



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

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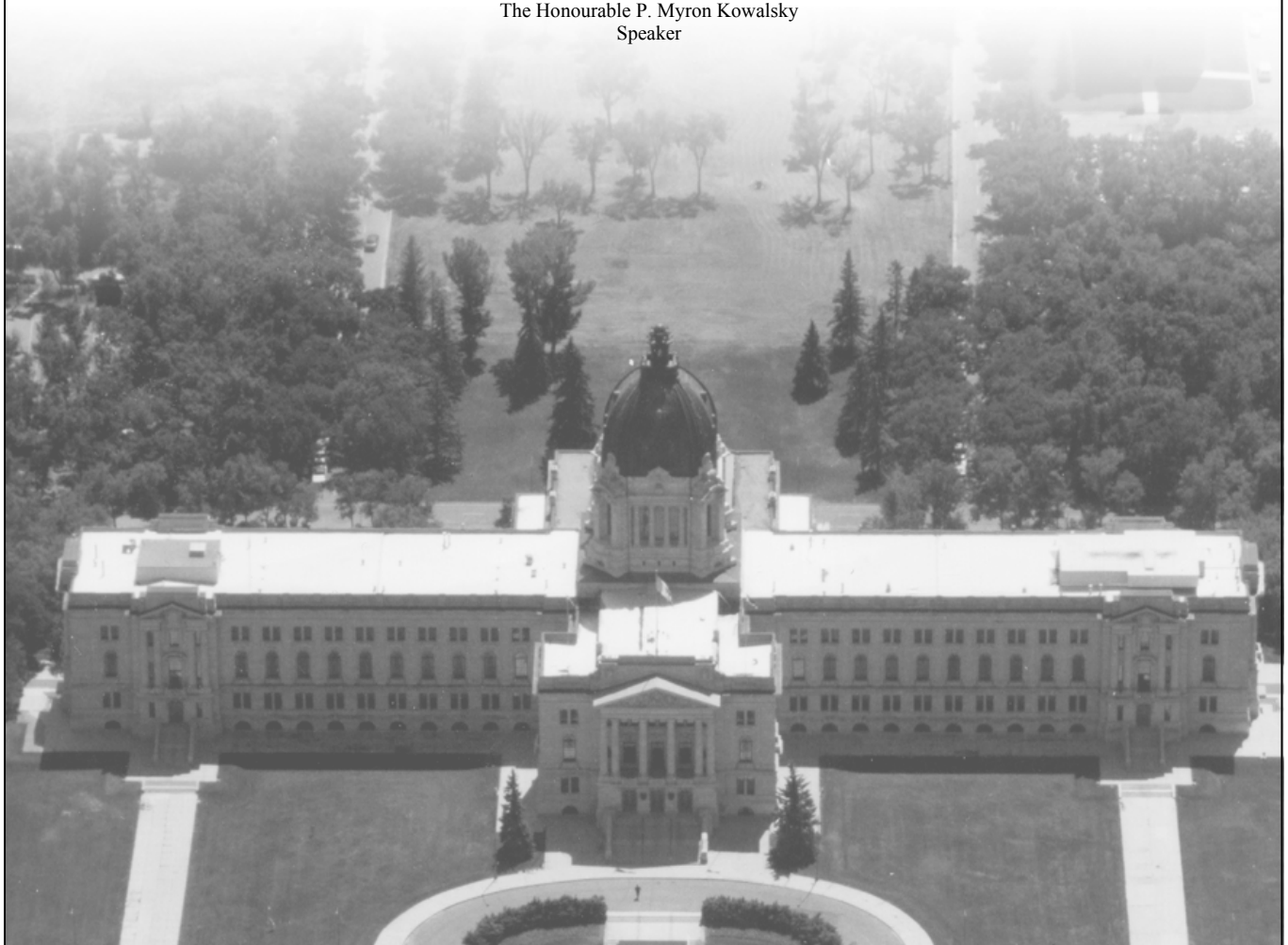
**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

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(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

<b>Name of Member</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>	<b>Constituency</b>
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 Cypress Hills.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise on behalf of constituents of Cypress Hills to present a petition reflecting their concerns with forced amalgamation of school divisions. The prayer reads as follows:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, these two pages of petitions are signed by constituents from the community of Tompkins and Piapot. I so present.

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

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today on behalf of people who are concerned about the epidemic of crystal meth that is taking over parts of Saskatchewan:

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

The people who have signed this petition are from Wadena and Saskatoon. I so present.

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition regarding the Claybank Brick Plant. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reconsider the decision to reduce funding to the Claybank Brick Plant.

Mr. Speaker,

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

This petition is signed by people from North Battleford to Sault

Ste. Marie. I so present.

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Arm River-Watrous.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here, citizens that want to improve cellular coverage in rural Saskatchewan:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take all necessary action to install the technical equipment necessary to ensure that all rural areas of Saskatchewan are protected by reliable cellular phone coverage.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens from Jansen, Raymore, and Semans. I so present.

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Kindersley.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise in the Assembly today to present a petition on behalf of citizens of west central Saskatchewan concerned with the forced amalgamation of 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.

Mr. Speaker, there are many, many names on this petition from the town of Unity. I so present.

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

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am certainly pleased to be able to present a petition on behalf of citizens who are gravely concerned with 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 its 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 this petition all come from the community of Wilkie. I so present.

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for

Rosetown-Elrose.

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have yet another petition to halt the forced amalgamation of school divisions. Among their concerns are that the proposed changes to amalgamate 59 school divisions by January 2006 will not prove to be cost effective. 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, communities in the constituency of Rosetown-Elrose represented on this petition include Rosetown, Fiske, Plenty, Stranraer, and Sovereign. And I am pleased to present this petition on their behalf.

#### READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

A petition concerning cabin lots in the area of the Rafferty dam; that's sessional paper 729;

A petition concerning cellular phone coverage in rural areas; that's 730.

And addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 180, 637, 638, 640, 715, and 720.

#### PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Chair of the Private Bills Committee.

##### Standing Committee on Private Bills

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'd like to present the third report of the Standing Committee on Private Bills. I'd like to move, seconded by the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood:

That the third report of the Standing Committee on Private Bills now be concurred in.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member for Regina Dewdney, seconded by the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood that the third report of the Standing Committee on Private Bills be now concurred in. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Question.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — The motion is carried and pursuant to rule 82, the private Bills 304, 305, and 306 are deemed to have been read the first time and are ordered for second reading on the next private members' day.

#### NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 90 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Agriculture: what steps are you taking to control the outbreak of an unprecedented deer mouse infestation in west central Saskatchewan that threatens to destroy crops to an even larger extent than last year, and which also worries residents about contact with the deadly hantavirus associated with deer mice?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Cut Knife-Turtleford.

**Mr. Chisholm:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 90 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Learning: what was the total cost to date of moving Saskatchewan Learning to its new facilities?

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I have a second question. I give notice that I shall on day no. 90 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Learning: are the former offices of Saskatchewan Learning presently occupied; if so, by whom? And was the asbestos problem addressed prior to the new tenants' occupancy?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Regina Coronation Park.

**Mr. Trew:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Legislative Assembly some 22 grade 9 students from O'Neill High School in the constituency of Regina Coronation Park. They're with their teacher, Mr. Chabot.

And they have taken a little bit of a different tack, Mr. Speaker. They've got a number of students who've been here before so they're doing a student-guided tour, and the student guides are Esther, Shila, and Stephanie. And I know that this group has got a couple of other stops to make this day as well.

Mr. Speaker, I invite you and all members of the Assembly to welcome this fine group of grade 9 students and their teacher from O'Neill High School. Welcome.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Moose Jaw North.

**Mr. Hagel:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three people who are seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. Along with intern, Kyle Toffan, who is working with me until the end of next week, are a couple of people who are destined to become related to him in the not too distant future.

We have in the gallery with Kyle, Mervin and Denise Bunnell, who farm just north and west of Moose Jaw, and because of Kyle's involvement here have taken a new interest, not only in the building, but the proceedings here and are coming to see Kyle at work. They are enthusiastically looking forward to the spring seeding, which is not far away and being aided by the moisture outside today.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members to show a warm welcome to Mr. and Mrs. Bunnell.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

#### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

##### First Granddaughter for Sergeant-at-Arms

**Ms. Eagles:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one of those special events in a person's life is when the grandchildren begin to arrive. Today is one of those special days for our Sergeant-at-Arms, Patrick Shaw. A new granddaughter, Chloe Brooke Knight, weighing in at 6 pounds, 11 ounces, was born this afternoon, the first granddaughter, likely the first grandchild of many to come hopefully.

And as I've found, Mr. Speaker, as we grow older there are many things that become so important and one of those things is looking forward to a special bond that will grow and develop over the years that they spend together. So maybe the Sergeant-at-Arms could stand up and take a bow for such a great job well done and . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Ms. Eagles:** — And I'm sure all members will join me in congratulating Patrick, his wife Wendy, and the proud parents, Erin and Kevin Knight. And we hope that all is well with your new granddaughter. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Regina Elphinstone.

##### First Nations University of Canada Powwow

**Mr. McCall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the weekend, myself and many members on this side of the House had the honour of attending one of the largest and longest-running powwows in the country — the 27th Annual First Nations University of Canada Powwow.

Mr. Speaker, powwows are important social, spiritual, and cultural gatherings that promote cross-cultural awareness and understanding. This weekend more than 3,000 dancers, singers, drummers, and spectators from across North America gathered to celebrate traditional First Nations music, dress, song, and dance.

Mr. Speaker, this powwow was a celebration of life and provided participants with an opportunity to renew old friendships and to begin new ones. It gives students a chance to visit with family and friends and to say thank you for supporting them during their educational journey.

Mr. Speaker, the host institution of course is the First Nations University, which is tremendously important not only to the First Nations community but also to everyone in Saskatchewan, I believe.

Mr. Speaker, this weekend people of all ages came together to compete in a variety of performance categories. In addition to dancing there was also a trade show that featured Aboriginal arts and crafts and a selection of very tasty traditional food.

I ask all members to join me in acknowledging the powwow committee for hosting an excellent event, the First Nations University of Canada for hosting. Congratulations to all the performers and a special tansi to powwow MC [master of ceremonies] extraordinaire, Mike Pinay. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

##### Kenaston and District Dinner Theatre

**Mr. Morgan:** — Mr. Speaker, last Saturday my wife and I had the privilege of attending the Kenaston and district annual dinner theatre. It was a great meal and wonderful entertainment.

The Kenaston and district group has been doing this for approximately the last 10 years to raise operating funds for their community theatre, which is a new building which has now been paid for by a variety of community events. Many hundreds of thousands of dollars have been raised for that purpose through community events and I think the people from Kenaston should be commended.

We noted that the MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] from Arm River and Carrot River Valley were there working as waiters that evening. I'm not sure whether they were merely politicking or training for the potential of an unplanned career change. Having witnessed their ability as waiters, I would like to urge them to work hard as MLAs and ensure their re-election

because I don't believe that they have a career in the food services industry.

[13:45]

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask all members to join with me in congratulating the citizens of Kenaston and area on their hard work and the excellent events that they put on and the fact that they have created a community centre that has now become the focal centre for that part of the province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Moose Jaw North.

### Celebrate Saskatchewan On Ice

**Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, along with the Premier, it was my honour to attend an event that will surely be remembered as one of the outstanding evenings of our centennial year.

Mr. Speaker, Celebrate Saskatchewan On Ice saw over 1,000 skaters ranging in age from 19 to as young as 4 come together from all across Saskatchewan in the largest skating extravaganza in the history of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, the choreography, the costumes, and in particular the enthusiasm of the young participants was extraordinary, a living example of our centennial theme, 100 years of heart.

Mr. Speaker, with nearly 7,000 people in the stands it was the largest single audience ever for the skaters. It was also their first time performing to live music, and they were pumped.

Mr. Speaker, it was an evening of dreams — dreams long cherished coming true, with new dreams for the future being born. Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the Co-Chairs of Celebrate Saskatchewan On Ice, Marge Auringer and Marilyn McEwen for turning their vision of this event into reality.

I want to acknowledge as well Blaise and Yvette Kirchgessner of the Clavet Figure Skating Club who had the formidable task of doing the choreography for the event. And I want to acknowledge the time and efforts of all the 150 volunteers whose time and efforts were invaluable ensuring the show was a success.

And of course, Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the skaters themselves, who gave such an outstanding demonstration of Saskatchewan's centennial spirit. Thank you to them all.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

### Fishing Lake Hockey League Champions

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, after a seven-game series against the Theodore Buffalos, the Canora

Cobras senior hockey team is the Fishing Lake Hockey League's 2004-2005 champions.

This senior men's hockey league consists of teams from Preeceville, Canora, Kelliher, Kelvington, Wadena, Springside, Foam Lake, and last year's champions, the Theodore Buffalos.

After splitting the first four games, Canora took game five with a 4-0 win due to outstanding goaltending by Cobras' Dwayne Boddy. Crowd counts in both Canora and Theodore ranged from 800 to 900 fans for each game. Many of the Canora fans in attendance on Friday night hoped to see the Cobras win the series at home, but it was not to be. The Buffalos took game six with a 9-3 win to tie the series at three games apiece.

The final game of the series returned to Theodore. Cobras had the lead at the end of the first period, but the Buffalos skated back to tie the game 2-2 at the end of the second. There were many chances to take the lead in the third period, but goaltenders on both sides of the ice played remarkably. Then, 27 seconds into overtime, the Cobras' Scott Marchinko scored the championship winning goal.

Hearty congratulations go out to the Cobras' coach, Cal Homeniuk, team trainers Nichol Martinuik and Matt Hrynkiw, office manager Carla Bugera, the team, and the entire Canora Cobras hockey organization for a job well done.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Centre.

### Seniors Walk Length of Province to Celebrate Centennial

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — Mr. Speaker, a group of Saskatchewan senior citizens is travelling the length of our province in celebration of the centennial, while establishing a foundation that promotes good health and well-being. The group left on March 11 and started their journey on cross-country skis in the northernmost region of the province. Upon reaching Black Lake, they continued their trek on foot and are now joined by a motorhome as they walk in shifts, rotating every 16 kilometres.

Mr. Speaker, the journey from Selwyn Lake to the US [United States] border just south of Estevan is estimated at 1,572 kilometres and was expected to take 45 days. So far, Mr. Speaker, the group is ahead of schedule, walking about 80 kilometres a day. And in fact, Mr. Speaker, the group may be in Regina as we speak. We hope they stop by the legislature later this afternoon or tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, the walkers start their walk at 7:30 in the morning until about 5 or 6 in the afternoon.

Cliff Shockey is the organizer of this journey and came up with this idea as the ideal way to recognize Saskatchewan's centennial and to promote healthy living. Since then, Mr. Shockey has been collecting pledges to start a foundation that raises awareness about exercise and good health. He's hoping the walk will get people thinking about the lifestyle they're living.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all my colleagues to join me in commending these senior citizens for promoting healthy activity and for embarking on an impressive adventure to commemorate this province's 100th anniversary. I wish them a safe and enjoyable trip. Thank you very much.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

#### Lac La Ronge Indian Band Elects New Chief

**Ms. Draude:** — On behalf of the Saskatchewan Party, I'd like to offer my congratulations to Tammy Cook-Searson, who was recently elected as the new chief of the Lac La Ronge Indian Band.

The election of Ms. Cook-Searson is a historic and proud moment for Saskatchewan's largest Indian band. This is the first time that this band, which boasts over 7,000 members, has elected a woman as chief. And while she has large shoes to fill to replace former chief, Harry Cook, who served as chief for 18 years, I know she is well prepared for the challenge and looking forward to working with band members on the task ahead.

Prior to election as chief, Ms. Cook-Searson has served as the band councillor for the Lac La Ronge Band. Along with the chief and other councillors, she served on the board of Kitsaki Management Ltd. partnership, which has built a successful track record since its inception in 1986.

Being an elected official holds challenges for everyone who seeks public office. It's not always easy to balance the varied needs of constituents, and in this case band members. I particularly commend women who get involved in politics, a traditionally male dominated profession.

The words that hold special meaning for me in this career are the ones spoken by Gandhi, "... be the change you wish to see in the world."

On behalf of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, we wish Chief Cook-Searson all the best in her new duties. And once again, congratulations.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

#### ORAL QUESTIONS

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

#### Timing of Memorandum of Agreement Regarding Health Care Workers

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, an independent tribunal said there was political interference by the NDP [New Democratic Party] in the joint job evaluation deal that was signed on the eve of an election call. Yesterday the Minister of Health also admitted to political interference in these negotiations.

My questions are for the Premier: what government officials interfered in this negotiating process and what role did the Premier's office play in circumventing the normal negotiation process to benefit the NDP on the eve of an election?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, I think the member opposite once again shows that the research that he's got at his caucus, and with what he's doing, doesn't get it right. It was very clearly laid out in the newspaper this morning that:

Susan Antosh, [who's the] president of the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations ... took issue with the tribunal's contention that government officials had drawn up the memorandum of agreement by "cherry-picking" from proposals made by the unions and by employers represented by SAHO. It was each side, not the government, that drew up the deal, she said.

That's a direct answer to the member's question, and thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on budget day the Premier was more than happy to jump to his feet and tell us how he supports fair collective bargaining and he would never interfere in the collective bargaining process. Now we find out that's not true. And the Premier isn't even getting up to answer the questions any more. Mr. Speaker, the independent tribunal said this agreement was incoherent and distorted because the normal negotiating process was circumvented for large "p" political purposes.

My question is for the Premier: what was his role in this blatant political interference in the bargaining process?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, when agreements are reached in collective bargaining, they involve many parties and many different groups of people. But it's at the bargaining table where that happens. It's very clear that each party at the bargaining table act as representatives either from the union or from management. They are given certain mandates to go and bargain, and when they do that there are times where they have to go back to the employer or to the union and say, give me some other instructions, we can't get that to work.

Mr. Speaker, what's happened in this situation was that they had been bargaining for over two years to come to an agreement. There was required some more resources, I think we can say in retrospect. That kind of request came forward to the appropriate processes in government and there were some resources that were available. And that allowed them to then enter into an agreement which was as described by the president

of SAHO [Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations].

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, everyone is now admitting to political interference in these negotiations. The president of SEIU [Service Employees' International Union] said, and, Mr. Speaker, I'm quoting now, "It sure as hell was political."

Minister of Health said, and I quote, "In all public sector negotiations, politics, timing of elections, they are all factors and I think this is no different."

Mr. Speaker, does the Premier agree with that? Does politics and the timing of elections play a role in all public sector negotiations?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not even sure how to answer that question, because it's so naive. I think what you have to recognize in public sector bargaining, whether you're in Europe or United States or Canada or Saskatchewan, there're always issues around timing of election, who's elected, how that works. That's just part of what happens. And ultimately it is the taxpayers and voters in a particular province that will end up paying for that and it will be based on how well the government has managed all kinds of issues including collective bargaining.

Mr. Speaker, those kinds of issues continue throughout the mandates. It's unfortunate — but I think fortunate for the people of Saskatchewan but unfortunate for that member — that he never has and never will have the opportunity to be involved in that process.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's clear that the minister has indicated that this NDP government sees politics and timing of elections as key roles in public sector bargaining. The negotiations had been dragging on for four years. Then all of a sudden, on the eve of an election, the NDP suddenly found millions of dollars to come up with a settlement.

In fact, I received an internal memo from CUPE [Canadian Union of Public Employees] that says, and I quote:

An agreement was reached, after the government of Saskatchewan intervened and approved the funding . . . on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2003. SAHO was unwilling to bargain . . . and signed the agreement reluctantly . . .

Mr. Speaker, CUPE says the NDP approved extra funding to make this last minute deal. The Premier would have been the only person to have known about this approval of new funding. Will the Premier admit that he interfered in the negotiating process?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, once again, I would like to talk about the member's naiveté about this because practically every single deal involves parties bargaining. If there aren't sufficient funds for the government bargaining committee or, in this case, for health, the SAHO bargaining committee, what do they do? They say we need some more funds, we need some more room to bargain. And they go back to the government and through the processes in government which include public sector bargaining, Treasury Board, all of those places. And, Mr. Speaker, that's just how the process works.

Now I think, Mr. Speaker, part of the challenge for the member opposite is that he may want to talk to the person who wrote this report and find out why he said these things. But we know from the people who involved that they would be very much willing to tell him that they had been bargaining hard for a couple of years and they finally had all of the pieces together to make a deal.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

[14:00]

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

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Mr. Speaker, it's pretty clear from the tribunal document, and the minister can indicate the members that were on that tribunal that they drew a conclusion from the information that was provided to them. On the eve of an election these unions that negotiated were able to get a 13.3 per cent increase. But the minute the election was over, the NDP slapped on a 0, 1, and 1 wage mandate on all the other public sector unions. And even some of the workers who received a \$1,000 lump sum payment may have to pay some of that money back.

It just goes to show the NDP has no problem manipulating the collective bargaining process. The NDP has no problem using public sector workers for its own political purposes. Mr. Speaker, why is the Premier using workers for his own political gain?

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, in the province of Saskatchewan, the health sector is a very important employer. There are many people who work and provide health care for all of the citizens of the province. and so it's absolutely crucial that you end up working hard to get an agreement. Now practically, there are many issues and many things that come together when an agreement is reached. And part of that is a bargaining process that moves through and takes the opportunity when an



agreement is available to be reached.

And, Mr. Speaker, we see that again and again. Sometimes it involves a strike; sometimes it involves many days of people testing each other's sort of will to resolve things. But always, Mr. Speaker, we believe the best agreement is reached at the table no matter what the process is around how to get there. And, Mr. Speaker, we're going to get there and make sure that all these things work.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Krawetz:** — That's pretty clear and it's been verified by this tribunal that said that there was not a negotiated process — that this government interfered. No wonder so many teachers and nurses and other public sector workers are angry at this Premier and this NDP government. They see how the NDP uses the people. They see how the NDP say one thing before an election and then they do exactly the opposite after the election.

Mr. Speaker, there was not one word from the NDP about 0, 1, and 1 before the election. In fact, the Premier had millions of dollars to step in and circumvent the negotiating process. That's why so many public sector workers are feeling betrayed by this NDP government. And the Minister of Health tells them to get over it. How arrogant can one get? Mr. Speaker, when will the Premier get over it and stop using public sector workers?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, yesterday the member opposite was trying to figure out why some groups would be quite interested in the timing of the election as it related to resolving labour issues. And, Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of quotes from those members that might make a difference in how people see how labour negotiations go. We have the member from Wood River who says:

The whole bureaucracy, the whole civil service, has to be cleaned out. Every socialist system in the world has collapsed under its own weight. I can wield a pretty good sized broom, and you know what I would do with the broom in there.

We also, also have that fairly calm former Health critic who even says when he talks about civil servants:

We need to reward excellent performance and clean out the dead wood.

Mr. Speaker, those are not the kinds of comments you make about valued employees in your health care system.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

### Strike by Emergency Medical Technicians in Yorkton

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, 15 emergency medical technicians in the city of Yorkton are now on strike. The main issue for those working in Yorkton is wage parity. The EMTs [emergency medical technician] say they are paid \$5 an hour less than their counterparts in Melville, a town as close as 25 miles away. Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain why ambulance workers in Yorkton are paid significantly less than their counterparts just a few miles down the road?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, this matter that's being raised by the member relates to bargaining between a private sector contractor who contracts to provide those services to the Sunrise Health Authority and the particular union involved. The kind of funding that's available on a province-wide basis for ambulance service is done on a common policy across the province.

**The Speaker:** — Order, please. Order. Order, please. Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, the funding that's provided for ambulance services across the province is on a similar basis, is a common policy, and that money is available through the Sunrise Regional Health Authority for this particular private contractor. And we encourage them to resolve this matter at the bargaining table.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that was an amazing answer. Right now we have a strike in Yorkton. The safety of Yorkton residents are at stake and that minister doesn't want any part of it. And yet days before an election call, that government got involved in the process when it was to their benefit, not depending on the people of Saskatchewan's safety, just the NDP, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan EMS [emergency medical services] association has been lobbying the NDP government to solve the wage parody issue between public ambulance services and contract services. This government has taken extraordinary measures to implement job evaluation for the health sector at an estimated cost of about \$65 million.

Can the minister tell us why this issue hasn't been addressed and will he address this issue today?

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, as I said before we have a

common level of funding for these kinds of contracted services across the province, and there are many other ambulance services that are operating using this funding in a very positive way. We encourage the members of the union in this particular case and their employer, who is a third party contractor with the health region, to go back to the bargaining table and sort this one out. Mr. Speaker, that's how we resolve labour issues here in Saskatchewan and that's how they'll continue to be resolved.

**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 understand that a few replacement workers have been hired but nowhere near the 15 EMTs that are now on strike.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: how will this strike affect the quality of emergency care for people living in Yorkton and area, and what kind of a contingency plan does this government have to ensure Yorkton and area residents will receive timely emergency care?

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — The regional health authority has made very clear plans for providing care. They operate the ambulance services in Melville, Langenburg, and Ituna; and all of those services have been on alert and are providing services as required in the Yorkton area. This is the plan that they've had for some time, and we know that it will continue to provide good care for the people in that area.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

#### **Guidelines for Waiting Lists for Medical Procedures**

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the waiting time alliance of Canada has reported this week . . . now the alliance is a group of doctors from six medical specialities, and this group has said regarding the waiting lists that they are, quote, "alarmingly long." There is no place in Canada that knows that better than right here in Saskatchewan.

When will the minister adopt the guidelines that were set out by this group of respected physicians in Canada?

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, the guidelines that we set out about 13 months ago have become a model for the rest of the country around how to develop guidelines for surgery. Mr. Speaker, what the special committee of the Canadian Medical Association has done is added their ideas into this because they know that the provinces and territories and the federal government are in the process of discussing national guidelines as it relates to specific areas.

I would inform the member that last week in Toronto there was

a meeting called Taming the Queue which included experts from around the world and every part of Canada. There were 28 speakers on one day, and I'm informed that in every single one of those speeches they talked about the groundbreaking work done in Saskatchewan around wait lists.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, that is amazing to think that when we've got some of the longest waiting lists in Canada, that they would be using Saskatchewan as a model. It's not a model of what to achieve; it's a model of what not to do, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, an example of that is a waiting time alliance said that radiation therapy for cancer treatments should be done within 10 days. Here in Saskatchewan, Dr. David Popkin, head of the cancer centre for Regina and Saskatoon, says their goal is 50 days between initial visit of a radiation oncologist to the start of treatment. Let's see, the national average, 10 days; Saskatchewan, 50 days. You call that a model, Mr. Speaker? Does the minister call that a model? Why such a huge discrepancy between what we offer here in Saskatchewan and what is targeted in the rest of Canada?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, I understand that that member is continuing a long tradition of the opposition in not doing their research. There's a great big deal of difference between targets, between targets about what you want to do.

The Canadian Medical Association has traditionally taken a position around the fact that you need to increase more capacity. What we know from the research we've done in Saskatchewan, working with people from right across North America, is that there are two issues, there's capacity to do surgery and there's management of the flow of patients. And the doctors will always come down on a capacity issue. We will say there has to be a balance between these two.

And, Mr. Speaker, what we know in Saskatchewan is that we have to continue to work around the management. That's the message from the national conferences. That's the message that I hear at the national tables of ministers, and we're going to continue to lead the way, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, we see how they're leading the way on cancer treatment — 10 days to 50 days. Well let's try orthopaedic surgery. Mr. Speaker, the time of waiting alliance says that people waiting for knee and hip surgery shouldn't wait any longer than five months. Well, Mr. Speaker, if you check this minister's own patient registry, you'll see that

a quarter of the patients waiting for this type of surgery are waiting longer than five months; that's 1,750 people waiting in Saskatchewan longer than five months for some orthopaedic surgery.

Mr. Speaker, we are failing. We know of people that have waited two, three, and as much as four years for this surgery. Does the minister think that that is a model that the rest of Canada should follow?

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, what I think is a model that the rest of Canada should follow — and in fact they are following it in Ontario; they're following it in British Columbia; even in Alberta they're watching very carefully what we do — and that is to find out exactly what's happening and then make sure you manage the flow.

Now, Mr. Speaker, those members opposite yesterday voted against the budget which put millions of dollars towards these particular issues and they continue to vote against all the initiatives that are going forward to make sure we improve everything for the people of Saskatchewan.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that he brings up the budget now and that they put in more money, because the minister was on radio today and he was quoted as saying that — over the noon hour — that the problem is capacity. According to the minister this is a management problem, not a staffing problem — a management problem.

I'd be very interested to talk to the health care professionals in the front lines that we have talked to and see if they think it's a management problem or a personnel problem, Mr. Speaker. He seems to feel that everything's just fine, just tinker with the management a little bit and it will be that much better.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at five times the waiting list for cancer treatment in this province and when you look at waiting lists for orthopaedic surgery that is up to five times the national guidelines, does he think it's only a management problem?

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, not only do they have difficulty with the research, when they actually look at the information they have trouble with that.

Mr. Speaker, what we do here is we look at all of the different parts and we try to provide balance. And as I said just previously before he just read the last question without listening to me, what we have to look at is capacity and management. And basically there are places where the capacity needs to be looked at. There's also places where management looks . . . has to be looked at.

But it's clear from the experts right across the world, that the flow of patients through your health system is where the wait-list problem comes and that takes management of how you get the patients there.

[14:15]

Mr. Speaker, we have the information now in Saskatchewan that allows us to make choices around how we spend our money in this budget and in coming budgets to deal with both the capacity issues and the management issues. And, Mr. Speaker, we're going to do that because we know that that's going to provide a solution for all of the people of this province.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that he would talk about research and that we're not doing our research.

Well you know, the Fraser Institute reported last fall on waiting lists. And what they reported was that it was a 104-week wait for knee and hip surgery. But the Minister's response to the Fraser report is that he questioned the methodology — it couldn't be right; it was the Fraser Institute that was making that report.

Well, Mr. Speaker, now the waiting time alliance, these respected physicians, have come out with an identical report saying that waiting list times in this province are amazingly long, amazingly too long, Mr. Speaker. If the Fraser Institute wasn't good enough because of their methodology, are you going to question the waiting time alliance and these physicians?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, we have been working very carefully and diligently on this. And because of that, I know that my colleagues across the country have been providing support and saying, we're going to use what you're doing.

In Ontario, the Minister of Health has gone forward to the people of the province and said, we're going to adopt the Saskatchewan surgical registry as a program in Ontario. And we have said to them, please use what we've learned; we're interested to learn from you what you're doing, but we're happy to share what we know here. Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to do that because we are leaders and groundbreakers as it relates to providing health care.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, they voted against the budget. We haven't been able to figure out if they're on plan 1 or plan 10 or plan 200. But we know that we have a very clear goal, and that's to serve the people of Saskatchewan for the long term.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

## STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

### Ruling on a Point of Order

**The Speaker:** — Order, please. Order, please. Order. Order, please. Before orders of the day, I would like to comment on a point of order that was raised yesterday. The point of order was raised by the Government House Leader regarding remarks made by the member for Canora-Pelly.

I have since then had a chance to review the record, on page 2336 of *Hansard*, where it was clear that the member of Canora-Pelly was indirectly using language which otherwise would be considered unparliamentary. I consider, members, that many of these statements are sort of on the slippery slope. I brought it to the attention of both sides earlier, or last week, that the use of phrases which would incorporate members' names . . . order, please . . . is also unparliamentary.

So on the basis of these precedents, and I'm sure there are others, the point of order raised by the member, by the Government House Leader, is well taken. And I would ask members to refrain from introducing unparliamentary language, using slang or other figures of speech.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### WRITTEN QUESTIONS

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Government Whip.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and table responses to written questions no. 921 through 925 inclusive.

**The Speaker:** — Responses to questions 921 through to 925 inclusive have been submitted.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

### SECOND READINGS

#### Bill No. 88 — The Health Labour Relations Reorganization Amendment Act, 2004

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Labour.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Health Labour Relations Reorganization Amendment Act, 2004, and I will do so at the end of my remarks.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a few minutes of the Assembly's time this afternoon, first to outline the background to this legislation, to give a brief explanation of what it does, and to explain how it benefits Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, The Health Labour Relations Reorganization Act was passed by this Assembly in 1996. That Act provided for the appointment of a commissioner to examine labour relations between employees and employers in the then newly created health districts.

More specifically, the commissioner, James Dorsey, was charged with developing the regulations necessary to rationalize labour relations in the new health system with minimal disruption. That health reform process then under way had consolidated a large variety of health services in a single local health district. As a result, the workers in previously unrelated bargaining units found themselves working for the same employer. The unions were involved with the government to develop this process to facilitate a smooth transition to this new system. At that time, Mr. Speaker, there were 538 bargaining units in the health care sector and it was clear that something had to be done.

The so-called Dorsey regulations did three things. First, they grouped workers in the health sector into three broad categories. Second, the regulations established a process to decide the trade union that was to represent the health workers in each category in each region. And third, the Dorsey regulations provided for a stable period of transition in the health sector by placing a moratorium on any attempts to change the trade union representing the employees in any particular bargaining unit.

Since then this Assembly has twice extended the period in which the Labour Relations Board has prohibited . . . was prohibited from making orders that amend, varied, or rescinded union representation in the health sector, most recently until January '05.

Mr. Speaker, in considering the amendments before us we should be mindful of what the Dorsey Commission and The Health Labour Relations Reorganization Act and the regulations flowing from it have accomplished. When all is said and done, the Dorsey regulations were endorsed by unions representing more than 80 per cent of the workers in the health sector. The Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations, representing almost every health employer in the province, also supported the new streamlined structure.

Mr. Speaker, the Dorsey regulations significantly reduced the number of bargaining units in the health sector. Streamlining the collective bargaining process in this way was a significant step forward in fostering stable labour relations in the health sector while the health system evolved.

Mr. Speaker, our health system continues to evolve and improve. But this year sees some unique challenges facing us, not the least of which is the fact that all of the collective bargaining agreements in the health care sector have expired and for some of these bargaining units, it's the first collective agreement in the restructured health authorities.

With this Bill, we therefore propose to extend the moratorium until January 1, 2006. This will allow all involved in collective bargaining to focus on the task at hand, the successful conclusion of bargaining in these newly structured units without having to worry about changes in the unions representing the employees.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is not a step that we take lightly. We do believe that workers' rights to choose their own unions is a fundamental principle and that's why we are committing to allow the moratorium to expire on January 1, 2006, thereby restoring this fundamental principle to health care workers

across the province.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, this Bill will also provide us with the mechanism to give the Labour Relations Board the authority to amend or rescind orders or to make new certification orders with respect to multi-employer bargaining units in the health care sector. This is an important step because while there currently are a number of multi-employer bargaining units in the health care sector, the Labour Relations Board does not have the authority to make orders respecting such units. Clearly, the concept of multi-employer bargaining units is fundamental to the model in place today and this amendment ensures that the LRB [Labour Relations Board] has the necessary authority to amend or rescind orders or to make new certification orders where appropriate.

Mr. Speaker, let me conclude by saying that, in general, the Dorsey regulations have been a positive development for our health care system. Extending the moratorium will ensure continued stability throughout the course of the rest of this year.

And, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 88, The Health Labour Relations Reorganization Amendment Act. Thank you very much.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister of Labour that Bill No. 88, The Health Labour Relations Reorganization Amendment Act, 2004, 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. It's with pleasure that I rise to speak briefly this afternoon on Bill No. 88, An Act to amend The Health Labour Relations Reorganization Act.

Mr. Speaker, some of us who have been in this legislature for some time remember quite well the Dorsey report, that made very sweeping recommendations about reorganizing health care unions in light of the formation of health districts. And, Mr. Speaker, we understood at that time — and for the record, I believe it was 1996 — that this reorganization of the representation of workers in the health system was reorganized. And with that very dramatic reorganization there was an argument that said for some reasonable period of time that there should be some rights of workers taken away in terms of being able to move to whatever union they saw fit, and that it was important for the stability of the health care system that there be a period of time of cooling off for allowing this reorganization to take hold.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think when I recall the arguments of the day they were reasonable arguments at the time. But here we are in 2005, almost 10 full years after this initial change and recommendations of the Dorsey Commission, and this government is still asking for extensions for that stability to continue. Well, Mr. Speaker, I think in the 10 intervening years there have been some significant changes in the health care system itself.

We've moved from the districts to the regions, and over that period of time certain groups of workers have lobbied members

of the government and ourselves as opposition and made pretty compelling arguments about the fact that the current arrangement in all instances doesn't serve everybody well. Technicians and technologists in the laboratories for example have said that they don't feel that the bargaining unit that they've been assigned to by Dorsey is serving their purposes well and they would like to exercise their rights as workers to have different representation.

And, Mr. Speaker, while the arguments of the government a decade ago almost had some validity, I'm not so sure that they currently have that same validity given the intervening time and years and the changes to the health care system.

Mr. Speaker, the minister also mentions that it's necessary to have the Labour Relations Board have some additional authority and powers that they don't have. Well, Mr. Speaker, given the Labour Relations Board's track record, I'm not too sure that it's in the best interests of workers that that group of people have any more authority and responsibility than is already allocated to them, and certainly not without the support and comment of workers in this province that share that same desire.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I think it's extremely important that we have time to be able to consult with the workers who are saying to us that they don't feel the current configuration is appropriate for them. We need to listen to their arguments and get their counsel, and in order for that to happen, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important at this time that I adjourn debate.

[14:30]

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member from Melfort that debate on second reading of Bill 88 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. 94 — The Apiaries Act, 2005

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

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at the end of my remarks I will move second reading of The Apiaries Act, 2005.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's beekeepers have done an excellent job of growing and diversifying this province's honeybee industry through extensive research and development, and through careful management and control of insects and pests. The legislation I'm proposing today will continue to support this growing industry. There have been big changes in the industry in the past 30 years in Saskatchewan and Canada, with the greatest changes occurring in Western Canadian beekeeping.

Saskatchewan beekeepers have one of the highest per colony honey production averages in the world, Mr. Speaker. They

have gone from an imported packaged bee industry to one of relative self-reliance with overwintering of bees. They have learned how to monitor for the presence of mites and to apply controls to minimize the damage while maintaining productivity. These producers are leaders in research and development to improve genetic resistance to the mite, thereby reducing the dependency on chemical controls.

The Apiaries Act was first introduced in the 1920s and was last fully revised in 1973. The last amendment was in 1995 and it is time to again update the Act to ensure that it meets industry needs.

The proposed Bill I'm introducing in the House today will ensure that the necessary legislative authority is there to support the industry's efforts in minimizing the impact of bee diseases and pests. In order to support this industry, Mr. Speaker, we met with the Saskatchewan Beekeepers Association and we communicated with the producers. Mr. Speaker, they support the policies on the proposed Bill because they are concerned about threats to the industry from the resistant strains of American foulbrood and varroa mites.

Mr. Speaker, they anticipate the Act will continue to provide authority for programs to prevent or minimize the spread of these mites. I appreciate and thank all the stakeholder groups who provided us with their valuable input throughout this process.

The main purpose of the Act is to minimize the spread of diseases and pests of honeybees. This Bill will continue to require registration of beekeepers, sets out conditions for operating apiaries, provides for quarantines to limit movement of bees from areas infested with a bee pest to non-infested areas, requires permits for importation of bees, and provides for orders to correct unsatisfactory operations. Amendments to the Act are proposed to ensure that the legal authority exists to enforce the intent of the Act.

Mr. Speaker, it is critical that we continue to support this valuable industry with enforceable legislation. So, Mr. Speaker, I say let it be. And I move that The Apiaries Act, 2005 be read a second time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister of Agriculture that Bill No. 94, The Apiaries Act, 2005 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? The Chair recognizes the member for Humboldt.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to be able to stand today to speak about The Apiaries Act that was just introduced by the minister. I would like to join with the minister in the praise that he has given of the beekeepers in our province. They are indeed very important to the agriculture industry as a whole to Saskatchewan, and they are doing extremely well within our province.

It was a surprise to me because there's a few sizeable beekeepers in my own constituency. I was surprised to learn that the drought affected them quite considerably when we had two years of consecutive drought in the Humboldt constituency.

And in speaking with the beekeepers that are in that area, they were telling me how their feed costs were increased significantly because they needed to feed the bees more when there was a drought.

It's been an ongoing situation with the beekeepers and a debate among the beekeepers, when it comes to border crossing of bees. There are some of the beekeepers that feel that queen bees should be more accessible from the US, and there's other beekeepers that doesn't agree with that viewpoint. So it will be interesting to meet with them to see what they feel this Bill will do to affect their industry.

But I do understand the need for very tight border controls on the bees because of disease. My background, as most members in this Assembly know, is working in a microbiology lab. And even though it was human lab, I am first-hand knowledgeable in what happens when you get an antibiotic resistant bacteria and all of the difficulties and challenges that comes with that. And yes, in humans is one thing. But in the livestock, bees, etc., in the agriculture industry, it's also extremely important that we monitor and safeguard ourselves from antibiotic resistant strains of bacteria getting into any sector within the agriculture industry.

So therefore, Mr. Speaker, it's with great pleasure that I will be taking this Bill to the beekeepers that are in my area as well as meeting with the organizations in the industry, and getting their input and seeing what they have to say about this Bill. Therefore I will adjourn debate.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member for Humboldt that debate on second reading of Bill No. 94 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried. Now why is the member for Saskatoon Centre on his feet?

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — To introduce guests.

**The Speaker:** — The member from Saskatoon Centre has requested leave for introductions. Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Leave has been granted. I recognize the member for Saskatoon Centre.

## INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the rest of the House I'd like to introduce the walkers that I was talking about earlier that have been busy walking from the North to the South. They're here in your gallery, and I just ask them to give a wave as I read their names. Don Skuce, okay, Don. And Roland Duquette and Shirley Kowalski and the organizer — the drive here — Cliff Shockey. All right, there you go.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — There you go, all right. Now you may notice that they've got their centennial pins on, and they've been carrying the Saskatchewan flag proudly across the province. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I ask you all to give them a warm welcome, send them off to finish off their trip. Thank you.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — Why is the member for Moose Jaw North on his feet?

**Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Speaker, to join in the introduction of guests if I may.

**The Speaker:** — Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — It has been granted. I recognize the member for Moose Jaw North.

**Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Speaker, as chairman of the centennial I just want to join with the Hon. Minister of the Environment in extending congratulations to our walkers who have undertaken an outstanding centennial project, going from the north end of this huge province of ours to the southern tip all in celebration of good health and bringing attention to that.

Over the course of the last week and a half or so I've had three occasions to pass the walkers and after . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I was driving. They were they were walking then, and walking rather briskly I would add. But each time I passed, I was pleased to just give a . . . to toot the horn as just a short rejoinder of celebration together with them, get a hearty wave both ways.

And I want to extend centennial congratulations to our walkers to wish them well on the rest of their journey and to wish them all a very happy centennial.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

## SECOND READINGS

### Bill No. 95 — The Ecological Reserves Amendment Act, 2005

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Minister of the Environment.

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, after my remarks I'll be moving second reading of the amendments to The Ecological Reserves Act.

Mr. Speaker, we in Saskatchewan are blessed. Our forests, lakes, rivers, and native prairie are second to none. On the whole, our environment is vibrant and healthy. Even so, we recognize the need to make sure it stays that way. We have taken several steps to do just that.

For example, our representative areas network protects a system of areas representing the full range of ecological and biological

resources found here in Saskatchewan. The representative area network now stands at 9 per cent of Saskatchewan's land and water, close to 6 million hectares. With additional sites identified, that will move us to 10 per cent in the next few years.

We are committed to using the representative areas network to protect about 7.8 million hectares or about 12 per cent of Saskatchewan. Land included in the representative areas network will still be available for other uses such as camping, hunting, fishing, and trapping.

Mr. Speaker, our protected areas also include 38 ecological reserves. Our ecological reserves conserve some of the most unique and valuable environments in this province, including the Great Sand Hills representative area ecological reserve. The amendments to The Ecological Reserves Act clearly state that the boundaries of any of the provinces 38 ecological reserves cannot be changed without approval of the Legislative Assembly.

The changes to The Ecological Reserves Act also includes extra protection for the Great Sand Hills representative area ecological reserve in the form of an additional amendment. This amendment would ensure that, as well as the boundaries, land uses allowed in the Great Sand Hills reserve could not be changed without approval of the Legislative Assembly. This will provide a greater level of protection for the Great Sand Hills ecological reserve than any other ecological reserves have received under this legislation.

The Great Sand Hills ecological reserve covers 36,585 hectares or 141.25 square miles. That's about 18 per cent of the Great Sand Hills. The amendments would allow for activities such as exercising treaty rights, ranching and hunting to continue in the Great Sand Hills representative areas ecological reserve. However, activities such as gas development would not be allowed.

The Great Sand Hills is a unique and sensitive area. It is rich in flora and fauna, including endangered and rare species that are unique to the Great Sand Hills ecosystem. The Great Sand Hills also have the largest area of sand dunes on the Canadian prairie. The area also has significant gas development underway with a potential for more in the future, making it important to the economy of the area and the province.

The government has accepted all the recommendations of the Great Sand Hills land use strategy review committee in principle and added more protected land to the area.

We recently established a scientific advisory committee that will conduct a regional environmental study of nearly 200,000 hectares or 750 square miles in the Great Sand Hills. The field work for the regional environmental study will begin this spring with a target date for completion of the study's final report set for 2006-07.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our actions demonstrate our government's commitment to conserving our environment while developing a green and prosperous economy. These actions are also significant steps forward in the government's commitment to addressing recommendations of the Great Sand Hills land use

plan review committee.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I respectfully move second reading of the amendments to The Ecological Reserves Act.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Deputy Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister of Environment that the Bill No. 95, The Ecological Reserves Amendment Act, 2005 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Question.

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

**Mr. Morgan:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to this Bill and to make certain comments about this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, I've had the opportunity, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of reviewing this piece of legislation. And, Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this Bill is to ensure that the ultimate accountability for ecological matters regarding this Bill and this area come back to the legislature and are not dealt with by way of committee or by way of bureaucratic involvement.

And I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's imperative for all members of the House to realize that whether they do the things by way of regulation or by way of legislation, that they are ultimately the ones that are accountable to the citizens of Saskatchewan for this. The problem with bringing things back to the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the risk of politicizing the situation and politicizing the process that takes place.

[14:45]

Mr. Speaker, we have no fundamental problems with the process coming back to the House by way of . . . for further debate in the event that there's going to be changes made to this. However it is the expectation of the members on this side that the hard work and diligence that would be done before it's brought forward and that we would see reports and evaluations that are done using best practice methods, and would be done with proper review, evaluation, and environmental assessments rather than mere politicking on the parts of some of the other members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, the Great Sand Hills is one of Saskatchewan's little-known jewels. It is part of the diverse ecological heritage of Saskatchewan. There are many unique species in this area, including — and if I have my wording right — the ferruginous hawk, the Great Plains toad, and the Ord's kangaroo rat, which sounds to me suspiciously like some cabinet members' names. But at the risk of crossing the line, I will withdraw that before I even make the statement, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in this area, the Crown owns 85 per cent of this land. It is used for ranching, gas exploration, and recreation. These are all major uses of this area. There is a very high potential for natural gas development. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need to ensure that there is an appropriate balance to allow development, exploration, and utilization of that, while

at the same time protecting this very fragile environment and very fragile ecosystem.

Mr. Speaker, during the 1990s, the RMs [rural municipality] of that area and the Great Sand Hills Planning District Commission developed a report and did a very extensive review and made recommendations to the government that allowed for additional land to be set aside and other areas of that land to be controlled growth. That report was submitted in June 2004. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it would be my recommendation and suggestion that that report should be circulated through that area and elsewhere to allow for some appropriate community input and industry input as well. If there is going to be development in this area, there should be some significant environmental assessments done to ensure that the ecosystem is protected.

There is also significant potential for recreational use in this area. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have seen certain areas of shore land elsewhere on the continent that have been badly damaged by dune buggies and other types of motorized vehicles. We would want to take steps to ensure that the recreational uses that the Great Sand Hills would be put to would not damage this fragile environment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I noted as well when I was researching for this Bill that in Sceptre, Saskatchewan, there is a museum. And while I haven't attended the museum, I would like to note and suggest that all members might want to attend it as they travel through that area. The admission fee is only \$3 and given the current state of MLA compensation, it may be a good affordable summer break to go to that institute. So would like to suggest that may be an appropriate thing for all members to review.

This is, Mr. Speaker, an interesting area of the province. People travel through there on their way to Swift Current, Medicine Hat, Calgary and often drive by without going in. And it may be advisable for all MLAs to consider visiting this part of the province. It's not something that's remotely situated.

We want to, Mr. Deputy Speaker, ensure that if there is going to be further development in this area, that it's done appropriately. There are the possibilities of horizontal drilling and other things that may well allow for the safe development of the natural gas reserves that are in this area. And we should be approaching this with the area, that we are stewards of this resource, but we want to see the resource developed and appropriately utilized for the long-term benefit of all of the residents of Saskatchewan.

I think the members opposite too often see themselves as a goalie and they want to block all development and I don't think that's the appropriate approach that should be taken. We should see ourselves as wanting to be careful stewards, balancing the risks that are there. We would want to see ourselves, in effect, as a referee or a coach, rather than as a goalie using terms that some of the members opposite might feel more comfortable.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would move adjournment of debate.

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



**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — That's carried.

**Bill No. 98 — The Prairie and Forest Fires  
Amendment Act, 2005**

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of the Environment.

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. After my remarks, I'll be moving second reading of The Prairie Forest Fire Amendment Act, 2005.

In 2001, a \$40 million forest fire contingency fund was put into place as a mechanism to ensure that funding was available to fight large forest fires. Since then, significant changes to our approach to forest fire management, both operational and financial, have rendered this fund unnecessary.

In March 2003, the province approved a new fire and forest, insect and disease policy framework, developed after extensive public consultation. The new policy uses a values-at-risk approach to ensure that our firefighting resources are being used appropriately.

Under the new policy we continue to protect what's most important to people. The new policy also allows fire, wherever possible, to play a more natural role in the ecology of our northern forest. As well, in November 2004 we announced plans to invest significantly in the renewal of our fire response fleet of aircraft, a \$42.4 million investment over the next four years.

Last year we implemented an additional increase of \$30 million to the fire management and forest protection branch's base budget. As documented in this year's budget, we are continuing to fund fire management and forest protection at this higher level. All of these enhancements taken together have addressed many of the reasons for establishing the Forest Fire Contingency Fund. The fund was depleted during the difficult 2002 fire season, it has not been used since, and there is no money in the fund now.

To simplify budget accounting for the fire program, and to implement the recommendations of the Provincial Auditor, we are winding up the Forest Fire Contingency Fund. To do this it is necessary to repeal the section of the Act that brought the fund into existence.

I therefore respectfully move second reading of The Prairie and Forest Fires Amendment Act, 2005. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Deputy Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister of Environment that Bill No. 98, The Prairie and Forest Fires Amendment Act, 2005 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Arm River.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well when you first look at this fund, it sounds like the present day government . . .

broke and out of money.

It says this fund was started in 2001 so I vaguely remember it coming through the House, and I remember some of the stuff that was said on it. It said that creating the constituency fund will ensure money is readily available to fight large forest fires and allow us to better address ongoing priorities. It also will prepare us to staying on top our forest fire situation both fiscally and responsibility. Which is good, Mr. Speaker, because the people that fight these forest fires, they put their lives on the line every day and they do need the money and the protection.

And I can remember a couple of the issues that were raised with . . . about it, concerns I guess would be, is this going to be more of a bureaucratic fund? Will some of that money instead of actually going to the front-line services, Mr. Speaker, or, Mr. Deputy Speaker, going to the front-line services, will it be eaten up by bureaucracy? And that I'm not sure of yet. You know we could do some checking on that because I want to make sure that they have the funds.

Now I know the last year was a wet year and there wasn't many forest fires up there. In 2002, like the minister had said, it was a dry year up North. I can remember the forest fire situation up there was desperate at times in 2001-2002.

Now this government has a tendency to maybe not look too far ahead sometimes and one of the issues that I want them to realize that there will be some more dry years coming on and there will be some large fires and then we'll have a forest fire problem again.

Now by shifting this money in to fight these fires, closing out this fund, I want to make sure they haven't actually cut the funding to ensure that when these large fires, and we do have . . . When dry years come along that we do have the resources up North that they will be able to fight these fires, Mr. Speaker, that they're going to have the equipment to actually fight them, so that when the . . . Because that is what this government's job role is to provide so the firefighters up there will have the services and the resources to fight these fires.

Now he talked about consulting with the interested parties out there and I'd also like to . . . We're going to be finding out in the next week or two if they actually did because this government has kind of a habit of saying they did and then really not doing it, like consulting with some of the parties in the past, which has been proven too. In the past it's been, it's pretty well a known fact on that. There's been quite a few instances of that, Mr. Speaker.

So those are the roles that we will be looking at, to actually talk to the people, the front line people on there, if they have adequate services to be fighting these fires on there and that they're not just basically shortchanging them when they take away this fund. Are they going to be short? Basically there was \$40 million thrown into it. Does that mean in the upcoming budget in the next year or two that they will be short \$40 million when they have to go out and fight these fires?

We talk about tourism in the North and we need to preserve the forests there and the safety of the people that are fighting these fires with this contingency fund that was set up and now being

dismantled.

It also raises the question, and we did raise it back in 2001, is it just more . . . was it just more bureaucratic, another level of administration with having a separate fund. Is it getting to be the point of . . . Our role as government and the role over on this side is to simplify government; to simplify that the money flows to the right hands when it's needed at the right time and not different funds over here, and different funds over here, and the pocket of money over here, because this government has been known to shift money around and play with figures. It's been proven in the past with the Fiscal Stabilization Fund at that end, Mr. Speaker. So with that, I'm going to be adjourning debate on this while we go out and consult with the people that will be directly affected by this. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — It is moved by the member for Arm River-Watrous that debate be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — That's 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 Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Rosetown-Elrose.

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Well thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I thank you for the opportunity to speak on Bill No. 59, The Ambulance Amendment Act, 2004. It's a pleasure to be up in the House. There was quite a lineup of people wanting to speak on the centennial year debate and speak about the horrendous budget brought down by the NDP, and I didn't get into that queue. But, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to speak on this Bill because I've had considerable feedback from constituents in the Rosetown-Elrose riding, and throughout Saskatchewan, expressing their concerns about Bill No. 59, The Ambulance Amendment Act.

Mr. Speaker, this Act is an important Act because it affects health care, and it affects people being able to receive health care when they need it — particularly in an emergency situations — and receive it in a timely fashion, in an immediate fashion, so that hurt may be relieved and in fact lives may be saved.

Mr. Speaker, if you will allow me, I'd like to go back a few decades, actually back to the 1970s, and relate a personal experience. Mr. Speaker, that's a long time ago. In fact that was way back when Allan Blakeney was the premier of Saskatchewan. And at the point in time was when my wife Gail and I were beginning our career on the farm in Saskatchewan.

We'd just been married and we were building a house.

Now unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, there was a construction accident on the site. And this I believe was in 1978. And it was a serious accident, Mr. Speaker. We called the closest health care facility, which was the hospital in Beechy, and they had no ambulance. And this gentleman was in severe pain. In fact we weren't sure whether it was life threatening. And that's a very frightening situation to be in, and I wish that upon no one in this room, or no one anywhere. But it happened.

[15:00]

Mr. Speaker, we had to wait a long time for our doctor to arrive in a station wagon, and we had to make shift a way to get the injured worker out of the basement of a house under construction, into the back of a station wagon, and that station wagon had to drive — I believe it was about three-quarters of an hour or longer — to meet an ambulance. It might have been a little less, it might have been half an hour to meet the ambulance which I believe was coming from another distant community. And then they had to transfer, try to stabilize this construction worker, move him out of the station wagon into a health care facility, and then out of that health care facility into an ambulance and rush him into the city of Saskatoon. It turned out he had a number of broken ribs and there was some internal hurts, and it was in fact a very serious injury. And he experienced a lot of pain and we experienced a lot of anxiety because there wasn't proper emergency care present when it was needed. It just wasn't there.

Others shared those concerns in our community, and the community in the 1980s, I believe it was, bought an ambulance; fully outfitted that ambulance. It was community owned and it brought a lot of comfort to all of us who were concerned about health care emergencies and the timeliness of having an ambulance reach an injury scene, or be available to take a heart attack victim or whoever required ambulance service to a health care facility.

Mr. Speaker, not only has our community purchased an ambulance, but they have made sure there are trained staff to service that vehicle and to be on board that vehicle when it's in use. And in fact the ambulance has been traded off and a better ambulance has been acquired. And you know, the story is fairly positive because of community initiative.

Mr. Speaker, there's even a paramedic from Edmonton who returned to his home in the Beechy area and he is part of the team that are involved in providing good emergency measures service to our community. People have become confident in our emergency measures response team and in the ambulance service that we have in our community. It's trusted and it's a needed service.

Well recently, Mr. Speaker, with some of the budgeting of health care dollars in the province of Saskatchewan, the Heartland Health Authority has indicated that it wants to reduce ambulance service in its health care authority region. Mr. Speaker, there's a consolidation of service and it's causing a lot of concern in the community in which I live and in other areas like Dodsland and Plenty where ambulance service has been reduced and further cutbacks are being threatened.

And so then they hear about this Act that we're debating today, Mr. Speaker, and they find out that this may further impair emergency response service to the communities that I represent. And they feel threatened by this, Mr. Speaker, and rightfully so.

SEMSA [Saskatchewan Emergency Medical Services Association], the Saskatchewan emergency measures association, have pointed out that there are flaws in Bill No. 59. Particularly, the flaws are the loss of sections no. 10 and section no. 18. Mr. Speaker, if this amendment is passed, it will mean that with the loss of section 10, deemed renewal is gone.

Mr. Speaker, for those providing ambulance service, that means it's more difficult to secure the financing, particularly if you want to improve your equipment. It's more difficult to go to the bank and receive the required funds — if some are needed — when in fact the deemed renewal is not there, regardless of how good your service is and whether you're meeting the needs of your community and doing it in a proper manner.

And then of course, with the loss of section no. 18, the process of mediation and arbitration for contractual disputes related to the assignment of the contract and the performance of the contract is also lost.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know that there needs to be accountability, and all of those who provide emergency services such as ambulance service to the province of Saskatchewan are certainly prepared to be accountable. There's no doubt that they want to improve their quality of service, that they want to meet the standards that are set. But, Mr. Speaker, or Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is particularly wrong and unfair of this government to suggest that the deemed renewal should be removed and that the process of mediation and arbitration for performance on contracts should be lost.

This is a wrong move and for that reason, Mr. Speaker, one of two things needs to happen: either this Bill should be withdrawn, corrected, and reintroduced or, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Bill should receive some significant amendments. And we're not talking about mere friendly amendments. We're talking about some substantial change to make the Bill acceptable and beneficial to the people of Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, just the way that the Health minister has approached this Bill is particularly disappointing. It seems like he's more interested in getting his little piece of legislation through than considering the consequences of an important service to the people of Saskatchewan and what might happen to that service if this Bill isn't fixed. And, Mr. Speaker, that is indeed a regrettable position to be taken by the Minister of Health, and one that I wish that he would reconsider and change.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we need a government, an NDP government over there, that recognizes that it's wrong and will change the mistakes it made. Now, Mr. Speaker, we keep seeing the NDP government repeat over and over mistakes, and we see them sit on those mistakes until the problem becomes so huge that they have to, in fact, make a change. We see them lacking vision and direction, and The Ambulance Act, I believe, is another example of that.

But there are examples like the PST [provincial sales tax]. Mr. Speaker, I remember when the NDP raised the PST. They raised it from 7 per cent up to 9 per cent. And then, Mr. Speaker, they decided to lower it from 9 per cent down to 7 per cent and then from 7 per cent down to 6 per cent. They always talk about when they lower the tax but they never talked about when they raised it. Now, Mr. Speaker, they've increased the PST back up to 7 per cent. People are frustrated by a government that doesn't know how to create a strong economy and how to ensure that there's predictable tax levels in the province of Saskatchewan.

Likewise, they want to have confidence that the Minister of Health and his department has a grip on providing health care, and including emergency services in health care, to the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, same thing, the same attribute of the NDP that we've seen, and with The Ambulance Act has been seen, in the issue of property tax. Mr. Speaker, a few years ago the NDP said, well we should try to lower the property tax on agricultural land. And so they brought in this 25 per cent reduction but it was only for two years. And, Mr. Speaker, when the two years were up, then they cancelled the reduction and full property tax was again assessed and collected on agriculture property. And then now, Mr. Speaker, they are back at it again in another two-year program. This time it's a measly 8 per cent reduction, probably far less than the increases that municipalities will be forced to impose on their ratepayers because of the NDP's neglect in funding for education.

Well, Mr. Speaker, now they're doing it again with this ambulance Act. Mr. Speaker, they had the proper clauses in the original Act, the clauses that allowed deemed renewal to take place. And, Mr. Speaker, the section of the Act that recognized performance, they want to take this out. It's a big mistake. So I challenge the Minister of Health to, for once, recognize the mistake before the damage is done.

Mr. Speaker, this is not, this is not . . . we're not talking about a tax measure, and those are serious issues. Mr. Speaker, we're not talking about the forest fire amendment Act and the contingency fund, another example of where they tried something and then they took it away.

And I remember that debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We voted against the budget. And the members on the other side said, you shouldn't vote against this budget. I remember the member for Athabasca and the former member for Cumberland arguing that we should support the budget because it had a Forest Fire Contingency Fund in it. If we voted against it, somehow or another we were against fighting forest fires in Saskatchewan. Well, Mr. Speaker, now the NDP themselves are discontinuing the Forest Fire Contingency Fund. It has no money and they say it's not needed.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if that isn't problematic, and if that doesn't exemplify the problem with this ambulance Act, I don't know what does.

Mr. Speaker, we also saw the NDP government introduce a new municipal Act. And they told us last year, you've got to rush this municipal Act through the legislature. We've got to have it

out there lickety-split. Well, Mr. Speaker, we said, no. The municipal Act is an important Act, just as this ambulance Act is an important Act. And it needs to be duly considered. And we need to think about the consequences of this Act. Let's not rush it through.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister responsible for Municipal Affairs in this spring session of the legislature withdrew that new municipal Act because it needed to be fixed up. I tell the Minister of Health, this ambulance Act needs to be fixed up. I ask the Minister of Health to either withdraw the Act and fix it so it protects the people of Saskatchewan and ensures good ambulance service through the province or else do a major overhaul through amendments of the Act. Do not let this Act go forward in its current state.

Mr. Speaker, if there's one thing the NDP needs to be told over and over again, it's get things right; get things fixed. Don't put up with second-class legislation. Don't make third-rate decisions. Start doing things right. Get it right, Mr. Speaker.

The NDP needs to stop spinning its wheels. Our province is just teetering on the edge of whether we're a have province or a have-not province. Every decision we make will either strengthen this province and help us to be on strong ground, strong fiscal grounds, provide better health care including emergency health care, or it moves us into the have-not side of the ledger, where we can't afford good health care, where we can't afford good emergency response systems. Mr. Speaker, these are all important issues.

And so in conclusion, again I ask the Minister of Health, consider the importance of Bill No. 59, The Ambulance Amendment Act, 2004. Consider the consequences if they remove section no. 10 and section no. 18. Bring it back; fix it, bring it back. Do it right, before it goes through this House, rather than allowing the mess to continue, the second-rate legislation to be implemented, and then having to bring it back like they brought back the forest fire amendment Act and as they're bringing back the municipal Act. Start getting things right to start with. It'll save us all a lot of time, a lot of trouble; save the people of Saskatchewan a lot of heartache, a lot of grief, and a lot of anxiety.

Mr. Speaker, upon that I would move that we now adjourn debate on Bill No. 59. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm certainly pleased to be able to enter into debate on Bill 86, the second amendment that we've seen this sitting to The Labour Standards Act.

I was listening carefully to my colleague, the member from Rosetown-Elrose, and I heard him say that this government needs to get things right. And they certainly do. This may be a rare occasion where — at least in the limited scope of this Bill — where they've got it at least three-quarters of the way right. And one of the reasons that perhaps they did is because they looked at the private member's Bill that my colleague, the member from Saskatoon Southeast tabled, the whistleblowers Act, and that's what this Bill basically, these amendments basically deal with. There are some provisions of these amendments that we feel perhaps could be strengthened and we would hope that perhaps the minister may bring some amendments forward before we're done dealing with this Bill.

But there certainly is a need to protect those workers that in the workplace who see individuals breaking the law, whether it be other colleagues of theirs in the workplace or the employer, that they have an avenue whereby they can report these wrongdoings and not be persecuted for doing so. There has been recent cases in this province where working people have stepped forward and said, what's happening in my workplace is wrong, and they've reported it to their superiors and ended up losing their jobs. And that certainly is not acceptable, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And so therefore, these amendments would certainly correct some of those inequities and I think we need to acknowledge that.

[15:15]

However there are some things in these amendments that perhaps need to be clarified and if we would refer to some of the press that surrounded the first reading . . . or second reading of this Bill, a lawyer from Regina who represents Ms. Linda Merk in a case where Ms. Merk stepped forward and indicated that there were some problems in her workplace, the lawyer, Roger Lepage, is quoted as saying in the November 27 issue of the *Leader-Post* that while these amendments are helpful, perhaps they didn't go quite far enough in the area of defining lawful authority and direct and indirect supervisors. And the lawyer, Mr. Lepage, goes on to say that — and I'm quoting now — he's referring to the lawful authority section:

“It should say something like “any person who has control over the workplace or the employee or the employer” . . .

And that perhaps is something that the minister may want to look at and perhaps bring forward an amendment.

I believe in that same article she was quoted as saying that she may be . . . that this Bill would be held over to the spring session, sitting, which we are in now, and that perhaps we may see some changes. So we will be watching carefully to look at and see if some of those amendments are being brought forward or perhaps we may have to do that on the opposition side.

But we will certainly be willing to work with the Minister of Labour and this government to strengthen protection for working men and women who feel . . . who will come forward and report wrongdoing. I think that needs to be very strong in our society for the betterment of all members of our society.

It's interesting, I think that we will probably — if we can take the Minister of Labour and the Premier at their word — we will see a further amendment to The Labour Standards Act sometime in this spring sitting. And we're certainly waiting to see this, a third amendment brought forward dealing with the government-directed, additional hours issue, section 13.4 in The Labour Standards Act. This was an ill-fated attempt by the Minister of Labour to perhaps gain some . . . for political gain, which blew up in her government's face, and I think the sooner that she and her government deals with this issue, I think, the better. I think we need to put this to rest. As indicated by not only working men and women but by employers, by municipalities whether they be urban or rural, by universities, health regions, that that certainly wasn't an appropriate way of directing additional hours. That is best left to be negotiated and done within the workplace. And so, we need to deal with that in a fairly quick and precise way, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Also I'd like to take this opportunity to perhaps make a few general comments about the misconception that we see on that side of the House as far as the bargaining process and defending workers' rights. It seems to . . . The NDP seem to think that they are the guardians and the stewards of workers' rights. Well nothing could be further from the truth.

It does no one in this province any good to see one group of individuals being taken advantage by another group. The role of government should not be to take sides either on one side of an issue or another side of an issue, when it comes to labour relations . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Exactly. There are individuals who vote against some of the very people, their colleagues, that they worked hard alongside to represent.

And we hear a member from the backbenches from Regina protesting as if we are intruding on their ground and that is . . . Nothing could be further from the truth. All the reasonable people in this province have a vested interest in seeing that we have fair and impartial labour laws and that they be interpreted and administered in a fair and impartial way.

I can tell you that as my role, former role as Labour critic, I spent a number of hours sitting down with labour leaders in this province and talking about labour relations and the atmosphere and the environment of labour relations in this province. And I want to tell this House that if these people on that side of the House think that the people in the labour movement are entirely enthralled with the direction that this NDP government has taken in the last few years, they better wake up and smell the toast. Because there are a lot of working men and women who have seen what this government has done, has used the working men and women as political pawns for political gain.

And I can tell you it's been noted and it certainly hasn't been appreciated. And I can also tell you that it would not surprise me in the next election that that discontent will be very evident at the polls, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

As I was saying, the role of government needs to be that fair and impartial body that both employees and representative employees and employers can go to help them deal with conflict within the workplace; and to help them come to contracts, settlements, if they are unable to do that themselves. But it must be fair and impartial. And even though when in my discussions with labour leaders we had very different opinions on how we would attain that, we certainly did not disagree on the fact that the government's role in any jurisdiction should be that third party that is fair and impartial, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that the application and creation of new labour laws and the administration of labour laws should be done so, and fairness should be the underpinning of that.

And that is what this party is all about, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Because when you have that environment, it leads to job opportunities, career opportunities for the working men and women of this province, and that is a good thing. And it is something that people feel comfortable in coming to our province to create jobs for the betterment of all citizens of this province.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, although as I said we are certainly supportive of many of the parts and amendments that are contained in this Bill, I think we will just like . . . I would like to adjourn debate at this time to give the Minister of Labour perhaps the chance to strengthen a few portions that have been identified. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — That's 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 Thunder Creek.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's a pleasure for me to enter in debate on Bill No. 87, The Trade Union Amendment Act.

As I understand the intent of the Act, it basically deals with several issues. They are to allow the Chair of the Labour Relations Board to designate him or herself, or the Vice-Chair, to hear certain matters alone; to give board members the same privileges and immunities as justices of the Court of Queen's Bench; to allow members of the board, presumably including the Chair and the Vice-Chair, to complete cases that they have been involved in after the completion of their term; and to provide powers to the board to have themselves or any appointee enter and inspect premises and question any person.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, to allow to matters between union members and unions to be heard only by the Chair or

Vice-Chair of the board opens the door to even wider than it is now towards bias towards one party or another.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, every precaution must be taken to protect the most vulnerable in these kinds of matters. And all reasonable people will understand that a trade union would likely be better represented in a situation of this kind than would an ordinary employee who happens to have a complaint against his union.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this unequal struggle is one that needs to be addressed. It is certainly not an area for any board that operates by the good graces of the provincial government should be seen to be cutting corners. These individual workers who have complaints against their unions deserve the consideration of a full panel of the Labour Relations Board, just as unions and employers do when they square off against each other.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one might even suggest that it is an attempt by one party or another to keep complaints of this kind by employees against their own unions as quiet and as low key as possible, even though this may mitigate against the weaker party receiving justice in that situation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this kind of corner cutting also takes whatever balance out of situations like this that was supposed to exist with the Labour Relations Board, whether such matters were to be heard by . . . whereby such matters were to be heard by a balance of board members from trade union and employer side of issues. This so-called balance has been badly violated by this government that owes its very existence to the trade union movement.

But to proceed with this Bill would be to pretend in a very blatant fashion that no such balance was to ever exist. Mr. Deputy Speaker, as regards giving members of the board the privileges and immunities of justices of the Court of Queen's Bench, it should only be considered that justices of the Court of Queen's Bench are bound by very strict rules on process and procedure, especially as it relates to how hearings are conducted.

No amendment to such in 18.1 should be considered unless the government is willing to remove all current members of the Labour Relations Board and reappoint a full board through a much more stringent appointment process and a process that will result for the first time in recent history in some real balance between labour and management on the board.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is not acceptable for members of the board who may have been dismissed for one reason or another to be able to complete investigations and deliberations on cases that they have been involved in. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is no more proper than it would be for those members opposite to continue on as MLAs after they are defeated in the next election. Mr. Speaker, I won't go on at length about this issue because it is obvious to any member of the public that people in any job must leave their duties when they are dismissed or their mandate expires.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, finally with regard to the provision that would allow the board or any appointee of the board to enter

into premises and inspect, view work, material, machinery, appliances, articles, records, or documents, and to question any person, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or Mr. Speaker, these are powers ordinarily given only to police and safety offence regulators, and powers that are even in the hands of those professionals to be used only in very limited circumstances usually involving a court order.

Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no need or justification for any adjudicative board to have such powers. Mr. Speaker, the Labour Relations Board is seen now as a board that is biased against management, and heavy-handed in the abuse of the powers that they already have. To give the board extraordinary powers of this kind in an atmosphere already poisoned by the board's perceived bias is nothing short of irresponsible.

Mr. Speaker, I hope the government will reconsider this Bill and pull it from the agenda. Otherwise, Mr. Speaker, this Bill must be defeated and for now I move to adjourn it.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member for Thunder Creek that second reading debate on Bill No. 87, The Trade Union 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. 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 Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Arm River-Watrous.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to enter the debate on this particular Bill, Bill No. 80, The Education Amendment Act. Probably since I've been a MLA this particular subject of amalgamation, trustees, education, has been one of the ones I've received the most letters on and also probably the most talking. And I've attended a lot of meetings throughout the last year dealing with it; it's a very contentious issue dealing with it.

This particular Bill, understand, deals with the election of trustees which in itself — never mind the amalgamation end of it — is quite contentious.

[15:30]

I was just going through a map . . . In fact I had one person, trustee, phone me and he's thinking of running for election. But where he had one little school, he now has — he will if he wins that election — he will have three schools to look after and a district that is almost half the size of my constituency. Because the whole school division that I belong to personally is three times the size of my constituency.

My constituency is one of the larger ones in this province. I

think I'm at 4,500 square miles of it, so you can times that by three. For some of the members opposite, it starts at Davidson . . . well comes up closer to Craik, coming down No. 11 Highway, and runs west all the way to the Alberta border. And that's quite a drive, basically. So if you're going from one end of it to another, basically, doing any business, you're almost going to have to pack a lunch on it. That's how far it is from one end to the other.

And then that's been raised, of the size of these school board areas, and a lot of parents are worried about it. Because I can remember talking to trustees before. You know, they got quite a few calls and you've got to remember this isn't a paying job. They're paid per diems for meals, for meetings, and that's it. So they take their calls in the evening and they have to respond to the calls back in the evening, on that. And it's on their free time, basically. They don't get paid for that. And when they were with just one school, they used to get quite a few calls.

Now this particular trustee with three schools or more, and some trustees will maybe have more than that under their . . . are they going to be . . . The parents are worried: are the trustees actually going to be able to address the problems? Because a trustee basically is like a councillor, is like an MLA. It's going to be the go-between, between the student and the person and the people and the actual school. It's going to be the go-between. That's who a parent, if it feels that it needs to address a particular problem in a school, that it will go to the trustee, to its elected official to raise that issue with the school. And there is concern out there that they will not be able to address that on both sides, on the elected trustees even looking at size of the divisions of it and also from the parents' end.

And I had a couple of trustees also, good trustees — there's many, many — anybody that takes a public office, you know, that deserves the public's respect. They do it to better it, whether it's trustees, councillors, whatever. And they're even worried with the size of it that they won't be able to do an adequate job. That they're worried that they're not going to be able to run.

I've had some of them tell me, I'm not going to run. I don't think I'm going to have the time. I'm actually scared I'm not going to be able to address the concerns of the people that elected me for that job; that I'm not going to be able to do a proper job with the size that they're giving me to look after. Basically, because they're going to have to do it at nights and on the weekends and whenever they're not at their regular job because it isn't a high-paying job being a trustee, as anybody knows that's ever been involved in that particular end of public life. So looking at that, it is a concern with the trustees.

I don't even know . . . there's some areas that there is basically . . . I'm glad that this one person finally said that he was going to step forward and put his name forward, because throughout my constituency the elections, I believe, could be coming up fairly soon this year. You should be . . . you'd think you'd be hearing talk of people wanting to run for this job, wanting to take over this particular job. And you know what, Mr. Speaker? There isn't. Out there, there isn't interest.

When I've been out asking, the people that are doing it are saying I really don't know if I want to go ahead. I don't think, I

don't think I have the time to do what they're asking me to do. That's how conscientious these people are out there. They feel if I can't actually provide the service that I'm not going to run. So that's a worry out there.

I think there could be some divisions out there that could have trouble getting people to run under these huge borders. You're dealing with, like I say, from the edge of basically coming out of Regina, north about . . . it starts at 60 miles north of the Alberta border. That is a very huge, huge area. That's three times my size of my constituency.

And I know the trouble I have getting from one end of my constituency to the other. It takes me from one end to the other, it takes me three hours to go visit somebody and visit the communities and touch base. So these trustees, when they go to meetings, go to different events are going to have trouble with that, and it's a concern.

I mean, I've gotten letter after letter after letter dealing with this. And I would like to read a couple of them into the record, Mr. Speaker, and also for some of the members opposite just so they know the feeling that deals with the amalgamation out there, that also deals with the election of trustees. It deals with some of the problems because these are . . . these issues I want to bring to the floor and let the people know opposite of the feeling out there.

I'll start with this one letter that is from the Kenaston area:

. . . [the minister] says he is amalgamating school divisions to address the inequity between the highest assessed and lowest assessed school boards. I'm not saying that school division amalgamation is not good, but I am unable to get clear answers to my questions.

Why Amalgamate?

What are the benefits of Amalgamation? It does not appear that there will be an improvement to education. It does not appear to result in a reduction in tax on property. For some municipalities taxes will increase. It does not appear that there will be a reduction in the cost of education.

There are other ways to eliminate zero and negative grant boards and to equalize education funding besides trying to mix high and low assessed school boards. Roy Boughen had suggestions.

Should we not learn from the amalgamation that occurred in Manitoba? The larger divisions did not have improvements in their education system, but did cost more. Any increase in dollars should be spent on improving education. Mr. Thomson says that [the] "larger school divisions will be better able to provide a full range of programs and services." How? If they do not save money how can services be improved?

Why Rush Amalgamation?

Why is Mr. Thomson rushing the proposed amalgamation through? Why . . . [is he] not consulting with the people who will be affected by this change? I know that the

Equity Education Task force talked to the existing school divisions prior to presenting their report, but there has been no public discussion since the report has been presented.

The newly drafted school divisions are too large covering thousands of square miles. The proposed division in our area is about 200 miles by 110 miles covering 11,600 sq miles. This area is too large for sports competitions, too far for specialists to travel to assist students, and too large to govern without a much larger administration. There is talk of satellite offices and creating sub-divisions. Why design a bureaucracy that is so large and is so much more expensive to operate than many of the current divisions? Further, these large boards will have less accountability to parents, students, and the community.

Smaller school division boards have a better knowledge of the communities, families and students they serve and are therefore better able to understand and meet their needs. Why not keep the decision-making power in the hands of the local communities?

#### SchoolPLUS

SchoolPLUS is an important thrust of the Saskatchewan government. Students, parents and community members see the benefits of increased public participation in our schools. I am encouraged that the Sask Learning and the school divisions are facilitating [or operating] more interaction. However, local accountability for and local participation in education go hand-in-hand. I am concerned that these mega-sized school divisions will hinder the development of SchoolPLUS.

It goes on about impact on rural communities.

My number one concern is providing the best possible education to all of our students. My second concern . . . [is] keeping rural Saskatchewan alive. We need to do more to build a prosperous future in rural Saskatchewan. It is an untapped resource for the province. All government decisions should consider the impact on the economic development of our province. Many rural communities are working hard to develop the local economy but the uncertainty created by the new proposed school divisions is making people reluctant to move to or invest in rural Saskatchewan. I am concerned that the final outcome of this amalgamation will . . . affect rural Saskatchewan.

The first outcome in the process will be centralizing division offices in the larger urban centres eliminating jobs in the smaller areas and in the rural area.

Most people I talk to are either unaware of the amalgamation plans or resigned to the "inevitable". Can Sask Learning not take the time to show us the information that resulted in the Minister's decision to create large school divisions? Can he not get input from the people directly affected by this change and allow them the opportunity to accept the change? If these mega school divisions are not successful it is our children . . . [that] will suffer.

So that's a lot of the concern that is out there. The worry out there, Mr. Speaker, is that schools may close. One trustee, three schools — is this government going to fully fund the education end of this? Is it going to put more money in to cover this? Or are the small schools going to be the first to go? Are children going to be on the bus for numerous, numerous miles from school to school?

And those are legitimate concerns out there with that, that they feel that anything larger that they will have lost their input into it, then there will be smaller schools that don't have a trustee to represent them. The trustee that represents that school will live maybe 50, 60 miles away. How much input is he going to be in that school to keep that open, even though that school, if it is closed, will put students on the bus maybe for as long as an hour, riding it. So it is a huge concern from one end of the constituency to the other.

I'd like to read another letter, another concern. These are just a few letters, but I've gotten hundreds of them, and talked to literally close to 1,000 people over this issue, and had lots of calls. As a rural taxpayer . . . and this one is from the Holdfast area:

As a rural taxpayer I am appalled by the changes you are making to the rural school divisions in this province. I have seen references made to Ontario, possibly Alberta and Manitoba, maybe some others that apparently you are using as examples to justify these drastic changes. First of all, we don't have the population to effectively have school divisions with at least five thousand students. Ontario and Alberta have cities that have a . . . [larger] population than the whole province of Saskatchewan. Manitoba did not realize any significant savings in their recent amalgamations. Our population, other than the cities, which are exempt, is scattered over a large area. Most certainly, when your plan is put in place, we will have school closures and I'm sure students will have to be bussed many more miles. Remember [that] these are young kids. Our infrastructure is in terrible shape, some highways are worse than prairie trails and most rural kids have many miles of gravel roads to get to those highways plus our winters can be very severe.

The timing of the whole issue shows a total disregard for the rural people. You make the announcement in the spring, send out the map in late summer and have the map finalized in the fall. All this is taking place between seeding and harvesting, the busiest time of the year [in rural Saskatchewan].

We live seven miles from Holdfast where my wife, [and] our kids and myself all received our education. We were happy to belong to [the] Sask. Central School Division. The Director, Mr. Eliasson, Superintendent of Business, Mr. Benson, and all the other office staff make regular visits to our school. Everyone knows who they are and I think that is important. [The] Division Board holds their monthly meetings here on occasion, as they do in most other schools in the division. That gives the board a chance to see every school and when important decisions are to be made, they know what the school looks like, who the staff and students are and what their culture is. Now,



according to the map your Task Force has drawn up, [that] we are in the Qu'Appelle Valley . . . [School District] and we don't want to be there. In fact, Sask. Central . . . [School Division] will no longer exist.

There are a couple of criteria that your "Task Force" have failed to . . . [show us] in their mandate. It is stated that "Except in exceptional circumstances, there should be amalgamation of whole school divisions". ". . . [Wherever] possible, previous voluntary amalgamations should be respected". Why didn't you respect these two points regarding Sask. Central?

That is quite a THANK YOU from your government to a School Division that was a pioneer in the amalgamation process. In case you didn't know, your government was promoting volunteer amalgamation several years ago, and Sask. Central was a result of that suggestion. They didn't resist and say, "No [No] Way, we're standing pat", they went out and they did it. I give them credit for that. But now we will resist. We did our job, now make sure all other divisions do the same before cutting US in half and disposing . . . us, yet some other divisions are exempt.

It seems to me that your government thinks that unless [changes] not operated from a city, they cannot be cost effective and run properly. Sask. Central was operated from a small two story building in Watrous. Office staff look after most of the maintenance and cleaning. No one is hired to clean the building every night or come in and change the light bulbs, now that is cost effective. Are your new Super Divisions going to be run that way, I don't think so. Sask. Central relies heavily on the local school councils for input. They are the pulse of the communities that make up our division and . . . a vital part of our division. Division trustees mostly represent two schools and it is impossible for them to properly represent both schools without input from the local school councils. The distance is too great for one person without them. I have heard that they will also be a thing of the past in your super-divisions.

I heard on the radio last week that your government is consulting with school divisions regarding the restructuring. I haven't seen or heard of any consultation. Would it not be wise to consult with the rural taxpayer also? After all, isn't it the rural taxpayers who are going to benefit from this forced amalgamation? Show us your plan and maybe then we could pass judgment in your favour. Up until I can see a plan that shows me how you're going to save enough money to reduce my taxes other than forced amalgamation, I will not believe [you].

Your government has spent millions already on the volunteer amalgamations, especially in the second round. I understand the first round amalgamations didn't receive near what the second round did. You have commissions that have added to the cost and because the results weren't exactly what you wanted to hear, you are just going to toss all that aside . . . do exactly what you want anyway.

Now you have a task force, and I understand a restructuring coordinating committee, a foundation

operating grant external reference committee, and probably many more committees before this is all done. How long, or will you ever recoup the money already spent and the money you are about to spend?

We want what is left of our rural way of life and you are taking that away from us. There are several young couples who have moved back to our area. They like it here and want to stay, but when they have families, how far are their kids going to have to travel to school?

My daughter and her husband were married last winter and just moved back here. She drives to Moose Jaw every day to work and . . . helps me on the farm. If these people are forced to move, you can bet your bottom dollar that won't be anywhere in Saskatchewan. They're fed up and won't stop until they cross the border. Is that what your government wants, more people leaving this province?

Mr. Thomson, it is not too late to say you made a mistake. Do like you did with the Boughen Commission, throw it in the garbage and forget about it. I respect a man more if he admits to a mistake when he has made one than one that doesn't. You may be gone in four years, some of us may still be here, and we will have to live with the results of your thoughtless decision forever.

I am not against continuing with the voluntary amalgamations. I think it is healthy if you can seek your own partner and form one. But you're going about it the wrong way. It will not work in Saskatchewan. Please reconsider your decision.

Those are some of the concerns out there about the school amalgamation, the forced school amalgamation. Most people agree that there had to be some changes, but why so drastic, why 5,000 students? I think there was a study done in the United States that said around 2,000 students was the best school division, was the best size that presented the best, could present the best programs and still had the one-on-one work with the students, plus the division and the trustees. Because you start getting too huge, there is mistakes that are going to be made, or people are going to fall through the cracks with her. And that is a huge concern. There is different ones out here. I'll just quote a little bit from another letter:

I'm writing to you with urgency, requesting that you SUSPEND or STOP the planned, forced school division amalgamations until the full impact of the proposed changes can be evaluated! I understand that the government is anxious to rush through the proposed changes to SUPPOSEDLY free up more funds for the large urban school divisions and perhaps also for political reasons. Please let more rational minds prevail, at least for a period of time.

The proposal leaves me with several major concerns — as yet unanswered. Briefly they are:

BIGGER is NOT always BETTER! In some cases there are economies of scale, yes; but at what costs? A large high school may be able to offer more class choices than a smaller school but please take a close look at the number

of credits held by grade 12 grads from small town schools compared to large city collegiates! You could also compare the success rate of students from rural schools to students from city schools at post secondary institutions. Look at the percentage participation of students in school sports in small compared to large schools . . . tell me honestly that BIGGER is BETTER.

And it goes on to write:

whether there will [be] in fact be any financial savings. Some administrative positions will be eliminated saving a few dollars but I would suggest that these savings will be more than used up with the increased time and money spent in travel by Directors and other roving personal as well as student transportation costs, capital expenditures, etc. PLEASE review Manitoba's recent experience to see if there REALLY WILL BE ANY SIGNIFICANT SAVINGS over all.

the proposed LARGE school divisions WILL result in MANY school closures in the next few years. DO YOU NOT THINK THAT RURAL RESIDENTS ARE TOO NAIVE TO REALIZE THIS or to soon forget the cause! This will likely result in large capital expenses on some of the schools remaining open. Also, the increased distances many students will be forced to travel will not only be costly but WILL RESULT IN UNACCEPTABLE TRAVEL TIMES AND DISTANCES FOR MANY STUDENTS, ESPECIALLY YOUNGER STUDENTS. Perhaps you and those suggesting that [the] 100 km each way each day is acceptable should actually ride a school bus on an actual route for a few days just to experience it for yourselves. A 100 km ride on a school bus run will take at least one and a half hours — more likely 2 hours! Do you feel that is acceptable for children 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 . . . years old? [to be riding a bus for that long?] . . .

closing schools in rural Saskatchewan will help hasten the depopulation and death of rural Saskatchewan! Is that what your government actually wants? Perhaps so. (Yes, I know that the NDP support base is largely urban!) What businesses will want to or be able to establish themselves in rural areas if there are no schools, no hospitals, poor roads, and as a result no people around to employ? Please give this some careful evaluation in light of your government's talk about trying to . . . [revitalize] rural Saskatchewan.

I understand that there are other very workable solutions to leveling the education mil rates across the province without forcing unwieldy and undesirable large scale amalgamations. Please stop and consider these other alternatives.

Finally, why are Ile-a-la-Crosse and Creighton School . . . [divisions] not being rolled into the Northern Lights . . . [school district]. I see that Ile-a-la-Crosse receives government grants of . . . [four and a half million] for 515 students while Davidson . . . [school district] receives \$900,000 for 688 students. Yet, Davidson is being forced into amalgamation . . . [why not] Ile-a-la-Crosse is not! What gives?

I would be interested to know if the Premier himself actually sees this letter. Thank you for letting me know either way.

Those are the concerns that are out there. And that's every town and every rural community that's out there, Mr. Speaker, that goes on that. There are major, major concerns with this. And I think with these school divisions and the trustees, it's going to an ongoing problem that I think this government hasn't solved yet, and there's going to be a problem there.

And the big thing is funding. The way this government funds things, there's going to be probably less money and these school divisions are going to have to try to survive with less money. That's what some of the trustees told me they don't want to run. They don't want to face their problems out there. They actually believe that there's going to be less money coming from this government. And in the past years of watching this government operate, you know, I believe that too, that it's going to be the students that are going to be suffering with these decisions.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I want to adjourn debate on Bill 80. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member for Arm River-Watrous that debate on second reading of 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.

### Bill No. 90

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Quennell that **Bill No. 90 — The Adult Guardianship and Co-decision-making Amendment Act, 2005** be now read a second time.]

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Lloydminster.

**Mr. Wakefield:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've reviewed the notes that have been prepared for this particular amendment, Bill No. 90. I've listened to the minister as he introduced the second reading. And it would appear to me that there is not a lot of detail in here that anybody is going to take exception to because I think it's moving in a direction that needs to be done.

The first reaction I guess when I first reviewed this is, these amendments, are they really important? But the more I thought about it, the more I reviewed the notes and the actual amendments, I think it is. I think it is very important because, although it pertains to a very narrow section or sector of the contracting or contracting in the economy, if you're ever into a situation like this then of course it becomes very important.

One of the things that have become more and more important in our daily dealings with one another is the fact that we do have to deal with contracts, and we have to deal with formal agreements. One time we would just shake hands and that was

good enough. But it seems now that it really does go back in focusing on these contracts.

And in this particular case, the amendment is addressing a situation where maybe somebody has entered a contract and as, I think as the minister described it, that the person may not have been in full capacity or full facility. And there has always been an opportunity to take advantage of a person such as that.

So in this particular case, these amendments — and I would have to agree with them — is trying to protect a situation where instead of having that potential for abuse of somebody that hasn't got the full capacity to understand the agreement or in fact has a guardian appointed to make sure that the agreement is in effect, the onus now becomes on that person to show that he believes that the person did have full capacity at the time of signing. And this would apply if a guardian was appointed within the 12-month period.

I think, like I said, it's a very narrow aspect of the contracting and a narrow aspect of the people that it might affect. But if it does affect it, then I certainly would support moving these amendments in place so that there is no confusion.

The personal property portion of contracts becomes a real concern because it's in fact the basis of what most of the economy is based on. Property becomes the agent that agreements and, therefore, opportunity is built on. And to protect that integrity of that section of the agreement or that part of the economy, I think it's very important.

So has advantage been taken in that case? And why is this amendment put forward? Well I'm not sure. I suspect there was. And because of this, these amendments are trying to put in place a condition so that anybody that is responsible and part of that agreement is not allowed to take advantage. And the onus then becomes that person's responsibility to prove that he had ... to his best belief, the person had full capacity when he signed it.

It's a very short amendment. And I would at this time move that we amend ... I mean, adjourn the debate so that further discussions can be had with different sectors of the community.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member from Lloydminster that second reading debate on Bill 90, The Adult Guardianship and Co-decision-making Amendment Act, 2005 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 Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Cline that **Bill No. 91 — The Land Surveys Amendment Act, 2005** be now read a second time.]

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

**Ms. Eagles:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to speak today on Bill 91, The Land Surveys Amendment Act, 2005. And this Bill is a very short amendment to The Land Surveys Act, 2000.

What this Bill does, Mr. Speaker, is that it adds cadastral parcel mapping system to the 2000 Act. And ISC [Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan] has been offering an enhanced version of the cadastral parcel mapping since mid-2003, and this Bill will put it into legislation.

The cadastral version is designed for simpler use and cadastral data provides more information such as who owns the property, also its shape and relationship to adjacent property, all the while reflecting the actual subdivision, including metes and bounds subdivisions.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure when the taxpayers hear the words Information Services Corporation, they are reminded of how much money it has cost them so far. ISC was originally projected to cost \$19.7 million, but the costs have skyrocketed to over a \$100 million. And every one of those, Mr. Speaker, are taxpayers' dollars.

[16:00]

What remains to be seen is how much financial damage this NDP government can do with this one page of new legislation. Mr. Speaker, ISC was supposed to be a paperless system. And I remember not too long ago when the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy and myself went to an oil company in our area, and we were told that they had contacted ISC for some information. ISC did respond to them but instead of sending them the one required page of a document, ISC faxed them 120 pages of information that was of no value at all to them. They were very concerned about the cost-efficiency and the effectiveness of this.

And, Mr. Speaker, I've had many calls from individuals who are buying property, whether it be real estate in town or farm land, stating that their involvement with ISC was nothing less than nightmarish, very expensive, and extremely confusing. And I think we should be mindful to do a thorough job but not be wasteful, time wise or money wise.

Mr. Speaker, we do not know the financial details, but what we do know is this NDP government's sorry record as far as being efficient and effective. And with ISC already 500 per cent over budget I hope for the taxpayers' sake, that the financial bleeding is over at ISC. So, Mr. Speaker, with that I move to adjourn debate.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member for Estevan that second reading debate on Bill No. 91 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. 92

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed

motion by the Hon. Mr. Quennell that **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** be now read a second time.]

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Lloydminster.

**Mr. Wakefield:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Again this Bill 92 is a very short . . . has not a very extensive set of amendments. But in fact it does try to cover an area that I think is becoming more and more relevant and important all the time. And listening to the Minister of Justice in his note and reading the notes from his second introduction at second reading it . . . I think it applies more and more all the time. Because as the world becomes in fact smaller and smaller in relation to how people move around in different countries, it becomes more important that it is a . . . It's important for people to be treated with respect, dignity, and with consistency in each of the particular countries.

And so the understanding is that the . . . An Act respecting the Application to Saskatchewan of the Hague Convention on the International Protection of Adults should be reviewed and should be brought into relevancy here in Saskatchewan.

It's noted that this Hague Convention, passed in 2002 — no, the year 2000, sorry — that there was some inconsistencies, particularly with people as they travelled and moved from country to country, and in particular those people that moved and were disadvantaged in some way. Maybe they were . . . didn't have the full capacity to be able to look after their own affairs, and what this Bill does, it makes it consistent then as they move from one country to another.

Because there is more and more opportunity for people to recognize the things that have happened in other countries and what is going to be becoming a problem in others, I think this kind of a convention, and putting the consistencies in place, was a very timely and an important aspect. There is, always seems to be in situations like this where people will take advantage of particularly the disadvantaged, or as the minister called it, insufficient faculties to be able to respond to these particular situations.

Something comes to mind as I was reviewing this, that in fact in the recent tsunami crisis where there ended up to be a lot of homeless people, there was unscrupulous people that actually tried to take the orphaned children and abscond with these children and move them into a situation where they were abducted from their local region.

I think, not that this will apply in this case, but it just shows that unless there is a convention in place that has consistency, this behaviour will continue, I'm sure. And the amendments that are being put forward here is to bring Saskatchewan into that convention so that it in fact would comply with what they have put forward in these amendments.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would propose that . . . I move that we adjourn debate so that further discussion can be had.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member for Lloydminster that second reading debate on 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 Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Beatty that **Bill No. 93 — The Doukhobors of Canada C.C.U.B. Trust Fund Amendment Act, 2005** be now read a second time.]

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Cut Knife-Turtleford.

**Mr. Chisholm:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise and speak to Bill No. 93, an Act to amend the Doukhobors of Canada C.C.U.B. trust fund amendment Act. And that is the Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood.

The proceeds of the trust referred to in this agreement are to be utilized to celebrate and support the culture and heritage of the Doukhobor people. This Bill addresses the functioning of the trust in that it addresses how the appointments are to be made to the board that are charged with administering this trust.

The makeup of the board is to be four nominees from Saskatchewan and British Columbia and one nominee from Alberta. All nominees will be approved by the minister rather than by the Attorney General as was provided in former legislation.

We see this Bill as legislation that will assist in this board's ability to continue in its mandate of administering the trust fund. We recommend therefore that Bill 93 be referred to the appropriate committee. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — The question before the Assembly is the one 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?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Question.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried.

**Deputy Clerk:** — Second reading of this Bill.

**The Speaker:** — To which committee shall this Bill be referred? The Chair recognizes the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation.

**Hon. Ms. Beatty:** — I move that Bill No. 93, The Doukhobors

of Canada C.C.U.B. Trust Fund Amendment Act, 2005 be referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation that Bill No. 93 be referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried. This Bill stands referred to the Committee on Human Services. The Chair recognizes the Government Deputy House Leader.

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would move that the House now adjourn.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Government Deputy House Leader that this House be now adjourned. 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 16:10.]

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Premier

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

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

Hon. B. Belanger  
Minister of Northern Affairs

Hon. E. Cline  
Minister of Industry and Resources

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