



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

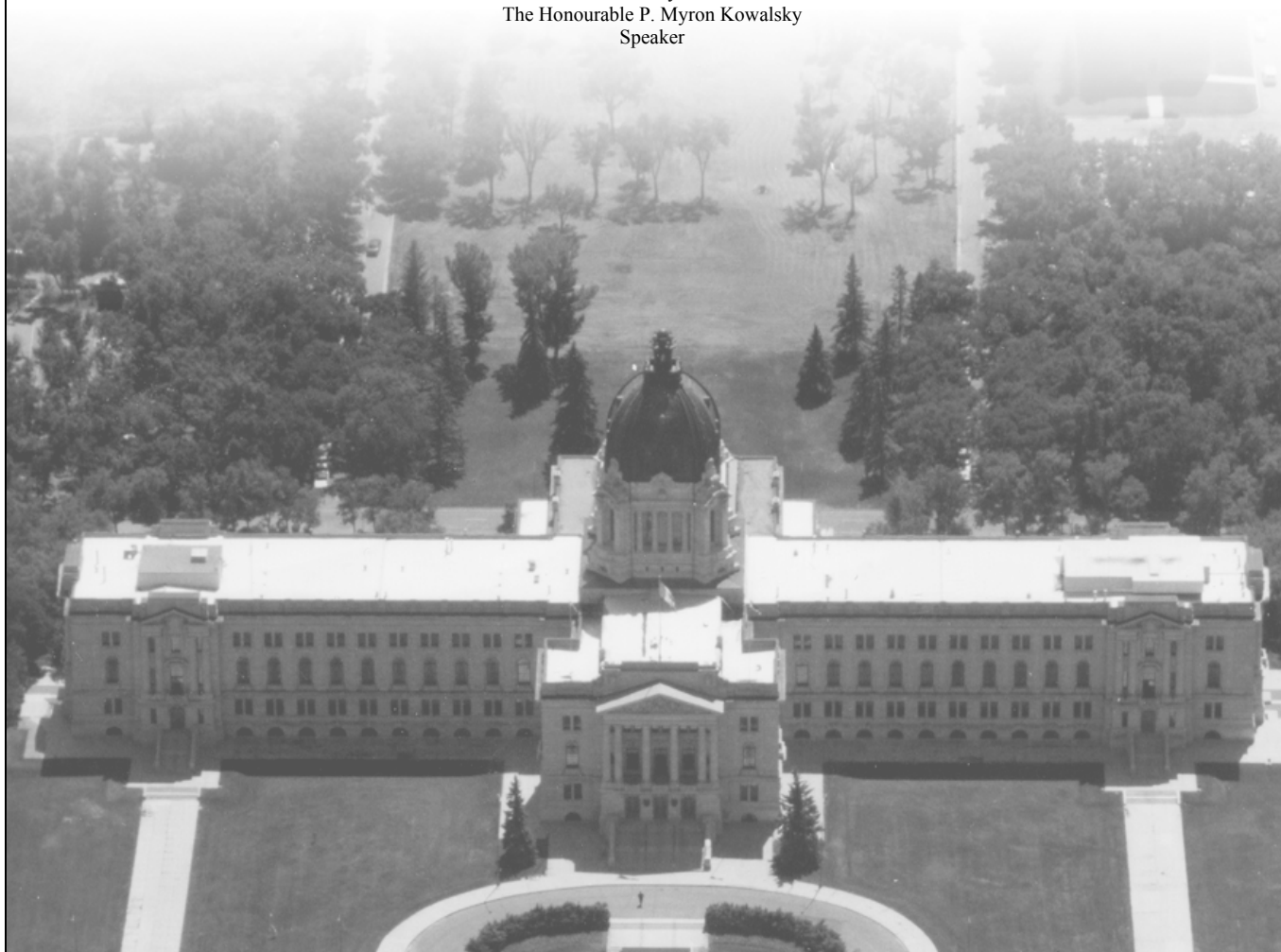
of the

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

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Highway 32 in the southwest part of the province continues to be an issue of serious concern to the residents of Cypress Hills, and the prayer addressing their concerns 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 individuals from the communities of Leader, Prelate, Sceptre, Medicine Hat, several others, Eatonia, and Mendham. I so present.

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

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a privilege again for me to rise on behalf of constituents concerned about the lack of group home spaces in Swift Current. The prayer of their petition reads as follows:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, the petitioners today are from the community of Herbert and the city of Swift Current. I so present.

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

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you. Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition that states that on behalf of the staff, participants, and families of the Wheatland Regional Centre Inc. and other like centres across the province that provide services for individuals with disabilities . . . they are concerned that the provincial budget responses do not come close to meeting the minimum recommendations of the human resources plan put forward by SARC [Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres]. The prayer of the petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners will humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly will please consider implementing the

minimum compensation recommendations for staff members to support people with disabilities as outlined in SARC's human resources plan.

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition come from the fine community of Rosetown, and I am pleased to present it on their behalf.

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 Highway 35 and the state of disrepair. And the prayer reads:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And the petition is signed by residents of Radville. 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 that want to halt crop insurance premium hikes and coverage reductions:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take all the necessary actions to reverse the increase in crop insurance premiums and the reduction in coverage.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by good citizens from Dundurn, Simpson, Hanley, Regina, and Saskatoon. I so present.

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

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present another petition from constituents opposed to possible reductions of the health care services in Biggar. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Biggar Hospital, long-term care home, and ambulance services maintain at the very least their current level of services.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

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

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

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of citizens of west central Saskatchewan opposed to the rerouting of Highway 51. 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 steps to ensure that Highway 51 is rebuilt to go through the town of Kerrobert so that local businesses may be given the opportunity to promote themselves to and gain business from patrons passing through Kerrobert.

Mr. Speaker, this particular petition is signed by citizens of both Kerrobert and Kindersley. I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and pursuant to rule 14 are hereby read and received as addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 106, 666, 715, 716, 720, and 730.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to introduce to you, and through you to all members of the Assembly, 29 Grade 12 students from F.W. Johnson Collegiate in my riding, Mr. Speaker. These are very gifted, wonderful students, Mr. Speaker, who come to our Assembly from F.W. Johnson each and every year.

They are accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Jeff Perry, who has been a long time visitor to this Assembly each year with at least one of his classes. And, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to have everyone welcome them to their Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you, and through you to all members of the Assembly, the person that tries to make me look good in this Assembly. Granted I don't give her a lot to work with some days but, Mr. Speaker, Beth Epp, the constituency assistant for Saskatoon Silver Springs . . . Beth is down today taking part in an orientation for the Royal visit.

And she's the smiling face and the pleasant voice that people in the Saskatoon Silver Springs constituency see and hear when they call my office. And I'd like to ask you and all members to welcome Beth to her Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Nutana, the Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In your gallery this afternoon, we have 22 public servants that are touring the Legislative Assembly this morning and this afternoon. They are employees in the departments of Agriculture and Food, Community Resources and Employment, Environment, Finance, the provincial lab, Health, Justice, the Legislative Assembly, the Public Service Commission, and SaskTel. Later this afternoon after question period, I'll have an opportunity to meet with the public servants along with our colleague from the official opposition.

I would ask all members of the Assembly to welcome these people who provide important public services to our citizens day in and day out. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the minister in welcoming the contingent of public servants to the Assembly this afternoon. I understand they've already had a very busy day. And I can only hope that when 3:30 or so comes around and you're very, very tired and won't have very difficult and incisive questions for myself, but I look forward to it anyway. And certainly, Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for this Assembly to welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Borgerson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce a special guest to the Assembly this afternoon. He is sitting behind the government members here with the Minister from Government Relations. I'd like to introduce Paul Dennert who is a legislator from South Dakota. He is a member of the House of Representatives and serves on the appropriations committee in that House. Mr. Dennert is a farmer and a cattleman. He operates a family farm along with his son.

We've had a very good visit. Mr. Dennert's had the opportunity to meet most of the government members and will have a chance to meet members from the opposition as well over the next day and a half. We've had a great time comparing South Dakota and Saskatchewan and have agreed that those are simply the two best places to live on the continent. And with that I'd like to invite all members to welcome Mr. Dennert here to Saskatchewan and to this Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the member in welcoming Representative Paul Dennert to the

House today. It's been my pleasure to work with what I knew as Senator Dennert prior to his most recent election as Co-Chair of a subcommittee of the Midwest-Canada relations committee.

Now the member has described Mr. Dennert's occupation and some of his personal information. But I'd like to add to that, that I know him on a professional level. And as a consequence of our dealings, I found Mr. Dennert to be a man of integrity, a man who practises good common sense. But because the issue of BSE [bovine spongiform encephalopathy] was the one that we worked on most closely together, I'd also say he's a man of courage. And I'd like us to acknowledge his presence here today and the good work he's done on our behalf.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Bakken Lackey: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to welcome to the Legislative Assembly my constituency assistants for the constituency of Weyburn-Big Muddy: Marcie Swedburg and Marilyn Charlton, if they'll give a wave. They're in your gallery. They work very diligently every day on behalf of the constituents of Weyburn-Big Muddy and certainly go above and beyond the call of duty to assist myself. And I'd like to welcome them here today, and I'd like all members to help me welcome them.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Members, it's my pleasure today to welcome a return of a special guest to the Saskatchewan legislature, and that is Ilene Grossman who is seated in the Speaker's gallery. She is the assistant director for planning and development for the CSG [Council of State Governments] Midwestern office. She staffs the Midwest-Canada relations committee for the MLC [Midwestern Legislative Conference].

Ilene is responsible for the MLC legislators' exchange and escorts a delegation from the American Midwest to Saskatchewan every year so that the Midwest legislators will get a first-hand look at our system of government and have a chance to discuss issues with our MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly].

In addition she manages the 13-state Midwestern Governors Association which includes all 11 Midwest states from the MLC plus Missouri and Kentucky. Welcome back to the Saskatchewan legislature, Ilene.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Rendez-vous Canada 2005

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, May 7 to 11 is Rendez-vous Week in Saskatoon. Over the course of the week, more than 1,400 travel writers and travel buyers from Europe, the United

States, Asia, and the rest of Canada will be in town to take part in Rendez-vous Canada or RVC, Canada's premier international tourism industry marketplace.

Mr. Speaker, every spring RVC brings together international buyers with Canadian sellers of tourism products. This is the 27th year of Rendez-vous Canada, and typically it is hosted by Toronto, Montreal, or Vancouver. Saskatoon is the smallest centre to ever host the event.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is rarely thought of as an international tourist destination. However, Mr. Speaker, many in the industry believe it is simply undiscovered. Saskatchewan is rich in possibilities, whether we are speaking recreationally, culturally or in terms of natural heritage. And, Mr. Speaker, we have a strong tourism foundation on which to build.

Tourism Saskatchewan tells us that in my Saskatoon Fairview constituency alone, tourists spend over \$7 million annually and help to employ over 1,100 people. Mr. Speaker, organizers are expecting that RVC 2005 will generate around \$300 million in business over the week and that the event will generate over \$4.5 million in direct economic spinoffs in the Saskatoon area.

I would thank the organizers of Rendez-vous Canada 2005, in particular the people at Tourism Saskatoon and Tourism Saskatchewan, for doing a great job of showcasing Saskatchewan and putting together this world-class event.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

National Nursing Week

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, May 9 to 15 is National Nursing Week. The theme of this National Nursing Week, the theme is: Patients First. Safety Always.

If I can use a health care analogy, nurses are the heart of our health care system. From holding a patient's hand and comforting them to assisting in emergency surgery, nurses are an integral component of the health care system. They help educate patients and contribute to the overall well-being of Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, one concern to the nursing profession right now is a safe patient-to-nurse ratio. It is important to provide proper care and help with nursing burnout, Mr. Speaker. And we know that with the nurses in negotiations right now, that is a major issue that is at the bargaining table. Healthy workplaces will help us all maintain and recruit nurses within this province.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members as well as the general public to recognize and thank the nursing profession for the great work and dedication they provide our health care system throughout the whole year. I know I will be thanking them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[13:45]

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

Prince Albert Raiders Have Great Season

Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I would like to say a few words about this year's Prince Albert Raiders hockey team. Over the course of the last number of weeks this group of young men have given a real demonstration of perseverance and of character.

Mr. Speaker, the Raiders had a pretty good regular season. They had quite a few injuries and some of their top players were out all year, but they battled through and they managed to secure a very respectable third in their division and a playoff spot as well, sir.

In the first round they went up against the Saskatoon Blades, led by Raider Ryan Depape who scored the first goal, the winning goal, in the first game as well as scoring the overtime winner in game four. The Raiders swept the Blades four straight.

Mr. Speaker, they then moved on to Alberta. They took on the Medicine Hat Tigers. And after six games, Brent Ottmann got the winner in double overtime.

Mr. Speaker, thanks to players like Kyle Chipchura, who returned to the lineup after suffering a severed Achilles tendon and picking up 11 points in 12 games, and Rejean Beauchemin, who led the WHL [Western Hockey League] playoff goaltenders with a 1.85 goals-against average, the Raiders put together two four-game winning streaks and won 11 straight games on home ice in their playoff run.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry to say that their run came to an end a few days ago. But throughout the playoffs they played with determination and heart, and Prince Albert recognizes them as being their champions.

I want to thank all the Prince Albert players, the coaches, and the fans for a great Raider hockey season.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Holocaust Remembrance

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it was my pleasure this past week, along with the minister of Education and other political and municipal leaders from across Canada, to march with thousands of Jewish men, women, and students as they commemorated the March of the Living in Poland.

Mr. Speaker, the March of the Living was organized to commemorate and remember the tragic deaths of some 6 million Jews during the Nazi reign of terror which took place during the Second World War. Our tour of Poland to commemorate this event took us to Warsaw where we toured the Warsaw ghetto where Jews were confined, to Lublin and the Majdanek concentration camp where many Jews lost their lives.

We then travelled to Krakow and were taken to the Auschwitz concentration camp. On Thursday, May 5, we joined some 12,000-plus marchers marching from the train station in Krakow to the death camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau. Here we joined with the marchers in a ceremony to remember the millions who lost their lives and then celebrate the liberation of the camps.

Mr. Speaker, words cannot express the horror, the terror, and the evil that was perpetrated on so many innocent people — men, women, and children — simply because they were Jews. We can only hope and pray that as we remember and learn from the past that we will strive to live with and respect people regardless of their race, religion, or nationality to ensure that we will never again experience another tragic event of this nature. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Saskatchewan Employment Statistics

Mr. Yates: — Well well well, Mr. Speaker. Here's something you won't hear from the doom and gloomers on the other side of the House. The Saskatchewan job numbers are in for the month of April and, Mr. Speaker, last month more than 476,000 people were employed here in Saskatchewan. That makes April Saskatchewan's 13th straight month of year-over-year job increases, Mr. Speaker. That's impressive. And it gets even more impressive, Mr. Speaker, when we add in that full-time jobs are up, youth employment is up, and we have one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country.

Mr. Speaker, the province is on a roll. We just got another credit rating upgrade. Capital investment is projected to increase by twelve and a half per cent, the highest projected growth rate in the country. And Export Development Canada is predicting that our growth will be double the national average.

Newspaper editorials are talking about it, Mr. Speaker. Here's a quote from a paper in, I think, the member for Cannington's constituency. First it talks about all the positive economic stories in the province and then says, "Government leadership cannot be overlooked in all this good news."

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, government leadership cannot be overlooked. Well, Mr. Speaker, it can be if you sit on the doom and gloom side of this Assembly, and, Mr. Speaker, because good news for Saskatchewan is bad news for the party opposite.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Saskatoon Hosts International Travel Trade Event

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join with the member from Saskatoon Fairview in

highlighting the country's largest international travel trade event that's taking place in Saskatoon right now. Over 1,400 delegates arrived Saturday for Rendez-vous Canada. The conference continues through May 11 and is expected to generate unprecedented levels of tourism interest from international markets.

The member from Saskatoon Nutana and I had the opportunity to attend the opening reception yesterday. Rendez-vous Canada is being held at Saskatoon's Prairieland Park and pairs international buyers with Canadian travel suppliers. It provides an efficient opportunity for international buyers to meet suppliers of Canadian tourism products, services, and information in one place annually for four days of programmed business. Many of the delegates will experience Saskatoon and Saskatchewan for the very first time.

Saskatoon is able to showcase some of its many unique events and sights. Travel buyers and writers will tour areas such as the Beaver Creek Conservation Area, the Saskatoon Berry Farm, and the University of Saskatchewan. Attendees will be encouraged to do business with local tourism officers.

This is the first time that Rendez-vous Canada has come to Saskatchewan. Todd Brandt, CEO [chief executive officer] of Tourism Saskatoon, has worked in conjunction with Roy Anderson, the president/CEO of Tourism Saskatchewan, in hosting the conference. The spinoff benefits of exposure for our tourism products around the city and around the province are tremendous. Organizers anticipate 300 million in business during the week.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you and all members to join me in congratulating Todd Brandt, Roy Anderson, Randy Fernets, and all volunteers involved in this important event.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Prince Albert Potters Win International Prize

Mr. Borgerson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a few kilometres northwest of Prince Albert, just off Highway 3, there's a pottery studio owned by Denyse and Rod Simair. The Simairs describe the studio as, quote:

A place where we experience a challenge . . . yet find a refuge . . . a place where . . . our grandiose ideas meet with the reality of humility . . . a place where we can continually learn and expand.

Not surprisingly, Mr. Speaker, the work that comes out of the studio is extraordinary. The Simairs produce stoneware as well as large, wheel-thrown raku vessels. But, Mr. Speaker, the Simairs also practise a largely unknown, extremely difficult, and highly specialized art called crystalline ceramics.

Mr. Speaker, the Simairs spent a year learning the glazing process that's at the heart of crystalline ceramics. The failure rate is high. But as Ms. Simair says, "if you can manage it, you can achieve magic."

Mr. Speaker, Denyse and Rod were among 25 crystallieri from eight different countries recently invited to France to take part in a rare exposition of crystalline glazes. A committee of jurors made up of 125 ceramic art professionals, along with the first 125 visitors at the exhibition, cast their votes to determine the Simairs should be the recipients of the Grand Prix Crystalline 2005 for their piece entitled *Butterfly*.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating Denyse and Rod Simair for their outstanding achievement. The kinds of results they have seen are not possible without great dedication to the craft. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

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

Negotiations with Federal Government Regarding an Energy Accord and Equalization

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Premier. Mr. Speaker, over the weekend the Ontario government signed a new fiscal arrangement with the federal government worth \$5.75 billion. Question to the Premier is, when can Saskatchewan expect both a new equalization deal and an energy accord for our province?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, let me say initially that I welcome the new fiscal arrangement that the province of Ontario and the Government of Canada have made. It is an arrangement in my view that has the national government clearly recognizing that the strength of a provincial or regional economy lends therefore to the strength of the nation. And as I review the Ontario fiscal arrangement, this is an arrangement that will add strength to Ontario and therefore to Canada.

We have, Mr. Speaker, as you well know, been in significant negotiations with the national government over the last period of weeks and days and hours. And I anticipate very shortly we will be able to announce a significant arrangement with the province of Saskatchewan and the Government of Canada.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Also over the weekend in the *Toronto Star*, an official from the Premier's office was quoted as saying that a proposal from Ottawa was going to be coming in days. I assume that's what the Premier is alluding to. I think the people of the province of Saskatchewan, in addition to those who subscribe to the *Toronto Star*, would like to welcome this information if it is indeed true.

So would the Premier highlight for this Assembly whether he's referring now to both a new equalization deal in the long term and also a specific energy accord for our province.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I believe, as the Leader of the Opposition well knows, we have very readily committed this province to engaging in the process that will review equalization with the federal panel that has been established. The Minister of Finance I know is working on that right now.

In terms of seeking an energy accord, an accord, a financial arrangement with the national government that will strengthen Saskatchewan's economy, that will enable this economy to build, particularly around energy, Mr. Speaker, I anticipate announcements in a very few days.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I would assume that all members of this Assembly and indeed most people in the province and other academics like Mr. Courchene, Professor Courchene, have looked at this issue, would agree that the case for a recognition of the unique nature of Saskatchewan's resource revenue is far more compelling in terms of a new equalization deal even than what Ontario was able to present. Ontario did get at least a new fiscal arrangement on the weekend.

And I'd ask the Premier to clearly indicate to members of this Assembly, obviously not the terms of what he is referencing, but whether or not he's specifically talking about an energy accord that would treat our natural resources — specifically oil and gas revenue — differently and more fairly when it comes to equalization for our province.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I believe if the Leader of the Opposition would recognize, we have through the efforts of the people of Saskatchewan, through industry and working people in Saskatchewan, the efforts of this government, have now achieved the status of a have province.

Now Mr. Speaker, what that means of course is today we are out of equalization. And it is the intention of this government — and I'm sure of this province — to keep Saskatchewan out of equalization, to keep the economy strong enough to keep out of equalization. We are seeking, Mr. Speaker, an arrangement with the national government that will strengthen our economic capacity to ensure that this province never again becomes a recipient of equalization in Canada.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Food Allowance

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Community Resources. Would this government with the most money it's ever had, being a have province . . . But in its latest budget, this government ended 20 years of

inaction by increasing the basic food allowance for people on social assistance by a whole \$10 a month. That means a single person now gets \$120 a month. Mr. Speaker, this increase is barely a start, and it's not good enough. Mr. Speaker, when will this government consider indexing the basic allowance to match the rate of inflation?

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

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Every year we undertake measures to improve the status of low-income persons, and certainly the feature that the member opposite is talking about is one thing that we do. But we provide supports in a whole range of other areas with housing costs, child care costs. Supports to the actual shelter allowance was changed this year to more reflect the real rates in communities, and as well the quality shelter supplement. So people have an ability to have a significant additional amount of resources this year.

But, Mr. Speaker, I would have to say that this is an issue we all have to work on in our communities because we have too many people who do not enjoy the advantages that most of us do. And certainly I'll look forward to that member supporting increases to the minimum wage as well.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:00]

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

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well as the minister didn't answer the first question we'll try again. This government is ignoring calls from food banks. It's ignoring recommendations from anti-poverty groups and organizations across this province. I read over the weekend how there's 6,512 people in Regina alone and 10,000 in Saskatoon on social assistance. That's 16,500 families going to the grocery stores with \$100 a month. These families get hit hard and there's very little change in their expenses. This government has made a start with an increase to the basic allowance. It's time to get to the next step.

Mr. Speaker, when will this government consider indexing the basic allowance to match the rate of inflation?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Again, Mr. Speaker, those kinds of initiatives are considered at budget time, and they're put on the table with all the other requests. And certainly within our area we have many new budget requests every year because we deal with individuals with disabilities, we deal with child protection — we deal with a range of issues.

But I want to say, Mr. Speaker, for example in Regina under our Building Independence program the number of people who

depend on assistance for their income has gone from 9,000 cases to 6,000. For a single parent, which was one of our target groups, if you move under the Building Independence program your income goes from 17,000 a year to 26,000 a year. So we have made substantial improvements in adequacy for people with children.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We'll try and get there one more time with the answer. The number of people using food bank has jumped by 40 per cent between 2003 and 2004. Children using food banks are up 25 per cent. Ten new food banks in Saskatchewan alone last year. Ten dollars a month more for the basic allowance is only a start; I'm not going to make much . . . it's not going to make much of a dent in child poverty with 44,000 children reported living below the poverty line in this province.

Mr. Speaker, the former premier, Roy Romanow, made a commitment almost 10 years ago to eliminate the need for food banks. Indexing the basic allowance is one more step down that road. Mr. Speaker, will the minister answer the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for CRE.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Again, Mr. Speaker, when the leader of the party opposite was asked how much it should be increased by, he didn't have an answer to that. Apparently today we have a new policy that's popped up on the floor of the legislature, which is indexing.

We did put . . . Sorry, Mr. Speaker, but I have to say the born-again progressives on the other side have not yet convinced me of their sincerity. But what I will say, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order please. Order please. Order please, order please. Order please. Order. Order please. I would like to bring to the member of Rosetown's attention that question period is for dealing with issues rather than personalities. And I would like her to withdraw that personal remark addressed to the opposition.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I presume you mean me, Mr. Speaker. I'll withdraw the comments and proceed with my answer.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of CRE.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two concerns in allocating the resources this year. One was not only to put more resources for food into people's pockets but to make sure it got to the kids. And that was one of the reasons why in this budget there was additional resources in the amount of \$500,000 put directly into the programs and the schools so that children were getting food directly through the school food programs and supporting their educational efforts.

But, Mr. Speaker, we've had a hugely targeted initiative for people with children and people with disabilities that have significantly improved their independence and their quality of life.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Legislation for Treatment of Drug-Addicted Youth

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, last Friday I gave second reading of the private member's Bill, An Act providing for the Protection and Assessment of Children who are Abusing Drugs. I would like to make it perfectly clear that this Act is designed to give parents the tools to help their children with addictions. The private member's Bill will enable parents to apply to the court for apprehension and confinement.

I understand that the minister is looking at changing section 18 of The Child and Family Services Act. Can the minister explain to the Assembly what kind of tools such a change will provide to parents? How is this going to empower Saskatchewan parents?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for CRE.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Again, Mr. Speaker, the child protection branch of our department responds to issues that are raised by members of the community, whether they be parents, teachers, police, whoever they may be. This has been the process. And then at that point, they're visited by a worker who then does some investigation of the situation and makes the decision as to whether it should be referred to a court process.

Regardless of the process that we use, someone is going to have to make an assessment in order that it goes before a judge with evidence to place before the judge. I'm expecting a report later today that will give me more information on what is in fact possible. And I suspect we can continue moving forward as we have been, in a collaborative manner, with the member putting forward ideas and myself checking into what's possible under our current legislation.

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

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, section 18 of The Child and Family Services Act requires a police officer to go to a representative appointed by the minister or the minister herself if they believe a child has to be apprehended. This does not give parents any more power than they already have. There are only two ways that parents can get their children into drug treatment. First one is to have them arrested, or secondly is to go directly to the Minister of DCRE [Department of Community Resources and Employment]. There is really no middle ground.

Can the minister explain why is she reluctant to let parents be parents and give them the tools they've been asking for to get help for their children.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for CRE.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't quite understand what the member is getting at because when a person brings forward a concern, what we have done that is different than what we did before is we didn't apprehend people over the age of, well of the age of 16 and 17 before; only 15 and under. So this ability to apprehend is a power that we had but had not used.

We've now used it because we were approached by concerned people and will consider, on a case-by-case basis until we have a final resolution to this, other situations where people feel that a child in that age group requires to be apprehended and held in custody even though they've committed no crime.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I guess what the minister doesn't understand is we don't believe that people should have to go to the minister of Social Services to get help for their children. We believe parents should be able to go directly to the courts and have their child helped.

On Friday, the minister said making parents go to the courts to get their children treatment may be too much. Doesn't she think having to come to the legislature and beg for help is too much? Or how about parents having to go to the police and have their child arrested, isn't that too much? Parents want legal tools. They want the right to be parents.

Mr. Speaker, in committee the other day, the minister admitted that there were 6,000 child apprehensions last year; 6,000 times the state intervened on behalf of children. Why doesn't this minister believe that parents could apprehend on behalf of their children? Aren't parents as well equipped to deal with their children as the courts?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for CRE.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Mr. Speaker, right now the parents do have the ability to go to the court with the person from the department. And in fact that person provides a support role in ensuring that the information is there that's needed, that the assessment is there that's needed. I don't think it would be necessarily helpful for a person to go directly to court without any of that preparatory work having been done.

That being said, as I say I've said to the member before — and I totally believe this — that parents do want more tools. I believe that a lot of young people are very concerned when they see friends get into things that they can't handle. And certainly I have every intention of improving the ability to intervene in these matters but I also want to do it with some consideration to the resources, the people, and the processes involved.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, less than a year ago this government mocked the Sask Party when we expressed our concerns about the drug crystal meth. Now the Premier not only acknowledges the problem but is willing to head a Premiers' Conference on the issue.

The Speaker: — Order please. Order. The member for Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, now the Premier is . . . not only acknowledges there was a problem but is willing to head a Premiers' Conference on this issue and we thank him.

Mr. Speaker, again the Sask Party is listening to the parents of children with addictions that are asking them to allow them to have the right to involuntarily admit their child into treatment. Will this government listen to the Sask Party now and do what we know parents want them to do? Will they allow parents to have the right to be parents in this province?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the minister for CRE.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say this very carefully, but not all the young people that we deal with have a relationship with their family. So I have to think of this from the point of view of those children as well as these children and what is going to work for the children of the province.

I did indicate I wanted to speak to some of the Aboriginal representatives that we've been in discussion with on these kind of matters before. I do want to talk to the Children's Advocate. All of that is in process. And in fact no matter what we do we will be doing it sooner than they're doing it in virtually any other place. And that's my commitment, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Funding for Centennial Projects

Mr. Weekes: — Mr. Speaker, several weeks ago the opposition asked for a list of centennial projects that have been rejected. Officials in the department tell us that the list has been prepared and is on the minister's desk. The minister told the media Friday the full list is available, but she will not release it now. Mr. Speaker, why is the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation refusing to immediately release the list of rejected centennial projects?

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

Hon. Ms. Beatty: — Mr. Speaker, thank you for that question. I've said this before in the House that we have a process in place. There's a board of trustees that approve or not approve these projects that have been submitted, and there is no question that there is some great project ideas out there.

And one of the final processes that's going to be taking place is

at the end of this month like, you know, the member opposite mentioned. And at that time, you know, some of the final decisions will be made as to whether appeals have been approved or not approved. And at some point, the list of projects that have been approved and not approved will be made available.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well we know that the list is available, it's just that the minister won't release it today. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation says the whole thrust of the centennial celebration is that it is community driven. Mr. Speaker, 167 of 351 applications received from communities for community projects have been rejected. Mr. Speaker, why is it that close to half the applications for this portion of the centennial money have been rejected.

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

Hon. Ms. Beatty: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say again that I am so proud of the work that the board of trustees do for this province. And there is all kinds of great projects that have been approved, and the fact is there's only a certain amount available, you know, to work with. And it's not an easy decision for these folks to work on. But at the end of the day, there is a process in place. It's arm's length, and that's the way it should be.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Weekes: — Mr. Speaker, the minister has over \$800,000 for fireworks for some communities but nothing for the Saskatoon Optimist Club. The minister has \$600,000 for Tommy Douglas' movie, movie that clearly doesn't meet any of the normal criteria for centennial investment. It's a capital project. It's an investment that is in no way cultural. It is a movie that whenever there's a public event, a cabinet minister has to be invited.

Mr. Speaker, it sounds like politics more than a celebration. It seems like any ideas the government have get money, and anything that comes from the community is rejected. Mr. Speaker, given these facts, how can this minister say our centennial celebration is community driven?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:15]

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

Hon. Ms. Beatty: — Mr. Speaker, the fact is there's hundreds of community projects that are happening over there, all over the province, and there's all kinds of celebrations happening. There is no question as far as that goes.

And getting back to the issue of project approvals and not approvals, the list is not final yet, Mr. Speaker. And like I said before, the decision is not up to me. It's an arm's-length board of trustees that makes these decisions. And it's the right way to handle these project requests, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Immigrant Nominee Program

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is lagging far behind when it comes to the immigrant nominee program. This program brings skilled workers and professionals to our provinces from around the world and we become richer for it.

In the fiscal year 2004-2005, Saskatchewan brought 242 people to the province under this program. By comparison, in the year 2004 over 4,000 nominees were accepted in Manitoba. Mr. Speaker, why the big difference in the success of the program in these two provinces?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the members will know, we have a new nominee program arrangement with the federal government. We are entitled this year to nominate up to 400 individual nominees along with their families. At present we have over 800 people that are in the process of moving to Saskatchewan. We have an arrangement with the federal government where we've been able to expand our skilled categories from 11 . . . or about 2 per cent of our skilled workforce to about 45 per cent of our workforce.

The federal government does in fact run the immigration process in this country. And we've been very successful in getting the federal government to be more flexible in order that we can recruit and attract new immigrants to the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, very successful. You can't argue with the numbers — 4,000 in Manitoba versus 242 in Saskatchewan. You have to ask yourself why there's such a big difference.

Well, Mr. Speaker, one reason may be the well-developed community support program that they have in Manitoba. In Saskatchewan most of the work is being done by volunteers who are doing their best but have little support from this government. Mr. Speaker, why is the community support program for new immigrants so far behind in Saskatchewan compared to other jurisdictions and what is this government

doing to remedy the situation?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, we have entered into a new arrangement with the federal government where international students that come to our province can stay for two years after they graduate from their program. And they will be eligible to be nominated under the immigrant nominee program.

I would remind the member opposite that immigration is a federal responsibility. I think we have done a tremendous job in terms of getting the federal government to agree to double the numbers of immigrants that can be nominated under our program. They've agreed . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order please. Minister for Immigration.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The federal government has agreed to double our immigrant nominee program in the last year. We now can nominate 400 individuals along with their families. We expect to recruit over 1,000 people to the province of Saskatchewan. We have a very successful partnership with the trucking industry where 240 immigrants will be nominated under that program. As well, Mr. Speaker, we are in the process of allowing international students to work off-campus, and this will be most helpful in helping us recruit new immigrants to the province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, for 2005-2006 Saskatchewan has set its goal under the immigrant nominee program. That goal is 400, 10 per cent of Manitoba. The bar is set too low, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, young people are leaving Saskatchewan, baby boomers will soon retire. It's a frightening combination. Mr. Speaker, why are we setting our target so low under the immigrant nominee program?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, Manitoba has had an arrangement with the federal . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order please. Order. Minister of Immigration.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know the eloquence and etiquette hasn't changed much over there. I am trying to answer the question.

Manitoba has had an experience with the immigrant nominee program since 1988. They in fact nominate . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. I would request all members to provide the proper opportunity for the minister to respond completely. Minister. Order. Order please. Order. Order. Minister of Immigration.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The facts are that Manitoba does not have an immigrant nominee program of 4,000. Their program is 1,500. When you include their families, yes, they have 4,000 people that are coming to the province. We have a program this year that we've been able to negotiate with the federal government for 400. We anticipate that we will have over 1,000 people come to the province. And in fact we have 800 people that are in the process of moving to the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we are working very carefully and incrementally with the federal government and we anticipate that we will be able to expand our immigrant nominee program immensely, Mr. Speaker. And in fact we'll have more to say about this in terms of an expansion this fall.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Regina Walsh Acres. Why is the member on her feet?

Ms. Morin: — To introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The member for Regina Walsh Acres has requested leave for introductions. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly some guests in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. To the very left — and perhaps they can wave as I announce their names — to the very left we have Garnet Dishaw who is with the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour. Beside him we have Chris Banting who is the secretary-treasurer for the Retail, Wholesale Department Store Union. Beside him we have Paul Guillet who is the representative for the Retail, Wholesale Department Store Union, and Don Anderson who is also with the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour.

These are as you can see not spring chickens. These are trade unionists in the province who have dedicated their lives to bettering the working conditions of all workers in the province of Saskatchewan. And I'd like all the members of the Assembly to give them a hearty welcome to the Assembly today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Gantfoer: — Before orders of the day with leave to move a motion substituting names on standing committees.

The Speaker: — The Opposition House Leader has requested leave to move motions with respect to committees. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. The member for Melfort.

MOTIONS

Substitution on Standing Committee on Human Services

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the member from Humboldt:

That the name of Wayne Elhard be substituted for the name of Michael Chisholm on the Standing Committee on Human Services.

The Speaker: — Order please, members. It has been moved . . . Order please. It has been moved by the member for Melfort, seconded by the member for Humboldt:

That the name of Wayne Elhard be substituted for the name of Michael Chisholm on the Standing Committee on Human Services.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Government Whip.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to order written questions 1,094 through 1,216 inclusive.

The Speaker: — Questions 1,094 through to 1,216 have been transferred . . . ordered, ordered to be tabled, have been ordered to be tabled.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 100 — The Police Amendment Act, 2005

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

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Police Amendment Act, 2005.

Mr. Speaker, the final reports of the Commission on First Nations and Métis Peoples and Justice Reform and the

Commission of Inquiry Into Matters Relating to the Death of Neil Stonechild have highlighted the need for changes to the existing police complaint process. While the existing legislation provides for an independent officer, the nature of past offence illustrates the need to ensure that, on an institutional level, a transparent and demonstrably accountable process is established that will gain the confidence of the Métis and First Nations communities.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill provides for fundamental changes to the police complaint and investigation process in the province of Saskatchewan. These changes were recommended by a joint steering committee struck almost two years ago for the very purpose of reviewing the municipal police complaint process.

The committee initially consisted of Saskatchewan Justice, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, the Métis Family and Community Justice Services, the Regina Police Service, the Saskatoon Police Service, and the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police]. And it was subsequently expanded to include the chiefs of police association and the Federation of Saskatchewan Police Officers.

Mr. Speaker, the steering committee has concluded that First Nations people are not using the existing municipal police complaints process as much as they should. And we are advised that they are not using the RCMP complaint process at all. First Nations people have, however, demonstrated through their use of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations Special Investigation Unit, SIU, that they will use a police complaint system that they trust.

Accordingly the new process contained in this Bill is intended to foster that same level of trust by continuing to work with the SIU in identifying and receiving complaints, by including First Nations and Métis individuals as decision makers and investigators in the new process, by making it as easy as possible to make a complaint, and by responding to complaints quickly and in a way that will demonstrate the complaints are being taken seriously and that they will produce results.

Mr. Speaker, the changes including informalizing the input and participation of the Métis and First Nations communities in the public complaint discipline and criminal investigation process by expanding the existing office of the complaints investigator into a more representative police complaints commission appointed following consultations with the FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations] and as well as other policing partners.

A key element of the new complaint process is the requirement for every appointment to the five-person panel to be the product of consultations with the FSIN, the Federation of Saskatchewan Police Officers, the chiefs of police association, and municipal police boards.

Another key element is that every complaint regarding a police officer and every investigation with respect to a possible criminal offence with respect to a police officer will be subject to the direction of the Police Complaints Commission. The PCC [Police Complaints Commission] will then determine whether that investigation should occur by the PCC itself through its investigative arm, by the police service against whom the

complaint was made, by the police service with an outside observer, or by a separate police service. However such an investigation is conducted, the report would then be returned to the PCC to be provided to the chief of police for determination of action. Through this independent process, the investigation into any alleged police misconduct, whether by way of complaint or by way of investigation into a possible offence, would be subject to the governance of the PCC.

By making this process responsive, representative of the community it serves and fully integrated on both the complaints and offence investigation sides is the goal of the joint steering committee that the Aboriginal community as well as the community at large can place greater confidence in these matters.

In addition to these fundamental changes regarding the public complaint investigation process, this Bill also makes a series of other amendments. The first is the implementation of rules respecting cross-border policing to provide clear appointing and governance authority in cases where an out-of-province police officer needs to continue an investigation in Saskatchewan or when a Saskatchewan police officer must leave the province for similar reasons.

These changes implement the uniform cross-border policing Act that was adopted by the Uniform Law Conference of Canada at its 2003 meeting. Given the increasing complexity of police investigations and the need for undercover officers to travel across jurisdictional lines in their investigations, we feel this is of critical importance to co-operative policing in Canada.

[14:30]

Mr. Speaker, a further amendment to this Bill authorized the Lieutenant Governor in Council to annually issue commissions under the Great Seal of Saskatchewan to those police officers who have received appointments to any of the ranks of inspector, superintendent, deputy chief, or chief. This commission, modelled on a similar process undertaken by the RCMP, will recognize the sacrifices and commitments of our Saskatchewan police officers in providing professional municipal policing services.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill also introduces an important requirement to address the public concern that police investigations into incidents in which they are directly involved need greater transparency.

This Bill provides that where serious injury or death has occurred while a person was in police custody or as a result of police action, the municipal police service or the RCMP detachment concerned will be required to immediately consult the deputy minister of Justice. This will allow the deputy minister of Justice to determine whether an investigation observer should be appointed from another police service or RCMP detachment in order to monitor an investigation and provide a confidential report back on that investigation to the deputy minister. Through this mechanism, an outside observer will be able to confirm for the deputy minister of Justice that in these delicate matters all appropriate steps are being taken to ensure a full and frank investigation.

Mr. Speaker, this provision, which includes for the first time the RCMP, is intended to operate in addition to the significant changes previously outlined with respect to the public complaint process.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation represents a fundamental change in the manner in which municipal police services are governed in Saskatchewan. I thank the members of the joint steering committee for their hard work over a period of almost two years to produce these innovative and progressive changes. The Federation of Saskatchewan Police Officers, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, the chiefs of police association, as well as the various other committed partners of this process share a common ideal of increasing professionalism in the delivery of policing services. With these changes the accountability, transparency, and I believe the effectiveness of Saskatchewan's police services can be ensured well into the 21st century.

Mr. Speaker, I would invite all members of this Assembly to join me in supporting this Bill. Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act to amend the Police Act, 1990.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 100, The Police Amendment Act, 2005, be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? The Chair recognizes the member for Arm River-Watrous.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to get up and debate this Bill or make some comments on it. And the member talks about Neil Stonechild. I think everybody in Saskatchewan has probably heard that case. And he's right that the people of the province should feel that they should be able to approach a police with any complaint. They should feel that they are safe in doing so and that the matter itself will be looked after professionally. And if this Act helps that along, that's good. And I think that's the intent of this particular Act because he is right when he talks about the Aboriginal, Métis.

And there's also other people that are nervous about laying complaints about police. They feel that they may even be targeted by the police themselves after. And there is an apprehension out there of nervousness that people . . . and they make a complaint, that maybe it won't be followed through. And I'm quite sure that it is. But I think that we have to do all we can as members here to ensure that the public feels comfortable in approaching the police when they have a matter that they would like investigated because, if you can't feel safe with your police, you know, that's a scary thought. And I think we have to work towards ensuring with that at that end and looking at this particular Bill.

It also talks about appointing an Aboriginal to the committee, which is good. That should have been a long time coming for . . . you know, in my mind it should have been there long ago. But I'm glad that he's going along that lines there because every minority needs to be representative or should feel safe that they can approach their particular police with a complaint at that end.

It also talks about cross-border investigations I believe here.

I'm looking through it . . . something that when investigations do across the border and as time goes on as we come as a more global country with everything, it seems like crime too has become very cross-border.

You look at the bike gangs and different gangs that have started in the East. At one time you never heard about gangs out here in the West, and now it seems like they've spread. First I can remember in Winnipeg talking about bike gangs and certain gangs of individuals that we never had out here. It wasn't a problem years and years ago. You always considered it a problem that was down east or maybe in Vancouver, or it was in the United States, but not anymore. It's a problem here in Saskatchewan, in Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw — where gangs are starting to work in it. So anything that you can make towards working with interprovincial forces on any kind of a particular investigation, I can't see anything particular wrong with that.

There is also another thing he had mentioned here on talking about investigations here and also of the joint steering committee have worked on it. And I think they've come up with some good recommendations at that end of it, Mr. Speaker. Looking at this Bill though, I would also would like to send it out to our police critics — our critic and also the police — and to make sure that everybody out there is happy and that most of the recommendations are that was recommended . . . that people are happy with that. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to adjourn debate on this particular Bill.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Arm River-Watrous that debate on second reading of Bill No. 100 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried.

Bill No. 119 — The Election Amendment Act, 2005

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

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Election Amendment Act, 2005. Mr. Speaker, a modern elections Act is one of the cornerstones of a proper, functioning democracy. Under the direction of our independent Chief Electoral Officer, Saskatchewan's candidates and political parties are held to a high level of accountability and transparency in the operations and financing of provincial elections.

That being said, it has become apparent that The Election Act, 1996 requires updating. Mr. Speaker, approximately a year ago a committee was struck comprised of representatives of all three major political parties as well as the Chief Electoral Officer with a mandate to identify issues of the operation of the existing election Act and to recommend amendments. The purpose of this Bill is to now implement the unanimous recommendations of that committee.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill includes proposed amendments that would authorize the development of a permanent electronic

voters list, simplify authorization of advertisements, standardize treatment of surplus funds, provide that election signs be permitted in residential properties, require access for candidates to be permitted to condominiums, provide for facsimile submission of nomination papers in an emergency, treat polling as an election expense, increase the rebate to candidates to match the federal levels, increase the rebate to political parties to match the federal levels, provide that the Chief Electoral Officer will appoint returning officers, provide that a returning officer is not to break a tie vote, simplify absentee voting, and provide for the reservation of a name for a political party.

Mr. Speaker, while a majority of these changes are procedural in nature, changes are also made to accommodate recent electoral-related Supreme Court of Canada decisions regarding prisoner voting rights and reducing the number of candidates required to constitute a fully funded party from 10 candidates to 2 candidates.

Mr. Speaker, the prospect of developing a permanent electronic voters list is one of the most significant recommendations of the committee. Under this Bill, regulations will be provided for that will allow the Chief Electoral Officer to immediately commence the process of ensuring that Saskatchewan has a current and accurate voters list that will facilitate voting and communications in an election in a much more modern and efficient manner.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the membership of the committee and the respective caucuses of the political parties for the co-operation and hard work in identifying these changes through this collaborative process. I would also like to thank our new Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Jean Ouellet, and his staff for their efforts in identifying the number of procedural and practical changes and assisting the committee in understanding the operations of this complicated legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all members of this Assembly join me in supporting these changes to our electoral process. Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act to amend The Election Act, 1996.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill 119, The Election Amendment Act, 2005, be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? The Chair recognizes the member for Arm River-Watrous.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to get up to discuss this Bill. I would like to join the member opposite in congratulating the Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Jean Ouellet, and wish him all the best.

I know the previous one, Jan Baker, did an excellent job. I remember dealing with her since '99. And she was very, very helpful and very, very informative when a person asked a question, and helped me quite a bit in the '99 election when I was basically pretty green and you're not sure what's going on and you want to make sure that you're following all the rules and regulations. And she did an excellent job. And I think Mr. Ouellet will be doing, I trust, will be doing an excellent job too at that end of it.

With this particular Bill, I'm just going through it with some of the recommendations on it which is to authorize development of a permanent electronics voters list — which is good, Mr. Speaker. I can remember attending a conference where — I think that was in Edmonton — where we had talked about some of the provinces that have put that in, and they seem to be very happy with that.

And as we're moving through the technology age, as we go on, electronic is going to be a part of it. And anything that simplifies the voters list, that helps you access it better than going through . . . I can remember getting mailed out our voter list, or going to pick it up, I guess, last time in Nokomis. I mean, it was like lists and lists and boxes and boxes of voters lists. And it would be nice to be able to access maybe that from a computer in your office rather than going through that hand by and which . . . The people that were volunteering in my office at election time did an excellent job of it, but I think they would like to . . . anything, any way that we can simplify it.

Also talks about simplifying advertisements, some of the rules on it, I understand, on that end of it. I'm not sure exactly what that is. I'd like to get some more information on that. But any time we can simplify things in the election process, it should be good.

It also talks about election signs on residential properties, which is good. I mean people all want to support their particular party at election time and want to be able to put lawn signs out on their front lawn and not be encumbered by bylaw or law that maybe says in a certain area that you can't through election. Because people like to let . . . you know, some people like to let know how they vote and support their candidates in that.

Also it looks at providing a fax submission for nomination papers in an emergency, which is good. Because over the past, I can remember at the federal end I think that we've even had a candidate pass on or get very sick sometimes and have to withdraw at that end of it. So being able use the fax is good.

Any time you can simplify the election process . . . Because as all the members know opposite, it gets pretty hectic out there and man you got a lot of things on your mind. And it's very stressful for that month of . . . You've got a million things to do, and you're trying to follow the rules and the regulations that are set out, making sure that you follow the right procedures on it at that end of it.

I know the minister opposite also talks about increasing rebate to candidates to match the federal levels. And also one of the things that I do like about this particular Bill, it provides that the Chief Electoral Officer will appoint the returning officers rather than the governing party at particular time. And I think that's a good thing because any time when it comes to appointing the people, I think it should be on the merits of the person out there that have worked in the previous or whatever. Everybody should be able to feel that they can submit their application to be an electoral officer in their district, rather than just saying, well the NDP's [New Democratic Party] in; I know that they're not going to choose me. They're going to choose a party worker that maybe did some door knocking for him at the far end. So taking that process out of there and trying to make it less political I think is a good thing.

It also provides the returning officer's not to break a tie vote. And I think we had that in the first election I was here in '90 . . . I think it was a by-election where that actually happened. The electoral officer had to cast a deciding vote, if I remember right. And I mean that's got to be pretty stressful on a returning officer to be able to cast it. And knowing that it wasn't you know . . . so the whole district knows exactly how you're voting on that particular time. And that's not right. It should always be nobody should know if you don't want them to know exactly how you voted at that end. So taking that out of there is a good thing.

The prisoner voting rights, I understand, well that comes from an Act from the federal end that was challenged, I guess in the court, coming from the Supreme Court of Canada. But I know the average person out there, if he's said that the prisoners will be voting, probably my . . . I know in my area, won't really like it that much. They will say, you know, that they shouldn't be able to. But unfortunately I guess that's not determined from their stand from here in the province. That's coming from Canada, at that end.

[14:45]

And also another one, to reducing a fully funded political party from ten candidates to two, I don't about that one. I'd like some more information on that. I'm thinking, you know, if you can't run 10 candidates, you know, I don't know if you really constitute as a party itself. If you're only running two, you know, basically that's like two independents, you know. I'm not fully . . . don't know more about that particular thing. I would like some more information on that, Mr. Speaker. So with that I would like to adjourn debate on this particular Bill.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Arm River-Watrous that debate on second reading of Bill No. 119, The Election Amendment Act, 2005, be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

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

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

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Fuel Tax Amendment Act, 2005. I would like to declare that this Act will be treated as a confidence vote as it is an integral part of our 2005-06 budget.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill decreases the tax on aviation fuel from 3.5 cents per litre to 1.5 cents per litre effective March 24, 2005. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, the tax on aviation fuel purchased in Saskatchewan that is used commercially in international flights becomes fully refundable under the regulations made under the fuel tax legislation. The reduction in the aviation fuel tax revenue, Mr. Speaker, will be partially offset by an increase in expected aviation fuel sales. Therefore the net cost of the tax reduction and rebate is expected to amount to about \$800,000 per year.

Mr. Speaker, with these tax changes Saskatchewan joins Alberta in having the lowest aviation fuel tax in Western and Central Canada. As a result, Mr. Speaker, the provincial business climate for Saskatchewan's airlines, aviation fuel dealers, and aviation service organizations is being improved.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of The Fuel Tax Amendment Act, 2005.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 120, The Fuel Tax Amendment Act, 2005, be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? The Chair recognizes the member for Moosomin.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to make a few comments regarding Bill No. 120 I want to first of all begin by complimenting the provincial government in recognizing the need to look at the high cost of fuel in the province of Saskatchewan and the tax level on that fuel and the implications it has to this province and to each and every resident who lives in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation specifically deals with one level of fuel and it's the aviation fuel. And to move from 3.5 to 1.5 cents a litre certainly brings us in line with the provinces around us — in line with Alberta and lower than Manitoba. And as the minister indicated, we trust . . . just the fact that the commercial carriers or any air traffic in this province can now look at, especially when they're flying across to other areas of Canada or the United States, would look at Saskatchewan as a place where they can purchase their fuel because they now have a more competitive nature to deal with.

And, Mr. Speaker, we're all aware of the costs that we as taxpayers are facing or the travelling public are facing because of the ongoing increases in fuel costs. And those costs have to be passed on to the consumer. And as those costs are passed on to the consumer, no doubt airlines face the challenge of trying to get consumers to look at travelling by air. By addressing this issue on fuel gives them at least a little bit more that they can work with as they look at their costs and try and bring their costs in line, or the prices for their travellers in line with what would be more acceptable.

Mr. Speaker, the one thing this piece of legislation doesn't do however is doesn't acknowledge the concern that we have in Saskatchewan especially with the large agricultural base in the province of Saskatchewan. One of the issues that certainly is hitting the floor right now is the fact that farmers across this province are in the process of the spring seeding, the spring planting. And I have on many occasions heard many producers raising concerns about the high cost of fuel, the returns that they're going to get out of the crop that they're planting today.

And, Mr. Speaker, we would have hoped the government would have looked in some respect at the agriculture-related fuels and finding a more equal and level playing field, and follow the guidelines of the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan who have been calling on this government, calling on the federal government to address some of these issues.

And when I speak about agriculture, Mr. Speaker, it's not just

farmers but it's also the trucking industry. And we're aware this week of what has been taking place in the lower mainland in British Columbia as a result of the high fuel costs and what it's driving trucking companies . . . the challenges that they're facing.

So, Mr. Speaker, we compliment the government on noting that there is certainly some issues that needed to be dealt with. We have to find a more level playing field and addressing the aviation fuel issue. However we would like to have seen the government look at the other aspects of fuel, the economy of the province, and how we can drive this province, how we can build this province by enhancing whether it's agriculture producers or the trucking industry or the rail industry in looking at their costs as well and trying to create a more level playing field.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Moosomin that debate on second reading of Bill 120, The Fuel Tax Amendment Act, be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion's carried.

Bill No. 125 — The Corporation Capital Tax Amendment Act, 2005

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

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Corporation Capital Tax Amendment Act, 2005. I would like to declare that this Act will be treated as a confidence vote, as it is an integral part of our 2005-06 budget.

In the 2004-05 budget we announced that we would be reviewing, in consultation with the oil and gas industry, the taxation status of resource trusts that own oil and natural gas producing properties in the province. As a result of this review, Mr. Speaker, the government is introducing amendments to the Saskatchewan corporation capital tax legislation to include resource trusts for the purposes of levying the corporation capital tax surcharge. These changes are effective April 1, 2005.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill has been introduced to specifically address a tax inequity issue between corporations and resource trusts involved in similar business activities and to preserve the province's corporation capital tax base.

Mr. Speaker, the corporation capital tax is an important source of revenue for the province. In this fiscal year it will raise approximately \$373.7 million.

This Bill, Mr. Speaker, is strictly intended to close a tax loophole in order to restore tax equity in the oil and gas industry. It is not a general tax increase and is consistent with the government's overall policy of maintaining and increasing the competitiveness of the Saskatchewan taxation environment for oil and gas industry investment.

Mr. Speaker, as part of this government's commitment to review . . . to a review of business taxation in Saskatchewan, we plan to include the corporation capital tax and the corporation capital tax surcharge in the business tax review. Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of The Corporation Capital Tax Amendment Act, 2005.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 125, The Corporation Capital Tax Amendment Act, 2005 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? The Chair recognizes the member for Moosomin.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's very interesting that the minister would begin by basically telling this Assembly that his government will view this piece of legislation, Bill No. 125, as a confidence vote in this government. And one has to ask, what kind of confidence are they really, really trying to bring to the people of Saskatchewan, to the province of Saskatchewan?

Are they trying to create confidence in the investment community, looking at this province as a place to build and to come to and to invest? Or are they more interested in just continuing to drive out investment and then themselves have to find the money to do projects as a government on their own rather than looking at people in the private sector who would be willing to and will look at this province as a good place to invest?

Mr. Speaker, one can only assume that since this government hasn't been able to keep its promise of 0, 1, and 1, that now they have to look at other alternatives to generate a tax revenue to address the issues of the ongoing contracts that are now being negotiated that have gone beyond the 0, 1, and 1. And we're quite familiar with the most recent contract that's been settled with the teachers of this province.

Mr. Speaker, we do not begrudge teachers being paid appropriately and accordingly and recognizing their skills. However our concern from the day the government talked about 0, 1, and 1 isn't coming from the opposition side of the House — one would say, well that might be interesting — but our concern was that this government promotes itself as being a government that's open to fair and honest negotiation and has settlements in wage agreements.

And yet when you said 0, 1, and 1, you basically ask yourself exactly what opportunity is there for openness in wage agreements and in the debate as groups continue to work to lobby to bring forward the reasons why they feel they need to arrive at certain levels of wage guidelines, whether it's beyond the 0, 1, and 1.

And this piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, is, as I mentioned earlier when you've got the 0, 1 and 1, we all know now that the cost of the teacher's salary has certainly been higher than what the government first recognized. And where do they go? They go to the major industries and corporations in the province of Saskatchewan which I would suggest to you this province is going to need to begin to become much more open to the fact that investment in this province is good investment.

The opportunity of inviting large corporations to come to this province and invest in this province is good for this province. Mr. Speaker, it's good for the taxpayers of this province. It's good for the labourers of this province. It's good for people even within the union industry, Mr. Speaker, because of the fact that we have more investment in the province of Saskatchewan. And in this case we're talking about the oil sector and the energy sector, Mr. Speaker. And you look, Mr. Speaker, you take a look at the companies that have invested or are here right now, although we need to be mindful of the fact we seem to be really lagging behind other provinces when it comes to real investment in the oil and gas industry in the province.

In the area I represent, the Moosomin constituency, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we have many young people who have left this province. And they're following the dollars of drilling and the oil sector. Because of the fact the investment isn't here, they're leaving the province. And those are good paying jobs, Mr. Speaker. They're leaving the province to go after those jobs. Why are we not bringing them into this province? And I would suggest to you that Bill 125 is going to be another inhibitor in keeping out that good, solid investment that really creates real job opportunities for the young people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this government has spoken out of both sides of its mouth. Early in the year they offered royalty holidays for wells using enhanced oil recovery methods, and as I believe is was the Premier used to say, awoke a sleeping giant. Just this past week they are now telling us they've hit — or the Monday after they made that announcement — they hit the oil sector with a lead pipe known as the corporate capital tax. Mr. Speaker, you can't have it both ways. Mr. Speaker, you cannot on one hand say you're inviting people in and then the next moment turn around and basically bat them over the head and say you're still welcome to come into the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, it's important for this government to finally realize that large corporations are not enemies. They're job creators. They bring investment opportunities to the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, you can appreciate the fact that we have some major concerns with this Bill before this House at this time, and therefore at this time I move to adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Moosomin that the debate on second reading of Bill 125 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

[15:00]

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, at the end of my remarks I will move second reading of

amendments to The Farm Financial Stability Act. Mr. Speaker, the livestock loan guarantee program assists Saskatchewan residents in establishing production associations and borrowing funds on the strength of a government guarantee to the lender and the association's assurance fund. These funds are used by the association to purchase feeder cattle or bred cattle on behalf of members.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this Bill is to introduce amendments that increase flexibility and safety to producers who are enrolled in the livestock loan guarantee program.

The amendments are the result of consultations with an 11-member producer advisory committee representing farmers and with a number of financial lenders, including banks and credit unions. The proposed amendments will confirm that the producer agreements under this program are exempt from certain provisions of The Saskatchewan Farm Security Act as has been the practice when producer agreements have been completed between the association and its members.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed amendments will allow feeder and breeder associations to enter an agreement with the minister to proceed with debt collection after a guaranteed payout has been made to the lender, while working in partnership with government in recovery of government's loss.

Under the existing legislation an association loses the right to recover money from a member after a guarantee has been called. As well, the proposed amendments will provide increased safety to member funds. They will ensure that assurance funds held by an association are exempt from seizure by other creditors. They will provide increased flexibility to producers who want to leave their deposits in the fund so that these deposits are there for the next purchase, without these deposits being at risk from other members' defaults.

And lastly, the proposed amendments will provide authority to make regulations related to assurance funds.

Mr. Speaker, the changes to the Act I have described are being made to address livestock producers' need for programs that change to reflect the current financing environment while ensuring risk is manageable. I believe these amendments developed in consultation with stakeholder groups will result in continuation of the livestock loan guarantee program as an important source of financing, thus furthering the growth of the livestock sector.

I would like to express my appreciation for all the input we received from stakeholder groups throughout this process. These stakeholders recognize the importance of the continuing alliance between producers, lenders, and government in supporting the financing needs of the livestock sector.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I move that The Farm Financial Stability Amendment Act be read a second time. Thank you.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Agriculture and Food that Bill 121, The Farm Financial Stability Amendment Act, 2005 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

I recognize the member for Melville-Saltcoats, but I believe that Melville is up for introductions. I'd like to just get somebody else on record first if I could please. Is the Assembly ready for the question? The Chair recognizes the member for Biggar.

Why is the member for Melville-Saltcoats on his feet?

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With leave to introduce guests.

The Speaker: — The member from Melville-Saltcoats has requested leave for introductions. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members today 25 grade 5 and 6 students from Saltcoats; also a couple of their teachers, Johnna McBride and Marlene Blatter, and chaperone Cheryl Morphy.

I might also mention, Mr. Speaker, these students are from my hometown, in fact where I took a lot of my schooling. So I'd like to ask all members to welcome them here today. I'll have a chance in a few minutes to meet with them. And will all members welcome there here today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

SECOND READINGS

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

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to say a few words on Bill 121, the farm financial security Act.

The provincial loan guarantee program has been very important to not only the feeding industry of Saskatchewan but also to the cow-calf producer. And it's fundamental that the government keeps the loan guarantee program intact, improve it, and make improvements as far as security.

And there's a couple of key points that I know because I'm very close to the local Biggar feeder co-op and take loans out personally. But there's many, many producers in Saskatchewan that do use the loan guarantee program. And the relationship between the government and the lender and the producer is important.

And there's a tendency in the past that producers that have a very poor financial situation — very poor financial, well, stability quite frankly — and they go to a bank or credit union. And the tendency is for the bank or credit union to kind of dump these producers off onto the local feeder association. And that's not really fair to do that. It puts added risk to the whole

feeder association, the local feeder association, and the provincial plan if that becomes too prevalent. And that's something the government needs to address, I believe.

Also as we know with the BSE situation the last two years, the producers are under a lot of financial stress and the feeder associations have been key in keeping many producers afloat. And particularly in the feeder part of the plan is that money is lent to producers to buy these feeders. The producer has the obligation to put their own feed and inputs into these cattle. So the animals are actually gaining in equity all the way along, and so it's very safe from the government's point of view and from the stability of the plan and the feeder association.

On the cow-calf side is a little bit more dicey, let's say, because of the last two years and the value of a cull cow and those types of things. Except even though the feeder price and the calf price hasn't been as high as we'd like, it's still the value has generally been there. It's normally when there's been problems with the feeder association and bad loans, it's in the first year or two when there's been very few loans . . . payments been made on the loan and the equity hasn't built up in the breeding stock. And of course the value of the breeding stock may collapse.

So it's important that the government keeps that balance in mind, both to help the producer, but also protect the local feeder association and the program as a whole.

It's interesting to note that the assurance fund will now be exempt from all creditors and that's very, very . . . not all creditors but from the banking and the credit unions I believe is the way the Bill is read.

Now there's a number of housekeeping amendments. I think it's very incumbent on the government not to make any changes that would drop the guarantee to an individual member or the association that needs to use this money.

So, Mr. Speaker, certainly we will talk to the stakeholders about this and just get their feedback about the changes that are being considered. And certainly we will be discussing that issue with them and I'm sure we'll have questions later on. And I know a number of my colleagues would like to continue to speak to this so I'd like move to adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Biggar that debate on second reading of Bill No. 121 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Bill No. 122 — The Miscellaneous Labour Statutes Amendment Act, 2005

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

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Miscellaneous Labour Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 and I will do so at the end of my remarks.

Mr. Speaker, the effect of the Bill before the Assembly today is to make the amendments to a number of pieces of legislation administered by the Department of Labour.

First, Mr. Speaker, the Bill modifies section 18 of The Radiation Health and Safety Act, 1985 which sets up the radiation health and safety committee. The radiation health and safety committee advises the minister with respect to radiation health generally, safety measures, and recommended code of practices.

The committee is to include a diagnostic radiologist, a therapeutic radiologist, a specialist in pathology or internal medicine with extensive knowledge of and training in hematology, a dentist or dental surgeon, a medical radiation technologist, and a physicist experienced in radiation physics. Most of these experts are nominated by their respective professional associations.

Under the current wording of the Act, unless all named representatives are appointed, the committee is not validly constituted. Occasionally, Mr. Speaker, one of the nominating organizations is unable to find a qualified member willing to sit on the committee. The Bill before the legislature clarifies that the radiation health and safety committee can continue its work even if all of the members have not been appointed.

Mr. Speaker, in 2003 a case in the Court of Queen's Bench confirmed that an employee who is terminated with less than one year of employment is still entitled to holiday pay on termination. The Bill before us today clarifies that, under section 35 of The Labour Standards Act, an employer is required to pay a terminated employee his or her holiday pay even if that employee worked for the employer for less a year. This interpretation was always the intention of the legislation and the court confirmed it. This amendment therefore does not change the law, but makes it more apparent.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill also repeals the unproclaimed section of 13.4 of The Labour Standards Act, the so-called additional hours section. The Bill will also repeal the unproclaimed section of 84(1)(e.11) which establishes the authority for the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations for the purpose of section 13.4.

During the first two months of this year, this government undertook a consultation exercise to see whether it would be possible to develop regulations that would make section 13.4 workable today. Ultimately what we heard was that it is not in fact possible to make additional hours under The Labour Standards Act workable.

The issue of providing people with the opportunity to make a decent living from a secure job is a very complex one, and we have come to realize we need a different approach. And that is why we announced that we would be withdrawing the draft regulations and repealing the unproclaimed additional hours section in this session of the legislature. But, Mr. Speaker, this does not mean that we are abandoning the people we have been trying to help. That is why we also made the decision to appoint a commission on improving the work opportunities for Saskatchewan residents.

The commission will make recommendations to improve access by part-time and vulnerable workers to employment income, employment benefits, and work opportunities in Saskatchewan's growing economy. This will include identifying the issues faced by part-time employees and others employed in non-standard working arrangements. The commission will also examine existing government policies and programs that address these issues and assist workers in making a transition out of non-standard or low-wage work. I have asked the commission to present its report and recommendations by December 15 of this year.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, there are several pieces of legislation that contain references to other legislation that has been repealed and replaced with newer Acts. This Bill updates those statutory references.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 122, The Miscellaneous Labour Statutes Amendment Act, 2005.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Labour that Bill 122, The Miscellaneous Labour Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? The Chair recognizes the member for Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to speak to Bill No. 22. As the minister laid out what this Bill is doing, it's interesting that there's a number of other amendments other than repealing section 13.4. And I just want to make the comment that that's where the department and the government should be putting its time to . . . is giving fair and balanced labour laws to Saskatchewan to try to bring in governments . . . jobs and investment into the province.

And then having this 13.4 on the books and then after the 2003 election saying to their friends in the labour movement that basically that this is going to be their payoff for their support in the election and finding out that it was such a hideous section that the outcry from the people of Saskatchewan was so great that they had to back down. And it's unfortunate the government went that way. They seemed to have found themselves that they couldn't help their friends in this way. And one wonders what is coming next as far as a payback to the labour movement, and I suspect Bill 86 and 87 is that payback.

[15:15]

And I would just like to say, what the Department of Labour should be doing is looking after occupational health and safety — the welfare of workers, the safety of the workforce on the job site, Workers' Compensation Board, labour standards — to make sure rulings are fair and balanced for both the employer and the employee. And this type of amendment which they thought they could sneak by is just totally unacceptable.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to allow this to go to Committee of the Whole.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion moved by the Minister of Labour that Bill 122, The Miscellaneous Labour Statutes Amendment Act, 2005 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Fairview.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, amendments to The Trade Union Act are important but as well we have Bills 86 and 87 that are important, and at this time I would move to adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Saskatoon Fairview that debate on second reading of Bill 122 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Bill No. 123 — The Wildlife Habitat Protection Amendment Act, 2005

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

Hon. Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, after my remarks I will be moving second reading of The Wildlife Habitat Protection Amendment Act, 2005.

Mr. Speaker, it's been over a century since the plow met Saskatchewan's prairie. Over the past 150 years, the majority of native prairie in North America has disappeared. In Saskatchewan it's estimated that almost 80 per cent of the prairie has been lost. Mr. Speaker, the changes don't stop with the Prairies. Since European settlement began, 73 per cent of the boreal transition zone in Saskatchewan has been converted to farm land.

At first the transition from prairie to farm land was slow, but after World War II, farmers cultivated more land and grew more crops. Often marginal land was cleared, plowed, and used to grow grains and oilseeds.

Southern Saskatchewan now has one of the most modified landscapes in the world. Over the past century we have seen more than 75 per cent of our natural area in the agricultural region be used for farms and other developments such as roads, towns, and cities. The farm land has given us bountiful crops, and agriculture still is an important part of the provincial economy. The producers who lease land included in The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act have proven to be good stewards and wildlife is benefiting.

As well as being important to agriculture, this land has also been home to wildlife populations, some of which often weren't previously found in this province. Examples include white-tailed deer, raccoons, red fox, and many small birds. The habitat protected by The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act provides food, water, shelter to more than 400 species of wildlife.

Much of the best remaining wildlife habitat in Saskatchewan is on Crown land. These natural areas are very important for maintaining existing wildlife populations. The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act protects 1.4 million hectares of natural upland and natural wetland in the agricultural areas, while continuing

to support some agricultural uses and oil and gas activities.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize that The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act designation has no effect on the lessee's rights to continue leasing the land. The philosophy of The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act is to conserve wildlife habitat while allowing traditional uses. As a matter of fact, much of the land under The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act is leased to cattle producers who use it for grazing and haying. Cattle as grazers play much the same role as bison used to.

Under The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act, oil and gas companies may explore and drill, but they must minimize their impacts on the surface. They are also limited in the number of well pads permitted on these lands.

The amendment to The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act, which we are speaking to today, recommends taking 2,223 hectares out of The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act. The largest area recommended for withdrawal is 2,012 hectares. It relates to a specific land claim settlement by the Mistawasis First Nation. Mistawasis First Nation has met all the conditions related to the sale of these Crown lands. If this amendment is approved, Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food will sell the land to the Mistawasis First Nation at fair market value. The amendment will allow the rest of the designated land — a total of 210 hectares in the Hudson Bay, Shell Lake, and Endeavour areas — to be made available to the current lessees and accommodate an existing commercial lessee's plans for seasonal uses.

The proposed removal of the land included in the amendment is mitigated by actions taken during the past two years which protected approximately 51,800 hectares of ecologically important Crown land. The withdrawals meet the needs of the producers and community interests involved, and the department is committed to placing other lands equal to those withdrawn under the WHPA [The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act] protection. This reflects the no-net-loss policy of the province. Mr. Speaker, this demonstrates that we are continuing to work to conserve habitat for our birds, fish, and animals.

We have also used the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund to protect more than 84,000 hectares of prime wildlife habitat through both purchase and conservation easements.

The representative area network is also an important part of the province's efforts to conserve habitat. Today nearly 6 million hectares of important lands and waters are included in the representative areas network. That is 9 per cent of the province's area as we proceed to 12 per cent, to our 12 per cent goal established under the biodiversity action plan.

RAN [representative area network], the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund and The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act have put Saskatchewan at the forefront of national and international habitat and ecosystem conservation. We are showing that the wise use of public land can curb habitat loss while accommodating the interests of agriculture, wildlife, and the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I now move the second reading of The Wildlife Habitat Protection Amendment Act, 2005.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Environment that Bill 123, The Wildlife Habitat Protection Amendment Act, 2005 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? The Chair recognizes the member for Rosetown-Elrose.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to speak to Bill No. 123, An Act to amend The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act. This is an Act that amends the current Wildlife Habitat Protection Act. And it removes some clauses from the old Act to accommodate land claims by the Mistawasis First Nation which, as members know, is a First Nation located west of Prince Albert.

Now listening to the minister speak, you would have thought that this was an environmentally friendly Bill that was adding lands to the wildlife habitation protection Act, but in fact the opposite is true. It's actually taking land out of The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act. So it was a little odd to hear the minister raving about land being put into the Act when in fact the Bill that he's presenting today does exactly the opposite. And I was quite amused to see the member from Saskatoon Greystone wildly applauding. I thought, why is the member from Greystone — who I thought was an environmentalist — just so wildly applauding his colleague that's taking lands out of The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act? It just seemed rather strange to me.

The government explanatory note says that there will be no . . . there will be future efforts made to add equivalent lands to the WHPA to offset removal, so obviously that's their intention. But we've seen the intention of the NDP many times is only words and not actually action.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of questions that arise from the tabling of this Bill. Is there a process in place to determine how more land will be incorporated under the WHPA at a later date? How are they proposing that this will happen? Or is it just a pipe dream? Is it just a wish on behalf of the NDP government?

Also because of this Bill and the settling of this claim, will there actually be less wildlife to protect? The minister didn't touch on that possibility. And I think that's a question that needs to be asked. And we should be looking into that very matter because if lands are taken out and the new owners of the land have the right to do with as they please, you know, what will be the outcome? You know, we're not anticipating that it would be negative, but nevertheless we have to ask the question.

Obviously for a government that claims to be a green government, this is a really strange piece of legislation that they have brought forward because while it takes land out of protection, it certainly doesn't have the power to put land into protection. Also are the current owners of the land being compensated? We would assume that they are. I didn't hear the minister clarify that, so that's another question that needs to be asked about the piece of legislation. Will the compensation be fair? What process will compensation take? How will it be determined? And finally, as I mentioned, this Bill has the potential to lessen the amount of wildlife protected in the

province.

We know that the treaty land entitlement is a factor in this Bill, and we want to know how the process will unfold. Is it under the usual auspices? And I think I heard the minister say it was. If that is in fact the case, then we are pleased because we believe there needs to be a willing seller, a willing buyer, and that in the case of lease lands that the lessee of lands have first right of refusal. And we would understand that if there are future lands that are brought into the TLE [treaty land entitlement], that they would be under that process.

And therefore, Mr. Speaker, these questions come to us immediately upon reading the Bill for the first time. There may be other questions that need to be answered. We as the official opposition certainly do our due diligence to review NDP legislation very thoroughly because we have found some bad apples in the barrel from time to time. And whether this is a bad apple or a good apple, we will take our time to determine.

We want to consult with some of the stakeholders, make sure that they are aware of what's happening and that they are satisfied that the government has provided them with adequate explanations. And once we ascertain all of that information, then we can decide whether to support this legislation or not. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, at this time I would adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Rosetown-Elrose that debate on second reading of Bill 123 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion's carried.

Bill No. 124 — The Automobile Accident Insurance Amendment Act, 2005

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister Responsible for SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance].

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to move second reading of The Automobile Accident Insurance Amendment Act, 2005.

The Automobile Accident Insurance Act governs the Auto Fund, the universal mandatory automobile insurance program administered of course by SGI. The primary purpose of the Auto Fund is to provide basic auto insurance coverage for Saskatchewan drivers at affordable rates. The proposed amendment to the Act will ensure that coverage is as fair as possible for all Saskatchewan motorists while rates continue to stay affordable.

Mr. Speaker, upon proclamation of this amendment, SGI customers who suffered catastrophic injuries prior to August 2002 will all receive the same income benefit based on the industrial average wage. The increase in income benefits will affect approximately 200 customers injured prior to the introduction of no-fault in 1995 and before improvements were made to benefits in August 2002. In both cases, some customers are currently receiving an income benefit less than the industrial

average wage.

These customers who are permanently and severely injured will receive a minimum . . . at a minimum I should say, an income benefit based on the industrial average wage, which is currently at \$430.56 per week. The benefit will be indexed to the consumer price index, Mr. Speaker. This will mean an increase of as much as \$180 per week for some of the affected customers.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very important benefit enhancement for these particular SGI customers who rely on these injury income benefits to live on. This change in legislation is being made to ensure that all customers who did not have a choice in their insurance coverage prior to 2003 are all receiving the same level of income benefits.

That concludes my outline of the proposed amendment found in The Automobile Accident Insurance Amendment Act, 2004. This amendment works to make our compulsory insurance more fair, more efficient, and more socially responsible. And, Mr. Speaker, this change will ensure fairness for all Saskatchewan motorists while keeping auto rates affordable.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act to amend The Automobile Accident Insurance Act.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[15:30]

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister Responsible for SGI that Bill 124, The Automobile Accident Insurance Amendment Act, 2005, be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? The Chair recognizes the member for Rosetown-Elrose.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, and I'm also pleased to respond to Bill No. 124, the automobile accident insurance Act (no. 2). And, Mr. Speaker, at first glance it looks like some positive things in this legislation. This Act, as I mentioned, amends The Automobile Accident Insurance Act, and this amendment will increase the income indemnity benefit payable to people who were permanently injured prior to January 1, 1995. And, Mr. Speaker, I think Saskatchewan people are known as people with heart and compassion, people who care about other people, and if we can further assist those who have been injured we want to do that.

Mr. Speaker, the amount of the increase will be from the current rate of \$251.45 per week to a new amount of \$430.46 per week. Mr. Speaker, what's encouraging is that these benefits will be indexed — indexed to the consumer price index, I understand, which is different than the current food allowance.

You know on one hand we see an NDP government being very tight-fisted with vulnerable people, not indexing the food allowance, but at least in the case of this particular provision we do see that there is indexing involved. These adjustments will occur annually. And, Mr. Speaker, we speak in favour of that kind of legislation as opposed to the very tight-fisted and unbelievably frugal, almost mean-spirited approach to people on social assistance who aren't receiving adequate increases in

their food allowance.

And, Mr. Speaker, the new provision will increase the income replacement benefit payable to individuals who were catastrophically injured between January 1995 and July 2002. So this Bill is looking back at people who haven't been treated properly between those years and is making adjustment to see that they receive the adequate compensation that they should have. The amount will be the greater of the individual's income replacement benefit or the industrial average wage.

Mr. Speaker, there are also some housekeeping changes in this Bill. And we always take that word housekeeping with a grain of salt. We want to have a little closer look and make sure that they are merely housekeeping and don't have any negative impacts on the people of Saskatchewan.

We will be again consulting with the stakeholders. We will be reflecting on changes to the new traffic safety Act. And once we are assured and feel confident that this is in fact a good piece of legislation — as it appears to be at first blush, Mr. Speaker — we will allow it to move on. But until we can do that, Mr. Speaker, I would adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Rosetown-Elrose that debate on second reading of Bill 124 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Clerk Assistant (Committees): — Committee of Finance.

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

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Health Vote 32

Subvote (HE01)

The Deputy Chair: — The first item of business is estimates for the Department of Health found on page 76 of the Saskatchewan Estimates book. Mr. Minister, could you introduce your officials.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you very much. This afternoon I'm pleased to have with me John Wright, the deputy minister; Duncan Fisher, the assistant deputy minister; Max Hendricks, the executive director of finance and administration branch; and Lawrence Krahn, the assistant deputy minister.

The Deputy Chair: — Vote no. 32, subvote (HE01), central management and services. Is the subvote agreed? I recognize the member from Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister and your officials, I look forward to asking some questions this afternoon

and I'm sure you look forward to answering them as well.

Mr. Minister, I'd like to start with the whole area of addictions. And I know that a few years ago SADAC [Saskatchewan Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission], one of the CBOs [community-based organization] that was working with addictions, was disbanded — I think that could be the word that was used — and everything was put under mental health.

I know that not all the provinces have done that and I imagine there must have been a reason for it, but I'm wondering if your department has actually had some benchmarking at the time, if you've measured the effectiveness of the decision to remove mental health from under the CBO and put it under . . . addictions under mental health and putting it under your department now.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you very much. I think your question revolves around the presence of SADAC, the Saskatchewan Alcohol and Drug and Addictions Commission in Saskatchewan and what the present services are.

Probably about just over 10 years ago, the decision was made to remove that province-wide agency and have the services provided through the regions. And the present system now is the regional health authorities provide both addictions and mental health services. And they still have addictions counsellors; there's people specialize in addictions and specialize in mental health services. But the coordination through one management or administration allows for the response, especially to dual diagnosis and multiple diagnosis issues, in a much more coordinated way.

It also has allowed for services to be provided right across the province and so that the various regions of the province will provide the services as part of the regional health authority. Some areas continue to have more expertise than others, and they become provincial resources. And that reflects the fact that they have a significant number of specialists in that area or that they may have a facility in that area.

But we made that decision consciously as a government and as Saskatchewan Health, and we're continuing to work with that system which provides services across the province.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, I guess my question was determining the effectiveness of what you're doing now by putting addictions under mental health, as opposed to having an organization that was just looking after addictions itself. The important aspect of this is ensuring the people who have addictions, whether they're living in a small area, a rural area in Saskatchewan, or living in downtown Regina, would have the same opportunity to have the counselling and have help for their addictions.

And my question to you is, how can we be sure, or how are you sure that this is working better than the old system?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the question is, are the services provided in a better way now than they were before and what kind of information do you have . . . or do I have here that will support that?

Now practically the kind of information that I do have relates to the total number of people that are served. And the numbers as of, I guess it would be as of last year, the period ended March 31, 2004, was that there were about just over 21,000 admissions. And 10 years earlier that number would have been just over 15,000. So there's a broader service provided and I know we've put more resources in over these years. And so that's one measure.

Also we provide services right across the whole province through the regional health authorities. And the access points are still fairly substantial right across the province. There's not just one access point.

For example for each RHA [regional health authority] there are access points in many communities and then the services are provided in that particular area. But if there isn't a resource that's available in one regional health authority, then they would go to another regional health authority, whether it's Saskatoon or Prairie North or some other area. So the services continue to be provided.

One of the challenges in this whole area — and it's not just a challenge in Saskatchewan; I'd say it's a challenge right across North America — is dealing with the dual and multiple diagnosis where people have mental health issues and addictions issues that are intertwined. And I think the new system that we have has enabled us to be better prepared to deal with that particular problem. But as we know, and that's why one of our members has been reviewing the whole addictions area, is that we have to do some things better and so we're trying to figure out what those things are and where we can put our resources if that's what's required, or how we're organizing things if we need to change that.

[15:45]

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, the number of 21,000, I believe, would be the number of people or cases that have been brought forward that have an addiction. Is that what the numbers represented?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, this is probably a mixture of all addictions that there are from gambling to drug and alcohol concerns. Now that addictions is under mental health, can you give me an idea of what percentage of the mental health budget is dealing with addictions? And I understand that's a complicated question because of the multi-faceted approach of addictions. But I know that there would've been a number that was used when you were talking about it through SADAC, so can you give us an idea of the percentage of that budget?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — In the budget that we are now discussing we've added 1.75 million on top of 23 million, so the total would be \$24.75 million for addictions — that's specifically directed to addictions.

Ms. Draude: — So is it up to the regional health authorities to determine if that extra money is spent on personnel or treatment centres, or how is that determined?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — In the response to your question I think the best way to describe it is that the \$23 million that are there in the existing, ongoing programs are primarily decided by the regional health authorities as they organize their costs. The additional 1.75 million, which is in this budget, will go to meet some of the specific needs and probably in response to the report from the member who is studying this particular issue.

What I would remind the member though is that the biggest costs and almost all the money relates to staffing costs, because often the facilities are located in another health facility. And so, there's not very much money that would be allocated toward buildings and other things like that. It's actually related to the staff that are involved.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. You had indicated earlier that the number of cases of people who have addictions have gone up from 10,000 to 21,000 in the past 10 years. So I imagine that, I would think that that probably means the number of addiction counsellors has increased in the same percentage — I would hope. And also the number of training seats that are available for people working in that area has also increased.

Can you give me an idea of how many addiction counsellors there are in this province?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I'd just like to correct the member's interpretation of my previous information. The move was from 15,000 cases approximately to 21,000 cases — not 10,000.

But the budget over that same time period has gone from 12.9 million in '96-97 to the proposed budget now for '05-06 which would be 24.75. So it's almost doubled even though the number of cases have gone up by 50 per cent.

But practically, across the system, there are probably approximately 250 people who work in addictions throughout the health system.

Ms. Draude: — So, Mr. Minister, has that number doubled? Was it 125 in '95-96?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — That's not information that I have right here but, if you wish, I could get that. I don't think it would double necessarily, in that the costs per worker have gone up. But I think that we have been steadily increasing the supply of people working in the addictions area and we've been responding to the needs and requests as identified by the managers in the regional health authorities.

Ms. Draude: — Has the number of training seats in the province gone up as well?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Whether the number of training seats has increased is not information that we have here. That would relate to the Department of Learning and SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] and some of the . . . of university courses, if they're related. So we don't have that information readily available, but we could obtain that I assume if you wished.

Ms. Draude: — Is the minister aware if there has been a request or an idea that there's a need for more people that are

trained in this area of chemical addictions?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — We continually monitor within the health system what kinds of workers are required, and clearly the issue around nursing numbers and others take the top spot.

But one of the things that we did identify in our Action Plan for Saskatchewan Health Care is having a clear health human resources plan. That plan will be completed by December of this year. It will take into account information right across the whole gamut of the occupations within health care. It will respond to things that have been identified by the member who's looking at addictions issues. It will respond to concerns that are raised by regional health authorities around what some of their needs are.

I think we as far as . . . We have bursary programs that are provided. I don't think there are any bursaries directly related to chemical dependency workers in that particular course, but there are bursaries related to clinical psychologists which often . . . and they're often people who work in this field.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. There's two or three other areas that I want to go through and I know time slips by quickly. So I want to start by asking about the beds for addictions. I know at Larson House we've been told that there's 20 social detox beds and 12 brief detox beds.

Can you give us, give me an explanation of what you mean, the difference between these?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The difference between the brief detox beds and social detox relates to primarily the length of time. Brief detox would be a situation where somebody is brought into a facility for, oh 36, 48 hours, maybe three, four days, just to basically settle a particular episode that may be there. So often they're brought in by social workers or police.

The social detox is a little bit longer and it would depend on the particular situation. But the role of the social detox is to have a person detox so that they can go into a treatment program so that one may be you know weeks or even a month or two in that particular point. But the point is when they go into their treatment program they need to be off of whatever particular chemical dependency they're involved with.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, I have no doubt that you're very concerned about the fact that we don't have youth treatment beds in this province. And I'm aware that you're saying that we shall have. In July I believe there's supposed to be 12 beds available.

I also know that just from the discussion you had a moment ago that there is a knowledge that the length of treatment, depending on the addiction, has to differ. When we are talking about crystal meth, I know that all experts are saying that the amount of time required for treatment has to be far longer than the 28 days that's being used now for most treatment centres. Has there been discussion on the amount of time that these beds will be available per patient when they are dealing with drug addictions, especially drugs like crystal meth?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — At the present time at Calder Centre there

are 12 youth beds, and so there are 12 youth treatment beds at Calder Centre. But what we have identified is that there are some other needs for youth stabilization beds. And so we're looking at that and that's the kind of information once again that the member who's looking at this is going to be presenting in his report.

As far as the length of stay for treatment, basically that's tailored around the needs that are there. And as the member knows, there are different lengths of time depending on what kinds of substances are involved, and it's fairly clear involving crystal meth that we need longer times of period in the initial detox. And as that particular treatment protocols are developed, then they will end up making sure that there's more time if that's what's required.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, the youth program that's in place right now I believe has . . . There are youth beds there. But from my understanding there isn't a different program for youth than there is for the adult people that are in the centre. I'm sure the minister is well aware that a treatment that works for an 18-year-old is not the same type of treatment that's required for somebody who's 38 years old.

And that's one of the real frustrations that the workers find is that they aren't able to provide a program to the young people that are in the centre that will actually meet their needs. And also I'm concerned that the training that'll be required for the personnel that'll be dealing with the youth is being taken right now. If we're going to have some beds open this summer for people that are dealing with an addiction like meth, those people should be trained at this time. Are they being trained? Where are they being trained? How many have you got ready to go, so when we do have the centre open, treatment centre open, we'll have the personnel ready to fully work within the program?

[16:00]

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think what we have to recognize is that we do have many capable people within our overall addiction services who are specialists in youth addictions, and those particular people will be the ones that will be staffing what we do plus new people that may be available.

But clearly the goal is to have people who have knowledge about some of the traditional problems that relate to drug addiction, but then also make sure that they are aware and have the latest information around crystal meth. And this is clearly an expanding field. We know that there isn't even an international protocol yet around youth addiction to crystal meth. There are some very, very good ideas, and we will be making sure that that's all part of what we do here in Saskatchewan.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, I take some heart when you say that it's an expanding field because we're well aware it is, and we also know that it's not going away. We'd like to think that it would be something that would be a flash in the pan like some of the other drugs, like ecstasy a few years ago. But it's not going to be. All the centres in the world that have talked about it know that this drug not only doesn't go away, it increases. So my concern is that we are not just ready for what we have right now but for what is going to happen in the future.

In question period a while ago, Mr. Minister, you'd indicated that there was going to be 12 beds open this summer — I think you said during the summer — the youth beds in Saskatoon. And I'm hoping that these are going to be open regardless of whether the Legislative Secretary to the Premier has filed his report and made his recommendations yet. You'd indicated that they would be. And they are a glimmer of hope for parents who have concerns right now.

So I guess I'll stop and ask you if indeed those beds are going to be open this summer and when this summer?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think my response around what we're going to do is, this year's budget has that money available to build these particular beds, and so that's what we're doing, the planning now. And one of the challenges is, where do we put them? Do we put them with . . . just expand in Calder? Do we end up with some places in other parts of the province which we think is important? And also the whole issue that's been raised around secure care means that we end up asking some of the questions about whether we actually need to build some brand new spaces, in other words in a completely separate kind of a building.

And so all of these things, those we have the budget dollars. We have the people planning and working about what the different options are, and that's what's happening right now.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, I'll do some checking, but I'm confident that you'd indicated that the 12 beds are going to be in the Hantelman centre, I believe, this summer. And that was the information that we are basing our decisions on.

And we also know that as you are well aware, that the treatment is not the regular 28 days. The AARC [Alberta Adolescent Recovery Centre] centre in Calgary is one of the most effective places in Western Canada, and they're saying 90, 180 days, 360 days depending on the patient, on the client.

If the information that you've given us is what is actually going to happen, we're going to have 12 beds that could be tied up at least half a year. So I guess I'm concerned that we're not going to have, even with these 12 beds, the spaces that we're going to need, we need at this moment. I'm wondering if you're . . . what the plans are for the speed at which you're going to be looking at other centres and if you're working with other jurisdictions to ensure that we do have youth facilities for everyone that has an addiction.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the member has identified an important factor which is what we are doing, which is working together with Manitoba, Alberta, British Columbia, and the territories around what everybody is doing in response to this particular issue. And we will be getting more information about that at . . . meeting that we have as well as what we've gathered so far. We know some of the kinds of things that have happened in other provinces.

As it relates to the care and the fact that sometimes they might need a whole year in treatment, one of the other factors that is involved, especially with crystal meth, is that it might take three, four, five, six re-entries back into the system. And so we already anticipate that. And that's why I've said previously it

would be protocols designed around individual patients.

The other factor is that much of this treatment does take place in a community base and that they work together out of an office and remain either in their family home or somewhere else. And so that is often a very normal course of way of dealing with this. And so what we need is all of the different tools that spread the whole gamut. And I very much appreciate the questions that relate to some of that most intensive, longer-term kind of treatment which is what I think the questions have related to.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, the importance of outpatient treatment can't be discounted because for some patients it does work very well. But there are a large number of them — and probably the ones that contact my office and your office — that know that more intensive treatments are going to be needed before they can even start taking outpatient treatment.

Mr. Minister, dealing with the conference that the Premier is going to be holding dealing with meth, I'm hoping that your department has some input on the agenda. And can you give me an idea of what is going to be discussed? And if you're going to in fact have people that are . . . have witnesses come to meet with the Premier so the decisions that are made are based on actual front-line people, not just coming up through the system.

Too often it gets watered down or said in a way that we learn to understand as the jargon that takes place in this building, but it's not necessarily the real life. I think it becomes too watered down unless we're talking to the people who are dealing with addictions on a day-to-day basis, not just the workers in the area but the people who are actually using or the parents that are involved in it. So could you just briefly outline the agenda of this conference for us please?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I don't have the information about the agenda yet other than that officials have been working from the Health department in conjunction with a couple of other departments around what the agenda will be. And I know the goal is to get that information out very clearly.

I understand your point about making sure you have everything from the individual story right through to the big policy issues as part of what's discussed, because one of the challenges is you get so caught up on the policy side that you miss the individual's stories and what their actual needs are. And clearly that's one of the challenges in the legislature always is how to make sure that the right personal story and concern leads to the appropriate policy that will help many, many people. And that's clearly the goal that we have in what's happening here and I know that's what the Premier's concern is as well.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, even at this moment we have to say that it's not even a challenge, it's a problem. It's a great big problem we have and we have to admit it and we have to deal with it. We can't solve a problem until we first admit there is one.

Mr. Minister, I'm wondering . . . The budget indicated that there was going to be considerable money spent on addictions and I believe the budget actually talked about crystal meth. But I'm wondering of the, I think it was about \$3 million that was

going to be spent in the various aspects of treating addictions, if you actually can identify where the money is being spent. It's nice to say that there is a sum of money out there and that the number, the dollars regardless of the exact amount is great, but there is the three areas that have to be, we have to look at. And can you identify where exactly we will be spending the money?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I appreciate that question because the 1.75 that we have available in this budget year is for a part of the year that takes a while to actually get some of the services going. And so in next year's budget the same services will cost \$4.7 million. So on an annualized basis the increases that we're announcing now are \$4.7 million.

Where does it go? Well it goes to additional youth stabilization services to provide that short-term detox place where young people can go and withdraw from alcohol or drugs. And also there's looking at more brief detox centres; that's the one with the short-term response. In the North we need to have services that are available across a number of communities that would be able to travel into some of those communities. Also we're looking at some community outreach centres for street youth and family. And also there's the information media campaign around education.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, I really appreciate all the different aspects that you're looking at, but it still doesn't . . . I don't know if you've actually looked at the actual costs. What's it going to cost for those mobile treatment centres in the North? Do you have a figure on that? Where are they going to be stationed? Where are you going to be getting them from? Who's going to be staffing them? When are they going to be in place?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I guess first off I would encourage the member to vote for the budget because you can't end up finalizing the budget till you actually have it passed. That's one of the challenges. What we are right now working at, how and where this money will be spent. But practically the actual expenditure of that money can't start until we're passed the budget process.

One of the reasons that we have this amount announced as starting sort of in the summer and in the fall is that that then allows us to do that particular planning. So if you have specific concerns from specific communities around different kinds of things, make sure that that can be fed into the whole process as well.

But we are . . . These are our goals and it's based on what we hear from the workers in this system throughout the province.

[16:15]

The Deputy Chair: — I recognize the member from Cypress Hills.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I have a just a few questions I'd like to direct to you and your officials this afternoon.

If you'll recall about a year ago, the number one issue facing the Cypress Regional Health Authority and the constituents of

Cypress Hills was the possible closure — certainly the drastically reduced service potential of health services in the community of Climax. The community hospital there — or health centre, I guess as it's referred to now — serves a very large geographical area but a rather sparsely populated area. And at the time, Mr. Minister, there were a number of people from the communities of Climax, Frontier, even as far east as Val Marie, Bracken, Orkney and also from the communities of Claydon and Divide that came to this legislature and made an impassioned plea for the continuance of service in the facility at Climax.

At that time, Mr. Minister, I think I could characterize it fairly you expressed a concern for the service that was available to the people there. You recognized the unique nature of the location, the geographic limitations that prevent transportation of patients on an emergency basis. And you indicated at that time, Mr. Minister, that because of the uniqueness there, you would like to see a satisfactory resolution to the difficulties that faced that particular community if the hospital was either closed down or service was severely curtailed.

Mr. Minister, would you please give us an update as to the progress that's been made in finding adequate solutions for that facility to date, if any?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you for that question. Last Thursday, the people from Climax, Frontier and all of the committees there south, in the southwest part of the province, came forward and presented their proposal to the Cypress Regional Health Authority board. And my understanding is that it was a very well-thought-out proposal around a whole of number of issues.

My sense is that — from the reports that I've been receiving from that area — is that they have been talking and talking and talking since I was down there last year. And they're not totally in agreement I think on how to sort this out. But I guess the report is that a very reasonable proposal was put forward on Thursday and now the regional health authority officials who were responsible for that are looking to see how it can fit with some of the ways that they say make sense to provide service in that area.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. If I understand it correctly from people in the community, one of the issues that they need addressed in any solution is a certain element of flexibility. You know we ordinarily look at health facilities as the kind of place you can receive certain types of services for so many hours a day. They're sort of fixed. They're kind of rigid, and everybody knows when their shift is and how long the doors are going to be open and so forth. But — and you might correct me if I'm wrong — but I understand that one of the issues that they feel would help address the needs of the community, especially as it relates to emergency service after normal operating hours, is a flexibility that probably isn't common practice in the area of health care delivery.

It's been suggested to me — and I think this probably made up part of the proposal at the Thursday meeting — is that the facility be open from 9 to 5, seven days a week, but that there be a consistent on-call capability available for after-hours emergencies, that limitations that are now imposed because of

maybe union provisions or staffing issues or those types of things only allow for on-call service in the community three maybe four days a week at best.

And what has brought this to the sort of a point of concern is that some of the most difficult tragedies and problems have occurred in the community after the normal operating hours of the hospital. And I guess, without going into all the details of the most recent one, I guess I'd like to know from the minister and his officials whether or not they can envision building the kind of flexibility into that particular facility that would allow them to have an on-call nurse for emergency purposes only after the hour of 5 o'clock, seven days a week.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I thank the member for that question. I think that you've hit the nub of the issue and the discussion, and it's the interplay between the EMS [emergency medical services] service that's there 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, and the role of the local clinic as it relates to then the Shaunavon Hospital which provides a broader base. And I think that's where the fairly reasonable proposal that came forward last week is being reviewed in light of how these things can fit together.

And my sense is that they are looking at, well what kinds of staff do you need, what kinds of staff are available, how could some of these things fit together. And I'm not sure if contract issues are a part of it, but they may be. And that would be needed to look at as well.

But I'm not right in the middle of that particular negotiation. I'm hearing reports that the discussions are continuing in a constructive way, and that the community is hoping to have it resolved shortly.

Mr. Elhard: — I don't want to put words into the mouth of the local people, but it would seem to me that it's not going to take a lot to satisfy them. It will take some creative thinking and some flexibility on, you know, who can work there and who's available and what kind of backup they would be able to provide in terms of emergency services.

You know, there's nothing more tragic than having — well as I alluded to a few moments ago — a 16-month-old child suffer a serious accident, be taken to the Climax facility, and the door's locked. And, you know, it's difficult enough to face that kind of a circumstance, but if the EMS which is based in another community is understaffed or is serving a backup in Shaunavon which is 40 miles away, you know, if those kind of circumstances happen to be in place when the emergency happens in Climax, there's no consolation for the people who are in that situation.

So, Mr. Minister, I guess what we need to ascertain is will your department, your ministry, encourage the Cypress Regional Health Authority to show that kind of flexibility? Will you encourage them to provide the resources necessary to provide a kind of service that can be counted on by the community? It doesn't have to be a doctor on staff 24 hours a day. It doesn't have to be, you know, a nurse on staff and in the facility and the doors unlocked 24 hours a day. It might require a nurse practitioner. It might require just a nurse that can provide service in a palliative care circumstance or situation. But it isn't

going to be something that is going to be necessarily written in stone and hard and fast. It sounds to me like the community is willing to be very reasonable about how they achieve these particular goals for their community.

Having said that, Mr. Minister, I do recall that there was going to be an effort by the department and by the regional health authority to try and recruit a nurse practitioner for that facility. Can you report on the success of that particular search?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The provision of services through the doctor that provides services I think both in Shaunavon and Climax, and the fact that this whole issue hasn't been sorted out has meant that the ability to recruit a nurse practitioner hasn't been successful at this point. But my understanding would be that once they've figured out the configuration and the description of the reasonable solution that's worked there, that will make it much clearer what the nurse practitioner's job will be, working together with the physicians in that area.

And I know that everybody's ready to get to that point where they can have a model that may be similar to what's available in the Kyle, Beechy area. And I know some of them have been thinking about that because that's where we have a long-standing experience of positive solution to some of the problems that were there. So thank you.

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Minister, I think the, you know, the people of the south line there — the Climax, Frontier, Val Marie, Bracken, Orkney, Claydon communities — would feel a great sense of relief if they could see this effort coming to fruition quickly. The problem for them is they don't see an end in sight. And they've been negotiating with the Cypress Health Region for the best part of the last year.

There's been a little progress made especially as it relates to weekend service. But there hasn't been the substantive solution put in place as it relates to after-hours emergency issues and coverage for those sets of circumstances. And of course, being that we're into spring right now and we have the advantage of summer travelling, you know, some of the difficulties are naturally going to be covered off by the ability to move people quickly and readily to Shaunavon.

But as you are probably well aware, this past winter we had some very difficult circumstances down there. We had . . . You know, the roads, the brand new road through the river valley was shut right down for a couple of days because of bad weather. And if you can't transport people that makes it even more essential that that facility be operational and able to provide services in the community of Climax. So, you know, that's a concern to these people. And so if we could have something in place that would address those concerns sooner than later, I think we would all be considerably relieved by that prospect.

And I know that it doesn't, it doesn't sound like a real problem when you're in urban Saskatchewan and only a few blocks from a hospital. But when the power goes out like it did twice in successive weekends last month in those communities down there — the power was gone for upwards of 48 hours — it's absolutely critical that those people have access to emergency facilities in case of mishap or illness.

Mr. Minister, I will take your responses and with your . . . well not even with your permission — just because you gave the responses, I'm going to make them available to the people of Climax and Frontier. And I think they'll be somewhat encouraged by what you have to say. The proof will be in the realization of these endeavours. Thank you, Mr. Minister.

The Deputy Chair: — I recognize the member from Indian Head-Milestone.

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Chair, I have one question regarding a case file that came into my office just over the last day, I guess 24 hours. I wanted to ask a few questions on it just to make sure that the numbers that I was given are correct.

It's about a . . . Well I'll just read the information that I have. It was a lady that sent us some information on a husband who has been in coronary care at Saskatoon City Hospital for a week. He was experiencing chest pain and is waiting for an angiogram. Although he has not had a heart attack, apparently patients are put into coronary care unit while waiting for an angiogram.

This gentleman was told that there are 400 people ahead of him and only one machine in that hospital to do angiograms. He was also then told that there's 10 to 12 people that go through that machine a day. So when you extrapolate that out he's going to be waiting an awful long time for this angiogram. He hasn't had a heart attack so I don't know if that puts him at the back of the list as opposed to being moved ahead. And he was also told that there is a second machine but it's broke down and they're not going to fix it because it's outdated.

So could I have somebody comment on those numbers? Four hundred people ahead of him waiting for angiogram in Saskatoon. Only 10 to 12 done a day. And so what is this fellow supposed to do?

[16:30]

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I don't have specific information about the particular case and we'll . . . by providing that information here we'll have people look into that particular one. But I do have information about a few things that are happening around the cardiac care in Saskatoon. One of the angiogram units, the one that they use, is no longer functional and they're in the process of buying a new one. We've provided \$1.7 million to the Saskatoon Health Authority to purchase a new one and so they're in the process of doing that.

As it relates to the procedure, people who require angiograms are triaged. They take the people that are the most serious first and people who are in the CCU, the coronary care unit, usually have the first go at getting the machine. There are also some patients who are able to travel to Regina, are coming down to Regina to have that particular assessment done. And that's part of how we're responding to this. But the particular equipment is very expensive and they are buying a new one to replace what's there.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. So there certainly is a large backlog then apparently in Saskatoon because they are only operating with one machine and they're looking at funding for a second machine. Would that be true that there would be

400 people waiting in the Saskatoon Health Region to receive an angiogram and is there only 10 done per day in that one particular hospital? Because if that's the case, number 399 has got an awful long wait.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — This issue around the coronary care in Saskatoon and the fact that one of the machines is no longer operable is something that's been identified. And we've asked for a plan already around how they're going to manage to take care of those people in Saskatoon, working together with Regina. There's virtually no wait lists in Regina.

And so practically what happens is that if they can work together, they can provide that coverage on three machines while we're getting the fourth one up and ready in Saskatoon. Clearly the goal is to make sure that people get the service as quickly as possible.

Mr. McMorris: — One last question regarding the angiograms. Then would the second option . . . I see that . . . I guess maybe the third option . . . The second option would be coming down to Regina. Is the third option covering out-of-province for a person that has been waiting? And this particular person is a . . . I mean, his work season is through the summer and he's waiting for a couple of weeks already. And he's afraid that he's going to lose most of his work season waiting for an angiogram so that he can move on to the next step. So in that case would out-of-province be covered?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — As indicated earlier, the specific case that you raised, we'll be following up with that one. But as I pointed out before, if he's actually in the CCU, in the coronary care unit now, he would not be part of that larger number of patients that are waiting. He'd be in the top category. And so we'd anticipate that it would be handled fairly quickly.

The Deputy Chair: — I recognize the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, welcome to your officials today. Mr. Minister, I was just home on the weekend and I had a scenario brought to my attention and that's in regards to the Spiritwood hospital or health care unit. As you know, we lost two of our three doctors in February — I believe it was actually January — and right now we're trying to find doctors.

There was a meeting held last week and the CEO of the Prince Albert Parkland Health District came out to that meeting and — Mr. Gren Smith-Windsor — and advised the group of people there that May 21 will be the deadline for acute care in the Spiritwood hospital. Now of course as you know and as many people know in Saskatchewan, doctors are hard to find and hard to come by. Interim doctors or locums are also getting harder and harder to find to keep hospitals open.

The community and the doctor in Spiritwood are working very, very hard to try and find locums and doctors to facilitate the region around Spiritwood. What role can the minister play in regards to this situation?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you very much for the questions around this. This is a particular concern that I've been aware of,

and I know that Prince Albert Parkland Health Region has been recruiting doctors. And one of the challenges is that some of the doctors that they've got that are willing to come won't be available until the end of June or early July. And so we have a period of time between now and the end of June where there may not be as robust a coverage for the hospital and the emergency room. And I think one of the concerns was that if in fact they're not able to get somebody, they're going to make sure that the community knows that for certain numbers of hours there aren't people available.

And I'm not totally aware of the meeting that you refer to, but I am aware that this is a concern that they've got, and they're trying to manage it in the most appropriate way possible.

One of the goals obviously is to see if they can get some locums in, some people who would come in on a temporary basis to make sure this doesn't happen. But at this stage I don't think they have a complete solution to the problem which is then they want to make sure that the public knows what services are available when. And as you've indicated, it appears the problem comes to a head for at least a few days around May 21.

Mr. Allchurch: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. I wasn't at the meeting either because I was down here, but I was told on the weekend this meeting took place and the CEO of the Prince Albert Health District, Mr. Gren Smith-Windsor, was quite adamant in saying that May 21 the acute care will close down. And I think reasoning for that is because the locum that's in there right now is leaving on the 21st which only leaves one doctor in Spiritwood at the time. And it's actually a three-doctor facility. So if you're trying to run the operation with one doctor, there is some problems.

The doctor and the community are trying to work, as I said, looking for doctors or locums to fill in. That is a great difficulty also because it's summertime. But what the community of Spiritwood and the doctor is hoping is that the minister can give some assurance that this will not close down their acute care system. If it closes down for maybe some hours during the daytime okay, but to close down acute care system means the viability of the hospital is gone. And the citizens of Spiritwood and community are quite anxious to hear from the minister in this regards to give some assurance that it will not close down.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The services provided in that area are very important, and this challenge around providing some emergency room coverage in the facility is that . . . a particular problem that we're going to deal with. But as far as the long-term acute care services in that community, that's not an issue. The goal is to get a full complement of physicians — and as we move forward with the primary care operations, nurse practitioners and others — so that we won't have these gaps in service around emergency coverage.

But I don't think there should be any concern around the long-term acute care coverage at that particular facility.

Mr. Allchurch: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. Those words are reassuring I'm sure to all the people in the community of Spiritwood. They worked hard to raise money to facilitate this facility. I know, Mr. Minister, you were out there at the grand opening and in fact you have some ties to that community.

So that community, being that it's well over an hour from Prince Albert or North Battleford or Meadow Lake, is an area where we need health services and Spiritwood provides that. The unfortunate thing right now is both doctors left at an inopportune time which puts a heavy load on the doctor at present. So those comments are reassuring that the acute care will not close down.

Another aspect of this — there are many doctors from South Africa that would like to come here to doctor. I know the doctor present at Spiritwood now recruits probably 90 per cent of his doctors from South Africa. The problem that lies with that is the fact that immigration stands in the way of getting these doctors here.

Is there any way that you can help with the doctor and the community of Spiritwood to speed up the process of immigration to bring some of the local doctors into facilities in rural Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Our policy as it relates to these immigration matters is to respond to what kinds of requests for information or support or others from the Department of Health as soon as possible because immigration is a federal responsibility.

But I know over the years that I've been the Health minister, when a particular issue comes up, for example around a family member who maybe requires medical care once they come to Saskatchewan from South Africa, we've been able to provide the appropriate documents that will allow for the immigration process to go ahead very quickly. If there are other kinds of issues around how they would fit into the Saskatchewan system, I know that the College of Physicians and Surgeons and Saskatchewan Health work very carefully.

[16:45]

There's a real advantage in having our present Minister of Immigration being a former Health minister so she's very attuned to these issues. And I know that she, when anything comes up that she hears about it in her role as Minister of Immigration, it moves right to the top of the list. So if there are any issues that arise in the local community where Saskatchewan Health or for that matter the Government of Saskatchewan can help, we will be there with the community.

Mr. Allchurch: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. I know I've taken opportunity to write letters on behalf of the doctors before with regards to immigration to help speed up the process, and I know that the minister has also been in the Health portfolio so she understands this. With that, Mr. Minister, thank you. I want to take the comment you have made back to the citizens of Spiritwood and area. I know they'll be glad to hear your comments, so thank you.

The Deputy Chair: — I recognize the member for Moosomin.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I just want to follow up a little bit on the doctor recruitment situation. And I follow it up because one of the communities that I'm quite involved in — in fact my home community of Kipling — has been a community that's had a number of doctors over the

past number of years. In fact as recently as two years ago we had three physicians in the community and they were actively working to recruit a fourth. Unfortunately today we're in the situation where we have one physician and we're covering a fairly large area. I think you're quite well aware of the area.

And I would like to know, Mr. Minister, what the department is actually doing to try and address the concerns that local communities and regional health districts are having in recruiting physicians. And while part of the issue might be immigration, do we have a problem in this province as far as the guidelines that we have and restricting doctors in coming to the province, in filling out the forms that are necessary? And what is your department doing as we look at the broader picture of how we recruit doctors to this province?

And secondly what are the numbers of young people looking at entering the College of Medicine in the province of Saskatchewan as we look into the future of addressing the needs of the ongoing shortages of physicians in the province?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I thank you for that question. And clearly this was identified in our action plan in December 2001 around recruiting. And I guess I'll give a little bit of positive information around some of the things that are actually happening and then provide some further information about what we're actually being able to do.

I think the good news — and this is information that I provided to the Saskatchewan Medical Association meeting in Saskatoon on Friday — is that the numbers of doctors in the province who are practicing, right as of March 2005, is 1,680. And this is up from five years ago where the number was 1,626. So it's not up dramatically, but it is higher.

And as it relates to rural family practitioners, in March 2000 we had 210 rural family practitioners. As of March 2005, the number is 235. So we have more practitioners.

Now as you've identified, it's different communities that end up with the problem at different times, and so it moves around. We are able to do a number of different things around recruitment of rural physicians.

And the numbers of different programs that we have that are operated, together with the Saskatchewan Medical Association, include the rural practice establishment grant. So a certain amount of money . . . if you actually set up your rural practice, regional practice establishment grant that helps there. Rural practice enhancement training if you identify . . . after you're into your rural practice, you need some other skills to complement the other doctors in that area. There's funding to allow them to go back for that kind of training.

We have rural emergency care which is a continuing medical education fund, so it allows for funding to have people go and get that extra education they might need to cover for emergencies. We have a locum service which provides rural relief and weekend relief across the province. We also have rural travel assistance program and rural extended leave program. So these are things that we've worked together with the Saskatchewan Medical Association, and most of them are managed together with them.

Our recruitment and retention funding in this last year's budget was \$11.8 million that goes into these various kinds of things.

So we know that when a particular problem arises in one community like Kipling . . . it becomes a big problem there. But what we do is we bring the provincial resources as well as the local regional health authority resources together and attempt to deal with that.

We also very much appreciate the work that's done by the existing physicians and the local mayors and reeves who often work together around providing assistance in recruiting new people as well.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I guess the frustration that people sense is over the past number of years . . . as I indicated, there seem to be no lack of opportunity. If a physician was leaving the community, they seemed to be able to recruit and have someone by the time they had moved on to a different location. And in most cases, the physicians that have left have moved on as they've advanced in their field of specialty and realizing that they really wouldn't have the opportunity to practise in the smaller location. They'd have to look at a larger location. There didn't seem to be difficulty in recruiting someone to come in and fill the position that they were leaving.

And the numbers you're indicating seem to indicate that we're up a little bit, but I'm not exactly sure why a community like Kipling would be all of a sudden facing going from where we were looking at recruiting a fourth position down to a situation where we're facing, where we basically have one physician as my colleague had just indicated in the community of Spiritwood.

And I would just like to know, Mr. Minister, you've given a number of initiatives that the Department of Health has in place in recruiting physicians into Saskatchewan and into rural areas. I would like to know how aggressively the department moves in attempting to address some of the needs that the specific communities have, or whether or not the department has even contacted . . . do regional health districts or local communities seek assistance from the department when they fail in their own efforts to recruit the . . . need for the physicians and family physicians in those communities?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The answer to the first part of the question is we are made aware of the issues around recruitment in various communities across the province. The department doesn't actively recruit for a specific area. The regional health authority and the local community work together around that, working closely with the Saskatchewan Medical Association. And they provide that kind of work.

The difficulty is, as you've identified, when a change as dramatic as what's happened in Kipling hits and then they feel like they're behind the eight ball trying to get things sorted out. That also is a challenge for all of the different programs that we have.

The other side of that though is we do have good news, like what happened last week or so in Yorkton where they were able to recruit a new general surgeon to come to Yorkton from New

Zealand, and he . . . originally from South Africa to New Zealand. So that's able to provide a service there. And you have many of those positive stories.

One of the challenges is that people come to Saskatchewan and provide services and then end up looking at . . . well is this where they want to be for the long term or for the short term? Quite a number of them do stay in communities because it's just a very good place to live, in our communities across Saskatchewan. But others do go to other provinces or to the States. And we just have to continue working to make sure our compensation packages are appropriate, our facilities are appropriate, and all those things. And that's what we're working at — on a province-wide basis to make sure that that happens.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. One follow-up to this, and it goes back to a comment earlier that I think you may not have caught the answer . . . or the question, Mr. Minister. And that is, what is the province doing in regards to the medical college in expanding the college? And, Mr. Minister, are we at a place where there are more people really trying to gain entrance to the college?

Because I think at the end of the day, Mr. Minister, we've been relying on people outside of the province, certainly outside of the country, to try and meet the needs of family physicians in, not only in our province but across our country.

But it would seem to me that we need to — as well as we look into the future — look at ways in which we can open up more doors for individuals who would like to get into the field of medicine, with the idea that if we have more seats available in the province of Saskatchewan, we would open up the door for more people being then available to meet the needs of Saskatchewan residents and communities as they try, attempt to fill the positions of physicians in the province. So, Mr. Minister, I await your reply to that comment please.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you for that question. I'd like to answer it in a couple of different ways. As you may know, a few years ago we increased the number of seats at the College of Medicine from 55 to 60. And so therefore in this year's budget, what we planned is to have five new residency spots because that extra number will be coming through their full year of the undergraduate medical part. We also added four residency positions that are for international medical graduates who would wish to study.

I think the more . . . or broader part of your question relates to what we're doing in the longer term around the academic health sciences building and education in general. And our goal is right now with the academic health sciences committee — with medicine clearly in the middle but also nursing and physio and pharmacy and all these others — around how we provide health education in the province. And clearly the goal is to provide some more spaces for medical students and other places, but we're going to do that in that broader context as we expand the whole academic health sciences field.

So I think we're getting close to the end of the time. I know that one of the members had a question from a previous time about lab technical fees, and I'd just like to respond to that on the

record now.

Basically the issue was a question from a technologist who's employed in Saskatoon. And there are technical fees that are paid to physicians on a fee-for-service basis when they employ their own staff and use their own equipment to provide a service. So they may have their own clinic somewhere. When services are provided in a hospital using hospital equipment and the regional health authority staff, then the physician's only allowed to bill for their professional service and not for some of these technical fees.

The Saskatchewan Medical Association represents physicians in bargaining around fee-for-service billings. And this is an ongoing process. So if there is a particular problem around this, physicians can go to the SMA [Saskatchewan Medical Association] to include it in the bargaining discussion as it moves forward. So practically I think that's the kind of answer around the fairly complicated question that was asked before, and so I'm pleased to provide that information on the record.

And so I'd like to thank all of the staff who are here with me . . . Oh one more question. Oh sure.

The Deputy Chair: — I recognize the member from Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mr. Minister. I just would hope that the minister would be able to define the word soon for me. I had asked a number of written questions regarding the Heartland Regional Health Authority. The community of Kindersley has been short in representation on this board as there has been a vacancy for some time. It's, I believe, exceeding nine months now. And I have asked the question to the minister, and I would just hope that he could possibly provide a date for that community of when they will have a representative on the board. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — All of the boards in Saskatchewan have terms where on the regional health authority boards will be renewed at the end of June and early July, so there will be appointments that will cover everybody at that time.

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

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, I move we report progress.

The Deputy Chair: — The Government House Leader has reported progress. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: — It now being 5 o'clock, this committee stands recessed till 7 p.m.

[The Assembly recessed until 19:00.]

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