



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

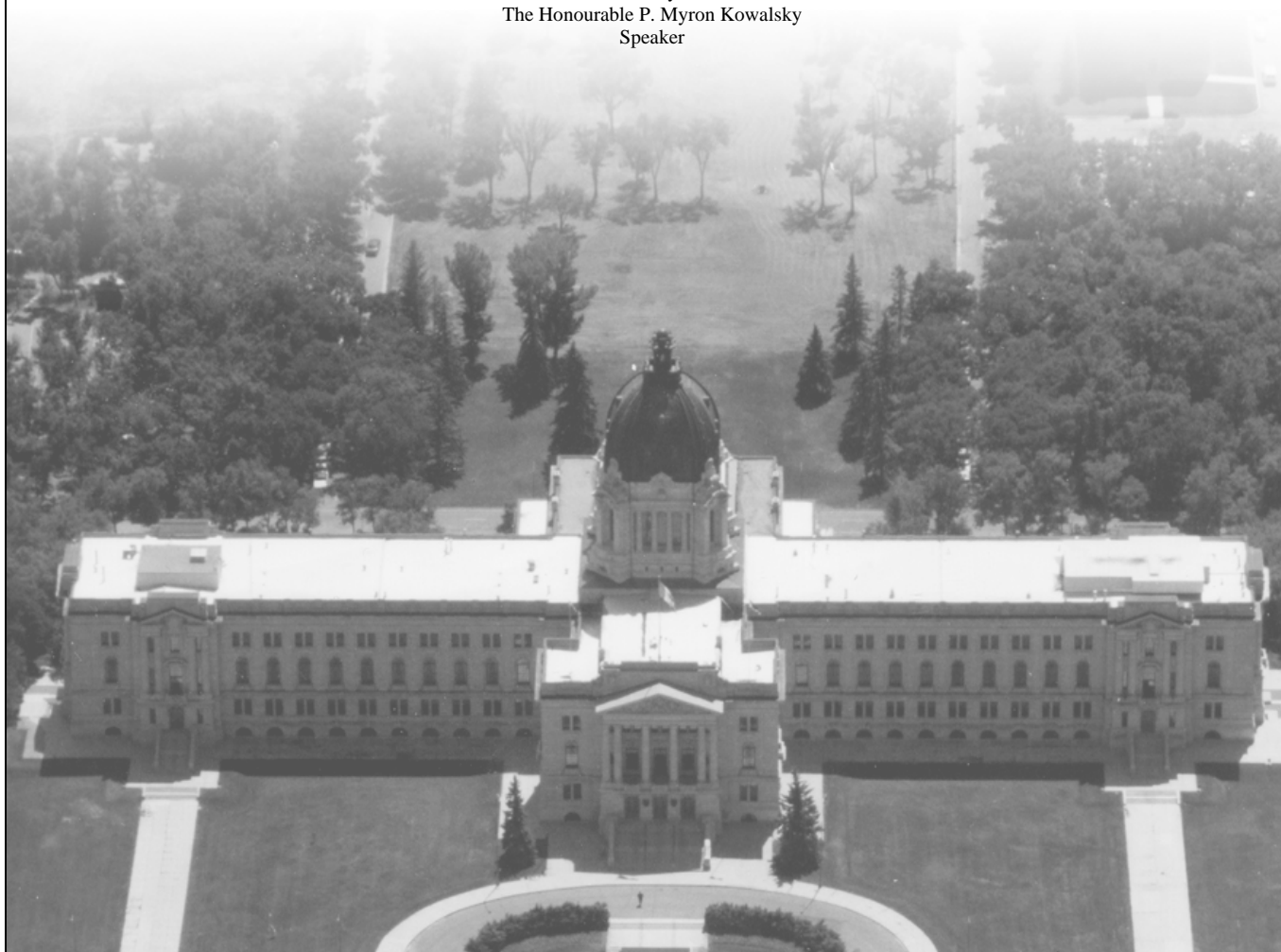
Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of

The Honourable P. Myron Kowalsky
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Addley, 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
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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 10:00.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I begin to present to this Assembly a number of petitions regarding the drug Avastin and how it can assist individuals dealing with cancer. And I read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to fully fund the cancer drug Avastin.

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

Mr. Speaker, the petitions I present today are signed by the good folks from the community of Saskatoon.

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

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today again I rise to present a petition on behalf of constituents and others concerned about the condition of Highway 32 between the communities of Cabri and 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, today's petition is signed by individuals from the communities of Prelate, Leader, and as far away as Saskatoon. I so present.

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

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I present a number of pages of a petition of citizens 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 Carmel, Wadena, Rose Valley, Humboldt, Saskatoon, and Muenster. I so present.

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

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again today I rise to present a petition on behalf of Saskatchewan citizens who have deep concerns over the implementation of a two-tier health system. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to fully fund the cancer drug Avastin.

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

And this is signed by folks from Estevan, Shellbrook, Saskatoon, Meota, and Oxbow. I so present. Thank you.

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

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I again rise to present a petition from constituents who are opposed to possible reductions of health care services in Biggar. The prayer reads:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens of Sonningdale and Biggar. I so present.

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

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in Assembly this morning to present a petition. 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 fully fund the cancer drug Avastin.

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures of this petition are from Saskatoon and Pinehouse. I so present.

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

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too rise to present a petition on the people looking for help with Avastin. 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 fully fund the cancer drug Avastin.

And as duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is signed by the good people of Saskatoon. I so present.

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

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition calling on the government to maintain its Department of Highways section shop in Watrous:

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 remain open so as to ensure the safety of all motorists and Saskatchewan Highways employees who would be affected by such possible closures.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

This particular petition is signed by the good citizens from Watrous, Saskatoon, and Regina. I so present.

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

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I rise again in the legislature today to present a petition regarding the funding of the cancer drug Avastin. I will read the prayer for relief, Mr. Speaker.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to fully fund the cancer drug Avastin.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by extremely concerned citizens from the constituencies of Greystone, Riversdale, and Fairview.

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Kerpan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise on behalf of citizens of Saskatchewan who are concerned with the government's decision not to fund the cancer drug Avastin. 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 fully fund the cancer drug Avastin.

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

Mr. Speaker, signed by citizens from Saskatoon and Meadow Lake.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and pursuant to rule 14(7) are hereby read and received as addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 7, 64, and 639.

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. 37 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Immigration: for the fiscal year 2004-2005 how many people were nominated through the Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program and in which category were they nominated?

And also the same question for 2005-2006.

And also, Mr. Speaker, I give notice I shall on day 37 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Immigration: for the fiscal year 2004-2005 how many people immigrated to Saskatchewan and did not apply through the Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program?

And also the same question for 2005-2006.

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I give notice I shall on day no. 37 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Immigration: for the fiscal year 2004-2005 how many people, including dependants, immigrated to Saskatchewan through the Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program?

And also, Mr. Speaker, the same question for 2005-2006.

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

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 37 ask the government the following questions:

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

I have the same question for 2000 and 2001.

I also have a question:

To the Minister of Health: how did the department monitor any established programs or controls to mitigate fraud risk or to help prevent or detect fraud in 2000-2001, 2001-2002?

Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet, I still have a number of questions to the Minister of Health for that same day 37. This one is:

Does the management of the department have any knowledge of any actual or suspected fraud or illegal activities within the department during the year 2000-2001? And number two: if so, what is the nature of this activity?

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

Another question:

What did management of the department find as a result of its monitoring of any established programs and controls to mitigate fraud or detect fraud for the years 2000-2001?

Same question for 2001-2002.

And my final question for day 37. I shall ask the minister:

Is the management of the department aware of any allegations of fraud or any 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? And number two: if so, what is the nature of this activity?

Mr. Speaker, the same question will be asked for the year 2001-2002. I so submit.

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

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 37 ask the government the following question:

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

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 37 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Justice: is management of the department aware of any allegations of fraud or other illegal activity within the department in the years 2002-2003, such as information received from employees, former employees, customers, clients, suppliers, or others? And if so, what is the nature of this activity?

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 37 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Justice: 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? If so, what is the nature of this activity?

I give notice that I shall on day no. 37 ask the government the following question:

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

I give notice that I shall on day no. 37 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Justice: did management of the

department have established programs and controls to mitigate fraud risk or help prevent or detect fraud in the year 2002-2003?

Mr. Speaker, I have similar questions for 2001-2002 as the previous ones that I had asked, and the same for 2001-2002 and the years 2000 and 2001. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — Members of the Assembly, it is my pleasure today to introduce to the Legislative Assembly His Excellency Markús Örn Antonsson, Ambassador of Iceland to Canada. Mr. Antonsson is accompanied by Mrs. Steinunn Armansdottir, also of Iceland, and also accompanied by a familiar face to this Assembly, and that is Mr. Jon Örn Jonsson who is the honorary consul of Iceland in Saskatchewan. And with them also is Debbie Saum, chief of protocol.

Members of the Assembly, you may know that Icelanders have a very strong work ethic. Their workweek is one of the longest in Europe. Icelanders have a great love of history, literature, and language. Per capita they publish more books than any country in the world. An interesting thing to note is that every child from Iceland has to know how to swim before they can graduate from elementary school.

His Excellency today will be meeting with the Lieutenant Governor, will tour the Legislative Building, will meet with the president and CEO [chief executive officer] of Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership, and will also be meeting at the Regina Research Park.

In keeping with the work ethic, he will then travel to the Quill Lakes area to the town of Wynyard where he will participate in a spring celebration called Thorrablot.

Members of the Assembly, I would ask you to welcome His Excellency Markús Örn Antonsson to Saskatchewan.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[10:15]

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to join with you, Mr. Speaker, and all members and in extending a welcome to His Excellency, Ambassador Antonsson to the province of Saskatchewan. We welcome your visit, sir.

We have as you will know, deep Icelandic roots in our province — a large Icelandic community. I know that community will celebrate your visit just as we celebrate the ties between our province and your nation and future opportunities that we may pursue together. And so on behalf of the government I want to welcome you to the province of Saskatchewan.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the official opposition we want to join with you and the Premier in welcoming His Excellency to the Legislative Assembly today, and our guests also, the honorary consul, Mr. Jonsson. We wish him well in the meetings that he's going to have later this day.

And in Wynyard, as the Premier has mentioned, there are a number of people in our province who proudly boast Icelandic roots. And even more importantly today, there is the opportunity for an even better relationship, economically and otherwise, between our countries and also between Saskatchewan and Iceland. So we join with all members in welcoming you here today, Your Excellency.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Environment, the member for Regina Lakeview.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's also my pleasure to welcome the Ambassador of Iceland to Saskatchewan. And as the former Norwegian consul who worked very closely with Mr. Jonsson on behalf of many issues, I just want to say:

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

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure and my honour to introduce a individual seated in the east gallery, a constituent from Canora-Pelly. Harvey Malanowich is a long-time resident in the Canora area. He and his wife Stella reside on their family farm.

Harvey and I know one another for probably 20 years. I was talking with Harvey this morning and I didn't realize that he's spent 12 years on the Canora School Board, nine of those years at a time when I was there.

He's been the reeve of the RM [rural municipality] of Sliding Hills for over eight years, so over 20 years of service to the people in Canora. He's also been on so many boards and agencies that I wouldn't even start to begin to list all of the accomplishments of Harv.

Harvey and his wife Stella, as I have indicated, have three children: Clayton is a grain buyer in the community of Shellbrook, Chad is a member of the Saskatoon police force, and Candace is an RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] member as well. So tremendous young individuals who I've had the opportunity to meet many, many times, Mr. Speaker.

A final accomplishment in Harvey's many attributes of course is that at the recent SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] convention Harvey was elected as the new representative on the SARM board representing division 4. And he replaces of course Jim Hallick who has moved up to the position of vice-president, Jim also being from the constituency of Canora-Pelly.

So I'd ask all members to join in welcoming Harvey Malanowich to his Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the rest of the members in the House I'd like to welcome a special guest in the west gallery. Gunnar Passmore of the sheet metal workers is here visiting us today. He's a strong advocate for sheet metal workers and all workers here in this province and he's a frequent visitor of this legislature. So I'd ask all members to welcome him here today, thank you.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Saskatoon Junior Achievement Awards

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, I recently had the great pleasure to attend the Saskatoon Junior Achievement Awards. Junior Achievement is about inspiring and educating young Canadians and helping them to understand economics while developing business and leadership skills.

It seems to be working, Mr. Speaker. Among the many interesting products marketed there were aquarium candles, cellphone jewellery, and a miniature putting green you grew on your desk.

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate all the participants and winners of this year's Junior Achievement awards. Students from Holy Cross High School and Walter Murray Collegiate Institute in my Saskatoon Eastview constituency were very well represented among the finalists. Between the two schools they were winners in 15 categories.

Mr. Speaker, Holy Cross High School won this year's SaskEnergy Educator Award. As well, Mr. Speaker, the Professional Leadership Award went to Seema Grover, a grade 11 student at Walter Murray. The Achiever of the Year is Nick Purich, a grade 12 student from Walter Murray.

And the Company of the Year was Aili, a junior achievement company that produced customized T-shirts and a coffee-shop-style newsletter for which they sold advertising space. The President of Aili is Michael Zhang, a grade 11 student at Walter Murray. Mr. Speaker, I also wish to acknowledge all those associated with junior achievement in Saskatoon, in particular program manager Les Morrison. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Congratulations to Estevan Hockey Champions

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, recently the Pee Wee A Prairie Petro Chem Bruins from Estevan won the provincial Peewee A Tier II title in Tisdale — that's a mouthful — with a two-game, total points win of five goals to four.

And on Wednesday, March 29 they went on to the South Central Minor Hockey League championship against the Avonlea Thunder. After losing the first game 9 to 5 in Avonlea, the Bruins bounced back on home ice to win 3 to 1 then battled to a 5-4 victory on Wednesday night to capture the title.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to sponsor a hockey jersey, and this year I sponsored Connor Fox, who plays for these champions. To Connor and the entire team, I extend my best wishes when you travel to Grand Forks for your final tournament of the year on April 13. Congratulations and thank you to the team and of course to the coaches and parents who work tirelessly in support of our young people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Regina Wascana Plains.

2005 Summer Games Legacy

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The 2005 Canada Summer Games will leave a significant and lasting legacy. The capital legacy includes upgrades to 17 sport venues and the deepening of Wascana Lake. The asset legacy includes the donation of more than \$600,000 worth of sporting equipment to more than 100 sport and community organizations.

And, Mr. Speaker, as Chair of the Premier's Voluntary Sector Initiative, I want to mention the human legacy of an expanded commitment to volunteerism and to thank the more than 6,000 volunteers who contributed so much to ensuring the games' success.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday I attended an event where games' organizers announced a projected surplus of over \$3 million from the games, a surplus that will be used to create the building dreams and champions legacy program. It uses the financial surplus and combines it with commitments from the community organizations to create a wide range of programs to foster excellence in youth.

Mr. Speaker, I especially want to acknowledge Bob Ellard, Mo Bundon, and John Lee of the host society of the 2005 Summer Games. They have done an incredible job. And I want to thank them along with their partners in government, community, and corporate sectors for this legacy of the games that will benefit future participants in sport and culture for all Saskatchewan youth.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Spelling Principles

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I note that under the government motion for the 75-minute debate today, the American spelling of labour is used. L-a-b-o-u-r is the Canadian spelling of labour.

Mr. Speaker, this may seem like a trivial point but I think it reflects the fact that this government has lost its way. This government has lost its Canadian identity. First, the government goes to the US [United States] for SaskTel Mobility billings and only Broe from Colorado can do ethanol in Saskatchewan. Now the NDP [New Democratic Party] is privatizing cancer care. Next it will be trying to Americanize our labour laws.

Mr. Speaker, using the American spelling in the Saskatchewan legislature as part of the Dominion of Canada is an affront to all Canadians.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — I am wondering, Mr. Speaker, if this is not indicative of this government's hidden agenda. Mr. Speaker, language is an important part of culture. We have many similarities with our American neighbours but we clearly have many differences — differences that create our unique Canadian culture, like our affinity for irony, Mr. Speaker. I find it quite ironic that this government that calls itself a labour party should use the American spelling of labour.

I believe it's a tradition in this legislature, Mr. Speaker, to use Canadian spelling for all our communications and I would hope that this tradition continues.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Documentary Inspired by Athletes

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, today I'd like to recognize the exceptional work being done by Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* journalist and athlete Jason Warick and other running enthusiasts in Saskatoon and in Kenya.

In 2004, Mr. Warick travelled to Kenya to train with marathon great Kip Keino. Mr. Warick, a provincial record holder in both the marathon and 10-K race, quickly befriended Mr. Keino and learned of his work in his hometown of Eldoret, Kenya. Mr. Keino — who is an Olympic champion — has built an orphanage, an elementary school, a dairy and tea farm, and a training camp for aspiring runners.

Mr. Speaker, the generosity of Mr. Keino and other Kenyan athletes motivated Mr. Warick, the Saskatoon Runner's Club, and Brainsport Running Club to begin collecting shoes for young runners in Kenya. So far several hundred pairs of running shoes have been donated to athletes in Kenya, Mozambique, and Niger.

Mr. Speaker, opportunities for young people in Eldoret, Kenya are severely limited by their inability to attend high school in

their community. Upon learning of the need for a high school in Eldoret, Jason and the Saskatoon community sprung into action. Their efforts to date have raised approximately \$24,000, two-thirds of the money needed to build this essential institution. And this effort is a continuing one. In May, Kip Keino's son Martin will be visiting Saskatoon to participate in the Saskatchewan Marathon and to raise funds for the new high school.

Mr. Speaker, Jason's experiences in Kenya have inspired a documentary appropriately entitled *Run* which was screened last week here in Regina.

I'd like the House to join me in congratulating Jason Warick, Mr. Keino, and their partners for their commendable efforts to improve life for communities in Africa and to wish them continued success in these very worthy endeavours.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Fraud in Government

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, today marks the last day of March. And you know what the month of March was? It was Fraud Prevention Month across Canada. Ironically enough, March is also the month that the NDP government finally came clean on fraud within their government — 43 cases of fraud to be exact, totalling nearly \$2 million.

This unprecedented amount of fraud and theft would have gone unnoticed had the Saskatchewan Party not submitted nearly 500 questions on fraud. What was the NDP's response to these questions? They stonewalled and refused to answer. And this was after the Premier jacked up his communications staff and budget by a half a million dollars. He said it was to answer questions in a timely manner, but we all know that isn't correct.

Mr. Speaker, this tired, old, worn-out NDP government has given the people of Saskatchewan 43 new reasons to ask: when is the Premier going to screw up his courage and call an election?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Growth in Swift Current

Hon. Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Every day the party opposite, led by the member from Swift Current, tell the world what terrible economic shape Saskatchewan is in, that there's no opportunity for young people, that it's a terrible place to do business. It's no wonder Saskatchewan has a PR [public relations] problem, Mr. Speaker.

Saskatchewan is booming, and the opposition leader's hometown of Swift Current is booming right along with it. At least that's what the Swift Current mayor says. She says that

last year Swift Current experienced a \$70 million construction boom. According to the city's director of business development, it was a record year even without the building permit for the new \$32 million Cypress Regional Hospital.

And the city expects the growth to continue this year, Mr. Speaker. According to the Swift Current Chamber of Commerce executive director, the city has made great strides in attracting businesses and attracting and retaining families and workers. Plus the executive director says that since 2003 there has been a lot of growth in the city, not just in the public and health sector but also in the business sector.

[10:30]

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition lives in a boom town, but he would never admit it. And this disconnect between reality and the Saskatchewan Party posturing is just one of the reasons why the members opposite have no credibility whatsoever, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

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

Treatment of Seniors in the Health Care System

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to bring before the Assembly the case of a 93-year-old Carmichael woman who should have the undivided attention of this government, of the health care system, and does not. Her name is Hilda Krohn. As I said she's 93 years old, and she suffers from cranial shingles, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this month, she was rushed by ambulance to the Swift Current Regional Hospital. The hospital however, Mr. Speaker, decided for whatever reason that it was acceptable to discharge her at midnight. At midnight she was discharged from the hospital with no place to go.

The question to the Premier is this: is that the kind of health care our seniors can expect from his NDP government?

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The case that the member from Swift Current is raising today is not one that I am immediately familiar with. I am however aware that the regional health authorities have the day-to-day responsibility for managing the care within the regions and the communities and that the regional health authorities take their responsibilities very seriously.

Mr. Speaker, I accept the invitation of the member opposite to have a look at this case, review it with the regional health authority officials and report back to the member opposite at the first opportunity.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Leader of the

Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What the case demonstrates for all of us in the Assembly though is that while it's had an acute effect on Mrs. Krohn — and we'll hear more about it shortly — this is indicative of what's happening with the health care system under the NDP government.

In the space of 24 hours, Hilda was bounced around from hospital to hospital. In fact, Mr. Speaker, she was in and out of three different hospitals in the same time span. Once discharged from Swift Current, she went to Gull Lake by ambulance, where she had a bed for 12 hours. And then it was off to Maple Creek by ambulance for another bed, Mr. Speaker.

The family is happy with the work of hard-working, caring, health care professionals that attended to her, but the problem, Mr. Speaker, as there are not enough beds . . . And one of the ministers over there has just been heckling about whether this is, whether we raise this to be, I think he said, phony-baloney. That's what he's been saying from his seat. Well I can assure that minister and any member over there that, for the family and for Hilda, nothing about this is phony. They'd like some answers from this NDP government. Why are they treating seniors like this, 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. I think what the case raised by the member from Swift Current indicates that we have a very complex system that from time to time faces challenges that are difficult to manage in emergency situations.

Mr. Speaker, the health system in Saskatchewan deals with approximately 30,000 people per day, Mr. Speaker. The health system actually is serving the vast majority of those people in extremely compassionate, caring, and reasonable ways, Mr. Speaker.

And fortunately when things go wrong, we have systems in place to be able to identify what has perhaps gone wrong and set in place ways to correct those. Mr. Speaker, I will review this with the regional health authority to determine what happened and to learn from this case, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, last week in this Legislative Assembly I raised concerns on behalf of the people of Swift Current in southwest Saskatchewan about bed shortages — long-standing issues with respect to bed shortages — and the bed shortages were also now impacting on long-term care. These shortages in southwest Saskatchewan raised last week, raised over months and months, are the reason behind the problem that we raise again this morning.

The Minister of Finance says it's about grandstanding. That

minister from the North says it's phony-baloney. You know what, Mr. Speaker? Because for them, for them it's just everything is politics. For them, their answer to Hilda is that, Mr. Speaker; their answer to Hilda is that it's all phony-baloney.

We're asking this question not only on behalf of her, but on behalf of patients across this province who for months have been saying and their families have been saying there's a bed shortage, there's a nursing shortage. Is this how seniors can be expected to be treated by the NDP health care system?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think the vast majority of Saskatchewan people are aware that the health system in this province treats seniors extraordinarily well, Mr. Speaker. And while we face pressures from time to time in various parts of the province, Mr. Speaker, overall we have an extremely positive system.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite should know that in fact Saskatchewan has the second highest number of long-term beds per 1,000 people in the country, Mr. Speaker. Only one province has a greater number of long-term care beds per 1,000 people, Mr. Speaker. That's a significant commitment.

The Speaker: — Order please, members. It should be one at a time, occasionally two or three but not five or six. The Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated on an apples-to-apples comparison per 1,000 population, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has the second highest number of long-term care beds, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Well notwithstanding the apples-to-apples comparison, Mr. Speaker, here are the facts for Hilda and for too many seniors who need long-term care. The decision has been made that she's . . . Right now she's in a medical bed. She's in an acute care bed in Maple Creek. That's the last place she was bounced to. It's been decided that she needs a long-term care bed. That's what the family has been told. The family's been told she needs a long-term care bed, but there is not a long-term care bed.

Two years ago this NDP government closed 90 hospitals and long-term care beds, and they fired 40 nurses. Do you remember that, Mr. Speaker? And those people in this province said the result is going to be incidents like this. The result is going to be bed shortages.

Mr. Speaker, the question to the minister, to the Premier if he'd like to answer one: do they now admit that their decision to close 90 hospital and long-term care beds and fire 40 nurses two years ago was wrong? Will he admit that, 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. The members opposite know we are now one week away from a provincial budget to be brought down by the Minister of Finance in this Chamber. The members opposite will also know that the Department of Health, Saskatchewan Health, has received significant dollars appropriated for the purposes of supporting Saskatchewan people and seniors, Mr. Speaker. The budget delivered next week by the Minister of Finance will not be any different, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Population Statistics and Policies

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, under this NDP economic policy, recently we've seen six straight months of job losses in Saskatchewan. This week, we've seen the number of population losses. We've lost 2,000 people in the last quarter. Now the Saskatchewan schools are expecting an enrolment loss of over 3,000 students in each of 2004 and 2005.

Mr. Speaker, this is just one devastating number after another for this government. When will they realize that they must take immediate action to reverse these very damaging population trends in our province?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — You know, Mr. Speaker, on a daily basis in this legislature, you need to check the facts as presented by the opposition. On a daily basis, you need to check the facts. Now the member just stood up and said we've had job loss in the province. Well I don't know which province he lives in, but the province that I live in has help-wanted signs right across this province, Mr. Speaker. There are jobs in this province everywhere.

We did a little survey on the websites last week. Jobs going wanting in Saskatchewan on that morning, nearly 6,000 jobs available in Saskatchewan. Right in the Leader of the Opposition's hometown — he ought to go home and find out about this — we read that there's a boom going on. We read yesterday in the Regina *Leader-Post* there are between 2- and 300 jobs available in Swift Current, Saskatchewan today, Mr. Speaker.

Now you just got to, you just got to check the facts because it's just not credible when they stand up and speak in this legislature.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Gantefer: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier, if anyone, should know . . . is that it's one thing to have jobs posted in the papers, but it's another thing to have young people left in this province to fill those jobs.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Mr. Speaker, it's bad enough that our employable-aged people are all leaving for better opportunities in other jurisdictions. Children in our schools — our elementary and our high schools — are leaving this province as well with their parents. Mr. Speaker, we're losing about 3,000 students a year in this province. That's over 17,000 in the last six years.

Mr. Speaker, it doesn't . . . It's bad enough that these children and their parents are leaving this province. That also means that there's fewer jobs for teachers in this province. It means teachers will be leaving this province, and they'll also be taking their families with them.

Mr. Speaker, this government's failed economic policies are directly responsible for the loss of students and teachers in our province. When will they admit that they need to change what they're doing?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, some years ago, some years ago some of us used to enjoy this little television program called the Muppets. And they had these two old fellows in that program; they used to sit up in the balcony. I think they're called the Waldorf and Astoria — grumpy old men. Every time I look over here I see Waldorf and Astoria all over the place — grumpy old men.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, we hear this constant negativity. You bet . . .

The Speaker: — Order please. Members will come to order. Order. The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, you bet this government is concerned when we see our young people travelling to other parts of Canada to find their future — you bet. And we've put a plan together to address this. We've got our economy humming, so there are jobs in this province.

We have outlined a significant plan of action to improve our competitive edge, to work with our Aboriginal community, to build the educational opportunities, to institute a population strategy program under immigration. And, Mr. Speaker, this government believes in telling the Saskatchewan story and telling it with positive, good news to it, Mr. Speaker, unlike those negative nabobs across the way that can only go about, only go about criticizing and bringing down the hopes and the futures of this province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, even Kermit the Frog knows what this Premier doesn't know; you can't build an economy when all your young people are leaving for neighbouring provinces. Mr. Speaker, over the next decade, there is going to be a significant decline in enrolments. In our province, it's projected that we are going to lose 21 per cent of our school-aged children in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, when will this government stop watching *The Muppet Show* and instead come up with some decent economic policy?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, while the Leader of the Opposition has been watching *The Simpsons* — and I'm told he watches *The Simpsons* a lot — you know what we've been doing? You know what we've been doing just in the last little while?

We've established Student Employment Experience. We've established Green Teams. We've built the Leaders of Tomorrow program. We've got Gradworks going in the Crown investment corporations. We've created Youth Opportunities Unleashed. We've set up the young entrepreneurial foundation, a \$25 million foundation over five years that's got access from a lot of young people. We're developing the Your Future is Here program. And we're working with our REDAs [regional economic development authority] in terms of youth employment, Mr. Speaker.

And we've set out a plan to sharpen our competitive edge, to work with our Aboriginal communities, to build in terms of skills training and access to education, to build a population strategy around immigration, Mr. Speaker, and to work on telling the story.

Now what is their plan, Mr. Speaker? Cut the taxes, ruin the labour laws, and get a — what is it? — a new brand. That's the plan; get a new brand. Mr. Speaker, it's not satisfactory. It's just not credible.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

[10:45]

Condition of Highway 15

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister of Highways explain to this House why the Highway 15 from the junction of Highway 20 east to the town of Semans has been closed down?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Highways and Transportation.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I'll have to take notice of the question. I wasn't able to hear the question, but if the member would like to repeat it again, I'd be more than willing to respond.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Arm River . . . Order please. Order, order. Order. Hon. members, we need to have a situation in the House where the questions which are put are able to be heard. So I'll ask members to come to order so that the member for Arm River-Watrous can re-put his question.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Highways. Can the Minister of Highways explain to this House why Highway 15 from the junction of Highway 20 east to the town of Semans has been closed down?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Highways and Transportation.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I want to thank that member for the question. I believe that that stretch of highway had some work done on it in the recent past. And the work appeared to not be able to do the job; it structurally has broken down. And I am told that it is part of the program for this spring, and I am assuming that as soon as construction crews can get on, they will repair what appeared to be faulty material when it was repaired in the past.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Brkich: — To the Minister of Highways, that particular piece of highway was rebuilt last year — I would imagine — at considerable cost to taxpayers. The residents in that area were finally ecstatic to have a highway that they thought they could use for a number of years after travelling on a highway that had been neglected for a number of years. To their dismay, the highway is breaking up and closing down. My question to the Minister of Highways: how much money did you spend . . .

The Speaker: — Order. The member would remember to restate his question through the Chair.

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, how much did the Government of Saskatchewan spend rebuilding that highway last year only to have it shut down this year?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Highways and Transportation.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I can say to the member opposite that I do understand the inconvenience that the breakdown of that particular piece of road has created for the people in that community. I can say that there are times when faulty materials or faulty application or conditions of weather can create a breakdown of work that has been done.

But I want to say to you, Mr. Speaker, and through you to all

people of this province, that the contractors who do work on our highways in an annual basis are, for the most part, very qualified. They do good work. I would want to say the people that supply the asphalt and that supply all the materials supply very good quality. Sometimes there are breakdowns. This happens to be one of them.

Now the member may be chirping from his seat and is a little upset that this has occurred. But I can tell you this, that our construction crews will be on that road and we will be rebuilding it to the standard that people in that area would expect. Mr. Speaker, that's the role of the Department of Highways, and I think they do a very good job.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Crop Insurance Premiums

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, later today we'll be introducing a motion to delay the payment of outstanding crop insurance balances beyond tonight's deadline. Through this Act, we can remove one nail from the coffin of farm families.

Mr. Speaker, this government likes to talk about what others can do. Well here's one thing that that minister and that Premier and that government could do to help the farmers that are up against it out there and can't meet this deadline. Will they support our motion today?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The answer is no; we will not. Mr. Speaker, very clearly we have been providing information for those farmers out there who have received the benefits of crop insurance and who owe their bills to the company. Mr. Speaker, we have been very clear that the deadline is the 31st. And we have offered terms for those people, Mr. Speaker, so that it will help them deal with it.

We carry them debt-free until October 31, Mr. Speaker. From October 31 until March 31 there is moderate interest. And, Mr. Speaker, in that time they have opportunity to go to Crop Insurance and to make arrangements for payment, which include a 25 per cent down payment and then arrangements that will bring it to a close by June 30, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We learned today that the Premier is running around or sitting at home watching reruns of the Muppets. Well I think that Agriculture minister must be watching Wile E. Coyote or something to get up to

speed on the Ag file because he certainly doesn't understand it. And he doesn't understand what's happening out there.

We have a number of farmers — and he'll admit to this — that cannot meet the deadline tonight. They can't meet 50 per cent. They can't meet 25 per cent. They have no cash, Mr. Speaker. And that's the dilemma that they're caught in right now. What adds to that dilemma that if they cannot meet the deadline by tonight, they do not have crop insurance. They cannot apply for the spring cash advance, so therefore they're probably out of business. Is that satisfactory to the Premier, Mr. Speaker?

Here in Saskatchewan, they brag of Tommy Douglas and his compassion for Saskatchewan people. What happened to that, Mr. Speaker? Where did that compassion go? Let's have a little feeling for the people in rural Saskatchewan and do one thing that we could to help them out, Mr. Speaker. Will the Ag minister do that?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, we're going to have a fair bit of time this morning to debate that issue, Mr. Speaker. And I want to talk about the facts as what the member from Saltcoats-Melville's talking about, and the facts are like this, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to refer to the document that's been presented by the Saskatchewan Party on the code of ethics. And it speaks to the dismantling of false information, Mr. Speaker, and it says this that:

Members shall use care to avoid dissemination of false information and shall not knowingly do so.

Mr. Speaker. And I'll be asking at the end of this question period that there be an action by the Leader of the Opposition to address one of his members.

And I say this, Mr. Speaker, just on the date of March 24, the member from Saskatoon Northwest says this. He says that "They have no ability to provide not only the basic needs of food and clothing . . ." and money, but there are other issues that these children get to them in sports, activities, and recreational things — not at all, it says. And this is a quote, Mr. Speaker, about no money for foster parents is what he says. Then he goes on to say, and I'll answer this question further, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The member's time has elapsed. The Chair recognizes the member from Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure if the member for Yorkton is living in the past or what, but he's not Ag minister any more. In fact I'm not sure we have one, but I'll ask my question anyway, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to give some quotes of the present Ag minister and some of the things he's said in the past. And I quote:

We must recognize that farms are businesses and that those farmers are making business decisions . . .

He's right on except the fact that they don't have any money to make those decisions with and they can't meet their payments and their deadlines. Another quote and:

Good financial planning would say that you have to go to your financial institution [and] . . . make sure you can pay . . .

Well, Mr. Speaker, again it shows the Ag minister does not understand just how bad things are in rural Saskatchewan. He's got to have a little compassion here. Give them a little time. Will he do that today?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that we have today the member from . . . the Leader of the Opposition talking about the Saskatchewan Party's code of ethics. Mr. Speaker, we have the member from Saskatchewan northwest, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan northwest, who says, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Members will come to order please. Order please. Order. The member for Yorkton.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — . . . from Saskatoon Northwest, Mr. Speaker, who made a number of false statements in this House, Mr. Speaker, false information, false information on what happens with foster homes, Mr. Speaker. False information, Mr. Speaker, in relationship to whether or not there are support services for families in the province, Mr. Speaker. And yesterday in a scrum, false information, Mr. Speaker, about whether or not there are beds available in Saskatchewan for treatment in this province, Mr. Speaker. False information, Mr. Speaker, on a number of fronts.

And I say to the member of the opposition today, misleading . . . The false information of this House, Mr. Speaker, contravenes the exact code of ethics, and I ask the member, the Leader of the Opposition today to ask for the removal of the member from Saskatoon Northwest from this Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker, on the false information that he has provided to this House and to the people . . .

The Speaker: — The member's time has elapsed.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, I haven't a clue why that member's on his feet, but then when he gets up, he hasn't a clue. He hasn't a clue what we're talking about here today, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the CAIS [Canadian agricultural income stabilization] program isn't working. It's not reliable. The banks won't lend money on it; farmers can't go get an operating loan

saying I'm in the CAIS program. And, Mr. Speaker, farmers are telling us, we'll pay our crop insurance premiums with grain. We've got grain on hand, but we can't move it.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have an example this morning of a farmer that's trying to re-rent his land to another farmer. And he offered to go with no rent, and he offered to pay the taxes, so the renter was getting it for nothing. The farmer had to refuse because there's no money to be made out there, Mr. Speaker. And they come to an agreement that the landlord would pay the renter \$8 an acre. That's how bad it is out there, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Agriculture and not the member from Yorkton, the foundation for agriculture is crumbling. Will that NDP government do something finally to help rural Saskatchewan, to help farmers in this province, to help farm families survive till this fall?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — We'll have the entire morning, Mr. Speaker, to debate Mr. Strahl's buck up comment in Yorkton, and we'll debate that in a little while. But what we want to do, Mr. Speaker, is we want to talk this afternoon . . . we want the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, to come clean, Mr. Speaker. We want the Leader of the Opposition to come clean.

The Speaker: — Order please. Order. Order. Order. The Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, I've asked the Leader of the Opposition to honour his own code of ethics that he has for all his members of the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker, because in his code of ethics he says, when there in fact has been information that has been falsely disseminated, and knowingly so, there should be an action.

And I say to the Leader of the Opposition that he should be removing from this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, from this House, should be removing the member from Saskatoon Northwest on his comments that he made, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to foster parents, as the statements he made, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to the issues of support services for families in this province who have addictions and for the statements he made yesterday in the scrum about whether or not there were beds available in Saskatchewan.

The Speaker: — Member's time has elapsed.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Why is the member from Melfort on his feet?

Mr. Gantfoer: — A point of order.

The Speaker: — Would the member mind just holding his point of order until we get to orders of the day? Ministerial statements. Introduction of Bills. Stand no. 1.

On the point of order, the Chair recognizes the member for Melfort.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Clearly, Mr. Speaker, today the Deputy Premier, the member from Yorkton, was taking the opportunity to replying to agricultural questions in question period and inferring that a member of this Assembly was deliberately misleading the House.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that everyone understands that that is not proper conduct. And I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to direct the member from Yorkton, the Deputy Premier, to retract his statement and apologize to the House for his accusations.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, in response to the point of order raised by the Opposition House Leader, let me remind the House, Mr. Speaker, and ask for your consideration the points that the Deputy Premier was raising in his question to the Leader of the Opposition.

He was asking whether the Leader of the Opposition will follow the code of ethics adopted by his party in reference to the conduct . . . in reference, in reference, Mr. Speaker . . .

[11:00]

The Speaker: — Order, must have order. The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, not once did I hear the Deputy Premier use the phrase that the hon. member was intentionally misleading this House. He referenced the comments made by the member in this House and outside of this House.

And therefore, Mr. Speaker, I think it is inappropriate to find the Deputy Premier out of order. His comments were clearly in order. He was not accusing the member of intentionally misleading the House. What he was asking the Leader of the Opposition to do is to act on his code of ethics of his party as decided by his party.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order please, order please. Members from time to time . . . order please. From time to time in this Assembly the emotions rise and members ought to be cognizant of just how much provoking they are doing during their statements. I was listening to the language very carefully. In this case, as has been in many cases, the members made . . . the member from Yorkton made a statement which made certain or drew certain allegations quite similar, to what I've heard over the last two weeks, to others.

I also noted that the member did not accuse anybody of deliberately misleading and I made that as a very fine distinction, whether intention is implied or not. So I therefore consider this a dispute of facts that the member's, from Melfort, point is not well taken. Order.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Order please. Order. Order please, members. Order please. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Members I would ask that the schoolyard games be over for the day. I would ask that the member for Canora-Pelly withdraw the offensive word that he fired across the centre of the Assembly at this time.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will withdraw that remark.

The Speaker: — I thank the member. And now we will . . . Order please. Now we will carry on with written questions. Order. I would ask all members . . . Order. Order.

The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Fairview, the Government Whip.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government, I'll be tabling responses to written questions 631 to 650 inclusive.

The Speaker: — Responses for 631 to 650 inclusive have been submitted.

PRIVATE BILLS

SECOND READINGS

**Bill No. 301 — The Faith Alive Ministries
World Outreach Centre Inc. Act**

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

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased today to stand in this Assembly to speak to the petition brought forward by Faith Alive Ministries out of Saskatoon.

Faith Alive Ministries World Outreach Centre is a non-denominational church that was incorporated in the province of Saskatchewan in 1980. It's of Pentecostal and charismatic persuasion and has been personally involved with ministry since its inception . . .

The Speaker: — Order please. I just want to be able to hear what the member is saying. The member for Moosomin.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, the gentleman who sent the letter of request, Mr. Pierce, has been personally involved with the ministry, with the Faith Alive Ministries ministry since its inception. The ministry with K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] and Bible college has been at its present location in Saskatoon for 17 years, and for 24 years has had a two-year program of religion and theology along with strong emphasis on integrity, honesty, and good work ethics.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. Pierce points out that many graduates of this practical theology course have pursued careers as teachers, as firefighters, police officers, social workers, and government

employees. But they've also had First Nations chiefs go through their college, band counsellors, drug abuse counsellors, missionaries, and pastors. They're a member of the Canadian Bible College. And they've come forward with a petition, Mr. Speaker, due to the changing times and they're requesting of the Assembly that the Legislative Assembly provide them with the authority to award certificates, diplomas, and confer degrees in religious studies and theology at their Faith Alive Bible College. And, Mr. Speaker, I believe that their petition is certainly one that is commendable, one that this Assembly should support.

And therefore at this time I move that Bill 301, The Faith Alive Ministries World Outreach Centre Inc. Act be now read a second time and referred to the standing committee on private members' Bills.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Moosomin that Bill No. 301, The Faith Alive Ministries World Outreach Centre Inc. Act be now read a second time and referred to the standing committee on private members' Bills. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. The Bill stands referred.

Clerk Assistant: — Second reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — The Bill stands referred.

Bill No. 302 — The Orange Benevolent Society Amendment Act

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

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to rise and speak to Bill No. 2, the Orange Home benevolent society amendment Act.

Mr. Speaker, the Orange Home society is certainly an organization that I think many people are familiar with. I believe it was established back in the mid-'20s, early '20s, and has done great service for the community of Indian Head and the province. It's a one of a kind organization, Mr. Speaker.

Its motto — and I was just not expecting to speak quite so early because I didn't expect the government to pull their motion — but its motto is, it's easier to build boys and girls than try and fix men and women.

And that's certainly been kind of the way they've conducted their business — bringing people from all over the province and some of the youth from our province and working with them, putting them through the school system in Indian Head and extracurricular activities.

I think one of the most significant things when I was looking through the website regarding the Orange Benevolent Society is they have never received 1 cent from either provincial or federal government. This home has operated on their own doing this work for people of Saskatchewan through fundraising and fundraising only.

And I think it's a real credit to this organization, number one, the work that they do, but also the fact that they've been able to do this work over the last many decades — from the early '20s — just through the generosity of people throughout the province but also the hard work of the people that are connected with the society.

So, Mr. Speaker, the petition certainly, as when I looked at it and looked through what they are asking, looks like it's a very good idea — allowing them to grant money to people that are passing through their home and moving on to whether it's post-secondary education and things like that. So, Mr. Speaker, I would move that Bill No. 302, the Orange Home benevolent society amendment Act be now read a second time and referred to the standing committee on private member Bills.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Indian Head-Milestone that Bill No. 302, The Orange Benevolent Society Amendment Act be now read a second time and referred to the standing committee on private members' Bills. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. The Bill stands referred.

Clerk Assistant: — Second reading of this Bill.

Bill No. 303 — The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool Repeal Act

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

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill 303, The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool Repeal Act be now read a second time and referred to the standing committee on private members' Bills.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Saskatoon Eastview that Bill No. 303, The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool Repeal Act be now read a second time and referred to the standing committee on private members' Bills. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

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

Motion No. 3 — Crop Insurance Premiums

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to enter into the debate brought on by the fact that this government and this Minister of Agriculture has refused to extend the deadline for crop insurance beyond this . . . today.

Mr. Speaker, these are truly not ordinary times in agriculture. Producers are facing what is the worst farm income crisis in the 100 years that we've been a province. At a time, Mr. Speaker, like this when producers are losing their farms and worrying about where they'll find the money to put in a crop this spring, this NDP government is only compounding their problems.

Mr. Speaker, grain and oilseed prices have fallen 27 and 26 per cent respectively from this time last year. The real price of wheat has been in decline from about \$400 a tonne in 1992-93 dollars in the early 1950s to under \$200 or less than half that in 2003. And lately even the more high-valued commodities have followed suit.

This Ag minister, Mr. Speaker, who told farmers they're going broke because of business decisions is now telling Saskatchewan producers that this NDP government won't even extend the deadline for crop insurance to help them out in their hour of need. Mr. Speaker, this is almost beyond belief. It's callous and cynical beyond belief, Mr. Speaker.

And the minister chirps from his seat that it's not true. Well it certainly is true. The deadline passes today. Producers that haven't at least found a substantial percentage of their premiums will be out. And those producers, Mr. Speaker, will not be eligible for 2006 crop insurance. In other words, they will not be able to get funding when they go to their lenders. They will not be eligible for spring cash advance. They will be out of business, Mr. Speaker.

[11:15]

Without crop insurance, Mr. Speaker, these producers will certainly not be able to obtain lines of credit. The first question the bank asks these days when a producer or grain grower goes to get funding to put in his crop for the year is, can we have an assignment of your crop insurance? And these producers will — to a man — have to say, no because I can't get crop insurance this year. And the banks in every case will say, too bad then; run along. Not having crop insurance may even detrimentally affect the producers' return from the CAIS program if indeed they're among the lucky producers that even receive one.

In the past, Crop Insurance has taken the time to consult with producers and decide to extend deadlines to better serve producers. But this government has refused to do that in this the worst time in agriculture in the history of the province. However, it didn't stop them from spending \$26,600 on mailing out threatening letters to producers telling them that they will

not receive crop insurance if they haven't paid by today.

Mr. Speaker, that only covers, that 26,600 only covers the postage on those letters. I suspect that it costs that Crop Insurance Corporation at least \$10 a letter to get those letters out, over and above the cost of postage. So add another 35,000 or so to that twenty-six six, Mr. Speaker.

This is despicable and disgraceful and almost beyond belief that it's . . . This government, Mr. Speaker, has driven a wedge into the centre of this province so deep between rural and urban people that, even though agriculture is still one of the major contributors to our economy in this province even in these horrible times, most urban people believe that agriculture is a drag on our economy and on our society. This NDP government has done that intentionally, Mr. Speaker, in a cynical manner over 15 years.

Mr. Speaker, this is absolutely inexcusable behaviour from a government. To turn half of the population of the province against the other half is unbelievable. But this government has done it. This NDP government has done that and they drive that wedge so deeply into the heart of this province that the divisions may be irreparable. I don't know how you re-educate people in urban Saskatchewan, generations removed from farms, that agriculture is a major contributor. Even the Leader of the Liberal Party recently in debate with me — a debate sponsored by the real estate association — said and I quote as closely as I can remember, he said that agriculture is like an anchor that drags us down. That also is inexcusable, Mr. Speaker, and cynical.

Mr. Speaker, this NDP government intentionally tries to break our farmers. They know that agriculture will never support them again after the things they have done, and so they intentionally drive farmers from the land. They do that in a cynical, intentional, and disgusting manner, Mr. Speaker, that is not worthy of the government of this province.

Our neighbours to both the east and west have taken steps to make their crop insurance programs more flexible and more affordable, to better assist producers through these difficult times. Manitoba has added excessive moisture insurance to its crop insurance program to help producers deal with the spring flooding that the province experienced the last year or two, to assist areas that were hit with heavy rain. Alberta invested a further \$20 million to reduce premiums for Alberta producers.

In Saskatchewan, this NDP government annually announces that crop insurance premiums will be going up and crop insurance coverage will be reduced. This has been a pattern for the last four years at least, Mr. Speaker, and we expect that it will continue.

You know, Mr. Speaker, there is no consolation for our producers who have watched their premiums increase in the past years while their coverage has decreased. And now, they can't even get an extension on the payment deadline to enable them to have crop insurance for 2006.

The program has been so eroded that without the fact that they are ineligible for financing without crop insurance, they probably wouldn't want it anyway but they have to have it in

order to operate. And this government cynically holds that over their heads and will break those producers in a systematic fashion who cannot afford to pay at least a substantial portion of those premiums by the end of business today.

This NDP government seems intent on managing the death of Saskatchewan agriculture instead of looking at ways to assist it. They seem to look for any little thing that they can cut or take back from Saskatchewan producers that will further put them in trouble with lending institutions and make it even more impossible for them to meet their financial commitments.

It was this NDP government, Mr. Speaker, that closed rural service centres, depriving Saskatchewan producers of agronomic advice.

It was this NDP government, Mr. Speaker, that removed spot loss hail from crop insurance — unlike other jurisdictions in Western Canada, Mr. Speaker.

It was this NDP government that waited until the 11th hour every year to fully fund their share of the CAIS program.

It was this NDP government, Mr. Speaker, that clawed back 20 per cent of the farm fuel rebate, citing difficult financial times, and with government revenues at an all-time high they have refused to give back what they took. This Agriculture minister was the one who claimed that fully funding the CAIS program and ensuring some assistance for Saskatchewan producers was akin to throwing money away.

It's time, Mr. Speaker, that this minister stopped throwing temper tantrums and slapping federal Agriculture ministers with one hand while holding out the other for money. The new federal government has been in power for a matter of weeks and already this minister and that Deputy Premier have driven a wedge so deep that Saskatchewan will have a problem dealing with this federal government on agricultural matters. They did that by misquoting the Minister of Agriculture and spreading that word as quickly as their moccasin telegraph could carry it.

While there are responsibilities that belong to the federal government, Mr. Speaker, this government denies its own responsibilities for producers and has done so for far too long. These cuts that I have alluded to were not the decision of the federal government. They were made by this NDP government and this Agriculture minister.

Saskatchewan is a province that was born from agriculture and that has grown with agriculture, and a province, Mr. Speaker, at this time, under this government, that refuses to recognize the huge potential of agriculture to continue this growth into our next century.

A single Saskatchewan farm, Mr. Speaker, injects enough money into the provincial economy to pay the salaries of over three Saskatchewan residents, based on average Saskatchewan salaries. At a time when these producers are at the mercy of international markets and are trying to compete with the treasuries of the US and Europe, where is this provincial government? They even refuse to do the very basic, minimum things that they could do to help our producers through this time of need.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I move the motion:

That this Assembly urge the government to extend the deadline for crop insurance.

Mr. Speaker, this motion will be seconded by the member from Melville-Saltcoats.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Thunder Creek and seconded by the member from Melville-Saltcoats:

That this Assembly urge the government to extend the deadline for crop insurance.

The Chair recognizes the member for Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'm pleased to be able to join in with the member for Thunder Creek today to talk on one of the many important issues in the ag industry out there and the problem that farmers are having out there, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, as the deadline comes due tonight for the crop insurance premiums from last year to be paid up, I think we see a number of farmers that tonight or tomorrow morning are going to feel that much worse than they already did today, knowing that they can't meet that deadline and that the provincial government had absolutely no sympathy for them and absolutely no help for them in their time of need.

Mr. Speaker, the first thing we have to realize that these times right now probably haven't been this bad or seen this bad in the last 70 or 80 years, maybe even longer, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure even in the '30s if things were this bad on the farm because everything has changed dramatically, Mr. Speaker. I believe in the '30s that farmers' and farm wives' biggest job was making sure they could feed their families. But the debt load wasn't there, Mr. Speaker. Their problem was they had no money, they had no cash, and were right up against it.

Well, Mr. Speaker, farmers today are right up against it, in fact are losing in many cases everything that they've worked their whole lifetime, their wife has worked their whole lifetime for, and their families have worked their whole life towards — that is their pension plan — and it's disappearing very quickly. And what happens from that NDP government over there? Absolutely no compassion, absolutely no sympathy to the problem. In fact they just say, that's the way it is. They'll have to make out on their own. That what the Ag minister and I guess the Premier himself agrees that it's their problem.

Mr. Speaker, the deadline's coming tonight. And we've asked and asked and asked that this Ag minister would bend a little and come to an agreement where farmers could even just have an extension of say, three months.

In many cases, their bins are full of grain or half full of grain. They've got a large quantity of grain from last year's harvest and yet can't move that grain or if they can, it's worth very little. And we're putting them in a position where they have to

wholesale that grain to make this commitment so that they can have crop insurance for this year — but also, Mr. Speaker, so that they can qualify for a cash advance, a spring cash advance, which they absolutely need out there right now to be able to put a crop in this spring.

So, Mr. Speaker, we're talking about crop insurance premiums from last year that aren't paid right now and won't be paid in many cases. I believe the other day they said the number was 3,800 and the minister himself has said that some of those have found and scratched and raised the money to pay the premium or part of the premium. And the rest are still out there. And I believe that would leave — if his numbers are right — about 2,800 to 3,000 farmers out there at this point that can't meet that deadline tonight at midnight and are going to be in dire straits.

Mr. Speaker, rural Saskatchewan is right at a . . . just a spot where they have nowhere to turn. And it's not just farmers, Mr. Speaker. It's not just farmers. It's farm businesses of all kinds — fuel dealers, businesses, car dealers even out there, Mr. Speaker. Machinery dealers are up against it because as every day goes on and the markets are slowing down out there, their businesses are slowing down because farmers don't have anything to spend at all — any cash to spend to any positive movement out there.

We're all hurting in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and I think that's something that the Premier should take note of. I believe that's something the Ag minister needs to take note of. And it's certainly something that the whole NDP government should be taking notice of.

Mr. Speaker, to not have a cash advance this spring, for many farmers the last few years is what they've actually functioned on. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if they can't afford crop insurance and they don't get a cash advance, I think many of them are going to throw the keys on the table or go to their banks — like some have this last while — and throw the keys on the desk of their banker, and say, you have it, you take it back; I have absolutely no way of making my payments; I have absolutely no cash to put this crop in. And that's where we are at this point.

Mr. Speaker, I was really disappointed. We have a new federal government right now. We have a new opportunity for this government to work with that new federal government. Whether they agree with their politics or do not agree with their politics, we need them to get along with this government to help our farm families in Saskatchewan.

Because number one, it's our responsibility to get through to the federal government that we need help in a time of need, which we're at right now. And the last thing we need is bad relations between the Agriculture minister from Saskatchewan, the Premier from Saskatchewan, and the Prime Minister of the federal government and the federal Ag minister. The last thing we need is bad relations between those two.

[11:30]

We just saw a Liberal government get beat in Ottawa where relations between that government and this provincial

government were at an all-time low because this government continually bashes the federal government because it's their fault for everything that goes wrong in Saskatchewan with agriculture.

Well, Mr. Speaker, sure the federal government has a responsibility, and sure that at times they haven't been there for us. But at the same time this provincial government has ran for the last 14 years, have ran and put their head in the sand and said, we're not helping with any problems in agriculture because it's not our responsibility.

CAIS funding is a real good example, Mr. Speaker, where they hold out until the very last minute so that a farmer can't even go to the bank and use CAIS as collateral and say, I'm in the CAIS program; I want an operating loan. That isn't a possibility because the provincial government hasn't been funding their share until the very last minute.

In fact right now, Mr. Speaker, we don't know if the NDP government is going to fund their share of CAIS for the 2006 season. We have no idea. So a farmer in Saskatchewan right now that's up against it has nowhere to turn but maybe throw the keys on the desk and, Mr. Speaker, they have absolutely nowhere to go.

Mr. Speaker, some of the things we say and do affect what happens with the optimism that's in agriculture and the mood that's out there where farmers are up against it, farm wives are up against it. And why I keep mentioning the farm wives, Mr. Speaker, is because at many cases, and we hear of this all the time lately, where farm wives are the ones that are taking the brunt of it.

The farmer gets to the point where stress has completely overloaded him. He doesn't want to answer the phone. He doesn't want to go to town. He doesn't want to go to the post office for sure, in case there are more dunners there and more bills that he can't afford to pay, Mr. Speaker. And all this time the farm wife has to try and help her husband get through these bad times, but she also has the family to look after. But at the same time she's also going through the same stress. And farm families are very proud people, Mr. Speaker. And they don't easily admit that they're up against the wall and that they need help.

And I guess, Mr. Speaker, what we're saying today is that that's the times that you need a provincial government that cares, a federal government that cares. And right now, Mr. Speaker, with the Minister of Agriculture from the province of Saskatchewan saying very negative comments about the federal Minister of Agriculture, I could just see every farmer in this province shudder when those remarks came out. Because what happens, it gives the federal government an out, really, in helping Saskatchewan farm families. Because when the Agriculture minister from Saskatchewan offends the federal government — the new federal government — where relations could have been renewed and we could have had much more optimism, when you go out of your way to offend those people, it's easy for them to turn their back on us and say, well the provincial government in Saskatchewan won't work with us at all. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's exactly the opposite of what we need right now.

We need a provincial government that will go to bat for our farmers, take our cause to Ottawa and say, what can we do, how can we help our farmers? And even if it's just till this fall, Mr. Speaker, we get to point A. To point B, we'll worry about that later. But we need to get through till this fall.

And many farm families haven't that opportunity because, number one, they can't get a cash advance because they can't get crop insurance. And that's something this provincial government can control. Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of things that happen in agriculture that are out of the control of the provincial government. We admit that, we understand that, we know that. Many of us on this side are farmers or farmers from the past. We understand. But there are things that this province, this provincial government could do to help farm families out there.

Not one thing is major, but a lot of little things would certainly add and help to what is happening out there. Spot loss hail was one, Mr. Speaker, that that government — and I believe it was the Deputy Premier, was the Agriculture minister — that cut spot loss hail. In his wisdom, he thought he would cut that out of the budget for whatever it cost this provincial government. It was a good investment, Mr. Speaker, and the Deputy Premier saw fit . . . We saw him get up in question period, which was . . . I'm not sure if the minister is all right.

I would question sometimes just where he was going. He wasn't even answering questions on agriculture, Mr. Deputy Speaker. He was the farthest thing from agriculture as we could reach. He was pointing his fingers at members over here.

And I guess maybe what's happening, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that really we have a government here that is not caring of agriculture and by the signs of what the Deputy Premier did today, they just don't care about what's going on. They really don't care for the families that are up against the wall. They don't care for the kids out there that have to see what's happening within their families — the breakups that are going on out there. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a very sad, sad situation in many cases.

And many farmers out there . . . I've had calls and other members on this side of the House have had calls from farmers that, a year ago even, were very stable, were up to current with all their bills. And now we're getting calls this spring that for a first time . . . And that's a shock for farmers out there that have never had bills carry over till the next spring. It's a shock to their system to have to be in this spot. They've heard of other farmers and other farm families being in this situation. But until it hits you, you really don't understand just how bad things are.

And, Mr. Speaker, we're getting calls — and some of them, Mr. Speaker, they want to talk for a half an hour, three-quarters of an hour — they know, especially in opposition, there's no one button that we can push. But they have to have somebody to talk to, to share what's going on out there and to expand with us and ask us if there's anything that could be done to help them from this point of time until at least this fall, until maybe things will improve.

Mr. Speaker, we all understand that it's grain prices are low and world subsidies are hurting our farmers here. I think we would agree with the Agriculture minister on that front. But that's

really in a way out of our control also, and it's certainly out of the control of our farm families.

So, Mr. Speaker, we're here today and we are here to try and get this government to pay attention to what's happening out there in agriculture. I know and I understand, there's very few of the members opposite that really understand agriculture — one being the Minister of Agriculture who, as we go day to day and ask questions, shows that he really doesn't understand the Ag portfolio.

And I know he'll say he's working hard at it and he may be, Mr. Speaker. But he certainly shows by some of his answers when he says things like, well it's a business decision, this is decisions that farmers are making — well it's decisions farmers are making because they have no cash. They may have bins full of grain out there; they may have bins half full of grain out there. But number one, in many cases, they can't move that grain. There's nowhere to sell it. And number two, when they do move it, it's at fire sale prices because the buyer know he's got the farmer at his mercy. And that's the point of time when you need your governments at both levels to help you from point A to point B.

Now we had a grain and oilseed payment here not long ago, Mr. Speaker, and a lot of farmers didn't get that payment and aren't going to get that payment. The problem being that if they did qualify for a CAIS payment, Mr. Speaker, and through no fault of their own there's been a clawback, the CAIS program will get a hold of them and say, Mr. farmer, you received X number of dollars from us — 5,000, 7,000, 10,000, whatever the number may be; it doesn't matter. The money was used to pay bills. Now they're being asked to turn around and pay that money back.

Well the number one problem, Mr. Speaker, is there isn't a farm family in this province that still has that money. That money went to good use. It helped pay bills, it helped those farmers get through this winter to this point, if they got a payout. And the CAIS program — don't get me wrong — is not working well at all but where those payments have come and then these farmers are being asked for a clawback or asked to pay that money back, can you imagine, Mr. Speaker? What a day that is when you go to the post office and receive this letter from CAIS saying, we made a \$7,000 payment or a \$10,000 payment last fall, say November, and now, Mr. farmer and farm family and kids, we want that money back; we made a mistake.

And in many cases, Mr. Speaker, that program is so flawed that even the bureaucrats don't know how to run it. They don't even understand it, Mr. Speaker. And it's very frustrating for all of us on this side that represent farm families and for the farmers out there to understand how a program could be put in place that doesn't work for our Saskatchewan farmers. It's not there when we need it so what good is the program?

And you know why that situation has arose? That situation has came to be because that government and the ministers of Agriculture for the last number of years, going back to Mr. Upshall . . . I can remember when Mr. Upshall was in that portfolio and said, farmers, it's your problem; you've got to do it yourself. Or, it's the federal government's responsibility.

I went on a tour with Mr. Upshall down east, and that was his message to the federal government. We balanced our books in Saskatchewan, but we're not going to help our farmers out at a time of need. It's all the federal government's fault. Or they'll turn, point their finger at us on this side of the House and say, oh it's the opposition crying wolf.

Well, Mr. Speaker, every member on this side of the House at some point of his constituency represents farm families that are up against the wall. And, Mr. Speaker, it's a sad, sad day when the provincial government does not have the compassion — the compassion to help farm families to the tune of at least making a point of going out of their way to get along with the federal government when they need assistance for farm families.

And I guess, Mr. Speaker, that comes partly along with not understanding the Ag portfolio and not understanding agriculture. And I suppose maybe you could also go further, Mr. Speaker, and say well it really doesn't rely on any votes for them, because they represent very little of rural Saskatchewan.

It's a shame that a provincial government would play politics with farm families who are up against it. And at this point, many of them are going to either be going bankrupt . . . they're going to throw in the keys and walk away. And again we lose real, very resourceful people that have in many cases 100 . . . Century Farm Award sign on their gate. And they're having to leave this province, Mr. Speaker, under an NDP government. That is something that that government should be totally embarrassed to have happen under their watch.

I remember back, Mr. Speaker, my parents talking about the caring of the governments and the Tommy Douglas at that time. I believe my mother at one time voted for Tommy Douglas. Not twice — I said once, Mr. Deputy Speaker. She did because she felt that Tommy Douglas had compassion and cared for people. And I've heard that from others. But those same people today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, do not vote for the NDP because they feel this is not a caring, compassionate government as we see under the Ag portfolio.

And it's too bad, Mr. Speaker. In fact it's downright sad when we see long-time residents of Saskatchewan having to pack up the belongings and take off. And actually many of those farmers right now, Mr. Speaker, the real sad part of it is they're 50, 55, 60 years old, maybe even older. Their pension plan just went under, Mr. Speaker. They don't have the luxury like we do to have a pension plan or public sector workers that have pension plans. They don't have that luxury because when they go under and go broke, there is absolutely nothing left.

Can you imagine what you must feel like when you know your family . . . you can't even support them to buy groceries. You have to pick up, load up, and head out, and in most cases to Alberta or somewhere where they might get a job. And I wish them well when they have to do that but, Mr. Speaker, it's a sad, sad situation.

Mr. Speaker, I remember when I was younger and just started farming, probably in the '70s, and there was an auction sale. There'd be an auction sale in our area, and it was a gathering time at that time. It was a good time because somebody was retiring. They had got to a certain age and they were retiring.

They were selling out for good dollars. Their land was going for good dollars. The machinery was going for good dollars. We would all be there. It was kind of like you were visiting your neighbours and wishing them well and bon voyage.

Well, Mr. Speaker, today farm auctions are a tragedy. We saw the farm auction in my area, the Stockholm area, the other day, Mr. Speaker. We had a family that purchased land, machinery, buildings, in the millions of dollars. This was a very big venture. And I believe that the people when they come in had good intentions and felt . . . maybe not understanding completely the agriculture file, but spent millions of dollars of investment dollars into our area saying, there's got to be money out here to be made. So, Mr. Speaker, what the man and his wife were saying is we feel that it's worth investing in agriculture out there. It's worth taking the risk and putting our capital into there.

And what do we see a short three years later? And knowing that they're going to lose millions, I would believe, Mr. Speaker — and I can't back that up with fact — but I know they took a great beating on what they received for the land and the improvements they'd put into that land. They'd improved the land dramatically.

And the machinery, Mr. Speaker. In fact some of the stuff, some of the farmers have told me, probably went for possibly 10, 20 cents on the dollar. And, Mr. Speaker, that's a tremendous loss for somebody to take. And, Mr. Speaker, it's a shame because what happens then is there's not investment dollars to go into agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, some of the quotes that the Minister of Agriculture has had in the past make me really wonder if it's not that they don't understand agriculture, or if it's just that they don't want to understand agriculture and do not want to support it in the province of Saskatchewan.

I quote, Mr. Speaker, from the Ag minister, November 7:

Mr. Speaker, if we were to put those hundreds of millions of dollars that are drawn up in the CAIS program, and those hundreds of millions of dollars that really are a product of an inequitable system that put Saskatchewan paying five or six times the provincial per capita average, Mr. Speaker, it would be akin to throwing those dollars away and not investing them in the future of agriculture.

That's quite a statement when you think of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker — to put money into our farm families in Saskatchewan is like throwing money away. So I guess we understand why, Mr. Speaker, there is no compassion over there and there's no really caring of what's going on in rural Saskatchewan.

[11:45]

Another quote, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from the Minister of Agriculture:

We must recognize that farms are businesses and . . . those farmers are making business decisions about the kind of inputs that they will . . . [be putting] in.

Well yes, they're business decisions. But business decisions have to be made with the amount of capital that you can afford to invest in your crop that you're going to grow or into your agriculture business. And, Mr. Speaker, it just shows that there's no caring or compassion with the government opposite.

Mr. Speaker, another quote:

"We'll be providing the support that there is through our current programs and we think . . . those programs will meet the basic needs and we have no intention of doing any kind of ad-hoc program at all at this point," . . .

That was from our present Agriculture minister, Mr. Speaker, September 14, 2005. So at that point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they were already talking about the problem but were not dealing with the problem, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe what has happened this week has, Mr. Speaker, has done a lot of harm to provincial-federal relations. And when we have a provincial government that has no new ideas and will not stand behind one of the industries in Saskatchewan and then turns on the other hand and blames everybody else for their problems — it's either the federal government or it's the farmers' problem; it's the weather; it's somebody else's problem — and accepts no responsibility for it, I would say that the first thing we need is a provincial election.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot afford to let rural Saskatchewan die out there. We need rural Saskatchewan in conjunction with urban Saskatchewan to make this province grow like the other provinces around us seem to be doing. We see the job numbers out and the population numbers out, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The job numbers in BC [British Columbia] are growing dramatically. The job numbers in Alberta are growing dramatically. In fact to the east, our neighbour to the east with about one-third of the resources at most that we have here, their job numbers are growing. And yet what happens when we get back to Saskatchewan? We're losing people. The population's dropping, Mr. Speaker, and everything is behind in Saskatchewan. It's just like we're a have-not province, really, in the middle of a boom everywhere else.

And that's probably the farthest thing from the truth. Oil and gas in this province are doing very well and other industries are doing very well. And it's at that time, Mr. Speaker, we need a government with enough foresight to put this all together, to find a way to bring the people back that have left, bring new people back to Saskatchewan, grow our population. And let's get by this defeatist attitude, that we can't hear and we seem to just really appreciate being a have-not province.

So, Mr. Speaker, with that I join with the member for Thunder Creek in asking the provincial government to reconsider and extend the deadline for crop insurance.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble): — We have a motion that's being moved by the hon. member for Thunder Creek and seconded by the hon. member from Melville-Saltcoats:

That this Assembly urge the government to extend the deadline for crop insurance.

Is the Assembly ready for the vote on the motion? I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to give note that following my talk, I will be moving an amendment, Mr. Speaker. And the content of the amendment that I will be moving is this, Mr. Speaker:

That all the words after "this Assembly" be deleted and the following words would be substituted:

commend Crop Insurance for its flexibility and payment options by allowing producers with amounts owing on their 2005 crop insurance premium to make an initial payment of 25 per cent by March 31, 2006, with the remainder of the balance then payable upon arrangement.

That is the amendment that I will move.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that it's very important to clearly state the facts in this issue. Because as the members opposite have noted — and I agree with them and I understand — that this is one of the most difficult times that farmers in this province have faced over decades, perhaps one of the most difficult times in the history of this province in terms of the ability to deal with issues that are far beyond their control like world prices, like the changing value of the dollar, weather-related issues.

Mr. Speaker, they have consistently taken pieces, parts of what has been said in *Hansard* and brought forward to the public statements that are composed of their ideas and a quote of one or two words that I have made or perhaps other members have made. Mr. Speaker, this to me really is, from my view it is not politically ethical kind of actions that they have been undertaking.

And it bothers me from a number of perspectives. One, Mr. Speaker, is that when we are dealing with people who are in trouble, it is very important to be able to communicate with them effectively, to work with them effectively. And you know, the member opposite talked about there being a wedge driven between rural and urban people. I regret to say that members opposite have had that hammer in their hand driving that wedge just as hard as they could drive it, Mr. Speaker. And that includes paying for ads out in rural newspapers that say things like, Minister of Agriculture says farmers going broke because of business decisions. And they only put that piece in quotation marks because they took it out of context, Mr. Speaker, which is in my view completely inappropriate and is unethical, Mr. Speaker.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I do think it's important to put the facts on the table. And, Mr. Speaker, there is a clear reference in *Hansard* where I used those two words, business decisions, and, Mr. Speaker, it was about as people are preparing to farm, they'll make business decisions around the kind of inputs that they will use for their seeding in that given year, Mr. Speaker.

So let's try in this time where farmers need the support of this House — not just the government but of this House — to be

careful in our statements, to be thoughtful in our statements, and not to try and drive that wedge for simple political partisan reasons. And unfortunately that has been what has been happening over and over and over again, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have a crop insurance program . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble): — I apologize to the hon. member but . . . Members, members of the Assembly, members of the Assembly, I would ask for order please. I'm having difficulty hearing the Minister of Agriculture. He has the right to be heard, and I've asked for members to please keep their voices down. I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have a crop insurance program that has provided effective risk management for 45 years. And over those years, Mr. Speaker, we have done I think a tremendous job in this province under a variety of different governments of making sure that that program is credible, that it is supportive of farmers in their business, and that it provides the kind of risk coverage that they need.

Today that program is in place, Mr. Speaker, and we have provided, as to our agreement, the funding that is needed to make that program viable. We also have, Mr. Speaker, rules in this program that make it credible. I had a phone call to my office from a farmer the other day who said, we stand 100 per cent behind your position on the deadline. We think that is responsible government. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, by far the vast majority of people who are in crop insurance, who help pay for that program by their premiums, those people, Mr. Speaker, are counting on the integrity of this program and are counting on others to also make the payments. And if they can't make the full payments, to make arrangements.

Mr. Speaker, I had two members of the executive of SARM in my office yesterday, and we were sharing our concerns about the current situation and wondering is there anything further that we can do. And they painted a picture that is probably quite accurate in terms of what is happening in some situations, where farmers are in dire straits and they get a letter from Crop Insurance — whether it's a registered letter or a letter just providing information — and in their frustration, Mr. Speaker, they may not look at it.

And so we needed to do everything we could to try and make sure that farmers not only knew that the deadline is today and to let them know as well that they do have payment options. And so to that end, we called around. I called around to radio stations last night in the province to make sure that at least they would get that clear announcement that there were payment options available for them and that they needed to get in and make those options.

It is important, Mr. Speaker, that they make the payments, that they get in and at least put the 25 per cent down because that, Mr. Speaker, enables them then to also apply for the potential cash advance from the Canadian Wheat Board. And that also is very important for farmers to have that option, and also it provides them with a certain security in dealing with their

lenders in the upcoming year. These are important components of the program and how it functions in this province.

It is also important, Mr. Speaker, in that we have a second part of the business risk management program in CAIS. And with CAIS — by buying crop insurance, by having that insurance — if there is loss, then the insurance helps keep the margins up. These programs are dovetailed in order to be supportive of each other.

And so again it is, as much as possible we have advised and tried to provide information to farmers encouraging them to enrol in the programs.

I do have to question the mischievousness of the attacks today on myself and on this government because in the scrum the other day, after the member from Saltcoats had raised this issue of payments, he was asked by reporters . . . And, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read to the Assembly the comment that was made by that member. When asked by reporters whether a couple of months extension was going to help these farmers if they were at extreme risk, Mr. Speaker, what he said . . . Would it help them from going under, he was asked. And this is what he said, and I quote, "No," he said. And that's the quote — no, it would not help them.

So given that, I really question the attack today and just see it as one more attempt to hammer that wedge between myself and farmers and farm families, and between our government and farmers.

Now it's very, very important to know that over the two years that I have been Agriculture minister, that I've travelled extensively in the province meeting with many farmers, with farm families, and have developed many good, solid relationships. I know that the previous minister did the same. And we know that there are those strong relationships which will continue and which we'll continue to build on. We have not only built on them on a personal base, but we have done it by the kind of programs that we have offered.

Mr. Speaker, I think everybody in this House — opposition members included — can read the budget figures, and they know that this NDP government in Saskatchewan has provided, in the last two years, over \$1.32 billion in agriculture support, Mr. Speaker. That, Mr. Speaker, amounts to in this past year \$700 million — \$700 per capita — far beyond what any other province is providing for their farmers and farm families.

Mr. Speaker, this NDP government made those payments, supported agriculture, invested in agriculture. Why? Because we understand agriculture, and we care about what is happening to the people and to this industry. Very clearly we have put our money right where our mouth is, Mr. Speaker. We have made the payments and provided the support. And I can tell you that we will continue to do that.

Now I think, Mr. Speaker, as well that we have often dealt with — as the opposition has attempted to drive a wedge between the NDP and farmers — we have dealt with a lot of revisionist history. And it's important for us to be clear about what some of that relationship is, Mr. Speaker. Because clearly, as we have moved through this last decade, there have been some very,

very severe hits that this province has faced because of our federal government. And I want to be clear that the NDP in those struggles clearly was on the side of farmers and farm families.

And I have to be very clear as well. I heard the member from Elrose-Rosetown area say clearly the other day that, when it came into the House, that he stood up for the Crow rate. That's good. The NDP were clearly backing the Crow but, Mr. Speaker, the federal government pulled the subsidization rate for agriculture transportation, grain transportation, pulled it out of this province. It was supposed to be an agreement for perpetuity. It was taken out.

The sum total of the effect of that . . .

[12:00]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble): — Order. Members, I know there are strong feelings on this issue, but it is getting very difficult for members of the Assembly to be able to hear the Minister of Agriculture. I would ask for order. I recognize the Minister of Agriculture. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the net effect of that — and we've made this very clear over the years in our relationships with the federal government, past federal government, and also in discussions with our current minister, federal minister — that the net effect of this was to pull at least \$500 million a year out of the Saskatchewan economy. And farmers are still paying to export the commodity.

Mr. Speaker, this is not right. The federal government had an agreement. They reneged, and they did not, Mr. Speaker, they did not provide for farmers the kind of funding that would build value-added industry in this province. They just simply pulled \$500 million out of the economy, and they have used that to help build their surpluses over the years.

Mr. Speaker, they also . . . And in 1999 we travelled down there, down to Ottawa, a joint group of government, opposition, and farm leaders. We travelled to Ottawa to make clear to the federal government what the impact of their decision to take the subsidies out — a unilateral decision to take the subsidies off agriculture — what the impact of that was. What was it? The impact of that decision was \$1 billion a year. Mr. Speaker, that is money that has been taken directly out of the farm economy by the federal government.

So when we talk to the federal government, when we talk to the federal government, what we are saying, Mr. Speaker, is that they are accountable for much of the loss that this province has been facing. And we are saying to them: be accountable; put it back. Put the funding into this province and help us build the industry. Help us support the industry in a difficult time like this.

And, Mr. Speaker, I look at the programs that we have. I look at the investments that the people of this province continue to make in agriculture and will continue to make in agriculture in the business risk management side, in the support side with payments like we made through BSE [bovine spongiform encephalopathy], in the investment side, payments like we are

making for the meat strategy to help build that. The loan credits, Mr. Speaker, the PST [provincial sales tax] coverage for inputs, the no tax on the diesel fuel that is used in farming — all of these are supports that this government and the people of Saskatchewan provide for agriculture. And they are vital to help keeping this industry, which is so important to the whole economy of Saskatchewan, thriving.

Mr. Speaker, today it is hurting. It is hurting badly. But I can tell you also very clearly that it is not this provincial government that can make up the shortfall.

We have seen payments in the last two years, payments from the federal government, that have come into this province . . . a year ago at this time, \$280 million. Mr. Speaker, when I talked to farmers about that \$280 million, they were clear. It didn't solve the problem. It helped out a little bit. They were appreciative. And, Mr. Speaker, the \$290 million that is going to grains and oilseeds producers is not solving the problem either.

Now we've had a range of asks from people who are active in the agriculture industry or who are knowledgeable in the industry, everything from the APAS [Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan] request for \$75-an-acre payment which on cultivated acres would be about \$3.1 million and on seeded acres about 2.6 billion or 3.1 billion on cultivated acres. Mr. Speaker, those numbers are larger than the whole federal government budget. But they have identified the depth of the need here.

Mr. Speaker, it is huge. It is far beyond the capacity of the provincial treasury, and the members opposite know this. They admit it, but then they turn around and try and hammer a wedge between the provincial government and the agriculture industry and farmers by saying, well you know the province is just dishing it all off on the federal government.

No, Mr. Speaker, we have come to the table with the dollars. We will come to the table with dollars, all that this treasury can afford. But we, Mr. Speaker, as a province — as a province — we cannot, Mr. Speaker, compete with the national treasuries of the United States, the national treasuries of the European Union. That's a fact.

We are dependent on our federal government. And, Mr. Speaker, when that federal government tells us that there's going to be an additional \$500 million rolling out, everybody in this province — the farmers of this province — are saying, now, we need it today. We are saying we need it today. Five hundred million across this country will not solve the problem. It will not make the difference.

Farmers are saying clearly, it's not about getting subsidies; we want to be paid for our work, for our commodity. That's clear. But today they're trying to compete against farmers who are getting huge subsidies. They're competing in an international market that makes it unfair for the farmers in this province, for the farmers all across this country. And we need — our farmers here and across Canada — need this federal government to put this industry as a high priority, not somewhere beyond the five top priorities but as a high priority.

Our Premier has raised this with the Prime Minister recently. It is one of the highest priorities that we have in this province, and it has been made clear in setting the agendas in our discussions with the federal government. But I can say very clearly, we need our federal government to come to the table. We now have a large number of government MPs [Member of Parliament] sitting in this province. I believe, I believe that those members care about the farmers in this province. I believe that. And I want to see those Conservative members of parliament stand up to their government and challenge the government to do what they said they were going to do.

And, Mr. Speaker, when I was in Yorkton, when I was in Yorkton . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble): — I apologize to the Minister of Agriculture, but order. Order. I ask for order. The member has the right to speak, and all members have the right to hear him, so please come to order. I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when I was in Yorkton at an event that one of those MPs put on — Mr. Breitkreuz — very clearly the federal minister and I were standing together on a number of issues. I know that he referenced me in his speech. But also when he was asked about what they were going to do, he was very clear that though he cares — and I believe he does; I know he does — he was very clear that he did not have anything to offer those farmers that day. He was very clear that there was a budget process that they were going to have to go through. And when pressed by the farmers — when pressed — he said, you're going to have to buck up.

Now the members opposite say that that's not the case. Well I'd like to quote from a newspaper article today in *The Western Producer*. Mr. Speaker, from *The Western Producer* . . . I was not alone in hearing this. The member from Yorkton heard it. Eight hundred other people heard it, Mr. Speaker. And though there is denial from the other side very, very clearly, this is what Mr. Wells from the NFU [National Farmers Union] heard as well. He says, that's . . . He said, Mr. Speaker, and I don't know why the members opposite are getting so exercised about this. I mean Mr. Strahl very clearly made this statement. He made it because he is saying, he can't act today. He needs time. Well I'm telling you what he said. He said:

“That's why I'm encouraging farmers, just . . . to buck up and get into the program (CAIS) . . .”

Because all we've got for this year is the CAIS program . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . No, the quote was:

. . . Buck up and get into the program . . . get what you can out of it while we devise [another] . . . new . . .”

And it goes on from there. But that is the quote. And, Mr. Speaker, all I said the other day in this House, and what I will say again today, that's not good enough. It's not good enough to just say but . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble): — Members, I'd ask members on both sides of the House to please calm their voices

and give the Minister of Agriculture a chance to be heard. Other members who want to get into the debate will then have an opportunity to speak. I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you. What this . . . And I perceive him to be a very thoughtful and caring minister. What he said was not good enough. He needs to press his colleagues in cabinet. He needs to press his government for more. Why? Because the 500 million, as I have said, will not solve the problem.

And do you know what he needs to do that, Mr. Speaker? Do you know what he needs? He needs these people to push him. And he needs us to push him. Why? Because he's got to have that pressure in order to put pressure where it belongs — on Finance, on the Privy Council, on the Prime Minister — to make sure that this becomes a priority item. That's what he needs. He needs the pressure from us in order to do that. You know that. You've got to realize that that is exactly what's needed.

Now I believe fully that that minister cares — as I care — for the farmers of this province and for the farmers of this country. Why? Because they are a vital part of the economy of Saskatchewan and Canada. And we know, Mr. Speaker, we know clearly that they work hard. They produce well, but they are not getting paid what they should be paid for their commodity.

We know this, Mr. Speaker, and we want to see that rectified, and we need our federal government to help us rectify that. Why? Because, Mr. Speaker, they are the ones who are capable of doing it. They have the legislative power, and they have the financial power. And we need them to come to the table, and we need them to do it quickly. It's not a little Band-Aid today that's going to make the difference. It's not, Mr. Speaker, what it is, is some very, very clear, thoughtful support from all across this country.

What it needs is a change in understanding of how the agricultural economy has to work. You cannot have on one side of farmers . . . Mr. Speaker, if the federal minister clearly takes a hold of this, we will see a difference. But I can tell you, yelling from the opposite side here isn't going to help rectify the problem. That I can say for sure.

What I can also say is that we will continue to work together with the farmers and the farm organizations of this province to make sure that everything is being done to make the larger changes that will make a difference. We know that there are programs in place that can be effective if they are changed. But we also know that the federal government must invest more money in this vital industry.

And we also know that they must make some structural changes. You cannot have a system where you've got this one vitally important component that is being starved today. You've got a component that feeds into that, that is making good profits — the input side. You've got people on the other side of that who are doing quite well.

The problem is that farmers can't set their prices. They're price takers. And they have to pay the price that is charged for what's

there on the input side. And then they have to take whatever it is that's paid to them for their product. And they're competing with those federal treasuries of Washington and of the European Union.

Mr. Speaker, we need to stand together in this province and across this country. And we need our federal government to come to the table and actually make a difference by what they can do with their financial power and their legislative power. And, Mr. Speaker, we have been there, and we will be there. Mr. Speaker, that is very clear. We have been there more than any other province, more than any other province, Mr. Speaker.

And that, Mr. Speaker, at \$700 per capita, Mr. Speaker, far, far outpaces what any other province is doing.

[12:15]

Mr. Speaker, as far as the crop insurance program is concerned, we've heard the members opposite talk about the changes that the other provinces on either side of us have made to crop insurance. Well I can tell you very clearly that they don't have the same challenges that we do here. This is not Alberta and this is not Manitoba. This is Saskatchewan.

Let me just draw an example. I believe it's in the '05 year where the new programs, the RIC [revenue insurance coverage] that the Alberta government has added to their crop insurance, the RIC program which puts a floor price and pays out at the end of the year if it's not met. That program cost them, in administration, \$20 million I believe in '05, and then it was about \$78 million in payouts. If we had run that same program here, exactly the same parameters on the program, it would have cost us \$22 million in administration and well over 400, almost \$500 million in payouts for the same program.

Now I tell you, this is one of the realities that the members opposite just don't seem to get, don't faze, don't care about, I don't know what it is, but this is a unique province. And I can tell you very clearly that as a unique province we have also been building a unique program in the crop insurance program. We have been developing new programs that will help farmers meet their needs and we have been putting those programs forward and they have been responding well to them. We have been continuing to develop those programs and we will continue to adapt the crop insurance program as we move ahead.

Now the other question that has been raised here — and I do want to address this one again as I have in the past — and that's spot loss hail. Very clearly, there are independent brokers who sell hail insurance in this province and they were appreciative of the change that was made. And I've had brokers talk to me and say how much it has meant to them to have the opportunity to sell the hail insurance without the Crop Insurance Corporation selling spot loss.

You also have municipal hail which is owned by the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities. And municipal hail, though they can quite easily compete with the crop insurance spot loss hail program, they also say — and they say they can live with that — they also say that it does make it more difficult in administering and paying out. But all that said,

I have assured the members opposite, I have assured the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities and APAS that we have taken this issue to review it and to bring it forward to deal with in the upcoming year. And we will take the best advice from our consultations and from our farm support review committee and we will work with that. And, Madam Speaker, when we have dealt with that, we will bring this forward for consideration.

So we are responsive. We listen to what the needs of the farmers are, and we seek to comply where we can. We also listen to other businesses in this province and try and be responsive and responsible with them.

So all I can say in summary, Madam Speaker, is that on this very, very important issue of trying to provide for farmers the best of support, we recognize that there have always been some farmers who are not able to pay their crop insurance bill. There always have been. But I can also say clearly that we provide them with an opportunity to pay a portion of it by the deadline and to make arrangements moving out from there. We do provide that support and that option, and we will continue to do that. We also are very careful to inform them as fully as possible about when the deadlines are and what those deadlines actually mean to them and to their business just in case they've been stressed and can't do it.

The other thing I want to say is in dealing with this Agriculture portfolio at a time when it is so difficult for many farm families, I think it is important that the opposition at least try and stick to the facts and not take things out of context and twist them around and put paid advertisements out into the public that really, from all my view of life, I would say are completely unethical. And I think they need to take their ethical paper and really look at some of the actions that they're taking and re-examine what they're about. Because you know, if we pull together, if we pull together, you know, we actually will be able to make a difference for the people of this province, for the farmers of this province.

Madam Speaker, that's what I intend to continue to work for. I know that's what my colleagues in this NDP government continue to work for. We do want to see a strong agriculture industry. We are investing for the future — millions of dollars every year — and we are helping to make some of the transitions that are so important. We'll continue to do that. And, Madam Speaker, we do hope, we do hope that the opposition Sask Party will stop pushing their doom-and-gloom attitude out there and will really stand together and stop trying to drive a wedge between the government and the people, and really enable us to work together to make a difference and to have a united voice in pressing on our federal government.

With that, Madam Speaker, I would like to move the amendment which I read out earlier and that is that I move, seconded by the member from Yorkton:

That all the words after "this Assembly" be deleted and the following words be substituted:

commend Crop Insurance for its flexibility in payment options by allowing producers with amounts owing on their 2005 crop insurance premium to make an initial

payment of 25 per cent by March 31, 2006 with the remainder of the balance then payable upon arrangement.

I so move, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Agriculture and Food and seconded by the member from Yorkton, the Deputy Premier:

That all the words after “this Assembly” be deleted and the following words be substituted:

commend Crop Insurance for its flexibility and payment options by allowing producers with amounts owing on their 2005 crop insurance premium to make an initial payment of 25 per cent by March 31, 2006 with the remainder of the balance then payable upon arrangement.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. I want to just take a few minutes to speak on the motion in support of the amendment that the Minister of Agriculture has put forward.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, first and foremost that I think that there's very little disagreement in this Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker, about the importance of having both the national farm program for producers across Canada and in our own province today to have good support, solid programs; both on revenue insurance, both on market insurance, and also to ensure that we have some kind of a disaster program in Saskatchewan. I don't think there's any question, Madam Speaker, about what we need to do here in our province.

And I would say to this House, Madam Speaker, and to the members across that there has been a great deal of work in this province that has been undertaken to try and make it better for Saskatchewan farm families.

Some of that work, Madam Speaker, has been not only driven by members on this side of the House. There has been from time to time occasion, as I've said in other speeches that I've made in this Assembly, that we have had the support of members opposite to try to make a difference in helping farm families across Saskatchewan. And this is not a different occasion today.

And at the end of the day, Madam Speaker, when you take a look at the kinds of investment, as the Minister of Agriculture has already alluded to, there has been tremendous investment in agriculture — both at the national level and at the provincial level — and per capita, as the Minister of Agriculture has talked, there has been a tremendous commitment here already made.

Now some would argue that it isn't enough, that there should be more. And I think collectively on this side of the House, we'll argue that we should change the formulas because our Saskatchewan producers and Saskatchewan people shouldn't be disadvantaged by the current formula of 60/40 that's in place.

We all know that in this province we've had the kinds of disasters over the last number of years that have required a significant draw on the crop insurance program. This province has met its commitments on the crop insurance program.

Some would argue that we should be enhancing our crop insurance program to cover a larger portion of insurance for producers in Saskatchewan. And I don't think anybody would argue that we shouldn't attempt to try do that. It is a common goal that we have in this Legislative Assembly, irrespective of what your political affiliations are or the nature of which you have a relationship with the national government.

I think that at the end of the day we want to see farm families with stronger insurance programs. We want to see them with better revenue and we want to see them competing in a marketplace today that's even and stable. That's what we want in this Assembly, Madam Speaker.

And I think the question is, whether or not and how are we getting there . . . and how are we getting there. And we've attempted that in a variety of different ways. We finally have in Canada — whether members would agree or disagree about the quality of — the national program and the agricultural policy framework. We finally have one. And most of us would agree that there's lots of adjustments that we need to make to them and we need to change them. And collectively I think, through the efforts of this Assembly, we should try to do that.

And I want to just highlight a couple of areas, Madam Speaker. We have, I think today, both agreed — on this side of the House and on the other side of the House and members of the opposition — that really we should do something about the 60/40. And we should work collectively on the 60/40.

And our Minister of Agriculture and this province is on record that we should move to something that's . . . an 80/20 would be more favourable to Saskatchewan producers. And we've got the member from Saltcoats who is the Ag critic, Saltcoats-Melville who's the Ag critic, he's on record too to say that we should be at an 80/20 formula today in the province. And we have other members of the opposition that have said, on time to time in the speeches that they make, that we should be changing the formula and it should be 80/20 with . . . The federal government should be providing a greater opportunity for Saskatchewan producers.

So we don't have any debate on that piece, Madam Speaker. We're in agreement that we should have a change in the formula and it should be 80/20. We don't have much debate in this Legislative Assembly, Madam Speaker, that we should change the concepts of the agricultural policy framework on revenue insurance — that it should be a crop insurance program with some kind of a modification to CAIS or maybe an improvement on CAIS is what many of us would argue and attached to that would be some type of a disaster component.

There's no debate in this Legislative Assembly that we should have a change in the principles of that particular package. And collectively we're on record on this side of the House to say that we should have those three components fixed, and we have members on the opposition who are exactly on the same page. I mean I've heard the agricultural critic say just recently that we

should have in Canada a disaster program and that in fact that disaster program should provide sufficient dollars to this province and to other provinces across Canada where in fact there is hardship. And clearly today we have hardship in Saskatchewan and associately we should try and build a stronger disaster program for our Saskatchewan, Canadian producers. So there's no demur in the debate, Madam Speaker, on those issues.

The issue I think that we're busy debating today is, will we see some changes to what we've all been . . . all we've been working collectively for to try to achieve. Because there is no secret today that the lion's share of how these programs need to be supported are national. We both agree on that.

And so when we talk a little bit today about the crop insurance program, we should remember that there was a strong lobby a few years ago for us to get out of a portion of crop insurance, where they said that the hail portion . . . People said to us that the Government of Saskatchewan should not be investing in the spot loss hail piece. And that argument was advanced by a number of members who are currently still sitting on the other side of the House who said the Government of Saskatchewan should not be in the private sector's face. They should get out of there.

And so we took that under advisement and spoke with a number of people across the province and we gradually moved out of that, Madam Speaker, because we got that kind of information from people across the province and the members opposite that we were interfering with the private sector.

And we had a very strong lobby from the municipal sector in this province who supply a very large portion of crop insurance to us as farmers across the province, of which many of those premium payments that are paid actually support men and women who work in our communities across the province in the municipalities. And so for members opposite today to stand up in their place and say what we should do is we should put in another 25 or \$30 million or whatever that number might be to relieve producers of some of the hardship that they have, it's a laudable task that we should undertake. And we should probably move down that piece.

But what it does state, Madam Speaker, is that the people of the province are again going to be subsidizing the crop insurance program, and it flies in the face of the philosophy of our members opposite. So they need to be clear about what they want us to do. Do they want to join with us and do some work on putting additional dollars into the crop insurance program that are subsidized, experience some of the feedback that we're going to get from the private sector and the municipal sector in the province, and join with us in saying, yes we should do that.

[12:30]

And it would be most appreciated, I think, in this House if we would have members of the opposition who would stand up and say, you know, we believe that this is exactly the approach that you should be taking, that the province of Saskatchewan and the people of Saskatchewan should be subsidizing hail insurance in this province. And in fact we think that you should take money out of the provincial treasury in spite of what the municipalities

and the private sector are doing. And it would be good one day to just have a couple of the members from the opposition stand up and make those comments.

But I've yet to hear them with that kind of . . . [inaudible] . . . But we need to go there. I don't disagree that we need to go there. We should go there and we should examine it. And the Minister of Agriculture has in fact undertaken to do that over the next several months and see what kind of support we're going to get from the members opposite when we get to that particular piece.

Now, Madam Speaker, we also know that in order for us to change the landscape of Saskatchewan, we're going to need those support programs in place. And I was at the Yorkton event along with the Minister of Agriculture and a number of members who sit in the opposition benches who come from rural Saskatchewan today, and we heard the speech that was given by Minister Strahl. I had an opportunity to actually spend a half an hour with Mr. Strahl at my constituency office in Yorkton to talk about a variety of different areas of which we're working collectively on.

And I'm not for a minute suggesting, Madam Speaker, and I don't think the Minister of Agriculture is for a minute suggesting that we shouldn't work co-operatively with the national government — absolutely we should. There is absolutely no way that you can build any kind of a framework in Saskatchewan around agriculture without a co-operative working relationship. And all we want to do, Madam Speaker, is to try and sort out in which direction we can work collectively with one another in order to enhance and build a stronger national framework for our producers.

And so I think when the Minister of Agriculture got up to give his speech and when he finished his comments, Madam Speaker, he then took some questions a few minutes after he did his press scrum. And one of the questions came from an individual from the Nipawin area where they had the huge flood.

And he said, Mr. Minister, we appreciate all the good work that you've done for the people of the province or for Canada. We know that you're working hard to change the CAIS program and we expect that this will happen in short order for you. And then he said, we want to know whether or not you're prepared to invest in agriculture \$3.5 billion. We need \$65 an acre, on average, on 70 million acres for Canadian producers, is what he said, is what the person from the floor asked from the Nipawin area.

And Mr. Strahl answered the question by saying this. He said, we've made the commitment on the seven fifty, and I'm working really hard to get the additional \$500 million. But I don't have yet the approval of my cabinet for the \$500 million. And he said, when you do the math on that — was his next comment — when you do the math on that, that's about \$6.50 an acre and it's not \$65 an acre. And it was quiet and there was no applause. And he said, I guess those numbers don't give me very much applause, is what he said. And he didn't get very much applause.

And then the individual sat down and the second speaker came

to the microphone and said, you know, you've answered only a part of the question, but what about when we're going to see a difference in the CAIS program? And Mr. Strahl then went on to say that we probably won't see a change to the CAIS program till sometimes 2007, late 2006, maybe 2007. But there will not be any changes to the CAIS program yet today which affects the crop insurance program, is what he said. And farmers that were in that room couldn't understand how it is that you had an administration that campaigned on CAIS not being any good, that they couldn't change it for a couple of years. And then Mr. Strahl went on to say that what's required here is an agreement from the provinces to sign this off.

And I can tell you that the Minister of Agriculture in this administration would in fact, Madam Speaker, endorse the change to the entire formula today if he asked us to do that. It's not impaired by the position of the province at all. And so we should not for a minute, we should not for a minute be concerned about the fact that the province wouldn't endorse the change to the plan.

And then of course when he was asked again, Madam Speaker, by the second speaker on the floor whether or not we're going to see a change in the CAIS program and new money this year, Madam Speaker, the member said, I can't find you \$3.2 billion. I can't find you \$3.5 billion. I'm going to have a hard time finding \$500 million. And you know boys, you know what we're going to have to do? We're going to have to buck up here in . . . We're going to have to buck up, is what his comment was. And for those who were in the room, couldn't believe the comment.

And I'm not for a minute suggesting that in fact that the federal government is going to have some difficulty in finding \$3.2 billion. I can't for a minute believe that that's not going to be a tough exercise for them to find the money. And maybe it's an unrealistic figure of which Canadian producers are asking for. But I can tell you the \$65 an acre for farmers today is not an unrealistic number. It's not an unrealistic number to get this crop in this spring.

And to provide an additional \$500 million . . . And I was listening as the member opposites were speaking and listening . . . And speaking just off the record, Madam Speaker, to the member from Maple Creek, and he said our previous commitments on \$200 million, on previous occasions, worked out to about \$5 an acre. And there was some mockery to the amount of money that we put in. Well that was all Saskatchewan taxpayers' money, that \$200 million at \$5 an acre. Every penny of that was Saskatchewan people's money.

And you compare that today, Madam Speaker, to the additional \$500 million that the national government's rolling out, which works out to \$6.50, which is going to come from 32 million people in the province versus 1 million people in Saskatchewan where we paid out \$5 per acre from our little old population of Saskatchewan here, where men and women are working hard to provide that kind of subsidy to agriculture. And the national government, Madam Speaker, in Yorkton, said we might be able to find you an additional \$6.50 per acre on a population of all of Canada. You tell me about the fairness of that particular statement, Madam Speaker.

What are we going to do, Madam Speaker? We're going to continue to work with the opposition. We're going to continue to work with this opposition. We're going to want this opposition to do the kinds of things they said that they wanted to do four months ago or five months ago in the November legislature where they said we should be on buses and trains and planes to Ottawa. We should be on buses and trains to Ottawa and we should be looking for additional money for Saskatchewan farmers.

And you know what? We should be doing that, Madam Speaker, for Saskatchewan and Canadian farmers. They said that we should be on buses and planes and trains to be going to Ottawa and changing the CAIS program, refocusing the CAIS program and making it stronger to provide more benefits for Saskatchewan people.

And I bet you that they've got their planes and trains and buses already booked to do that, Madam Speaker, because it's important that they do that. Because I can tell you that the Minister of Agriculture and this side of the House, Madam Speaker, are going to be working with the federal government to try and change both the CAIS program, enhance funding for the CAIS program, the changing of the formula that you're talking about, and building a stronger Saskatchewan agricultural and Canadian economy.

And so this is not a division about what we want to do for Saskatchewan farmers. This debate, Madam Speaker, it's not a division. This is about working collectively and listening to the voices of our members opposite as they're driving and working with Ottawa to fix the disparity that Saskatchewan producers have with men and women who understand their political flavour as well or better than we do. And so we're going to expect that they're going to be putting a ton of pressure, a ton of pressure on the federal government to change the kinds of disparities that exist for Saskatchewan and producers today.

And so I'm going to continue to work closely with the Minister of Agriculture and this government to make sure that we have in this province the kinds of agricultural policy, the kind of financial support, and the kinds of opportunity for enhancement and building on the renewable fuels of this province in a far more significant way.

So with that, Madam Speaker, I'm going to move to adjourn the debate.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Yorkton has moved to adjourn the debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried. I recognize the Minister of Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Madam Speaker, I move the House do now adjourn.

The Deputy Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Government Relations that this House do now adjourn. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried. This House stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30 p.m. I wish everyone a safe and happy weekend.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:40.]

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GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

CABINET MINISTERS

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Premier

Hon. Graham Addley
Minister of Healthy Living Services
Minister Responsible for Seniors

Hon. Pat Atkinson
Minister of Advanced Education and Employment
Minister Responsible for Immigration
Minister Responsible for the Public
Service Commission

Hon. Joan Beatty
Minister of Northern Affairs
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women

Hon. Buckley Belanger
Minister of Community Resources
Minister Responsible for Disability Issues

Hon. Eric Cline
Minister of Industry and Resources
Minister Responsible for Investment
Saskatchewan Inc.
Minister Responsible for Information Services
Corporation of Saskatchewan

Hon. David Forbes
Minister of Labour
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Water Corporation

Hon. Glenn Hagel
Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation
Provincial Secretary
Minister Responsible for Gaming
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Government Insurance

Hon. Deb Higgins
Minister of Learning
Minister Responsible for Literacy
Minister Responsible for Liquor and
Gaming Authority
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