



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

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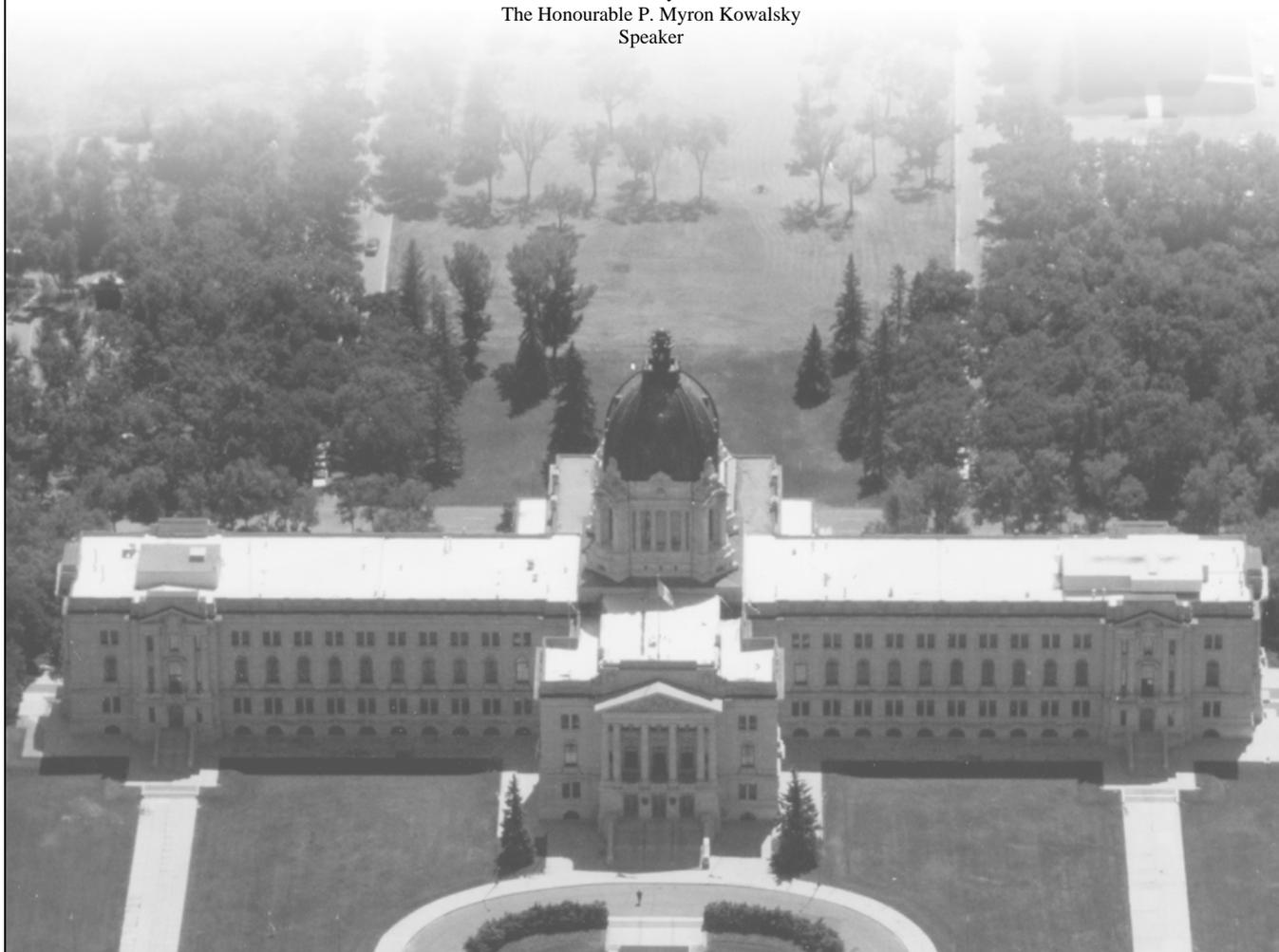
**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

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(HANSARD)

Published under the  
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The Honourable P. Myron Kowalsky  
Speaker



**MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN**

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

<b>Name of Member</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>	<b>Constituency</b>
Addley, Hon. Graham	NDP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Atkinson, Hon. Pat	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Beatty, Hon. Joan	NDP	Cumberland
Belanger, Hon. Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornrud, 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, 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
Gantefoer, Rod	SP	Melfort
Hagel, Hon. 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, Hon. 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, 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, Hon. Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney
Vacant		Weyburn-Big Muddy

[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. Again today I rise to present a petition on behalf of individuals from the constituency of Cypress Hills that are very concerned about the condition of Highway 32, especially the stretch from the town of Cabri through to Leader. The prayer reads as follows:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, these two pages of petitions are signed by individuals from the communities of Prelate, Eatonia, and Leader. I so present.

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition regarding the possible reduction of health care services in Biggar. 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 the Biggar Hospital, long-term care home, and ambulance services maintain at the very least the current level of services.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by people from Biggar. I so present.

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

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today with petitions from people concerned about health care. 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 the current level of service.

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

Not surprisingly, Mr. Speaker, these petitions all come from the

town of Biggar. I so present.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, it's an honour today to rise on behalf of residents of the province concerned about the Highway No. 5. 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 necessary action to upgrade and widen what is the very narrow Highway No. 5 from Humboldt to Saskatoon.

[Mr. Speaker] And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

All of the petitioners that I present for today come from the great city of Humboldt. I so present.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition for the widening of Highway 5. The citizens who have signed this petition are concerned about a number of issues, one of which is that the current condition of the highway makes passing hazardous. The prayer of the petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to upgrade and widen Highway No. 5 from Humboldt to Saskatoon.

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

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of signatures on this petition from Humboldt, as well as the communities of Saskatoon, Preeceville, and Annaheim. And I'm pleased to present this petition on their behalf.

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

**Mr. Wakefield:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to present a petition on the basis of these people writing in about Highway No. 5, and the concern about the safety thereof. And the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to upgrade and widen Highway No. 5 from Humboldt to Saskatoon.

And this petition is signed by a broad range of people from Regina, Cudworth, but especially as far away as Camrose and Edmonton. I so present.

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

**Mr. Chisholm:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise to present a petition regarding the Highway No. 5 condition. The highway is narrow; it needs to be widened. The petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to upgrade and widen Highway No. 5 from Humboldt to Saskatoon.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by residents of Saskatoon and Humboldt. Thank you.

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

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I along with my colleagues have several pages of a petition of citizens who are concerned about the safety of Highway No. 5. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to upgrade and widen Highway No. 5 from Humboldt to Saskatoon.

And the signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from Humboldt, LeRoy, Watson, Dundurn, Preeceville, Saskatoon, Regina, and St. Albert, Alberta. I so present.

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

**Mr. Gantefoer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with my colleagues to present a petition on behalf of citizens concerned about the safety of travelling on Highway No. 5. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to upgrade and widen Highway No. 5 from Humboldt to Saskatoon.

Signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, as you might expect are mostly from the city of Humboldt but also from Saskatoon and Middle Lake. And I'm pleased to present on their behalf.

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

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I again rise today to present a petition from constituents who are opposed to possible reductions of health care services. 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 Ruthilda and Biggar and district. I so present.

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

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present another petition on behalf of 600 children — and their parents — under six years of age in the Saskatoon Silver Springs constituency regarding a much-needed elementary school in the Arbor Creek area of Saskatoon. The prayer of the petition reads as follows:

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

The petitioners today live on Lashyn Cove, Berini Drive, and Cowley Road in Northeast Saskatoon. I so present, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I rise with a petition from citizens that are very concerned about the safety of Highway 5 between Humboldt and Saskatoon. And I read the petition:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to upgrade and widen Highway 5 from Humboldt to Saskatoon.

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

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by the good citizens of Humboldt, Muenster, Prud'homme, and Air Ronge. I so present.

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Rosthern-Shellbrook.

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition today:

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 Department of Highways section shop in Watrous, Saskatchewan, remains open so as to ensure the safety of all motorists and Saskatchewan Highways employees who would be affected by such a possible closure.

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures to this petition are all from Watrous. I so present.

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

**Mr. Kirsch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to bring a petition that is on the poor conditions of Highway 5 that has been very unsafe. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to upgrade and widen Highway No. 5 from Humboldt to Saskatoon.

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

It is signed by the good people of Saskatoon and Humboldt. I so present.

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

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition to improve SaskTel cellular service in rural Saskatchewan:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

This particular petition is signed by the good citizens from Jansen and Drake. I so present.

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

**Mr. Morgan:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition regarding autism spectrum disorders. It is the first time this petition has been presented in the House, so I will be reading the entire petition for this time only:

To the Hon. Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan and legislature assembled:

The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Saskatchewan humbly showeth:

Whereas people who have an autism spectrum disorder are some of the most vulnerable in our province, and in Saskatchewan the number of children being diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder is high — 1 in 251,203 — and the rate of increase is alarming, 159 per cent over six years up to March, 2004; and

whereas until the cause and cure of autism are found, research has shown that children and adults who have an autism spectrum disorder can benefit from the provision of intensive behavioural intervention therapy based on the principles of applied behavioural analysis, speech, communication, and occupational and physical therapy as well as medical attention for autism spectrum related conditions. As a result of the effective treatment, 50 per cent more people with autism spectrum disorder develop speech. Sixty-six per cent have more typical IQs, and 230 per cent more adults with autism spectrum disorder achieve some degree of independent living; and

whereas for a variety of reasons including lack of assigned resources and delegation to ministries with little or no

expertise, the provision of IBA/ABA therapy to people with autism spectrum disorder is not available on a provincial basis with the provision of other therapies being either not available or subject to unconscionable . . . the long waiting lists, and that Saskatchewan is the only province without a current or planned provincial autism effective treatment.

Mr. Speaker, I will now read just the prayer for relief:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to act upon the following recommendation made February 2005 by the Government of Saskatchewan caucus committee on Human Services to the Saskatchewan Minister of Health.

The presentation from Saskatchewan Families for Effective Autism Treatment concerned issues surrounding the support of autistic children and adults that need review, one in particular being the availability of behavioural therapists. The committee was impressed with the commitment of the parents and families of people with autism and encourage you to look to ways to improve their lives from diagnosis to therapies, work opportunities, and family support by doing the following . . .

And it lists the specific items, Mr. Speaker:

coordinate among the departments of Health, Learning, and Community Resources and Employment with input from stakeholders to formulate a provincial comprehensive autism spectrum disorders treatment program, provide . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order please. Order please. I have given the member considerable extra time. I would like him to bring this to a close.

**Mr. Morgan:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm reading the petition as it was provided to me. I have . . .

**The Speaker:** — I would just ask the member to bring this to a close.

**Mr. Morgan:** — Mr. Speaker, the petition seeks various types of relief and support for autistic family. I so present, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

#### READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

**Deputy Clerk:** — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and pursuant to rule 14(7) are received as addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 7, 8, 12, 64, 67, and 27.

#### NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 31 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation: to date how much money has your department given to the provincial youth advisory committee?

And also, Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet, I give notice that I shall on day no. 31 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation: to date how much money has your department given to the Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism?

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Rosthern-Shellbrook.

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 31 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Northern Affairs: did management of the department have established programs and controls to mitigate fraud risk or to help prevent or detect fraud in the years 2002-2003, 2001-2002, and 2000-2001?

[13:45]

I also have another question:

For the Minister of Northern Affairs: how did management of the department monitor any established programs and controls to mitigate fraud risks or to help prevent or detect fraud in the years 2002-2003, 2001-2002, 2000 and 2001?

I also have another one, Mr. Speaker:

For the Minister of Northern Affairs: does management of the department have any knowledge of any actual or suspected fraud or illegal activity within the department during the year 2002-2003 and, if so, what is the nature of this activity?

I have also another one for 2001-2002 and also 2000 and 2001.

Mr. Speaker:

To the Minister of Northern Affairs: what did management of the department find as a result of its monitoring of any established programs and controls to mitigate fraud risk or detect fraud in the year 2002-2003, 2001-2002, 2000-2001?

Mr. Speaker:

To the Minister of Northern Affairs: is management of the department aware of any allegations of fraud or other illegal activity within the department or its agencies in the year 2002-2003 such as information received from employees, former employees, customers, clients, suppliers, or others? If so, what is the nature of this activity?

I have the same question for years 2001-2002 and also for the year 2000-2001.

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

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a number of written questions also, and I give notice that I shall on day no. 31 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of the Environment: is management of the department aware of any allegations of fraud or other illegal activities within the department or its agencies in the year 2002-2003 such as information received from employees, former employees, customers, clients, suppliers, or others? If so, what is the nature of the activity?

I give notice that I shall on day no. 31 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of the Environment: is management of the department aware of any allegations of fraud or other illegal activity within the department or its agencies in the year 2001-2002, such as information received from employees, former employees, customers, clients, suppliers, or others? If so, what is the nature of the activity?

I give notice that I shall on day no. 31 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of the Environment: is management of the department aware of any allegations of fraud or other illegal activities within the department or its agencies in the year 2000-2001, such as information received from employees, former employees, customers, clients, suppliers, or others? If so, what is the nature of the activity?

I give notice that I shall on day 31 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of the Environment: what did management of the department find as the result of its monitoring of any established programs and controls to mitigate fraud, risk, or detect fraud in the year 2002-2003?

And to the same minister, for the year 2000-2001, the same question and the same question, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of the Environment for the year 2001-2002.

I give notice that I shall on day no. 31 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of the Environment: does management of the department have any knowledge of any actual or suspected fraud or illegal activity within the department during the year 2001-2002? If so, what is the nature of the activity?

Same question, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of the Environment for the year 2000-2001 and the same question to the Minister of the Environment for the year 2002-2003.

And I give notice on day no. 31 I shall ask the government the

following question:

To the Minister of the Environment: did management of the department have established programs and controls to mitigate fraud risks or help prevent or detect fraud in the year 2002-2003?

And the same question to the minister for the year 2001-2002 and the same question to the minister for the year 2000-2001.

And:

To the Minister of the Environment: how did management of the department monitor any established programs and controls to mitigate fraud risk or to help prevent or detect fraud in the year 2000-2001?

Same question for 2001-2002 and the same question to the minister for the years 2002-2003. I so present.

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

**Hon. Ms. Beatty:** — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and all members of the House 19 grade 9 students from Churchill Community High School in La Ronge. Ta wow. And accompanying them is their two teachers, Christine Ravenis and Susan Greene and also chaperone, Ms. Regina Poitras.

I'd like everyone to welcome them to the House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of the House seated in your gallery this afternoon, George and Esther Haas from Esterhazy are joining us this afternoon. George and Esther have had a keen longstanding interest in public affairs in the province and more currently in changing the nature of public affairs and the delivery of those public services in the province of Saskatchewan.

And many in this Assembly will know that George is a recipient recently of a medal of bravery, of the Carnegie Medal. And so, Mr. Speaker, I would ask members to join with me in welcoming George and Esther to their Legislative Assembly.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Borgerson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, probably the best part of our work as MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] is the friendships we form with people around this province, old and young. And on that note I'd like to introduce in your gallery, Riley Simonite who is 14 years old

in Grade 9 at École Valois in Prince Albert. Riley's mother Barb Riley is attending the Saskatchewan school board meetings here today. And Riley is here to observe the work of this Assembly.

I will tell you as well that Riley is a member of the Parlement jeunesse fransaskois. He is active with that group — has been in the past — and will be at the Assembly in the fall, at which time he expects to be the minister of health. I will indicate as well, Mr. Speaker, I will indicate as well that Riley enjoys debates and enjoys politics and is an active and ardent supporter of the New Democratic Party.

Mr. Speaker, I will say here in this House, watch out for Riley Simonite. I'd like members to welcome Riley to the Assembly today. Thank you.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

#### Z99 Radiothon

**Mr. Trew:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. CC, Lorie, and Buzz are connecting with Z99 listeners as only this zany trio can. And Z99 listeners are connecting with the Hospitals of Regina Foundation for Regina General's neonatal unit as only those listeners can.

The radiothon started, Mr. Speaker, 19 years ago. Now what a credit this is to local radio, the Z99 support team, the Z99 fans who donate so generously, but especially what a credit this is to CC, Lorie, and Buzz, who are the friendliest and most caring team in radio today.

The radiothon speaks to character. Imagine — 19 years ago, CC came up with a great idea, a great idea that gets better each year. Thanks to all of the support and all of the listeners and all of the generosity, thousands of babies benefit from the Regina neonatal unit, Mr. Speaker.

I want to congratulate southern Saskatchewan for responding so generously to save and improve babies' lives. I want to remind everybody that they can still contribute for quite a while yet; this goes till 6 o'clock tomorrow. And you contribute by calling 522-KIDS — that's 522-5437. Please dig deep, donate generously. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

#### Second Annual Torch Awards

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last evening I had the opportunity and privilege to attend the Better Business Bureau's second annual Torch Awards, along with two of my colleagues, the members from Moosomin and Wood River.

Several hundred people gathered to witness the events of the evening, representing the best of the business community from towns and cities throughout the province. The eligible candidates were thoroughly evaluated by an independent panel of judges from the business and academic community, whose identity remained a secret until the event last night.

And, Mr. Speaker, the criteria for consideration of the Torch Awards really are rigorous. They include high ethical standards of behaviour towards customers and others with which they do business, the demonstration of ethical practice in their business, a reputation for such ethics in the marketplace, and a recognition of same by their peers, as well as truth in advertising.

Now out of the 22 companies and organizations that were nominated, the winners included the following Saskatchewan businesses and organizations: Regina Auto Body Shop Ltd., South Hill Inn from Prince Albert, Superior Cabinets from Saskatoon, Regina and Region Home Builders', Brothers & Tyler Financial Consultants in Regina; Automobility Medical of Regina, and McKenzie Plumbing and Heating of Regina.

Our congratulations go to each of the winners of this year's Torch Award.

An added feature of the evening was an address by the founder of the PhoneBusters anti-fraud call centre, Detective Sergeant Barry Elliott. His talk covered several potential means of being defrauded and action that one might take to avoid such unhappy and costly episodes personally and in business.

Mr. Speaker, this is an event well worth attending, and I would like to congratulate the Better Business Bureau on its outstanding event.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

#### **Celebrated Saskatoon Athlete Wins Bronze Medals in Turin**

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Colette Bourgonje is a Paralympic athlete from the great constituency of Saskatoon Centre. At the recent Winter Games in Turin, she captured bronze medals in both the women's 5 K and 10 K sit-ski events.

Colette is a dedicated athlete who always looks for the positive and stays focused on her goals. She competed at the national level in cross-country running before a car accident left her paralyzed when she was 18 years old. She has since gone on to even greater achievements in wheelchair racing and cross-country skiing. Mr. Speaker, Colette has won numerous national championships, three world championships, participated in four Paralympic Winter Games, three Paralympic Summer Games, and she has captured two silver medals in Nagano in 1998.

Mr. Speaker, she's a member of the Saskatoon Hall of Fame and was named Saskatoon athlete of the year in 1996. The city

of Saskatoon has honoured her by naming a city street after her. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, Colette was the recipient of a Breakthrough Award which was presented by the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity in Ottawa. And when she's not training, Mr. Speaker, she teaches the fourth grade at Fairhaven School in Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, in Colette's own words: "Work hard, train hard, and don't forget to thank the people that helped you along the way." Well I would like to invite the members here to join me in thanking Colette for her commitment to our community and in congratulating her for a truly inspirational performance in Turin. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

#### **New Democratic Party's Tactics**

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, just when you thought the NDP [New Democratic Party] government couldn't get any lower or more ridiculous, they demonstrate once again that there is no act of desperation too low to which they won't sink, too low that they won't sink in order to distract the public from their own disastrous record of accountability. I'm speaking of course of the Minister of Finance's journey yesterday into the 1980s in the NDP's way back machine.

Mr. Speaker, it's no secret to anyone in this province who has watched this government fail time and again on creating jobs or stopping out-migration that the NDP have not had a new idea on growing this economy since the 1970s. And now, and now we know why they just can't get their heads out of their past, Mr. Speaker. How else can you explain the fact that it's just a couple of weeks before the budget when the Minister of Finance should have been sitting down with business owners and other stakeholders, he chose instead to sit on his mountain of cash, reading 20-year-old memos and watching reruns of *Fantasy Island*?

Mr. Speaker, it's time to turf the ABBA. It's time to turf the shag rug and let voters turf this NDP government and turn the management of this province over to the one party in this legislature, the Saskatchewan Party, that is focused on the future, not the past.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

[14:00]

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

#### **Draganfly Innovations**

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you very much. I want to take a moment today to recognize the recent successes and ingenuity of Draganfly Innovations, a business owned, operated, and located in my constituency of Saskatoon Nutana.

Draganfly Innovations is owned by an engineer and Saskatoon resident, Zenon Dragan, who began simply as a hobby in 1997. But the company's flying machines and unique accessories quickly found popularity with families, hobbyists, and even international agencies like NASA [National Aeronautics and Space Administration].

In addition to its already impressive catalogue of small helicopters, remote-control airplanes, blimps, and even flying saucers, Draganfly Innovations recently developed an aerial photo plane to be marketed this spring. This plane's unique ability to take high-quality photographs has made it an appealing invention for a wide variety of clients — from military and police to the agricultural sector.

The originality of Dragan Innovations has garnered international media attention from *The New York Times*, CNN [Cable News Network], the Space Channel, the History Channel, *Popular Mechanics*, and *Popular Science*, and has also led to local recognition in 2004 when Dragan Innovations was a finalist for two Saskatchewan achievement in business awards.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend my congratulations to Dragan Innovations on their great success and entrepreneurial spirit. And I'm confident that this positive endeavour in our province will lead to a future which is equally bright for all Saskatchewan business people.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

#### Members' Comments

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Mr. Speaker, it's a sign of just how desperate the NDP have become. Usually they wait until election time to pull out the gutter politics, but I guess they must have seen the latest polling numbers that show the dynamic, young leader of the Saskatchewan Party pulling further and further ahead of the tired, worn out leader of the NDP.

And now the NDP have two choices. They could come up with a plan to try to make the Premier look better — but of course that's impossible — so their only choice is try to smear the Leader of the Opposition. Just one day after they were forced to admit to 42 cases of fraud within the NDP government, the Minister of Finance falsely accused the Leader of the Opposition of fraud. Then a few minutes later, the Premier himself decided to join the Minister of Finance in the gutter and started to make similar accusations.

Mr. Speaker, I was trying to think of the right word to describe this act of political desperation. There's sad, pathetic, sleazy . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order please. Order please. Order. The member for Humboldt.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we could describe it as sad, pathetic, sleazy, scummy. But you know what the right word is? Typical. Typical of an

increasingly desperate NDP Premier who will say anything to cling on to power.

**The Speaker:** — Order please. I want to have the situation where the member can be heard and that I can hear the words that a member is saying. The member for Humboldt.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — In fact it's not the least bit true, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier this week the Leader of the Opposition made this statement in the Assembly and I quote:

. . . 30 years from now, there might be a movie made about politics today. The Premier himself might be portrayed in the movie. I would want . . . that portrayal to be accurate.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that the Premier doesn't share the same commitment to telling the truth and will stoop to the lowest form of gutter politics, a gutless, drive-by smear against the Leader of the Opposition.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

#### ORAL QUESTIONS

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

#### Financial Accountability

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Premier said this yesterday and I quote:

. . . anybody that works in my office has a pretty good idea [of] what goes on in my office.

Given that comment, we can conclude the Premier knew everything that was going on and so did everyone else in his office. That being the case, I'm sure this government will have no problem revealing all instances of fraud dating back to when the Premier took office. And since everyone knows everything already, it shouldn't take long to answer the questions.

So, Mr. Speaker, will this government commit to taking the standards they outlined this week for public reporting on fraud and apply them to the entire period since the Premier took office?

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

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — You know, I appreciate hearing from the member opposite at some point because there seem to be many definitions on that side as to what fraud is. I look forward to them defining this for us.

I'll tell you what I thought was very interesting yesterday in terms of what we heard. What we heard was a rationalization coming from the Leader of the Opposition about what it was that he learned while working for John Gerich. And what was it that that member said? That member actually said in the scrum, that you know what, it was a great thing that he got a chance to work with Grant Devine. He says, quote:

Frankly — I think it's an asset that I was involved in a

government that lost its way on these issues.

That's what he said. He said, I thought it was an asset that he'd worked for that government.

Two weeks from now, Mr. Speaker, I will table a budget in this House that will ask taxpayers to commit more than half a billion dollars to continue paying interest on a debt that was built up by that government that lost its way. I don't know that taxpayers and voters are going to think it's such an asset.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Mr. Speaker, I think the official opposition is making a very simple request on behalf of the taxpayers of the province of Saskatchewan. If these new standards are good enough for the future, certainly they must be good enough for the past. And if everyone in the Premier's office knows about everything, it shouldn't take long to compile this information.

Mr. Speaker, if this government has nothing to hide, why not apply those standards of public reporting for fraud right back to when the Premier took office? Mr. Speaker, will this government commit today to a full reporting of instances of fraud back to the date when the Premier took office?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Mr. Speaker, the members opposite were earlier accusing me of using the way back machine by going back to 1989, 1990 and taking a look at what the Provincial Auditor had to say then. The Provincial Auditor has clearly been reviewing it. Provincial Auditor has said today in the paper that he's aware of all the incidents involved. If the members have a question, they need only go to the Public Accounts Committee, of which they chair, and ask the Provincial Auditor.

But what I find more interesting is just the general lack of credibility that the opposition has on this issue — a complete lack of credibility. Because what is it they say when confronted with this issue? They say, you know what . . . they don't say, I'm sorry about that; they don't say that this was wrong. They don't say anything other than . . . You know what the leader says? He says, “. . . I think it's an asset that I was involved in a government that lost its way on these issues.” I would add parenthetically, and along the way lost \$7 billion worth of taxpayers' money.

Mr. Speaker, frankly we expect better from the opposition. We expect an end to the double standard, and we expect some questions that are credible.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, Mr. Speaker, it's incredible the comments we get from this government.

The official opposition asks 580 questions. It took this government months and months and months to come up with answers. There has been an increase in the Premier's staff to ensure that answers are supplied in a timely fashion.

Mr. Speaker, delay after delay after delay and finally we're told that there are 40 examples of fraud, some that had not been disclosed. In some cases charges were laid. In some cases they were not. In some cases employees were dismissed.

Mr. Speaker, can anyone on that side of the House tell the people of Saskatchewan how many of those people could get their jobs back as a result of a grievance or any other action? And how many of those who were dismissed are working for the government in some other capacity?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Well speaking of second chances, I find it interesting that the Leader of the Opposition is out there saying, you know what, I know that he was part of a government that, as he says, quote “. . . lost its way . . .” And what is it that he says? He says, you know I think it's an asset because, quote, “. . . I know . . . [that] I've resolved to never allow that to happen again . . .”

I want to let the Leader of the Opposition in on a secret — so too have the voters. Hence why for four terms they've returned an NDP government and will not make that member the premier of Saskatchewan.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

### Recruiting and Retaining Nurses

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, if that Finance minister or that Premier are so sure of that proposition, that Premier ought to screw up his courage and call a general election, and we'll find out who switch places, Mr. Speaker. That's what ought to happen in the province of Saskatchewan.

It's also why, it's also why, by the way, Mr. Speaker, we saw them sink to new lows and be as desperate as they were outside the House.

Part of the reason that we want change in the province of Saskatchewan is for health care. And nowhere is the issue more acute perhaps even than in my own constituency of Swift Current and in southwest Saskatchewan.

The NDP Health minister, Mr. Speaker, has admitted to no plan for a target for nurses — nurse recruitment and retention in the province. Meanwhile doctors on the Cypress Hills medical advisory committee are saying that the nursing shortage in the

region, the nursing shortage in the . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order please. Order. Order. I would ask the Leader of the Opposition to put his question.

**Mr. Wall:** — The doctors are saying in Swift Current, Mr. Speaker, that the nursing shortage will limit the number of beds. We appreciate the new health care facility that's being built, but what good is it, Mr. Speaker, if there aren't beds, if there are not nurses to staff the beds for patient . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. Order please. I ask the Leader of the Opposition to put his question.

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, we appreciate the new hospital in Swift Current, but what good are the new beds if there's not nurses there to keep those beds open?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will repeat what I have said for a week and a half in answering questions to the members of the opposition. Nursing, Mr. Speaker, nursing is an honourable and respectable profession. We expect quite a number of young people in Saskatchewan to seek nursing as a career. Mr. Speaker, we intend to ensure that the facilities that the nurses will be working in when they graduate are amongst the best, if not the best, in North America. And, Mr. Speaker, we are doing all that we can to ensure the recruitment and retention strategies are in place to ensure that it continues to provide a career for people who are compassionate and care about the people of this province.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, those words ring very hollow indeed for the people of southwest Saskatchewan, for people across the province who languish on the longest waiting lists in the Dominion of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses is saying that our region in southwest Saskatchewan, the Cypress Hills region, needs 15 more nurses just to meet professional standards for client care. Nurses in the region have raised similar concerns about shortages in the past. Last May I rose in this Assembly to express them. They were worried that they were asked to cover ICU [intensive care unit] even if they were not trained to do so. And the minister, certainly the former minister, will remember that.

A shortage of nurses means a shortage of beds. In Swift Current and across southwest Saskatchewan, that is the case today. What is this minister doing about it, Mr. Speaker?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And members opposite and the health care community knows that we've been working with that community since 2001 to prepare an action strategy with regards to dealing with the recruitment and retention of physicians, nurses, technologists, and pharmacists in this province. We released a report in December and we are in the process of implementing that report, Mr. Speaker.

We're in a globally competitive environment for professionals. And, Mr. Speaker, I just want to quote. National studies supporting that there are declining numbers of nurses, RNs [registered nurse], licensed practical nurses, and RPNs [registered psychiatric nurse], and the risk to safe client care include recent nursing sector study 2005 and the Canadian nursing advisory committee final report. These studies both support efforts towards the retention, recruitment of nurses including implementation of workload measurement systems, increasing the number of full-time positions, examining absenteeism, hiring nurse mentors, increasing educational seats, and incentives to delay retirement.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's Health Workforce Action Plan has included all of these matters . . .

**The Speaker:** — The member's time has elapsed. The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

[14:15]

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, may I say on behalf of the MLAs that represent the Southwest and Cypress Hills region, and more importantly on behalf of the people who need good health care in the Southwest, if this is the minister's plan, if this is the NDP's action for strategy, they ought to stop helping because it's actually getting worse under this government, Mr. Speaker. That's the fact of the matter.

SUN [Saskatchewan Union of Nurses] is saying there aren't enough nurses there. We have the medical association, doctors in Swift Current saying the problem is acute. There aren't enough beds. There aren't enough beds and not enough nurses of course to staff them — that's the problem. In the meantime the government's building a new hospital and is readily admitting — seems to be readily admitting — that they won't have enough nurses to open the beds.

What is the point of that? What part of the planning and strategy of this government does that fit in under? Do they have a category for incompetence, Mr. Speaker?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Since 2003 this government has hired 260 additional nurses. Mr. Speaker, there are currently 230 nurses in the nursing education program who will graduate this year, Mr. Speaker. We are in a position to ensure that every one of those nurses will be employed in the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, the region in Swift Current, the regions in Rosetown, the regions in Lloydminster, the regions in Meadow Lake are

going to be well served by the principles and practices of this government.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My office in Swift Current, I think the constituency offices of my colleagues in southwest Saskatchewan, are fielding an increasing number of calls of people in southwest Saskatchewan — and frankly across the province — frustrated with health care here in the birthplace of health care, under this NDP government.

The situation, the frustration is, in addition to the acute care bed shortage or at least the nurses to staff them, is long-term care beds. We've got a long-term care bed shortage there as well. And what happens then, Mr. Speaker? Well patients that should be in long-term care are in medical beds; they're in acute care beds.

These are real problems going on in Swift Current. And all of the paper and all of the booklets that the minister could point to — and action plans, and strategies for this, and points about that — don't matter a lot to those people who are being short shrifted on health care in southwest Saskatchewan.

To the minister: what is his plan for the Cypress Hills region to ensure that there are medical beds there for patients who need them?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud of the work of the people in the Cypress Hills Health Region. The CEO [chief executive officer], the president or the Chair of the board, the members of the board, the volunteers for the hospital foundation — these are very caring people who are planning to ensure that the long-term needs of the people in that region are well taken care of.

The province is putting together the priorities and strategies and financial support networks that they need to deliver the kinds of programs that are necessary in the region. I have complete confidence in the region administration, staff, and volunteers.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday we learned that the minister and SUN had a meeting. And what came out of the meeting was that this minister simply does not keep his word, Mr. Speaker. The only commitment that came out of that meeting was, from this minister, more meetings.

Well here's what one of the nurses had to say about the minister's lack of commitment, and I quote:

... as one of your constituents from North Battleford as ... a Registered Nurse. I was extremely disappointed to learn that you, as our Minister of Health don't believe the nursing shortage ... [is] "critical."

Jennifer Hanna-Woodworth works in the ICU and the CCU [critical care unit] care unit in the Battlefords hospital ... says that the shortage is in a crisis situation. They're so short of staff that half the beds have had to have been closed. Patient care is being compromised. That's what nurses in your hospital, in his hospital, Mr. Minister, are saying.

When will the minister commit today to filling the nursing vacancies in his own city?

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact I had a meeting with the Chair of the board of Prairie North Health Region this very morning, Mr. Speaker. We discussed some of the vacancies in Prairie North. The Prairie North Health Region, Mr. Speaker, is very much aware that I consider this to be an issue of priority.

I am confident in the regions to address the vacancies. I made the commitment to SUN and I make it again in this Chamber as I have before. We are committed to filling the vacancies that exist within the system today.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, what we've heard from this minister so far is absolutely no targets, no goals, and no plans to fill the vacancies. And what nurses are feeling around the province is no hope from this NDP government, Mr. Speaker. This young nurse goes on to say, if the Minister of Health was sincere about his commitment to nurses, he would start by visiting the Battlefords hospital in his own constituency.

Will the minister finally get in touch with the situation in his own constituency and talk to the front line workers that deliver health care in that facility? Will he visit the Battlefords Union Hospital and see first-hand the effect that the lack of nurses has, the nursing shortage has, on patient care and the attitude of the nurses because of the shortage in his own hospitals.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Mr. Speaker, I'll visit there this weekend with the same commitment that I've made to this House, I will make to them. Mr. Speaker, I value the work that nurses are doing in this province. I value the work that the health regions are doing to deal with a critical problem in a global scenario, Mr. Speaker. I will work in North Battleford and around this province to ensure that there's quality health care for the people of Saskatchewan.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, this young nurse says that there is no support from this . . . the nurses feel absolutely no support from this government. When she hears the minister say that Saskatchewan is better off than other provinces, she goes on to say, I quote:

. . . [it's] like a slap in the face to all nurses who are enduring this shortage everyday.

That's what the nurses are saying in our health care facilities. Nurses are working overtime to fill 12 vacant time rotations within that hospital in North Battleford. They are burnt-out. They are being denied holidays or having holidays cancelled. They are concerned about patient safety. She goes on to say, and I quote:

You, Mr. Taylor as our MLA for North Battleford and Minister of Health have a responsibility to get . . . [the] facts straight [right here in this hospital] . . . right here at home.

Mr. Speaker, will he go and visit with the front line care workers — not just the health district board Chair — but the front line care workers to see the situation that they are facing?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The implication of the question is of course that I haven't been there. And of course I've been there on a regular basis. I've met with people who work within the hospital. I've worked with the volunteers. I've visited with patients, Mr. Speaker.

There are vacancies throughout the province. We acknowledge there are 250 vacancies. We are prepared to work with the health regions to ensure that those vacancies are filled. Mr. Speaker, I met with the Minister of Health from the province of Alberta this morning, Mr. Speaker. Speaking of vacancies, the city of Calgary has 500 vacancies at this very moment.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, I think that's the very point. He stands in the House and says there's 250 vacancies. Is he meaning 250 RN vacancies, or is he grouping licensed practical nurses in that whole number? And that's the whole issue with SUN. Come clean with your numbers and show us where you come up with the 250 . . .

**The Speaker:** — The hon. member will remember to speak through the Chair.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Will the minister come clean with his numbers and show us where he comes up with the 250 vacancies? Is it RNs or RNs and LPNs [licensed practical

nurses] combined?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday when I met with the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, we talked about comparative number calculations. In that meeting I suggested that we would sit down together and discuss these numbers — whether they come from the department, Statistics Canada, surveys. Mr. Speaker, I read in the collected media summaries today that the representative from SUN who was present at that meeting indicated that she was . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order please. Order please. I would ask members . . . I would ask members to pay attention to the question and to the response. The Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to make it clear that I'm prepared to work with Saskatchewan Union of Nurses on identifying exactly where the vacancies exist and work with them to ensure that we've got the proper strategy to replace people that are in that place.

And, Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet I want to share the views of Anne Guest, a nurse here in Regina, who in a letter to the Regina *Leader-Post*, said she feels:

. . . privileged to be part of the process of caring for cardiac patients and their families in the hospital. Nursing is an honourable profession . . . I am proud to serve my community. I am . . . very proud of our younger nurses . . . [that] I see . . . continuing the nursing legacy — nursing with humility and dignity.

Mr. Speaker, we need more nurses in this province.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's not just the Battlefords Union Hospital that has a severe staff shortage. The Saskatchewan psychiatric hospital in North Battleford also has an extreme staffing shortage.

Currently there are 18 nursing vacancies, Mr. Speaker, but what this government has done is gone and filled six of those positions with non-nursing professionals. Is that the way of filling vacancies into the future? Because now they're only showing 12 vacancies. Is that the minister's plan to fill some of the vacancies that RNs have . . . some of the RN vacancies, is with non-nursing professionals?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know the members opposite don't like to hear the word

challenge, but there is one challenge that our regional health authorities have and the CEOs of our regions and the health facilities have, Mr. Speaker, and that is ensuring that all of the vacancies can be filled. There are service needs that exist throughout the system, Mr. Speaker, and our health regions are doing an admirable job finding ways to ensure that the challenge is being met.

This does not replace a long-term plan to ensure that nursing positions are filled with nurses to the full scope of their practice, Mr. Speaker. I have full confidence in the regions to do the job that they have been asked to do and that is to ensure that there is proper care for the residents, the people of Saskatchewan.

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan psychiatric hospital in North Battleford has an alarming rise in overtime and sick time hours. Morale is at an all-time low. From 1999 to the year 2003 — get this — overtime has increased by a whopping 106 per cent, Mr. Speaker, 106 per cent increase in overtime. Sick time has increased by 51 per cent during that same period. These are symptoms of a critical illness called nursing shortages in Saskatchewan. How can the nurses give proper care when they are feeling burnt-out and sick themselves? When they're tired, Mr. Speaker, they can't give the care that they want to.

Will the minister commit today to finally start with some base numbers, some base numbers on the vacancy rate with SUN? Is it 250 combined or 250 just RNs? Because that's what SUN is saying. You've got to start with a base number before you can start setting targets and then meet those targets, Mr. Speaker. Will he commit to that today?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We know that there is a significant challenge in recruiting and retention, not just in Saskatchewan but across Canada and North America.

Mr. Speaker, this is nothing new in the province of Saskatchewan. We've been addressing this issue since we put the action plan together and we have taken steps, Mr. Speaker, that are going to have some very significant impacts on this province. Mr. Speaker, last year alone in our budget we put an extra 100 nursing education program seats in place. We now have more than 400 seats. A year from now, Mr. Speaker, we will be graduating 300 nurses per year under the nursing education program.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order please. Order please. I would ask the member from Arm River-Watrous to come to order.

[14:30]

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

### New Computerized Tomography Scanner in Lloydminster

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And speaking of health care, I'm pleased to be able to share some very exciting news concerning the progress this government continues to make in improving access to quality health services for Saskatchewan residents.

Mr. Speaker, I've just returned from the city of Lloydminster where I joined community members and the Prairie North Health Region in celebrating the opening of a brand new CT [computerized tomography] scan in the Lloydminster Hospital. It's an exciting day for residents and health care professionals in the west central area of our fine province. And it comes only weeks, Mr. Speaker, after the health region hosted a similar celebration in North Battleford where I . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order please. Apologies to the minister. The apology should really be coming from the members of the House for interrupting. Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And of course this announcement comes only weeks after the health region hosted a similar celebration in North Battleford in the hospital — during which I also attended that — where a new CT scan is now serving patients for the Battlefords Union Hospital.

Mr. Speaker, the residents of these communities will notice the immediate and positive effects of having state-of-the-art CT service available close to home. Most importantly patients will have quicker access to CT scans and will save time, money, and the stress that's often involved when they have to travel long distances for service. The quicker access will help not only the patients, Mr. Speaker. These new diagnostic imaging suites will also relieve pressure on scanners in other centres and ultimately reduce the number of people waiting for a CT scan.

The benefits, Mr. Speaker, do not end there. We all know it's a challenge, as I said during question period, to attract and keep medical specialists, technologists, nurses, pharmacists here in Saskatchewan and across North America. This new CT suite makes Lloydminster Hospital an even more attractive workplace — a facility that offers stable, state of the art diagnostic imaging service that can only have a positive effect on recruitment and retention in the Lloydminster area.

Mr. Speaker, this government's significant investments in diagnostic imaging capacity are paying off for Saskatchewan residents who want to see improved access to these services. This year alone, we provided funds to upgrade CT scanners in Prince Albert, Saskatoon, and Regina and to open the two new scanners in the Prairie North Health Region. Thanks in part to these and other measures and to the dedication and support of our medical professionals, we are making great progress on wait times and wait-lists.

This year we expect to do more than 103,000 CT scans in Saskatchewan. That's an increase of more than 9 per cent from

last year. Our wait-list for this service continues to shrink in spite of increasing demand. We're not only keeping up, Mr. Speaker, we're gaining ground. It's heartening that the numbers tell us we're heading in the right direction.

And, Mr. Speaker, we're doing more than buying and upgrading diagnostic imaging equipment. We also want to ensure this equipment is put to the best possible use to provide fair and efficient access to these services. Our province's diagnostic imaging network comprising medical imaging specialists, family physicians, and representatives from the health regions and the public will advise us on a strategy to ensure that this is accomplished.

Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to travel to Lloydminster today, and I'd like to acknowledge and thank the leadership, management, staff, and physicians of Prairie North Health Region who contributed their time, effort, skill, and commitment to this significant enhancement of health services in the region.

I look forward to future visits to other of our beautiful Saskatchewan communities as we continue to invest in sustainable, accessible, high-quality health services for today and for years to come. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to respond to the ministerial statement. And I thank the minister for sending over a copy of what he had to say today because it's interesting to compare what he had to say today and what the reality is out there and the challenges that are faced.

And I said the word. You know, Mr. Speaker, heaven help this government if you ever rule the word challenges out of order because honestly they would not be able to describe, not be able to say a word about the health care system if you ever ruled the word challenges out of order.

Mr. Speaker, the minister talked about a new CT scanner opening in Lloydminster and Prince Albert. And certainly we're in favour of more diagnostic devices that can certainly shorten the waiting list.

There's a couple of issues that come into mind though. We just finished talking a lot about the lack of and the shortage of registered nurses. We talked a little about the shortage of psychiatric nurses, you know. And one thing that I have learned from this government is they're great on making announcements, but they're not so good in fulfilling those announcements with staffing in behind.

Not very long ago did they talk about opening up more beds in the Regina Qu'Appelle Health District. And what we have found out since then is they hadn't planned on a nursing complement to cover those beds, and they've had to take from other wards. And we've heard from nurses on those wards on how disastrous that has been.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we also know that there is a lack of professionals to cover off some of these scanning, whether it's an MRI [magnetic resonance imaging] or CTs. The government will say that they can't operate the MRIs 24 hours a day because they simply don't have the professionals. So it's one thing to go out and open up a bunch of other facilities, but I bet any money that this government has not done the homework to guarantee the health care professionals are there to back it up.

But even more important . . . And it's interesting — especially this minister — to stand there and say, we are proud of the investment we're making in these communities. I think it's extremely important that the public knows who helped make this investment. Mr. Speaker, Husky Oil put \$350,000 into this CT scanner. Border Credit Union put 200,000 into this facility, Mr. Speaker. I was very interested to hear this minister talk and pound his chest on what a great job he's doing, but he failed to mention the private partners that are funding it. It's just typical of this minister and this government to go out and make grandstand announcements but not give credit where credit really is due. And it's the private investors that have made this possible.

And it's private investors all throughout the province. I know I've attended health care, health foundation dinners here in Regina. I know the members from Saskatoon on this side of the House attended the health foundation dinner in Saskatoon. Not an NDP member was there in Saskatoon or in Regina when these foundations have raised hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars to put equipment into our hospital. And not once have I heard that NDP government give one ounce of credit, Mr. Speaker. I think it's absolutely appalling.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### WRITTEN QUESTIONS

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

**Mr. Iwanchuk:** — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government, I would table written question 595.

**The Speaker:** — The response to 595 has been tabled.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

### ADJOURNED DEBATES

### SECOND READINGS

#### Bill No. 28

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Wartman that **Bill No. 28 — The Veterinarians Amendment Act, 2005** be now read a second time.]

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

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to speak to Bill No. 28, The Veterinarians Amendment Act. Mr. Speaker, there's some obvious things in here that are noteworthy that needs to be done, that any self-regulating

organization needs to do. And I really don't have much of a problem with the rules that the association is wanting. But we take considerable exception to many other items in this Bill. And quite frankly . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order please, members. Order. Member for Biggar.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'd like to point out a number of areas that we have great concern with and not only . . . that have been brought forward to us by the producers and the livestock associations of the province, Mr. Speaker. It's interesting to note in the Minister of Agriculture's comments concerning this Bill in second reading that he said — and it's right here in *Hansard* — that:

These amendments are being presented to the Legislative Assembly following extensive consultation with stakeholder groups including the Saskatchewan Veterinary Medical Association, the Dairy Farmers of Saskatchewan, Sask Pork, the Western College of Veterinary Medicine, the Saskatchewan Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the Saskatchewan Horse Federation, [and] the Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess I would have to say that the minister has misled the House . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. Why is the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow on her feet?

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Mr. Speaker, with leave to introduce a guest.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

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

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And with thanks to my colleagues for giving leave to introduce a guest.

Mr. Speaker, in your west gallery is my mom. Mr. Speaker, it's pretty rare when we have an opportunity for family to come and spend part of an afternoon with us here. My mother, Maxine Curts, who now resides in Indian Head and has for a number of years, I'm very pleased to have her here. And I hope she can spend a little bit of time this afternoon so we can maybe duck out for coffee, Mr. Speaker, if the House Leader will let me. But please, I would ask my colleagues to welcome her here this afternoon.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — Would the member state his point of order?

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Speaker, just about one minute ago before you interrupted the hon. member opposite for Biggar?

**An Hon. Member:** — Yes.

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Biggar. The hon. member for Biggar. He just used the phrase . . . His final phrase he used before you sat him down was that the minister has misled the House. Mr. Speaker, you will recognize I know that this is a phrase that is not permissible in this House. And I would ask that you would require the hon. member to withdraw the remark, to apologize to the House, and then to proceed without these unnecessary interludes that are blatantly contrary to the rules of the House.

**The Speaker:** — The member is wishing to speak to the point of order?

**Mr. Weekes:** — Yes, Mr. Speaker. What I was saying is that . . .

**The Speaker:** — The member for Biggar on the point of order.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw those words and apologize.

**The Speaker:** — I thank the member, and I recognize the member for Biggar.

#### ADJOURNED DEBATES

#### SECOND READINGS

#### Bill No. 28 — The Veterinarians Amendment Act, 2005 (continued)

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture in these second reading remarks spoke to all the various groups that he and his bureaucracy and department has spoken to about this Bill. And we have been approached by a number of organizations. One, the Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association which certainly has told us a different story about the input that they gave to the minister and nowhere in their comments to us that they have agreed to any of these changes and amendments in this Bill.

Also the minister also did not say that the department officials have met with the Saskatchewan Equine Ranchers Association which you would think that the department and the Minister of Agriculture would speak to that particular group concerning horses and equine dentistry and all those types of issues.

And another very important group in Saskatchewan which the minister and his officials did not speak to is FACS [Farm Animal Council of Saskatchewan], the Farm Animal Council. And the Farm Animal Council is made up of practically I believe every livestock association in the province, and the minister did not go and speak to that group as well.

We know speaking to the producers and the producers group

that this veterinarians Bill has many, many flaws. Now just to point out some of the flaws. When we have sat down with the Saskatchewan Equine Ranchers Association, the Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association, they have pointed out some glaring problems with the Bill.

Mr. Speaker, the history of livestock production in this province and this country goes back many years. As a rancher, myself as a rancher and a livestock producer, I was very surprised to find out, Mr. Speaker, that individual producers can't basically, under the law, under this law can't look after their own cattle. They can't castrate the animals. They can't preg test their animals and — it was a shock to me to learn — even doing Caesareans, which is a bit more of a technical procedure. But still, producers and ranchers have been doing these operations on their livestock for generations.

And it's very surprising to find out when speaking to the SVMA, the Saskatchewan Veterinary Medical Association, they will admit that yes, those restrictions are in the existing Bill but they say, well don't worry; we will never act on those particular types of procedures.

[14:45]

But, Mr. Speaker, that really doesn't speak to the concern that we have. It's not that the association recognized that that's something the producer should be doing. It is actually in the Bill. And at some point — who knows when? — those items may be considered illegal. Producers may be charged for actually working on their own animals.

And, Mr. Speaker, and again, who has the Minister of Agriculture been talking to? It doesn't make any sense that this Bill would be brought forward with those types of items in the Bill, in the existing law, and let alone in The Veterinarians Amendment Act, Mr. Speaker.

The other very obvious and serious concern here is the procedure of equine dentistry. And in this Bill these amendments, Mr. Speaker, are really taking that right away from equine dentists. And there's a number of very professional people that do this procedure in Saskatchewan, in Western Canada for that matter. And under this Bill, they will not be allowed to do equine dentistry.

Now it's an interesting situation. Now I understand from the SVMA, the Saskatchewan Veterinary Medical Association, that their concern is — and I think it's a legitimate concern — that there's a shortage of veterinarians in Saskatchewan and in Western Canada. And I agree with that. Their take on it is that they need more opportunity to do more services so that basically they could create more income for their operation which will attract more veterinarians into their profession. And I agree totally with that. They're a very important part of the livestock industry, and we need to support them.

The other side of the issue, Mr. Speaker, is that there is a shortage of veterinarians in Western Canada and in Saskatchewan in particular. And so there's a lot of these procedures like equine dentistry that they're not able to do. When students go in to get their degree in veterinary medicine, they only spend a very limited time on items like equine

dentistry. And by their own admission, they're not experts in that area. And so there are people out there that are doing that on a full-time basis.

And I only need to look at my own operation. My daughter has a horse, and it was noticed that there was scars inside the horse's mouth. And it was recommended to us to take this horse to a equine dentist. And the dentist was able to give the horse a sedative and he has very expensive, special tools that they use to grind down the teeth and actually pulled out, I believe they call the eye teeth out of the horse that was causing the damage and the scraping inside of the horse's mouth.

And all these things, you know, just make the life better for the horse. And when someone's riding the horse, sometimes you wonder why a horse isn't performing as well as the horse normally performs. And you have to look at reasons, what things are bothering the horse. And in this case, my daughter's horse was being bothered quite a bit by these problems inside the horse's mouth.

The other issue around equine dentists is in many cases they are also farriers. They shoe horses. They trim horse's hooves. And going back again to what the equine dentists say and the Saskatchewan Equine Ranchers Association have said, that there isn't enough vets. So there's really a void in the livestock industry in that area that needs to be filled and these people are filling it.

In my operation and in many operations, we still use horses to move cattle. We have a feedlot, and we have horses that our employees ride every day, in the winter and the summer, and they need to be shod. So we need to hire a farrier to come in on a regular basis to trim the horse's hooves, to put shoes on the horse. And in the wintertime of course the shoes need spikes so that they don't slip on the ice and snow.

And it's really a profession, Mr. Speaker, that is becoming . . . well there's a shortage of people in that profession. There's more and more people going out of that profession. And when we speak about the equine dentist, I think in all cases, they're also farriers as well. So that's the part of the industry and the business that will employ people full-time in that pursuit. They can be a equine dentist as well as a farrier. And I haven't spoken to very many veterinarians — if any, quite frankly — that want to take up that profession because they are busy and it's a very specialized form of enterprise that you need the proper tools — very expensive tools, quite frankly. And quite frankly it's a lot of hard work.

And these people really earn their pay when they deal with horses because a lot of horses aren't . . . either not well-trained properly or even well-trained horses will not stand when they need to lift their legs up to shoe the horses and to trim the horses' hooves and to pound on the shoe. And the same thing applies with equine dentists. I know watching the procedure done to my daughter's horse, not only the horse was given a sedative, but it was also put in a kind of a restraint. And there's an element of danger that the horse lashes out, that these professionals know how to handle horses and are very . . . actually take a lot of care to make sure not only the people involved don't get hurt but as well as the animal is looked after.

Which brings up another point about the Bill is the need for . . . Well I guess the question is, how do we get around these conflicting viewpoints where the veterinary association says we don't have enough vets in the province — which we all agree there is not enough — and from the other side practitioners, the dentists, equine dentists and farriers and other people that work in other parts of the livestock industry see a void and a need. And how do you fill that void?

And what was suggested to us, Mr. Speaker, was that in particular these equine dentists, most of them or many of them have taken courses in the United States where they're offered and they've gone to colleges in the United States and got proper training. And what is being suggested that the equine dentists which I . . . When I asked the association, they say there's about six full-time equine dentists in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. What was suggested to us, that these six individuals — or maybe there's more — they basically be grandfathered in to being a technician. And future technicians would take a course that should be and could be offered by the . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. Why is the member for Saskatoon Massey Place on his feet?

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With leave, to introduce a guest.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Leave has been granted. The member may proceed.

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to my colleague, the member from Biggar, for letting me intervene during his very interesting speech.

I would like to introduce to you, Mr. Speaker, and through you to other members of the Assembly, Mr. Kevin Graham, who is sitting in the west gallery. And he is the vice-president of marketing for a company called Whitemud Resources, and they're trying to develop the resource of kaolin, which is commonly known as white mud, in southern Saskatchewan near Wood Mountain. And I've toured this site with Mr. Graham and geologists from our Department of Industry and Resources, and there's great potential there, Mr. Speaker.

And as you will know, Saskatchewan is the number one producer in the world of potash and uranium, and we're hoping that with the good work of Mr. Graham and his colleagues we may become the world's largest producer of kaolin as well. So I'd like all members of the Assembly to join with me in welcoming Mr. Graham here today. Thank you.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

Biggar.

## ADJOURNED DEBATES

### SECOND READINGS

#### Bill No. 28 — The Veterinarians Amendment Act, 2005 (continued)

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was talking about the relationship between and the concerns of not having enough veterinarians and giving the veterinarians more business in order to attract more veterinarians to the province and to the university at the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] and the void that is out there where technicians fill that void in horse equine dentistry, and also farriers with shoe horses and those types of issues. And as I'd mentioned before, Mr. Speaker, allowing, grandfathering the six or more equine dentists into technicians and in the future setting up a course either through SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] or the veterinary college at the U of S to train more technicians in the future to be specific for equine dentistry, being farriers, horseshoeing, those types of issues.

And in that way, Mr. Speaker, these technicians could work with or under a licensed veterinarian. And that would also get around the concerns about using sedatives and drugs that may or may not be available to someone that is not a veterinarian.

And we know, we've all heard the stories about — typically in animal health — drugs, you know, coming across the border, coming across from the United States. And certainly we wouldn't want any individual to be in a position that they're breaking any laws concerning this. But it just speaks to the fact that there is a considerable void in the industry that needs to be filled, and we need to do something about that. And I think that would be a good compromise to allow these people to be a technician.

And these existing six or eight people that would be grandfathered in, they could just come in and write an exam because they're experts in their field. Quite frankly they probably should be the people that would develop the program and the examination and training to bring more people into this field. So it's not something that they would . . . They shouldn't be left out of the process. They should be really part of the process and be allowed to take part in this whole support and training in this future course that individuals could take to become equine dentists and farriers.

And certainly it also speaks to the concern as I mentioned about drugs that these people need to do the job, two reasons: safety for the individual that's doing the shoeing and the dentistry work, but also the safety of the horse that's being worked on. And it's very, very important that this takes place.

Mr. Speaker, in the Bill that speaks to it, that it would include specifying dentistry on animals as within veterinary scope of practice, removing the exemption of castration of horses, and clarifying that all procedures for the diagnosis of pregnancy, sterility, or infertility in animals are included in the veterinary

scope of practice.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have watched horses being castrated. And certainly it takes somebody that's very careful and expert in that field. In the, I'll call it, the old days — unfortunately I'm getting older that I remember the old days — horses would be thrown with ropes and basically tied down, and then the castration would take place. Nowadays with drugs, they would be sedated, basically put under, and the castration would take place. It's much easier on the animal — for man and beast as is said back home — and much safer for everyone concerned. And again these people that are doing this in the industry have been doing this for years. And I don't see any reason why they do not continue to do that, Mr. Speaker.

The other thing that is very amazing about this Bill which we have found through discussion with the stock growers and others is that producers can't do pregnancy tests on their own animals. It's actually not in the . . . They're not allowed to do it. And, Mr. Speaker, that is unbelievable to find out that producers can't do that type of thing on their own animals because this is a practice that's been going on for generations. This is not new. But to find out now that it's not allowed under the Act is shocking to producers across this province.

[15:00]

We have been told that there's not a problem by the vet medical association; that it's not a problem with the individual producer doing their own work. But what they have said that there's at least one individual's been prosecuted, that a non-veterinarian going out, doing preg testing services. They've hired people to follow this individual around. They've saw him go to ranchers, saw him work there and they made a record of it. They hired a private investigator to follow this person around and they charged this individual and he was convicted of performing these operations, this preg testing. So there's a balance to what we're saying here. Possibly that individual should not be doing that work unless they were also considered a technician.

There is courses for the last 30, 40 years teaching individual producers about AI [artificial insemination], about preg testing. And then to find out now that these individuals, they have to be so careful about where they do their work that they could be charged. You would just assume the neighbours would help neighbours. And why not somebody that has a special expertise in that in the community, why wouldn't that person be the one that everyone would get to preg test their animals?

So there's many, many questions concerning that area too. And it's really disconcerting actually to find out that many of these procedures that producers have been doing on their own for generations, to find out now that they're basically illegal.

And even though the Saskatchewan Veterinary Medical Association says, well don't worry; we won't pursue these people in the court — that's not good enough, Mr. Speaker. Those procedures have to be taken out of the Bill. There needs to be amendments to be taken out of the Bill to allow producers to do their own work, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, another area that is of great concern is producers doing their own Caesareans, and this is not uncommon for

producers to do their own Caesareans. And there's many reasons why this should be allowed. Individuals that have quite a number of animals that calve out 200, 300, 4, 5, 1,000 head of cattle naturally will learn how to do Caesareans because every year not only do they breed cows that calve in the spring, but there's also a replacement factor that they breed a number of heifers, and there's generally a higher rate of Caesareans in heifers. So these producers become quite I would say expert in doing Caesareans. But again we find out now that they're not legally allowed to do that, and I'm sure they'd be quite surprised to hear that.

The other thing is with doing Caesareans, there's certain drugs that need to be given to the animal. And again it has the potential of having problems getting the proper drugs to give to the animal, to sedate the animal for freezing where the incision is made, and those types of operations and procedure.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the hard reality is even though we're through the BSE [bovine spongiform encephalopathy] crisis for the most part — animals that are 30 months and younger are able to be exported to the United States — we still do not have the border open to the United States to export cows. And at the worst, at the depth of the BSE crisis, they were worth 10 to 15 cents a pound. That's 100 to \$150 on a 1,000-pound cow. Now the prices for cows have come up somewhat, Mr. Speaker. They're around that 35 cents a pound. But on a 1,000-pound cow, that's \$350 that an individual would get for a cull cow.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if this cow or heifer needs a Caesarean, well I checked into the prices. A Caesarean costs about \$335. Well, Mr. Speaker, you know what's going to happen if a producer has a cow that needs a Caesarean? It's going to cost \$350 . . . or it's only worth \$350 and it's going to cost \$335 to do the Caesarean. Well he has two options really, Mr. Speaker. One is to gain the knowledge and ability to do the Caesarean himself or let the animal die or just put the animal down because it's not worth saving. Now, Mr. Speaker, that certainly isn't good alternatives.

And I believe that this Bill should address that type of situation that would allow a producer . . . first of all, the producers that are already doing Caesareans, to make it legal for them to do it. And also open the door up for technicians that may do it for a reduced rate, either working through or with a veterinarian in the busy season when the veterinarians don't have the time, especially in single-person practices that just don't have the time and the energy to cover the area that is needed.

And again it goes back, Mr. Speaker, to the point that there's not enough veterinarians in the province. And producers from all over the province have said, well they can't get a vet; when they go out to check your cattle at midnight or 2 in the morning and there's an animal that needs a Caesarean, well it's obvious that a veterinarian that's working long, long hours in a single-person clinic is not going to drive 20 to 30 or 50 miles — and in some cases even greater distances than 50 miles — to do a Caesarean because they are just plain exhausted from being up many, many nights in a row. So those are the issues that we see.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this also speaks to why we don't have enough veterinarians in the province. Well, Mr. Speaker, there is an agreement that I believe Alberta, Saskatchewan, and

Manitoba commit so much funding to the vet college at the U of S. And we're very fortunate in Saskatchewan to have that college training veterinarians in the province. But, Mr. Speaker, the government has let the vet college be run down. Now they have committed resources recently to it, but it got to the point that the vet college was working with equipment that was really 30 years old.

And there's been many innovations in the livestock industry. You can just go to any feedlot that's been recently built and you'll see that their handling facilities are state of the art. And in our own vet college at the University of Saskatchewan this college to this day does not have that state of the art equipment. So there's a concern there. Students that are going there, are they getting the best training that they could, given that they have antiquated equipment to work with — fencing, squeezes.

And then we find out, Mr. Speaker, because there is a shortage of veterinarians, that the Alberta government is now in the process of building their own vet college for large animals, even though I understand they are still going to continue to commit resources to funding their share of the vet college at the U of S. But this is not a very good sign, Mr. Speaker, when one of the partners at the U of S is going on their own to build a large-animal vet college. Now, Mr. Speaker, this is quite disconcerting because what does that say about the future of the U of S vet college? What does that say about the future of the livestock industry in Saskatchewan when one of the partners is basically on the verge of pulling out of the whole partnership?

The other issues that are around that is veterinarians are trained for large animals and small animals. But we have seen through the last really 20, 25 years, for various reasons, more of the veterinarians are wanting to specialize in small animals. And it's understandable. Working with large animals is very physical and demanding, and working with small animals is much better as far as . . . usually the dog and cat owners will bring their animals into the clinic. And they can deal with the animals in their clinic, in where it's warm, dry, all the equipment and everything is there. Large-animal clinics and operations, they're certainly, they're certainly . . . it's a different type of business where it's more demanding, and that's something that has to be addressed as well. And I'm not sure if this Bill is addressing that to date.

Now, Mr. Speaker, talking to the Saskatchewan Equine Ranchers Association, they are producers that have PMU [pregnant mare's urine] lines, and their industry has been devastated in recent years. And they have come to us, the official opposition, and said this is the last thing they need is to have to, in their eyes, hire more expensive — through the local vet — the more expensive procedures in order to look after their horses. And they're very upset that this Bill has been introduced and the amendments to this Bill because really they have been in an industry that's been really hurt in a big way in the last few years. And I believe that it's up to this government to support the members of the Saskatchewan Equine Ranchers Association.

Now, Mr. Speaker, going back to that balance between veterinarians and technicians that I was speaking about, since the onset of BSE, I believe that we have to be very concerned and the government needs to really look at the effects of

disease, not only to the safety of the food chain for human consumption, but also what that does in relationship to our trading partners.

As we all know, Mr. Speaker, when we found that we had BSE in Saskatchewan, in Canada, the borders were closed to the United States market. Since then we know the borders have been partially opened to 30 months and younger last spring. The markets have come back to a more or less normal situation in those younger age groups.

But still for the cull cows, that hasn't returned to normal markets. And it's interesting to note that ranchers and livestock producers, about 10 to 15 per cent of their income comes from the sale of cull cows. So it's a very important part that is still closed to the border, to the United States market.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about our trading partners, one of the big concerns is the health of our product, naturally — the safety of our product. And we have been told — and from my point of view as a livestock producer from working with veterinarians — that because there is a shortage of veterinarians, that it's putting strain on our system to deal with outbreaks of disease.

BSE was bad enough, but what if there was an outbreak of foot-and-mouth in North America, in Canada, in Saskatchewan? Do we have enough veterinarians on the ground to deal with that type of a very contagious disease? BSE, as bad as it was, is not a contagious disease. Quite frankly many people think it's a kind of a phony situation to begin with. But it's recognized that it's a disease that can be transmitted to humans. And so obviously we needed to take precautions to make sure the food safety was looked after.

But what if we had a very contagious disease breakout? And by all accounts we don't have enough veterinarians in this province. Now that would be a very, very serious problem.

The other part of that equation is why we would have an outbreak of disease. Well bioterrorism is something that is a big concern in the world. And any terrorist would see that spreading a contagious disease like that in North America would be devastating to our economies in the United States and Canada.

The key, Mr. Speaker, is to have enough trained veterinarians and technicians on the ground basically to come in and sort that situation out if there is an outbreak of — as I used the example — foot-and-mouth.

As we know back in the 1950s, there was an outbreak of foot-and-mouth near Regina. And at that time the authorities at the time came in and really cleaned up the situation. They slaughtered animals. They buried animals that could have been infected with the disease and did a very good job and stamped the disease out. And we've never had it since. So there's an example of what was done in the past but given enough resources and that's why it was looked after.

[15:15]

Nowadays I'm told by industry officials and veterinarians that we really don't have enough people on the ground in order to

look after a serious outbreak of an infection in our livestock industry. And that's a great concern to me. And again it goes back to maybe we don't need all veterinarians. Maybe we need more technicians as well to help with that type of a serious situation.

And again it speaks to our relationship with our trading partners. As we know, look what's happening with the bird flu that's coming across the world. Really it's a matter of when, not if, it arrives in North America. And we need the people on the ground to deal with outbreaks of those types of contagious diseases or viruses that may affect human health as well as obviously the health of livestock, Mr. Speaker.

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, when you look at our society in Canada. And I just need to go back to the history of my own family on both sides of my family. On one side of my family, they originally emigrated from Greece, and my grandfather was a really a peasant farmer in the mountains of Greece. They raised goats and milked goats and raised sheep for food. And when they came to Cambridge, to the United States, worked on the railway, immigrated to Canada I believe in 1906, worked for awhile on the railways in Canada and started farming in Canada, and that's what they raised. They raised mainly sheep and hogs.

And there was no — at that time, Mr. Speaker — there was no discussion about whether they can look after their own animals or worrying about being prosecuted just looking after their own animals, Mr. Speaker. They slaughtered sheep and lambs for meat, sold the meat around the community. They lived near Biggar by a community called Springwater. My grandfather used to set up a booth at the Springwater fair days and sell hot dogs that they made on the farm and different types of meat. And it was just an accepted fact and a right, quite frankly, that individual producers could do that, while nowadays there are so many rules and regulations that it's practically impossible other than certain individuals with a lot of capital behind them in order to do that process.

And I think there has to be a balance, Mr. Speaker, so that we still allow the entrepreneurial spirit to flourish in this province like my grandparents had when they first came to this country, to make a good living. They went on to have a slaughterhouse and did custom slaughtering of hogs mainly and again, sold meat around the community.

My other grandparents on the other side of the family, the Weekes side, they emigrated to Canada in 1921. He was a British marine that fought in World War I. They came to Canada and homesteaded north of Purdue. They had the horses. They had the livestock, the chickens and pigs. But what my grandfather did was lease and buy land in a certain area — in a block — and fenced it and really became a pasture manager.

Many people grazed their cattle and livestock on his pasture. And again, Mr. Speaker, if these types of laws were enforced in those days, my grandfather wouldn't be able to work and to make a living in those early days. It was just a foregone conclusion that you could look after other people's cattle, livestock, do any veterinary procedures that needed to be done, and it would be accepted and approved by everybody concerned, Mr. Speaker.

Through the years when my father first started farming, when he was 16 years old, he always had the dream of being a feedlot operator, of feeding cattle. And in the mid-to-late 1950s, he moved to the present location near Biggar where he started building corrals and set up a small feedlot to begin with. And in the early 1970s, he expanded the feedlot to where he was feeding up to 10,000 head of cattle at one time. And as I grew up as a teenager and as a child, I always helped around the feedlot and the farm, and it was a foregone conclusion that we would do our own procedures.

One of the jobs we had . . . I have two brothers and one of the jobs we had as kids growing up is on Saturdays, that would be the weekend that we would process cattle. And when I say process cattle, my dad bought steers and heifers and brought them into the feedlot. They needed to be processed which would include vaccinations, possible castrations, ear notching, implants, and deworming, those types of things. And it was my brother who was probably 15 years old and I was 12, and we were processing cattle.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this Bill, really when we look at it in detail what . . . The laws that's in this Act would make that an illegal operation. And I find that very alarming to see that type of Bill in this province where it's just been a foregone conclusion that producers could do their own type of work with their own animals.

In later years, Mr. Speaker, my dad's operation expanded. We hired actually the vet college out of the University of Saskatchewan to come out on a herd health, to do our herd health. And what they provided for was really a . . . I guess I'll just go into the details of what they did. Any time we had an animal that died, we would call the veterinary clinic and they would come out and do a post-mortem on the animal. And they would take pieces of the animal back into the university, do tests on it, and try to find out why the animal died.

And it was very important. When we first got involved with the U of S and particularly Dr. Janzen, there was a disease, a virus that was going through the livestock industry in Western Canada called IBR [infectious bovine rhinotracheitis]. And it quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, it looked very much like a normal pneumonia or shipping fever that is very common in livestock. But the problem is, normal shipping fever you give an animal antibiotic and generally, if the animal is caught quick enough that you could . . . The animal would respond to the medicine, to the antibiotic, and recover.

This disease called IBR is a disease that didn't respond. It was a virus. They would come down and show many of the same symptoms as shipping fever but wouldn't respond so the death rate became a problem. And many of the animals that had the virus did not do well after . . . even though they lived, they survived, did not do well, and in many cases never did finish when we were finishing animals for slaughter.

So this herd health program that we had with the University of Saskatchewan was very valuable and it's really expanded. With the growing feeding industry in Western Canada, that's essential to have some kind of a herd health program, either with the veterinarians or skilled people in herd health, in feedlot situations.

And there again, that's another example, Mr. Speaker, of the need of veterinarians in this province. And also, whenever the veterinarians came out to diagnose an animal they would . . . Because the university vet college is a teaching college, they would bring students out to the feedlot. And they would get the students . . . They would train the students really on the ground. They would get the students to help doing the post-mortems. If there was any castrations or operations needed to be done, they would show the students, train the students how to do it as they went along. So it was very valuable both for the vet college and for my dad's operation.

Mr. Speaker, back in the 1970s when the exotic cattle first arrived in North America, many producers, including my father, began to AI, artificial inseminate, livestock to try to breed up to a purebred animal in various different breeds — Maine-Anjou, Simmental, Blonde d'Aquitaine, Chianina, Charolais, Simmental. And my dad built up a herd of well over, I believe, at the peak of 500 cows. At the time there was a brucellosis outbreak in Western Canada. And again it's a serious disease for animals, but it's also a disease that can be transmitted to humans.

And at that time the Health of Animals, which is the CFIA [Canadian Food Inspection Agency] now, they took the approach that they would try to basically not eliminate the disease. Well I guess they were always trying to eliminate the disease, but the approach they took wasn't working. What they would do is come in and ask — well ask — demand the producer that has the disease in their herd to clean their corrals out, to segregate animals that have the disease, cows and heifers that have aborted fetuses. And that's the main way that this disease was passed on, through aborted fetuses.

And we went through all that work and finally the powers to be and Health of Animals and the Government of Canada decided, well the only way to eradicate the disease once a herd has it is to slaughter all the animals. And it's very devastating to the producer, but Health of Animals at the time learned the proper way of doing it and to their credit did the right thing and came in. And when the herd had brucellosis — they were tested for it — they'd come in and slaughtered the whole herd. They'd give compensation. Compensation is never enough but I'd think that we were happy considering the devastation of this disease. Came in and slaughtered all these animals and cleaned up the disease and eventually eradicated brucellosis from cattle. We're free from the disease and that certainly was one of the trade irritants with the United States, when we had brucellosis.

There's other diseases. Bluetongue is a disease that United States has. And so certainly if diseases are not looked after properly by the powers-to-be, that they really cause huge trade distortions and affect the producers of the day.

When the Charolais, probably the most prominent exotic breed, came to Canada, rate of gain was the big thing in the feeding industry. So my dad went out and bought the highest gaining bull at the test station at the U of S — Charolais bull. And this bull gained when he was on feed, gained nearly five pounds a day — I forget the number, but it was a huge, huge number.

So we bred this bull to our cows. Of course these cows that we had were British breed cows and never been bred to a larger

exotic bull. And what we found out, to our dismay, that that was a big mistake. This bull really had big large calves. There was calves that were coming out of cows that were 100 pounds plus and so there was a lot of calving problems. There was a lot of caesareans that had to be done and we learnt the hard way about breeding our cows to easy calving bulls.

And there's another example, Mr. Speaker, of a producer needing to do his own vet procedures, needing to be able to have the tools, the knowledge. And now I see — after we see what's in the Bill, in the Act — the legal right to work with their own animals.

And it's the same thing, Mr. Speaker, with the AI-ing, artificial insemination. Producers have been always doing this with their own cattle. They've, I don't think it was even . . . There was courses given around the province teaching individual ranchers and producers about artificial insemination so they could go back and do their own AI. And now to see that this Act really outlaws many of these procedures is very, very alarming, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, going back again to what the Saskatchewan Equine Ranchers Association have told us, to the stock growers what they have been telling us, FAC, the Farm Animal Council — we certainly have a lot of problems with this Bill.

[15:30]

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have been told in a meeting that the Minister of Agriculture has said that the Bill would be pulled, and these changes would be made in a new Bill. Now we've been told that the Bill would proceed, and these amendments would be brought in through committee.

Well again, Mr. Speaker, I don't have a lot of confidence in the Minister of Agriculture. It's amazing to me to see, Mr. Speaker, that his department have spoken to all these different groups before this Bill was introduced and still left out all these very glaring examples of problems in the Bill, and not only the amendments in the Bill but going back again to the existing Act where producers are not allowed to do their own work.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read a letter from the Saskatchewan Equine Ranchers Association to Dr. Robert Kerr, the provincial veterinarian of Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food. And it says:

Dear Dr. Kerr:

Re: Proposed changes to The Veterinary Act, 1987, as it relates to equine

It has come to our attention the Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food has initiated a review of The Veterinary Act, 1987. This letter is in response to proposed equine-related amendments to that Act. While we understand some of the amendments are being considered in efforts to eliminate non-licensed personnel from illegally accessing and administering pharmaceuticals, these changes have raised animal care concerns with us, as equine owners.

As an industry, the Saskatchewan Equine Ranchers raise

and care for over 2,000 horses. As responsible horse owners, our interest is to always provide our animals with the best care possible. To ensure that we are current in our management practices, we [continue to] . . . invest considerable resources and time into advancing our skills and knowledge with regards to a variety of issues from nutrition to animal care.

As with any livestock operation, periodically we require outside experts to assist us in ensuring our animals remain healthy. Although we're often challenged to find experienced veterinarians in rural Saskatchewan, they play a significant role in our business. We rely on veterinarians to assist us with many issues [with] . . . disease control to assisting mare/foal care issues, etc. On most occasions we find veterinarians very helpful and dedicated. However, we are often challenged with locating experienced and knowledgeable veterinarians in a timely fashion, due to the shortage in the rural communities.

In addition, on some occasions we find veterinarians do not have the skills to efficiently deal with various tasks, such as equine dentistry. Therefore, when we require dentistry services, reputable and experienced 'equine dentists' are our preferred choice. It is our experience that equine dentists are able to perform dentistry in a responsible and timely fashion, which assists us with ensuring our animals are receiving the best care possible.

In discussing this issue with a number of veterinarians . . . [we] have voiced concern about the equine dentists doing inadequate jobs, which may cause additional trauma to the horse, and not having the knowledge to address their mistakes. As this may very well happen, inadequate jobs can also occur by veterinarians, who are not skilled, experienced and lack equipment in the dentistry field. As well we are finding fewer veterinarians are able to provide teeth care services, which creates more of a dilemma for horse owner, particularly those who own large . . . [quantities] of horses such as members of SERA.

With regard to . . . [the change in your] Act re: equine dentistry, SERA suggests [Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food] consider other solutions to this issue such as, providing regular dentistry courses for all professionals including equine dentists and Veterinarians. Providing incentive programs to veterinarians to establish practices in rural areas, increasing dentistry teaching within the College of Veterinary Medicine to ensure all veterinarian students have adequate knowledge and have developed the skill set they need to provide equine dentistry.

Although we do not have the solution to the concern of some equine dentists illegally acquiring and administering drugs, we do not realize this may occur and cause concern. However, until skilled and willing veterinarians are more readily accessible in rural areas, horse owners need to continue to keep animal care paramount in their operations. To this end, it appears that keeping equine dentistry a viable option for horse owners needs to remain an option.

We cannot and will not endorse the changes in the above

mentioned areas.

Sincerely,

Shane Boyes  
SERA President.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that pretty well speaks to their concerns which I've tried to outline so far. Mr. Speaker, they're speaking to mainly equine dentistry and equine concerns, but also, Mr. Speaker, the Bill also is moving horses from livestock, which it has always been considered livestock, to a companion animal. And really moving it . . . the definition of a horse from livestock to companion means it's put in with dogs and cats and those types of animals.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to note that there are many horse lovers in this province and Western Canada. And it's true enough, Mr. Speaker. There are probably as many horses, I understand, today as there were in the '20s and '30s and '40s. It's just that back in those days horses were used on the farm for farming activity, for pulling sleighs and wagons, but nowadays they're more of a pleasure animal. There's still some horses being used, as I mentioned, in my operation and many other operations and ranches, horses still being used as working horses.

But more and more of the horses are being used basically as . . . are kept as pets for riding. They're a very wonderful animal. As I mentioned, my daughter really loves her horse. And people really want to look after their animals, give them proper care and nutrition, and it's interesting to note that this concern with equine dentistry has become a greater and greater concern, Mr. Speaker.

Now also, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my own operation and many other ranches and feedlots, that we have very skilled people that are not veterinarians delivering antibiotics, vaccinations, doing castrations, dehornings on cattle in the feedlot. And as far as I can see, that is not permitted under this Act. And, Mr. Speaker, quite frankly it's not acceptable to have that type of law in place in this province when we want to grow and expand the livestock industry in this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think that the government needs to do considerable work and thought into this Bill before it is either reintroduced or amended because obviously the government hasn't done its homework at all with this Act. And really it's quite alarming what this Bill will do, Mr. Speaker.

We received a letter, an anonymous letter from a practicing veterinarian, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan. And it's quite interesting to see this person's point of view. Again they restate what I've been saying, but it goes on to say that the Saskatchewan Veterinary Medical Association wants government regulation that effectively will be a direct transfer . . . cash from the livestock producer's pocket to that of the veterinarian.

And again it goes on to say . . . Talk about timing. Well I've just spoke to the . . . No kidding, the timing is devastating when the cost of a Caesarean is three hundred and thirty-five, twenty-five dollars and the price of that cow would be around

the same price, \$350 depending on the weight. So that's certainly a serious, serious consideration.

It goes on to say that this government . . . they want this government to make it illegal for a producer to administer penicillin or any other drug to livestock they produce. They will have to pay a veterinarian to do this for them in the name of public interest. And it goes, it says . . . Oh dear. Mr. Speaker, the information goes on also to say also a non-veterinarian may administer . . .

It also goes on to say that there's a concern with neighbours helping neighbours, giving medicine and those types of things. And the Act, as we know, states that the fine for the first offence is not more than \$1,000. Second and subsequent offences are not more than \$2,000. So it's a very serious, serious concern to producers.

Mr. Speaker, and as we try to develop our livestock, intensive livestock operations . . . cattle and livestock is something I know more about. But we have many hog barns have been built in this province. We have a number of chicken feather operations, eggs operations as well. So these are very, very critical to those producers as well, and all those producers have associations that belong to the Farm Animal Council.

Now, Mr. Speaker, my operation also belongs to the Farm Animal Council. And this group was set up really to be the focal point to really push back to certain overzealous farm animal welfare groups that really . . . well as producers we know that their position is not, quite frankly, acceptable. It's not even factual, Mr. Speaker. The PETAs [People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals] of this world that . . . we know how extreme they can get. And the Farm Animal Council have great concerns with this veterinary Act.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that we have to have certain standards in our livestock industry. We all know that animal welfare is very important. It's not a matter of just being cruel or giving punishment to an animal. It's an economic reality. If a producer doesn't treat his animals properly, doesn't look after his animals properly, this producer isn't going to make any money at the job, at his business. So it's certainly . . . The two things go hand in hand. And there's always bad apples out there.

But I think the livestock producers of this world are the best producers of this province, or the best producers in the world quite frankly, and go to great lengths in order to look after the animals properly because first of all they're producers that like animals. They like working with animals. They naturally treat their animals well. And in order to make money, they know they have to look after their animals to get the best performance and weight gain and those types of things.

So I think fact that the Farm Animal Council is the group that really keeps an eye on practices in the livestock industry. And they're really the group that speaks, in my mind, to many of the potential problems and concerns that may arise.

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, that over the years there's been development of other livestock industry, as I'm also aware of the game farming industry, the elk industry—raising of elk. And it's interesting that in the elk industry, again an animal that

does run in the wild will be the most . . . well let's say take a lot of consideration because of the fact they were once a wild animal. And there's a lot of people concerned about the welfare of elk or game farm animals in particular.

And I have a bit of a knowledge about the elk industry. The elk are raised for a number of reasons. One, for breeding—you raise elk to sell to other producers to expand their herd. You raise elk for meat. It's an expanding industry as well. But the one interesting aspect of raising elk is the cutting of the horn and the value of the horn.

And, Mr. Speaker, the elk industry has gone through some trying times as well with chronic wasting disease and . . . But there's still some value in the horn. And the process around cutting the horn, Mr. Speaker, is an interesting one. And the producers have to be very, very concerned about the proper procedures so that the animal does not suffer, that the animal does not die, and the best humane practices are applied in the cutting in the horn.

Mr. Speaker, the cutting of the horn from the male elk take place in the spring. And depending on the age of the animal, sometime they will start, Mr. Speaker, in April, May, June, July, depending on the age of the animal. And in elk operations there's always a concern about the hardship on the elk bull when the horn is cut. And that is a problem because the elk horn is cut at the velvet stage. And it's interesting when you touch the horn of an elk when it's in the velvet stage, it is . . . The reason it's called the velvet stage is because when you touch it, it's just like velvet on the outside. But on the inside, it's full of blood. It's a part of the animal that is growing quickly and it's full of blood. And to the touch, it has that velvet touch to it. And also it's very warm—actually hot, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker.

[15:45]

And so producers, when they go to cut the horn off at the velvet stage, have to be particularly careful in how they do that. And there is a device called the Stockstill. And the Stockstill is really a piece of equipment that gives a very light electrical volt to the animal. And you hook it up to one end of the animal. There's different ways of doing it. When it was first started in the industry, they would say you should do the whole body of the animal. So you'd hook up the Stockstill on the tail of the animal and on the ear of the animal on the side you're cutting the horn. And you would just turn it up and give a slight electrical shock to the animal, and it would take away the pain of cutting the horn.

But in recent years, it's been refined to putting it on . . . hooking one piece of the equipment onto the ear and the other just to the skin of the animal. And it's amazing when you hook that up, you turn the electricity on. And then you would put a rubber band around the horn and turn the power up when you're actually cutting it off, with either a mechanical saw or a handsaw cut the horn off. And when you shut the power off, the animal would stop bleeding. So it's very safe. It reduces the amount of bleeding the animal would have. It would certainly reduce the shock or the sensation and the pain of the cutting of the animal.

So these are types of practices that producers are using in other types of operations, in game farm operations. And again, Mr. Speaker, does this Bill, does this Bill prohibit those types of operations? And as we try to diversify this province — as we know agriculture's going through some very tough times — producers are looking for diversification into other livestock and other crops so they can make ends meet.

Mr. Speaker, as a good example in my area, there's not only my livestock operation . . . but producers have diversified away from grain farming as we know because of the, just the devastating prices in grain farm to livestock, particularly cows and calves.

And, Mr. Speaker, in the Biggar constituency I believe I have two veterinarians that work in my constituency. One's located in Biggar and another one is close to Saskatoon. And I know during calving season these people are just run right off their feet, Mr. Speaker. And certainly, certainly we need more veterinarians.

And I know in other provinces, we've been shown the map by the SVMA about the areas that veterinarians cover in the province. And there's certain areas — especially in the South, Southwest — I believe there's huge areas that one veterinarian will look after. And quite frankly it's impossible that these veterinarians can get around to all the producers' ranches in calving season. So it's pretty imperative that ranchers . . . Well they always have been self-reliant and looked after their own veterinary work and certainly speaks to that in today's situation where they will need to continue to be able to do that. And it's certainly disconcerting, as I mentioned, that these producers may be actually breaking the law by working on their own animals, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to note that producers always have got together — neighbours, friends — got together to process cattle, castrate, brand calves in the spring and normal work that's always been done. And to find out now, Mr. Speaker, that these procedures may become or may be illegal is very disconcerting.

Mr. Speaker, not only is cow-calf operations and feedlot and ranching operations, but there's purebred producers in the province as well. And one of the things that purebred producers do naturally is breed breeding stock, mainly bulls. Producers will have their own bull sale or go together with other producers and have a bull sale or just sell bulls off the farm. And one of the things that they have to do is get the bulls' semen tested to see if the bulls have strong semen so that these bulls will breed the animals that the producer wants bred in their herd. And that's certainly a procedure that veterinarians do.

And as we hope the livestock industry expands in this province, Mr. Speaker, the need for this type of service is going to increase. And again there is that balance between veterinarians that do that work, Mr. Speaker, and are they able to get around and do all those particular procedures. And again it's very seasonal work. Bull sales take place in the spring so all that type of work needs to be done in a very short time. And so that's a concern as well, Mr. Speaker.

The other aspect of the livestock industry is preg testing. And

years ago producers wouldn't get their animals preg tested. They would just, well they would see which animal didn't have a calf in the spring and then decide at that point whether they were going to keep that animal, rebreed it, or sell it. Now most producers get the animals preg tested in the fall and sell them as cull animals because they don't want to feed that cow throughout the winter and find out that they don't have a calf and then have that extra cost of feeding that cow all winter. And so this again speaks to this real big problem where the Act . . . the veterinary association wants this restricted to only veterinarians. And again, Mr. Speaker, allowing technicians or just producers themselves to do that type of procedure on their own ranches and farms.

And I personally think there needs to be more co-operation between the SVMA, number one, which really highlighted is working with the Saskatchewan Equine Ranchers Association, working with equine dentists so that these people can be either grandfathered in now or new technicians come along, they get the proper training that they need in our own university. Or SIAST for instance could give the training to these people and work together. Where these individuals, both in the horse dentistry areas but also ranchers or technicians, could go out and do preg testing in the fall which as we know a lot of the veterinarians can't get around to all the ranchers that . . . Again, a reasonable type of procedure that needs to be done.

And I think there needs to be a lot more co-operation first with the government of the day. The NDP government obviously has dropped the ball on this Bill, not realizing first of all what's already in the Act that's very detrimental to the industry but also dropped the ball. They claim to have spoken to all these livestock groups, but I know there's a number of these livestock groups were very surprised to see what's in this Bill.

So the government needs to work with producers, needs to work with livestock associations and work out some type of mechanism to allow the veterinarians to really try to get what they need — which I agree — to encourage more veterinarians in the province but also to fill the void, the gap in some services that are out there that is being filled by equine dentists, by ranchers doing preg testing and those types of things.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know there's a number of other members that would like to speak to this Bill. And it's going to be interesting to see how the government deals with this Bill in the future because I certainly know that producers will not stand for the amendments that is being brought in. And once producers have learned that actually everyday procedures they've been doing for years is also illegal, potentially illegal, that there's going to be a grave concern in the livestock industry about this.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to let one of my other colleagues speak to this Bill at this time.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble):** — I recognize the hon. member for Arm River-Watrous.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to add a few points that . . . My colleague had talked about the Bill quite extensively, but he did miss a couple of points, concerns about this particular Bill. This government has talked about making amendments on this Bill but like I say, they won't bring them

forward yet. And there's concerns out there. There isn't a lot of trust in this government. They're looking at 42 fraud cases that are out there. And over the years we've talked about trust in this government, and it's slipping at that end of it.

But there's one particular thing in this Bill here that deals with . . . It's being amended on striking out the word horses. And it goes on to say, under explanation, horses today are often considered pets rather than livestock. So I would like to tell a few stories out from my area that kind of refute that fact. That horses are considered working animals.

And I showed this to some ranchers and I've had a few calls on it. And even vets . . . We don't have many vets out our way unfortunately. I think in my constituency right now I only have, that I know of, one vet that's set up in Watrous. We have one that services out of Lumsden, is hoping to set up a satellite office in Davidson, and I hope she does that.

But one of the concerns is dealing with PETA any time you change a little bit of legislation dealing with the word pets because they're always looking to stop the use of animals. And when I say any kind of use of animals, I don't even think they like people to have pets. I really don't. You look at their website and you see the people demonstrating. I think basically — they, in themselves — they don't even believe that people should even use animals for pets. That fish shouldn't be in an aquarium. That you shouldn't have dogs; you shouldn't have cats. And specially large animals, they're opposed to that, of any kind of use for animals at that end of it.

And by bringing this kind of legislation in, will that give them a doorway to start bringing a lawsuit against some ranchers for using horses or will that maybe bring a lawsuit . . . Maybe not so much. Right now they're not going after ranchers. That's further down the line for them.

One of their steps is rodeos. That's their first step is what they'd like to end. And by bringing that forward, would that give them some kind of a leeway to bring in a lawsuit or to cause trouble for people that use them in rodeos, people that ride horses in gymkhana? I have 4-H clubs out throughout my constituency, as many members do, where horses are used in gymkhana. It's a sport that, you know, they compete in it and that end of it.

So that was a great worry, changing that, because where would it stop? The next step is also then are you going to maybe change it where they can't be used for any work? Would that be further down the road? We talk about working horses. There's lots and lots of people in my constituency, they use horses a lot more for work than they do consider them for pets, even though they treat those animals very, very well. There isn't any horse owner that probably treats his horse any better than a cowboy or anybody that's working with horses.

You take in my constituency, Arm River constituency, I don't know if you . . . I'm going to tell a few stories. And I hope you allow me a little bit, but it does tie to this particular Bill. This valley that I represent along here that runs between Regina and Saskatoon . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh you said, Arm River valley. If you ever look at it when you're travelling on the highway, it does come up to Aylesbury, Chamberlain. You can look down in there.

Along that valley is cattle country. That's all it can be used for. It's not farmed. It's cattle country. It's privately owned pastures. It's co-operative owned pastures. It's community pastures. There's some provincial pastures set up. There's also some federal community pastures that are set up all along that base — all along that whole river bottom there. And there is a river that runs through it year-round. It's spring-fed, and that river never, I've never, ever in my life have ever remembered that ever going dry. There's always places that, along there, it may get down to a trickle some dry August and July, but there is always water running through there.

[16:00]

And that's one of the reasons the only way that you can work that particular valley is on horses. I mean that's it. You get down along the river; it's boggy. You can't take a four-wheel drive, ATV [all-terrain vehicle] and . . . down in there working. The sides are too steep. There's bramble bushes, buck brush, trees, small brush. The only way to work that cattle out of that country is on a horse. And so when they're working that particular in the fall, when they're rounding up cattle or when they're checking cattle, the fence lines, that's the only way they'll check fence lines, water holes, take salt out.

I know of cowboys in the PF [Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration] pasture. We used to put our cattle in the PF pasture at McCraney years ago. Now I have more of my own, so I don't use it anymore. But I can remember as a kid going there and in the fall rounding up the animals you . . . horses, they were . . . and it was all done, it's still done on horses.

And I'll tell you what. There isn't anybody that probably treats their horse any better than a cowboy. I've seen them work in the saddle, you know, 10, 12 hours in the day, dog tired, and yet when they bring that horse in, they take the saddle off it, blanket. They rub it down. They make sure that horse is cooled down, watered, and fed properly before they eat and they rest.

So at that end of it, it worries me that PETA is always saying that horses . . . and when they're used for work or they're used in rodeos, they're mistreated. I've been involved in rodeos. Horses are looked after very well on rodeos. The stock producers that take the animals to the rodeos, then horses are very well looked after. They're looked after by vets. They're looked after by the owners. They are very well fed, very well maintained, and anything that they need in the way of medicines or injuries that may have occurred they are very well looked after. And yet there's that perception out there in the big cities — not so much in Saskatchewan and Alberta, Manitoba and BC [British Columbia], but maybe down east and in the states in the big cities that — that they're mistreated, that they're ill-treated.

So anything change in that, that worries the producers out there because as a rancher you're always fighting PETA. That's in the back. They're out there trying to . . . And they will use any little thing to start with, and then they just keep going. And they want to eliminate the use of horses, cattle for meat, horses to ride. I mean that's their long-range goal. And if anybody thinks any different, they're misinformed because if you follow them, if you watch their website, that is a goal that they want to push. They will take a little step at a time. And we have steps here in

the province that protects the mistreatment of animals which we have, which is good. I mean them laws there. It is. If anybody is inhumane to an animal, we have societies, we have laws that protect that, already in place. I would say we have some of the best laws in the country dealing with that.

And I don't think we need to have that particular clause in there. I think it should stay the way it is because of that. We already have laws that deal with inhumane treatment of animals. But changing wording, trying to . . . And that's what PETA would like is to make the perception that something's a pet, and then once it's a pet then it's classified different than a working animal. Then all of a sudden, oh you shouldn't be using it as riding or roping or using it for work.

The member before me talking about feedlot operators, I mean that's the only way you can check animals is on a horseback in a feedlot. And that's what they do. There's riders . . . I've got a feedlot not that far from me. I mean that's . . . They got two or three riders. That's their job every morning, get on the horse and check the pens, check the animals. They have the medicines with them. Whatever needs to be treated — whether it's foot rot, whether it's a shot of penicillin or respiratory disease that's showing up in an animal — well that's when they can treat them particular animals.

And it also deals with another little issue of that Bill. When you talk about feedlot operators, does that mean then they maybe they can't treat them animals? Because that's how they . . . that's how it's done. It's not by the owner because they're dealing with 10,000 head of cattle. The owner can't personally treat every animal at that end of it. So it's done by the cowboys that are working the pens. They're the ones that are treating the animals. So does that mean then, under this law, that they won't be able to treat them animals at that end of it, Mr. Speaker?

And that's also a concern that was raised by some feedlot operators because, I mean, you can't have a vet that runs around. They just don't have the time. There isn't a vet there. And the cost would be . . . And these cowboys do the minor treatments. They're the ones that administer the medicines. They're the ones that treat for foot rot, for various simpler things along there that could be . . . You know, this Bill could say maybe, no you can't do that because you don't own them cattle; you're just working for the owner.

And that also deals with the ranchers. Does that mean that the cowboys can't treat an animal in the PF pasture, that every time they run into something that they're going to have to call a vet? And lots of times you can't find vets. They're just busy. Out in our area, they're just . . . especially when it comes to calving time, at that end of it.

But getting back to working, there's various things of working horses, you know. And it's just not to Saskatchewan and Alberta and different places. I was in Hawaii two years ago, and I wanted to see the interior of the country. It's a beautiful country, Hawaii. I was in Oahu. But yet you know, it's pretty mountainous. And I really didn't want to take a vehicle there; you can take an ATV there or some things.

But there's a ranch just outside Oahu about, oh about half-hour drive away, along that. It was started by a whaling captain

years, years ago. It's been in the family for generations and generations. And it's a working ranch, but also they turned it into a tourist one on the side. And they have, you can rent a horse for the day and you can ride the trail. So I did that, Mr. Speaker. And basically, that is considered a working horse.

There were people there from the city that probably would consider that horse a pet. And they were there that day. But that, basically to the owners, that is a working animal because when they're not doing tourists, taking them out, if they're short horses in . . . [inaudible] . . . they grab them to move the cattle around. They will use them horses in that end. And also that's an extra set, extra money being brought in from that particular ranch or whatever. It's another source of income around that. So that is basically what you would call a working ranch.

Them horses, they probably don't think they're working. I mean they enjoy being there. I was there that day. They enjoyed . . . You know, you could tell when a horse . . . If you're familiar with animals, you can tell when an animal isn't under stress and enjoys doing what it is doing. And they enjoy getting out and going along there, the mountain trails. We did a ride up, did a ride back. Cattle were spread out over the side there in the grassy place. It was very beautiful. But dealing with PETA, that is things that they would like to shut down.

There's also, if you look at outside of Craik, there's trails in . . . same thing. There's different places that people are setting up places where you ride horses for recreation even though it's a source of income for the ranchers on the side. And that is worrisome to them, that this may be opening up, may be making it harder for them to actually use that as a working horse, even though that's what it's classed as. For the owner, that is a working animal — not a pet — even though it's treated just as good as anybody would treat their cat or their dog and that. But it's still a working animal; it is not a pet.

So to classify it into the pet range is troublesome to a lot of people. You show this Bill to a lot of ranchers. And on that side, there probably isn't. But the member from Yorkton, he's got some farmland in that area and he's got some cattle owners. And I think if he showed that to them, I'm pretty sure that they would be a little concerned with that end of it, that there isn't many members that do, but there is a few that reach out.

The member from Meadow Lake, that's a lot of cattle country in that area. I think if his producers and ranchers knew about this, they'd be a little concerned. I think they would want that struck out. They would want this not basically changed because basically, I think when you're doing that, you're opening the door for organizations like PETA. And I mean, you have to remember that these people are humanely treating their animals. It's not like they're not, I mean.

So that's one of the concerns with that particular Bill at that end of it. It also deals with vets at that end of it. And I have nothing but respect for vets. Like I said, my area, I wish we had more. We've only got one that I know of. I can remember lots of times needing a vet and phoning and you can't get one.

And one instance, there was a vet one time. We had a heifer calving. And it was 30 below. It had been storming for a day, day and a half. I mean, there was roads blocked. It was like

midnight when I went out and checked. And so, managed to get it in. All I could do was, I couldn't run it in the open pen where the chute was and the head gate. All I could do was get it in the barn, throw a rope on it, and started to pull the calf. I couldn't get it to come.

You know, I phoned my vet. And he says, can you bring it in, which normally I can do most times. I said, you know . . . I look at my trailer. It's buried in a snow bank. It's 30 below out. I don't think this tractor's going to start, it's a diesel. I don't think I'm going to. I know that I'm not going to. There's a bank in front of that barn. I'm not going to be able to back the truck and the trailer up and load this animal. And it's already down. I don't think we're going to get it. And I said, you know, the only other option . . . He says, I've worked on ice. I can't get out.

I could shoot it, you know, because I don't want to see an animal suffer. Nobody wants to see an animal suffer. And he says no. He says, I'll be there. And it was storming, and I said, well, I don't know. The highway's pretty rough. And he says, I'll be there. He had a four-wheel drive. I haven't met a vet yet that doesn't have a four-wheel drive, especially in rural Saskatchewan because they need one out there.

And he was there. And we worked on it. We worked on that. Remember bringing it in there, and it was like 30 below. And so we got the calf puller out again and he's trying. I'm pulling and he's got his hands in there and it's not coming. And he says, I think we're going to have to perform a Caesarean. And he says, you know, he says I don't do many of these out in a barn almost in the middle of nowhere, he says, but I think we're going to have to. And I says okay, I'll help you any way I can you know. I mean that's dedication.

So we get ready. We get set up. You know we get the animal. There's a drug he gives that kind of sedates it a bit, just so it's not wild because we got to have some movement on it. You don't want to have it choke down. You know we got to shave the area where we're going to do the Caesarean. He then puts antiseptic on it, and then we start . . . he cuts it. And by this time we don't know if the calf's alive. We pushed it back. We knew when we started it was, but we've got to push the calf back, back into the cow because we only had basically two feet showing and a little bit of the nose. We had to get it back in the cow, and then he starts cutting, and you don't know if the calf's alive. But to make . . . it was a good story. The calf did . . . we did get the calf out.

But that's dedication. He was there in the middle of the night; probably didn't leave there until 3:30. And I'm not the only guy that has cattle in trouble out there. I mean I asked him, how much sleep do you usually get? And he said in calving, he said not much. He said I'm on call basically 24 hours a day. And they go 24 hours. They go. When they're out there, they go hard. And I have a lot of respect for my veterinarians.

And I know on this Bill that some of them are a little bit concerned with it because I mean they . . . there's various aspects of it. The pet one is that. That's a big concern to them. And also at the end of it I think this also deals with horse dentistry, I understand at that end of it. And it also deals with . . .

Another thing talking about vets, because there's times when I've phoned a vet and he can't come. I remember the one that's in Lumsden now, phoning her one time and she said, I'm on a call. I'll get there, you know she said. And before that she said, I'm already two calls behind.

So I mean I got to phone, there's always somebody you know in the area that can help you. And basically they have to be . . . And a lot of them won't take cash but I mean you got to give them something. I mean these guys sometimes travel 30 miles. I know some guy that's very good with animals that basically knows how to do a lot of that stuff. And you will . . . You know a lot of them won't take cash but you'll say listen . . . you know other guys have gotten them, and you know just because they need to. Nobody wants to see an animal suffer.

Now what's this going to . . . like this is also a concern to raise. Will that affect that, that somebody is helping somebody else and maybe only charges for gas. You know I need some gas money because I've been out doing this quite a bit. Will that affect them, you know. And that happens lots out in rural Saskatchewan. I mean people, you just help one another. I mean you know somebody that's in trouble. I've gone and helped neighbours with their cattle. That just the way it is out there in rural Saskatchewan at that end of it.

[16:15]

So there is some concerns with this particular Bill. And I know that they said they were going to bring some amendments. Well let's look at them first or let's just pull the Bill off the order paper. Why is it coming back all the time? And now why not . . . why can't they show us the amendments, like before it gets to committee? You know, when all of a sudden then they are saying, well let's vote on it. Let's do this, you know, let's . . . You know, they're pushing it. So we'd like to see the amendments so we have time to get them out to my vets and get them out to the producers at that end of it. So at that end of it I hope they do.

Talking about horse dentistry at that end of it, I understand that it is different than veterinary. There is . . . I don't know in Saskatchewan if you can take courses at that particular end of it but I know in the States you can.

There was a guy — I didn't know him that well but a buddy of mine knew him — and he was a horse dentist, you know. He had taken a course. He wasn't a vet, but he'd taken a horse . . . for dentistry. And I remember him telling the story because that his . . . he was joking with him. He says, I need some work done on my teeth. Because it was his fault. Or he said to the dentist, it's your fault I've got this tooth knocked out, and maybe I'll tell you the story that ties in with this horse dentistry and telling a little bit about the horse dentistry's past.

The story is the buddy, they rodeo a bit down in Texas and this is where this horse dentist was. And he's like most vets, or people that are into dentistry, or into owning horses. They have cattle on the side, most of them do. Even the vets around here, our vet around here, they have animals. They usually like to have cattle on the side and animals. And he happened to be down there staying with him when he was rodeoing down there for a week or two. And one morning he said, well we're going

to move some of my cattle to another pasture and would you like to help? He says, yes okay, I'm down here. Yes okay. You got an extra horse for me? He says, yes, oh yes, yes.

So they saddle up and it's early in the morning. Because in Texas if you're going to move cattle, you got to move them in the morning. You got to work with them because if you work them in the heat of the afternoon, I mean it stresses the animals out, it stresses the horses out; you've got insects. So any work they do with cattle is early in the morning.

So it's about 5, 5:30 and they're going to move these particular cows to another pasture. And where they're moving them out of, there was a kind of a thicket of trees and buckbrush and a kind of a long, little creek and stream. And he says, well do you want to go this way? And there's usually . . . sometimes early in the morning there'll be a few cows, they'll be laying in the shade and that, and just kind of bring them out in the open. And we're moving them up west, he said, towards the direction there.

So my buddy, he's kind of like riding. It's early in the morning and he's half asleep. And he's got his, you know, hat kind of pulled down a little low and he's riding the horse. And all of a sudden the horse just stops. It just tenses up. And if you've ever ridden a horse, that means a couple of things. I mean, one, it's hit unfamiliar territory, or it smells another animal. There's danger. It's alert, eh? So he kind of . . . You know in Texas, I mean, that can mean a snake. If you're in up in the western part, the highlands, Texas, or in the mountains, it could be cougars, stuff like that. So anyways he kind of perks up, he looks, and he's eyeball-to-eyeball with a possum. Now the possum is like he is — it's half asleep. So the possum kind of like . . . And if you're familiar with possums, they sleep upside down in trees, hanging by their tail. So the possum all of a sudden, it wakes up; it panics; it drops on the horse and the . . .

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble):** — I just want to say to the hon. member, while his stories have entertainment value, I don't think they're closely enough related to the Bill. So I just remind the member that we are dealing with The Veterinarians Amendment Act and I have been patient with the member, but I would ask him to try to draw his remarks to the Act. Thank you.

I recognize the hon. member for Arm River-Watrous.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Mr. Speaker, why I tell it like this, this person that was a vet is a horse dentistry which also deals with this Act. And he talked a little bit things dealing with this Act. Anyways, getting back quick, story short, possum . . . The horse started bucking, my buddy's trying to keep the horse from bucking, slap the possum off. Anyways he falls off. He hits a tree, catches his mouth, knocks a tooth out. So the vet comes back — this is horse dentistry — and he said jokingly, he says, well, you do horse dentistry. You know. He says, is this anything like a real dentist? And he said no, we do take courses. It is different than that. It is different, he says. But he's not a vet.

Now under this law then he wouldn't be able to treat horses. He wouldn't be able to do that any more. He wouldn't be able to do any horse dentistry because he is not a registered vet. Even though that's all he did — he only worked basically on horses'

teeth. And you may say in Texas they may not do a lot of that, but close to Houston, there's a lot of money, and there's a lot of people that have horses.

Even around Saskatoon, acreages that look after . . . that is a big demand in a lot of the big cities and acreages. They will look after their horses to the T. I mean these horses are in air-conditioned barns. They are like looked after very well, and yes, they have teeth and they will have people that come and look at their teeth at that end of it. So under this law, that wouldn't affect him.

Now I haven't been down there for a long time and I don't know if they've actually changed the ruling on it, but I just wanted to tell the story of that. Because he made a living on the side doing that. That was his living on the side, doing horse dentistry. He learned it from his dad and had taken some courses. So his dad did in the '30s and '40s and basically back then they just pulled teeth that were rotten on horses. I mean, you know abscess, same as you. I mean, there's nothing worse as a person if you've got an abscessed tooth, how much it hurts. Well it's no different on an animal. They feel pain like we do. And that means somebody has to be able to do that. Somebody has to have that knowledge of taking that tooth out or working on that tooth. So there is a place for them. And maybe it's not a huge place, but it is a place. If you care about animals, it is a place in society for them. And they did that at that end of it.

And I know . . . I'm sorry about the story but I'm just trying that when we deal with legislation, when we deal with legislation, we bring forward legislation such as this Bill, it deals with people. These aren't numbers. They're dealing with people. And that's why sometimes I like to tell a story that relates to a particular piece of legislation. Because you bring forth a particular piece of legislation, you alter people's lives. If it's an SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] Bill, doing a driver's licence, you alter the way you do things. If it's a Justice Bill, you will alter the way they may have to do things, you know.

And with this Bill, you may alter the way things happen to a certain person's life. So when you do that you should have full knowledge of that and know that how is it going to affect it further down the road. You have to look . . . you have to be able to . . . When you bring forth legislation, you have to look just not how it's going to deal with today. How is it going to deal with six months down the road or a year or two down the road? How is it going to affect people? Is it going to put people out of business or is it going to cause concerns?

I mean you know if a particular . . . With horse dentistry, I mean if these people can't practise it, I mean yes it will affect the way it is done. And there is . . . Horse industry is an industry. It's just not cowboys that use them. I mean, there's riding schools. I come up here to Regina. There's equestrian. And that's where some of the dentistry is done, on them kind of horses because all . . . And show horses. When you do the Regina Exhibition, there's horses are brought in for show.

And part of it is looks. And yes, if you've got a swollen jaw on a horse you know you don't want that. If you have maybe a tooth that needs to be filed — there's just not pulling teeth. Sometimes on some of them they will file teeth that a horse

broke, which they will on certain things — if they're eating something or whatever, just like a human you know — and it causes them a bit of pain. They'll file it down. They look after it at that end of it.

And these are people that care about animals. I mean you'll . . . Because that's one of the things we have to deal with, whether it's vets or whether it's the horse dentistry or that. The main thing is people care about animals. These people all care about animals. They all care about their welfare, and any way that they can help them you know at that end of it.

And dealing with that end of it, I've never had a lot to do with horse dentistry. I've only talked to the one horse dentistry at that end of it.

But another aspect of it is then, where else are you going to stop this? There's also people . . . I've got a guy that used to trim hoofs. I mean, I know of people that did that. They went around. They trimmed hoofs for horses. And that wasn't a vet, but that was separate. And there was always people that did that. They came around once a year. If you wanted your hoofs trimmed on your horses, they trimmed them. They had the tipping cage, you know. They knew what had to be done. But yet they weren't vets. They weren't vets. You have to remember that. They weren't doing any veterinary work other than, you know . . . They weren't doing any other treating. But they also trimmed hoofs. So does that mean then, is that going to be the next thing that you will say no, that these people can't go around trimming hoofs, that only vets can do?

Another one is shoeing. I mean, years ago people used to do that and there still is. And they're harder and harder to find, them kind of people that'll shoe horses, but they go around and they shoe horses, you know. They trim the hoofs, and some horses they still shoe them. And is that going to come further down the road, where all of a sudden no, you can't do that end of it? So that worries the people here, where you're bringing forth the legislation . . .

I don't think there was a problem in the industry when I talked to anybody. I've talked to vets. Unfortunately I'm probably going to be talking to one or two this spring because that means I've got trouble with a cow or a calf, and I've got to talk to them at that end. And I'll be talking this.

But it's not a problem that's ever . . . And over the years I've known a lot of vets, and it's never been a concern. In the last six years, they know I'm an MLA, you know. I've talked to them, and they said that, you know, it's never a concern with the vets in my area at that end of it.

I know that there was the member from Nutana that said, well we'll send it to all the vets. Well I'll take it. I'll take my speech. I'll take Randy's speech and give them to my vets at that end of it because to them this isn't a problem that needs to be fixed, you know. All they want is . . . They're like us. They want more . . . [inaudible] . . . with the shortage of vets in there, at the end of it. And that deals with money in the country.

BSE hurt. Right now farming industry is in the toilet. BSE hurt the cattle industry. I mean, you try to save as much money as you can, you know. And unfortunately that is at any way you

can, and there's been less demand for vets. In fact, you know, guys have . . . because guys are getting out of the farming industry, getting out of the cattle industry . . . BSE, there was less cattle being out there. And guys phoning, maybe not phoning the vet as much as they should have or could have, you know. They would only do if they were just backed in the corner with an emergency at that end of it. They would only try to phone them only when it was an emergency rather than before; guys would phone them for anything, you know, just come out and for doing some castration or whatever or to even look through the herd.

I can remember guys just bringing a vet out and say, you know, let's spend some time. Let's go through the herd and take a look, maybe do some planning for next year, you know, and what I should do at that end of it. But that's a concern. That's more of a concern to the vets and the producers out there . . . is probably that there isn't the money for them at that end of it. And that's something I think everybody would like to see is getting more money into producers' pockets at that particular end of it.

Now this Bill also goes on . . . like, where would it stop? We talked about with horses. Well how about cattle someday? Talking about hogs, I mean right now there was that miniature pig craze, when they had them little miniature pigs, and they were sold as pets. So how about if all of a sudden in a few years they say well now all hogs will be more considered pets because there's more pet hogs in the world than there are actually raised for food. Does that mean that they're going to fall into a different kind of category?

And a guy can think, well here in Saskatchewan that's not going to happen, but you have to remember in parts of the country that there probably is more pets for hogs, these miniature pets. In fact I just read somewhere that they were breeding, crossbreeding pigs and they had these little ones. And they were only this small. I remember seeing them. It was only in the news about six months ago. They were. Honestly. A couple of members are laughing but this is true. It's true. And they were trying to get them a little bigger, and it was basically pot-bellied pigs, and they were for the pet industry. That's how they were crossbreeding them at that end of it. So is this going to deal with this particular Bill at that end of it? Because this particular Bill also could deal with that further end of it.

But anyways, getting back to this particular Bill, I may be varying a bit at that end of it, but this is the things that can happen further down the road with this industry at that end of it. But talking about this particular Bill at that end of it, I think them amendments should be brought forward. I think that we should be able to see them in advance, so we can show them to the vets and the producers at that end of it. I don't think that's a bad request at that end of it. And in fact I don't think that's an unreasonable request at that particular end, that it should be brought forward at that end of it. And I would urge the government to bring in amendments so we can look at them, rather than say, well let's bring it to committee and then trust us and then we will try to deal with it there. And by that time, then they're going to say, well there isn't enough time.

[16:30]

We want it passed right away. And also in committee, they can push stuff through. And so that's my request to the minister, that he would deal with the amendments — bring the amendments forward — and basically pull the Bill at that end of it.

So with that, I think there's a couple more speakers that want to address this particular Bill, so I will sit down with that.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble):** — I recognize the hon. member for Batoche.

**Mr. Kirsch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I must say, Mr. Speaker, that I enjoyed the member. His stories were very entertaining and interesting and, I thought, did stay on the point.

Mr. Speaker, we have a shortage of large animal vets, and we're trying to address this shortage by putting a Bill that will maybe put more money into their hands. I don't see that happening. When you see the vet students that are training, the majority of them are training for small animal vets. They have no interest in the large animal vet business because there are no dollars in it. There is no profit to be made.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble):** — I would ask hon. members to please give the floor to the hon. member for Batoche. And I recognize the hon. member for Batoche. All members to just keep the noise volume down please. The member for Batoche deserves the right to be heard, and I recognize the hon. member for Batoche. Thank you.

**Mr. Kirsch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The price is the factor. The dollars and cents are what's causing the situation. And making a Bill where the vets would be able to pull more things under their umbrella and make more profit is not going to help the situation.

For example, my brother-in-law had his dog attacked by coyotes or whatever, and he had to take it in for stitches, and it was \$400 to stitch up his dog. Now 1,000 pound cow at 35 cents a pound today's market, that's 350 bucks. So the price of the livestock doesn't justify a vet. And yes, the producers care about their animals, but the bottom line has to be the dollar because that's the business they're in. So as a result, the producer ends up diagnosing with the gun.

We're hearing now that the price to have a dog neutered is \$150. Now if this Bill moves into the livestock industry, can you imagine the producer that has 500 calves and he has to get the vet in, instead of being able to do it himself or bring a neighbour in. That's \$75,000. He can't afford it. The market can't bear it.

As a result the ranchers have become more and more self-sufficient. For calving they call in neighbours. Oftentimes they call in a neighbour when they can't get a vet. Due to the shortage of vets, it's hard to get a vet all the time. And like some of the other members mentioned the hours that the vets are already spending trying to cover a large area, so you call neighbours. And they usually end up calling . . . Everyone calls the same neighbour because he's the one with the longest arms

and probably the most experienced. He's the one that's calved more cows so that's the one they call.

And I know of a particular case that the local neighbours have called time and time again and not once have they been able to call the vet who arrived later and have the vet able to deliver the calf if that farmer couldn't. He had as much practice as the vet had. So if he couldn't get it out, the vet couldn't, and they had to go to a C-section [Caesarean].

One neighbour becomes better at it and as a result they have to give him some restitution of some kind, so they end up paying him. And this Bill would make that illegal. Well, Mr. Speaker, how do you justify that? He's helping his neighbours out, and he's putting so much time into it that he's losing time on his own operation, so they're trying to help him out.

Another example is hoof trimming, Mr. Speaker. And I've spent a fair deal of time at the veterinary college in Saskatoon. I know a lot of the vets there. And I've seen producers bring in animals for hoof trimming, beef animals. And the vets trimmed them, and they don't have the experience that a lot of the professional hoof trimmers that make their living just trimming hooves.

So if this Bill starts to move into their jurisdiction, we've got the same thing there. These guys can actually do a better job of hoof trimming. Yes, the vet does a better job of a lot of other things. But when it came to this particular animals, the hoof trimmers are better at it because they've spent their entire life. In fact I've seen the hoof trimmer come to the vet college and he was teaching the vets how to trim feet. So how can you say he shouldn't be licensed and he shouldn't be working?

Another one is AI work — artificial insemination. There's people that have taken that training course and they make their living on the road with the cryogenics tank and they're doing AI work. Well, Mr. Speaker, they are far, far better at it than someone who is just doing a little bit of it. That's full-time work for these people and in the States they are licensed and they do the travelling and that's what they do.

Preg testing is another situation. It gets expensive. It's difficult. And if you've only got a few animals it doesn't take much basic training for a rancher to do his own preg testing. But there again that gentleman with the long arm who is doing the calving, he's probably the one that's best at it again and he's the one coming around doing the preg testing.

We're also now . . . when the treatment of animals. You wonder about a simple case of mastitis. And to the average rancher, farmer, dairyman, whatever, that's a pretty simple case. And if he's going to have to get a vet in to deal with it, it's going to be time consuming. And when will the vet get there? And it's a simple practice that he can do himself.

A new one now that most ranchers are learning to handle is the new treatment of pink eye where you can roll over the eyelid and inject up under the eyelid. And with a little practice any rancher can do that in no time flat and then they put a patch over the eye and turn them out and it's a new thing. It's a one-time treatment. Whereas it used to be you'd bring the animals in once a day, and if you could even twice a day, and

you would have to treat that eye to try and keep it from spreading. And now with the home remedy system, it's working much better.

So I'm thinking if we had certified training courses for some of these people to justify it. I mean most ranchers now, they've got a stethoscope and they've got all different kinds of syringes and scalpels and needles and in some cases the vet has worked with them and trained them and show them. Okay.

In fact the last member had a story and I won't go into one but I'm just going to . . . a short one, the vet who did a little human medicine, went under the influence of alcohol. So it does happen the other way, but that's another story.

Ranchers are homegrown vets out of necessity. Dollars and cents have dictated the practice of ranchers doing vet work. Some say it's cruel for ranchers to do their own vet work. Mr. Speaker, ranchers care very much about their animals. Rather than penalize them, let us train and equip them so they can legally do the work.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble):** — Why is the hon. member for Indian Head-Milestone on his feet?

**Mr. McMorris:** — With leave to introduce a guest.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble):** — The hon. member for Indian Head-Milestone has asked for leave to introduce a guest. Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble):** — That is agreed. I recognize the hon. member for Indian Head-Milestone.

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

To you and through you to the rest of the Assembly I'd like to introduce someone who is sitting up in the Speaker's gallery and has been following along I think quite intently with the debate on the veterinarian Bill — is Don Saelhof, who is a constituent in Regina Wascana Plains, has been involved in the agriculture industry for many, many years as a consultant.

But the other most interesting point of Don is that he is also a candidate in the Saskatchewan Party nomination race for the Saskatchewan Party in the seat of Regina Wascana Plains. And I know he's been doing much work and unbelievable . . . The amount of support that he and other candidates are finding in that constituency is overwhelming, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm sure the membership sales have gone very, very well. Certainly there is a large amount of support there and I certainly, from the past job that this government has been doing, I can certainly see why.

So I'd like all members to welcome Don Saelhof to the Assembly.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

## ADJOURNED DEBATES

### SECOND READINGS

#### Bill No. 28 — The Veterinarians Amendment Act, 2005 (continued)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble):** — I recognize the hon. member for Batoche.

**Mr. Kirsch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm asking them that we train these people and make it legal for them to do the work that they're already doing and they will continue to do due to the economy. Profit margins and losses are what have forced the situations. Ranchers are like farmers. They are the bottom line producers. They cannot pass the expenses on to the consumers. They have to absorb the cost themselves.

Now if you administer penicillin to an animal and the animal goes into shock, which is not so uncommon, the animal dies unless a vet administers epinephrine within 15 minutes. Mr. Speaker, epinephrine is illegal for a farmer to have but a lot of ranchers have epinephrine. Their vets have given it to them because without it that animal would die. There is no way the vet can get to the rancher's place in 15 minutes. So the ranchers and the veterinarians have found a compromise and I think more of these issues have to be looked at a compromise, a way of making this work.

Mr. Speaker, before a Bill like this is passed, the government should have really consulted with ranchers. They did not go to the grassroots of the industry. They did not go to the people who are paying the bills, to the people who are on the front line. Why would you not listen to the people who it affects the most? It has a large effect on the group of people who are just starting to recover from the BSE crisis. I think you should start at point A before you try to introduce a Bill that affects this group of people.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also told now that cattle going into the United States, we're looking at . . . they will not accept an animal over 30 months of age. Well how do they determine the age of this animal? They determine the age by a system called mouthing the animal. And that entails someone looking into the mouth, looking at the growth of the teeth, the shape of the jaw, and determining the age of the animal. Now in order to meet standards, are we going to have vets doing this or are we going to certify some people that have trained and studied and learned how to do this and have them at the border doing this?

So this again shows that . . . I mean we've got brand inspectors doing this kind of work and we could have guys that are doing the mouthing. And there are different systems that we can have other people doing it. Because cornering the veterinary association into being able to push the prices up in order for them to survive is not going to help our bottom end producer. And that's key — the bottom end producer.

Many producers are worried about the clause that this Bill will require for a vet for the castration of horses and they fear that this is a precedent-setting thing. They're saying it's a hill to die on. They're worried that first it's horses, then it could be

yearling bulls, next hogs, and keep moving in that direction.

We're concerned because it appears that the minister did not consult with these people and who would be most affected by this legislation. So, Mr. Speaker, at this time I would adjourn debate.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble):** — The hon. member for Batoche has moved that the debate on The Veterinarians Amendment Act, Bill No. 28 be adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble):** — That is carried. I recognize the Government House Leader.

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move that this House do now adjourn.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble):** — It's been moved by the Government House Leader that the Assembly do now adjourn. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble):** — That is carried. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 16:45.]

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