



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

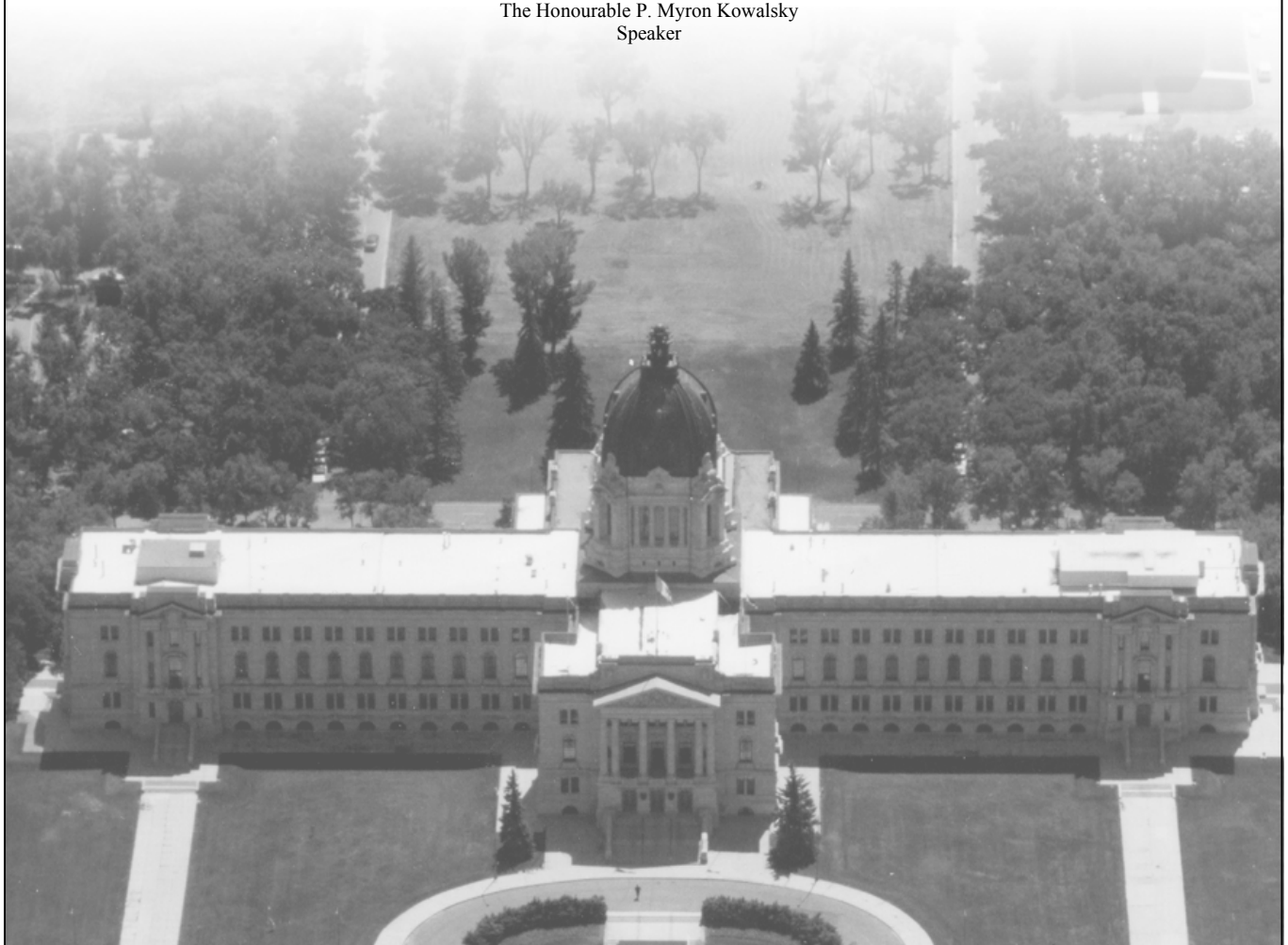
Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of

The Honourable P. Myron Kowalsky
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

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

[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Cypress Hills.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One more time I'm standing to present petitions on behalf of my constituents regarding forced amalgamation of school districts. The prayer reads as follows:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, these three pages of petitions are signed by residents from the communities of Hazlet, Lancer, Abbey, and Webb. I so present.

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

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The petitions from constituents with respect to group home spaces in Swift Current continue to pour in to our office. And the prayer for this particular petition, Mr. Speaker, reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to provide funding required for additional residential spaces for Swift Current residents with lifelong disabilities.

It's a simple request, really.

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

Mr. Speaker, the petitioners are from the communities of Wymark, Hazlet, and the city of Swift Current. 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 insidious drug crystal meth:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The people that have signed this petition are from Wadena, Margo, Nut Mountain, Kelvington, Kuroki. I so present.

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

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with the forced amalgamation of school divisions. And the prayer reads:

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

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

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

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

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition regarding the Claybank Brick Plant, and I would like to read the prayer. 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.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by people from Alberta, many from Regina, as well as the Avonlea area. I so present.

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise today to present a petition on behalf of concerned parents in my constituency regarding a much needed elementary school in the Arbor Creek area of Saskatoon. The prayer of the petition reads as follows:

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

The petitioners today live on Buckwold Cove, Lashyn Cove, and Guenter Terrace in northeast Saskatoon. I so present.

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

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition here with citizens that are upset because there's no cellular service in rural Saskatchewan. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take all the necessary actions 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, Lanigan, and Lockwood, I so present . . . and Drake also.

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

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present another petition to revisit the effects of the TransGas Asquith natural gas storage project. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately address the concerns of all individuals affected by this project, pay 100 per cent of the costs involved to rectify disruptions to water supplies, produce an environment assessment study encompassing a larger area outside the scope of the project, disclose the project's long-term effects on these areas, and consider alternative sources of water for the project.

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

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and pursuant to rule 14 are hereby read and received as addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper no. 637, 638, 640, 715, 720, and 730.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you and the rest of the Assembly it's my privilege to introduce 21 grade 8 students from the great community of Milestone. They're here with their teachers — which is one is no stranger to the House — Ms. Judy Bradley and also David Hawkins, who has been here a number of times with different classes to the Assembly.

I would like to welcome, and it's always a kind of a special welcome when it's a school that you attended. I had the privilege of attending Milestone schools, high school, Milestone High School for six years. And contrary to the government's

belief, that covered six different grade years as well, Mr. Speaker.

So I'd like to welcome them all here to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Nutana, the Minister Responsible for Immigration.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This morning in your gallery are a number of distinguished guests from the Ukraine and Tisdale, Saskatchewan. I would ask them to stand. I would like to introduce Volodymyr Gishak who is the deputy director of the Kiev Youth Labour Centre, Viktoriya Shamina, interpreter and assistant to the director, Walter Garchinski who is the human resource manager for Northern Steel in Tisdale, Barb Bond the immigration adviser with our immigration branch.

Now for all members of the legislature, you need to know this, that Viktoriya is 24 years of age, and her English is impeccable, impeccable. And Volodymyr is in his mid-30s, and he's about to go back to the Ukraine to become the director of the Kiev Youth Labour Centre.

Mr. Speaker, the Kiev Youth Labour Centre is a large, dynamic Ukrainian institute which prepares young families with skills and training for work abroad. The institute has been instrumental in helping Northern Steel recruit a dozen welders and their families from the Ukraine. The first six welders and their families have successfully arrived in Tisdale on March 7 to an overwhelming welcome from the community of Tisdale. And five more welders and their families are due soon.

I want to, on behalf of all of the citizens of this province and all of the legislators, thank and congratulate the efforts of Walter Garchinski and Northern Steel and the staff at the Kiev labour centre for working with our Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program because they have done a remarkable job of bringing much-needed welders and their soon-to-arrive families to our province.

Mr. Speaker, I had occasion last night to have dinner with our guests from Kiev, and they tell me that there are a lot of people in our province that look like them. And I said that the reason for that is that we have a very large Ukrainian population. So on behalf of all of us here, I want to try some Ukrainian. I've had much help from my colleagues in trying to get this right so I will say . . .

[The hon. member spoke for a time in Ukrainian.]

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Carrot River Valley.

Mr. Kerpan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly guests that we have in your gallery from my constituency at Tisdale, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this Prairie Steel Products, the business, is just another good example of what can be done with a lot of co-operation and help from all of our communities all across the province. I'd like to welcome them here today.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not quite as brave as the minister in attempting to try any Ukrainian this morning. I'll try to do a little bit of Croatian and say . . .

[The hon. member spoke for a time in Croatian.]

. . . to you this morning and welcome to the Saskatchewan legislature.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Swift Current.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the members of the Assembly it's a pleasure to introduce a former member of this Assembly — seated behind the bar and joining us today — and also a former minister of Finance as well as some other portfolios, who has since gone on to a very successful private sector career. I'd like to introduce to you and through you and ask members to welcome Lorne Hepworth.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Prince Albert Northcote.

Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I too would want to join the Leader of the Opposition in welcoming Mr. Hepworth to this legislature. When I was a rookie in the mid-'80s, Mr. Hepworth was playing a lead role in the Grant Devine administration as his minister of Finance, and it was very interesting to watch how government worked . . . as a new rookie member. And I want to say to him it's good to see him back here again — good to see him as a visitor, though. Thanks very much.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Saskatchewan Employment Statistics

Mr. Yates: — Well, well, well, Mr. Speaker, here is something you'll never hear from the members opposite. Today is Labour Force Friday here in Saskatchewan, and what a glorious, bright and sunny spring day it is, Mr. Speaker. Despite the unremitting and unrelenting doom and gloom attitude of the Conservative Saskatchewan Party opposite, this province's economy is on a roll.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's job numbers for March of this year have once again reached record high levels

— the 12th straight month of record job numbers for the province. Saskatchewan's only one of three provinces whose job growth numbers are above the national average, and we have the second lowest unemployment rate in the country, Mr. Speaker.

Last month's job numbers here in Saskatchewan are up over 13,000 from last March, and full-time jobs are up over 10,500 from March of last year, despite the fact that overall the number of full-time jobs in Canada has dropped, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, youth employment was up by 2,700 jobs this March over last, and we have the second lowest youth unemployment rate among the provinces, Mr. Speaker.

Once again pretty much everything in this province is up except the political prospects of the Conservative Saskatchewan Party opposite, Mr. Speaker — and that's exactly where they're going to stay, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Paragon Awards Celebrate Business Excellence

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had the pleasure last night to attend the Paragon Awards, the Regina & District Chamber of Commerce Paragon Awards celebrating business excellence, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to report to the legislature who the winners were in the categories. Young entrepreneurs — something we need more of in this province — Pamela Ait-Allaoua, Tot's Café, Mr. Speaker, a café that specializes in serving children and their parents in a restaurant. A very successful business.

Community involvement, Clarica for their charity work, Mr. Speaker. Community alliances, Rawlco Radio and Z99 for their fundraising for the neonatal unit. Marketing and promotion achievement, the Saskatchewan Roughriders Football Club. And perhaps maybe the government might be interested in making the helmet head watermelon our national fruit, Mr. Speaker, our provincial fruit.

Export achievement, Mr. Speaker, was won by Ground Effects Environmental Services. The Customer Service Award was won by Access Communications, Mr. Speaker. New business ventures was won by *Savour Life Magazine*, a restaurant magazine, a food column, Mr. Speaker. And special note for me was another finalist in that category, Wallnuts Expressive Catering, which is run by a young lady from my constituency working in Regina, Mr. Speaker.

Athena Award, in association with the Athena Foundation, Mr. Speaker, was won by Sandra Greenough of Greenough & Associates. And finally, Mr. Speaker, the grand finale, business of the year was again Access Communications, Mr. Speaker, a double winner this year and a winner in spite of competing with SaskTel's *Max*.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[10:15]

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

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And last night I, too, was at the Paragon Awards — and a lovely event it was — along with the member from Saskatoon Meewasin and the member from Saskatoon Massey Place. We attended the Regina & District Chamber of Commerce Paragon Awards.

As we all know, Mr. Speaker, any business requires personal risk and a lot of hard work. So it's very rewarding for these businesses to be recognized in this way.

The Paragon Awards celebrate excellence in business, honouring entrepreneurs for outstanding achievements and contributions to their community — the city of Regina in this case — and our growing provincial economy. This year's winners I thought exemplified talent, ambition, creativity, and certainly play a significant role in the momentum of Saskatchewan's economic prosperity.

The 2005 Paragon Award winners were, and I'll reinforce it because they deserve to be mentioned twice. For young entrepreneur, Pamela Ait-Allaoua from the Tot's Café. The award for community involvement, Clarica, for their staff participation and fundraising. The winner for community alliance was Rawlco Radio/Z99. And of course we've heard about CC and Lorie from the member from Coronation Park, and their work for the neonatal unit.

For marketing and promotional achievement, Saskatchewan Roughriders Football, and they in turn recognized Phoenix Group. The Export Achievement Award to Ground Effects Environmental Services, out of Nipawin, Mr. Speaker, originally. And for customer service excellence, the winner was Access Communications. The New Business Venture Award to *Savour Life Magazine*. And the Athena Award to Sandra Greenough of Greenough & Associates. Congratulations to all the winners and to the chamber of commerce, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

2005 Rural Women's Achievement Award Recipient

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise in the House this morning to talk about a remarkable constituent from Wynyard. Bina Keyser of Wynyard recently received the 2005 Rural Women's Achievement Award on March 12 during a ceremony held in Humboldt. This award is given by the Partners for Rural Family Support, a non-profit grassroots organization made up of concerned people working together to identify, develop, improve, and maintain support to families living in rural communities. Mrs. Keyser was nominated for the award in the arts and culture category. The criteria for this category is community involvement in either music, drama, crafts, writing and literature, or serving on local arts councils.

Mrs. Keyser is a very talented, retired schoolteacher, who is particularly talented in the artistic area of music, singing, and production of musical theatre. Over the years she has won many awards for her work in the annual music festival, directing five different choirs in the festival. In addition this fine citizen sang in her church choir for nearly 40 years and directing it for 10 years. She is also part of the Icelandic choir. Her work with the women's singing group called the Cantabile Singers resulted in two recordings. Today she continues to share music with the Wynyard church community and Golden Acres.

I would ask that all members join me in congratulating Mrs. Bina Keyser on her tremendous contribution of artistic talent, both to her home community and to the province. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Your Future is Here 2005

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The future truly is wide open for young people in Saskatchewan. Earlier this week the member for Massey Place announced the launch of Your Future is Here 2005. This community-driven initiative celebrates the young people in our province who are poised and positioned to be highly successful in their respective fields.

Mr. Speaker, this program began as a grassroots initiatives of the Rotary Clubs of Saskatchewan and is supported by various organizations, including the Department of Industry and Resources, Saskatchewan Research Council, several Crown corporations, and various organizations within the private sector. Mr. Speaker, so far the program has raised more than \$300,000 for youth from a wide range of contributors, including the private sector and the community.

Your Future is Here proves to our young people that you can do it here, by providing a one-stop resource for information on youth programs and funding agencies, as well as delivering funding to scholars and new entrepreneurs.

As we look forward to a new century of opportunity, Your Future is Here is an appropriate name for a program that looks to celebrate the talents and successes of our many young people. A recent Rotaract scholar winner, Meghan Brandt, affirmed her commitment to staying in Saskatchewan to build her career as a doctor when she said, quote, "Why wait until tomorrow to start making a difference in our province?"

That's the attitude that this program has fostered, and that's the attitude that we want to see in our leaders of tomorrow. For the young people in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, tomorrow is now.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

CJVR Radio Station Wins Awards

Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Speaker and members of the legislature, next year Melfort's CJVR country radio station will

celebrate its 40th year on air. This year, however, they are celebrating the huge success they achieved at the annual Saskatchewan Country Music Awards dinner.

Against a competitive field of over a dozen other stations, for the 10th consecutive year, CJVR accepted the Fan's Choice Radio Station of the Year Award. Ken Singer, general manager of Radio CJVR Ltd. was thrilled that *Canadian Coast-to-Coast* also received the Show of the Year Award. This program is proud to feature and promote only Saskatchewan and Canadian country music artists. The host of *Canadian Coast-to-Coast*, Dave Baker, also received the On Air Personality of the Year and Music Director of the Year Award.

Gary Fitz, the creator of *Canadian Coast-to-Coast*, retired general manager and vice-president of CJVR, continued the success of the evening by being presented with the Legends and Legacy Award. Gary was presented with this award for his dedicated and active role in the Saskatchewan country music industry.

Mr. Speaker, and members, again it's with pleasure that I ask you to join me in congratulating CJVR for its success in the country music radio entertainment in this province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Tisdale Businesses of the Year

Mr. Borgerson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, while it is my privilege to represent the good people of the constituency of Saskatchewan Rivers, today I wish to acknowledge a couple of businesses from the Carrot River Valley constituency, just next door, who are recently honoured for their business achievements.

Mr. Speaker, every year, the Tisdale & District Chamber of Commerce presents awards to businesses from Tisdale and area that have made an outstanding contribution to the growth and development of the community. This contribution can be in many forms, including research and development, job creation and retention, community involvement, and of course, Mr. Speaker, business excellence.

Mr. Speaker, the winner of the Business of the Year Award in the small business category — that is, with 10 or fewer employees — is the Art of Touch Therapeutic Massage Clinic owned and operated by Marcy Werth. Thanks to Ms. Werth's business acumen and her desire to provide high-quality service since opening in 2003, the clinic has been so successful that two full-time positions have been created in the last two years.

The winner of the Business of the Year Award in the large business category is the Tisdale 7-Eleven, managed by Sharon Sabadash. Not only does the 7-Eleven provide excellent service to the community, but the business is also very community minded and donates to numerous local events and organizations.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all my colleagues to join me in

acknowledging these two winners of the Tisdale & District Chamber of Commerce Business of the Year Awards.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

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

Canadian Agricultural Income Stabilization Program

Mr. Wall: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the Agriculture minister was asked about ensuring Saskatchewan producers have the ability to withdraw all of the funds from the CAIS [Canadian agricultural income stabilization] program deposit accounts. And in his response last week, the NDP [New Democratic Party] minister said, quote: "... that position was not accepted by the federal government."

In light of yesterday's news that the government of Manitoba, however, has signed an agreement with the federal government to release CAIS deposits, we find the minister's statements questionable at best.

So, Mr. Speaker, the question is why did the Minister of Agriculture say last week that the feds weren't interested in working with the provinces with respect to the CAIS deposits, when yesterday's announcement out of Manitoba clearly indicated something else?

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

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Well, Mr. Speaker, to begin with, I think it's very important to note that the way the question is put certainly twists a number of issues there. And I think that's typical of the Leader of the Opposition and his style.

What I want to make clear is that the federal government was working towards being able to take the deposits off. Mr. Speaker, we had already made the commitment that we were there; we have signed all the necessary papers to make sure these deposits come off. And as I indicated earlier, I did take the lead in Prince Edward Island on this issue, and I did push it, and I did push it again in our March meeting. And, Mr. Speaker, the deposits are coming off and those people who have money in deposits will be able to take that money out. Mr. Speaker, this is significant for producers in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, we know that seven provinces need to sign for this to happen across the country. And so in the meantime the NDP government in Manitoba announced that it's signed a federal-provincial agreement that will allow Manitoba producers to withdraw all funds in their CAIS accounts. According to that province's Ag minister, this will move ... this move will free up about \$63 million for Manitoba farmers.

Mr. Speaker, the farmers in Manitoba need that money at this point — just before seeding. The farmers, the producers in the province of Saskatchewan, need that money, Mr. Speaker. So the question to the minister is this: is the government working on a similar deal, and when can we expect an announcement in light of the fact that Manitoba is leading on this issue and have made their announcement yesterday?

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

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think it really is incumbent on the opposition to listen more carefully. The fact is, we have signed all the documentation — the money is ready to roll — and for Saskatchewan producers, that means 134 million, Mr. Speaker. The deal is signed; the agreement is made. It's ready to roll as soon as the federal government makes its decisions here, and I believe that it is ready to roll in the very immediate future, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the province of Manitoba, the Agriculture minister in Manitoba apparently has gone through all the same machinations that the Minister of Agriculture just highlighted. The difference of course is the announcement's been made and the program is in effect or the initiative is in effect. So what's holding things back here in the province? If everything is ready to go, why isn't it going? Why is the province of Manitoba ahead on this issue? When can producers expect a final announcement on this from the Minister of Agriculture?

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

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Mr. Speaker, these Conservative Sask Party people just do not listen. The fact is, the fact is — listen carefully — the deal is signed. We have signed it. The federal government just has to sign to amend no. 6. It is our understanding that they will be signing that ASAP [as soon as possible]. Today, tomorrow — it will be done as quickly as they do it. I really . . . as you may note I don't control the federal government. Things would be slightly different if I did. But they will move it ahead as quickly as they can.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Treatment of Macular Degeneration

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday when the Minister of Health was asked, who should decide who gets the preventative treatment for blindness that we brought up yesterday, should it be the doctors or the government? And this is what the minister had to say. He said, in many ways, like this week's benchmarks for waiting time,

this effort to prevent a man's blindness is a lobbying effort.

Mr. Speaker, those are the terms he used, "just a lobbying effort." Is that what the minister truly thinks? We have a man that comes to this building and he is suffering from the potential of going blind and the minister believes it's only a lobbying effort? How could the minister be that crass? Could he please explain that statement?

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the committee of doctors and professors at the medical school that make these decisions — I do not make these decisions — is called the Saskatchewan Formulary Committee assisted by the Saskatchewan drug quality assessment committee. And there are quite a number of doctors, medical doctors, pharmacists, and they are the ones who are assessing the evidence. And, Mr. Speaker, when they tell me that these doctors, after four years of requests, still haven't provided the evidence then I will rely on these professional committees that have been established with the leaders in the medical profession.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[10:30]

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

Mr. McMorris: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the evidence is in. It's there. And if the minister would get away from his arrogance, and calling people naive on this side of the House, and attacking victims that come into this legislature, and look at the evidence that is put in front of him. Mr. Speaker, the American journal of ophthalmologists, September 2003, volume 136, page 407; retina, *The Journal of Retinal and Vitreous Diseases*, volume 22, no. 1, on February 2002 — that's where the evidence is. There is evidence in other provinces that supports the use of this treatment. But for some reason this minister and this government would rather call a victim just simply a lobbyist than deal with the real issue. Will he instruct that committee to re-look at the evidence that has been put forward by professionals from around the world?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — When we work on these issues as a government we rely on our Department of Health and the advice that we get from professionals. In this particular case we have a committee, which is a Saskatchewan Formulary Committee, that reviews these drugs very carefully. These are medical doctors and pharmacists who . . . also nurses who are specially skilled at reviewing the medical evidence.

In the particular case involved here, they have asked again and again from these particular ophthalmologists that they would provide the evidence. They were one of the first groups in the country to accept the evidence that it does work for some of their patients. And so we provided this particular drug for use there. But to expand it into a new group where the evidence

isn't there, they've said no.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, the minister stands there and calls for evidence. The evidence is in. On March 2, 2005 a letter from Kevin Colleaux from the College of Medicine, University of Saskatchewan, and he quotes in his letter:

Worldwide evidence on the benefits of this treatment . . . have now been collected . . . analyzed . . . [and supported by] The American . . . [Academic of Ophthalmology and the] American Society of Retina specialists.

Mr. Speaker, the evidence is in. But for some reason the minister feels that he's much smarter than the opposition — that's been said many times. He certainly feels he's much smarter than George Siefert, who came here and told the people of the province that it is working on his behalf; and now he's saying he's a little bit smarter than all the specialists around the world. When will he re-look at the treatment and do the right thing and cover it?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, once again I say that I will rely on the professional advice that I receive, and I will quote from the letter that was sent to the doctor involved in this case:

The Saskatchewan formulary committee has previously reviewed the drug Visudyne and recommended coverage for the treatment of age-related macular degeneration and for the treatment of pathological myopia in patients with predominantly classic subfoveal choroidal neovascularization. The committee is currently reviewing the evidence submitted by the manufacturer on the use of Visudyne in the treatment of ocular histoplasmosis. This indication was recently approved by Health Canada. Health Canada has not yet approved the use of Visudyne for the minimally classic or the occult forms of macular degeneration and no detailed clinical studies have been submitted to the Saskatchewan review committees to support the Visudyne in these indications. Currently the provincial criteria is that they have to have Health Canada's [approval] . . .

The Speaker: — The member's time has elapsed. The Chair recognizes the member for Carrot River Valley.

FleetNet System

Mr. Kerpan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this government's on record as saying that it will dismantle the FleetNet emergency communication system in 2006. SaskTel wants to replace FleetNet with push-to-talk technology over its own cellular network.

Mr. Speaker, emergency workers and responders all over the

province are saying that this technology suffers from very serious delays, and we're all painfully aware of the lack of . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order, please. I would like to be able to hear the question. The member for Carrot River Valley.

Mr. Kerpan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying we're all painfully aware of the lack of complete cell service in the province of Saskatchewan. So my question is to the Minister Responsible for SaskTel. Are his intentions still the same, and if so, why are they the same?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for SaskWater, SaskTel.

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm answering this question in my capacity as Minister Responsible for Public Safety. And I say to the member opposite . . . and members opposite were at the annual convention of the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association in 2004, and they will have heard me say there very clearly as I say now today that SaskTel and the Government of Saskatchewan, including the Department of Corrections and Public Safety, have looked at this issue.

And we have made a decision that the FleetNet service will not be phased out until a viable alternative technology is in place for our emergency service providers in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Carrot River Valley.

Mr. Kerpan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister for his answer; I actually addressed it to the Minister for SaskTel but I had known that the Minister for Corrections and Public Safety had made this announcement in March, so perhaps we ought to call him the minister for SaskTel lite.

So I'll ask either one of the two ministers my next question, and here's what Neal Hardy, the president of SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities], has had to say about FleetNet. And Mr. Hardy says, and I quote:

. . . we have been given no real answer as to why it is necessary to get rid of . . . [this system.] It's a good system.

So I'm asking the minister what his longer term plans are, now that he has placed a moratorium on the dismantling of SaskTel. When does he plan on dismantling the system?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for Corrections and Public Safety.

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — Well, Mr. Speaker, let me just say that there are many users of the FleetNet system, and about a quarter

of them are our very important emergency service providers in the province of Saskatchewan.

The push-to-talk system that is being proposed by SaskTel will work very well for about 75 per cent of current FleetNet user systems, who I think are looking forward to the increased flexibility that they'll get with push to talk, as well as lower operating costs, Mr. Speaker.

But as it pertains to our emergency service providers, SaskTel and the Government of Saskatchewan recognize their social responsibility to ensure that emergency service providers have an effective, fully functioning radio and telecommunications system, Mr. Speaker. And we are therefore consulting widely with emergency service providers as we speak, to ensure that in the long term we will have such a system in place. And I assure the member that until we have our new technology, FleetNet will stay.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Carrot River Valley.

Mr. Kerpan: — Well, well, well, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure that's pretty comforting for the 25 per cent of the people in the province who are not going to have any kind of emergency response system at all. I wonder if the minister would like to be in the, live in the area where the 25 per cent does not have any communication.

Mr. Speaker, the equipment for FleetNet is still readily available. Manitoba continues to use FleetNet effectively, and there is no alternative in place. SaskTel has been planning to dump FleetNet since 1997. That's when they dumped their support service contract with the manufacturer. It seems like SaskTel has been planning for years to get out of FleetNet.

And yet, Mr. Speaker, you can phone a SaskTel dealership today and still buy FleetNet equipment. So my question is to the minister or one of the ministers, why did they choose to mislead the people about the future of FleetNet? And why didn't they bother to tell the province that FleetNet . . . what it was up to?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister Responsible for SaskTel.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — First of all, Mr. Speaker, I think that question is more specific to SaskTel.

Let me say this, make this observation first of all, Mr. Speaker. I can understand why that member is interested in mobile telephone service, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, let me also say that . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Let me also say, Mr. Speaker, that the equipment that that member refers to is no longer being supplied. And the equipment that is being provided for emergency services through SaskTel is now equipment that is in their stock; it's old stock. You're not able to get this new equipment . . . you're not able to get this equipment as new any more, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Effect of Smoking at First Nations Casinos

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well the ashtrays are being set out onto the tables today at the Painted Hand Casino — let the smoking begin. On June 16, 2004, in this House, the Minister of Health promised a level playing field for all businesses. The minister promised he had done his homework. Mr. Speaker, he had not. He failed miserably, and actually should be sent back to the salt mines to relearn his homework and to learn how to respond truthfully, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what is the minister going to do now about the non-provincial wide smoking ban?

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, we in this province have brought forward a law of general application as it relates to smoking in Saskatchewan. And it applies right across the province, but it also respects the jurisdiction of the federal government and of the First Nations.

And, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to respect that jurisdiction, and we will work together with the First Nations and with the federal government.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, on June 16, 2004, the minister says that the smoking ban will work. So I don't know who the stranger was who was saying this was, but this is a quote of the minister on that day:

As long as there's an even playing field so that people are operating under the same rules, we will have all of that information clearly laid out; and that will be a part of the information . . . In a way that allows first nations to take ownership of the overall policy.

Mr. Speaker, the minister gave this House assurances there would be a level playing field. He said his work was done. The consultations had taken place, but he failed in negotiations with the First Nations. Why did the minister blow it, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, we presented and we passed here in this legislature, with the assistance of the members opposite, a law of general application in the province. And we passed that law so that it would cover those areas where we in this legislature have jurisdiction.

Mr. Speaker, the challenge is the Constitution of Canada and

how our powers are limited as a legislature. And, Mr. Speaker, we respect the Constitution of Canada. We're going to work together with the First Nations and with the federal government and continue to respect the Constitution.

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Members of this House voted in favour of the smoking ban based on the minister's assurance to this Assembly it would be a level playing field, Mr. Speaker. Last fall, the Minister of Finance covered off his smoking losses at casinos while small businesses were left out. Here's what the Minister of Finance had to say in response, quote: "This is a new environment that businesses have to adapt to." He covered off the losses for government and then hung everybody else out to blow in the wind like smoke, Mr. Speaker.

There is no level playing field, because the Minister of Health didn't live up to his word. He didn't have a consensus that included First Nations as he told this Assembly he had. Mr. Speaker, the ashtrays are out at the Painted Hand Casino. What is the government going to do to ensure a level playing field in this province?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I ask the members opposite, are they in favour of a smoke-free Saskatchewan or not?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, members on this side of the House voted in favour of a smoking ban across this province that applied equally to everyone. The minister gave this House assurances that he had done his homework. He had a consensus across this province that included First Nations when he was specifically asked that question, Mr. Speaker. He did not have that, even though he told this House that he did have, Mr. Speaker.

Why does this minister continue to allow a non-level playing field? Why is he not back at the negotiating table, settling this issue so everybody plays by the same rules on the smoking ban, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[10:45]

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, we brought forward a law of general application that applies to everybody in the province, unless under the Constitution there is an exemption. Mr. Speaker, that kind of challenge is there and that's how we operate in this country.

Mr. Speaker, have the members opposite changed their perspective — that we in this legislature would use our power and our legislative authority to go for a smoke-free legislation? That's a specific question that I ask for that member and all the other members.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, on the issue of the smoking ban legislation, members on both sides of the House rely on cabinet ministers; we rely on them to answer questions truthfully when they're asked so we can form the decision, so we can form the vote that we will make on an issue.

The minister was asked the question that the member for Cannington has highlighted already. He was asked if he had his homework done, if he had consulted with First Nations ahead of time. And he told the House that he had. He told this Assembly that he had done his homework. We found out later that he had not done his homework. So the question to the Minister of Health is this: why did he not tell the truth to members of this Assembly in advance of the vote?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order, members.

Members, on the phrase just used by the Leader of the Opposition and previously with respect to the phrase used by the member for Cannington where he talked about learning to respond truthfully, I would bring to members' attention from Beauchesne's *Parliamentary Rules & Forms*, 6th . . . Order, please. Order, please . . . 6th Edition, page 141, rule 481:

. . . it has been sanctioned by usage that . . . [members], while speaking, must not:

. . . impute bad motives or motives different from those acknowledged by a Member.

Would also imply not only bad motives but bad actions. So I would ask the member to withdraw that statement before we proceed any further.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I withdraw that statement.

The Speaker: — I thank the member. I would also ask the member from Cannington to withdraw that statement.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, I withdraw that remark.

The Speaker: — I thank both members for their co-operation. The question has been asked. I will now go to the minister for the response.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, when we were working with this legislation and as we continue to work with this legislation, we have to work within the powers that we have as a legislature. And unfortunately for some members and for all of us, we don't always acknowledge that we operate under a

Constitution of Canada.

And, Mr. Speaker, what I said last June was that there could be challenges around this particular issue, and we will continue to work with those people. At that point, the only situation that was available was the compliance of the First Nations in Yorkton and that was our understanding, that was my understanding at that time, that this was going to be the common practice across the province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that didn't prove to be exactly how this has turned out. But what I would say is, that we have substantial compliance with our legislation across the province. We're going to operate within the Constitution of Canada.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Government Responses to Issues

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

Mr. Wall: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know Saskatchewan people have some basic expectations of their government. They would expect the government to have a vision for the future of the province. The NDP fails on that count. And they'd expect some basic competency. What have we heard this morning, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the competency of this government?

Other governments are helping producers. They've got deals in place with respect to the CAIS deposit. This NDP government does not. Other governments are helping people who are losing their sight through macular degeneration. This government is not. The NDP was going to replace FleetNet. Now it's back; now they're going to keep FleetNet; now it might not be back — we're not sure. And on the smoking ban, Mr. Speaker, remember the grace period? It was on again, off again. You remember the minister's assurances that he had a deal done? We found out that that's not the case.

With this government it is true that the left hand does not know what the far left hand is doing, Mr. Speaker, and the question to the government is simple: how could they be this incompetent? How could any government in Canada be this stunned?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — I want to say very clearly first of all, this is a government that stands behind and supports the jurisdictions of First Nations peoples in this province. This is a government that stands behind its agricultural producers and works with them and on their behalf. But, Mr. Speaker, I know what's . . .

The Speaker: — Order please, members. I ask the members on both sides of the Assembly to come to order. The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — But I'll tell you what's going on here today, Mr. Speaker. This Conservative opposition over here,

they don't want to talk about good news in this province. No. They want to talk about everything else.

They don't want to talk about 13,200 new jobs in the province of Saskatchewan announced today.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — They don't want to talk about one of three provinces in Canada showing this kind of economic growth. They don't want to talk about the second lowest unemployment rate in the nation of Canada. They don't want to talk about the solid record of this New Democratic Party government.

That Conservative opposition, they're nothing but a bunch of complainers and the people of Saskatchewan know that, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 104 — The Planning and Development Amendment Act, 2005

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister responsible for Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 104, The Planning and Development Amendment Act, 2005 be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Government Relations that Bill No. 104, The Planning and Development Amendment Act, 2005 be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a second time? The Chair recognizes the minister.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — At the next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 105 — The Local Government Election Amendment Act, 2005

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill 105, The Local Government Election Amendment Act, 2005 be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Government Relations that Bill 105, The Local Government Election Amendment Act, 2005 be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a second time? The Chair recognizes the minister.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — At the next sitting, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

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 once again to stand on behalf of the government to respond to written questions 947 through 953 inclusive, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The responses to question 947 through to 953 have been submitted.

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Carrot River Valley.

FleetNet Emergency Communications System

Mr. Kerpan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at the end of my remarks today I will be moving a motion as it relates to the FleetNet emergency radio system that is current widely used in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

But before I get to that, Mr. Speaker, I was a bit confused — and it's a related issue — I was a bit confused in question period because I had thought that the member for Meadow Lake was the Minister for SaskTel, but it appears as though the member for Greystone may be the new minister for SaskTel. And perhaps I missed a news announcement that there was a cabinet shuffle — I don't know. Or maybe they, maybe they think that there needs to be two, two ministers for SaskTel because neither one of them is doing the job. I'm not sure.

And the other thing that I guess that bothered me a little bit in question period as it relates to this issue is the member from Meadow Lake chirping in his seat about me needing the use of mobile phones. Well, Mr. Speaker, I never thought of this before but well, perhaps if the member for Meadow Lake would like to run against me maybe, maybe that could be arranged. And I'm not afraid of the results, to put his record and my record before the people of the province might be not a bad

idea.

So I was a little disappointed about the flippant remarks and the lack of answers to some very, what I think, what many people across the province think is a very important issue, about the use of the FleetNet emergency system. I asked the question what the long-term plan is for the government as to how long they will keep the FleetNet system in use before they scuttle it and go to a . . . to go to a new system that at this point in time is certainly not proven and certainly no where near to have been discussed and talked about with all the stakeholders of the province.

So there are a great many concerns, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the possible alternative that the government is offering. The only alternative I've heard offered to replace the FleetNet system is the push-to-talk cellular service. Well, Mr. Speaker, again cell service of course in Saskatchewan is sketchy at best, especially if you live in my part of the province, in the Carrot River Valley where SaskTel cellular service is unavailable.

So my question then becomes — and was answered by the member for Meadow Lake during question period — is that, well the cellular service covers 75 per cent of the province. So what he's really saying in essence is that only 25 per cent, only 25 per cent of the people who live in Saskatchewan will be without emergency communication — only 25 per cent, which surprised me because I know, I'm pretty sure, that the member for Meadow Lake would be in that 25 per cent. Especially once you get north of Meadow Lake, I would assume that they lose their cell service, just like I do when I leave the bigger communities in Carrot River Valley, such as Tisdale and Nipawin, Carrot River and Hudson Bay, so on and so forth. So the answer that 75 per cent coverage is going to be acceptable is not acceptable, is simply, simply not acceptable.

We talk about the costs, Mr. Speaker, the costs to the communities and the RMs [rural municipality] of Saskatchewan over the past good number of years since the FleetNet system was brought into place. And I looked back at the job that the Government of Saskatchewan did at the time to sell the FleetNet system to communities and RMs throughout the province, Mr. Speaker. And I know that there's been untold many hundreds of thousands of dollars, perhaps millions, that have been spent by communities and RMs trying to put a FleetNet system into place that has been, has been for the most part pretty effective, a pretty effective system.

I go back to comments made by people that I know the best. And one that I had heard in the last few months from one of the town councillors in Carrot River, Mr. Dale Debiegne, who is hugely concerned — he is the fire chief of Carrot River as well — hugely concerned with this issue. And he's not the only one. My colleagues, mostly from rural Saskatchewan, have brought the same stories to our caucus, saying that, you know, the costs and the ineffectiveness of a new system are going to be, going to be overwhelming for communities in Saskatchewan. Carrot River, for instance, just spent \$20,000 to put a FleetNet system into place that is no longer going to be a viable system once the government decides that they are going to scuttle it.

So then my questions become, what are the plans for the future? What's the new system going to look like? Will the government

compensate the communities and RMs for the money that they've put into the FleetNet system? And, Mr. Speaker, the answers have been very, very slow in coming.

[11:00]

Mr. Speaker, I want to quote just a couple of people from Saskatchewan, and I did this in question period, but I want to get it on record again here today. Neal Hardy, who is the president of SARM, and I quote from Neal on November 17, 2004, and I quote:

It's a concern to a lot of people, and we have been given no real answer as to why it is necessary to get rid of it. It's a good system.

Mr. Speaker, these are the people that are using the FleetNet system out in rural Saskatchewan. And they are telling us, they are telling me, they are telling my colleagues, and they are telling the government, because I know that they are telling the government not to be in a hurry to scuttle a system that basically has served a very effective purpose for a good number of years.

Many of these communities, Mr. Speaker, have just recently, within the last two or three or four years, spent a lot of money on this FleetNet system. And yet we know that from 1997 obviously SaskTel had no intention of keeping the system because they cancelled their service contract. So we knew — they knew — for the last seven or eight years, Mr. Speaker, that they had no intention of keeping the system, and yet they didn't tell their customers that. They didn't tell the new customers that. Why didn't they tell people like Naicam and Carrot River and Nipawin that they were going to scuttle the system instead of allowing those communities to spend tens of thousands of dollars to buy the equipment, to go into a service that they knew was not going to be around for very much longer?

I know the minister's going to stand up, probably . . . well I'm not sure which minister's going to stand up. One of them is going to stand up and probably say today in this House that oh, they're going to keep the system until they've decided on a new system. Well again that's my question. When is the system going to be disbanded, and what are the compensations going to be for those communities?

Mr. Speaker, I want to get back to something that we've learned just recently. And I was shocked to hear this and to learn this . . . is that if you go to a SaskTel network dealer right today you still can, you still can, buy FleetNet equipment. You still can sign up to the FleetNet system. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's the other thing . . . is why would the government not be telling those potential customers that they're planning on disbanding the service? Why would they not say to them, well maybe you've only got six months left, or you've only got a year left, or okay maybe you've got two years left? We haven't heard what the date is, but at any rate, why would they not say, you know, to town A or RM X, you know it's great that you're interested in the FleetNet system, but it's not going to be used very much longer.

Instead they're misleading the public and saying we want your money. We want your business, and next week or next month or

next year we're not sure that they're going to disband the service. My colleague from Wood River said that's the way they do business. And you know what? He's right.

That's the long record, the long tradition of an NDP socialist government and their manner of doing business here in Saskatchewan. And frankly, Mr. Speaker, people in rural Saskatchewan, people all across the province are tired of that type of irresponsible behaviour by a government that's lost touch with those that they're supposed to serve.

Mr. Speaker, we look at a sidebar issue on this FleetNet issue and that being, I don't really understand who the boss is over there. I'm not sure whose announcement we ought to listen to any more. I mean, as I said in question period, the Minister for SaskTel won't answer the questions on FleetNet, and yet he'll answer questions on cellular service. And, Mr. Speaker, I've lost my faith in trying to ask legitimate questions in question period and asking for and hoping for legitimate answers.

Mr. Speaker, I hear the members across the way, and they're having a lot of fun with this. The member for Eastview is chirping a bit in her seat and, Mr. Speaker, it's a sad thing, you know, because this is a relatively serious issue. It's lots of fun to pretend that it's funny and that there . . . because she maybe doesn't have to worry about the FleetNet system, living in Saskatoon. But I could tell you that those people that live in rural Saskatchewan, those people that live in Carrot River Valley or Meadow Lake or Cypress Hills, they do have to worry about it, Mr. Speaker. They do have to worry about it.

And they, in fact, Mr. Speaker, in fact, Mr. Speaker, their lives depend on it. Their lives depend on the fact that they have got reliable, effective, cost-effective emergency communications right across the province, Mr. Speaker. And that is the issue.

The issue is not some flippant remarks about the cost or that 75 per cent of the people will still have coverage under the cell service. That's not the issue. The issue is that we have a responsibility to the people of this province to provide the very best service that we can when it comes to saving lives in this province.

That's been the socialist attitude when it comes to health care. It's been the socialist attitude when it comes to the smoking issue. We talked about that in question period. That's been the socialist attitude when we talked about agriculture issues. And that's also the socialist attitude, their record of management, when it comes to talk about emergency communication systems in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, our motion today deals with the request for this government to ensure and make sure that consultations are done with every stakeholder in the province. And it asks that those people are consulted and they're asked about their input. They're asked about the costs. They're asked about the effectiveness about the new system so that they're comfortable.

If there is a new system that needs to be put in place, tell us why. Tell us why that FleetNet no longer works. Tell us why after all the millions of dollars that have been spent on that system throughout the province that it's still a system that Manitoba thinks is well worth carrying on into the future, and

other places.

It's still . . . Tell us why that SaskPower won't even use this new . . . They won't even deal with SaskTel when it comes to their communication system. Mr. Speaker, SaskPower and the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] are now . . . currently they are working on a joint effort to put a new system of their own in place.

Tell us why SaskPower and one of the other Crowns won't deal with SaskTel on any of these communications issues. There are reasons. Do they know something that the rest of us don't know? Perhaps, perhaps. Perhaps that they're nervous about entering into another one of these socialist government type of business arrangements. That tells me a lot, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, the whole point of the issue of this debate today . . . And the issue is driven from the people of the province, the people who are in our emergency response systems who are telling me and who are telling us that they want to make sure that this FleetNet system stays in place at least, at least . . . and until a new system can be developed and costed so that people know with their eyes open what kind of a new system there will be, how long it will be in place, what it's going to cost and how effective it will be.

Those are four simple questions that everyone in this province absolutely has the right to know. So instead of catcalls, flippant remarks, and laughing, I would encourage, I would encourage the government from the other side today to enter into a debate with some degree of seriousness about an issue that really is about lives and saving lives in Saskatchewan. So, Mr. Speaker, I'm actually quite proud today to move that, and seconded by the member for Cypress Hills:

That this Assembly urge the government to maintain the FleetNet system until a viable, comprehensive, province-wide alternative system can be developed in conjunction with all stakeholders.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Iwanchuk): — The motion for the Assembly is:

That this Assembly urge the government to maintain the FleetNet system until a viable, comprehensive, province-wide alternative system can be developed in conjunction with all stakeholders.

I recognize the member from Cypress Hills.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to be able to participate in this 75-minute debate today on this particular topic, I might add, because the FleetNet abandonment proposed by this government at one time was of considerable importance to the constituents of Cypress Hills, not to mention the people who live in largely rural areas throughout the province of Saskatchewan

I must say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I was pleased to hear the

minister today stand and confirm that the government has had second thoughts about this and will probably continue the provision of FleetNet services until a viable and workable alternative is found.

I found that somewhat encouraging but, Mr. Speaker, I am standing to second this motion today because I believe that the government's approach to FleetNet service delivery over the last number of years, since about 1992 when it was originally introduced, has been completely schizophrenic.

At one instance they have said that FleetNet is a viable service and a good service, a reliable service, an important service to emergency providers throughout the province. But on the other hand while they were saying that, in fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, while the provincial government and the federal government were actually funding the purchase of FleetNet equipment or helping fund that equipment purchase by many rural communities, they were already allowing the technology to lapse into redundancy, to not update it appropriately. And in some instances individuals who had positions of responsibility and authority at SaskTel were talking publicly about wanting to get rid of FleetNet because it was costing the telephone provider so much money.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, while I want to see this system remain in place and working effectively and continuously until some suitable alternative is found, given the track record of the government's approach to this particular service delivery I'm not really certain that we can count on the minister's assurances today.

I want to just recite a little bit of history as it relates to this particular service delivery. FleetNet has been with us as I understand it since about 1992, and at the time was considered to be the best alternative for emergency contact. And by 1998 communities were being encouraged directly and specifically by this government to come on stream. If they hadn't done so already, they were significantly encouraged. And part of that inducement to join the FleetNet system was a partial funding of the cost of the equipment to the local municipalities.

And to bear that out, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to read from a letter of Eastend, dated July 30, 2004. This was just after the government announced that they would no longer be servicing emergency calls through the FleetNet system. This letter was written to the Premier, and I have a copy. And it says:

Prior to 1998 the Eastend & District Fire Department used an FM radio communications system that worked very effectively. In 1998 the Provincial government established Provincial 9-1-1 Public Service answering Points [using the acronym] (PSAP), an emergency service telecommunications program to develop an area wide communication system that would assist in the dispatch in communications capability of fire responders. The provincial 9-1-1 system required several municipalities to change their communication systems.

That was as of 1998. The letter goes on to say:

2 million dollars was provided by the government over a four year period, to municipalities to assist with 75% of

the costs to purchase radio and paging systems for fire services. The purpose of the program was to develop a communication system that would allow responding fire personnel to interact with other response agencies that they may be working with and to remain in contact with the respective dispatch agency.

The letter goes on to talk about the system and how well it worked. Although everybody recognized there were some flaws, it was at that point the best available communication system that they had been able to develop.

Now what's interesting about this is that the government is asking municipalities in 1998 to get on board this system, to provide a uniformity of emergency response capability throughout the province. It was very successful. The program compelled or induced about . . . well the majority, frankly, of Saskatchewan communities and rural municipalities to come on board, with the possible exception of some of the larger urban centres that used a different form of communications.

But in 1998, we've since learned that while the provincial government was spending money to help encourage local communities to get on board, at that same time SaskTel was refusing offers to upgrade the FleetNet technological equipment that was being offered by the manufacturer. We know that as about of 1997, improvements were being made available on the basic equipment, and the manufacturer was asking some of its customers if they would like to take advantage of the new technology. And at that particular point SaskTel was turning those offers down.

[11:15]

We understand that the decision to not buy some of the new technology from the FleetNet manufacturer complicated the system and compromised its reliability to a considerable extent. And at that point the only repairs that SaskTel made to FleetNet equipment was done on the basis of emergency requirement. And prior to that particular point the FleetNet system had been quite reliable, but as the technology aged, certainly the reliability started to diminish.

And consequently we had a number of communities that were relying on the FleetNet service as their only emergency telecommunications system, but not being assured of ongoing service being provided for that equipment. And certainly they weren't being allowed to access the new technology that was being made available by the manufacturer.

So we have these two different streams of intention operating simultaneously on the part of the government. They're funding the increased participation levels by communities throughout the province to get involved in the FleetNet system, while on the other hand, SaskTel and SaskTel Mobility are not accessing the new technology and the updated technology coming from the manufacturer. So as I mentioned earlier on in my opening comments, there was a schizophrenic approach to this particular system exhibited by the government and its chief agency, SaskTel and SaskTel Mobility.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the reason that this particular discussion today is so urgent is that at this point yet, there is no

significantly reliable alternative to the existing FleetNet system. With all its warts, the existing system is still superior to any alternative that has been offered as another system to rural communities throughout the province.

I know that SaskTel Mobility has said that one of the best alternatives they might suggest is the push-to-talk technology that is provided through digital cell service. The problem with that technology, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that while digital cell service might be available in up to 75 per cent of the communities in this province, the remaining 25 per cent don't have cell service of any kind and certainly not the digital system that other areas have been able to enjoy. So even if the push-to-talk system was found to be more reliable and certainly more modern, it doesn't provide the comprehensive coverage that the FleetNet system has provided.

I guess the other problem, Mr. Speaker, is that we found the response time in the push-to-talk system is not adequate. Because of the technology incorporated in that particular system, the push to talk has a significant delay. And when you're dealing with emergencies, delays of any kind cannot be tolerated. If there's a seven-second delay, which is what I'm led to believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's going to complicate the communications of emergency personnel at the very time it's most critical that they have immediate response.

You know there's an interesting question associated with this whole thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that is that as urgent as the need for good communications in emergencies has been — and we've known about it for a number of years — we also know that while SaskTel was abandoning the improved technology through FleetNet it was spending considerable sums of money in all sorts of lost ventures around the world. I can point to two immediately, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Retx.com cost SaskTel \$26 million and Navigata to date has cost us 75 million.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Iwanchuk): — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Greystone.

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to enter into this debate. I'm a little surprised that the opposition has chosen to put this motion forward, given what they have been aware government has been doing over the last few months on this matter. I just want to indicate, Mr. Speaker, that at the end of my remarks I'll be moving an amendment to the motion:

That the word "commend" be substituted for the word "urge" and the words "for maintaining" be substituted for the words "to maintain."

But let me just reiterate the point that I made during question period as a starting point for this debate, Mr. Speaker. And that is that the Government of Saskatchewan will not be phasing out the FleetNet system in this province for emergency providers until a viable alternative technology that will meet the needs of emergency service providers has been put in place in the province of Saskatchewan, and until there's been an opportunity for implementation, Mr. Speaker, sufficient time for implementation. So members opposite needn't worry, Mr. Speaker. I endorse the intent of this motion, Mr. Speaker.

And very simply, government is already taking exactly the action that members opposite are now proposing. We've been involved for months in consultations on an alternative technology, Mr. Speaker, and we're committed to keep the FleetNet system in place until the alternative technology has been identified.

Now let me just address some of the concerns that the member for Carrot River Valley has raised. First of all, I want to clarify this matter of somehow 25 per cent of emergency service providers being left out in the cold. That will not be the case at all, Mr. Speaker. The member, I think unintentionally, has misunderstood my comments during question period. When I said that 75 per cent of FleetNet service users would be happy with the push-to-talk system, I was referring to all the users who are not emergency service providers.

We've got a lot of other people using FleetNet in this province, Mr. Speaker. And those people are excited about SaskTel's plans for push to talk, which will give them a much more flexible system at lower operating costs. But I recognize, as Minister Responsible for Public Safety, just as the Minister Responsible for SaskTel recognizes, that the push-to-talk system is not going to work for our emergency service providers. And there's two or three basic reasons for that, Mr. Speaker.

The first is that our emergency service providers need to be able to communicate with each other in quite large numbers when they're going to an emergency, the scene of an emergency. We may have 15 or 20 vehicles travelling to a major emergency, Mr. Speaker, and they all need to be able to communicate with one another en route and push to talk will only allow about five different users travelling to an incident to communicate with one another.

And so push to talk is not going to work, for instance, for firefighters going to the scene of a major fire if there's more than five vehicles travelling there, Mr. Speaker. And we recognize that and that's one of the reasons why we've taken the position that we have.

We also recognize, Mr. Speaker, that push to talk, unless there's new innovations in it — which currently don't exist, but may exist in the future — Mr. Speaker, push to talk, we understand, is not going to work in a burning building, you know. And our firefighters need to be able to communicate in a burning building. And the push-to-talk system won't work for them in that kind of a situation.

So, Mr. Speaker, we recognize these facts and therefore we understand that our emergency service providers want the assurance that the FleetNet system will remain in place until there's another effective technology that will meet their needs, Mr. Speaker. So this government is taking, in effect, two simultaneous actions.

First of all, we're going to better serve the 75 per cent of FleetNet users who are not emergency service providers, Mr. Speaker, and who are looking forward to the additional innovation that will come with a push-to-talk system that will be less expensive in terms of operating costs, and at the same time will give them increased flexibility of use because they'll

be able to use it as a cellphone; they'll be able to use it for radio transmission, Mr. Speaker. There'll be a variety of additional uses that they will have available to them at less cost, Mr. Speaker.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, we're acting to meet the needs of our emergency service providers who we're hugely grateful for. Many of these are people who do their work voluntarily, Mr. Speaker. We have more than 400 volunteer firefighters around the province of Saskatchewan. As Minister of Public Safety, I am very proud of the work that they do, and they are relying on the FleetNet system, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, SaskTel and Corrections and Public Safety have signalled to our emergency service providers, just as we've signalled to SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] and SARM, that that FleetNet system will be in place for them as long as it needs to be, until a viable alternative technology has been identified and until there has been time for that technology to be implemented, Mr. Speaker. And so that is the very, very clear position of the Government of Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to inform the House about some of the consultations that have been taking place. For instance, Mr. Speaker, in the last week of March we held public consultations for emergency service providers in Prince Albert, in Saskatoon, in Regina, and in Swift Current. And these consultations, Mr. Speaker, were attended by emergency service providers from right across Saskatchewan and there was very good advice given to government, Mr. Speaker, at these consultations.

We held another round of consultations across the province this week, Mr. Speaker, including yesterday, Mr. Speaker, consultations at the fire chiefs conference that's taking place in Estevan. And I'm looking forward to addressing the fire chiefs this evening on a variety of public safety issues, Mr. Speaker.

But we consulted with the fire chiefs at their Estevan conference just yesterday on what their best advice is with respect to alternative technologies to FleetNet, what their best advice is with respect to how long the FleetNet system should stay in place, and other important implementation issues that we were anxious to get their advice on.

So I think members opposite will be able to see that we're serious about these consultations. We are looking forward to meeting, within a few weeks, formally with the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association and the Saskatchewan rural municipalities association to go over a potential draft report, Mr. Speaker, that the consultant is working on right now. And, Mr. Speaker, I just want to assure members opposite that we're taking the needs of emergency service providers in this province very, very seriously, and we're listening, Mr. Speaker, to the advice that they are giving us.

Now the member opposite asked the question, well apart from push to talk, what other alternatives are being looking at? And I just want to indicate to him, Mr. Speaker, a couple of options that are being examined.

One, Mr. Speaker, is the potential for emergency service providers to ultimately link into the system that the RCMP are

moving with, Mr. Speaker, their new system. That is one option, Mr. Speaker.

Another option, Mr. Speaker, is that rural communities — and it's primarily the smaller centres outside of Saskatoon and Regina that are being impacted by these consultations, Mr. Speaker — but another option that we have available to us is the potential to link up with the Saskatoon and Regina radio systems that have been put in place for emergency service providers. Saskatoon and Regina, unlike the rest of the province, have — because of their larger populations — have been able to invest in an integrated radio telecommunications system that provides linkages in communication with all the emergency service providers in those communities. And another option that we will explore is the potential to enhance that system and link emergency service providers in the rest of the province into the Saskatoon and Regina systems

So we're looking at both those as options. I just share that with the member for Carrot River Valley, who I know has a concern about this issue clearly. I appreciate him raising it, Mr. Speaker. I hope he will see, and that members opposite will see, and I hope that members of the public will see that government is acting in exactly the direction that the members are now suggesting, Mr. Speaker. This government is ahead of the members in terms of where the members are proposing to go. We've been going there for months, Mr. Speaker. But I do appreciate members opposite raising this issue as a concern, and government is responding to the concerns of emergency service providers.

We're looking forward to ongoing consultations. And I reiterate one more time, Mr. Speaker, that the FleetNet telecommunication system that we have in place right now will remain in place for emergency service providers until such time as an alternative technology has been clearly identified and there's been time to implement it. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Speaker, I'd indicated I was going to move an amendment. I should formally move it, if I could. And that is, I move:

That the word "commend" be substituted for the word "urge" and the words "for maintaining" be substituted for the words "to maintain."

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

[11:30]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Iwanchuk): — The member for Saskatoon Greystone has amended the motion:

That the word "commend" be substituted for the word "urge" and the words "for maintaining" be substituted for the words "to maintain."

And the Chair recognizes the member from Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm

very pleased to rise today and second the amendment made by my colleague from the constituency of Saskatoon Greystone.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is an issue that is of concern to Saskatchewan residents. And I think it's very, very clear that we are given the opportunity to put forward what the true position of the Government of Saskatchewan is. Mr. Speaker, we as the government, and the members of the government, share the concerns of Saskatchewan residents about the safety and well-being of our citizens.

And we are in fact, Mr. Speaker . . . Deputy Speaker, very concerned, very concerned that we have a good communication system in place for our emergency workers across the province. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the previous speaker has made it very, very clear that we will maintain this system until a viable alternative has been put in place.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, can we say today what that viable alternative is? No, we can't. We are continuing to look at options. There are consultations going on with the users of the system, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And those consultations will continue. It's very important, as we look to a new system in the future, that we understand all the needs of the users of that system, Mr. Speaker, and that that system in fact does meet those needs. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as those consultations continue, the FleetNet system that we currently have in place will remain.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are telecommunications and communication advances being made on a very rapid base across our nation and across the world today, and any new system we put in place needs to be sustainable for a long period of time. Because Saskatchewan's vast resource of land, Mr. Deputy Speaker, across this province, and the distances between communities in this province, require that we have a system that in fact is usable throughout all corners of our province — whether you live in the North, the South, Mr. Speaker, the far reaches of our province.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are committed that any new system we put in place in fact provides the same or better quality service than the FleetNet system today provides.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we look with the communities across Saskatchewan, with the stakeholders, for new alternatives to replace this aging system with more advanced technology — with better technology, Mr. Deputy Speaker — technology that will in fact perhaps enhance, and we would hope would enhance, the ability of emergency workers across this province to perform their duties in a way that is efficient, effective, and as required by the citizens of our province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the FleetNet system we have today is aging. Equipment is very difficult to get a hold of. It has its flaws. Reliability is becoming a concern for those who provide the system. And in order to look forward we need to look at whether or not keeping the existing system is the best option, or in fact moving to a more advanced system than meets our needs. Those decisions have not been made. And until those decisions are made and a new system is in place, we will keep this system up and operating for the people of Saskatchewan.

But with any aging system, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there becomes concerns about reliability. There becomes concerns about replacement parts. There becomes concerns about aging infrastructure around the system that may not be usable or able to be fixed readily, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So as you start to face those challenges, then you start to look at what options are available to you, and that's what's going on today, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Today a committee including many stakeholders is looking . . . what options are available to us with new technology. Today they're examining those options. They're talking to those who provide those services because they understand what services they need in each situation that they encounter. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a responsible way to approach this problem. I think even the members opposite would agree that that's the responsible way to approach this problem.

With a population of 1 million people, with the demographics of our province and the population sparsity in areas of our province, and the requirement to deliver services in all corners of our province for emergency personnel, Mr. Speaker, it becomes a challenge to understand exactly what each of those service providers require in the various parts of the province. So we're undertaking that review.

And I think that the Minister Responsible for Corrections and Public Safety is taking this responsibility and this initiative very seriously. He is meeting with fire professionals, he's meeting with police professionals, emergency medical professionals across the province. He's wanting to ensure that in fact whatever new system we look at, it will meet those needs of those professionals throughout the province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd once again like to tell the people of Saskatchewan that this government has made a very firm commitment that until we have a new system in place that provides that security for our citizens, the FleetNet system will be maintained. But it is also incumbent upon us to let people know that a system of . . . an aging system without reliable replacement parts and without reliable infrastructure, it becomes more difficult to maintain over time.

So being responsible, we are looking at whether it is in the public's best interest to maintain this system indefinitely or to look for a better, more up-to-date, more modern system that provides the same or better quality service to our citizens.

And in doing so, Mr. Speaker, government departments — the Department of Corrections and Public Safety, the Department of Government Relations, SaskTel — are all putting their combined efforts towards looking at what we in fact need in our province and how we can best deliver those needs in our province, meeting the needs of the various stakeholders and the citizens of the province who use the system. And those include a number of government agencies as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And once we have all this information together, we will continue to examine, based on the geographical considerations we have in the province, demographic considerations we have in the province, the various types of users, the need for reliable communications in various situations.

Firefighters need reliable communications in the middle of a fire, Mr. Speaker. In a room filled with smoke, they need to be able to communicate out to their trucks and back to their bases, Mr. Speaker. We have emergency medical personnel that need to communicate in very difficult quarters. And all those things need to be taken into consideration when we're in fact looking at a new system and what that system needs to do in order to meet the needs.

Now I can understand the concerns of citizens across the province. I can understand why the members opposite raised the issue because those citizens that they represent, as do we as members of the government, are concerned about what happens if this system isn't there, as of any particular time, Mr. Speaker, without a reliable replacement system and equipment available for them.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are working very, very diligently to first consult and understand the full implications of what we need now and moving forward. Because it is incumbent upon a responsible government when putting forward a new system, to design a system, or buy or build a system, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that in fact delivers a product for an extended period of time into the future. Because the infrastructure to put a new system in place can be very extensive, Mr. Deputy Speaker — and expensive. And we need to be able to know exactly what we need. We need to know that it will be reliable for many years into the future. And we need to understand that those systems are integrated so the various stakeholders and emergency services across the province who need to use these services, in fact can and will.

We also need to look at the cost of those systems for those who are going to be the stakeholders. So as we're looking at new systems, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have to understand the costs that those stakeholders will experience in a transfer or change of system, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And we need to understand what those costs would be. We need to have those stakeholders understand those costs well in advance of any change in the system.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think without doubt the Minister Responsible for Corrections and Public Safety has made it very clear we're extremely concerned about those issues that have been raised by both stakeholders and the public, and has made a very firm commitment that that system, the FleetNet system, will remain in place until it's replaced. And when it's replaced it will be replaced with a system that they will understand, that they will clearly understand will meet their needs as service providers of emergency services throughout the province. And, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work with communities, the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, fire departments, police agencies, emergency medical services, to make sure that we — we in the government and the members opposite — understand the needs of the various stakeholders prior to making any decisions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a debate that is more, I think, to reassure the public than to even reassure the opposition. I think the opposition knew very clearly the position of the government on this issue. But as with many of the key issues that we discuss in this legislature, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's really for the people of Saskatchewan. And they need to hear from those of us who

are members of the legislature what that position is.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that we've made that very clear today — that there is a commitment from the Government of Saskatchewan and the ministers responsible that we will in fact maintain this system until a viable alternative is put in place. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it's important that members opposite also acknowledge that the government is making that commitment; and has made that commitment. And as the various stakeholders are being met with across the province over the next weeks and months, they will each be reassured by the Minister Responsible for Corrections and Public Safety that that is in fact the government's commitment.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are very proud to have a province that puts the people first, a province that is very concerned about its citizens. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the FleetNet system is part of the required emergency services provided by the province for the people of Saskatchewan. And we are very happy to continue providing that service, and we're very proud of the citizens who use that service on a regular basis for the safety and security of our provincial citizens. And I'd like to thank each and every one of them, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Iwanchuk): — I recognize the member from Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am very pleased to rise today and become involved in this debate. We're talking about the emergency service protectors in rural Saskatchewan. They really are the lifeline and they're the basis of what we know as security and enhancement and protection in our areas.

Mr. Speaker, I was very concerned when we first started talking about this issue because I know that the emergency service providers were uncertain as to what the government was really planning. I don't think the government communicated well to the people across the province, the ones that are in the front line — workers — the real strategy and what they were planning on doing. I think the ability to communicate with the stakeholders and tell them what they're thinking and doing, knowing that those people are the ones that are responsible for the lives of people in their areas, it's an essential and first step for this government to do.

The issues that we have to deal with right now are not only the communication issue, which I understand the minister will be talking about to the fire chiefs this weekend, but also a consultation process on how they're actually going to determine what the right system is as we go forward.

And then the third issue that we have to talk about is compensation. I'm sure that the minister and many of the members across the way know that there's been a lot of money spent by people in rural Saskatchewan to look at a number of the systems that the government has looked at or forced stakeholders to use in the last years and they all cost a lot of money.

But I want to tell you a little about why we, as opposition, brought this issue forward. Representing rural Saskatchewan for the last 10 years in a real unique and diverse province like

Saskatchewan, I believe that the needs from people that are living outside of the urban centres is so very different from the needs that the members across know about. They don't live out in rural Saskatchewan. They don't know what it's like to know, individually, each one of their neighbours and their children and each one of their kids for the last 20 years. And it makes a big difference when you know that our communities are basically run by volunteers.

[11:45]

We have volunteers that are looking after the school boards. We have volunteers that are looking after . . . that are on the health boards. We have volunteers that are running town councils, and we have volunteers that are running the emergency systems.

Mr. Speaker, the people that are looking after these emergency systems are the volunteers that take extra training, personal development training — usually at their own expense — to ensure that they can provide the very best service possible to their neighbours. And they probably are going to do that work on their own time. They're going to be called from their job to look after . . . to take a debate or they're going to go to a fire or disaster and they're going to be doing that on their own time, Mr. Speaker.

And they raise money for payment for equipment like fire trucks and communication equipment, like the Visiplex and the FleetNet system, that'll bring security to their people. And then low and behold, after raising money — through hot dog sales and tickets and rallies — then the government decides okay, we'll change the system.

I think the real frustration comes, the uncertainty that they are really . . . the government makes decisions without consulting them. They will spend a lot of money on these systems and then the government will decide we're going to change our mind.

One of the reasons why this is so essential, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the fact that the need for our health care system has become so much more intense since the closure of the hospitals — 52 hospitals are closed in rural Saskatchewan. And we rely on our neighbours who have taken emergency training to be able to help them in times of need. And we don't, we . . . It's not as simple as just calling somebody from down the road.

Mr. Speaker, there was a quote, a comment made by the president of SaskTel, Don Ching in November of 2002 that said, SaskTel has invested something like \$30 million in FleetNet and now we've written off that entire asset.

Mr. Speaker, it's one thing for the government to write off \$30 million of assets because it's not their money — it's taxpayers money, the local people who have worked so hard to raise money and buy equipment that they knew that their neighbours will need. Every piece, every FleetNet piece of equipment costs about \$1,800. And each one of those means that somebody has worked long and hard to make sure they have the money for this equipment.

The town of Porcupine contacted the minister and the Premier just about a year ago when they were told that SaskTel Mobility planned to discontinue the FleetNet system. They were

concerned and they waited for a response. At the same time, the town of Tisdale also sent a letter and talked about the frustration they felt when there was a decision to discontinue the service.

And when I spoke to the local fire chief, he talked to me about why they actually . . . the money that they've spent and the time they've spent trying to ensure that they are going to provide a service to the people of the Tisdale area. They started with a radio system with phone capabilities; in a short time it was obsolete, but that system cost about \$30,000. They did get some grant from EMOs [Emergency Measures Organization], but that money was raised locally to ensure that they had an emergency service protection for their people.

Then they started their own system. They had a pager through SaskTel and it worked quite effectively. But then when they moved to 911, they had to go to the Visiplex encoders. And the concern with that issue was that so often the encoders went down, and to get the repairs meant sending the equipment to the States, and they would have areas that didn't have any emergency service protection for weekends in a row. And there wasn't enough of the repair systems to actually give them a chance to feel that their people were protected.

And when we went to FleetNet, the 911 commitment, the benefit there should be protection all the time. So lots of areas did buy new equipment; some of them who were gun-shy just bought used ones. They tell me that in some areas it works excellent. But in areas like Archerwill with the fire last year, the fire chief in Archerwill told me that in the Barrier Valley there wasn't coverage, even with FleetNet.

And, Mr. Speaker, many of the fire chiefs I've talked to said that they're concerned with the consultation and where the government may be going to next, especially if it involves cell services. Because, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the members across are very well aware that we don't have cellular service in a lot of rural Saskatchewan. And the digital system is only available in some areas and analog won't work with this push-to-talk system.

So the minister spoke about enhancement to other areas through push to talk, but even going down No. 16 Highway, Watson area has a digital system, Naicam has analog. Push to talk won't work in that area, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it's one of the very many concerns that people have.

Mr. Speaker, the minister said the government will keep the system until something better is devised, until the government has determined what system will work next. But one of the concerns that we have is that the quote from the *Prince Albert Daily Herald*:

“ . . . FleetNet 800 network is aging and might not be working reliably in the future. Only minimal support is available from the supplier due to the age of the network and associated costs to support older technology.”

The proprietor of that technology informed SaskTel, Saskatchewan fire chiefs, they do in fact have updated technology and have offered SaskTel each of these updates since 1997.

But, Mr. Speaker, SaskTel has actually refused those updates. In fact, the RCMP, SaskPower system will be using the updated technology, but about the same time they were refusing, it appeared they dropped their support service contract with M/A-Com. Since then the only updates that have been completed has come as a result of equipment breakdown.

Many people in Saskatchewan, especially those responsible for emergency services want to know if SaskTel had planned to shut down the FleetNet as early 1998. And if that's the case, why would they knowingly allow communities and emergency response providers not to tell them that they were actually going to not be using this technology?

Mr. Speaker, this convention this weekend in Estevan with the firefighters is something that I know that the minister has alluded to and said they will be speaking to members, and it's very important that he does. We have to talk about . . . we have to communicate with people who need these services. We have to talk about the cost for the next service, and we have to be able to consult with them what . . . the needs that they know.

They're living out there. They know what they have to provide to their service. And I know it's of utmost importance to everyone in this room to make sure that there is emergency services available for our people in rural Saskatchewan, as well as urban Saskatchewan. We need them all. We need all of our province to make . . . to ensure we have a healthy community.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Addley: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and it's my great pleasure to participate in this debate. Before I begin, I just wanted to take this opportunity to honour the men and women that work in Saskatchewan dealing with the emergency workers, the firefighters, the police officers — RCMP and all the municipal police — also the paramedics and the ambulance people.

The work that they do is one of those things that is unsung and is not generally appreciated until it's needed. So I think the debate dealing with FleetNet, the system that is a tool for them to use to protect us each and every day, is something that this government is committed to and has been committed to. So I know all members would appreciate the work that the people do out there each and every day.

Some of the concerns I do have listening to some of the opposition members — not just today, but over the years that I've sat in this place — is that on one day they will say that, we are in favour of this plan, and people are stupid if they haven't thought of this plan, and that it's something that should have been done years ago, and, you know, why is it not being done immediately. And then two years later suddenly all of those big plans are swept off the page and not utilized.

It gets back to the motion, Mr. Speaker. Here is a party that is attempting to take credit for a government initiative. The government worked with communities to set up FleetNet. They planned to move towards a better system with the push-to-talk

system. But they heard some concerns from community members that they have not been able to move to that system as quickly as they had expected. And so being a sensible, responsible response has been to say, we will maintain the FleetNet system until better alternatives can come about. And that's been what this government has been all about, and that's what this minister has been working very hard in clearly articulating these issues.

Now the opposition, I'm sure they knew that the government had already made this decision weeks ago, perhaps even months ago; in fact, we even discussed it at a Crown Corporations Committee meeting several months ago. And we had assurances by the minister at that time, and the officials, that we would not move off of the FleetNet network until the communities are prepared and able to step forward. So I think it's passing strange and perhaps a bit hypocritical, and maybe it's inconsistent or what I would term deliberately misunderstanding the situation that the government is putting out there; and perhaps even spreading that misunderstanding, I'm not sure. But why they would come out with a motion like this urging the government to do something that it's already doing, it just seems . . . it boggles the mind.

But I guess this goes back to some of the plans that the opposition is doing, you know. Why limit it to just SaskTel or just to the FleetNet portion of SaskTel? They want to limit the work of SaskTel just to the core areas — whatever that means. You know, it was not 18 months ago that the opposition were talking about, well we'll sell SaskTel if we can get a good price, and we would be crazy not to if we could get a good price. Well how does that fit in with, you know, the government should continue to maintain the system.

I'm not sure that they're in favour of the widespread Internet use that Saskatchewan people are enjoying here in Saskatchewan. I think it's up to 85, 86 per cent of people have access to high-speed Internet. I would hazard a guess that that percentage is much higher per capita than anywhere else on the planet. I don't know that for sure, but I would be surprised if that is different.

Another subsidiary of SaskTel, not just FleetNet, is the SaskTel *Max*, SaskTel *Max*, SecurTek, the cellular service. I mean, we have people standing up each and every day in the past saying, you know, we need to get SaskTel focused on its core review, or its core services, which is basically telephone, you know, land line telephone system. Then you have another member standing up and saying, no, we want cellular service, cell telephone, cellular telephone towers in my community. It just seems a little hypocritical and a little inconsistent, the plans that they are making.

And I hear the member for Arm River that obviously they're very concerned about this issue, and now he's saying they deserve both. They deserve to be privatized, and the government needs to be expanding the services, which just demonstrates how bizarre their position is Mr. Speaker.

Either it's got to be a . . . [inaudible] . . . owned SaskTel, open to competition from across Canada — CRTC [Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission] designates that — and here the opposition is saying, no, we

want to privatize, and we want the government to invest in it.

I think the opposition has to decide what direction they want to go and stick to it. I mean, I don't know . . . I've only been in this place for about five years, but I've heard numerous plans from the opposition that says this is the best way to go, until the next plan review that they out with, which completely throws out the previous plan.

So I'm not too sure if we even pass their motion — which doesn't make sense because it's urging the government to do something that it's already doing — giving the impression that somehow we aren't doing this, that if we did pass this, that in a month or two or three they're going to stand up and criticize and say, how come the government is investing money in FleetNet system? I mean, that's how bizarre and absurd some of the arguments that the opposition has put out in the past.

And now I hear the member from Cypress Hills, who I think is a very intelligent and thoughtful person, but I guess in this one case he seconded a motion that he wasn't aware that the government has already committed publicly to be going down this approach. So I just wanted to put myself on the record that I'm supportive of all of the men and women that work every day to protect us and also to say I will be voting against the main motion and supporting the amendment.

[12:00]

The Speaker: — Members, we have reached the 65-minute mark on the debate on the motion. I will now open the floor for questions for a 10-minute period. The Chair recognizes the member for Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the member from Carrot River Valley. I'd like him to outline for me if he could, what he believes the core services of SaskTel are.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Carrot River Valley.

Mr. Kerpan: — Mr. Speaker, I want to talk, I want to answer the member's question. I want to say — and I've said this in the House before, and I'll stand by that — is that I believe that the fine folks at SaskTel do a wonderful job. We talked about that in the last minister's statement last week, when they talked about the expanded wireless Internet system. And I've stood in this House and I congratulated SaskTel and the fine men and women over there for doing those kinds of core services.

Mr. Speaker, what I want to talk about, what I think is critical in this debate here today is something that that member talked about, and that's responsibility. And that's where I see . . . They talk about all these wonderful things, about how responsible they've been, how responsive they've been to fire chiefs and people across the province, and I would say to them, that's where the question really lies.

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

Mr. Brkich: — Well, Mr. Speaker, my question is for the

member from Saskatoon Sutherland. He talked about that the people already know that, that they understand that they can keep using FleetNet. Well, I talked to the fire chief yesterday in Davidson, and they still think it's being shut down. I talked to the one in Watrous. I've been . . . When I've been around that constituency, when they talk to me they tell me they are still understanding it's being shut down in 2006. My question is to you. Have you sent, through the Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order. The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Sutherland.

Mr. Addley: — Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that you did not send any letters to anybody. But, Mr. Speaker — and I won't involve you in the debate any more — but I guess the member for Arm River didn't hear my speech because I said they're either deliberately misunderstanding what we're talking about . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. The member has used this phrase deliberate misunderstanding and it . . . We do not allow people to say deliberately misleading. And deliberately misunderstanding, I believe, is bordering on the same thing and I would ask the member to withdraw that statement before he proceeds.

Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw that comment. Mr. Speaker, I think they are spreading information that is not correct. They knew that the government has made that. And I would ask the member, when that person called and said we didn't know that that is happening, did that member correct that misinformation or did the member just say, well I didn't know that this is happening? But why doesn't the member for Carrot River Valley answer the question? Does he support the former leader of the opposition in selling SaskTel; or does he support the current Leader of the Opposition that he won't sell SaskTel; or the member for Thunder Creek, perhaps the future leader of the opposition? What his position . . .

The Speaker: — Member's time has elapsed. The Chair recognizes the member for Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the member from Cypress Hills. I asked previously the member from Carrot River Valley what he believed the core service or core business of SaskTel was and if he could define that for the House. And I ask the same question for the member from Cypress Hills, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Cypress Hills.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has been a pleasure to participate in this debate today. But the question being asked is so completely off topic that I'm not going to honour it with a response.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Elhard: — The issue, the issue here today, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order. Order. The Chair . . . Order. The Chair recognizes the member for Cypress Hills.

Mr. Elhard: — The issue before us today, Mr. Speaker, is the absolute necessity of the continuance of FleetNet service in rural Saskatchewan. I have a particular concern about this, Mr. Speaker, because the week after this announcement was made I had four local fire chiefs contact my office in desperate straits wanting to know what the possibility of continuance was or what the alternatives might be.

Mr. Speaker, I'm here today, I'm prepared to stand here today and say thank you for the government's willingness to continue FleetNet service in this area. And I think that that should be sufficient in terms of this debate.

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

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My colleague from Arm River asked a question about the consultation process and the communication process and I didn't get an answer. So I want to ask the Minister of Corrections, can you give me an idea of how and when you communicated with the . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. I just wanted to bring to members' attention that the questions that are to be asked, are to be asked of people who have spoken in the debate only. Pardon me, I was . . . I missed that. Would the member repeat her question?

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Corrections who spoke in the debate today. I wanted to know how and when this government communicated with the fire chiefs to let them know that they actually had put a moratorium or reconsidered the decision to not close down FleetNet in January 2006.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Public Safety.

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — I want to thank the member for the question.

To clarify the communications. First of all, it was made very clear at the annual conference of the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association — where municipal leaders are there, obviously representing all municipal services, including their fire departments — that this government would not be firm about a phase-out date on the FleetNet system; that we would insist that there was an alternative technology in place for firefighters and for all other emergency service providers; and that until that alternative technology was in place and there was an implementation period for it, that FleetNet would not be phased out.

So first of all, we formally communicated that to our municipal leaders in the province who have responsibility for, obviously, delivery of fire services in their communities. Secondly, at the annual convention of SEPA [Saskatchewan Emergency Planners Association], our emergency service providers in the province, again I communicated this same message very clearly to them. And I'll be taking it to the fire chiefs tonight for reiteration, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for

Saskatoon Sutherland.

Mr. Addley: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I guess my question would be, and I appreciate the comments that the member for Cypress Hills made — and I'm not sure I heard all of the comments that the member for Kelvington-Wadena said — but would the member for Carrot River Valley or any member there at least acknowledge that the government has made this decision, has continued, made assurances on the record, both at Crown Corporations, here today, in communications that the minister has just outlined?

Would the opposition undertake that when members phone them and people that have questions about this, that they will at least communicate what has gone on here today, as opposed to allow that misunderstanding in the community to continue?

So my question, and would the member for Carrot River Valley also agree, that SaskTel service is second to none for rural customers in the entire world?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Carrot River Valley.

Mr. Kerpan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That brings me . . . I'll answer that question very simply. I would ask the government then — having all those members on that side stood today in their glorious spots and talked about how responsible a government they've been — would they undertake to send a letter to every community, every fire department, and every RM to say exactly what they've said in this House today, that they've decided to rescind their idea of disbanding the FleetNet system?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes for a question, the member for Carrot River Valley.

Mr. Kerpan: — Mr. Speaker, today in his remarks the chief Government Whip on the other side talked about how responsible that their government had been in taking the direction and the action that they've taken. Let me go through the facts, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the government sends a letter to all fire departments saying they're disbanding FleetNet. Then in November they change their mind. They talk about using a push-to-talk cell service as the replacement for that. Then they change their mind. Mr. Speaker, that's not being responsible. That's fearmongering. That's hogwash.

Mr. Speaker, my question to that member over there is what is the real motivation, what is the real motivation for disbanding the FleetNet system? Is it not that they want to provide those kinds of services internally?

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

Mr. Yates: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for the question, although I'd like to note he failed to answer my question just a few minutes ago. But I will answer his question, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, he asked me very clearly what the government's intention was. Well, Mr. Speaker, our intention is very clear. We will replace the FleetNet system — if we do — with a state of the art, modern system that meets the needs of those stakeholders in our communities that use those services, Mr. Speaker. It will be considered one of those very important core services to our province, Mr. Speaker. And it's unfortunate the members opposite cannot see that, Mr. Speaker. It is a responsibility to do so.

The Speaker: — Final question, the Chair recognizes the member for Greystone.

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the member for Carrot River Valley. His party, Mr. Speaker, is clearly on record . . . the Leader of the Opposition has said on many times, particularly in the last House, he constantly said that SaskTel should limit itself to its core services, Mr. Speaker. And he pointed as an example, Mr. Speaker, to SecurTek, as an example of something that wasn't core service.

And my question is to the member for Carrot River Valley. Does he consider, Mr. Speaker, that SecurTek is core service? Does he consider, Mr. Speaker, that rural Internet is core service for SaskTel? And does he consider that FleetNet is core service for SaskTel? What, Mr. Speaker, what areas of telecommunications would the Sask Party cut if they were in government in terms of what SaskTel delivers?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Carrot River Valley.

Mr. Kerpan: — Mr. Speaker, I'm really excited to answer this question because it brings me into what I was just thinking. What the core services of SaskTel are not are a \$72 million loss for Navigata or a \$2.4 million loss for tappedinto.com or an \$8.9 million loss for Ag Dealer or a \$2.2 million loss for Soft Tracks or a \$16 million loss for NST [NST Network Services of Chicago] or a \$9.4 million loss for Persona, and 26 million for Retx. That, Mr. Speaker, is not a core service.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The time for the 75-minute debate has elapsed.

PRIVATE BILLS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 304 — The Concentra Trust Act, 2005

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

Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 304, The Concentra Trust Act, 2005 be now read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills.

The Speaker: — It has been . . . Order, please. It has been moved by the member for Saskatoon Sutherland . . . Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Order. It has been moved by the member for Saskatoon Sutherland that Bill

304, The Concentra Trust Act, 2005 be now read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Clerk Assistant: — Second reading of this Bill and referral to committee.

**Bill No. 305 — The Saskatoon Foundation
Amendment Act, 2005**

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

Mr. Addley: — Mr. Speaker, I move Bill No. 305, The Saskatoon Foundation Amendment Act, 2005 be now read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Saskatoon Sutherland that Bill 305, The Saskatoon Foundation Amendment Act, 2005 be now read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Clerk Assistant: — Second reading of this Bill and referral to committee.

[12:15]

**Bill No. 306 — The Soeurs de la Charite de St. Louis
Repeal Act**

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

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I move Bill No. 306, The Soeurs de la Charite de St. Louis Repeal Act be now read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Moose Jaw North that Bill No. 306, The Soeurs de la Charite de St. Louis Repeal Act be now read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Clerk Assistant: — Second reading of this Bill and referral to committee.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

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

**Motion No. 7 — Government's Commitment to Young
People of Saskatchewan**

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise in debate in this Chamber on this motion. The motion of course reads:

That this Assembly recognize the government's ongoing commitment to ensuring that young people have every opportunity to succeed and prosper here in Saskatchewan.

Now it's interesting that the members opposite of course are already getting the cheerleading chant going for Alberta, but I would like to say a few things about what's going on in Saskatchewan and what's going on in this budget, Mr. Speaker. Because they can chant like the cheerleaders they are for other provinces all they want but the fact is that in the budget which is always the guiding document of any government . . . that's where you set out your first principles, what are your priorities, and it's not exhaustive, Mr. Speaker. Some of these projects are ongoing, but the budget really indicates what is important to a given government.

And in our budget there were four main themes around making Saskatchewan the most affordable place to live, around the best quality health care for Saskatchewan people in Canada. And one of the key planks was building the future here for our young people and of course one of the key planks in the provincial election in 2003.

Now again, Mr. Speaker, talk is cheap, but we've managed to translate our priorities into money and into backing up these commitments. So one of the first things under this particular heading in the budget, Mr. Speaker, was a \$1.2 billion education expenditure which increases . . . an increase of 74.4 or 6.8 per cent. When you include the teachers' pensions and benefits, the total then climbs to 1.33 billion.

And again, Mr. Speaker, there's some very contentious things going on right now. There's collective bargaining under way with the teachers. But I think when you look at the budget, education is certainly a very important priority, and we're putting the money in there to back that up.

There's also \$32.1 million in capital which includes government owned and third party capital. Now again, Mr. Speaker, when I think of what capital expenditure means to the young people of Saskatchewan, I think of something like the Petroleum Technology Research Centre out at the University of Regina. I think about the fact that the built space out at the University of Regina has increased by 50 per cent over the past few years. And I graduated from the University of Regina in the '90s, Mr. Speaker, and certainly the look of the place is much different from it was . . . even when I was there, eight, now ten short years ago.

And again that's because education is a critical advantage that our young people need to have if we're going to succeed in this global economy, if we're going to succeed in Saskatchewan. And if we're going to succeed, we need to put those resources in place. So it's physically evident when you walk around a place like the University of Regina that that commitment is concrete.

We've got \$160 million in total to fund more than 27,000 training spaces. Now again, Mr. Speaker, something of particular interest to me is within those training spaces we've got 1,000 new training spaces, including a great number of adult basic education training spaces. And when you think about, in my constituency, the kind of education opportunities that we need to get people trained for that, for taking part in the economy and participating in the labour force, adult basic education is critical.

And I really want to applaud and commend the government, and particularly the Minister of Learning, for coming through on that funding because these are, you know, people that take advantage of adult basic education. They've been to high school. Maybe they dropped out after grade 9, maybe after grade 10, and they need to get back on track.

And you know, programs like the Treaty Four Education Centre's adult grade 12, some of the work being done by the Circle Project I think of, and certainly work being done at SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] is very important if these people are going to get back into the work force and make a good wage for their family and get that good job and get that self-sufficiency and that pride of bringing home a good wage and providing for your family and, in turn, being good neighbours and good contributors to society.

So if we're going to make that happen, we've got to make sure that these spaces are available, so adult basic education is very important to that.

There are a number of other funding commitments that have been made, including a 6.8 increase for universities, federated and affiliated colleges, which includes the centennial university tuition grant, funds to enhance and expand nursing programs, and an increase in operating grants and funds for the College of Medicine accreditation.

Back to SIAST, there's a 6.8 per cent increase which includes \$900,000 for the expansion of the Nursing Education Program of Saskatchewan, a very important initiative, Mr. Speaker, when you consider the critical nature of health care and what that means to quality of life. In the northern skills training program there is 600 training opportunities. With student loans, obviously student loans are a very important part of being able to fund your post-secondary education. We're currently providing 16,500 students with student loans.

And there's more money for youth initiatives in this budget, Mr. Speaker, 6.5 million more dollars in this youth initiative. This will be used to expand the Saskatchewan bursary program, providing bursary assistance to 10,000 students. It increases the training opportunities through that additional 1,000 training seats, and it will also double the centennial merit scholarship

program from 500,000 to \$1 million for the coming year. There is 700 jobs for youth created through the centennial summer student employment program, and an additional 100 Green Team environment sector jobs for students.

The graduate tax credit, Mr. Speaker, that will be increasing this year to \$675. And in terms of again that physical infrastructure at the K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] level, there's going to be funding for school division restructuring costs, but there's also millions for major projects in Saskatoon, Warman, La Loche, P.A. [Prince Albert], Moose Jaw, and of course, Mr. Speaker, something I've heard a lot about over the years, the project at Ile-a-la Crosse.

We're also providing funding of \$7.5 million for the Western College of Veterinary Medicine, \$30 million for the lab building at the University of Regina, and \$27.6 million for renewal and capital maintenance at the universities and the federated colleges.

Now again, Mr. Speaker, those are some of the broad strokes under this key heading in the budget. But something that's perhaps on a more . . . you know these are the more general sort of things that are happening. Something in particular that I would like to talk about are some of the small things in this budget that maybe don't get the attention that they should.

One of those is the expansions made to the KidsFirst program. Because you know when we think about young people, we often think about the . . . when we get up for post-secondary education, you know, what kind of job opportunities there are in the labour force, and certainly we've had some great news today on that front, Mr. Speaker.

And certainly K to 12 is something that people think about when they think about what is happening for children, but something that's particularly important is that early childhood development. And in this budget, Mr. Speaker, something that I'm particularly proud to be part of this government and something that we did collectively is the increases that were made under the KidsFirst strategy, under which the early childhood development services will be provided to 160 new pregnant women, for a total of 355 women — an increase of 76 over 2004-05. Five hundred and fifty-seven new postnatal families will be enrolled in the program for a total of 1,119 postnatal families — an increase of 198.

As a result of an additional \$1.1 million, the home visiting program will expand to serve 1,474 families — an increase of 274 over the last year. And there will be 252 child care spaces maintained in the communities for KidsFirst families and 160 early learning opportunities will continue as well. These child care spaces and early learning opportunities are shared by the families within the KidsFirst program as their needs identify.

And I guess to back up a little bit, Mr. Speaker. KidsFirst, of course . . . I was a kid that grew up going to Kitchener Community School, one of the first community schools in the province, back in 1980. It was introduced under the then Allan Blakeney NDP government, something that the members opposite, you know, never miss an opportunity to take a swipe at Allan Blakeney. But Allan Blakeney did a tremendous amount of good for the province of Saskatchewan.

Well and I guess the member from Silver Springs is disputing that and that's great, but you know we can check the record, Mr. Speaker. And I think it speaks for itself.

It speaks that in community schools you had an enriched education for our low-income and more disadvantaged people. And you know, something that was a great advantage, Mr. Speaker, when I was a student at Kitchener, were the feeding programs. Now of course, if you're going to learn, Mr. Speaker, it's critical that you've got . . . you're paying more attention to the lessons from the teacher than the grumbling of your stomach. And it's a hard fact that, you know, not all families have kids that are going to school that are well fed.

And you know, certainly, Mr. Speaker, we've done things around Building Independence to try and put those supports in place to improve that quality of life to make sure that doesn't happen. But we've also put in place different mechanisms in terms of feeding programs and child nutrition programs to make sure that children are getting good, nutritious meals so that early childhood development is going well and so that they can become the great people that they should be able to become.

So this morning, Mr. Speaker, one of the things in this budget was a \$500,000 increase to the children's nutrition and development program which increases the government's investment to \$1.8 million over 2005-06. This is a 27 per cent increase in funding.

And again, Mr. Speaker, that's not all we're doing because certainly we participate in the child benefit — you know, something that was pioneered right here in Saskatchewan. And certainly, many of my colleagues were instrumental to the development of that in Saskatchewan and then participated, seen it go forth across Canada. And that's something, I think, we should all be very proud of here in this Chamber.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. McCall: — And so again, Mr. Speaker, there are things like that that contribute to the well-being of a child. But that's not the only thing.

So in KidsFirst, KidsFirst of course is provided through community partners like the Circle Project. They have an excellent daycare centre over on 5th and Pasqua. It's a straw built building, Mr. Speaker. It's quite a unique place. I had the privilege of being able to participate in the building of it, and it is quite the thing to see people putting up the bales and putting them into the structure and it's quite a unique place. But it's a really beautiful building. It's got a lot of sunshine. It's got a lot of caring staff and they do a great job with those kids. And it was certainly evident in how happy those children were.

And so we were there for snack time, Mr. Speaker. I was there with the Minister for Community Resources and Employment. And you know, we weren't there for nap time, but I figured I'd save that for perhaps later in the afternoon. Anyway, Mr. Speaker, it's . . .

An Hon. Member: — That's about where we're at right now.

Mr. McCall: — Some of the members opposite are saying that

nap time is coming sooner than they'd like.

But anyway, I think sometimes in this Chamber we lose sight of what the dollar amounts we vote are for and how that translates. But it was plainly evident in terms of the children getting this nutritious snack and just how well fed they looked — you know, the rosy cheeks and the happy faces — and it was a great thing to see, Mr. Speaker. Of course . . . And then we come back to the adult day care centre.

[12:30]

But anyway, that \$500,000 in the budget is a tangible commitment on the part of this government and in part of this budget to what we want to do to build our ongoing commitment to ensuring that young people have every opportunity to succeed and prosper here in Saskatchewan. You know, there's a lot else to be talked about in terms of the great news we're hearing on the labour force and again, I think, the work that's been done on the part of this government to make an environment that does contribute to a green and prosperous economy. I think there's a lot to be talked about in terms of the quality of life and the kind of measures that speak to the idealism of young people.

And I think there's a lot to be talked about in terms of the health care and making sure that we having healthy families and healthy communities because that's of course important, Mr. Speaker, to people when they decide, well where do I want to live in this country and around the globe — but I'd probably be stealing some thunder from my counterpart in this debate, the member from Saskatchewan Rivers.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I will wrap up my remarks and cede the floor to the member from Saskatchewan Rivers. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatchewan Rivers.

Mr. Borgerson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm pleased to stand to second the motion from the member from Regina Elphinstone . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Members, an oversight on our part, but the member did not move his actual motion. So before we can recognize the member for Saskatchewan Rivers, if the member could put his motion.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I thank members in the Chamber for their patience in this regard. I would so move:

That this Assembly recognize the government's ongoing commitment to ensuring that young people have every opportunity to succeed and prosper here in Saskatchewan.

I so move, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Regina Elphinstone:

That this Assembly recognize the government's ongoing commitment to ensuring that young people have every opportunity to succeed and prosper here in Saskatchewan.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Saskatchewan Rivers.

Mr. Borgerson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm even more pleased to stand to second the motion from the member from Regina Elphinstone.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a few weeks ago, just before session started, I had the opportunity to visit Sturgeon Lake First Nation and to talk to some of the students in the high school there. And I was in speaking with the grade 11 students at Sturgeon Lake and we were talking about Saskatchewan's centennial and the fact that Saskatchewan is now 100 years old. And one grade 11 girl asked an interesting question. She looked up and she said, 100 years; she said, only 100 years?

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are 100 years old this year but we're also 100 years young. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are a government that believes in the young people of this province. And in this year we celebrate not only the people who contributed to the last 100 years, but we celebrate the young people of this province who will contribute to the next 100 years.

And on that note, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I noticed just before this motion was introduced, the member from Kelvington-Wadena commenting on how perhaps there are better opportunities in Alberta or something of that sort. And I would like to, for her sake, read a quotation from our centennial youth ambassador, Theresa Sokyryka. And this quotation is in today's *Leader-Post*, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The article says that:

Performing before a packed gymnasium, Sokyryka told students they can achieve whatever they want to in life without leaving Saskatchewan.

"It's about being proud of where you are from . . . and believing your dreams can be fulfilled here if you work really, really hard" . . .

"There's so many opportunities here. There's no need to leave after high school."

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm pleased to speak to the motion from the member for Regina Elphinstone. We've been debating the budget for the last week and a half, and if there is a common theme in this budget it is a theme of youth. Across all departments we see in the budget strong evidence of this government's support and commitment to the young people of this province. There are direct effects to the lives of young people in this province, but throughout the budget there is what I would call a legacy that is set for the young people of this province.

In health, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we see increased spending — the highest spending ever — which will leave a legacy for the young people of this province of a health care system that is caring and compassionate — and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, publicly owned. And I note with amusement, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that members on the other side of this House often speak in a very different tone than they once did, trying very hard to seem like they're a kinder, gentler party than they once were.

And it reminds me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of a novel that many of us are familiar with, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when they sit on that side of the House, they are Dr. Jekyll. But I tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, should they ever, should they ever sit on this side of the House, we will see Mr. Hyde, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In education, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have record spending for the young people in this province, including the centennial tuition grant, and a promise from this government that we will look at the affordability and accessibility of post-secondary education for the young people in this province.

In environment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we see a number of initiatives that lay out a legacy for the young people in this province, including the Great Sand Hills initiative, the study that will protect the areas that need protecting in that gem of southwestern Saskatchewan called the Great Sand Hills. We see new energy initiatives such as the Rushlake wind power project which will power 64,000 homes in this province.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on this day I would like to make special mention of one environmental line item in the budget. And it may seem to members here like a very insignificant, small line item, but I want to mention this particular item for a particular reason.

In this year's budget, we have designated \$60,000 of core funding to the Redberry Lake project reserve near Hafford, the biosphere, Redberry Lake biosphere reserve. This may seem like a small budget item, but I think it's perhaps my favourite initiative because it was a cause of one of my constituents, George Herman from White Fox, who passed away last week and whose funeral was last Saturday.

George loved farming and nature and spoke of the importance of leaving a natural legacy for his grandchildren, for young people in general. My proudest moment was with George Herman, not long before the passing of that gentleman, when I was able to tell him that we would be providing core funding for the biosphere project at Redberry Lake.

This is a centennial legacy for the young people of Saskatchewan. That is the common theme of the budget that we have been speaking to over the last week and a half. And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to, with great pleasure, second the motion from the member for Regina Elphinstone, and I move that we adjourn debate.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — The member for Saskatchewan Rivers 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. Why is the member on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In the role of assistant Government House Leader, I would like to ask that the House do now adjourn.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — That is carried. This House stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. Monday. Have a pleasant weekend.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:40.]

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