



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

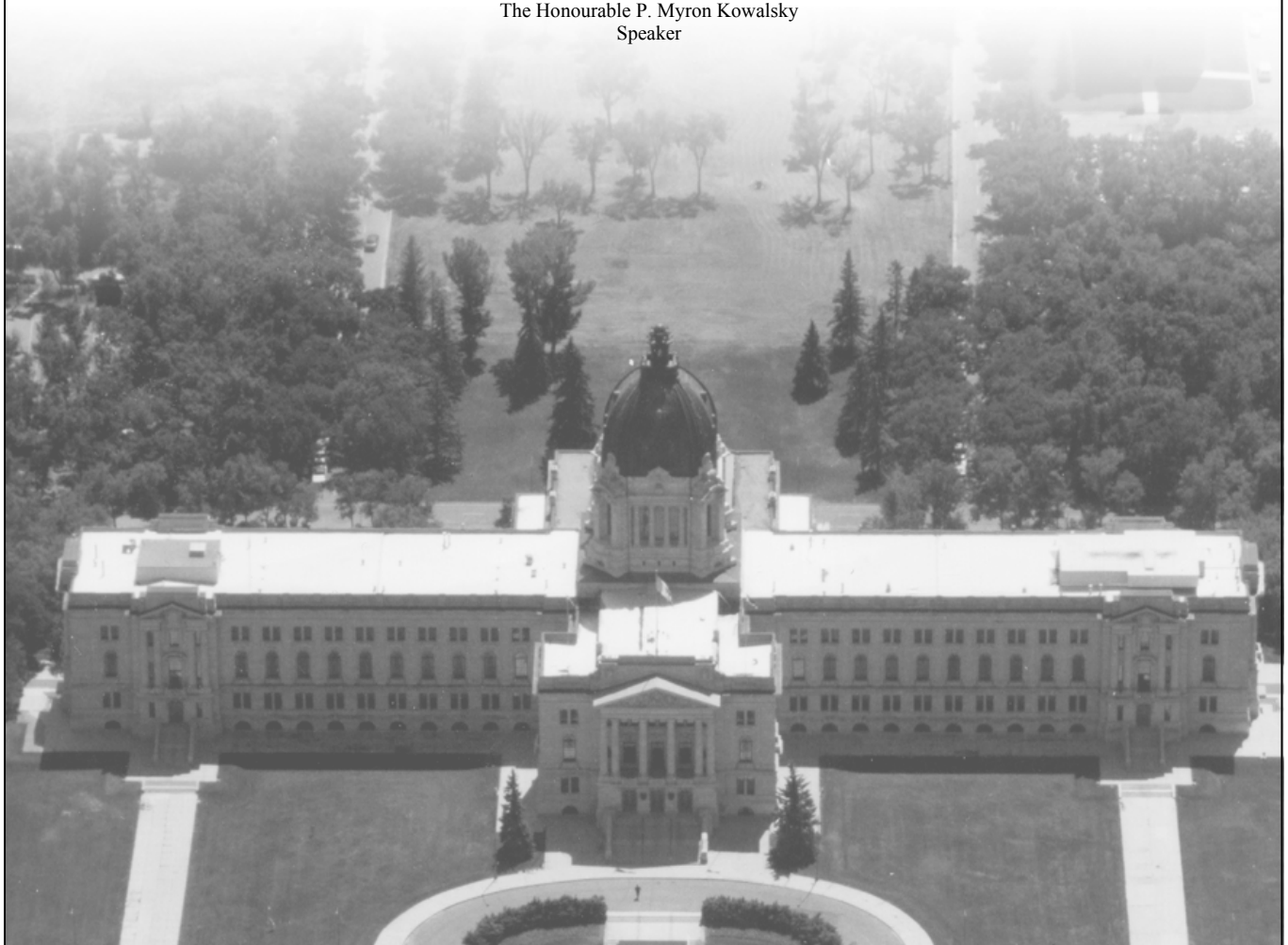
Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**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 Lackey, 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
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Chisholm, Michael	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
Cline, Hon. Eric	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Crofford, Hon. Joanne	NDP	Regina Rosemont
D'Autremont, Dan	SP	Cannington
Dearborn, Jason	SP	Kindersley
Draude, June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
Forbes, Hon. David	NDP	Saskatoon Centre
Gantfoer, Rod	SP	Melfort
Hagel, Glenn	NDP	Moose Jaw North
Hamilton, Doreen	NDP	Regina Wascana Plains
Harpauer, Donna	SP	Humboldt
Harper, Ron	NDP	Regina Northeast
Hart, Glen	SP	Last Mountain-Touchwood
Heppner, Ben	SP	Martensville
Hermanson, Elwin	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Higgins, Hon. Deb	NDP	Moose Jaw Wakamow
Huyghebaert, Yogi	SP	Wood River
Iwanchuk, Andy	NDP	Saskatoon Fairview
Junor, Judy	NDP	Saskatoon Eastview
Kerpan, Allan	SP	Carrot River Valley
Kirsch, Delbert	SP	Batoche
Kowalsky, Hon. P. Myron	NDP	Prince Albert Carlton
Krawetz, Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
Lautermilch, Eldon	NDP	Prince Albert Northcote
McCall, Warren	NDP	Regina Elphinstone-Centre
McMorris, Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
Merriman, Ted	SP	Saskatoon Northwest
Morgan, Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
Morin, Sandra	NDP	Regina Walsh Acres
Nilson, Hon. John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
Prebble, Hon. Peter	NDP	Saskatoon Greystone
Quennell, Hon. Frank	NDP	Saskatoon Meewasin
Serby, Hon. Clay	NDP	Yorkton
Sonntag, Hon. Maynard	NDP	Meadow Lake
Stewart, Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Taylor, Hon. Len	NDP	The Battlefords
Thomson, Hon. Andrew	NDP	Regina South
Toth, Don	SP	Moosomin
Trew, Kim	NDP	Regina Coronation Park
Van Mulligen, Hon. Harry	NDP	Regina Douglas Park
Wakefield, Milton	SP	Lloydminster
Wall, Brad	SP	Swift Current
Wartman, Hon. Mark	NDP	Regina Qu'Appelle Valley
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Speaker, Highway 32 that runs from Swift Current to the community of Leader continues to present a serious concern to the people of that area. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take immediate action and make necessary repairs to Highway 32 in order to address safety and economic concerns.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, these three pages of petitions are signed by residents of the communities of Abbey and Lancer, as well as people from the community of Herbert and the city of Prince Albert. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Eston Elrose.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition to halt the forced amalgamation of school divisions signed by people who are concerned that the size of the proposed school divisions is far too large to retain any local input into the education system. Mr. Speaker, the prayer of the petition reads:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition come from the communities of Forgan and Wiseton, and I'm very pleased to present it on their behalf.

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

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I have a petition regarding the forced amalgamation of schools, and the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to rescind the decision to force school boards to amalgamate.

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

And this is signed by citizens of Radville. I so present. Thank you.

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

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition today with citizens concerned about the exorbitant amount of money that was paid for a consulting contract to the CEO [chief executive officer] Jim Fergusson. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to ensure that the consulting contract is immediately terminated.

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

And the signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from Dundurn, Grandora, and Saskatoon. I so present.

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

Ms. Bakken Lackey: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of constituents of Weyburn-Big Muddy who are very concerned about the forced amalgamation of school boards. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to rescind this decision to force school boards to amalgamate.

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

And the petition is signed by the residents of Weyburn, Radville, and Minton. I so present.

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

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here with citizens calling on this government to repair and resurface Highway 15 from the junction of Highway 11 east to the junction of Highway No. 2:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that this portion of 15 Highway be repaired or resurfaced immediately so as to remove the safety hazards to all motorists who rely on this vital road for transportation and economic purposes.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

This particular petition is signed by residents from the town of Kenaston. I so present.

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

Kelvington-Wadena.

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

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 108 ask the government the following question:

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.

To the Minister of Health: according to the strategic plan on crystal meth, The Mental Health Services Act can be used to force a person into treatment for drug abuse. How many attempts at involuntary treatment out of this Act were there in 2004? How many of those attempts were successful?

As is duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

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

Signed by the good citizens of Grandora and Saskatoon. I so present.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice I shall on day no. 108 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for Immigration: did any Saskatchewan immigration officials attend any conferences, fairs, or meetings in Europe or Asia in 2004, and what was the purpose and costs of these trips?

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

I have the same question for going back to 1999. Also, Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet, I give notice that I shall on day no. 108 ask the government the following question:

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in regards to the excessive contract of Mr. Jim Fergusson of the Saskatoon Regional Health Authority. Mr. Speaker, the prayer reads:

To the Minister Responsible for Immigration: how many people were working in Saskatchewan in the year 2004 on temporary work permits and what type of permit?

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to ensure that the consulting contract is immediately terminated.

And that also goes back to 1999.

As in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

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

Signed by the good people of Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 108 ask the government the following question:

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

To the Minister of Finance: what portion of the Liquor Board Superannuation pension liability was funded in 2002, and what portion of the pension liability was funded in 2002 ?

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I rise again regarding the contract of Jim Fergusson. I will read the prayer for relief:

Further, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 108 ask the government the following question:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to ensure that the consulting contract is immediately terminated.

To the Minister of Finance: what was the portion of Liquor Board Superannuation Plan pension liability was unfunded in 2003, and what portion of that pension liability was funded in 2003?

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by citizens of Saskatoon Eastview, Saskatoon Nutana, and Saskatoon Southeast. I so present, Mr. Speaker.

Further, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 108 ask the government the following question:

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and pursuant to rule 14(7) are hereby read and received as addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 72, 76, 666, 715, 716, 720, and 730.

To the Minister of Finance: what portion of the Liquor Board Superannuation Plan pension liability is projected to be unfunded in 2010, and what portion of the pension liability is projected to be funded in 2010?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for

Further, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 108 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Finance: what portion of the Workers'

Compensation superannuation plan pension liability is currently . . . and what portion of the pension liability is currently funded?

Further, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 108 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Finance: what portion of the Workers' Compensation superannuation plan pension liability is projected to be unfunded in 2006, and what portion of the pension liability is projected to be funded in 2006?

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 106 ask . . . or 108 rather, ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Finance: what portion of the Workers' Compensation superannuation plan pension liability is projected to be unfunded in 2007, and what portion of the pension liability is projected to be funded in 2007?

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 108 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Finance: what portion of the Members of the Legislative Assembly Superannuation Plan pension liability was unfunded in 2002, and what portion of the pension liability was funded in 2002?

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 108 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Finance: what portion of the Members of the Legislative Assembly Superannuation Plan pension liability is projected to be unfunded in 2011, and what portion of the pension liability is projected to be funded by 2011?

I give notice that I shall on day no. 108 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Finance: what portion of the Public Service Superannuation Plan pension liability is currently . . . and what portion of the pension liability is currently unfunded?

Further, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 108 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Finance: what portion of the Public Service Superannuation Plan pension liability is projected to be unfunded in 2011, and what portion of the pension liability is projected to be funded in 2011?

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 108 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Finance: what portion of the STC superannuation plan pension liability was unfunded in 2004, and what portion of the pension liability was funded in 2004?

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 108 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Finance: what portion of the Saskatchewan Power Corporation supplementary superannuation plan pension liability was unfunded in 2003, and what portion of the pension liability was funded in 2003?

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 108 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for SaskTel: what portion of the SaskTel pension plan pension liability was unfunded in 2002, and what portion of the pension liability was funded in 2002?

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 108 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for SaskPower: what portion of the Power Corporation Superannuation Plan pension liability is currently and what portion of the pension liability is currently funded?

Mr. Speaker, I have similar questions for similar years. And I so present.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Hon. Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House, 35 grade 12 law 30 students up in the west gallery. Now some of these law 30 students are here studying at Campbell Collegiate, but many of the other students are actually studying law 30 through distance education. They come from, I understand, Mankota, Stoughton, Wawota, and Churchbridge.

And they are accompanied today by teachers, Mr. Bolander, Mr. Miller, and Constable Campbell; and the chaperones, Brenda Johash, June Balsher, Janet Blake, and Holly Fraser.

So I'd ask all members to give them a warm welcome here to our legislature.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Mental Health Week in Canada

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mental Health Week is a great time to start practising mind and body fitness. In our efforts to be more physically fit, do we stop to think about our mental fitness? This is a question the Canadian Mental Health Association is asking us to ponder as it launches its 54th annual Mental Health Week today, May 2.

This year's Mental Health Week theme is Mind and Body

Fitness, which focuses on the connection between physical and mental well-being. “Mental fitness is just as important as physical fitness, but . . . is not typically given the same recognition and support that we give our physical health,” says Penny Marrett, the CEO of the Canadian Mental Health Association’s national office.

She goes on to say, and I quote:

This year, during Mental Health Week, we are telling people [across Canada] that it is time to consciously focus on keeping our minds, as well as our bodies . . . [fit] — to start practicing *mind + body fitness* [Mr. Speaker].

Mr. Speaker, I don’t think there has been a commission or a report done in the last number of years in Canada on the health care system that they haven’t identified the mental health area as being underfunded, mainly in resources, Mr. Speaker.

I would call on all members of the Assembly to join with me in recognizing Mental Health Week this week here in Canada.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[13:45]

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

North American Occupational Safety and Health Week

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, this is North American Occupational Safety and Health Week, or NAOSH Week.

Ensuring worker health and safety is an important issue to the people of this province. One workplace fatality, one workplace injury, is too many.

Last Thursday on the National Day of Mourning For Workers Killed Or Injured On The Job, the Minister of Labour read out the names of 21 workers who died last year as a result of injury or illness suffered on the job. The minister also stated that over 14,000 Saskatchewan workers suffered an injury or an illness severe enough to take them off the job in 2004.

Mr. Speaker, NAOSH Week, much like the successful WorkSafe Saskatchewan partnership between the Workers’ Compensation Board and Saskatchewan Labour, is about raising awareness to reinforce the importance of safe and healthy workplaces.

The NAOSH Week theme this year is Equip, Educate, and Empower. And Mr. Speaker, I think it describes in very concrete terms the work we all must continue to do to promote the importance of preventing injury and illnesses in workplaces and in the home. Mr. Speaker, this province’s social and economic well-being depends on healthy and safe workplaces.

Throughout the week, a variety of education and awareness activities are being held in communities throughout the province. I encourage all members to support the NAOSH Week activities taking place in their communities. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Volunteer Award to Star City Resident

Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Speaker, the northeast parks and recreation association recently recognized Ann Osborne with a volunteer award because of her enthusiastic commitment and tireless hours spent promoting sport, culture, and recreation within the community of Star City.

For 14 years, Ann served on the Star City Recreation Board. She was also the organizer and supervisor of the summer playground program, chaperoned bus trips to swimming lessons, organized babysitting courses, and was involved in starting and supporting the Star City youth group. Ann was heavily involved in the minor sports, CanSkate, served a two-year term as treasurer for minor sports in Star City, and served for four years on the board of NERPA [North East Recreation and Parks Association].

Mr. Speaker, Ann still found time to serve on the Star City School Board, became a volunteer firefighter, a member of the royal auxiliary, and raised a family. If there was a local pancake breakfast, fundraiser, or community event, you can count on Ann’s face being among many of the hard-working volunteers.

Mr. Speaker, and members of the legislature, it is my pleasure to ask you to join me in congratulating Ann Osborne and thanking her for her many contributions to her community.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Former MLA Elected Mayor of Fort Qu’Appelle

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well he’s back. I’m very pleased to rise in the Assembly today and say a few words about a former colleague and a great friend who was recently elected as the mayor of Fort Qu’Appelle.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, Ron Osika has devoted much of his life to public service. And while he has had a long and successful career, he has more to give. Mr. Speaker, shortly after his election Ron said that his intention was to continue with the excellent work that the late mayor, Jim Wira, had undertaken on behalf of the people of Fort Qu’Appelle. And I’m sure, Mr. Speaker, that the good people of Fort Qu’Appelle will benefit enormously, not only from Ron’s intelligence, expertise, and experience, but also from his honesty, good humour, and sense of fair play.

Mr. Speaker, knowing Ron as well as I do, I have no doubt whatsoever that he will do an outstanding job as mayor of Fort Qu’Appelle, as he did as a member of this Assembly. As government, Mr. Speaker, I believe that we have been put on notice that His Worship, Mr. Osika, will be knocking on our doors — perhaps knocking down our doors — to move quickly

on issues facing his community of Fort Qu'Appelle.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure all members of the Assembly will join me in congratulating Ron Osika on his election as mayor of Fort Qu'Appelle and wishing him all the best in his new role in public service. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Nokomis School Wins Youth Enviro-Action Award

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am proud to recognize the remarkable achievements of the students at the Nokomis School. The students have been active in two environmentally green projects, the student for hire program and the town clean-up program, which have been a great benefit to the Nokomis community.

On April 20, SaskEnergy communications coordinator, Candace Weimer, recognized the volunteer commitment of these students to help bring a positive impact to our environment. The students were awarded the SaskEnergy Youth Enviro-Action Award, an award that was warmly accepted by the Nokomis School SRC [student representative council] president, Jessica Richter.

The award included a cheque for \$500 and a picture. Nokomis School was one of eight schools across Saskatchewan to receive this award. And I'm pleased to see these dedicated students pitching in to help keep our rural communities clean and beautiful, while showing a sincere interest towards maintaining our natural environment.

I believe that our students across Saskatchewan are very interested in the well-being of their communities, so we must continue to encourage their efforts towards taking pride in their volunteer achievements.

I would ask all members to join me in congratulating the students of Nokomis School on receiving the 2005 Youth Enviro-Action Award.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Energy & Our Environment Poster Contest Winners

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, each year as part of its ongoing work to educate Saskatchewan young people about energy production and its impact on the environment, SaskPower's Shand greenhouse sponsors the Energy & Our Environment poster contest for grades 5 and 6 students here in the province.

This year over 500 students from across the province submitted posters with an environmental theme, demonstrating the importance of energy conservation as a way to take action against climate change.

Mr. Speaker, the posters these students designed illustrate how in our day-to-day lives we can all help protect the environment by making responsible choices such as walking instead of driving a car, using energy wisely, recycling, and planting trees.

Mr. Speaker, this year's grand prize winning posters were submitted by Brody Starr from Balcarres Community School, Elisabeth Fortier from École Zenon Park School, Brett Westman from North West Central School in Plenty, and Cassandra Sullivan from St. Henry's Junior Elementary School in Melville.

Mr. Speaker, climate change is an important global issue. It affects all of us. I ask all members of this Assembly to join me in congratulating all the participants in the Energy & Our Environment poster contest, in particular Brody, Elisabeth, Brett, and Cassandra for their grand prize winning entries.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

A Saskatchewan General Store

Ms. Bakken Lackey: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Big Beaver is a hamlet located in the beautiful Big Muddy just a few minutes from the US [United States] border. The general store, one of the last of its kind in Saskatchewan, was recently featured in an article by Anne Kyle of the *Leader-Post*.

The store was opened in 1928 and has served Big Beaver in the RM [rural municipality] of Happy Valley ever since. It has been owned and operated by the Aust family for the last 50 years, first by Roy and Lena Aust and now their son and his wife, Ron and Gail.

The RM of Happy Valley, once home to 1,800 people, today only has 198 residents. Big Beaver was a main gathering point at one time for ranchers to market and ship their cattle. It has suffered the same fate as many other towns in Saskatchewan and has suffered a great, inevitable loss of people.

But Aust's Store has stood the test of time and remains the heart of the community. Residents and visitors alike come to Aust's Store to shop, have coffee, play cards, catch up on the local news, keep in touch with friends and neighbours. Aust's Store has everything from groceries, gifts, toys, cowboy boots, nuts and bolts, and veterinarian supplies.

Stories abound about people looking for that elusive something and then finding it at Aust's Store. Very fittingly, above the door of Aust's Store is a sign that reads, "Our motto is: 'if we don't have it, you don't need it.'"

Mr. Speaker, I would encourage members of the legislature and people across Saskatchewan to visit one of the best kept secrets in Saskatchewan, the Big Muddy. And when you do go to the Big Muddy, stop at Aust's Store. It's like taking a step back in time. It portrays a special way of life and the strong, undaunting people who made it so — a way of life, Mr. Speaker, which is sadly slipping away.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

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

Legislation for Treatment of Drug Addicted Youth

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, last year Bob and Doreen Harrison of Nipawin tried to get help for their son, Wes, who was addicted to crystal meth and to cocaine. Although the Harrisons were able to get their son into detox, they couldn't make him stay. The mother said: "We weren't there for three minutes and . . . [the] counsellor turned around and said to Wes: 'You can leave whenever you want.'" Three days later their son was gone.

Mr. Speaker, these parents watched helplessly as their son lost weight; he lost his teeth; he became psychotic and full of rage. As parents they wanted to get the treatment for him that he needed, but in the end they couldn't do it.

Mr. Speaker, last week I presented a Bill that would help parents like Bob and Doreen. When will this government debate this Bill?

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

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again I emphasize that we agree with parents' desire to have more tools in dealing with drug-addicted youth. And certainly we take that very seriously and want to make sure that whatever we do is going to be effective, and that we are going to be able to provide the necessary financial and human resources in order to carry out the prescribed action.

I'm looking at two things, Mr. Speaker: one is the short-term response and the other one in the context of the Alberta Bill. We are already in discussions with Alberta on why they have decided to take until 2006 to institute these changes.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, every day we wait there's the chance another child is going to be lost. Bob and Doreen Harrison said that if they could have forced their son Wes into treatment he may not be where he is today and a 56-year old Nipawin man might be alive today.

You see, Mr. Speaker, those parents couldn't get their son help. Last April when he was high on meth, Wes Harker stomped a man to death on the streets of Nipawin. Now he's serving 11 years for manslaughter in a Saskatchewan penitentiary. His mother said: ". . . empower the people who can help them . . . Don't empower [the drug users] because they don't know how to help themselves."

Mr. Speaker, to the Minister: does she believe the parents

should have the right to put their children into treatment?

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

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Now, Mr. Speaker, this is a very sad case that the member has represented to us. And there were provisions under the mental health Act that I believe could have been used if there is a desire to do that in that instance.

But I just say that we take this very seriously and we want to make sure that what we do is going to work, that it's going to be effective and that it will be a useable tool for parents, and will also keep in mind the protection of youth who don't always share the same view of when they're in need of protection.

So we need to find that balance between the parents' rights and the youths' ability to make some of their own choices.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what parents are asking for in Saskatchewan. They've got lots of responsibilities but they have very few rights, and that's what they're asking for.

Mr. Speaker, a mother in Prince Albert agrees with Doreen Harrison. Louise Roy's daughter has been addicted to crystal meth for two and a half years. She could not force her daughter into treatment, so in order to get her daughter help she turned her over to the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] for drug possession. Can you imagine how that would break a parent's heart? She said, and I quote:

We need a government to allow us to [be] parents by saying, okay, you've got . . . [a] problem, let's allow you to do what you have to do to help . . . [your children] out. Don't let them have a choice. They can't. They're incapable.

Mr. Speaker, when will this government give the parents the tools they need?

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

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well again, Mr. Speaker, these are not easy issues. The facts are that in our society you're generally considered innocent until you're proven guilty. When you are, in fact, guilty of an offence, yes, you can be charged, Mr. Speaker. And then the repercussions are court ordered. And in some instances that is, in fact, what happens and what has to happen.

We're trying to find a more parent- and youth-friendly method to use to accomplish . . . I think we all have the same goal and outcome to accomplish here. But I will take the time to do that, but I can assure the members that very soon I will be bringing forward a recommendation under section 18 of The Child and Family Services Act and dealing with the larger legislative

framework subsequent to having a quicker, short-term solution.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, whatever the government is going to do, they have to do quickly. We know that the parents in Lloydminster said the mental health Act didn't work the way it is right now. And we don't have the luxury of waiting. For over a year we've been waiting. Parents in Saskatchewan need the right to be parents in situations like this. Parents have many responsibilities, and what they need is rights.

We've now heard from two Regina mothers who say their daughters are so hooked on meth, they can't make a decision to go into treatment. We've heard from grandparents and a grandmother and a mother with their fight to get their daughter, Mary, into treatment. And now we've heard from families in Prince Albert and Nipawin saying that enforced treatment is a must. We have a leading meth expert from UCLA [University of California, Los Angeles] saying that forced treatment is what can help.

And I can't believe that this government believes that they can think better than parents in situations like this. We have to hurry.

When will this government start listening to the families and give them the help they need so they can help their children?

[14:00]

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

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I would, with all due respect, remind the member that most of us here are parents and grandparents so we're not thinking with some other mind. We're thinking with the mind of a parent and a grandparent. And don't think for a moment with an adolescent granddaughter that I'm raising that I don't think about this. This is very present in my mind what I would want to do in this situation and so have I discussed it with her.

But I still say, Mr. Speaker, we have a system right now that is set up to respond to the laws we have. And if we're going to change those laws we must also change the system that responds. And so that is why I have to look at the resources that we would bring to bear as well to make this a reality, not just an idea.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Labour Legislation

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in February this government promised to wipe government-directed hours from the books once and for all.

Here we are into May and this government still has not acted on this commitment.

We hear rumblings that perhaps it's because there are members in the NDP [New Democratic Party] caucus that can't bring themselves to vote to scrap government-directed hours. Mr. Speaker, it's time this government lived up to its promise instead of saying one thing and doing another.

Last week I introduced a private member's Bill to repeal section 13.4 of The Labour Standards Act. Mr. Speaker, our Bill is ready to go. Will the NDP government pass it and if not, what's the holdup?

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

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And as usual the opposition says one thing and the facts say another.

I would remind the member to review the blues that are in the binders that the staff leave on our desks every day. The Bill was introduced on Friday.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, a comment to the minister. In fact there is no mention of anything in these blues, these are the blues that are presented to us today, Monday, May 2. In the *Votes and Proceedings* of Friday, the minister has listed Bill No. 122. We have seen Bills that have sat on this paper for a long, long time so the minister needs to clarify where this Bill will go and if indeed we're going to see it.

Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 87 is another Bill that expands the power of the Labour Relations Board so that the board would have the power to make its own regulations, Mr. Speaker. The board would make its own regulations, not this government. We know Bill 87 would also expand the power of the LRB [Labour Relations Board] so that it could enter workplaces to search for evidence, an extremely intrusive power for a quasi-judicial tribunal.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell this Assembly who asked for these specific changes and what problems were identified as needing fixing?

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

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I apologize. It's listed in *Votes and Proceedings*, the white pages, Bill No. 122 we gave notice on Friday, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we've been very clear on the reasons that we have put forward Bill 86 and 87. Bill 86 . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. The Minister of Labour.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, we've been very clear on why we've put forward Bills 86 and 87 that were tabled in this

legislature in the fall session. Bill 86 corrects a definition of lawful authority for a case that is currently before the Supreme Court of Canada. Mr. Speaker, I can't believe the opposition would oppose a Bill that allows an employee the . . . protection when they are reporting an illegal activity. Mr. Speaker, it's absolutely appalling.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, I made reference to Bill No. 87, an Act which will allow police state intrusion. That's what Bill No. 87 says. It says that the police can . . . the Chair of the Labour Relations Board or his director can enter a place and search for evidence. This is not a common practice in a free and democratic society, Mr. Speaker.

Another controversial aspect of Bill No. 87 — so we've clarified the minister so she's on the right page — will allow the Labour Relations Board to force collective bargaining agreements. If a union is awarded certification and has not been able to come to an agreement with the employer on its first collective agreement, the LRB will then be able to impose one on them. Doesn't this defeat the purpose of collective bargaining? It also seems unreasonable, Mr. Speaker, when current collective agreements can sometimes take up to one year.

Mr. Speaker, my question: why would the government then want to force an agreement onto employees and employers after only 90 days?

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

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, there's really two points that I'd like to make on this. When the member is asking about why Bill 87, I would refer him back to some of the opposition's written questions where they have asked the length of hearings to be decided and issues to be decided and decisions put forward from the Labour Relations Board, the length of time that it may take.

They have asked questions over the last number of years. Mr. Speaker, one of the issues that this will deal with, it will improve the processes at the board.

And then the member brings up the issue of first contract and why the 90 days when the member was just on his feet the other day wanting the Government of Saskatchewan to get involved in an agreement in Yorkton with the ambulance drivers. We said then, please support first contract language. It would help mediate some of the issues in Yorkton, Mr. Speaker.

One day they agree; one day they don't. It depends on who's in the gallery and what audience they're speaking to.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Revenue from Oil Royalties

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, during the entire month of April, world oil prices remained substantially higher than was estimated in the budget prepared by the Finance minister. The range for the month was \$49 to \$58 US, well above the \$41 US price used by the Finance minister.

Mr. Speaker, will the Finance minister tell this Assembly the total amount of extra windfall revenue this government has received over the last month and commit to a monthly report on these substantial revenues?

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

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the member should know that it's not a question of where oil prices are on any particular day. The question is, are those prices sustainable for 365 days of the fiscal year? That is the real question, as to what kinds of revenue the government will have.

The member will know that a few weeks ago, he stood in this Assembly and said look, oil is \$55 a barrel. By his reckoning, you have an additional \$400 million. He wanted to know where it is that we would spend \$400 million.

Now the oil is at \$49 a barrel or at least it was at close on Friday that I saw, just over \$49 a barrel. Now we have something less than \$400 million. The question is, what would he have done with the \$200 million that he would have spent? What would he do?

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, I find it very surprising that the minister won't want to give this Assembly that information. My information is \$29 million net to the province. The average closing price for a barrel of oil in April was \$53.14 US, Mr. Speaker. I can appreciate the Finance minister's well-known conservatism, small "c" as it is. However, this budget is no longer a useful document. It's way off the mark.

The people of Saskatchewan need to have the information to properly evaluate the fiscal performance of this government and the decisions flowing from it. Will the minister commit to monthly reporting of excess oil revenues?

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

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Well, Mr. Speaker, this is a very curious question. There is a budget you see, Mr. Speaker, and the budget has a number of revenue sources. One of those revenue sources is oil royalties. And oil royalties, by my reckoning, in the budget constitute about 8 per cent of all of our revenues.

Now the member says, if that particular revenue source goes up, then we should be able to spend that money and we want to know about it on a monthly basis. But he doesn't mention any of the other revenue sources, whether those revenue sources

might have changed. Or for that matter what might have happened to expenditures, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to stay on the course that we are, that we have with respect to budgeting, quarterly reports, mid-year reports. We're going to continue to budget prudently and cautiously, and continue to receive credit rating upgrades — something that member knows nothing about, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, \$29 million in extra revenue to the provincial treasury. What is the minister trying to hide? By the end of this quarter, by the end of June 30, if oil prices stay in the same range that they did in April, this Finance minister will have 87 million more dollars than he budgeted for on oil alone. Meanwhile, low- and medium-income earners in Saskatchewan pay the highest tax rates in the country, Mr. Speaker. Small businesses continue to pay the highest tax rates in the country.

If the situation remains the same for the fiscal year, a possibility that many say is extremely likely, this minister will have more than \$350 million in unbudgeted oil revenue — \$350 million. More than enough to fund CAIS [Canadian agricultural income stabilization]. And who knows, maybe even enough for this government to start looking at long-term property tax relief for business owners and for taxpayers across this province.

Mr. Speaker, is the minister going to report monthly to the people of Saskatchewan so they can have an accurate view of the province's finances?

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

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I haven't heard that kind of fiscal reckoning and that kind of fiscal policy since the 1980s when you too had a government that said, well if you get this one thing, then maybe it will result in something else, so therefore let's spend the money. You know, all the ifs in the world could also add up to zero. And you have to, at some point, Mr. Speaker, yes you have to at some point — quarterly, mid-year — take all of the information that you have and determine where you are and then make the appropriate decisions.

Mr. Speaker, that particular party, when their leader was asked about debt reduction and where it would factor in among their 100 ideas, their leader said — the member from Swift Current — he said, um, I'm not sure. I'm not sure if it's on or what number it is. Well exactly, Mr. Speaker. These people across the way have absolutely no sense of fiscal management — none whatsoever. It's the same old story from the Devine days — promise the people everything but never, never deal with the questions of prudence and cautiousness, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Financial Assistance for Farmers

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this morning the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan came to the legislature. The association brought a petition signed by over 2,000 people and it called on this government to make a strategic investment in the agriculture industry. It called on the Minister of Agriculture to take a leadership role. It called for an immediate cash injection to help Saskatchewan farm families. Mr. Speaker, what was the Agriculture minister's answer? No, not likely to happen.

Mr. Speaker, that's this minister's standard answer when it comes to helping farm families. Has the minister had time to reconsider that answer?

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

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The fact is that the agricultural producers do represent a number of people who are having great challenges this year in agriculture. But the facts are also, Mr. Speaker, that there has been significant amount of money rolled into the agriculture sector as well — record numbers in fact — \$650 million over the past year to the agriculture sector. Plus, Mr. Speaker, the \$1 billion that the federal government rolled out put about 280 million into Saskatchewan.

The problem is, Mr. Speaker, that there are regions and areas of this province that are facing even more difficulty, and any of the supports that are given, we think, will apply to those who have suffered the most. And they can access those, Mr. Speaker — and they are accessing the funds that we're investing through the CAIS program. And, Mr. Speaker, the 2003 payments are paid out about 95 per cent, and producers are also able to access CAIS cash advances at this point. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Bjornerud: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to bring it to the minister's attention that he's talking about the 2003 CAIS program. This is 2005. Last year it froze, last year we had BSE [bovine spongiform encephalopathy], last year we had low-quality grain. We can't move the grain. Many farmers have full bins of low-quality grain that's worth next to nothing, Mr. Speaker. And the minister says that the CAIS program — from 2003 that they're still dealing with — is going to solve the problems. Well we know, and the farmers know in this province, it's not dealing with the problems. APAS [Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan] was here this morning saying, CAIS from 2003 is not dealing with the problems.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister reconsider? Just once in Saskatchewan, as an NDP government, take a leadership role in this country; come out ahead of everybody else and help our farmers in Saskatchewan. It doesn't matter what goes on in Manitoba. It doesn't matter what goes on in Alberta. Saskatchewan farmers are hurting. Will the minister, today,

commit to helping Saskatchewan farmers?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:15]

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

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, clearly we will commit and we have committed to helping Saskatchewan farmers. Mr. Speaker, the funding that I was talking about, contrary to the statement by the member opposite, is not just about 2003 CAIS. It's about 2004 CAIS, and about 2005 CAIS.

And in fact, this government has taken leadership, Mr. Speaker; leadership in trying to make sure that these programs are affordable not only for the people of Saskatchewan but all across this nation, Mr. Speaker. We have taken leadership. And, Mr. Speaker, those issues will be dealt with at the July meeting where affordability of these programs is highest on the priority list.

We have taken leadership, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the amount of money we have put in for the BSE programs. Mr. Speaker, we have been there. We will be there in the future. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, according to APAS this morning and Terry Hildebrandt, their president, there's much hurt out in rural Saskatchewan and we agree, Mr. Speaker.

Some of the input costs that farmers are dealing with this spring, Mr. Speaker: fertilizer costs have gone up once again; fuel costs have gone up — where a farmer paid 43 cents a litre last year, they're almost 70 cents a litre for that same litre of fuel. Mr. Speaker — seed costs have just skyrocketed because of the frost last year. We have canola seed out there, certain varieties, that have gone as high as \$300 a bushel, Mr. Speaker. We have flax seed out there.

Prices are skyrocketing and these farmers are asked to deal with these issues, those costs, different than any other province in this country because this government does not fund the programs in Saskatchewan.

The question that APAS asked that minister today, I think was a fair question. Are farmers in need . . . Will you consider, due to the extra revenue you have coming into the province, would you consider putting additional money in for farmers to put this crop in?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Well, Mr. Speaker, once again the member opposite simply does not have his facts right. This government has supported agriculture and will continue to support agriculture, Mr. Speaker. Record numbers of dollars put into agriculture in the last year.

Mr. Speaker, we know that there are people out there hurting, but we also know that the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool has been reporting that input sales are higher than normal. Mr. Speaker, we have been checking with the lenders. They are dealing with the producers on an individual basis and they are providing the resources for most to be able to do the inputs.

Now the member opposite is right in terms of some of the facts there, that the input costs are going up, Mr. Speaker, and the costs for fuel are higher than they have been in the past.

But, Mr. Speaker, every business in the country has to deal with those things and plan appropriately. The same is true in this business. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Bjornerud: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't think it should be a surprise to that minister that farm incomes are going to be down over \$400 million this year. At the same time, he even acknowledges that input costs have skyrocketed. How on earth are farmers supposed to make business decisions — as he said Friday, it's just a business decision — how are they supposed to make those business decisions when they don't have the money to do it, Mr. Speaker?

They're going to cut the inputs they put into crops. You know what that's going to do, Mr. Speaker? It's going to cost the CAIS program more money down the road, because yields are going to be lower and the income next year is going to be affected.

Wouldn't it be a better idea to try and help farmers right now get through this crucial time, get this crop in, and maybe we'll all see the benefit down the road? Would the minister consider that, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we will certainly see if there are a variety of ways that we can deliver support to farmers to enable them to move forward this spring. We recognize how important this industry is to the whole of Saskatchewan, and we have been providing support and will continue to provide a high level of support to this industry, Mr. Speaker.

We also recognize that in order for this industry to operate effectively, we have to have the support of the federal government in this situation. Mr. Speaker, the federal government charges on the fuel not only a fuel tax, but a GST

[goods and services tax] on top of that, Mr. Speaker. It seems to me that they've used a portion of their surplus from last year to help out. It would really help out, Mr. Speaker, if they would do something about their fuel tax. We do not charge, we do not charge fuel tax, Mr. Speaker. That's one of the supports that we give to producers.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Why is the member on her feet?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, leave to introduce guests.

The Speaker: — The member for Moose Jaw Wakamow has requested leave for introductions. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. The member for Moose Jaw Wakamow.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as many people will be aware with the member's statement, today was the kickoff for NAOSH week which is North American Occupational Safety and Health week. And at the kickoff luncheon today, Mr. Speaker, we had a very special guest, and she is sitting in your gallery accompanied by the deputy minister of Highways and Transportation, Mr. John Law — Candace Carnahan from New Brunswick originally, but now Candace works out of Ontario for a program that's called Passport to Safety.

Candace was injured quite severely in an industrial incident in a paper mill in New Brunswick. Mr. Speaker, after some very rough times, she has come through it with flying colours and now is here in Saskatchewan to kick off NAOSH Week, and she's made the effort to get out and speak to a couple of high schools in the Regina area. She is a great ambassador for young people and to express that ever-important understanding that safety is important and that young people need to be prepared and work safely, whether it's recreation, whether it's entering the workforce, or whether it's at home.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would ask all of my colleagues to please welcome Candace to Saskatchewan and to the legislature. Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 100 — The Police Amendment Act, 2005

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

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 100, The Police Amendment Act, 2005 be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill 100, The Police 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 read a second time? The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Next sitting, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 119 — The Election Amendment Act, 2005

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

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 119, The Election Amendment Act, 2005 be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill 119, The 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? Recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 120 — The Fuel Tax Amendment Act, 2005

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

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 120, The Fuel Tax Amendment Act, 2005 be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill 120, The Fuel Tax Amendment Act be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When will the Bill be read a second time? The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

**Bill No. 121 — The Farm Financial Stability
Amendment Act, 2005**

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

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 121, The Farm Financial Stability Amendment Act, 2005 be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Agriculture that Bill No. 121, The Farm Financial Stability 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 will the Bill be read a second time? The Chair recognizes the Minister of Ag.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you. Next sitting of the House, 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. Once again I stand on behalf of the government and table responses to written questions 1,023 through 1,026 inclusive.

The Speaker: — Responses to written questions 1,023, 24, 25, and 1,026 have been submitted.

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

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

**Access to Embargoed News Conferences and
Technical Briefings**

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The motion that is before the Assembly at this point has to do with the question of access by members to technical briefings that might be offered by government departments or Crown corporations.

The issue arose a few weeks ago when a member of the opposition caucus staff, one of their staff members attempted to

attend an embargoed press conference or technical briefing for the media and that staff member was — how shall I put this? — disinclined to attend that particular technical briefing, Mr. Speaker; in fact he was not allowed to enter the technical briefing.

And, Mr. Speaker, subsequent to that, the opposition members raised a question of privilege in the Assembly. They made the point that, given a recent ruling by the Speaker, Speaker Milliken . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please, members. Order. The Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, subsequent to a ruling by Speaker Milliken in Ottawa where a similar situation had arisen, the Speaker of the House of Commons, parliament ruled that if information was being provided on an embargoed basis for the media, then it followed that members should have access to the same information, which was contrary to previous practice in Ottawa and also contrary to previous practice here in Saskatchewan.

The Speaker there took the position that members have rights. They have a right to know what is taking place. It's not appropriate that members of the media are provided with information that's not then made available to members of the, in that case, members of parliament, in this case members of the Legislative Assembly, and therefore made the ruling that he did.

It was on that basis that the opposition put forward the question of privilege. The legislature took the point of view that that matter should be referred to a Committee on Privileges that is an ongoing or a standing committee of the Legislative Assembly. And that committee met to examine the issue in question. The committee reported on . . . I believe it was April 20 and indicated that the . . . the committee indicated they had been unable to come to a decision on its order of reference. The order of reference was that they examine this question and then report back to the Legislative Assembly.

I might point out that in the meantime following that first briefing for SaskWater, the government has taken the position that members should in fact be provided with the same information that is being provided to members of the media on an embargoed basis in their technical briefings, and since that time has organized technical briefings for members of the oppositions, in that particular case of Crown corporations that were presenting their annual reports. So prior to the media technical briefing, the members were provided the opportunity to attend a technical briefing of the same material that was being provided to the media. And a number of those briefings have in fact been held and attended, I think with one exception, by members of the opposition and their staff.

The motion before us would essentially attempt to formalize this practice. As a government, we agree that it's not appropriate to provide information on an embargoed basis to members of the media without also that information being provided to members of the Legislative Assembly on a similar basis. And we agree, and we took that position when the issue was first presented to the House, that it should be done. And since that time, as I've indicated, the government has made it a

practice to in fact provide that information to members of the opposition and for members of the government caucus too, should they so be interested in attending such a briefing.

[14:30]

So the motion before us attempts to formalize this practice. The practice would be consistent with the practice that is now in place in Ottawa, subsequent to the ruling by Mr. Speaker.

I look here, Mr. Speaker, at *Guidance for Deputy Ministers* of the National Library of Canada, where the Privy Council Office indicates that:

Technical briefings on government legislation [in that particular case] are often offered as part of the legislative process following introduction of bills. Such briefings should be organized by the Minister's office, and should always be offered to all party caucuses at the same time and before or concurrently with media briefings.

So that's the process that is now in place in Ottawa. We propose to put the same process into place here in Regina. Members on the opposite side in speaking to this motion will make the point that if they're not attending the same technical briefing as the media, that they're somehow deprived, is something that might affect their functioning in the House. That is not the case, Mr. Speaker.

Again we intend to ensure that the practice that is now being put in place, that that practice be put down as a request, a formal request from the Legislative Assembly so that members will have the same access to information that is being provided to the media. That is the position that we take.

And therefore, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move, seconded by the member for Moose Jaw North:

That an order of the Assembly dated April 12, 2005, instructing the Standing Committee on Privileges to consider the matter of the rights and privilege of members to attend embargoed news conferences and technical briefings, be rescinded for a reason that the said committee could not agree to recommendations before the specified deadline of April 20, 2005, had expired; and further,

That in the absence of recommendations from the Standing Committee on Privileges, this Assembly request that the government instruct its officials and Crown corporations to acknowledge and respect the rights and privileges of all members of this Assembly as follows:

That technical briefings and news conferences that deal with matters to be considered by the Assembly be made available to all members of the Legislative Assembly and their staff in advance of or concurrently with any media briefings;

And further, any technical briefing provided to the media that exclude members and their staff shall not be considered a breach of privilege as long as an advance or concurrent technical briefing is provided to members and their staff.

I so move, Mr. Speaker, again seconded by the member for Moose Jaw North.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Government House Leader, the member for Regina Douglas Park, seconded by the member for Moose Jaw North:

That an order of the Assembly dated April 12, 2005 instructing the Standing Committee on Privileges to consider the matter of the rights and privileges of members to attend embargoed news conferences and technical briefings, be rescinded for reason that the said committee could not agree to recommendations before the specified deadline of April 20, 2005, had expired; and further,

That in the absence of recommendations from the Standing Committee on Privileges, this Assembly request that the government instruct its officials and Crown corporations to acknowledge and respect the rights and privileges of all members of this Assembly as follows:

That technical briefings and news conferences that deal with matters to be considered by the Assembly be made available to all members of the Legislative Assembly and their staff in advance of, or concurrently with, any media briefings; and further,

Any technical briefing provided to the media that excludes members and their staff shall not be considered a breach of privilege as long as an advance or concurrent technical briefing is provided to members and their staff.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Southeast.

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a motion to amend the motion and it will be seconded by the member from Melville-Saltcoats. I move:

That all the words after the first "that" be removed and be replaced with the following:

this Assembly condemns the government for its continued refusal to honour the privilege motion passed on April 12, 2005 urging the government to respect the rights and privileges of all members of this Assembly by ensuring that official members and their staff, official opposition members and their staff, are allowed to attend any embargoed news conferences and technical briefings open to members of the news media; and further,

That this Assembly condemns the government for its continued practice of saying one thing and doing another, as evident by its actions in this matter.

Mr. Speaker, I have no doubt that later today this motion and the amendment will be voted on and that the motion that the government put forward will be passed and our amendment will be defeated. In reality 29 will beat 28 every, every single time, Mr. Speaker. In and of itself, this is not a major event in this legislature. But today we're going to witness a small but

significant and telling erosion of the democratic rights of the members of this legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to go through a little bit of the history of what took place with this particular motion. As MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] we have a right to know facts and to have information at or before the time that information is made public or, Mr. Speaker, as is given to the media. The governing party, in this case the NDP, should not use its governing position of power to preclude other parties or other members of the legislature from access to information that will allow those members to fulfill their roles as MLAs.

Mr. Speaker, in the past, technical briefings have been provided to the media to supply significant and important background information. That is a practice that has gone on for many years. And in the past, there has been a sporadic and varied method of availability, of making that available to members of the legislature.

In early April of this year, it became very apparent that there was some discrepancies in how the practice was being followed. The Finance minister and Government House Leader expressly consented — and in fact, Mr. Speaker, he consented in writing — to members of the opposition attending the budget briefing. This was satisfactory, and this, Mr. Speaker, was consistent with what opposition members' rights should be.

Then at a later and unrelated technical briefing, a Saskatchewan Party staffer was denied access. To use the House Leader's word, he was disinvented. Not sure about his choice of language, but if he wishes to call it disinvented, you can call it barred, kicked out, booted out, whatever else you want. The fact is, that staffer who was there to try and gain information for the opposition was denied any of that information.

The Saskatchewan Party promptly and rightly raised this matter as a point of privilege in the legislature. Mr. Speaker, on that day I was proud of the position that my party was taking. I was extremely disappointed and frankly, Mr. Speaker, somewhat shocked that the NDP did not share this fundamental view of the democratic process. What they did instead was came to us informally and offered concurrent or earlier briefings which they represented would be the same as the media briefing, and sort of held out this outrage that we would even question that the information might be different or that there was some other facts being presented or that there was any kind of an issue with that at all, and we're somehow holding out — that they were somewhat surprised that we wouldn't be enamoured with this idea.

Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Premier was adamant that the opposition would not be in the room when the media was going to receive its technical briefing. I don't know, Mr. Speaker, what they were afraid of. I don't know whether they were afraid that we as the opposition party might try and spin the media, or whether we might learn something by being there on the basis and hear something that the media would ask, and that we might try and cater or alter our position to make it consistent with something that was more reflective of the position that the media had taken.

I didn't know until shortly afterwards when we got into further

discussions what the real concern on the part of this NDP government was. And it soon became apparent when we made an offer that we wouldn't participate, that we would sit back, we would listen. And we feel it's quite appropriate to listen to the questions put forward to the media as it is for the government. That is how you learn what questions and what information the public wants to know, where the media is going. And of course both sides should be entitled to that information as well. But they were adamant. We were not going to be there. We were not going to get the benefit of any of the questions that were there.

Unfortunately that appears to be based on a high level of fear and paranoia on the part of the New Democratic government. And if this is where the unfortunate mentality of the NDP government are, well in my view, Mr. Speaker, they've already lost the next election before it's been called. Because there's no doubt if that's the level of fear, that's the level of paranoia, that's the level of mistrust . . . If they don't have any better confidence in themselves as politicians and in themselves as members of the legislature that they have to be afraid of that type of thing, and are willing to put the democratic basis on and sacrifice democracy for that, they don't deserve to be in government any further.

Mr. Speaker, on April 12 the privilege motion was debated at significant length in the legislature and various amendments were made and the process went forward. In summary, Mr. Speaker, the motion that was passed on April 12 simply stated that all members of the legislature had the right to attend technical briefings and that they would be made available and that the matter — and I use the word as exact put — the matter would be referred to the Standing Committee on Privilege.

Mr. Speaker, that committee was convened and attended shortly afterwards. And I might add, Mr. Speaker, that is a committee that has not been adjourned and has not been in practice in this province for a quarter of a century, so in effect we were making some significant legislative history. There's not very many people around today that have any significant recollection of what took place.

And, Mr. Speaker, what was referred to that committee was the matter; it was not if members get to attend technical briefings, or whether they should or whether they shouldn't. The preamble of that motion and the motion itself firmly stated the position of what members were entitled to and that position is consistent with and, surprisingly enough, it was supported unanimously by all parties.

The Saskatchewan Party arrived at the standing committee in good faith with the full expectation that we would be debating and discussing how this would be put into place, whether the members would sign an embargo agreement. Would we sit? Would we have the opportunity to ask questions? How would we ensure that the media had full rights to participate? Would the questions be asked before? Would they ask earlier? What might the remedies be for a breach? Would contempt be a solution? What else would take place? How would we do it to ensure that both members of the legislature got full, complete, frank, and open access? And further how we would do that in such a manner, Mr. Speaker, that the members of the media would not be in any way limited or in any way prejudiced by

what their rights were as far as trying to gain their information as required?

Mr. Speaker, just sort of an interesting aside, because this was something that happens only once in a century, this was a chance for this committee to create and take a little pride in creating some legislative jurisprudence. And it's an unfortunate tragedy that that didn't take place, that there was a deadlock right from the beginning; that the members of the government chose to deadlock the committee by refusing to debate what they were there to debate.

And the mark of that is now going to be something that will be reported in the next issue of *Beauchesne* on various parliamentary websites and the effect of that will be . . . is the deadlock that was there, how people voted those things, how ties are broken. And that's the legacy that that committee left. And, Mr. Speaker, that committee's deliberations are reported in *Hansard* and will be there on an indefinite basis.

Mr. Speaker, at that committee meeting the NDP demonstrated its paranoia and its surprising will to trade democracy for some minor, perceived political gain by attempting to pass a motion altering the terms of reference of the committee to if, not how, and to offer some kind of bizarre alternate briefings.

While I don't disagree with the suggestions and the discussions that were put forward as being in addition to what was being a basic right of the opposition, but certainly the debate should not have been whether that was in substitution for.

[14:45]

Mr. Speaker, the committee harangued for several meetings with no success. The paranoia and petty politics of the NDP carried the day and we ended up back in the legislature with an unfortunate and unnecessary deadlock that is a discredit to the NDP members of this House.

Mr. Speaker, after that happened, the NDP has now crawled out from underneath the rock and, in this House, has actually shown in writing where they stand. They put their position in writing by putting forward a motion, Mr. Speaker, that will effectively rescind the motion that was passed earlier. Mr. Speaker, what they're asking us to vote on today is a denial of the fundamental rights that were there.

But this time, that vote, Mr. Speaker, will not take place in committee. It will be here in the Chamber, where each and every member will be voting and will be held accountable. They will not have the luxury later on of saying, oh this was something done in committee; I didn't know about it; I didn't understand that this was going to be put forward. Mr. Speaker, each and every one of those members opposite later today will be called upon to vote on this motion, and each and every one of them can demonstrate their fear and their paranoia and their willingness to trade democracy for petty, perceived political gains. Mr. Speaker, it is an embarrassment for them to be in this House, taking that position.

Mr. Speaker, we look at this and we say, why is this a big issue? Why would we even fight this? This isn't going to make or break the next election. It's not the end of the world. But, Mr.

Speaker, the reality of this is that it's a small but significant erosion of parliamentary rights. If the NDP is willing to do this and if they're allowed to get away with this and nobody calls them, what else might they be willing to do? What other rights might that government be willing to trammel on for the sake of their political future?

Mr. Speaker, one of those issues might be Bill No. 87, an indication that they don't care about people's rights of privacy in their home, their rights to maintain their records — that they're giving bizarre search and seizure records to a quasi-judicial tribunal. They're giving, in that piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, the rights of that tribunal to enter by force people's homes, people's places of business. So if the same kind of mentality that erodes our parliamentary democracy continues on through things like Bill 87, where else does it go to?

Another example would be, for pure politics they're not looking at Bill 87 . . . or the Bill dealing with crystal meth and the treatment for crystal meth. They're standing up saying, oh, we're worried about the rights of 16- and 18-year-olds. What about the rights of MLAs? What about the rights of business owners? That they don't care about, but they'll stand up because it was somebody else's idea, and for pure political motive and nothing else, are willing to trammel on something that they should be supporting, they should be getting behind, and should never mind about whose idea it is or where it came forward.

Mr. Speaker, I would submit to the electorate of this province that these people should be disinclined from forming government the next time, and maybe dis-elected.

Mr. Speaker, the Government House Leader stood up in this House today and talked about what happens in the Parliament of Canada. If he reads the material that's there, he will see and he will learn that what takes place in the Parliament of Canada is that there is technical briefings for the media, there is technical meetings for other members of Parliament, and those meetings can all be attended. And they're open to members.

And the quotes that he's taking are from other places in the book dealing with other issues, and while nobody disagrees with other briefings, what a strange and bizarre argument to put forward that we wouldn't be entitled to these things.

Today a basic democratic right, small albeit that, will be taken away. We don't know what's next. We don't know how low this government will go. We don't know where they will stoop to for the next position that they want to put forward. Mr. Speaker, it's a travesty in a small sense, because this is not something that will bring down a government, but it's something the people of this province should know about.

They will know about it. It will be in *Hansard*. We will see to it that, come the next election, people know that this is a government that doesn't care about people's rights, that doesn't care about knowledge, doesn't care about background, doesn't care about fundamental democracy.

Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to move the amendment to this motion. That motion . . . that amendment will be seconded and

will be spoken to by the member from Melville-Saltcoats.

The Speaker: — Could I have the amendment delivered.

Order, please. As I read through the amendment, I find that there is a portion of the amendment that is out of order and that is the last sentence:

That this Assembly condemns the government for its continued practice of saying one thing and doing another as evidenced by its action on this matter.

In that it does not address any of the issues in the motion. If the member from Saskatoon Southeast is agreeable, I will simply strike that portion and we will proceed with the debate.

I recognize the member for Saskatoon Southeast.

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, on the rest of the motion, the rest of the amendment stands. If the Speaker is ruling the portion out there, we would like to proceed with debate and deal with the rest of the amendment, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — . . . has been stricken. The reference for members, purpose of members is Beauchesne's 6th Edition, page 174, in citation 566, the authority for this procedure.

It has been moved by the member for Saskatoon Southeast, seconded by the member for Melville-Saltcoats:

That all the words after the first "that" be removed and replaced with the following:

This Assembly condemns the government for its continued refusal to honour the privilege motion passed on April 12, 2005, urging the government to respect the rights and privileges of all members of this Assembly by ensuring that official opposition members and their staff be allowed to attend any embargoed news conferences and technical briefings open to members of the news media.

Is the Assembly ready for the question on the amendment? The Chair recognizes the member for Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate having the opportunity to speak on this motion today. And the original motion by the Finance minister today was:

That the Order of the Assembly dated April 12, 2005, instructing the Standing Committee on Privileges to consider the matter of rights and privileges of members to attend embargoed news conferences and technical briefings, be rescinded for reasons that the said committee could not agree to recommendations before the specified deadline of April 20, 2005, had expired . . .

First part of their motion Mr. Speaker. And I find that somewhat interesting because in the House, the original motion that we were voting on in the House where all members, both government side and opposition side, and that motion being:

. . . that this Assembly urge government and Crown corporation officials to respect the rights and privileges of all members of the Assembly, by ensuring that [the] official opposition members and their staff are allowed to attend any embargoed news conferences and technical briefings open to members of the news media.

And at that point, Mr. Speaker, in sending it to the committee on rights and privileges, both government members and opposition members voted in favour of that motion.

So what I found somewhat astounding, that when we get into committee, and why we're here debating this actual motion today, is because the vote in committee was actually three to three and was tied, where the three government members voting against that motion.

So I found it somewhat odd that in front of the cameras on the floor of the legislature that the members opposite, the government members would find it fine to vote in favour of that motion — to be open and accountable and agreeing with that motion, Mr. Speaker — and then getting behind closed doors to a degree where yes, the media was allowed to come in but the cameras weren't on, it was far easier I think for them to feel that they could vote against that same motion and probably the public in general would not realize what they were actually voting against.

But I guess, Mr. Speaker, this goes back to possibly when a government's been in power far too long. It's not the one big thing in most cases they do, but it's an number of little things that the government does that maybe shows the public — and for sure shows the opposition — that maybe it's time that they were moved somewhat out of the position of government for the little things like this, where it's just being a little less accountable, a little less forthright in . . . kind of an arrogance that comes forward, Mr. Speaker, in not wanting everyone to know exactly what's going on behind closed doors.

Because I can think of no other reason why they would vote against this motion that we had in rights and privileges committee. I mean if there was nothing to fear, nothing to hide, if there was no fear of something coming out that they didn't want out, then probably we would be having one embargoed media and opposition information session where we all got to sit in.

And we weren't asking to take part, Mr. Speaker; we were asking to listen, get the briefing as the same as the media were allowed, hear the questions that the media had put forth.

And I guess that's maybe where the problem seems to come here with the members opposite on the government side, Mr. Speaker, is they seem to have a fear of what of the media would ask them, how in depth they would delve into what they were being told, and what the media was allowed to hear that we weren't allowed to. They didn't want us in to hear the same information that the media was there to receive. And I guess that's another question, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure in most cases we would get the very same information that the media would get. But we have no guarantee that that would happen, Mr. Speaker. And I think that's partly why we were . . . why we are where we are today.

If you're open and you're accountable and you're a government that's hiding absolutely nothing, you have nothing to fear. Why would we spend the money of having two embargoed sessions, one for the opposition and then one for the media, where one open embargoed session would be suffice. It would do, Mr. Speaker. At a time when the Agriculture minister said we have no money for agriculture — and a number of other areas. The crystal meth situation where it seems they can't have any money to fix that problem because they're doing absolutely nothing.

Mr. Speaker, what I'm talking about today is if we're worried about things like saving money, here's a perfect example where one media and opposition information session would do both.

And as I said before, Mr. Speaker, this is just an example of maybe where we have an old, tired government. Been around a bit too long, probably would be not so bad had they lost the last election, knowing full well they're going to lose the next one, Mr. Speaker. And problems like this will resolve themselves, but we may have a couple more years and I think what we're worried about, Mr. Speaker, is the two years being . . . especially since we are also, we are also elected MLAs on this side of the House. Not just the government side MLAs are elected, but on this side of the House, 28, 29, Mr. Speaker.

And I know as you're fully aware, we're elected to represent the people in our ridings. And I think those people expect that the government to be accountable, give us the information we need to make judgments — such judgments as we made . . . An example would be, Mr. Speaker, with the tobacco issue and the Bill . . . the tobacco Bill.

Mr. Speaker, I go back to the motion that we're talking about here today because I'd hate to wander off too far and have to have the Speaker rule on that. So, Mr. Speaker, I'll go back to the motion that we're talking about today, and actually the original motion, Mr. Speaker, because in the rights and privileges committee as you're well aware of, we actually put an amendment into this motion. And I'll go through this motion again and then talk about the amendment that we put into that motion:

That this Assembly urge government and Crown corporation officials to respect the rights and privileges of all members of this Assembly by ensuring that official opposition members and their staff are allowed to attend any embargoed news conferences and technical briefings . . .

And where we put the amendment in, Mr. Speaker, is we had in this initial motion that we had and that we were debating, it actually said that opposition members and their staff be allowed. And that really wasn't our full intention. Our full intention was that all members — backbenchers on that side, anyone, any elected member that wished — could come to the media briefings and take part as we would be. So that was an amendment we put in. We thought if the government members had any problem with that, we didn't want that to be the sticking point why they might vote in favour of this.

[15:00]

Members on the other side on the committee, Mr. Speaker, took great lengths to speak about why this wouldn't be a reasonable motion to accept in committee. And I may remind them again that they voted in favour of this when it left the floor of the legislature, Mr. Speaker, and again saw fit to vote against it down in committee.

But it's somewhat astonishing to me when a government's been around so long that they can find a number of reasons, absolutely make no sense to anyone out there, why you would want to take this and split it up, have two — the media conference, the information session for the media, the information session for us — how you could even justify that.

The government is always saying, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the fact that the opposition always wants to spend money, we're actually finding a way here, where the one information session would be suffice. It would be great; it would do exactly what we're wanting. And I haven't heard one member of the media, Mr. Speaker, saying that they didn't want opposition members, they didn't want backbench members coming to that same information session. At least if they have a problem with that, we certainly haven't heard that problem.

So, Mr. Speaker, today I think what we're actually debating is something that should be common sense. It shouldn't even be to this point. It should've went down to committee, to rights and privileges committee, Mr. Speaker, debated the motion that was already voted on by all members in the House, all agreed to at that point. Very straightforward. I don't think it's nothing we're asking that in the House of Commons they don't already have, and yet here in Saskatchewan at this point we are told we can't have.

So I go back, Mr. Speaker, and I reiterate that I don't think anybody was purposely trying to hide anything, although it sometimes makes us wonder what actually is being swept under the rug here. Because if we were out front with all of the information that were provided to the media, I can't see where the problem is providing that to the official opposition.

So, Mr. Speaker, the amendment we had put in today . . . and I'll just read it back into the record, Mr. Speaker:

That all the words after the first "that" be removed and replaced with the following:

That this Assembly condemns the government for its continued refusal to honour the privilege motion passed on April 12, 2005, urging the government to respect the rights and privileges of all members of the Assembly by ensuring that official opposition members and their staff be allowed to attend any embargoed news conferences and technical briefings open to all members of the news media.

Mr. Speaker, so that's the amendment we have put forth today. And I guess I go back to, Mr. Speaker, when the members on that side saw fit to vote in favour of the motion that was sent down to committee to discuss and debate, and then saw fit behind closed doors to actually vote against that motion. Really what that boils down to is, once again — as we've been saying on many occasions — it's saying one thing and doing another, Mr. Speaker.

So I take this opportunity to second the motion put forth by my colleague from Saskatoon Southeast.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to stand briefly today to say that once again the opposition say one thing, and the facts are something completely different.

Mr. Speaker, I'm a member of the Standing Committee on Privileges. I want to set the record straight. And the record is this. Government offered media briefings to all members of the Legislative Assembly . . . all technical briefings which are the same technical briefings that the media get. We offered to put all of these technical briefings to all members of the Legislative Assembly — opposition; third party, when there is a third party; private members, if there were . . . Well there are private members, but independent members, if there's such a situation where there are independent members, and there have been from time to time in the Saskatchewan legislature.

Government proposed that the technical briefings would go to elected officials first. We have the situation where the opposition says, first isn't good enough. They're saying, first isn't good enough.

Mr. Speaker, technical media briefings have come about . . . Many, many years ago, legislation and legislators . . . It was a simpler process, if I can describe it that way because we relied, we had . . . I remember when the radio was up in the balcony over where the Speaker is now seated. I can remember radio broadcasts when I was a child and listening to members of the Legislative Assembly speaking to issues.

Now . . . pardon me, we also had weeklies where we got most of the in-depth reporting. Now we're in a situation where the media happens immediately, and the turnaround time is, the cycle is less than an hour. And what we want is to have . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . The members say, what are we hiding. Just listen up, and I'll try and explain it so . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order, please. Order. Order. I would ask that the member for Coronation Park address all his remarks to the Chair.

Mr. Trew: — I thank you, Mr. Speaker. The media, the technical media briefings came into effect because there's a belief that what governments need, what all governments need, is to have a better informed media because a better informed media on the technical background of what legislation is or, more typically, budget or any issue of the day, the better informed the media is, the better the reporting that they will do, the more accurate the reporting they can do.

So if they've got the technical background, Mr. Speaker, then they can report more accurately. And more accurate reporting means a better informed public. Mr. Speaker, it is always in the interests of good governance anywhere and everywhere to have the best informed media and the best informed public.

Government members, as I said, wanted private members; they want third parties' members, independent members of the legislature to have first right at information. That's why we proposed to make all elected MLAs first on the technical briefing — first, not second. And now today what we're proposing is that it will be first or at the same time — ahead of or at the same time as the media. Mr. Speaker, I just can't get through how first isn't good enough.

The opposition, Mr. Speaker, have said that they need to be in with the media. They've even offered . . . oh, but let us in and we won't ask questions. We'll just sit there and listen to the technical briefing, and we'll listen while the media ask their questions. I've heard that. I've heard that even including earlier today. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to suggest that the opposition should then do the honourable thing and resign and let the real opposition, the media, do their job and collect their pay. If that's the way they want it, then they should do the honourable thing and let the real opposition step up.

They should be ashamed of where they're at, Mr. Speaker. First is first. And all throughout the British Commonwealth, there's a history of parliamentarians getting the information, getting the technical briefings first, ahead of the media, and that's what we have been trying for.

Please, I urge all members and including members of the public, don't be fooled by the rhetoric. What the government is offering is for all members, not just official opposition, but it could include third party in situations where there is such a thing. It could include independent members and certainly does include private members would get the first technical briefing. The media get the second.

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the opportunity as a member of the Standing Committee on Privileges to have set the record straight. Obviously I'll be voting in support of the government motion, but I cannot support the opposition amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well first off before I get into the heart of my remarks, I'd like to comment on some of the comments by the member from Coronation Park.

He stands up and he says something about first. Well I'd like to read . . . Again here's a story where the government says one thing, but really it's a hidden agenda or another thing because I'd like to read from their own motion, and surely to goodness he read his own motion. And it says as long as advance or concurrent. So I ask the member over there, if concurrent, what is first? If they're concurrent, what is first?

And I'm sure that the member must understand that concurrent means at the same time. And yet he went on a rant about, you're getting your briefing first. Well it says in their own motion, concurrent. So if there's a technical briefing that's concurrent, why aren't people allowed in the same one? That is absolutely asinine to have two briefings run concurrently . . .

The Speaker: — I would just ask the member to temper his language somewhat. Would the member withdraw that particular adjective?

Mr. Huyghebaert: — I'll withdraw that adjective, Mr. Speaker.

So what the government is obviously doing, they're trying to hide something. They have to be trying to hide something because why would a government want to have two briefings conducted concurrently that's saying exactly the same thing? And that's what members over there are trying to relay to us and to the media, that the briefings are going to be identical. Well if they're identical, why have two? It really does not make any sense, and I don't know how anybody on that side of the House could stand up and say, well it's the right thing to do.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to get into some of my remarks as to how and why we got to the position that we're at here now. It was on April 11. There was a SaskWater annual report that was tabled in the Assembly. And the 9:30 briefing . . . SaskWater officials held an embargo technical brief on the 2004 annual report for members of the news media. The official opposition sent Mr. Dustin Duncan, a member of our caucus staff, to attend this technical brief. Mr. Duncan was advised by a Ms. Marie Trafford, an Executive Council member, staff member, that he was prohibited from attending — prohibited from attending.

Although this may have been practice in the past, I believe the government's decision to prohibit official opposition MLAs and/or staff from attending technical briefings on matters that come before the Assembly constitute a clear breach of members' parliamentary privilege.

Mr. Speaker, the Speaker of the House of Commons ruled on a very similar situation in 2001, and I would like to read that into the record. The federal Department of Justice held a technical briefing regarding a Bill that was to be introduced in the House of Commons later that day. Opposition members and their staff were denied entry to the technical briefing. An assistant to a government member was granted entry.

The Speaker of the House of Commons found these events to constitute a prima facie contempt of the House. Repeat — a contempt of the House. In his ruling on March 19, 2001, the Speaker stated, and I quote:

. . . the issue of denying members information that they need to do their work has been the key consideration for the Chair in reviewing this particular question of privilege. To deny . . . [any] members information concerning business that is about to come before the House, while at the same time providing such information to media that will likely be questioning members about that business, is a situation that the Chair cannot condone.

The matter was then referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. They, I think, meet more often than once every quarter of a century. That committee found the member's privilege had indeed been breached. The committee report on this matter stated:

The major difficulty in this case arises from the fact that

the pre-introduction briefing was offered exclusively to representatives of the media. Not only were Members of the House of Commons not offered or invited to such a briefing, their staff was explicitly denied entry to the technical briefing that was given.

Kind of sounds familiar to what happened on April 11, right?

Members were, therefore, predisposed to disadvantage and embarrassment in that they could be questioned about business to come before the House or just introduced, without being provided with the same information as those asking them had. This is precisely what happened to Mr. Toews who was the Official Opposition critic for the Justice portfolio.

The provision of the briefing to the media and not to Members on legislation before its introduction . . . [to] the House of Commons, undermines the pre-eminence of the House of Commons in legislative matters, and the right of the House to be informed first. Such an action impedes, obstructs and disadvantages Members of Parliament in carrying out their parliamentary functions. In all of these circumstances, the Committee has come to the inescapable conclusion that the privileges of the House and of its Members have been breached in this case.

[15:15]

Parliamentary privilege is breached by "any act or omission that obstructs or impedes . . . any Member . . . in the discharge of his [or her] duty." . . . The decision of the government to prohibit members of the Official Opposition from attending this technical briefing clearly impedes opposition Members in the discharge of their duties in exactly the same manner as the House of Commons case described above.

Clearly, Official Opposition members require access to information about Crown Corporation Annual Reports. All Crown Corporation Annual Reports are subject to review by the Crown and Central Agencies Committee, which include members of the Official Opposition. Furthermore, the Official Opposition critic is usually questioned by the media about each Crown report when it is released. This creates the very real possibility that the Member may face questions based on information learned in the government.

The government may argue that Official Opposition is provided with embargoed copies of all Crown Corporation Annual Reports, so Opposition attendance at the technical brief is not necessary. However, Crown officials clearly provide background and clarification that goes beyond the information provided in the budget documents. Otherwise, the media would see no value in attending the technical briefing, as they too receive the documents in advance.

Therefore, pursuant to rule 7(1) of the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*, please be advised of my intention to move the following privilege motion [which was presented to yourself, Mr. Speaker].

Now I would like to go back into what was actually ruled on in Ottawa, because I think it's very pertinent to the situation here. It's on the question of privilege. And it summarizes events that led up to the question of privilege being raised:

From the interventions of members it appears that the Department of Justice sent out a media advisory notifying recipients that there would be a technical briefing given by justice officials at 11.45 a.m. on Wednesday, March 14, with regard to the omnibus Bill, now Bill C-15, that was to be introduced in the House by the hon. Minister of Justice that afternoon.

According to the hon. member for Provencher, members of parliament and their staff were denied access to the briefing. The hon. member for Yorkton-Melville added that while his assistant was denied access to the briefing, the assistant of the government member was granted entry.

In any event, there is no disputing that the invitation to the so-called technical brief went out as a media advisory and was designed for members of the media:

The hon. member for Provencher indicated that following the briefing media representatives began phoning his office and asking for his reaction to the Bill, a situation he found embarrassing not only for himself and other members of the opposition, but also for the House of Commons as a whole since they had not seen the Bill and were not privy to its contents.

The hon. government House leader confirmed that opposition critics were given a courtesy copy of Bill C-15 about an hour and a quarter before the bill's introduction.

The minister explained that during the briefing, the media had not received actual copies of the bill or any other documentation. He went on to indicate that the briefing itself was under embargo until the bill was introduced, a fact confirmed by the copy of the original media advisory that the Chair has obtained.

The member for Provencher, as well as other opposition members who participated in the discussion, argued that by not providing information to members of parliament and by refusing to allow members to participate in a briefing where the media were present, the government, and in particular the Department of Justice, showed contempt for the House of Commons and its members.

As I see it, there are two issues here: the matter of the embargoed briefing to the media and the issue of members' access to information required to fulfill their duties.

As members know, the use of media embargoes, as well as the use of lock-ups, have long played a role in the way parliamentary business is conducted. For example, it has been our practice to permit briefings in lock-ups prior to the tabling of reports by the auditor general. Similarly, and perhaps more on point, is the lock-up held on the day of a budget presentation. Two features of these lock-ups are that members are invited to be present and members of the

media are detained until the event in question has occurred; that is the auditor general's report tabled or the budget speech begun. These are the features one might argue that have made these lock-ups so successful and so useful to the conduct of parliamentary business.

It must, however, be remembered that when the different arrangements have been made for early briefings, previous Speakers have consistently held it is not a breach of privilege to exclude members from lock-ups. I refer the House, for example, to the ruling of Speaker Jerome, in *Debates*, of November 27, 1978 . . . and the ruling of Speaker . . . February 25, 1981 . . .

The House recognizes that when complex or technical documents are to be presented in this Chamber, media briefings are highly useful. They ensure that the public receives information that is both timely and accurate concerning business before the House.

In preparing legislation, the government may wish to hold extensive consultations and such consultations may be held entirely at the government's discretion. However, with respect to material to be placed before parliament, the House must take precedence. Once a bill has been placed on notice, whether it has been presented in a different form to a different session of parliament has no bearing and the bill is considered a new matter. The convention of the confidentiality of bills on notice is necessary, not only so that members themselves may be well informed, but also because of the pre-eminent rule which the House plays and must play in the legislative affairs of the nation.

Thus, the issue of denying to members information that they need to do their work has been the key consideration for the Chair in reviewing this particular question of privilege. To deny to members information concerning business that is about to come before the House, while at the same time providing such information to media that will likely be questioning members about the business, is a situation that the Chair cannot condone.

Even if no documents were given out at the briefing, as the hon. Government House Leader has assured the House, it is undisputed that confidential information about the Bill was provided. While it may have been the intention to embargo that information that is an essential safeguard of the rights of this House, the evidence would indicate that no effective embargo occurred.

In this case it is clear that information concerning legislation [although denied to the members] was given to members of the media without any effective measures to secure the rights of the House.

I have concluded that this constitutes a prima facie contempt of the House. [And I invite the hon. member for Provencher to move a motion.]

And, Mr. Speaker, the motion was moved and the Speaker ruled on the order, on the motion that breach of privilege had in fact taken place.

So that brings us to the point as to . . . Again I want to go back to why. Why would the government want to provide two technical briefings, one to the media and one to members of the opposition and staff or some of their own staff? There has to be a reason for it. Is it that they're hiding something? And I think that's probably one of the key issues in this — is for what other reason, what other possible reason could there be other than to try and hide something?

Now, Mr. Speaker, we know from technical briefings that sometimes all of the information doesn't come out and some of the information, I know, we have to go digging for and looking for from our staff. For an example, and I'm going to read some into the record for some examples of . . . I don't know if the government is trying to hide something but we've had to dig these out. And I'll use, because it was SaskWater's briefing that our staff member was denied into.

The first thing one has to concern oneself with is, are they hiding something about SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company]? Because SPUDCO, as we know in this province, is a huge, huge issue that cost taxpayers \$35 million. So the initial thought was, are they trying to hide something about SPUDCO? Is that the rationale that the government did not want any of our people or any of us in the briefing? Were they trying to hide something on SPUDCO, our \$35 million boondoggle into the potato business?

And we look at other Crown corporation technical briefings and media briefings that have happened in the past. Now I don't believe they came right out and identified that *tapped into.com* lost 6.7 million. And those are important factors to understand when a technical briefing is given — how much money have some of these Crown corporations lost. Persona, for an example, a \$9.4 million loss. Now it's very important that we have staff or MLAs in these briefings if in fact those questions would come up. In fact those are fair questions to ask, is what are the losses incurred by this Crown corporation, in a technical briefing.

How about Navigata, for an example. I mean we could sit and we'd probably want to ask questions as to why they lost \$43.4 million. And again, is the government trying to hide some of this stuff? Is that why they would not want MLAs from the Saskatchewan Party or Saskatchewan Party staff in these briefings?

How about Retx.com that lost 26 million? That would be pretty nice to ask questions and be upfront about one like that. How about Craig Wireless at 10 million? And these are all from SaskTel, Mr. Speaker. So when SaskTel provides a technical briefing, these are very, very fair questions that need to be asked and should be asked.

How about NST [NST Network Services of Chicago]? A \$16 million loss. Clickabid, \$1.9 million loss; Soft Tracks, \$2.2 million loss; Ag Dealer, \$8.9 million loss. Mr. Speaker, these are questions, these are questions that need to be asked in technical briefings, and the media should be at the same briefing because it's the media that also want to know what these losses are.

So SaskTel alone, a technical brief with SaskTel would reveal a

\$124.5 million loss. And this is essential, Mr. Speaker, to the openness of the briefings, although they're embargoed until such time as they're brought forward in the House.

How about a couple of the other ones, like when SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] is giving a technical briefing? It would be nice for everybody in the province to know that they lost \$16.1 million on Coachman Insurance. And that's something that we would want to see brought forward in a technical briefing for the media and for the opposition. This is key information to know.

How about, like, mega bingo that lost \$8 million? Where are we going to find that out unless we have the ability to attend technical briefings and find out exactly where those dollars went and what happened to those \$8 million?

How about Pangaea? I mean we've heard about Pangaea. We have to go digging to find that information and that should be something that we could ask for in a technical brief — \$3.5 million loss in Pangaea, also the jobs that were promised in Saskatchewan.

So those, Mr. Speaker, are very much reasons why we would want our people in technical briefings along with the media in the technical briefings, at the same time. Because again it's very, very foolish to have two technical briefings if it's an open and accountable government that says it's going to be identical briefings. If they're that identical, it's pointless to have two.

So, Mr. Speaker, to me it feels that they're really, really trying to hide something. And I don't what they would be trying to hide if they're giving it to the media and not to us. It's inconceivable that they would want to do that because it to me is a distinct breach of privilege. There is so much fear and paranoia on that side of the House that they are afraid we might hear a question or something like that brought forward by the media. That's the fear and paranoia that exists over there.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have a government that is definitely not open and accountable. It's been in power so long, it's becoming a very, very arrogant government and very much the time for them to be removed from power. So, Mr. Speaker, with that I'm going to take my place because I know there's other people that wish to speak to this.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am privileged to join in this debate speaking about the issue of member privilege in this Assembly. Mr. Speaker, I would like to engage in this debate as the person that raised the initial point of privilege on April 11, Mr. Speaker. And other members of the legislature have spoken and read into the record the incident that sparked this whole concern.

Mr. Speaker, what I find objectionable in the motion that's being proposed by the government are a number of things. First of all, Mr. Speaker, this is a matter of principle. It's not something that we have gone to the NDP government for as a favour or some kind of ruling that would allow us a special

consideration. This is not that. This is a matter of principle that a member of this Assembly has the right and the responsibility, and indeed the duty, to receive the same kind of information at the same time as members of the media or third parties are receiving it.

Mr. Speaker, the government attempts by this motion to kind of put a smokescreen over the whole matter of the principle of this privilege motion and this privilege debate. Mr. Speaker, it doesn't matter how you couch it, but when you go to a technical briefing, there are base numbers of facts that the officials of a department are going to share with those who are in attendance.

[15:30]

And the most important part of it is, is that questions are then able to be posed to those officials about more detail and different perspectives on the information that was provided. And, Mr. Speaker, depending on the nature of those questions, depending on the direction those questions take, the discussion and the details of information that are brought forward, an entirely different outcome in principle can occur from one technical briefing with a certain group of people in attendance as what would happen in another one with a different group of people.

And so, Mr. Speaker, while the intent and the stated intent of these technical briefings for the media and for opposition members and backbench members is stated to be the same and could run concurrently, there's absolutely no ability of any government to assure this Assembly or an assembly that the information that would come out of these two technical briefings in these two circumstances would be exactly the same.

And so, Mr. Speaker, in principle as long as you refuse to have one technical briefing that is held for all of the people that need the benefit of an update and more technical knowledge about what a certain topic is speaking to, you are not able ever to be able to ascertain or to assure members that you're going to end up with the same identical briefing. Sure you can end up with a basic information the same, but depending on questions that are posed, outcome of a technical briefing could be quite different.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in that event there is an obligation that both parties should be . . . all parties, indeed, should be able to benefit from those insights. If I was a member of the media and I would be at the technical briefing — the same technical briefing that MLAs would be invited to — I might benefit as a member of the media from a direction or a line of questions that are posed to officials from the MLAs.

Conversely, if I'm an MLA I might benefit in my understanding of the technical nature of the briefing by the questions that are posed to the officials by the media. And so each group, all parties to this information, would be given the benefit of the same total amount of information. And in that way, and only in that way, Mr. Speaker, can you assure members of this Assembly that their privilege is not breached by being excluded from one or the other briefings.

There's no principled way that you can get around the fact that in reality technical briefings, while they start off from the same points of information, are very likely going to take on a

different dimension depending on how the questions are posed and what line of thought and priority and principle are going to be raised by either the media or MLAs in attendance, or staff in attendance.

And the only way you can protect the matter of privilege for members is to make sure there is only one technical briefing at which all people who have an interest and a reason to be there are allowed to be there and to pose questions of officials in a respectful, appropriate manner.

Mr. Speaker, I've heard members opposite say, well they're very concerned that the opposition wants to be there so they can see what line of questioning the media is taking, and therefore they can tailor their answers in regard to that line of questioning or line of thought that the media might pose. Well what is to fear from that? If you've got an open society and you're not afraid of the answers, well why are you afraid of the questions, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, it simply is impossible to imagine that it is somehow going to derail or railroad the process by having everyone at the same briefing.

Now, Mr. Speaker, for the record, I also understand that there are protocols that have to be followed in terms of asking officials questions that are not appropriate to ask officials. For example, you ask ministers questions that have to do with policy. That is understood. It's no different than, for example, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts where officials from departments or from Crown corporations testify in front of the committee. There's no minister present, but there is a certain respect and protocol that is adhered to in regard to the type of policy-related questions that can be asked. That's understood.

And, Mr. Speaker, no one is suggesting for a moment that that important principle would be tolerated to be violated. The basic principle of the exercise is to say that it is important that no member of this House be given less information than anyone else receives. And the only way of doing it is to have one technical briefing for all of those who have a reason and a rationale to be there.

Mr. Speaker, it's also not a little bit disturbing that after the initial question of privilege was raised on April 11 and by unanimous consent of this House direction was given to the Standing Committee on Privileges, that the committee initially ended up and continued to have an absolute deadlock, whereby the members of the government on that committee were unwilling to deal with the direction from the House.

It was clearly given that the House said, this is the principle that's involved; now you folks are to find a way to make this work within those principles and that direction of the House. And unfortunately the committee came back to this House and said, we're unable to report because we're deadlocked. And so out of that reality, that lack of a willingness to look at the fundamental principle of privilege that's involved here, we now have this government motion before us on the order paper that somehow tries to whitewash this whole situation and make it seem as if what the government is proposing deals with the issue of privilege. Well it doesn't, Mr. Speaker. What it does is

just give us a sample of a little bit of information on a separate sort of venue and it doesn't deal with the fundamental matter, the principle of the privilege of a member of this Assembly.

And it also then says because the members of the Standing Committee on Privileges were deadlocked, we just rescind what the Chamber, the Assembly, had unanimously brought forward, and that it then enshrines the status quo, and for here on and ever forward that there cannot be a question of privilege directed as a result of this practice.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it might be a valid thing for the opposition or from any members of this House to accept some lesser, watered down version of what is simply and truly the privilege of all members of this Assembly. It's not just a principle to the opposition. It should be a principle to government members, particularly backbench members as well, because they too have the right to that information and they too have the right to have it in the same kind of a venue as opposition members. We are all members of this House, and we all have responsibilities to our constituents and to this province, and as such we should have, as a matter of principle, the absolute right to those privileges.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I find it very disappointing that the government is taking this route which is circumventing the original direction of this Assembly; that it is circumventing what is in principle a matter of privilege for all members of this Assembly. And I certainly support the fact that we would go back to the original direction of the House on April 12. And that was passed and that's what the amendment of the official opposition speaks to.

So, Mr. Speaker, I certainly am pleased to have been able to speak to this motion and to register my objection to the fact that this is not a favour that is being done to the opposition, to give us a little snippet of information. This is not sort of something that is a condescending kind of a move to say, okay, give these guys something, and that's better than what the practice was in the past. That may well be true, Mr. Speaker, but it doesn't deal with the fundamental principle of the matter of privilege of a member.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I certainly am going to support the amendment, and I'm very disappointed that I cannot support the government's motion.

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

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to make it very clear, Mr. Speaker, that the principle is access to information before the public, and this motion gives members of the Assembly access to the information before the public. And that is what it is all about, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to enter this particular debate. It's been mentioned that this is

maybe not a big matter of the House, but in the scheme of things, it is, when you look at the history of it.

When I first came here, we were allowed to go to technical briefings if we wanted. The media, we could go and do them together. We could come and go. Just like every House throughout the provinces are allowed, through the House of Commons, it's been allowed. In throughout all of democratic countries, it's been allowed, Mr. Speaker.

At that particular day when that happened, when we weren't allowed to go in, there was no warning of it. We were just assumed we were allowed to go in like normal. It had always worked in previous practice before that, Mr. Speaker. And whether the member, the Government House Leader, member, how would he call it, disinvited, whether you call it being disinvited, or told to leave, or kicked out, or sayonara, or goodbye, or get lost, it means the same thing. You've lost part of a privilege that should be granted to each and every one of us here, Mr. Speaker.

And when that happened that particular day, you have to remember that the government didn't say to him, he says, oh no, we're going to give you a technical briefing on the side; we're going to do it concurrently; or we're going to give you one. No, they just said, you're disinvited. That means, you're gone; get out of here.

You know, if there was a weak opposition on this side or maybe not many hardly, opposition members, what would have happened? Would they have taken that privilege away from us 100 per cent for every member? Because that's what they were intended to do that day, the way it looks at, Mr. Speaker. They intended to take a privilege away. And any time you take a privilege, a freedom, away from somebody, Mr. Speaker, that's a sin, Mr. Speaker. And that's what they were going to do that day.

There was no mention of, we're going to give you an extra technical briefing; we're going to let you in later; we're going to do any of this other stuff that came up. It was just, goodbye; we don't want you in here, Mr. Speaker.

So then that day we brought up a point of order, Mr. Speaker, in the House, a point of privilege here in the House. And it was discussed. It was debated and it was a good debate. And do you know what came out of that debate, Mr. Speaker? A recommendation and a resolution that we should be . . . that all members, all members. When I talk about opposition I mean all members — third party, government backbenchers, government members — that you're allowed the freedom of that. And that came out of that recommendation, out of this House, Mr. Speaker. It came out that day. That recommendation and resolution came out of this House from every member. It was voted on unanimously at that.

And then from there it went to the Privileges Committee who then deadlocked because the government members changed direction that they were given from this House. To me you should follow out the direction of the House when it's unanimous. They tried to change it after to make more political . . . I would guess more points or whatever. They all of a sudden dug their heels in and said no, now we're going to offer you this

on the side instead of that.

But you have to remember, at first they weren't going to give us nothing. Till that was raised here in the House, there was nothing. They were going to take away a privilege, Mr. Speaker, that's been in practice for many number of years of every democratic House, of everybody that belongs to Canadian Parliamentary Association — affordable right of access to all information. As an MLA you should be allowed access to all information that's afforded to everybody.

All of a sudden they wanted to control who goes in, when they go in, who's going to be at the technical briefing — all that. It's getting to be a power play. It's getting to be an aging, older government that looks like . . . and I don't like to use the word. I don't know if they're hiding anything but that's the perception that's going to be going out there to the public and that's a perception that the public's going to be . . . When that happens they're going to say, well what difference does it make? The media's there. You can listen in. What's the problem?

I talked to some constituents about it and they just say, well why are they doing that? That just doesn't make sense. If this government is . . . They get up every day and they talk about being open and accountable. And if you're putting out programs, if you're putting out reports that you're proud of, you should be able to answer any question on that. You should welcome, you should welcome the questions on it. You should welcome the information to get out there because that's one more avenue of getting it out.

When I go to a technical briefing as an MLA, sometimes I'll ask on a program because I want to pass on to my constituents. They want to know what's going on in the CAIS program, all the different little programs that are out there. And there are many little side programs for different initiatives — whether you're a beekeeper or a grain farmer, organic farmer. There's different things in there that you can ask, that deal with programs.

And when you start taking that privilege away, slowly eroding it, because this is what this is dealing with — a slow erosion. It's not like they're taking a big thing but they're taking a little thing but where's it going to start next time? Because I said before at the beginning of this, they weren't going to allow us in to any of them until it was brought to the House.

[15:45]

So what would have been the next one? No technical briefings for media? Maybe limiting more information? If you're going to start down that slope — and that's a slippery slope — you start sliding that one, you start trying to hide information or not willing to release it, Mr. Speaker, that's . . . you're going down a very slippery slope at that end of it. And I don't think this House wants to go in that direction.

I don't know if the members opposite really want to limit access to information. Why wouldn't you, why wouldn't you want your people out there talking about your programs? You should be proud of them.

The Speaker: — Order, please. I think I would remind the

member to direct his remarks through the Chair.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Speaker, this House should and this government should be proud of their programs. If you're not, that tells me maybe they're not, maybe they're worried about the questions they're going to be asked in there. They don't want to shine any light on them. And that isn't what a government is about, Mr. Speaker. That's not what it should be.

You look in the past. You look at some of the things that have come out of what this government . . . We dealt, you know, this was annual report where this particular incident happened. It happened at a SaskWater annual report. And I mean you mention SaskWater in the public and the first thing they think of, Mr. Speaker, is SPUDCO. You know, that's the first thing they think of. And what happened there, Mr. Speaker, is there were . . . I think a member had to get up here and apologize. There was information that wasn't, that came out later in the House. It took years to be brought out. The whole story wasn't brought out immediately.

And so that's the first thing people think of and that's what, that's a misconception that, as a government, you should want to change. And so I can't understand why the members opposite would want to bring a motion like this forward. Because do you want more trouble like SPUDCO? This shines light on it, be able to . . . for people to ask questions, the media to ask questions, us to ask questions. And maybe you would have caught some of that stuff in SPUDCO before it went as far as it did, you know.

And you talk about lots of . . . There's lots of money losers when you talk about this government, you know. You can talk about Navigata and the money it's lost. I mean, maybe if some of these questions had been asked earlier, maybe there'd be some savings to the taxpayers. And you have to ask yourself, Mr. Speaker, is this why this government is bringing this motion up, because they want to try to limit the access of the opposition, try to hold them back?

They tried to keep us out at all until it was brought to the House and a recommendation and resolution was sent from this House. Other than that, they may have not even let us in, period, at any time. So then they come out with this side deal saying, well we'll give you the same time, maybe before, maybe sometimes after, maybe sometimes after the meeting, maybe at the same time, maybe before. Well then, you look at the cost, you know.

This government's always saying, well . . . wants to save money. What's it doing? It's going to be costing more money to do the same, very same thing that it was doing before. Why not just do it the way it was? Allow any opposition, any government member to come into a technical briefing along with the media, to sit there and listen to their program and the reports.

Because I'm pretty sure that the bureaucrats that are there, they're proud of the work they're doing. They're proud of the programs they're trying to bring forward. They're proud of their annual report. They should be able . . . And if they are, if they are proud of it, they should be able to defend it. They should want to defend it. As a bureaucrat, if I was one, I'd be offended

that this government is trying to limit access so people can ask me questions about my particular department. Why, why wouldn't you want . . . You think you'd want to welcome questions to your particular department at that.

So you look at, you look at history and the past, and the first thing that governments . . . the communist governments when they start taking control, they try to limit opposition. They try to start with little, little things, cutting them back. Or socialist governments, trying to access . . . trying to deny access for opposition, trying to put roadblocks in their way. Is that what this government, Mr. Speaker, is trying to do, is trying to put little roadblocks in the way of opposition? It's trying to limit the information out there. Because when you look at this, you wonder if that is their intent and is their purpose when this first started, Mr. Speaker.

I don't think there's any support, if you went around, any support anywhere in Saskatchewan that would say, well why wouldn't you allow any member to sit in on a technical briefing. A member of this House — government member, opposition member, third party member, independent member — why wouldn't you allow them just to sit in there and gather the same amount of information that the media is getting, that they should be allowed to, that they're going to, that they should be allowed to get, Mr. Speaker. I don't think there would be one person that would say, no I don't think that you should be . . . opposition members shouldn't be allowed in there, Mr. Speaker.

So I don't know where are they getting . . . They feel they have support for this. I don't feel like . . . I think if they asked their constituents about this, I think a lot of them would be appalled at what they do. Because they listen, this government, and they talk about, oh, we're open and accountable. And they talk about that all the time. And I know when they go door to door, they keep telling their constituents about that. Well I think maybe this is a message that maybe should get out to some of their constituents out there. And maybe these guys aren't as open, as accountable as they like to say they are, at that end of it.

Because any time you take away a tiny little bit of freedom — and that's what you're doing — a tiny little freedom, but it's an erosion. Any time you start down that road, it just leads to further . . . They may think, well we've taken that away. How else can . . . What other little roadblock can we set up there? You know we can't let the opposition, you know, ask too many questions because I mean that's no good. They may actually find something out, you know. They may even find some little dirt on us. So let's just try to put some little roadblocks in their way wherever we can, you know. And that's what happened, and that's what going to happen in the future if it's allowed, Mr. Speaker, you know.

And with some of the things that have happened with this particular government over the past years, I can maybe understand why they don't allow, or don't want people in there asking questions of the officials on some of the losses they've run through. And especially when you look at SPUDCO, some of the information . . . I mean, we can go back to Con-Force when they said that they were in a 51 per cent partnership, and we found out later on that they weren't in at all with them, you know. That was just to get around a labour law, a particular

labour law.

You know, maybe if some of them questions had been asked at that time, or were allowed to be asked, you know, maybe that would have come out . . . [inaudible] . . . the losses that were there.

And, you know, and after, they still tried to cover it up. I remember them first getting elected in '99. I remember door knocking in Outlook. I mean, that was a huge issue. It was just starting to come to light then. The information was just starting to come out. The previous opposition that was in — I think they only had nine members — did an excellent job of dragging it out. And they had to work to find that information out.

But I tell you what, the people already knew. They were starting to know out there what was going on with that. And this is just one more, you know, reason why that this motion should fail or the amendment should go ahead, Mr. Speaker, because as a House, as a legislature, as a legislator, you should be allowed as much information as you can get.

I know when I was down in the States just at an exchange program and you talk to them, I mean, they have access to all kinds of information. They're allowed to . . . which you should as a legislature . . . As a legislator, you should be allowed all the access to information because we're the ones that are making the laws here, making the rules, getting the information out to people. We should have access to every piece of information out there.

As a government, you should be using that tool. You should be proud to say, we want to get as much information out there as we possibly can. We want you to ask as many questions as you want of this government. You should be able to come and ask as many as you want or listen as much as you want at any time we're giving a technical briefing because that's what this government is about. That's what a government that's sitting . . . opposition would be like, Mr. Speaker. You know, you'd be not trying to hide things like it's looking like this present government is trying to do at this particular time with this motion.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I can't support that motion in all good faith. I don't think anybody could. But I do support the amendment that stands for the freedom of all MLAs, elected officials that are in this House.

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think this is a very important debate for this legislature and indeed for parliamentarians in Canada and across the Commonwealth. Since we take the points of privilege, the established traditions and rules from each others' Houses to make a determination on how each of our legislatures are going to operate, every time there's a new ruling which takes place within a legislature, it affects all of the legislatures within the Commonwealth. It doesn't affect, just in this case, Saskatchewan. It doesn't affect just the provincial governments. It affects both provincial and federal governments, Mr. Deputy Speaker, across the entire Commonwealth.

So the precedents that we set today, the precedents that will be set when this item comes to a vote will have an impact across the Commonwealth, which is the largest political body, Mr. Speaker, of nations outside of the UN [United Nations], Mr. Speaker, across the world. There's 54 or 56 nations, I believe, that are part of the Commonwealth, representing some of the largest countries in the world, such as India, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, what we do today is not irrelevant. It's not some minor, small thing that we shouldn't be wasting our time on. This is a very important ruling, Mr. Deputy Chairman.

What I find interesting about this exercise is the motion that was originally passed in this House and referred to the Committee on Privilege to ensure that the motion of the House was carried out, Mr. Speaker, and that motion was passed unanimously in this House. The opposition presented a motion condemning the actions of the government and laying out the rights and privileges of the members of this legislature and asking that this government — which is not the legislature, but the NDP government — honour the rights and privileges, Mr. Speaker, of the members of this Assembly.

And I would like to read to you what that motion, as amended, was:

... that this Assembly urge government and Crown corporation officials to respect ...

I think that's very important, Mr. Deputy Chair, that you take a look at that:

... that this Assembly urge government and Crown corporation officials to respect ...

Because clearly, they had not been respecting the rights and privileges of members. And what were those rights and privileges as talked about in this motion, Mr. Speaker? A motion that I again say that every member of the New Democratic Party voting on that day supported totally, Mr. Speaker. In fact it was their amendment to our original motion, Mr. Speaker. It says:

... the rights and privileges of all members of this Assembly, by ensuring that official opposition members and their staff[s] are allowed to attend any embargoed news conferences and technical briefings open to ... members of the news media.

It clearly outlined what the rights were in that motion, Mr. Speaker, and it asked that government and Crown corporation officials respect those rights. Those rights again were that all members of this Assembly be ensured that official opposition members and their staff are allowed to attend any embargoed news conferences and technical briefings open to members of the media.

Very clear what the rights were, that all opposition members be entitled, along with staff, to attend technical briefings and embargoed news conferences. The members of the government supported that. They wanted it known on April 12 that they supported democracy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, not that they were trying to exclude people from news conferences. They wanted it

known that they supported the rights of members to attend embargoed news conferences and technical briefings, not that there was a separation, not that there were two different qualifying groups, Mr. Speaker; everyone had that right.

And that was the motion that was sent to the Privileges Committee. And the reason it was sent there was to urge the government and Crown corporations officials to respect those rights. Once it got to the Privilege Committee however, Mr. Speaker, the government members stonewalled the committee demanding that the mandate of the committee be changed, and then simply stonewalling the vote when that couldn't ... when the official members of the opposition refused to allow the mandate to be changed. The motion simply came back to the House as a failure. And that's why we're debating this today, Mr. Speaker, because the NDP members, the government members stonewalled the Privilege Committee demanding that the mandate as passed unanimously by this Assembly be changed.

Mr. Speaker, that committee, in my opinion, does not have the right to change that mandate. They have the right to deal with the issues of the mandate, which was to urge the government and Crown corporations' officials to respect the rights and privileges of members, not to change the mandate. Yet the government members stonewalled that committee so that they could play their political games, so that they could try and deny access to members, Mr. Speaker.

[16:00]

The Finance minister in his presentation early today talked about disinviting our staff person from the technical briefing. Well to disinvite someone — assuming there is even such a word called disinvite — assumes that that person was then first invited, Mr. Speaker; assumes that that person was first invited, that they had the right to be there, and then the government denied them that right.

In the past, Mr. Deputy Speaker, members of the official opposition and their staff have had the right to attend embargoed news conferences and technical briefings. It happened all the time with budgets. Our members and staff were entitled to attend budget-embargoed technical briefings and news conferences. That has been a long-standing tradition, although I have to admit there's been a number of times that the government has had to be reminded that that was a long-standing tradition because they kept trying to waver away from it, Mr. Speaker. They didn't want to give the opposition the same information and the same access that they were giving to the news media, Mr. Speaker.

And clearly, as we have seen from the House of Commons debate on privilege and access, that that is not acceptable; that the members of this Assembly, and every Assembly, have the right to the same information that is given to the news media.

So if you have a separate technical briefing or news conference, how do you ensure that the same information is provided? Because if you have two different people at two separate briefings asking questions, Mr. Speaker, you're not going to get the same information because those people will tend to ask somewhat different questions. The answers will come back to

you in a somewhat different manner depending on who answers the question. So the information is not going to be the same.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this information that should be available to all members, as outlined in the House of Commons ruling, doesn't say that you have separate briefings. It says that the members have access to the information at the briefings, Mr. Speaker, and that's what the government is trying to deny us.

You know, you would think that a government who, theoretically at least, expounds their support for equality, would be supporting the fact that we all as members of this legislature should have equal access to the information. And yet they are trying to create divisions. The NDP Party is trying to create divisions in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

If someone was to come forward and say men and women, you can have access to the same information but you can't be at the same meeting where this information is provided. One group has to go this way, one group has to go that way. Mr. Speaker, that would be unacceptable in this society.

If you were to say we're going to divide you based on your religions and provide you with information, that would be unacceptable, Mr. Speaker. If you were going to divide people on their races and provide them access to the information that their legislator should have, that would be unacceptable. Any kind of separation like that, Mr. Speaker, is unacceptable in this society.

The NDP Party proclaims their support for equality until it affects them, Mr. Speaker, and then they deny it.

It's our belief, Mr. Speaker, that this legislature should treat equality equally in all situations. That means that any member of this legislature should have equal access and opportunity to participate in any embargoed news conference or technical briefing at any point in time. Whether it is a separate briefing for MLAs or a briefing for the media, members of this legislature and their staff should have access to both and all of those entities, Mr. Speaker — those conferences and those technical briefings, Mr. Speaker.

You have to wonder what the NDP is afraid of. What are they afraid is going to be found out, either at a separate briefing or at a combined briefing, Mr. Speaker? Why . . . as my colleagues have asked, what do they fear?

Well I guess if we look back at the history of the NDP, of this government, well perhaps they fear SPUDCO as has been mentioned, the information that was kept secret there for six years. Or perhaps what they fear is such a response as was given by the member from Athabasca — when he was the Minister of SERM [Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management] — well you didn't ask me that question so I don't have to answer it.

So Mr. Speaker, if the question is asked in one briefing and not in another, then one of the parties doesn't have access to the information. And that's what's critical in this motion, that everyone have access to the same information. That is what allows the members of this Assembly to carry out their duties,

to carry out the duties as assigned to them by their electorate in electing each and every member to this Assembly. They expect each one to be treated equally, Mr. Speaker, and not to be denied information.

Mr. Speaker, democracy is a slowly evolving creature. It started back when the nobility cornered King John at Runnymede and forced him to sign the Magna Carta which enshrined their rights and privileges. It didn't, it didn't enshrine the rights and privileges of the common people, Mr. Speaker, but it did tell the Crown and the monarch that some of your subjects have specific rights and privileges that you cannot abrogate.

And slowly over time, Mr. Speaker, the power of the monarchy was reduced. The power of democracy and of parliaments was increased. And that didn't happen, Mr. Speaker, without a lot of struggle. It didn't happen without bloodshed. Take a look at the revolution led by Cromwell against the monarchy, which really changed England, Mr. Speaker, from the all powerful monarchy to the supremacy of parliament.

Kings since that time, the monarchs since that time, continued, Mr. Speaker, to question and to pressure parliament not to exercise and to have those powers. In fact, Mr. Speaker, Speakers wear the tricorne hat to commemorate a Speaker that carried the message from parliament to the king that the king did not want to hear and that Speaker lost his head, Mr. Speaker, literally.

So, Mr. Speaker, the privileges and powers, the rights of parliamentarians has been hard won. No longer do we have to fear the power of the monarchy. Monarchs today are not going to supplant the power of parliament in our system. Not to say it doesn't or couldn't happen some other place in the world, but not here, Mr. Speaker, not in most of the Commonwealth nations.

But, Mr. Speaker, we now have a new threat to democracy, and this question of privilege and right in this Assembly today demonstrates that danger to democracy, Mr. Speaker. And that danger, Mr. Speaker, is the demand for power by a majority government — not to serve all of the members of the legislature but to serve, Mr. Speaker, the party in power. And that is the erosion that we're suffering today. That is the erosion that has been taking place in our parliaments for many years now.

As power is centralized, Mr. Speaker, into the prime minister's or the premier's office, it's an erosion of the power of parliamentarians, Mr. Speaker, and that is becoming a very real threat to democracy. The denial of access to information by members of this legislature, any other legislature or parliament in the Commonwealth, is an erosion of the power, the rights, and the privileges of all parliamentarians. And we cannot allow that to happen in this legislature on this day, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, if you talk to people across the country about the state of democracy in Canada, most of them believe there is very little left, other than the vote on election day; that they're actually electing a dictatorship for four to five years; that the prime minister or premier exercises supreme power over their own party, over the majority party, and therefore over all parliamentarians.

And they have a great fear, Mr. Speaker, that we're losing the rights of democracy in this country, that parliamentarians no longer serve their constituents. Rather they serve their party hierarchy and their leader, the prime minister or the premier or the leader of the official opposition.

That's why, Mr. Speaker, we're seeing a reduction in the number of people who vote. They don't believe in the system any more. They don't believe that they have the power to change the system. They don't believe the system responds to their needs. And why do they believe that, Mr. Speaker? They believe that because power is being concentrated into the hands of the few, and that power has been removed and extracted from their legislatures and their parliamentarians, Mr. Speaker. And this privilege motion does that as well. It removes the rights and privileges of all parliamentarians in this legislature, all members of this legislature, whether they're on the government side or the opposition side, from access to the information that they clearly should have.

Mr. Speaker, to pass this motion as the government has presented it is to fail in our duty as legislators and as parliamentarians. We would then allow a continued erosion of the rights and privileges — rights and privileges that the monarchs tried to take away and now are being eroded by majority government, and the rule of the leader of that majority party, be that the prime minister or premier in any jurisdiction, Mr. Speaker.

The only time that we see a return of that power to the parliamentarians, it seems, is when a government is in trouble — when they have a minority. We see some of that return in Ottawa, where members of the legislature become again viable participants in parliament, in making legislation.

But we also see, Mr. Speaker, the machinations and the contortions that a governing party will go through to try and maintain their power, such as we see happening in Ottawa today. We have seen the Gomery Commission been started because legislators there needed access to information and could not get it. The only information that was coming forward was information through the Auditor General.

So the Prime Minister of the day strikes a commission — the Gomery Commission — to investigate, and then immediately calls an election so that the information would not be available for the voters to make a determination, Mr. Speaker. That happened just over a year ago.

So, Mr. Speaker, access to information is critical to the proper functioning of a democracy. It's critical to holding governments accountable. And when majority parties in governments deny the opposition access to any information, it's limiting their ability to hold governments accountable.

[16:15]

I know that majority governments do not want to be held accountable. They want to be able to slide through without the public becoming aware of certain bits of information, such as happened with SPUDCO. When questions were clearly asked, both on the floor of the legislature and in committee which is an extension of the legislature, the information was not provided,

Mr. Speaker. So how do governments . . . how do oppositions hold governments accountable? How does the public become aware to be able to make intelligent, informed decisions, when the information is not being made available to them?

All of those bits of information, all of the government's operation is paid for by the tax dollars of the people, either in Saskatchewan or in Canada or throughout the Commonwealth, Mr. Speaker. They have a right, they have a privilege to have that information. And this government is now trying to deny the parliamentarians in this legislature full and equal access to that information. And we cannot allow that to happen, Mr. Speaker. As I said before, this is a clear erosion of what's happening; it's clear erosion of our democratic rights and privileges.

Let's take a look at the budget situation, Mr. Speaker, which is normally an embargoed news conference and a technical briefing. Under this new rule if it passes as is, Mr. Speaker, the government will have to have two briefings. Again, how do the parliamentarians get full access to the information if they're not at both briefings, Mr. Speaker? Because around this room we ask questions. Each person has a particular experience and a particular knowledge and a particular interest in a topic, Mr. Speaker. So each of us ask questions from a different point of view. That's why we're individuals, Mr. Speaker.

That individuality leads to different answers. The minister, if he's answering the questions, or the officials of the department will answer those questions differently based on the question, as I already mentioned. The member from Athabasca refusing to answer . . . providing all of the information unless he was asked a specific question.

So you're going to have people asking for different information in each of the different technical briefings, so one group is not going to have the same information as the other group, Mr. Speaker. And it's the rights and privileges of members of this legislature to have access to all the information, not just part of it, Mr. Speaker, not just the part that was asked in your briefing compared to the other briefing, Mr. Speaker. So that's the flaw in the government's argument.

The government even supported that, Mr. Speaker, in the original motion that they proposed to this legislature and passed unanimously. So clearly some of the political operators behind the scenes in government — not the members on the floor, Mr. Speaker, because they all voted in favour of it — some of the political operators behind the scenes have obviously convinced at least three of the government members, who are on the Privilege Committee that they erred, that they should not have supported that motion in this Assembly, that they were wrong in voting for it in the first place.

So I guess the question you have to ask them, if they were wrong, why did they all vote for it? Surely there must have been one of them then that disagreed with that motion and could've stood up and said no, I'm not going to support that. But, Mr. Speaker, they all voted for it, each and every one of them stood in their place and voted for this amendment that they presented, Mr. Speaker. So somebody then behind the scenes pulled the strings and they have changed their mind.

What else, Mr. Speaker, do those people behind the scenes pull

the strings on when it comes to decision making in this government? That they can so easily pull those strings to convince those members that voted unanimously for our rights and privileges, that they were wrong — that it had to be changed — to deny the rights and privileges of members in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. Clearly there is a flaw in that government, Mr. Speaker. That they are so easily swayed by somebody behind the scenes, Mr. Speaker, that they cannot think and make judgments for themselves. If they could, then they made that judgment on April 12th, when they voted unanimously in favour of the amendment to enshrine and to ensure our rights and privileges.

I'm amazed at how weak the judgment and the moral fibre of the members opposite are, that they can be so easily swayed by someone behind the scenes, to completely change their vote, Mr. Speaker. I'm amazed at that lack of will, will to stand up for the rights and privileges of the members of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I will be voting for the amendment as presented by the member from Saskatoon Southeast against the government's motion. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order then. The question before the Assembly is the amendment to the main motion as moved by the member for Saskatoon Southeast and seconded by the member for Melville-Saltcoats:

That all the words after the first "that" be removed and replaced with the following:

This Assembly condemns the government for its continued refusal to honour the privilege motion passed on April 12, 2005, urging the government to respect the rights and privileges of all members of this Assembly by ensuring that official opposition members and their staff are allowed to attend any embargoed news conferences and technical briefings open to members of the news media.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Question has been called. Those who favour the amendment say aye.

Some Hon. Members: — Aye.

The Speaker: — Those opposed to the amendment say no.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

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

[The division bells rang from 16:22 until 16:29.]

The Speaker: — Order please. The question before the Assembly is the amendment to the main motion as moved by the member for Saskatoon Southeast, seconded by the member for Melville-Saltcoats. Those who favour the motion please

rise.

[Yeas — 25]

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

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

[Nays — 28]

Calvert	Addley	Lautermilch
Hagel	Van Mulligen	Serby
Atkinson	Cline	Sonntag
Crofford	Prebble	

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please members. The voting will proceed.

Forbes	Wartman	Belanger
Higgins	Nilson	Beatty
Hamilton	Junor	Harper
Iwanchuk	McCall	Quennell
Trew	Yates	Taylor
Morin	Borgerson	

Deputy Clerk: — Mr. Speaker, those in favour of the amendment, 25; those opposed, 28.

The Speaker: — I declare the amendment lost. Order, please. Order, please. The question before the Assembly is the main motion moved by the member for Regina Douglas Park, seconded by the member for Moose Jaw North. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Those who favour the motion say aye.

Some Hon. Members: — Aye.

The Speaker: — Those opposed to the motion say no.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — Call in the members for a standing vote.

[The division bells rang from 16:32 until 16:53.]

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion moved by the member for Regina Douglas Park,

seconded by the member for Moose Jaw North, with respect to technical briefings. Those in favour of the motion, please rise.

[Yeas — 28]

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

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

[Nays — 25]

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

Deputy Clerk: — Mr. Speaker, those in favour of the motion, 28; those opposed, 25.

The Speaker: — I declare the motion carried.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 114

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Thomson that **Bill No. 114 — The Education Amendment Act, 2005/Loi de 2005 modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur l'éducation** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's certainly a pleasure to enter into the debate on Bill 114, an amendment to The Education Act.

I listened carefully, Mr. Speaker, when the minister gave a second reading on this Act, and he started off his comments by saying this is basically a housekeeping Act, Mr. Speaker. And he tried to downplay the provisions of the amendments that are contained in this Act.

There are a number of housekeeping aspects to this Act, but there are also some fairly major amendments that deal with the

restructuring of the Act to allow for the forced amalgamation of school divisions and the elections that are scheduled to take place that the minister announced back in February that we would have election of new boards of education on June 15 of this year, and that these boards would be put in place.

And they really wouldn't have a school division because the current boards of education are in place to run the school divisions until such time that the new boundaries that the minister issued through a ministerial order, which there are some questions around the fact whether the minister actually had the power to do that because of some of the amendments to the Act. It seems that perhaps to me be a question as to whether the minister actually had authority to restructure the school division, the boundaries of the school divisions until these amendments passed, Mr. Speaker.

So this Bill is certainly anything but a housekeeping Bill, Mr. Speaker. The minister talks about a restructuring and coordinating committee that the government has set up and so on. There are a number of issues that need to be addressed, Mr. Speaker, and so therefore, Mr. Speaker, I would move that we adjourn debate on this Bill.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood that debate on second reading of Bill 114 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Committee of Finance.

The Speaker: — I do now leave the Chair for this Assembly to go into Committee of Finance.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

The Chair: — It being near 5 p.m., this committee stands recessed until 7 p.m.

[The Assembly recessed until 19:00.]

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Elhard	2767
Hermanson	2767
Eagles	2767
Harpauer	2767
Bakken Lackey	2767
Brkich	2767
Weekes	2768
Merriman	2768
Morgan	2768

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk	2768
--------------------	------

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Draude	2768
Weekes	2768
Dearborn	2768

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Forbes	2769
Higgins	2777

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Mental Health Week in Canada

McMorris	2769
----------------	------

North American Occupational Safety and Health Week

Junor	2770
-------------	------

Volunteer Award to Star City Resident

Gantfoer	2770
----------------	------

Former MLA Elected Mayor of Fort Qu'Appelle

Belanger	2770
----------------	------

Nokomis School Wins Youth Enviro-Action Award

Brkich	2771
--------------	------

Energy & Our Environment Poster Contest Winners

Iwanchuk	2771
----------------	------

A Saskatchewan General Store

Bakken Lackey	2771
---------------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS

Legislation for Treatment of Drug Addicted Youth

Draude	2772
Crofford	2772

Labour Legislation

Krawetz	2773
Higgins	2773

Revenue from Oil Royalties

Cheveldayoff	2774
Van Mulligen	2774

Financial Assistance for Farmers

Bjornerud	2775
Wartman	2775

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 100 — The Police Amendment Act, 2005

Quennell	2777
----------------	------

Bill No. 119 — The Election Amendment Act, 2005

Quennell	2777
----------------	------

Bill No. 120 — The Fuel Tax Amendment Act, 2005

Van Mulligen	2777
--------------------	------

Bill No. 121 — The Farm Financial Stability Amendment Act, 2005

Wartman	2778
---------------	------

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Yates	2778
The Speaker	2778

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Access to Embargoed News Conferences and Technical Briefings

Van Mulligen	2778
Morgan	2779
Bjornerud	2782
Trew	2784
Huyghebaert	2784
Gantfoer	2787
Yates	2789
Brkich	2789
D'Autremont	2791
Recorded Division (amendment)	2795
Recorded Division (motion)	2796

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 114 — The Education Amendment Act, 2005

Loi de 2005 modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur l'éducation

Hart	2796
-------------------	------

CABINET MINISTERS

Hon. L. Calvert
Premier

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

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

Hon. B. Belanger
Minister of Northern Affairs

Hon. E. Cline
Minister of Industry and Resources

Hon. J. Crofford
Minister of Community Resources and Employment
Minister Responsible for Disability Issues
Minister Responsible for Gaming

Hon. D. Forbes
Minister of Environment
Minister Responsible for the Office of Energy Conservation

Hon. D. Higgins
Minister of Labour
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women

Hon. J. Nilson
Minister of Health
Minister Responsible for Seniors

Hon. P. Prebble
Minister of Corrections and Public Safety

Hon. F. Quennell
Minister of Justice and Attorney General

Hon. C. Serby
Deputy Premier
Minister of Rural Development

Hon. M. Sonntag
Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations
Minister of Highways and Transportation

Hon. L. Taylor
Minister of Government Relations

Hon. A. Thomson
Minister of Learning
Minister Responsible for Information Technology

Hon. H. Van Mulligen
Minister of Finance

Hon. M. Wartman
Minister of Agriculture and Food