of the province. And we talked about considerable flexibility on other matters. And there has been flexibility. There's been 11 agreements concluded to date. And we have shown flexibility on meeting specific needs in different workplaces and around different parts of their agreements.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Canora-Pelly.

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, I have another question for the Minister of Labour. In the last election this government campaigned on giving our young people reasons to stay in Saskatchewan. And now this NDP government is telling young teachers, nurses, and other public sector workers, that 0, 1, and 1 is as good as it gets. That doesn't sound like retaining professionals, Mr. Speaker, especially in light of the compensation packages being offered in our neighbouring provinces. Teachers in Manitoba just signed for 3, 3, and 3. Rosalee Longmoore, president of SUN [Saskatchewan Union of Nurses], says, and I quote: "No, there isn't any way the mandate will retain nurses."

Not only does 0, 1, and 1 turn the collective bargaining process on its head, it does nothing to make young people want to start their careers here in Saskatchewan. Why should young people believe the NDP government is interested in keeping them in Saskatchewan if the NDP doesn't have the decency to respect the collective bargaining process and negotiate settlements?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for Community Resources and Employment.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now I have followed what young people are asking for in terms

of entry into the workplace. And there are certainly several things that they comment on. One of them is that they would like full-time employment so that they have predictability in meeting their financial obligations. Certainly they're interested in professional employment that relates to their area of expertise. And wages are important, but I will point out we are living in the most affordable province in Canada.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Canora-Pelly.

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, right now the total bill for teachers' salaries is about \$600 million. A one percentage increase for teachers' salaries will cost about \$6 million. And right now this NDP government is telling teachers they can't afford that.

But, Mr. Speaker, let's look at all the money the NDP has thrown away on bad business deals. NDP chose to invest 12 million in Navigata last month — the BC [British Columbia] company that loses \$1 million per month. That's almost 2 per cent. Twenty-three million on the failed Atlanta dot-com, Retx.com; almost four percentage points for teachers. Thirty-five million on SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company]; five percentage points for teachers.

Mr. Speaker, why is the NDP more than willing to throw away money on bad business ventures all over the world but refuses to make the same investment in our teachers in Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Community Resources and Employment.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I might mention that we have a very large public sector in Saskatchewan because we value the public sector.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — When others would have an ideology that would have us privatize and contract out, we have maintained a strong public sector. Eighty per cent of the money that is provided for those sectors is wages, and we certainly believe in collective bargaining.

We have indicated flexibility, and we are willing to deal with a whole range of issues from health plans to recruitment and retention. These have all been the matter of agreements that we've already signed, and we'll continue to show that flexibility.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:15]

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Canora-Pelly.

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, let's take a look at the priorities

of this NDP government. They're willing to spend money moving employees around the city, but not on teachers. Remember how the NDP moved the Department of Learning into the building SaskEnergy once occupied? Well that move alone cost the taxpayers of this province almost \$12 million. Mr. Speaker, \$12 million is equivalent to nearly 2 per cent increase for all the teachers in the province of Saskatchewan.

To the minister: why does the NDP have the money to play musical chairs with employees at the Learning department but not enough to give teachers a fair and competitive wage?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for Community Resources and Employment.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Mr. Speaker, I will just mention that these are the same members who produced a list of people with NDP sympathies within the public service that they would fire. So your wage is not going to do you much good if you get fired because of what you believe in.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Canora-Pelly.

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, it's interesting listening to the answers from the ministers opposite. Now they're back in a world where we're not dealing with the future at all, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, the Minister of Health for the province of Saskatchewan said that the Saskatchewan people expect too much from our health care system. Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker? The minister tells people on the longest waiting list in the country that their expectations are too high.

Mr. Speaker, we need more nurses in this province to deal with waiting lists. That's plain and simple. Sources tell us that each percentage point of the nurses' contract is worth about \$4.3 million. It's about choices, Mr. Speaker. And this government chose to invest in rotting potatoes rather than offer competitive wages to much needed front-line workers like nurses.

Mr. Speaker, when will this NDP minister negotiate in good faith by instructing SAHO [Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations] to discontinue this government's 0, 1, and 1 mandate and allow for the negotiation process to produce a fair collective agreement?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Community Resources and Employment.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Mr. Speaker, I will remind the members opposite that we would have to live a long time to incur the kind of costs they incurred with 600 million a year in interest payments on the debt, which came about when they were the members in power.

And I will just say that we very much wish to work with all of our public servants to improve service to the public, to deal with workplace issues, and to ensure that they are appropriately compensated for the very important work they do in Saskatchewan's public sector.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: — Order, please. I recognize the Member of Community Resources and Employment.

Rental Housing Supplement

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to let you know a little bit about an announcement that we made today and to give some details to the House on this. And this may not be the question the members asked, but it's a question they're going to like the answer to. I want to announce today the Saskatchewan rental housing supplement that'll very soon be available to low-income Saskatchewan families and persons with physical disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, our Premier announced a new and groundbreaking program that backs our belief that a safe and prosperous Saskatchewan begins at home. As we know, good housing provides the stability for people to attend education and work, and for children to be part of communities and schools in our province. And there are several unique features to this program that make it very special in Canada.

First, this program will be available only to those households whose rental accommodations meet basic health and safety standards, and for disabled people's specialized needs. This program is linked directly to quality of housing. The program provides both renters and landlords with some new programs and tools to accomplish this goal.

Secondly, this assistance will go to households beyond those who are on social assistance to include those low-income households in the workforce. This program supports those households who are under the Building Independence program, have moved into education and employment, as well as those who are part of Saskatchewan's growing labour force.

Third, to connect with the province's Building Independence initiative, these supplements go directly to the household. And that allows them the independence and flexibility to seek out the most appropriate housing to meet their needs in the open marketplace. People will have more options, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to finding a place to live.

And finally, this supplement will be delivered in an innovative fashion through the Building Independence call centre. There'll be no long forms to fill out, and all the information is taken over the telephone resulting in a very streamlined process. This program will directly support low-income households in meeting their affordability challenges relative to housing, while allowing them the opportunity to improve their quality of housing.

Mr. Speaker, our government believes that investing in

Saskatchewan families today is an investment in our province's future, and we believe the investments we are making through rental supplements is a solid investment in the future, and I'm very pleased to repeat that announcement today.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be able to respond to the ministerial statement.

There is no question that low-income individuals and families in Saskatchewan, particularly those who are disabled, face many challenges including the inability of many people to find high-quality, stable housing that is also affordable. So today's announcement of additional funding for housing for low-income earners and the disabled is welcome. It is encouraging that the government recognizes that families face many challenges in our province and that families are struggling under this NDP government.

On the surface, Mr. Speaker, it seems that this is only a rental supplement which would exclude those who make mortgage payments. If that's the case it is unfortunate, because we know that home ownership and allowing low-income earners to build equity in their home and build assets is one of the best tools that we can provide families to get out of poverty.

Enabling families to own their own homes is about creating independence, building strong community, and giving children the opportunity to attend the same school, providing stability and improved education for our children. Mr. Speaker, that is why the Saskatchewan Party recently put forward a policy to promote home ownership as an important element in achievement of family independence.

Mr. Speaker, we certainly agree that affordable housing is an important issue facing families but, unlike this government, we believe that a long-term strategy is necessary to tackle the issue. You cannot simply talk about affordable housing in isolation from the other factors that continue to create poverty and create barriers to opportunity for low-income families. That long-term strategy, Mr. Speaker, must start with allowing low-income families to keep more of what they earn. The Saskatchewan Party policy, in fact, policy no. 1 in our 100 ideas reads: "Reduce provincial income tax for low income residents." The Saskatchewan Party believes minimum wage earners should pay no income tax and there should be a reduction in income tax to those earning under \$35,000.

It is shameful, Mr. Speaker, that this government continues to punish and penalize low-income earners at a time when it is flush with millions of dollars in unexpected oil and gas windfalls. Remember this fiscal year began with the NDP government hammering low-income earners by raising the PST [provincial sales tax]. It continued with the NDP punishing low-income earners by hiking utility rates and failing to keep its word to lower property taxes, which is one of the things needed to make housing affordable. So on one hand the NDP put forward a program like the minister announced today, but on the other hand they take it away.

Mr. Speaker, last week the NDP voted against our idea no. 1 and no. 3 of the Saskatchewan Party's 100 ideas, which would have increased the personal exemption for low-income earners and raised the food allowance for those on social assistance.

Mr. Speaker, we support the measure to build independence and enhance the dignity of low-income earners and many policies in our 100 ideas would go a long way to achieving this. And so we will be looking at the details of the program announced today with the hope it will help many of those most in need in our province.

The Saskatchewan Party will continue to press the government to establish a long-term vision and a comprehensive plan to create opportunity for low-income earners, families, and children on social assistance, and the disabled in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Why is the House Leader on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, with leave to introduce a guest.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has requested leave for introductions. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, seated behind the bar on our side of the House is a former member of the House. His main occupation, I think, other than being a member, was to be a professor of history, I believe, at the University of Regina. He served in the years 1978 to 1982, represented the riding of Regina Wascana. He distinguished himself; he was a very solid, contributing member of the government in those days and I would ask all of the members to join with me in welcoming Clint White.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Deputy House Leader.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I would ask leave of the House to move several motions regarding sitting hours.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. The Chair recognizes . . .

MOTIONS

Sitting Hours

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker,

I would move, seconded by the member from Melfort:

That notwithstanding rule 3(1) of the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly*, when the House adjourns on Thursday, March 24, it shall stand adjourned until Wednesday, March 30 at 1:30 p.m.

The Speaker: — A motion by leave by the member for Saskatoon Nutana, seconded by the member for Melfort:

Notwithstanding rule 3(1) of the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly*, when the House adjourns on Thursday, March 24, it shall stand adjourned until Wednesday, March 30 at 1:30 p.m.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. The Chair recognizes the Government Deputy House Leader.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Melfort:

That notwithstanding rule 3(1) of the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly*, when the House meets on Thursday, April 14, it shall meet from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and, when the House adjourns on Thursday, April 14, it shall adjourn until Monday, April 18 at 1:30 p.m.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Saskatoon Nutana, seconded by the member from Melfort:

That notwithstanding rule 3(1) of the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly*, when the House meets on Thursday, April 14, it shall meet from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and, when the House adjourns on Thursday, April 14, it shall stand adjourned until Monday, April 18, at 1:30 p.m.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. The Chair recognizes the Government Deputy House Leader.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Melfort:

That notwithstanding rule 3(1) of the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly*, when the House adjourns on Tuesday, May 17, it shall stand adjourned until Tuesday, May 24, at 1:30 p.m.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Saskatoon Nutana, seconded by the member for Melfort:

That notwithstanding rule 3(1) of the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly*, when the House adjourns on Tuesday, May 17, it shall stand adjourned until Tuesday, May 24 at 1:30 p.m.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried.

[14:30]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Government Whip.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and table responses to written questions nos. 906 and 907.

The Speaker: — Responses to questions 906 and 907 have been submitted.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 90 — The Adult Guardianship and Co-decision-making Amendment Act, 2005

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Adult Guardianship and Co-decision-making Amendment Act, 2005.

Mr. Speaker, The Adult Guardianship and Co-decision-making Act provides for the appointment of a personal or property co-decision-maker for an adult who requires assistance in decision making but does not need full guardianship services.

It provides for the appointment of a personal or property guardian in a situation in which the adult is unable to make his or her own decisions, and it provides for the appointment of a temporary personal or property guardian in an emergency situation.

The amendment Act will affect legal proceedings respecting contracts entered into by adults for whom property guardians, including temporary property guardians, have been appointed within a year after the execution of the contracts. Where the question of what the other party to the contract knew about the adult's capacity arises, the other party will have the onus to show that he or she did not have reasonable grounds to believe the adult lacked capacity at the time of the contract.

Mr. Speaker, under the current law, a contract can be voided if a vulnerable adult or his or her representative establishes, first, that he or she was mentally incompetent at the time of the contract and, second, that this fact was known or ought to have been known to the other party.

In situations where guardianship has been granted within a year of the contract, the amendment will shift the onus from the adult to the other party with respect to the second part of the

test. Rather than requiring the adult prove the other party knew or ought to have known about his or her incompetence, the amendment will require that the other party show that he or she did not have reasonable grounds to believe the adult lacked the capacity at the time of the contract.

Mr. Speaker, abuse of vulnerable adults is often difficult to identify, prove, and stop. When adults have reduced capacity they become particularly susceptible to such abuse. This amendment will help to ensure the protection of vulnerable people who may be taken advantage of prior to coming under guardianship.

Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to the protection of the most vulnerable members of our society. We see this Bill as a step forward in that regard, one that will be welcomed by those providing services to and advocating for vulnerable adults, and by others who see the terrible effects of abuse of these individuals.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of An Act to amend The Adult Guardianship and Co-decision-making Act.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 90, The Adult Guardianship and Co-decision-making Amendment Act, 2005 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? The Chair recognizes the member from Melfort.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today and speak briefly on Bill No. 90, An Act to amend The Adult Guardianship and Co-decision-making Act.

Mr. Speaker, in the minister's comments he made a very important statement and that is that we all have to work very diligently to make sure that we protect the most vulnerable of our citizens against people being able to take advantage of them or of their situation.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's an important piece of legislation that's being brought forward in that the whole issue of property guardianship is going to be clearly defined and the relationship between the knowledge that was provided at the time of the contract will be clearly laid out in this legislation so that any potential abuse of the system will be minimized and hopefully eliminated.

Mr. Speaker, this is important legislation that has ramifications for the way property is transferred in this province. And the official opposition looks forward to the opportunity for us to consult with the appropriate people in the province that may have some comment on this. And, therefore, in order to allow for that to happen, I would move to adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Melfort that debate on second reading of Bill No. 90, The Adult Guardianship and Co-decision-making Amendment Act be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried.

Bill No. 91 — The Land Surveys Amendment Act, 2005

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Industry and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of The Land Surveys Amendment Act, 2005.

The Land Surveys Act, 2000 was passed to modernize and update the laws and rules respecting surveying of lands in Saskatchewan, and to facilitate the implementation of the new LAND [Land Titles Automated Network Development] system in 2001. The land surveys system and related programs and services are administered and delivered through Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan.

One of the significant benefits of the LAND system was the connection of titles to the cadastral parcel database. This provided information with respect not only to who owns the land but also the shape of the parcel and its relationship to adjacent land. The cadastral parcel database is essential to support the operations of the land registry and is a key element of the infrastructure relied on for economic development in Saskatchewan.

The current Act identifies the controller of surveys' responsibilities for the survey system of the province and for operations of the land surveys directory. The land surveys directory is the public registry that contains traditional survey information including plans, field notes, orders, and other documents associated with legal surveys.

Assignment of custodial responsibility for maintaining the official digital graphical representation of the province's survey fabric and the cadastral parcel database is essential to support the land registry. Survey infrastructure and the Saskatchewan economy also are positively impacted.

The database of survey and parcel information is currently operated and maintained by the geomatics unit at Information Services Corporation which, along with the controller of surveys, performs the functions and responsibilities assigned under The Land Surveys Act, 2000.

The amendments proposed in this Bill will facilitate the appropriate and efficient operation and maintenance of the cadastral database in support of the land registry and the economy of Saskatchewan. The proposed amendments will define and assign responsibility for ongoing maintenance of the cadastral parcel mapping system, provide regulation-making power respecting the establishment and maintenance of the cadastral parcel mapping system, and provide the controller of surveys with greater flexibility to determine and alter hours of operation of the controller's office.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of an Act to amend The Land Surveys Act, 2000.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Industry and Resources that Bill No. 91, The Land Surveys Amendment

Act, 2005 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? The Chair recognizes the member for Melfort.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with pleasure that I rise to respond today to Bill No. 91, The Land Surveys Amendment Act, 2005.

Mr. Speaker, the minister has outlined a new function or an additional function that Information Services Corporation is making available in fulfilling their mandate to provide a land survey system.

Mr. Speaker, as soon as we mention ISC [Information Services Corporation] and talk about something new and efficient, the people of this province have reason to sort of be very, very nervous because I recall that initially in The Land Surveys Act that this is amending, in 2000, that ISC's implementation cost was estimated to be something like \$20 million and ended up to ballooning to over \$100 million. And one has to worry that this same trend may indeed occur in the rolling out of this additional service from ISC.

Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt that we need to have an effective and efficient and very professional land mapping and title system in this province, but certainly from past history it is been shown that this government really does not have a clue as to how effectively and efficiently to roll out these kinds of programs. So we have to register our concern about this new cadastral mapping system that will be used to identify subdivisions and parcels of land, and we have to be very concerned that this system is going to not, as well as the original rollout of ISC, end up being a very expensive boondoggle.

Mr. Speaker, so that we can properly investigate and communicate with the people that are very professional in this regard, and neighbouring jurisdictions as to how they are providing these same kinds of services, time will be needed for that consultation. And to allow that to happen, I would move to adjourn debate.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Melfort that debate on second reading of Bill 91 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried.

**Bill No. 92 — The International Protection of Adults
(Hague Convention Implementation) Act/Loi de mise en
oeuvre de la Convention de la Haye sur la protection
internationale des adultes**

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The International Protection of Adults (Hague Convention Implementation) Act.

Mr. Speaker, The International Protection of Adults (Hague

Convention Implementation) Act is based on a new format prepared by the Uniform Law Conference of Canada. The purpose of the uniform Act is to provide Canadian jurisdictions with a framework for implementation of the 2000 Hague Convention on the International Protection of Adults. The Act is a short Act that gives a force of law to the convention, which is set out in schedule A of the Act.

The convention provides for the protection of those adults who, by reason of an impairment or insufficiency of faculties, are not in a position to protect their person or property. The convention addresses problems raised by the transborder movement of vulnerable adults.

Mr. Speaker, the convention addresses such issues as jurisdiction to take measures to protect the person or property of vulnerable adults, the law to be applied and exercised in jurisdiction, the interjurisdictional recognition and enforcement of protective measures, and co-operation between state authorities.

Mr. Speaker, under the Act, a central authority will be designated to carry out the duties under the convention. This central authority will be the Minister of Justice, but the duties of the central authority will be delegated to the Public Guardian and Trustee in Saskatchewan. These duties relate to interjurisdictional dealings with respect to the protection of vulnerable adults. This legislation will be implemented in English and French, and will demonstrate to all Saskatchewan residents this government's ongoing commitment to the protection of our most vulnerable citizens.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to move second reading of An Act respecting the Application to Saskatchewan of the Hague Convention on the International Protection of Adults.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 92, The International Protection of Adults (Hague Convention Implementation) Act, be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? The Chair recognizes the member for Melfort.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I'm pleased to rise and speak briefly on Bill 92, the Bill respecting the application of Saskatchewan to the Hague Convention on the International Protection of Adults.

Mr. Speaker, it's our understanding that this is a Bill that is, and the basic premise of this Bill is something that comes under the Hague convention that is being implemented virtually in every jurisdiction around the world to extend a similar set of protection guidelines for adults in the way they are treated by legal systems and those sorts of jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that Saskatchewan wants to be very much a part of the world community in extending this international convention to adults in our jurisdiction, and that similar terms and conditions as exist in other jurisdictions should apply to the citizens and people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we are quite certain that this Bill will receive the

support of all of the people in Saskatchewan. However, as part of the process of due diligence that is required of us, we certainly want to take an opportunity to communicate with people in the legal profession to make sure that the wording of the Bill in our circumstance is appropriate and thorough. And in order to do that, Mr. Speaker, I would ask to adjourn debate.

[14:45]

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Melfort that debate on second reading of Bill No. 92 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Bill No. 93 — The Doukhobors of Canada C.C.U.B. Trust Fund Amendment Act, 2005

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation.

Hon. Ms. Beatty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill No. 93, amendment to The Doukhobors of Canada C.C.U.B. Trust Fund Act, addresses the manner in which members are appointed to the trust board of directors. The C.C.U.B. [Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood] Trust Fund was established from the proceeds when a Doukhobor co-operative operating in Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia was wound down.

The Government of Saskatchewan established a corporate entity to govern the use of the trust by enacting The Doukhobors of Canada C.C.U.B. Trust Fund Act in 1980. Profits from the trust fund are to be used to support activities that further develop Doukhobor culture and heritage. The board consists of nine members. In the past, these members were appointed by the attorneys general of each of the participating provinces. In recent years, the Government of Alberta and British Columbia have expressed concern about the board nomination process. Generally names were just provided to these governments, and each government forwarded the names to the minister responsible in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, to address concerns such as this, this amendment proposes that Doukhobor organizations in the provinces of Alberta, British Columbia, and Saskatchewan establish processes in each jurisdiction to nominate members to the board, and that those names be provided to the minister responsible in Saskatchewan for appointment by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. This amendment removes any responsibility for board appointments from the governments of Alberta and British Columbia, but preserves the right of each province to have representation on the board of the trust fund.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of this Bill No. 93, The Doukhobors of Canada C.C.U.B. Trust Fund Act. Thank you.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation, that Bill No. 93, The Doukhobors of Canada C.C.U.B. Trust Fund Amendment Act, 2005 be now

read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? The Chair recognizes the member for Melfort.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am again pleased to rise to speak to Bill 93, An Act to amend The Doukhobors of Canada C.C.U.B. Trust Fund Act, and to comment briefly on it.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to note the points that the minister made in her speech, that this trust fund was created as a result of winding down of an agricultural activity in the three provinces, and that the proceeds of this fund are used to celebrate our diverse culture and heritage and recognizes the very important part that the Doukhobors have played in our social fabric over the years.

And so, Mr. Speaker, at the request of the parties involved, it's important to note that this Bill is housekeeping in nature and that it streamlines the way representation is appointed on this trust fund. And I think that that will be a more effective and efficient way of operating this fund to maintain these cultural links to the past and make that very important going forward to the future.

Mr. Speaker, we would like to speak to some of the people that are involved with the decisions that are involved with this trust fund. And in order to facilitate that, I would move to adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member from Melfort that debate on second reading of Bill 93 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 59

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 59 — The Ambulance Amendment Act, 2004** be now read a second time.]

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Canora-Pelly.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to enter into the debate on an Act that has been before us for nearly a year. It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, that I had an opportunity to read the Minister of Health's comments last May 31 when he rose in this House and spoke to second reading of this Bill. Since then, Mr. Speaker, I do want to indicate that the file on this Bill, on Bill No. 59, as far as the opposition material that has been received, is overloaded. It's a huge file, Mr. Speaker, because I think it's a very sensitive issue.

And the point that many in the province of Saskatchewan are making, whether or not they're representatives of SEMSA, the

Saskatchewan Emergency Medical Services Association, or whether or not they're ambulance operators in over 80 of Saskatchewan's communities, they all say the same thing: there needs to be an improvement to The Ambulance Act.

The Ambulance Act has been in place since 1986 and it has served Saskatchewan well. There is a strong desire to ensure that if there needs to be changes to certain clauses of that Act regarding accountability, that in fact that take place. Every operator that I've spoken with, everyone who has sent us material says to the official opposition, and I'm sure they've said that to the Minister of Health as well, is that they want to be held accountable in that indeed there needs to be a clarification of clauses within The Ambulance Act that ensures that accountability is put forward.

But, Mr. Speaker, one of the concerns is that . . . of ambulance operators is that this Act will indeed put them in a very negative position. And while the Act overall contains a lot of clauses that need to be enacted, I think it is time for the Minister of Health to take a good, hard look at this Act and look at the possibility of amendments.

And I won't refer to them as friendly amendments because they're going to change the context of this Bill. But as was the case yesterday, when we listened to the minister responsible for Municipal Affairs . . . and in fact two Bills were removed from the order paper because there needs to be improvement in those Bills. There needs to be changes made to those Bills. And we understand that those Bills may in fact come back within this session that will make the Bill and the people who are involved and affected by that Bill, it will make it a better Bill.

And what we're saying to the Minister of Health, Mr. Speaker, is that this Act needs to be looked at in that similar fashion. There's a great concern from the SEMSA organization and individuals that there wasn't the consultation necessary to ensure that the right conditions were put forward.

When the people at SEMSA raised concerns about fairness, they raised concerns about the dismantling of The Ambulance Act. They raised concerns about how the changes that are being put forward in Bill No. 59 are in fact going to destabilize and demoralize the entire industry. That should be a red flag for the Minister of Health to say, is this the way that I, as the Minister of Health, want to go? I think that's the question that has to be asked. The people in . . . I'm sure the people in Saskatchewan Health need to ask that very same question of, why was this Bill put forward with those conditions that are there?

Mr. Speaker, when we look at sections 10 and sections 18 of the Act, we note that of course section 10 is going to be considerably rewritten, and so will section 18 as well. Both of those sections are very important to ambulance operators.

Mr. Speaker, I have . . . As the representative for Canora-Pelly constituency I'm very fortunate to have excellent ambulance services in Canora-Pelly from the Canora Ambulance Care Ltd., operating with its main base out of Canora, and the Duck Mountain Ambulance service operating out of Kamsack. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that it wasn't a short two and a half weeks ago I guess when I actually took . . . made myself avail their services. And in fact, I had an ambulance trip from Canora

hospital to here in Regina on a Monday morning when things weren't going as well as they should be for myself and I . . . and the doctor insisted that I travel by ambulance to Canora . . . from Canora to Regina. I can tell you that the service that is there is first rate.

And I want to indicate to you, Mr. Speaker, that a number of letters have been written by ambulance operators. One of the letters was addressed to myself and it has been sent to the Minister of Health as well — so it's not, it's not just a letter that I have; he has it as well — where the operator, the owner/operator of Canora Ambulance Care, Mr. Wally Huebert indicates the problems that he as the operator of the Canora ambulance will incur as soon as this Act is passed. And he's very critical of section no. 10 which informs him that as long as I continue to provide high-quality service, I will receive ongoing service agreements. This will be removed.

So there's no, there's no guarantee that even though he provides exactly as the service that is requested by Saskatchewan Health that in fact his service contract will continue. Now if that's not there as a written guarantee . . . And you know, Mr. Speaker, we were talking in this House during question period about the problems facing farmers and their ability to go to the bank with something that they can assure their financial institution that indeed there is a payment being made under CAIS. The very same thing is true for these ambulance operators.

If they don't have the ability to go to a financial institution and indicate that their contract of service is going to be maintained, why would a financial institution risk loaning huge amounts of money to them to update equipment? It's not a very cheap system, Mr. Speaker. Costs of ambulances, the costs of the machines in those ambulances are huge. And the ambulance operator must be able to provide updated changes in vehicles to ensure that his service that he provides to the people is first rate.

This ambulance Act change under Bill 59 will take that away, will not allow ambulance operators the ability to have an ongoing contract. And as I indicated at the very beginning, Mr. Speaker, accountability, if that . . . if the concern of the minister and the concerns of officials is that some operators are not being held accountable and their level of service to the people of Saskatchewan is inadequate, there needs to be changes to the Act that ensure that that is in fact reality. And no one in the industry is opposed to that. They want to have a process whereby there is a level of accountability, there is a level of service, and there's a measuring stick to ensure that if someone isn't meeting the needs and isn't meeting the service requirements of the area, that that will be changed and that they will be held accountable.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we take a look at all of those concerns that have been brought forward, I also, you know . . . when we start to look at ambulance care and ambulance operators we have to recognize that of course communities are going to be affected. And I have a letter dated June 4, 2004, from the town of Canora. It's been cc'd to the Premier and the Health minister and the Deputy Premier, so it's within the members opposite's files, I'm sure. And this letter says this; and I want to quote a paragraph from it. It says:

The council of the Town of Canora would like to express

its concern regarding recently proposed changes to *The Ambulance Act*. As you know, ambulance services in Canora and district are currently provided through a private company which offers a high quality of service and gainfully employs several residents of our community. Proposed amendments to the above legislation, specifically the elimination of deemed renewal terms and the potential lack of legal recourse in the event of contract termination, may have serious repercussions in our small, rural town, including a decreased ability for the ambulance to secure financing or a reduced value of their business.

Next paragraph says:

It is also our worry that these changes could lead to the Sunrise Health Region assuming direct control of local ambulance services, which could cause Canora to suffer the loss of yet another viable local business and possibly result in a reduction to EMS units or staff. Business closures or staff reductions like this ultimately translate into families leaving our community.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Mayor Dennis for indeed sending that letter to the Minister of Health and others, to encourage him and the members of Saskatchewan Health to think about what this Act is really going to do for those communities, not just for Saskatchewan Health and the implications of whether or not EMS [Emergency Medical Services] providers are going to become part of that larger group called health organizers.

They need to be aware that these viable, private businesses are doing their job right now. They're doing it well. They're doing it under an Act that has been in place since 1986. They want to have improvements to the Act to ensure that there are accountability measures and that there are conditions whereby services must be met, or there will be a consequence. They want those conditions, and they want those changes to the Act. But they don't want to have put in place something that jeopardizes their future, that puts them at risk because they can't update their fleet.

[15:00]

Mr. Speaker, I mean, and I think it's very clear that if an ambulance operator concludes that an aging vehicle needs to be replaced today to offer a better service and he can't do that because the financial institution reads this Act and says, you don't have a continuous contract anymore, obviously that vehicle is going to deteriorate next year and the year after. And if it's Saskatchewan Health's intention, then, to evaluate these ambulance providers in two, or three, or four years after they've been unable to update their fleets, you know as well as I do what the outcome of that evaluation will be. It will be negative. And that will be, maybe, what this government is intending to do.

So the question that EMS is asking, is why is this legislation being put forward? If it's to improve accountability, if it's to make the changes that are needed, EMS is willing to sit down with officials from the Minister of Health's office, from the Saskatchewan Health, and ensure that the clauses that are put into this Act are correct. Currently, they are not.

So again, Mr. Speaker, I ask that the Minister of Health reconsider this Bill, not for the purpose of withdrawing the entire Bill because as I've indicated there are many good sections in this Bill, but there needs to be changes. There needs to be amendments. There needs to be an effort put forward by the Minister of Health with all of the people involved in the emergency medical services association to bring forward an Act that everyone is able to work with. That's the least that I think we can ask of the minister. So, Mr. Minister, until that happens, I would move that we adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Canora-Pelly that debate on Bill No. 59, The Ambulance Amendment Act 2004 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Bill No. 67

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Cline that **Bill No. 67 — The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2004/Loi de 2004 modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la réglementation des boissons alcoolisées et des jeux de hasard** be now read a second time.]

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill No. 67, The Alcohol and Gaming Regulations Amendment Act. It's been spoken to by a number of my colleagues and addresses a number of issues that are affecting the casinos and VLTs [video lottery terminal] today.

The Act gives casinos the authority to ban people from Saskatchewan's casinos, and it also sets out the appeal process for people who have actually been banned. The Bill also sets the parameters for the introduction of an electronic application system for commercial liquor permits, and it puts existing SLGA [Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority] policies into legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition has spoken to a number of stakeholders who are really in favour of these amendments. So at the end of my comments, I'll move that we send this Bill to committee to answer specific questions and details. However, Mr. Speaker, the issue that I and the people of Saskatchewan question and basically take offence with is this Premier's refusal to be up front with the people of Saskatchewan about gaming.

We know that the government is dependent on gaming revenues as a way to fund social programs. But in opposition in the '80s, our now Premier was leading the fight against the dangers of gambling, the effect gambling had on society, and the effect it had on individuals directly. In fact, the Premier asked if any study had been done on the adverse effects of gambling. Mr. Speaker, today I'd like to ask the very same question. What has this government done with regard to this study? What have they done to determine the social/economic impact of gambling on

our province? What does gambling really cost the people of this province?

In our policy convention in February, the Saskatchewan Party stated the beliefs and feelings of not only our members but I daresay the feelings of many of the people in Saskatchewan. We all know that the Saskatchewan NDP government is addicted to gambling. Since the NDP took power in 1991, Saskatchewan has experienced a massive explosion of gambling that, combined with the proceeds from liquor sales, now generates more than \$700 million in revenue each year for the government.

It is impossible to understand the impact gaming expansion has had on families and communities without a comprehensive social impact study. Most experts indicate it'll take years of study to get a complete picture of the social impact of gaming. However virtually everyone consulted on the issue of gaming agreed a social impact study is fundamental to the development of a long-term gaming strategy for our province.

So one of the policies that we passed at our convention, Mr. Speaker, was that a Saskatchewan Party government would honour all existing casino development agreements but a complete, comprehensive study of the social impact that gaming expansion is having on Saskatchewan, before considering the approval of any other casino development or expansion in the number of VLTs, would happen in this province. And importantly, the study would be made public.

We also heard that Saskatchewan is not providing adequate addiction services and doesn't have adequate addiction treatment facilities. Some of government revenues generated by liquor sales and gaming activities should be dedicated to strengthening our addictions treatment centres and programs. So we passed another resolution, that is a Saskatchewan Party government would dedicate a percentage of liquor and gaming revenues to addiction programs and facilities.

Mr. Speaker, I represent a small . . . the part of the constituency that doesn't have any large centre. In fact our largest town has about 1,400 people. We know that the total VLT revenues from what is considered the rest of the province, that's areas that don't have a large centre, works out to about \$84.759 million. And there we have VLTs numbering 1,686. So per VLT, that's about \$50,000.

So although I can't get the exact numbers, I do know that the town of Kelvington, with six VLTs, will bring into this government about \$300,000. Wadena will bring in over \$500,000 and Porcupine Plain will bring in over \$200,000. That's money that comes directly from the community, and our people would like to know where that money goes directly and how it is actually adding value to our area.

At one time this government promised to set aside 10 per cent of the gaming incomes for communities. That was a promise made but it wasn't a promise that was kept. There are nearly 4,000 VLTs in Saskatchewan right now, now collecting over \$266 million a year.

Harold Wynne of the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse has already authored one report on gambling in this province. His

study in 2002 found that as many as 13,000 Saskatchewan residents had serious gambling problems and that more than 122,000 people were at risk of developing gambling problems.

Mr. Wynne said in August of that year that the Saskatchewan government should put the brakes on casino expansion until the study did . . . until the province actually did a study on the social impact. But the NDP government has decided to go ahead with the expansion even though the study could be at least five years away.

Another quote from Mr. Wynne is, he said, and I quote:

. . . in 2002 and I say . . . [it again] now — that there should be a moratorium on gambling expansion until these kind of impact studies are done.

The government has had several years to put this process in place. And I still ask, what's been done to date?

In August 1989 the Premier had this to say about another . . . Bill 67, an Act respecting gambling and the Saskatchewan Gaming Commission. He called it at that time, bad news. Why? I quote, he quoted:

One, it provides for an expansion of gambling in the province of Saskatchewan; and secondly, it provides that government opposite in fact can become a player, [and] a manager within the gambling industry.

It is his government that expanded the industry. And not only is this government a player, they are the industry.

He also stated:

We have a situation where literally thousands of people are leaving our province in record numbers and the government opposite seems to say the answer is, what do we need? — more gambling.

That was the answer on August 1, 1989. But you know what, Mr. Speaker? That's the answer today too.

. . . if this government, now so desperate for cash, thinks it can find a cash bonanza in . . . [the] field by going directly into gambling and looking for revenues through gambling, Mr. Speaker, I say to you, they're mistaken.

That was said on August 1, 1989. Mr. Speaker, I daresay that that's nothing less than a flip-flop.

The Premier has shown not only on this issue but on others that he will say one thing in opposition when he marches in downtown Moose Jaw and do another when in government.

Mr. Speaker, these questions must be answered sooner or later for the people of our province. In the meantime, I move that this Bill move into committee.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion moved by the Minister of Industry and Resources that Bill No. 67, The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready 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.

Clerk Assistant (Committees): — Second reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — To which committee shall this Bill be referred? The Chair recognizes the Minister of Industry and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 67, The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2004 be referred to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister for Industry and Resources that Bill No. 67, The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2004 be referred to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Bill No. 86

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Higgins that **Bill No. 86 — The Labour Standards Amendment Act, 2004 (No. 2)** be now read a second time.]

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Southeast.

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak to this Bill.

This Bill has been put forward as a Bill that deals with the usual routine amendments. It's a labour related Bill. And, Mr. Speaker, I've got growing fear whenever this government introduces or does anything to deal with labour issues. Because unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Labour has now developed the uncanny ability of . . . able to introduce things that are able to simultaneously upset both labour and the business sector at the same time. And incredibly enough, I think this may be another one that's headed the same way as some of the earlier things that have been done, Mr. Speaker.

This Bill is largely treated as being a housekeeping type of Bill. But one of the things, Mr. Speaker, that this Bill does is it gives the adjudicators under the Act the same powers and same abilities as The Public Inquiries Act.

And clearly, Mr. Speaker, this Bill is directed at the litigation

that recently took place regarding Wal-Mart and the attempts to unionize Wal-Mart so that the judicators, when they're dealing with these things, will be able to go on what may very well be a fishing expedition to try and obtain policy and practice manuals from Wal-Mart and from other large corporate employers that have developed very sophisticated and highly confidential policies dealing with labour relations matters. And, Mr. Speaker, I find it troubling and disconcerting that this government would put forward that type of legislation that would enable those type of bodies to have that kind of power.

Mr. Speaker, the type of thing that could be dealt with is the things that are the usual corporate privacy issues that we should be very reluctant to see eroded. The things that could come out as a result of that type of power would be information that would deal with pricing practices, confidential market shares, any number of other things that that type of tribunal would feel would be necessary to deal with. If they're trying to overrule the litigation that's taking place, it could give them virtually unfettered discretion to go on a fishing trip through the books and through the personnel, through the labour relations, through the practices, through the advertising things that large corporations have developed and spent large amounts of money.

Another troubling aspect dealing with that same section is it allows the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations allow other things to be produced. And, Mr. Speaker, whenever I see legislation that allows other things to be developed by regulations, you know that the Bill has effectively become open ended and is in a situation where this government could, if they chose to, by regulation do any number of other things. We saw that happen with the other Bill that was passed in 1996 — was left open with the potential for regulations to come later on — and it wasn't until this year we were dealing with the available hours issue.

Mr. Speaker, this particular Bill has got the open-ended situation again where once again the regulations could come forward and could produce the incredible problems that were manifest for this minister when she was dealing with the available hours legislation. And I find it highly troubling that we're putting forward legislation that has an open-ended ability to proclaim or pass regulations. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, regulations do not come back to this House for scrutiny. They give incredible powers to both the government and to the tribunals that are empowered by that.

[15:15]

And, Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of concern when a Bill is put forward that allows that type of thing to take place. And we as a legislative body should be loath to see that type of thing being passed or put forward, particularly given the current record of this government in dealing with labour.

The troubling aspect that this government had in dealing with available hours is that they alienated the SFL [Saskatchewan Federation of Labour], they alienated the business community, they alienated virtually every public employer in the province. The city of Saskatoon, the city of Regina, the city of Moose Jaw, the University of Saskatchewan, a number of other public entities came forward and said this is not a workable piece of legislation. The regulations aren't workable. I read the

regulations that came out with that piece of legislation.

If, with this type of legislation, similar regulations are passed or proclaimed, we'll be in the same type of problem all over again, Mr. Speaker. I find this something that should cause the residents of Saskatchewan a significant deal of concern.

There appears to be on the part of this government a plan for a large number of pieces of labour legislation to come in, where they are passed, not necessarily proclaimed in force, or are left open ended with the ability to pass regulations later on. And what it does, Mr. Speaker, is it sets a chill in the labour-business community, in the labour-business relationship, something that we as citizens and business people should all be concerned about, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of other provisions in this legislation that I would like to comment on briefly. Section 62 deals with paying money in, in satisfaction of a labour standards claim while the appeal is being processed through. Mr. Speaker, the initial theory behind that is it will protect the employer . . . or the employee in case the employer is unable to pay later on, and will take away the incentive for the employer to use the appeal to drag out the requirement to pay the money.

Mr. Speaker, in cases of businesses that are downsizing or having problems this could pose a significant financial hurdle for those businesses. Well maybe something the . . . [inaudible] . . . government might want to consider as an alternative, would be the ability to post security for costs or post other forms of security to ensure that payments are made later on.

Mr. Speaker, this could affect the ability of a business to carry on and is something that is troubling as well. And I would like to invite the Labour minister to try and consider some other options that might make it less onerous and less difficult for employers to deal with.

Another troubling aspect of this Bill is the addition of section 62.4(3) where it talks about the money being placed as security. Under the old Act, it was either going to go to the employer or the employee. Under this Act, the new provision is maybe it could be kept by the director, a new section saying that the government may glom on to this money and keep it. It doesn't say, necessarily, under what circumstances or why that would happen. And, Mr. Speaker, for the life of me, if the money is posted by an employer, why it wouldn't either go back to the employer or to the employee if the employee is found right, I don't know. But when the government comes along and says but we'll allow the director to keep it, certainly not something that's an appropriate use of this amount of money.

Mr. Speaker, if the government wanted to deal with this portion of the Act and do some upgrading, what they might want to do as an alternative would be to develop a system where this type of appeal process, Mr. Speaker, is expedited, or some kind of an expedited process. Because during the period of time where an employer does not pay an employee and the Act is under active dispute, the employee is without the money, the employer is without the money, and both entities — both the employer and the employee — would be well served by a process that could resolve this within a matter of hours or days rather than weeks or months. And the time periods in there allow for a fairly

significant delay in appointing adjudicators and appointing appeals.

Mr. Speaker, another aspect of this legislation is it allows and includes provisions under the whistle-blower process and it allows appeals to the Court of Queen's Bench. Mr. Speaker, the appeals to the Court of Queen's Bench are limited to appeals on questions of law or jurisdiction of the courts.

Mr. Speaker, what they might want to consider would be an appeal that would amount to, on some circumstances, a trial *de novo*, so that new evidence could be introduced or that other evidence could be reduced and that the Court of Queen's Bench could sit as a court that would hear all of the evidence that was there, rather than just looking at the narrow determination that was made in determining whether there was a jurisdictional error. And I would submit that that may add a greater element of fairness for both the employer and the employee.

Mr. Speaker, the changes that are proposed are done sort of under the theory that we're trying to include the changes made for the whistle-blower portion of the legislation, but what the minister should have done in preparing this draft might well have been to look at other aspects or other things that might be necessary in trying to have a streamlined, coherent, comprehensive process for prompt, efficient appeals that will adequately protect both employers and employees. And I'm not sure that this does.

Prior to being elected, I frequently had both employers and employees come to my office with problems that they had with labour standards. And usually the problems were as a result of delays or time problems, or as a result of evidentiary issues, certificates that were incorrect, and would suggest to Mr. Speaker that it may be appropriate to allow new trials in Queen's Bench if the Court of Queen's Bench was convinced that that was an appropriate use of their jurisdiction. And would suggest as well, Mr. Speaker, that if we left that jurisdiction to the Court of Queen's Bench as a discretionary thing, we could certainly leave ourselves in a better position than we are now by dealing strictly with the director and the adjudicator that's going to be . . . And, Mr. Speaker, this Bill as well allows for a panel of adjudicators to be put forward by way of order in council.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm troubled and concerned whenever I see legislation that allows for tribunals or officials to be named without dealing with what their educational criteria might be, what their professional qualifications or experience might be. There may well be that the panel becomes biased or is subject to allegations of bias or less than total partiality . . . impartiality and, Mr. Speaker, would think that this Bill may well be amended to include something that would require minimum qualifications and people that are also some distance from government, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, there also is provisions in here for enforcement of awards once awards have been made for . . . Excuse me, the members opposite, I'd certainly like to give them a break so that they might want to take some notes. Because I know that the points I'm making I'm sure have significant importance to them and I think maybe what might be appropriate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is if I go back to the beginning and start again so that they get a full, complete

opportunity to review and hear everything that I'm putting forward for them.

And, Mr. Speaker, the point I was making, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that my concern is the enforceability of the awards that are made by these tribunals.

Typically, Mr. Deputy Speaker, these awards are judgments and are registered as judgments of the Court of Queen's Bench. The problem that they have is that they are expensive and time-consuming for an employee to, to try and enforce them. And what this legislation might have done was to include a waiver of court filing fees and might also have included some expedited process to try and allow for the more prompt collection of these outstanding sums that are owed to employees.

And I'm surprised and troubled, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this Bill did not address any of the remedies that might be necessary to an employee to try and collect it. One of the remedies that might have been available might have been an automatic garnishee process or a continuing garnishee process or something that would give some assistance for the ability of those employees to try and collect those, those funds, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the last thing that I would like to comment on is section 74 which deals with the whistle-blower portion and talks about . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Morgan: — And I thank you for that, members opposite. It talks about who might be a person in lawful authority that an aggrieved employee might wish to go to when, when they have a complaint or wish to go forward with information. And under the proposed new legislation it will be any police or law enforcement agency with respect to an offence within the power, and any person whose duties include the enforcement of those statutes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what's troubling on this is it only deals with specific individuals that they can go to. It doesn't deal with members of the opposition, members of the media, or even somebody that might be a cabinet minister or someone that's higher up in the government or another government official.

One of the cases that recently was dealt with in the courts was the Merk decision where we're before the Supreme Court right now and what the decision has come down to is the employee that was fired for having gone two or three steps up in the management chain and this, this legislation will give that employee no help whatsoever because what that employee chose to do, quite rightly, was to bump up a couple of people in the management chain and say, this has, this has happened.

And now we're talking about the use of words directly or indirectly responsible for supervising. Well if that isn't part of somebody's job description, they go to a district manager or a district supervisor. They may very well not have any protection whatsoever from this piece of legislation and may well find themselves back in court seeking a judicial interpretation of this section.

Mr. Speaker, we put forward a piece of legislation, a private member's Bill, that offered some assistance in this area. The minister chose not to look at that and instead went with something that was a much broader approach but a much thinner remedy and actually, Mr. Speaker, probably minimal or no benefit to the employees that are effected by this.

Mr. Speaker, what I would like to suggest to the Minister of Labour is that they may want to reconsider this legislation and they might want to focus their work in the labour area on trying to rehabilitate the relationships between labour and between business and employees and between unions. Because what they've done right now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is they have driven a wedge — and a significant wedge — between unions, between management, between the business sector and the private sector, that are unnecessary things to do. And, Mr. Speaker, they have done it for political grounds. And they haven't even done that successfully.

Mr. Speaker, this is a Bill that's part of a larger scheme of other legislation that's intended to deal with labour in this province. And I don't think this is the type of legislation that should be going forward at the present time, and would like to urge the members opposite to reconsider some aspects of it. And accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I would move adjournment of this Bill.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — The member for Saskatoon Southeast has moved adjournment of debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — That is carried.

Bill No. 87

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Higgins that **Bill No. 87 — The Trade Union Amendment Act, 2004** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Deputy Chair, it certainly is a pleasure to . . . or, Deputy Speaker, to enter into debate on Bill No. 87.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when one looks at the accompanying news release that the government issued upon introduction of this Bill it would seem that this is a fairly benign Bill. It's going to help get things done in a timely fashion. It's going to clarify some procedural powers and duties of the Labour Relations Board, and goes on again to talk about more timely rulings and reducing costs and those sorts of things.

But this Bill is anything but benign. There are some pretty onerous sections to this Bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I think both employees and employers in this province need to be aware of. And we certainly will be taking our time to review each section of this Bill and get a full understanding of what the

implications contained within the Bill might be. And I will highlight a few of these today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I'm sure we will be discussing this Bill in this Assembly in a number of days during this session.

[15:30]

Section 17 talks about amending a number of subsections of section 17, which talks about some of the powers of the chairperson of the Board of Labour Relations, and making that individual, that board Chair, responsible for prescribing regulations and so on. Which one might ask, well why are those powers being given to the board Chair? Should that not be Department of Labour and the government's responsibility, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

Section 18 goes on and talks about the Canada Labour Code, which is the national legislation that deals with the Canadian Industrial Relations Board and talks about taking some of the provisions, if not perhaps all of them, from the Canada Labour Code and incorporating them into this amendment. And we need to really think about that. The Canada Labour Code was designed to deal with employers and employees that have a national presence — large employers such as Air Canada, the banks, as a couple of examples who have employees across this country — and both sides, whether it be the employees or the employers have the ability to have expertise at their command to help them with various issues, whether it be within contract negotiations, or labour standard issues, and so on.

And it seems that this, by incorporating some of the Canadian labour code provisions into a provincial Act, may be a bit of overkill. In fact it probably is. It would, it could prevent a number of employees from representing themselves before the Labour Relations Board. It could be very onerous for employers, small businesses who may be what we commonly refer to as a mom-and-pop operation. They may be required to hire expertise, which they really can't afford, to settle some minor issues. So that's a section that really needs to be reviewed and looked at very closely.

That section 17 also talks about the powers of the Labour Relations Board to enter the premises of both the employer and the premises of trade unions. And these are powers that shouldn't be given lightly. These are very onerous powers given to a board, a quasi-judicial board, that in practice most of the times are kept for very specific purposes and are usually only given to peace officers and safety regulators under very limited circumstances.

So we certainly have some major concerns with that provision of the Act, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I would suggest that both employers and the unions and employees should be certainly aware of some of these new powers that are being contemplated given to the Labour Relations Board.

What this Bill doesn't talk about, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is anything to improve the timeliness in which the Labour Relations Board renders its decisions. This is an issue that, as a past Labour critic and current deputy Labour critic, I hear on a fairly continuous basis. I hear from parties that have cases heard by the Labour Relations Board and are sitting and waiting for a decision from that body. And they're waiting, and they're

waiting, and they continue to wait.

In fact I had a call just the other day from an individual who had their case heard some 17 months ago — I repeat that, 17 months ago — and they still haven't had a decision. And from what I've been told about the case, it's not a complicated case. It's not a case between a large employer and a large union. It's an individual who brought a case before the Labour Relations Board. Their life is on hold. And when I raised this issue in the past with the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Labour paid some lip service to say, well yes, we're going to try and get these decisions in a timely fashion. But it's easy to say one thing, but the evidence just isn't there, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But as I said, in this Bill I see nothing that addresses that issue. Certainly there's exceptions to every . . . There are some exceptional circumstances where decisions maybe need to delay for six months or perhaps even a year. But as I said, this particular case that has been before the Labour Relations Board for some 17 months isn't a complicated case. I don't know what the holdup is, but when you raise the issue with the Minister of Labour, you don't get any answers.

So then you raise the issue with the Chair of the Labour Relations Board; you don't even get a courtesy of a reply to your letters. In fact when you call that office, you're told you have no business in inquiring as to when perhaps a decision could be rendered. And I don't think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that that is the appropriate answer that an individual in that position should be giving when asked when can a party expect to receive their decision. The individuals aren't asking for a specific date or say give me a time frame — two or three weeks or a month perhaps — but 17 months and they still don't have a decision, and have no idea when the decision is going to be rendered, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So like I said, there's nothing in this Bill that addresses that. No attempt. It was mentioned to the minister on a number of occasions, but we see nothing in it. This is the same incompetence from this minister that we've seen in recent history, in recent past, and it's continuing, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Another provision in this Bill talks about, as I had mentioned, timeliness of contract negotiations. And it talks about, if bargaining doesn't start within 20 days after a workplace is certified, that the Labour Relations Board will be given some powers to interfere in the collective bargaining process, something that this government likes to do on a regular basis. Whether it's the Minister of Labour or the Minister of Learning, they like to interfere in the collective bargaining process, as I said, very regularly.

And then it goes . . . this Bill also says that if the two parties can't reach that first contract, that first agreement, within 90 days that the Labour Relations Board will step in and impose a contract. Well I'm told by those people who practice labour law and who bargain on behalf of unions that 90 days just isn't realistic — particularly for a first contract when a workplace is certified. Well once again it appears that this Minister of Labour hasn't done her homework and just pulled some numbers out of the air and said well that looks good, so we'll put it in this Bill, and we'll see if the Bill flies, and with little concern about the impact it will have on negotiations and labour relations in this

province.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I've said there are a number of concerns that need to be addressed, and we will certainly be dealing with stakeholders in this area. So I would then move to adjourn debate.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — The member for Last Mountain-Touchwood has moved that debate be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — That is carried.

Bill No. 80

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Thomson that **Bill No. 80 — The Education Amendment Act, 2004/Loi de 2004 modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur l'éducation** be now read a second time.]

The Deputy Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Indian Head-Milestone.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a privilege to stand and speak in the House today regarding Bill No. 80, An Act to amend The Education Act, 1995.

This Act is not a very long . . . this Bill is not a very long Bill. It's only really a section long, only about a half a page or a page long. It doesn't really say a whole lot other than dealing with the election date of school trustees.

The interesting part of the election date, dealing with the election date of school trustees even though that isn't significant . . . The reason that this Bill is before the House is very significant. Whether the elections go ahead on the prescribed day and this Bill changes that for new school divisions, the most interesting part is why this Bill is in the House in the first place.

And the Bill is in the House because of the forced amalgamation that this government has forced school divisions into that started . . . I guess the debate started in May of last year shortly after I was named the Learning critic, when the minister responded to the Boughen Commission. I think we all remember what the Boughen Commission was set up to do.

The Boughen Commission was set up to look at how do we fund education in our province. People on this side of the House, people on that side of the House . . . I believe that we rely far too much on property tax to fund education. So how are we going to properly fund education?

I remember about four years ago or five years ago when the government had a little extra money, they decided to put about \$50 million over two years to address the problem. That was \$25 million a year. And they did that through the Department of Municipal Affairs, and people got a bit of a rebate on their

property tax, regarding the education portion of their property tax. And that's how they addressed the funding issues.

But the problem with that is, it was a short-term solution, and two years passed quite quickly. Then they were left with no extra money. So now how are they going to address funding of education? So instead of addressing the problem, what they said is, let's strike a commission. Let's ask Ray Boughen to strike this commission and travel the province and see how we should properly fund education.

Well the Boughen Commission came back with a report a year ago January, which outlined the whole issue of property tax, the overreliance of Saskatchewan on property tax to fund education. We are far more reliant in our province of Saskatchewan than any province in the nation, far more reliant on property tax to fund education. No other province is anywhere close to relying on the property tax base to fund education. Every other province, the provincial government, the provincial government of that province funds a larger portion of the education. Therefore there is not near the reliance on property tax. So the Boughen Commission looked at that and said, how do we turn that around? And they came out with a number of recommendations — many, many recommendations.

Now unfortunately the government of the day, this NDP government, decided to ignore all the recommendations, well except for I guess two. They remembered that . . . They followed that report and said, well let's raise the PST by 1 per cent even though we're not going to put it towards education because that was one of the recommendations of the Boughen report . . . was to raise the PST by 1 per cent and expand it on to restaurant meals. Well they left the restaurant meals out of it, but they did raise the PST from 6 per cent to 7 per cent last provincial budget. Unfortunately it didn't do one thing for the property tax . . . for the property owner . . . or the property taxpayer in our province because not 1 cent of it went to education, Mr. Speaker.

The other idea that this government picked up on, that the minister picked up on, was the issue of the fact that maybe we have too many school divisions in our province. Perhaps we are over-governed as far as school divisions in our province, so let's address that issue. Let's change the debate which was around how do we fund education. Let's change the debate from that over to an issue of governance and how many school divisions should we have in our province.

And I guess if I was to rate the minister on effectiveness, he was very effective because he did change the debate. People in the province for the last six months or seven months have been furious, for the most part, furious over the way the government has handled the whole amalgamation issue.

Now what we have to remember is it's not the issue of amalgamation that people were originally upset about. It was about funding education. But because this provincial government couldn't deal with the issue of funding education, it decided to change the debate. It changed the debate into amalgamation.

Amalgamation certainly isn't a new issue in our province. We've been dealing with school board amalgamations for the

last 10 years at least in our province or longer, longer, far longer than that when you think that we went from school units to divisions to all . . . you know from single schools to units to divisions. There have been amalgamations going on for decades and decades and decades in this province.

And I would say over the last — we'll say decade — over the last 10 years it has sped up a little bit where . . . and part of that was driven by this provincial government. The minister before this present minister stood in this House, and I remember him standing in this House saying, we need 25 per cent fewer school divisions in the next four or five years. That's what we need; we need to see the number of school divisions drop down by 25 per cent in the next four years.

And when you look at how many school divisions we had at that time and how many school divisions we had about four years later, it was very, very close to that 25 per cent target that the former minister, who no longer sits in this House . . . But apparently he was just appointed to oversee a study on a health facility in Saskatoon. It's funny how the apples don't fall too far from the tree, Mr. Speaker.

[15:45]

Anyway that is a different issue, and it wouldn't be speaking to this Bill. And I know I want to continue speaking to this Bill. So I won't talk about the former minister of Education, Jim Melenchuk, and his new appointment by this provincial government.

But what I do want to talk about is how school divisions took what the former minister said and took it to heart. And they worked and they worked and they worked and they amalgamated many, many divisions. I can think of one school division in the constituency that I represent, the constituency of Indian Head-Milestone, where the school division of Indian Head along with the school division of Cupar and the school division of Buffalo Plains, all three went together and formed one school division, Regina Qu'Appelle, or Qu'Appelle Valley School Division it is called.

Now that division did exactly what the minister had asked them to do. It cost hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars to do what the minister had asked them to do. And they'd been in force for about a year and a half before this minister comes along and says, I'm sorry, that was all fine and dandy but let's just kind of pretend that was a practice run because it has absolutely no bearing on what we're going to do from now on, Mr. Speaker. And it's really, really unfortunate that if it was a practice run, they could have gone through the steps, maybe not spent as much time, as much energy, and as much money on it, and just kind of went through the process, if the government had any sort of foresight as to what it wanted in education, because it truly didn't.

You've got a minister four years ago setting a target which the school divisions met, and now a new minister coming along and saying, I'm sorry, that target does mean absolutely nothing and . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well the minister says he never said he was sorry; he doesn't really care of the amount of work that was done. And I think the boards of education around the province would be very interested to hear the minister say that

outside of this House.

In fact, you know, I don't think that the boards of education nor the teachers of this province need to hear the minister say it outside the House because he's said enough inside this House that it got them ticked off, whether it's he doesn't want to see boards of education squander money any more . . . And I would ask the minister, and I have asked the minister in this House, which boards did he exactly mean? Which boards did he mean were squandering the provincial tax dollars, the very limited provincial tax dollars they received? Which division was squandering the property tax dollars that they've asked property owners in their division for? Which division was it that was squandering it? Let alone his statements most recently about teachers driving up property tax. It's the teachers that are driving up property tax, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So when I hear the minister say I wouldn't apologize for the way things have gone in education over the last four years, I believe boards would believe that, and also teachers would believe that, Mr. Speaker, because they've heard enough from this minister that I think it has given them a pretty good idea of the minister's intent on this whole issue.

But I want to get back to the fact that school divisions in this province have done exactly what the provincial government has asked; they have amalgamated. And I think of the one example . . . There are many, many examples of school divisions. For example, there was Timberline, Canora, Kamsack, Wapella, Shamrock, and Yorkdale that were school divisions that amalgamated once and then amalgamated a second time. There were six divisions that amalgamated into two or three divisions, and then those two or three divisions amalgamated again, all within the last six or seven years doing exactly what the NDP government had asked them. And then this minister comes along and says, I am sorry; that makes absolutely no sense whatsoever — we know what's best for all the school divisions in the province, we know how it should be run, and quite frankly you don't, and you wouldn't get to where we want you to go, so we'll do it for you.

And that was the response to the Boughen Commission which, again, I cannot stress enough the Boughen Commission was set up to look at how do we fund education, not the governance and structure of school divisions, but how do we fund education. The minister has had the debate in this province for the last six months on the structure and governance of school divisions which has done very, very little to address the real problem.

Now it's interesting that this provincial government has just received another windfall. And I remember about a year and a half ago they said, well we're going to put one-third of any transfer payment we get from the federal government towards education, not really ever expecting to get the windfall of transfer payment that they got. They didn't have a clue that that money was coming. Now that that money came — they ended up with a little over \$300 million — now they're saying, oh you know we did say that. We were going to give one-third to property tax. Now, I guess, we're going to have to.

So they're putting I guess about \$100 million into property tax and it's going to be done over two years, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They're putting \$100 million into property tax that will be used up \$55 million a year — 110 million — \$55 million a year for

two years.

I would like to go back to a little bit earlier in my speech when I said they had \$50 million, they put it in for two years; now they've got 110 million and they're putting it in for two years. Guess what's going to happen after the two years, Mr. Speaker? My prediction is what's going to happen after the two years that this \$110 million has been spent, they're going to say, well geez, maybe we should strike another commission on looking on how do we properly fund education in this province because the government for years and years and years have failed to deal with the root cause. And that is getting the reliance of funding education off of property tax and more on to the provincial government's coffers where it belongs and exactly where it is in every other province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So on the first point on my sheet here . . . Of all the points of about 15 that I want to talk about, the first point was that we disagree with the whole concept of forcing amalgamation. You know, I've heard the minister different times say, well we think that forced . . . voluntary amalgamation has gone as far as it can go. And there could have been nothing from the truth, Mr. Deputy Speaker, absolutely nothing from the truth.

He said it over and over again, that we have gone down the voluntary amalgamation path as far as we possibly can, and there would be no more voluntary amalgamation. Well I would have asked the minister to come down to Assiniboia with the Minister of Labour and myself and the member from Wood River and listen to three boards of education in that area that had been working for the last six months to a year, working on an amalgamation plan to amalgamate three boards into one.

In fact when you talk to a number of boards around in the SSBA [Saskatchewan School Boards Association] there was as many as 12 to 13 boards looking at further amalgamation on their own. So whoever gave the advice to the minister, whoever led the minister to believe that there would be no more voluntary amalgamation, was either misleading the minister or the minister was misled on his own because there are many, many boards of education that were in the process of furthering the amalgamation agenda in the province.

And I think it's very, very important to take into consideration not just the numbers of amalgamation and not just looking at the map and the structure of school divisions after. But if you talk to the trustees that have been through the amalgamation issue, if you talk to the trustees of the Indian Head School Division, the Cupar School Division, and the Buffalo Plains School Division, if you talk to those members when they were going through the whole process and negotiating to amalgamate and you talk to them after, they felt that they've built a culture within that division, that new Qu'Appelle Valley School Division because they worked on the issue, issue by issue by issue to make it work. They took ownership of it, and it would be and has been a very successful board for the limited time that it got to operate — two years — because of the culture that they set up when they were going through the amalgamation.

Now the minister seems to believe that if we strike a task force that looks at the map — which he's done, and the map has come out — and said, we only have really room for 12 rural boards in our province, that's all we need. I would guarantee it

will take years and years, if it ever happens, to have the culture, the camaraderie, the trust of trustees on a board, which is extremely important to have those boards function properly.

Unfortunately this minister has not considered any of that or his department has considered none of that because we're hearing right now from trustees that are saying, yes, I'm thinking about running. I'm going to go and sit on this board, I'm going to have to drive an hour and a half, two hours, to the board meeting. I don't have a clue where the other people are going to be from. I've never met them. I guess we're going to try and make this thing work. We've got no corporate history. We've got nothing. We are starting from scratch, Mr. Speaker.

And that is why amalgamation worked in this province, because boards took ownership of that process and they made those new boards work because they were the architects of it, Mr. Speaker. And that is completely lost.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, there are many, many other issues. Today we had the opportunity of meeting with a number of trustees from around the province that came and still wanted to show their displeasure and, you know, disagreement with the whole process that this provincial government has gone through. I asked them, had they met with the minister, because frankly, when the rubber hits the pavement, who's going to make this final decision? I mean, he's already made it, I guess. But it's the minister that makes the final decision. And I said, have you talked to the minister about that? Well no, he doesn't want to meet with us. He doesn't want to meet with us because they disagree with his vision.

And I remember talking to this very issue different times here and the minister would stand up and say, watch what you're saying because there's a lot of boards in favour.

I would submit that there are a lot of boards in this province — there are 58 boards that are being affected — by far the majority of those boards may be silent, but don't mistake that silence for agreement with your plan, Mr. Speaker, because that silence means absolutely nothing when it comes to agreeing with the whole issue of forced amalgamation. They don't agree with it but board after board and trustee after trustee that we've talked to are simply saying, it's a done deal. We can't go against it. If we go against it, we're going to be punished somewhere down the line because that's exactly the way this government operates. And so they're absolutely scared to come out and voice their true displeasure with the process. They've thrown up their hands and they've said, you know, he's going to do it; he's not listening to any of our concerns; he's not looking at the Manitoba experience.

We are talking to the delegates, the trustees that were in today and the . . . for example, a number of trustees from the Melville-Deer Park school board along with the director in talking about some of the cons. I mean it's easy to hear the minister talk about the pros of this whole amalgamation issue, but they were talking about all the different negatives that I don't believe that the department looked at and I don't believe that the minister looked at when it went down this path.

And the Melville situation is a classic example and I wish the Deputy Premier would comment on that. I was going to . . . I wish the Deputy Premier would comment on that, that very thing.

Because the Melville issue is a very unique issue. They've got a comprehensive board there that is combined with the Catholic, the separate board. And what has happened on this new process is that the Catholic board does not feel comfortable entering into an agreement, a partnership with the Melville Comprehensive School any more, because it's not the Melville Comprehensive School they're entering into any more. It's the bigger division as a whole. And they feel that they don't feel comfortable with that.

So what they've done is the Catholic section in Melville is joining with Yorkton. They had a perfectly great situation operating there and I know, I know it was probably not unique in the province. There are many other examples of it. But it's an example that, because of the forced amalgamation, the short-sightedness, not looking at every issue, that is being blown apart. It was a perfectly working operation that is blown apart because I truly do not believe the minister of the department gave it a minute's thought.

They didn't look at it. And you know, it's funny that they didn't give it a minute's thought because the minister was gracious enough to go out and meet with them, but after that meeting obviously went back to Regina and somewhere around Fort Qu'Appelle forgot everything that the board said, because it never did make it to Regina, Mr. Speaker.

But this number of trustees that were in Regina today that were talking about the different experiences that is going to affect their board . . . but also more importantly let's look around us at other provinces that have gone through the whole amalgamation process.

The province of Manitoba, which is of similar size . . . Often we get blamed for looking west and comparing ourselves to Alberta. We're not going to do that; we're going to look to Manitoba. They feel a little more comfortable when we look to Manitoba. And it's probably a better comparison because they've got an NDP government there that went through the whole process of forced amalgamation. We have an NDP government here, far too long I would submit, but we do have an NDP government here, and we're going through the same process. The only difference is, is that Manitoba was a couple of years in advance. Manitoba has been through this process a couple of years ago; we're entering into this process now.

[16:00]

And some of the points that have come from Manitoba . . . Now we should be able to learn from the experience that has happened in Manitoba, but we have to look at the results before we can learn from them. And that's exactly what the trustees that were in meeting with our caucus today were explaining — the Manitoba experience; what has happened over the last number of years through the forced amalgamation in Manitoba.

Now Manitoba school boards were told that forced amalgamation would save \$10 million. They were told that they

would save \$10 million. Now let's compare that to what the minister in our province has said. What has the minister in our province said about forced amalgamation? Well there's three reasons, there's three reasons for this forced amalgamation.

One of the main reasons was that we will save money, that there'll be more money that will go to the classroom. Well now for some reason, we can do it in Saskatchewan when Manitoba has been through it for the last number of years, said they would save \$10 million. In the first year the cost was \$17.1 million extra, with a minimum of \$7.8 million spent annually more because of the amalgamation process that Manitoba has entered through.

Now for some reason, some reason, we feel in our province of Saskatchewan that this NDP government is so much smarter than the NDP government in Manitoba that they will save a whole bunch of money when we know for a fact that Manitoba NDP government, it cost them more. So, Mr. Speaker, the whole issue around, there is huge savings to be gained by amalgamation, is really questioned. But it's not only questioned by the people that were in today, it's questioned by every board.

And like I said, this minister cannot take the fact that boards are silent or not opposing as a form of agreement with what he's doing. Because boards all over the province are saying that, you can have economies of scale, but when you get past a certain size those economies are thrown out the window and it starts costing more. And it truly does cost more, and I think we see that in Manitoba in the very example that we have right next door to us.

A number of other issues, after three years the Manitoba government now questions the increased costs in education. Many people in that province were saying: why weren't we told? Well, we have an opportunity now to tell people in our province of Saskatchewan. Perhaps Manitoba didn't . . . hadn't done all the background work, all the homework — oh boy, it sounds a little similar to where we are right now in our province — but we've got the Manitoba experience to learn from.

And the people in the Manitoba education system are saying: why weren't we given all the facts, why weren't we given the full bill of goods on this issue? You know, and I think that's what we're going to be hearing in this province. I have heard from trustee after trustee saying, you know, I disagree with the whole point about forced amalgamation but the minister is saying we're going to save some money. I can't see how it's going to happen, it just doesn't make sense, but I guess it's going to happen.

But unfortunately, if we look just next door we'll find that the amount of saving that the minister said we were going to see just isn't there. In fact, it's going to go the opposite direction and we're going to end up . . . it's going to end up costing us more.

And the minister questions that. He says you think that it's going to cost more. Well again, I would like to know the evidence that's he's got to show the savings that he's projecting. He's projecting millions and millions of dollars of savings. And I would like to know where that is.

You know, I remember a number of years ago, just shortly after I was elected to this House, when the whole issue of forced amalgamation of rural municipalities . . . And although, I would say most municipalities were opposed to it right off the bat, there were a number of councillors that were saying show us where we can save the money by amalgamating. If you'd come with a case study of how we save money by amalgamating there'd be many, many rural municipalities that would have looked at that.

But this is no different than the municipal amalgamation debate. The minister is saying we can save all this money, but they have not once come with a case study to say here's the amount of money this area can expect to see, that this area can expect to go back to education.

And without that — there's a good reason why the government won't do that, Mr. Speaker, I'd submit there's a very good reason why the government won't do that — because it sets a benchmark and it gives us something in two years time, in three years time, to call the government to account for. The government does not have to account, in three years time, because it's never set a benchmark as to how much money they expect to save. There's no way the government's going to come out and say each school division going from 58 now down to 12, these school divisions, 12 school divisions are going to find — pick a number — \$15 million extra that they can put right into the classroom. The minister will not come out and say that and neither will the department. And there's a very good reason for it because, in three year's time, they know they can't back up the numbers that they say are there. And it's evident when you take the example right here in Manitoba . . . right there in Manitoba. Okay, Mr. Speaker? So definitely, the cost was one of the issues. The cost was one of the issues.

Another issue was better education. It's going to create a better education for students in the province. I won't disagree that there are, that there are areas where because of low, low enrolment, perhaps not all the programs were offered; that may be an issue. But by increasing the governance of a school division does not necessarily increase the quality of education.

We're dealing with the number of trustees in a school division. Now he's saying that in an area of the Southwest, for example, we can't have 10 school divisions with 8 trustees per school division, 80 trustees. We've got to have 1 or 2 school divisions with maybe 10 to 20 . . . or, I guess 2 school divisions, 20 trustees. So you've dropped from 80 to 20 trustees. That all makes sense, but where does that deal with the whole issue of better education?

Better education is not telling the teachers that they're the reason for driving up property tax. Better education is treating teachers like professionals and complimenting them for the job that they're doing and giving them professional development so that they are able to bring the latest technologies and teaching procedures into the classroom. That's how you better education. Not by taking a shot at; we've got too many school trustees in the Southwest, we can't have 80, we can only have 20. That does not dictate better education, Mr. Speaker.

Well, the minister says there's only 12. We go from 80 down to 12. We can play the numbers game and the numbers game, we

can play all day. Does that dictate better education in the classroom? And no, it doesn't, Mr. Speaker.

So there's the issue of we're going to save a lot of money, the issue that we have, there'll be better education. And the third issue for the amalgamation is escaping me now.

I certainly do know that one of the major issues, one of the major issues that . . . around the whole amalgamation piece was the whole fact of equity in taxation and dealing with equity in taxation. Now the minister says by, instead of having 58 tax regions, we are down to 12 tax regions and that's going to address zero or negative grant boards because that's what it was directed at, that was one of the biggest problems. When you go to the Southeast, around the Estevan area and the Weyburn area, it just absolutely drove the minister nuts when he'd look at the map and seeing the mill rate in the Estevan-Weyburn area, and he would realize that those are negative grant boards. In other words they were . . . we could probably squeeze quite a bit more money in property tax out of those people.

And if you go over to the Kindersley area and the Lloydminster area, there's areas there that were negative tax and just drives the minister nuts to think that he couldn't squeeze, squeeze a little more tax dollars out of that property tax, Mr. Speaker.

And so the only way he could do that is he couldn't go to his division board and say, I'm sorry you cannot be a negative grant board. You have to raise your mill rate to 19 mills or 20 mills. That is the provincial average, even though that the Weyburn area might have been . . . the Weyburn area may have been at 16 and the . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . The minister is trying to tell me what the provincial average is.

And he wants . . . but what they're saying is that you can't stand to have one area quite a bit lower because of the oil revenues and it would be unfair. So let's address that issue. And let's put that . . . spread that tax dollar over a bigger region — a much bigger region; in fact 12 regions in our province. And so that's what's they've done.

But what they failed to realize is that given oil at \$57 a barrel right now, given some of the areas where agriculture is on the decline — partially thanks to this provincial government and the lack of funding for CAIS . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Now they laugh, they laugh at that. Obviously they weren't here . . .

An Hon. Member: — Agriculture's a big joke over there. None of them understand agriculture and it's a joke.

Mr. McMorris: — The member from . . .

An Hon. Member: — You are laughing at agriculture.

Mr. McMorris: — The member from Regina Walsh Acres, the agriculture guru from that side of the, from that side of the House, is laughing at the fact that they had nothing to do with some of the hurt on the farms here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have stood in this House day after day and told about the problems that farmers are facing because this

government failed to fund the CAIS program like it signed on. It's great to sign a contract, it sure wasn't so good to sign a cheque, Mr. Speaker. It's great to sign the contract but not so good to sign the cheque.

But let me get back to the point that I was talking about because that's certainly more important to the Bill, is the fact that the minister couldn't stand having negative grant boards so he squeezed them out and he got more revenue over 12 regions. And what I was saying is that when you take certain areas with oil prices rising and population declining, guess what position those school boards, even though there may be 12, there may be one or two of those school boards predicted in the next two or three years that are going to be in what type of position. They're going to be in the negative grant position. So all the issue . . . this whole issue of why the government decided to force amalgamation was to deal with zero grant boards or negative grant boards, will simply be out the window within two or three years.

So you know if I was a person going to run as a school trustee in the area that I happen to represent as an MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly], if I was going to be a school trustee in that area, I would go to that school board — if I happen to get elected — and we'd start sitting around the table, and we'd come up with a name for our school division, and we'd start working on the LINC [Local Implementation and Negotiation Committee] agreements. And we'd start doing all this work and we'd work for probably two to three years. We'll get everything put together. And then the minister would say, oh, oh, we've got negative grant boards again. We got zero grant boards again. Well how are we going to address that issue?

We're going to address that issue . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . we're going to address by amalgamating again. Wouldn't that do it? If we amalgamated again, if we amalgamated again, we could address that issue. So you've got . . . And doesn't that sound very, very similar. And you know that people say that history has a habit of repeating itself.

Let's go back five years ago when school divisions did exactly what the government did, amalgamated, went through the process, and then were told, sorry, that's not good enough; we're going to force you into amalgamation.

Now these people are going through the whole, exactly the same process. They're coming up with a new name. They're going through the LINC agreements. They're creating a culture within their division. And oh no, here it comes again. We're a negative grant board, guess what's going to happen? The minister is going to come out and say, geez, you know, I'm sorry, 12 boards weren't quite right. Let's go to six boards now. And they'll go through the whole process again, Mr. Speaker, all because the very first point that I made, the very first point, is that this provincial government does not know how to address the issue of overreliance of property tax for education.

So instead of going through the last 10 or 15 minutes that I've been speaking, had they addressed the first issue, if they would have addressed the first issue on properly funding education, we wouldn't have had to worry about Bill No. 80. We wouldn't have had to worry about the whole issue of amalgamation and forced amalgamation. And you wouldn't have had to listen to

me here speak about the issues that are faced all over rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, because the true issue is, when is this province going to take the responsibility for funding education through its coffers and not the property tax owners of this province, Mr. Speaker?

[16:15]

So, Mr. Speaker, I would move to adjourn debate on Bill No. 80 until we hear from many, many more stakeholders in the education system.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Indian Head-Milestone that debate on Bill No. 80, The Education Amendment Act, 2004 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. The Chair recognizes the Government Deputy House Leader.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that this House do now adjourn.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

[The Assembly adjourned at 16:16.]

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