



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

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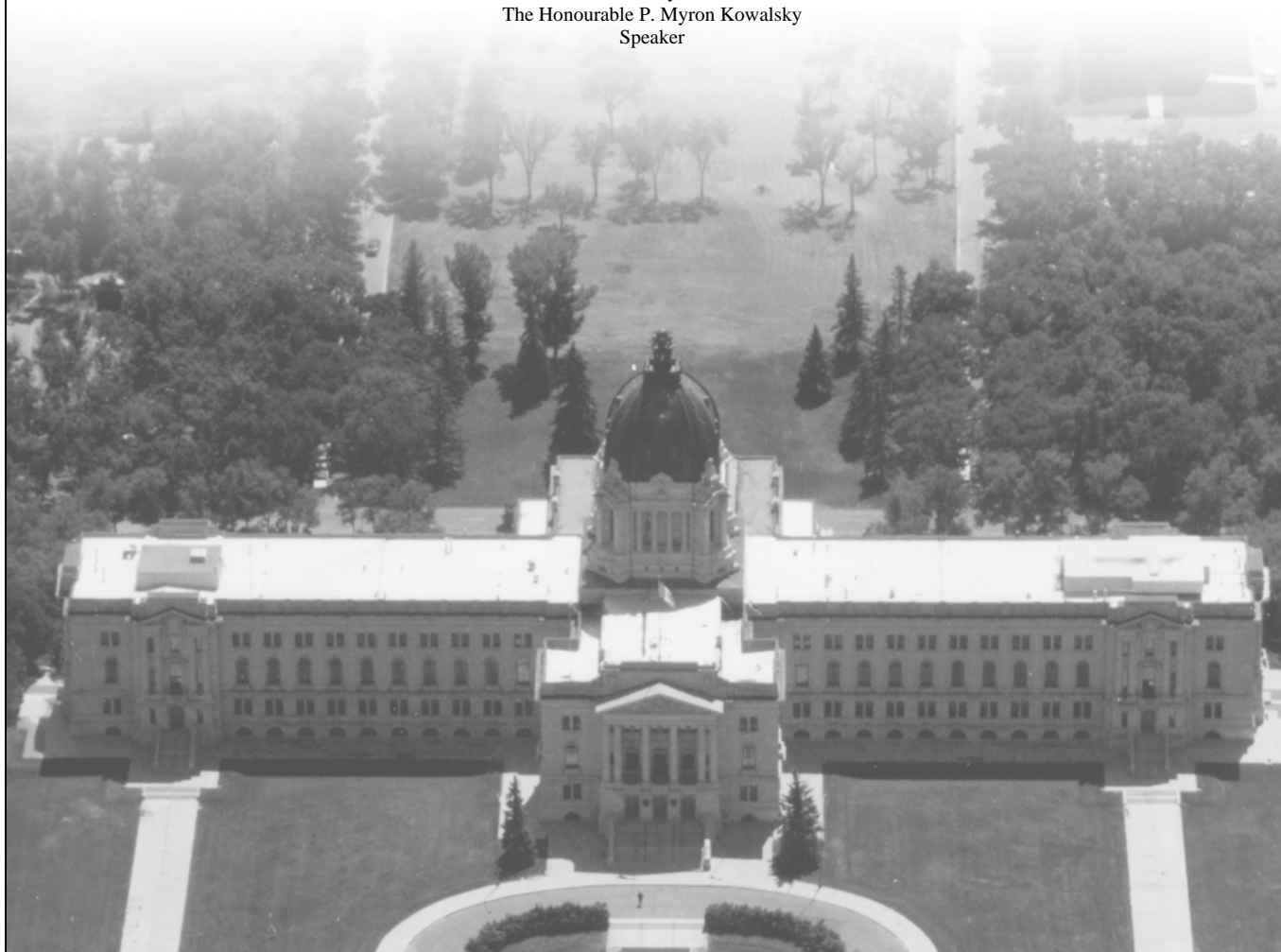
**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

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(HANSARD)

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

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### TABLING OF REPORTS

**The Speaker:** — I have before me a special report dated April 25, 2006 to the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly on The Youth Drug Detoxification and Stabilization Act by the Saskatchewan Children's Advocate which I table at this time.

### PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege today as well to present another petition to this Assembly on behalf of a number of people from the beautiful city of Saskatoon regarding a provincial children's hospital in that community. 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 implement an allocation of financial resources in this year's or next year's financial budget to build a provincial children's hospital in Saskatoon.

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

Mr. Speaker, as I indicated earlier the petition is signed by people from the community of Saskatoon. I so present.

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

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of residents of the city of Saskatoon I too rise to present a petition. 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 implement an allocation of financial resources before the next election to build a provincial children's hospital in Saskatoon.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition to present regarding a children's hospital in the community of Saskatoon. 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 actions to implement an allocation of financial resources in this year's budget to build a provincial children's hospital in Saskatoon.

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

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

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

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition to present today. 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 implement an allocation of financial resources in this year's budget to build a provincial children's hospital in Saskatoon.

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

I so present.

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

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I also have a petition to present on behalf of people petitioning for a new hospital in Saskatoon.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to implement an allocation of financial resources in this year's budget to build a provincial children's hospital in Saskatoon.

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

Mr. Speaker, all the signatures on this petition are from the city of Saskatoon. I so present.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition requesting allocation of funding for a provincial children's hospital in Saskatoon. This petition is signed by people who believe that children in this province deserve the finest health care. The prayer of the petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to implement an allocation of financial resources in this year's budget to build a provincial children's hospital in Saskatoon.

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition all come from the city of Saskatoon. I'm pleased to present it on their behalf.

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

**Mr. Wakefield:** — Mr. Speaker, I have a petition regarding funding for a provincial children's hospital. 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 implement an allocation of financial resources in this year's budget to build a provincial children's hospital in Saskatoon.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

These signatures come from the city of Saskatoon. I present it on their behalf.

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

**Mr. Chisholm:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm also pleased to rise this afternoon to present a petition regarding the need for a children's hospital in Saskatoon. 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 implement an allocation of financial resources in this year's budget to build a provincial children's hospital in Saskatoon.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by people from the communities of Martensville, Perdue, and the city of Saskatoon.

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

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too have a petition to present on behalf of citizens who are very concerned that this province does not have a children's hospital. 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 implement an allocation of financial resources in this year's budget to build a provincial hospital, children's hospital, in Saskatoon.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signatures to this petition, Mr. Speaker, come from the great city of Saskatoon. I so present.

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

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today with my colleagues expressing the concern of citizens about the lack of a pediatric children's hospital in Saskatoon. 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 implement an allocation of financial resources in this year's budget to build a provincial children's hospital in Saskatoon.

Signatures on this petition this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, are from the city of Saskatoon, and I'm pleased to present on their behalf.

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

**Ms. Eagles:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too rise today to present a petition requesting allocation of funding for a provincial children's hospital in Saskatoon. 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 implement an allocation of financial resources in this year's budget to build a provincial children's hospital in Saskatoon.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this is signed by citizens of Saskatoon, Grandora, and Rosthern. I so present. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand again today to present a petition on behalf of citizens of Saskatoon who are asking for funding for a provincial children's hospital. 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 implement an allocation of financial resources before the next election to build a provincial children's hospital in Saskatoon.

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

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

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

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to present a petition on behalf of residents across Saskatchewan that are concerned that Saskatchewan is the only province besides PEI [Prince Edward Island] that does not have a dedicated children's hospital. The prayer of the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to implement an allocation of financial resources before the next election to build a provincial children's hospital in Saskatoon.

The petitioners today live in Erindale, Arbor Creek, Silverspring, and College Park in northeast Saskatoon. I so

present, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with a petition today from citizens that are getting tired of the NDP's [New Democratic Party] promises about hospitals and would like to see some action. And the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to implement an allocation of financial resources before the next election to build a provincial children's hospital in Saskatoon.

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

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by good citizens from Saskatoon and Martensville. I so present.

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

**Mr. Kirsch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I also rise to present a petition on the request to have a children's hospital. 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 implement an allocation of financial resources before the next election to build a provincial children's hospital in Saskatoon.

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

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

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

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also join with my colleagues on calling the government for a children's hospital.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to implement an allocation of financial resources in this year's budget to build a provincial children's hospital in Saskatoon.

As in duty bound, petitioners will ever pray.

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

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

**Mr. Merriman:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise on a petition.

That a health facility focusing specifically on the areas of

pediatric patient care, disease and injury prevention, pediatric health education, and research which would best optimize the safety, health, and welfare of our children.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

From the good people of Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Morgan:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present yet another petition regarding allocation of funding for a provincial children's hospital in Saskatoon. I will read the prayer for relief:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to implement an allocation of financial resources in this year's budget to build a provincial children's hospital in Saskatoon.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by concerned voters from Saskatoon Eastview, Saskatoon Meewasin, and Saskatoon Greystone. I so present, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Kerpan:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And finally, Mr. Speaker, I too rise on behalf of concerned citizens of Saskatchewan who are concerned about the health care of children and want to see a children's hospital in Saskatoon. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to implement an allocation of financial resources in this year's budget to build a provincial children's hospital in Saskatoon.

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

Mr. Speaker, signed by citizens of Melville and Saskatoon.

## READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

**Deputy Clerk:** — According to order an addition to a previously tabled petition being sessional paper no. 644 has been reviewed, and pursuant to rule 14(7) is hereby read and received.

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 51 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for SGI: does SGI pass any private client information to Imperial Parking Canada for

any means? And if so, for what purpose and how many referrals has SGI made to Imperial Parking Canada in 2005?

And I give notice that I shall on day no. 51 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for SGI: does SGI have an agreement with Imperial Parking Canada to pass private client information over to Imperial Parking? And if so, has SGI tried to end this agreement?

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**The Speaker:** — Members, seated today in the Speaker's gallery, it is my pleasure to introduce to the Assembly Marian Powell, who will on May 2 be retiring as Legislative Librarian after a distinguished career of 24 years. Marian holds the record as the longest serving Legislative Librarian in Saskatchewan history.

Her achievements are numerous and I can say with certainty that the Legislative Library services were transformed more during Ms. Powell's tenure than during the entire existence of the Legislative Library before Marian. When Marian Powell took on the job as Legislative Librarian in 1982, there were no computers but the library had two telephones and one electric typewriter.

[13:45]

Today information can be accessed by Internet from several specialized databases and soon the final portion of the old card catalogues will be online, enabling members and their staff to locate material owned by our library from any Internet-connected computer in the world.

Under Marian Powell's leadership, the Saskatchewan Legislative Library was the first to tailor service to the needs of individual MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly]. Many of the wonderful electronic information resources currently available to MLAs are the result of cost sharing partnerships championed by Marian.

Besides modernizing the means and expanding the extent of information accessed through the Legislative Library, Marian Powell also oversaw major physical improvement in the Legislative Library. The reading room was renovated and restored to its original beauty. Custom-built shelving was purchased for both the reading room and reference areas. The library collection was consolidated so that materials can be retrieved in a very efficient and prompt manner. Our collection is shelved under environmentally controlled conditions to ensure preservation of these collections for future generations.

Bringing the library from 19th century technology to the e-age required vision and excellent managerial skills. Marian was able to hire, train, motivate, and retain a professional cadre of employees whose services are both appreciated and admired. The amazingly positive attitude our library staff brings to this magnificent building is a tribute to Marian's leadership style

and we thank her for that. Congratulations are extended to Marian Powell on her official retirement.

With Marian today is her mother, Mrs. Jean McKillop, our Acting Legislative Librarian, Pat Kolesar, and Marian's husband, Trevor Powell who is also retiring from a distinguished career as Provincial Archivist. MLAs, it is a pleasure today to welcome to this Assembly Marian Powell, Legislative Librarian, and Trevor Powell, Provincial Archivist.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Provincial Secretary, the member for Moose Jaw North.

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank you for allowing me to join with you in welcoming our guests, Marian Powell, her mother Jean McKillop, and Trevor Powell to the legislature this afternoon.

I've had the pleasure of knowing both Marian and Trevor for a number of years, and I thank them both for their hard work and their commitment to their fields and their endeavours on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan.

I'd like to add to your comments, Mr. Speaker, with a bit of information about Trevor Powell, our former Provincial Archivist. Mr. Powell has been employed with the Saskatchewan Archives since 1973, working as a staff archivist and then in later years moving to become director.

In 1986 he became our Provincial Archivist and has served in this position until his recent retirement, serving in that position for 20 years. He was instrumental in leading the major revision and updating of The Archives Act, a development which included a major expansion of the institution's role in the management of Saskatchewan's government information.

In 2002 he was awarded the Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal in recognition of his public and community service, his long-term contributions to the Canadian and Saskatchewan archival communities, and his leadership of the Saskatchewan Archives.

I'd ask all members, Mr. Speaker, you and others, to join with me in showing our appreciation as well to Mr. Trevor Powell for his achievements in the archives field. And we wish him and his family all the best and many, many years of good health and a wonderful celebration of their retirement years together. Trevor.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Eagles:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join with the Provincial Secretary in thanking Trevor and Marian Powell for their commitment and service to the province of Saskatchewan and the legislature and to wish them well in their retirement. On behalf of the official opposition, thank you and good luck.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — Members, it is also my pleasure today to introduce the Legislative Librarian of Manitoba, Ms. Sue Bishop. She is joining us today at Marian Powell's farewell reception to bring greetings from the Association of Parliamentary Librarians of Canada known as APLIC.

Members, would you welcome to the Assembly today the person who's helping us honour our retiring Legislative Librarian, Ms. Sue Bishop.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Kirsch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure I rise to introduce to you and through you, 24 students from Three Lakes School at Middle Lake, Saskatchewan. And that happens to be the school that I attended many years ago, Mr. Speaker.

And there's 24 young kids there, really good-looking grade 3 and 4. With them today is teacher, Valerie Rohel and chaperones — we've got Janice Martin, Gary Berting, Michelle Heidecker, Gerard Pitzel, Joanne Laforme, Lisa Demers, Allan Olynuik, Ross Hauser, Rob Baker, and Ken Parsons. And I wish all members to help me welcome them to their legislature.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join with the member from Batoche in recognizing one of the chaperones that was introduced just a few minutes ago. I understand though that this is the grade 4 and 5 group, not the grade 3 and 4, and some information on the sheet wasn't quite accurate.

But I'd like to introduce Mr. Ken Parsons. Ken is a graduate of Invermay School and he was a graduate in — well, I will say it — 1982-83, which is my last year of teaching in Invermay School.

But most importantly, a small school doesn't achieve winning a lot of sports awards without a lot of dedication. And in 1982, Invermay School was fortunate in achieving a medal in senior boys' volleyball, and Ken played a very important part in that.

So I want to recognize Ken. I know his wife Lisa teaches in Middle Lake as well, and their family. And we enjoy the friendship we have with this couple. And I'd ask all members to join me in recognizing a former grad of Invermay School, Ken Parsons.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

#### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

#### Remembering the Holocaust

**Ms. Junor:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is Yom haShoah Day, or Holocaust Remembrance Day. Shoah, Mr. Speaker, is Hebrew for whirlwind or catastrophe. On this day we honour and remember the 6 million Jewish men, women, and children whose lives were swept away tragically during the Holocaust.

Mr. Speaker, it is imperative that we remember and commemorate this horrible event, an atrocity that claimed the lives of millions of innocent people. By recognizing this day each year, we are reminded that the Holocaust was not a random, isolated incident and that anti-Semitism and racism are not vices of the past.

Tragically, anti-Semitism, racism, xenophobia, and genocide are realities of our world today. It is the understanding of these events that will enable us and enable the future generations to look beyond cultural and racial difference to a society with the promise of tolerance.

We must continually examine the responsibilities of democratic citizenship and reject the dire consequences of indifference and inaction. Mr. Speaker, it is also important to remember the victims of this atrocity and to honour their memories.

Mr. Speaker, Yom haShoah is indeed a day of reflection observed by the international community. However, members of this Assembly as representatives of our communities must also accept the responsibility of leading the struggle against violence, against discrimination, and against cultural intolerance. Mr. Speaker, it is only through the efforts of every community that the fires of hate might be snuffed out. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it has been some 60 years since the end of the Second World War which also brought to an end one of the most horrendous acts taken against mankind, and I speak of the Holocaust and the attempt to annihilate the Jewish community in Europe.

Mr. Speaker, last spring I had the pleasure of joining the Minister of Finance, many community leaders, educators, and leaders in the Jewish community from across Canada on a trip to Poland to attend and participate in the March of the Living. This event was organized to remember the travesty of the Holocaust and those who died, and also to remind us how important it is for us to not only remember the tragedy of the Holocaust but to work to ensure that an event of this nature never happens to us again.

Mr. Speaker, as you travel through Poland, whether it's the Warsaw ghetto, whether it's the camps at Treblinka, Auschwitz, Auschwitz-Birkenau, your heart is touched. And it's just hard to imagine what took place some 60 years ago as men and women, boys and girls were taken from their homes never to return.

How important it is for us to not only remember but to continue to work to ensure that this doesn't happen. And unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, on a daily basis we are continually reminded of the fact that we haven't reached that utopia of peace where all men and women can continue to enjoy the peace that we enjoy in this nation today. May we continue to remember and never forget.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

#### **National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week**

**Ms. Crofford:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week, April 23 through 29, is National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week and in support my colleagues and I are wearing the green ribbon lapel pins. I note there is an information display on the lower level of this building.

The Saskatchewan Coalition of Organ Donor Awareness, SCODA, along with this government, recognize the need to increase public awareness and education with regards to organ and tissue donation. SCODA is the only coalition of its kind in Canada and health care professionals throughout the country look to SCODA as a leader in collaboration initiatives to promote organ and tissue donation.

Mr. Speaker, the coalition references three primary facts as the foundation for necessity of an awareness campaign. First, only 3 per cent of all deaths are of persons considered to be potential donors. Second, there is about 4,000 people awaiting transplants in Canada. And third, a single organ or tissue donation could save or improve the lives of at least 11 of these people.

Mr. Speaker, the members of the House may not know of my personal experience with this. My husband, Vic, received his transplant in the 11th hour. It's a huge emotional impact to know that someone else's loss is your salvation. I know that this final gift is deeply and gratefully appreciated, and I would like to invite all members to join with me in congratulating SCODA on its tireless efforts to bring light to organ and tissue donation on this National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

#### **Saskatchewan Party Nomination in The Battlefords**

**Mr. Chisholm:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to announce that last evening the Saskatchewan Party candidate was selected by the people of The Battlefords constituency.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Chisholm:** — To a packed house, to a packed house of over 350 people at the Tropical Inn in North Battleford, Herb Cox was announced as the next MLA for The Battlefords.

Mr. Speaker, this was yet another heavily contested nomination, attracting five very competent community leaders vying for the opportunity to represent The Battlefords. The background of the candidates was impressive. They brought to the meeting their experiences in economic development, education, Aboriginal leadership, agriculture, business, law enforcement, and labour relations as well as extensive community involvement. This, Mr. Speaker, is what the Saskatchewan Party represents.

The people of The Battlefords have chosen a very capable, hard-working, and sincere candidate to represent them in the next provincial election. Herb Cox is a man of action that understands the needs of the people in The Battlefords constituency. He's involved in the community, Mr. Speaker, as a minor hockey coach, a 4-H leader, a director of the Saskatchewan Quarter Horse Association, as well as being the representative of his business colleagues. He and his wife have three adult children, unfortunately two of which have found employment outside this province.

He will make a great addition to the Saskatchewan Party team, and we look forward to having him join us in forming the government after the next election. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Regina Walsh Acres.

#### **Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation Joins Top 20 Employers**

**Ms. Morin:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Queen's University School of Business has recently named the Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation, SOCO, one of Canada's top 20 best small and medium employers. SOCO, operating as Innovation Place, for those who are not familiar, is the organization responsible for managing the province's research parks in Regina and Saskatoon as well as the forest centre building in Prince Albert.

This honour, Mr. Speaker, recognizes Canadian employers with employees possessing superior levels of interest and commitment to their organization's success, relative to other companies surveyed.

[14:00]

The Queen's University of School of Business compiled the list of businesses based on methodology developed with the world's largest human resources outsourcing and consulting firm, Hewitt Associates.

This year, more than 100 small and medium employers registered to participate, Mr. Speaker, of which 80 ultimately qualified to compete for best employer status.

As one of the top 20 small and medium employers in Canada, Innovation Place has been recognized as an organization where the staff are fully engaged in their work, proud of the difference they make, and supportive of the company's mission.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to invite the Assembly to join me in



congratulating SOCO for this prestigious award.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

#### **Cancellation of Premier's Dinner**

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last week the Saskatchewan Party brought this legislature news of the Premier's southeast dinner in Weyburn. The Premier was to talk about his vision of the future for this province.

However there was a glitch. No one wanted to hear this no-vision speech. That's right, Mr. Speaker. The Premier's southeast dinner has been cancelled — no sales. The Regina organizers of the big event informed people by email that the Premier and his caucus were no longer coming to Weyburn.

The Saskatchewan Party is happy to give this Chamber an update of the NDP's leadership race: the member for Regina South, 12; member for Saskatoon Massey Place, 12; the Premier, zero. I guess the NDP are still reeling from the sparse crowd at their Weyburn nomination coronation, and the lack of interest in the NDP budget.

Mr. Speaker, higher education property taxes in the Weyburn area, long waiting lists for health care and education, higher taxes on oil production, the worst job creation record in Canada, is just not the vision the people of Weyburn are looking for. The people of Weyburn-Big Muddy just don't want the tired, worn out, brown corduroy, shag carpet policies of the NDP government. What they want, Mr. Speaker, is the bright, fresh vision of the Saskatchewan Party. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Meadow Lake.

#### **Kraft Hockeyville 2006 Competition**

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On March 27 at the Meadow Lake Minor Hockey Association annual general meeting, the ringing of the cellphones was absolutely deafening. That day it was announced that Meadow Lake had survived the first round of cuts in CBC's [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] Kraft Hockeyville 2006 competition.

More than 400 communities entered the competition, Mr. Speaker, of which only 50 were chosen for the next round. These communities, including Meadow Lake, submitted brief videos explaining why they should be crowned Kraft Hockeyville 2006 as the second phase of the competition.

Carpenter High School students Kelsie Valliere and Krystina Arnold produced the video for Meadow Lake. The entry featured vignettes involving construction workers at PineRidge Ford playing hockey during their coffee break and a hockey game in the aisles of the Co-op Marketplace.

Mr. Speaker, the video entries were aired on April 12 and April

19 with 25 featured each night. Only 25 communities have been selected for the third round of the Kraft Hockeyville 2006 competition, 20 of which were determined by a panel of judges and five which were determined by popular vote of the audience.

Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased to announce that Meadow Lake has been chosen as one of the final 25 communities.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Mr. Speaker, I would like to invite all members to join with me in congratulating the people of Meadow Lake in their success in CBC's Kraft Hockeyville 2006 and in wishing them the best of luck as the contest unfolds. And as they do for their MLA, vote early, vote often — but this time, vote for Meadow Lake. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

#### **ORAL QUESTIONS**

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

#### **Out-of-Province Medical Services**

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister said that his department would be covering all of baby Paige's medical costs while she is in Edmonton. And we thank the minister for that action. I know from speaking with the family that they're greatly relieved to hear that the minister's department will do that.

Why, in the three weeks that baby Paige was in the Saskatoon health system, was the family never told in advance that if they chose to take baby Paige to Edmonton, that their costs would be covered?

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the member opposite will know, yesterday I announced that I have asked my deputy minister, in consultation with the quality of care coordinators and the chief medical consultant in the province, to conduct a review of what took place in this case, including activities such as that which the member opposite just raised.

Mr. Speaker, that review is currently being undertaken. The deputy minister has informed me that he expects to have a report in my hands before the end of the week. And I will be pleased to be able to share some of that information with the member opposite when that report is received.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm hoping the minister himself, who is the head of this entire system, can answer a few of these questions. This family was led to believe all along that

they needed a referral in order to be pre-approved for funding. Mr. Speaker, in my dealings with Paige's mother, Michelle, she told me that she asked anyone who would listen to please refer her daughter to Edmonton so that they could be pre-approved for funding. Paige's family doctor told Michelle that he did not have the authority to refer her and that a referral would have to come from a pediatrician.

Mr. Speaker, if the government is willing to pay for this treatment, why didn't anyone in that system tell this family that they could go to Edmonton and their medical costs would be covered? Do people in the system not know that that is the policy of this government, or was this family simply given incorrect information?

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated in response to questions last evening in estimates, the province's out-of-province medical care expense policy has been in place for some time. That policy is such that out-of-province care is covered unless it requires prior approval for MRIs [magnetic resonance imaging], cataract surgery, or bone density scans. Mr. Speaker, the physicians in this province, the specialists in this province, should be aware that that is the policy of the province. They should be aware that that's the kind of message that they provide to their patients and people in need of care.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Mr. Speaker, along with baby Paige's family, I personally have some questions in this particular case. In trying to help this family get the care that baby Paige required, I myself made several phone calls. I spoke directly to the CEO [chief executive officer] of the Saskatoon Regional Health Authority. While she was genuinely concerned about this case, she did not tell me that the family's costs would be covered if they chose to go to Edmonton themselves. I spoke to the vice-president of rural health with the Saskatoon Regional Health Authority, and he did not inform me that the family's costs would be covered if they went to Edmonton without a referral.

Mr. Speaker, again to the minister, why aren't the people, the people at the top of the regional health authority, telling patients that are desperate that they can go out of province without a referral and their costs will be covered?

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again as I indicated in estimates last evening, when a person is referred — a patient or a resident of the province is referred out of province — it is generally for specialist care or for diagnostic treatment that does require a physician referral. Mr. Speaker, it is generally the physician that initiates the referral activity. It is generally the physician which takes the lead in these matters.

But, Mr. Speaker, in this particular case, the deputy minister has

taken on the task, as well as the regional health authority, of reviewing all of the incidents in this case, and these incidents will be referred to me, I'm told, before the end of the week. And I will share that information with the member opposite when it is received.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Again, Mr. Speaker, I personally would like some questions answered by that minister. I was so frustrated. I had phoned everyone that I could think about, the authority and the regional health authority. Honestly I would have phoned their dog had I known their phone number.

And out of frustration I phoned that minister's office. And you would think that someone working in the minister's office would have known that baby Paige's treatment would be covered if they did not have a referral and chose to leave the province. But guess again. The ministerial assistant that I dealt with from the Minister of Health's office first asked me: what's the minister supposed to do about this? And then he told me that Paige would need a referral from her pediatrician before she went to Edmonton.

Mr. Speaker, even that minister's own aide was unable to tell me that this family did not need a referral and that the costs would be covered under reciprocal agreements. Mr. Speaker, why is his office not providing the information?

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. The member opposite will remember just a few moments ago I outlined the policy which indicated that prior approval is required for MRI and bone density scans. Mr. Speaker, depending on the way the question was asked, what service was being required, it is entirely possible that the answer to the question would have been, for an MRI you need a referral; for a bone density scan you need a referral.

In the case that's in front of us, Mr. Speaker, the reference that has been made through the media, that an MRI was required may or may not have been part of the question. And also a bone density scan is different from a nuclear bone scan which was required in this case.

Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that the review being done by the Saskatoon Health Authority and secondarily by my department is required to answer some of these questions.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Mr. Speaker, I'd be more than happy to help the minister out and along with his investigation. I asked that baby Paige be sent to a children's hospital because they were unable to diagnose her in Saskatoon. So I didn't ask for any specific tests. I did not know what was wrong with her, and I

am not a doctor and don't know what needs to be done.

Let's just review for a minute all of the people that were contacted about baby Paige's situation that I know of. The general practitioner, the health care workers in the St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Humboldt, a pediatrician, numerous nurses, a quality care coordinator, other health care professionals that dealt with her in her two-week stay at Royal University Hospital, the CEO of the regional health authority, the vice-president of rural care for the Saskatoon Regional Health Authority, and the minister's office itself — yet no one told myself or baby Paige's parents that she could go to Edmonton to the sick children's hospital and that costs would be covered.

Why is this the best kept secret in Saskatchewan?

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Again, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. And I reiterate that the physicians in this province are or should be well aware of the province's policy with regards to out-of-province referral. That having been said, Mr. Speaker, the results of the investigation will provide us with additional data on which to gauge and judge and make changes perhaps to the policy as we go forward.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I would like to reiterate that a lot of the questions being raised were, is this service available in the province of Saskatchewan, before a referral is made. And, Mr. Speaker, that is also a part of the review that's being taken on. Was the service available in the province of Saskatchewan? Were the physicians, the pediatricians available within the health region in Saskatoon to deliver the care that baby Paige required?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Timeliness and the urgency of a situation has to be factors that are looked at, not just whether or not it's available at some time in Saskatchewan. The baby Paige case has also highlighted the work of quality care coordinators who do play a vital role within the system. And we're concerned that they're not providing the patients with all the options that are available to them. In this case this family was told by the quality care coordinator to go back to square one and see their family doctor. This was despite the fact that the child required diagnostic testing and a visit with the specialist.

Emily Morley of Meath Park was initially told that she would have to wait three months for her visit with an oncologist. The family was told by the quality care coordinator that they should wait like everyone else.

As the minister reviews all this, will he undertake in addition to the investigation into the specific baby Paige case to review the roles of the quality care coordinators to find out what can be done to improve the services that they are providing?

[14:15]

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I can say that every aspect of this case will be reviewed as we take a look at what took place in the baby Paige case.

Mr. Speaker, as I had indicated publicly previously, I take this case very seriously. I believe that not only the Saskatoon Health Region but the system as a whole can learn from what took place in this case and can ensure that by learning from it that we can ensure that it's not repeated.

Mr. Speaker, I have also indicated that I believe that the quality-of-care coordinator positions that were instituted a number of years ago are an important part of our system. The people doing that work are doing a tremendous job generally across the province. And we need to recognize and support the difficulties faced by the quality of care coordinators and respect the work that they are currently doing.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to remind the minister that these are not the first cases that we have raised where the family doesn't believe that they were provided with all the right information from the quality care coordinators.

I'm sure all MLAs remember the case of Mr. Stan Szostak of Preeceville who was facing a three- to four-month wait for prostate cancer surgery in one health region, when the wait in another health region was much shorter. Yet the quality care coordinator failed to provide him with the information on that option.

Again to the minister: will he commit today to review the role of the quality care coordinators to ensure that they are properly equipped with all of the information necessary that patients require?

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Mr. Speaker, the answer to that question is certainly yes. I believe the quality of care coordinators provide an essential service within the system, and I want to do everything that I can from the position of minister to ensure they have all the tools necessary to ensure that they can do their job.

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I want to quote to the member opposite if she hasn't read the *Regina Leader-Post* from today, the editorial in the *Regina Leader-Post* which talks about the health care system. The final paragraph in the *Regina Leader-Post* editorial today reads and I quote:

The message is clear: a few well-reported failures don't reflect the reality that our health system is generally doing a [very] good job.

Mr. Speaker, I support the people who are working hard within the system, that includes quality care coordinators. I will do all

that I can to ensure they have the tools necessary to do their job.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Mr. Speaker, I think everyone in this House supports the front-line workers and understand that they're doing the best they can. But the system is frustrating, and there are problems within the system as a whole.

Yesterday the Leader of the Opposition asked the Premier to ensure that an external investigation of this situation be ordered. And as you know, the Premier and the Minister of Health both refused to have that done.

It should be noted that there have been investigations into the health care system by external parties before. Dr. Jon Witt used to head up the emergency services at Royal University Hospital. After raising concerns about patient care and understaffing in a letter to the former minister of Health, an Edmonton-based consultant was called in to review the emergency services. Mr. Speaker, why was an external review ordered in that situation and not now?

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to add to the information that the member already has from me personally and through the media, that the review that I have requested through the deputy minister includes the province's chief medical advisor. That advisor, Mr. Speaker, is the chief medical officer for the Five Hills Regional Health Authority, a well-respected individual within the province, someone who is at length from the Saskatoon Regional Health Authority and the facility and physicians in question.

Mr. Speaker, this is very much a review that involves independent individuals to ensure that we get a medical review, a systems review, a process review, so that we can learn from the activity that took place there.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

### Access to Emergency Room Services

**Mr. Morgan:** — Mr. Speaker, as an elected representative for the people of Saskatoon, I was horrified this morning when I read the story of Ron Bitz. Mr. Bitz had a serious heart attack March 15. He was driven to City Hospital but arrived 10 minutes before the emergency room was to open at 9 a.m. Mr. Speaker, Ron Bitz was on the steps of a hospital, but the NDP's health care system — the same health care system that the Premier likes to describe as an NDP health care system, the same one that he brags about — that system would not let Mr. Bitz through the doors. Mr. Speaker, why was that allowed to happen?

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again I appreciate the question from the members opposite. I read the newspaper this morning and read the account that appeared there of this case in Saskatoon, and like the member opposite, I found that there was reason to ask some questions in this case.

Mr. Speaker, the division of authority is very clear with regards to the day-to-day operations of the health care system. And the Saskatoon Regional Health Authority and the emergency medical personnel at the City Hospital have made a number of decisions and have policy in place which led to the circumstances that occurred there in this case.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is important for all to recognize that the regional health authority made a decision some 10 years ago that they did not require three emergency rooms operating on a 24-hour basis. And that policy is currently in place and operating, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Morgan:** — Mr. Speaker, Ron Bitz was transported to another hospital by MD Ambulance. He got a bill for \$275 for that ambulance trip because he picked the wrong hospital, because he assumed an NDP health care system would have its emergency rooms open. He assumed an NDP health care system would have trained staff in place to deal with his emergency.

Will the Minister of Health to commit today to an investigation into this matter and the other matters that we are raising before this House?

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am aware from discussions with the Saskatoon Regional Health Authority that the regional health authority, which is their responsibility, has begun a review in this case. Mr. Speaker, that is entirely the appropriate way in which this case should be reviewed. I've asked for the results of that review to be made available to me. And I support the regional health authority's review in this case.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

### Quality of Health Care

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Surgical Care Network has a website listing wait times for medical procedures. That website says that there are 29,192 people in our province waiting for treatment. Can the minister tell me how many of those patients would be eligible for out-of-province treatment? Better yet, can the minister tell us of those almost 30,000 patients in Saskatchewan, how many of them have been told the options that they have, like receiving

treatment outside of this province without pre-approval?

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the member opposite knows, we've spent a great deal of time, effort, and money over the last few years to reduce our wait times. Mr. Speaker, we are very pleased that on our long-waiters list, the reduction has been almost 50 per cent in the last two years alone on our long-waiters list. Mr. Speaker, we are making significant progress on our long-waiters list.

And I ask the member opposite how he would have addressed this issue had he been in a position to initiate his own election promise of several years ago to freeze funding for regional health authorities and the health care in this province?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — Let's talk about this NDP government's Surgical Care Network. They provide a toll-free number for people to phone in. Patients are encouraged to call this number so that they can, and in the brochure it says, have a communication link to the health care system. Mr. Speaker, if you were to call that toll-free number today, you'd get a recorded message. And this is what the recorded message says: due to a high volume of calls, it may take us a few days to get back to you.

Mr. Speaker, that sick people calling the surgical care wait-list, finding out how long they have to wait for surgery, now being told how long they have to wait to find out how long they have to wait, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely appalling.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister comment on the fact that he's asking people to wait to find out how long they have to wait?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me preface my remarks in this regard to again quote, not from the Regina *Leader-Post*, but from this time from the Conference Board of Canada, Mr. Speaker, that says that Saskatchewan, according to the Conference Board of Canada, has the third best health care system in Canada. Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of that fact.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of the fact that unlike many of the other provinces in Canada, we have initiated the Surgical Care Network — a way in which we can manage waiting lists.

And, Mr. Speaker, again I ask the member opposite to let us know how he would have done any of this by freezing the budgets of the health care system as was his election promise just a few short years ago.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday we heard the Premier angrily proclaim, "You bet it's a New Democratic Party health care system in this province."

Well people around the province are understanding what health care means under this NDP government. What it means is that sick children don't get the treatment they need and have to go out of province to find that treatment. What it means is that people phoning a wait-list are told to wait to find out how long they have to wait. That's what the NDP health care system is all about. We are told that people that are going to the emergency rooms in Saskatoon have to wait to get into the emergency room because it's not open yet. That's the health care of this NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, the health care system in this province is failing far too many people. When will the minister take his job for real and start dealing with the issues of wait-lists, of people having to leave the province, of the poor shape that this health care system is in? When will he start taking that job seriously?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again I urge the member opposite to read the Regina *Leader-Post* this morning, the last paragraph of the editorial:

The message is clear: a few well-reported failures don't reflect the reality that our health system is generally doing a [very] good job.

Mr. Speaker, more than \$3 billion is now being assigned to the health care system from this budget. Mr. Speaker, had the budgets been frozen when the member opposite was claiming it, there'd be about one-half billion dollars less in the system today. Mr. Speaker, thank goodness the people of Saskatchewan have not had to find out what their life would have been like under that party government, Mr. Speaker, and they never will.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, the reality today is under this NDP government, people are not receiving the health care they need. They're waiting outside of emergency rooms to get health care. They're phoning surgical networks, waiting to find out how long they have to wait. People are having to be shipped out of the province.

But, Mr. Speaker, people don't understand from this government, because they keep it hidden, what their options are. There is not once that this government has come clean and told people of the province that if they need care outside of the province, they will be covered.

Mr. Speaker, it's a kept secret. When will they come clean?

And instead of advertising the Finance minister's budget for \$500,000, maybe they should advertise what people can access from this Health department when it calls for out-of-province care.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

[14:30]

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It looks like the members opposite don't want to hear the answer to the final question of the member opposite.

I simply remind the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, that had that government been elected, had that party been elected, the system would have \$1.5 billion fewer dollars in it, and the waiting lists would be longer. The care would be less. We're proud of the system that we've got in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. We're learning from mistakes. But, Mr. Speaker, we're very, very proud of the people and the system that's serving the people of Saskatchewan.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### WRITTEN QUESTIONS

**The Speaker:** — Order please. For written questions, the Chair recognizes the Government Whip.

**Mr. Iwanchuk:** — Yes. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government, I'll be tabling responses to written questions no. 924 to 1,014.

**The Speaker:** — The responses to questions 924 through to 1,014 inclusive have been submitted.

### GOVERNMENT ORDERS

**Deputy Clerk:** — Committee of Finance.

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

### COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

#### Motions for Interim Supply

**The Chair:** — The question before the committee this afternoon is interim supply. Before the resolutions are introduced by the minister, I would ask of the minister to introduce the officials that he has with him this afternoon.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I am very pleased today to be joined by five officials who are with us from the Department of Finance. Sitting to my immediate left is Kirk McGregor, who is the acting deputy minister of Finance. Sitting to my right is Karen Layng, who is the assistant deputy minister responsible for treasury board .

Behind her is Dennis Polowyk, who is the assistant deputy minister of the treasury and debt management division. Directly behind me is Joanne Brockman, the executive director of economic and fiscal policy branch and the carrier of the calculator, she advises me, so any tough math questions will go to her today. And next to her is Terry Paton, the Provincial Comptroller. Those are the officials joining me.

**The Chair:** — I now invite the minister to move his motion.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I am a little new to this so you'll forgive me as I work my way through the script. Motion no. 1 reads that:

Be it resolved that a sum not exceeding \$1,207,151,000 be granted to Her Majesty on account for the 12 months ending March 31, 2007.

**The Chair:** — The motion before the Assembly is no. 1:

Resolved that a sum not exceeding \$1,207,151,000 be granted to Her Majesty on account for the 12 months ending March 31, 2007.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Question.

**The Chair:** — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Madam Chair, thank you to the minister for his motion, and thank you for the attendance of his officials. I'd like to congratulate Mr. McGregor on his acting deputy minister's position and wish him well in that position as the search goes on for a new deputy minister.

First question to the minister. This year we've seen a budget that was presented after April 1, I think a first budget in a long time that was past the March 31 deadline. Can the minister just outline for the House why the delay and if indeed . . . Well just to begin with, why the delay?

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Thank you very much for the question. The delay was in large part due to two reasons. First of all was the timing of my appointment into the portfolio. With my coming in at about February, I needed some additional time simply to come up to speed with the number of issues that we were dealing with in budget. That delayed the budget deliberation process somewhat.

And second of all, because of the nature of the issues that we were considering, particularly the Vicq recommendations, I had wanted some additional time to consult with the business community about the implications of that and what their views were about this. I had wanted — although those consultations had initially been done by the previous minister of Finance — I had wanted to undertake them again myself just to hear first-hand what the concerns, issues, and understanding were of the business community.

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I had heard that you were awaiting also some information from the federal

government. Was that the case? Was there any information that you were awaiting that contributed to the delay? If so, what?

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — We were hopeful at the point that we working through the budget that we would have a better understanding of where the federal government would be going, both in terms of their own budgetary policy and also in terms of some of the major program issues. For example what their position was likely to be on CAIS [Canadian agricultural income stabilization], where they were headed on issues like the equalization formula — 10-province standard with the exemption of natural resources — promised by Prime Minister Harper, those kind of issues.

It became clear, I think, as the new federal government was getting seated and working through its budget process that they were going to take some more time to deliver their budget. We did not end up getting much clarification in terms of the direction they were going to pursue and as such based our assumptions on what we understood.

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I take from his answer that then this isn't precedent setting, and in light of unusual circumstances that's what happened this year and we will not see this in future years. Is that correct?

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — My hope would be that the budget will be down well in advance of March 31 of next year. That's the planning cycle we're normally on. There were again largely two main issues for the delay. One was the cabinet shuffle and the second was really the issue around the Vicq commission.

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Thank you also for a copy of the interim supply. I guess you have to provide this to me if I'm going to know what you're proposing. I just wish in the future that we could get this a little bit earlier. And the copy that I have here, it looks like it's been photocopied quite a few times, and some of it is hard to read. So I hope in the future maybe we could get this at least the day before and have some time to prepare.

That being said, I have a few questions here, Madam Speaker. Under Agriculture and Food, it talks about \$205,000. It's under the category of less statutory amounts. Can you tell me specifically what the \$205,000 pertains to?

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — The interim supply motion is relatively straightforward. As the member is aware, the Act provides us currently with one-twelfth ... [inaudible] ... What we are essentially now dealing with is two-twelfths, which will take us to the end of May, which will mean that we do not need to come back in May to do it. There's actually not a need for us to be doing the interim supply, as I understand it, at this point for this first twelfth, but we've decided instead we want to go with the two-twelfths.

The numbers that are provided within this list simply reflect two-twelfths of all expenditures with the exception of the Department of Learning, which I understand represents two-tenths because of the way that the school year funding works. Oh and SPMC [Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation] also.

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Madam Chair, I understand the two-twelfths formula and with 264 million, that amounts to 44 million. But there's a category of less statutory amounts, 205,000. And members on our side just had a question regarding that specific amount and I'm sure it's something that the minister could point to and identify.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — I'm advised that what we're dealing with is the two-twelfths of the non-statutory vote. The statutory amounts are simply reflected there. They are simply required. So it is simply a statutory payment.

The specific around the amount, I don't have as to why that particular revolving fund has a net expense of 205,000 in it as a statutory requirement. But it is in fact a statutory and obviously triggered by some other piece of legislation.

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Okay. Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'll accept that answer and pass it on to my colleagues. Under the Environment department, it talks about the two-twelfths amounting to \$33.47 million. Can the minister tell me if any of that is destined for capital expenditures?

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — The allocation of the two-twelfths allows the departments some flexibility to meet the expenditures that are coming forward. They're expected to manage within the amount. There is or may well be within this some capital expenditure that they will undertake during the period under review. But it is largely a lump sum that is provided which allows them to manage their affairs between now and the time the budget is passed, at which point we will see the appropriate amounts reflected in each of the subcategories.

[14:45]

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Madam Chair, to the minister, along that same line, the footnotes at the bottom of the page no. 2 talks about an amount allocated to the Property Management Corporation or Sask Property Management — \$12 million. It says, of that, 6.382 million to provide for capital asset acquisition. Does the minister know what the specifics are of this capital asset acquisition that SPM would be undertaking?

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — I understand what they're looking at is 413 vehicles which were ordered in January for April delivery. And this is to make sure that the vehicles are in place for the summer season.

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Under the lending and investing category, the two-twelfths interim supply, there's some smaller amounts for most departments yet the Advanced Education and Employment shows a \$10 million figure under lending and investing. That seems to be quite a large sum compared to others in that category. Can the minister provide any additional details of what indeed that money would be used for?

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — It reflects monies required for the Student Aid Fund and as such reflects the usage within that fund at that point ... [inaudible interjection] ... Sorry. As I understand, it deals with loans to the Student Aid Fund is what

we're dealing with here and so it is a usage issue. That's why the number is fairly large. It has to do with the timing within that program.

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Again, Mr. Minister, a similar question under Agriculture and Food — the sum of \$67,000. Is the minister aware of what that would be used for?

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — I am told it is the Ag revolving fund for pasture lands. And again it is the amount that is deemed to be necessary as we deal with this interim supply.

**The Chair:** — I recognize the member for Canora-Pelly.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. Mr. Minister, the budget, as my colleague has asked, is an April budget and the year-end of March 31 passed before a new budget was introduced.

Are there departments or are there third party funding . . . And I'm referring to school boards, hospital, regional health authority boards, those kind of different entities within the province of Saskatchewan. Do any of those boards receive funding on the 1st of the month? My question then being very specific is, was there funding entitlement to any agencies or boards on April 1 that has been missed?

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Thank you very much for the question. Perhaps what is best is that I simply advise you what the acting deputy minister has told me which is, pursuant to section 14(1) of The Financial Administration Act of 1993, departments were provided with an automatic interim supply. This is deemed to be a temporary measure and was largely based on the supplementary estimates and further estimates that we dealt with in November. There were in fact as a result no agencies that went without funding as a result of the delay in the budget.

This interim supply however will provide the reflection of the new budget that was brought down on April 6. And so the previous interim supply was able to cover off the . . . or the, sorry, the provision under The Financial Administration Act was able to cover off the delay.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, that provision that you indicated was introduced not too long ago. Can you indicate what amount of monies are provided in the first month of a new budget based on previous supplementary estimates?

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — It is in fact one-twelfth of the previous budget.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — So then, Mr. Minister, as a result of that provision for any entity that would have received funding on a normal basis on the first of the month, none of those different entities would have incurred any interest costs because they would not have had their funding from the provincial government in place at the expected time, which would have been April 1.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — I'm not aware of any organizations that would have incurred any interest cost as a result of it. The only thing that was impacted by the delay in the budget was

obviously organizations received no funding for new initiatives that were contained within the budget.

So it was essentially a status quo budget until it's released in the legislature at which point we now, through this set of interim supply, reflect the funding for new initiatives. So agencies, third parties that might have been receiving funding for new initiatives will receive that through this interim supply. They would not have been covered off under the previous allocation, which really dealt with what the supplementary estimates were in November.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I note in the Department of Learning estimates — and I know this is a specific department, but on a global basis — a number of the funds that are allocated are based on the provision of actual expenses. Some of the funding has changed and, as former minister of Learning, I'm sure you were aware of that.

Does the interim supply that we're dealing with today, does that cover off monies that are allocated on a monthly basis? Or will it also include any funding for some of the provisions that you have indicated are now within the budget, that the particular board of education must actually supply receipts and invoices and make an application — I guess is the best way of putting it — for conditional funding? Does interim supply cover off conditional funding?

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — The school boards receive two-tenths under this appropriation, under this interim supply Bill, to recognize the way that their costs are dealt with.

The question about how the actuals are then dealt with, it is in fact dealt with on a reconciled basis after this as we actually go through the year. So this is largely a lump sum payment. And as the year moves on, we reconcile with what the actuals are.

**The Chair:** — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a general question for the minister then. As far as the whole column of two-twelfths interim supply, can he point to anything that is out of the ordinary or anything that specifically needed to be funded, anything that's out of the usual circumstance that needs to be done from this funding?

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — The only two issues that would be out of the ordinary are in fact the 18.8 million for the Department of Learning which represents two-tenths, and the 6.4 for the Department of Property Management which deals with some of the construction projects and the 413 vehicles I'd indicated.

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. A few general questions just regarding the debt of the province this year, and I see that the Bank of Canada hiked the interest rate again for the sixth consecutive time, and I suspect our debt payments, the interest rates will be increasing somewhat. But can you just outline for me, regarding the provincial debt, how much of it will come due this year on an average basis and what we're looking at as far as the extension out of the long-term debt?

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — I am advised that this year we're



expecting to borrow, as reflected on page 73 of the budget and performance plan summary . . . \$1.117 billion is what we have coming due this year. And so we would be refinancing that within the market. We're expecting that the assumptions which are built into the budget I'm told on page 63 are still holding true and that we are expecting no significant upward pressure.

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Thank you for that information. Just a question about the, you know, the price of oil and what we've seen happen lately. Oil touched \$75 US [United States] a barrel on Friday. It's down a little bit. Over the course of the first quarter, it's quite conceivable that we could be well above your estimate of \$60 US a barrel. Can the minister tell me if there's any calculations, any estimates on where we'll be at the first quarter, based on what we've seen so far in the first month of the first quarter?

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — It is in fact too early to say. And I think as we've seen with some of the volatility in the market, it's hard to tell what was necessarily driving it up towards that \$75 number. We are still anticipating at this point that we are going to be relatively close with the overall year rates.

The one question that obviously comes up and — although the member himself hasn't asked it — I hear fairly often is, at what point do we then, if we have some windfall money, start to think about reallocating it? My suggestion would be that that would certainly not occur in the first quarter. This is something that, if it did appear, that we needed to look at some change in projection. If the price of oil were staying high, we would start to look at that probably closer to the midterm as those numbers come in. But at this point it's hard to tell.

I would just indicate for the member's information that during the budget process, we saw oil fluctuating anywhere from as low as 57 to about 63. So there is still some volatility although that seems to have narrowed somewhat in terms of the overall piece.

The second issue that affects oil prices, at least in terms of what the provincial government receives, is the value of the dollar which is also up about two and a half . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . 2 cents, about 2 cents higher than we had estimated in the budget. So these two interact to a certain extent. So we'll need to really see what the first . . . several more weeks in until we'll have any idea of what the first quarter looks like, but I wouldn't be looking at making any substantive changes in terms of mid-year spending until truly mid-year.

[15:00]

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Through the Chair, I guess I'm quite concerned about that comment because of the lack of funding in the budget for the CAIS program. It's been outlined by yourself and by the Minister of Agriculture in the House that CAIS was not funded in this budget, and we would look to subsequent reports from yourself to fund CAIS.

And I was hoping that at least at the first-quarter report we could get CAIS funded, have that taken care of and look at other priorities like, you know, reducing income tax for low- and middle-income people or putting it on the debt. Or I guess where I was going to go with some of this questioning is,

what were your priorities? But my concern is that CAIS was not funded. The amounts were some \$150 million less than last year for agriculture, total. And when would the minister anticipate, you know, his commitment to CAIS funding this year?

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — I think I've indicated several times both in the Assembly and publicly — certainly the Minister of Agriculture last night indicated in the House — that this is something that we'll look at, at third quarter, as the final numbers become available.

I don't at this point know what the final cost is for the CAIS top-up, and I would argue that I doubt that anyone else does at this point. So we need to see what the 2006 numbers look like first, at which point then we'll make a decision about the third-quarter expenditure for it. But this is an expenditure, at the earliest, that'll come in the third quarter.

I think the Minister of Agriculture indicated last night we are in fact about six months ahead of other provinces in terms of the commitments on this, who in many cases — these other provinces — wait until the next fiscal year to in fact make the payments under the previous year's commitments. So we're doing this, we're attempting to do this within the current year. We'll have a better idea of what those numbers are when the final information becomes available around the third quarter.

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'm a little disappointed in the answer, but I guess we'll just have to live with it. I know in my first year in this House that we were waiting well into December, well into the last few days of the year, before we saw any commitment whatsoever towards CAIS. And I would just encourage him if he could see his way to fund it earlier, that certainly members on this side of the House would encourage him to do that.

Mr. Chair, to the minister, just talking, looking at page 78 of the budget performance summary, we see that the increase in the net debt for the Government of Saskatchewan — a figure that has been well documented across the province — the increase in the net debt as a result of this budget was \$288.5 million. Can the minister outline right now why he saw it fit to increase the net debt of the province of Saskatchewan at this time?

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — I want to address two issues. First of all on the issue of CAIS, if the member opposite has some knowledge of what the 2006 final numbers are, I would appreciate him sharing them with us so that we know specifically what it is those 2006 final numbers are.

At this point the federal government's not been able to provide us with that. The program's not been able to provide us with that, and we would not be in a position to make a decision about the final top-up until we see the numbers. I think that that's a perfectly rational way for us to undertake the budgeting although it is different in other provinces that force their producers to wait until the next fiscal year to actually have that money available.

On the question of the debt, I think that I would draw the attention of the member to page 76 of the budget and performance plan summary. At the bottom of that he . . . About midway through, bottom of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund there's

a number of ... Oh sorry, bottom of Treasury Board organizations' list, there's an issue identified here as adjustment to account for pension costs on an accrual basis.

The actuarials changed the assumptions within the plan. This resulted in a charge of \$336 million to the treasury and as such that is reflected in terms of the overall increase in the debt. Had there not been that change in the actuarial assumptions, then debt of the province would have decreased.

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and thank you for the answer on the CAIS question. Certainly we will look at what other provinces do. I had some information that Alberta was well ahead and prepared to do the funding. But I think more importantly what I heard from the minister is a commitment to fund CAIS as soon as possible within the Department of Finance's realm and also when the accurate numbers are in place. So that's the important commitment that he's made, and we hope that he does it in a timely manner.

Can the minister elaborate on the adjustment to account for pension costs on accrual basis? Certainly it's, you know, a third of a billion dollars there. Can he just tell me exactly what necessitated the adjustment? Of course it's important that these numbers be taken into account. And as the Provincial Auditor has stated, the summary financial statements are the important one to look at. The debt has gone up by 288.5 million, and that would be certainly information I'd like to get from the minister.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Well I suspect it's clear to everyone that it was a change in the discount rate, whatever that means. This is one of these complicated issues that actuarials deal with. And it is probably something that we should pursue in terms of providing some more detailed explanation at a later date. But it largely deals with the change of assumptions actuarials have made in terms of what they expect the plan to either earn or a number of people to draw down on it or what the basic assumptions are. I'm afraid I don't have a more detailed explanation at this point. But it may be best pursued directly with the officials.

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Certainly the discount rate is something that I haven't been briefed on either by our officials, so I'm not well aware, although the former Finance critic probably has a book on it somewhere that he could share that information with me.

Mr. Minister, you've provided me with some information — components of the tax estimates — in a timely manner, and I appreciate that. There's one document that I still require, and it's called, the other federal-provincial programs. Could I have your undertaking today to provide that information? If you don't have it with you, to get it to me as soon as you can?

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Yes I'm sorry. I didn't realize that that wasn't attached at the time, but I'll certainly endeavour to provide that.

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And again I'm sure that you would provide that information. I appreciate that.

Just a general question regarding relations with the federal government, can the minister outline for us if he's had

conversations with the new Finance minister, if he's undertaken to have any meetings in the next while, and what the status of relations are with the federal government and the provincial government with the minister.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — I have had one very preliminary conversation with Minister Flaherty. He had called shortly after being appointed. I welcomed him to his new position. Both he and I, of course being new, were looking forward to getting an opportunity to meet with each other and to have an opportunity to talk about some of the significant issues. I have not had any other contact with the federal minister.

Obviously there's been a number of discussions with federal officials through the officials channels about how various issues are being pursued. I anticipate at this point that we are looking at the national Finance ministers coming together at some point in late June to talk about a number of issues. Obviously one of them will be the priority of the new administration to deal with fiscal imbalance and other things.

I have to say that I am optimistic that we are going to see this new administration take an approach which will favour Western Canada, which will deal with some of our historic grievances. We of course are heartened by the Prime Minister's commitment to undertake a change in equalization, at least to deal with the movement of equalization to a 10-province standard with the removal of natural resource issues in it.

That is a huge benefit to Saskatchewan and, I would argue, to western Canadians if you were to undertake this change to the equalization program. In Saskatchewan's case it means a difference of about \$850 million a year to the fiscal payments. This means \$850 million of Saskatchewan taxpayer money that's currently flowing to Ottawa would be retained in the province for various expenditures.

So I'm optimistic that as the federal government is able to bring down their budget — as they are able to work their way through a number of these files — that we are going to find a good working relationship. For my part, I am quite interested in working with the new federal government to deal with some of these issues.

This is not necessarily the approach that, in terms of a full-change equalization, that we would like. But just as we said with the Martin government, we were prepared to work with them in a way that met their commitments and their priorities, I would say the same again to Prime Minister Harper's government — that we're interested in being a co-operative partner in the federation and helping it work.

What we need, however, to see are a couple of major issues dealt with, and there are some very significant issues that Saskatchewan will be pressing the federal government for. Number one is for the Prime Minister to act quickly to implement the 10-province standard with the exemption of natural resources. If we go to the 10-province standard, I am told that it is \$894 million worth of upside to the province of provincial money that currently flows to Ottawa that would be retained. If it is based on the — is it the five-province standard? — five-province without the natural resource clawback in it, it's 834 million.

And the other major issues that we'll be looking to work with the federal government on is to get certainly a better understanding of where Minister Strahl is going with CAIS and what Ottawa may be dealing with in terms of national agriculture financing. This has been a difficult issue. There's no doubt been a great deal of debate in this House about what the federal government may be undertaking on that, that's significant to us. The other issue that we'll be looking at is where they decide to move in terms of dealing with the Kelowna accord and what the implications are in terms of First Nations funding.

The only dark cloud I would say that is on the horizon — and it is indeed not, you know, close; it's not a huge difficulty at this point — is that none of these three issues that we've identified that would be at the top of our list to deal with Ottawa are indeed at the top of their list. And unfortunately each of these, as we deal with Ottawa, are often characterized as priority six on their list of five priorities they want to deal with.

I think as the federal government settles into office, as they become more comfortable with running the federal government and indeed engage the provinces more, we'll start to see them engage on these other issues. We're prepared to give them some time to do that, mindful that every day that we delay the move to the 10-province standard costs Saskatchewan two and a half million dollars. So those are our three issues.

We're interested in working with the federal government, and I'm hopeful that we are going to have a positive working relationship.

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

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. And before my colleague, the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs, concludes his questioning, Mr. Minister, a couple of questions on debt servicing and renewal of debt. I know my colleague has asked a couple of questions regarding debt.

I note from the government document, from the budget document that you provided, that the debt servicing estimate for this year versus the forecast for the conclusion on March 31 '06 is very nearly the same, approximately \$550 million. However I note that the interest or the debt servicing costs for last year, forecast versus estimate, is in fact about \$40 million less. I've talked to officials within your department about the Public Accounts document — and I don't have my Public Accounts document with me — and I know that there are various maturity changes that occur with monies that are coming due.

Mr. Minister, I'm wondering if you could indicate as debt matures in this year, in this fiscal year '06-07, do you expect that the new debt that will be required to set up a new system of repayment on that debt, will you be incurring similar interest rates, or in fact will you be incurring less interest rate in relationship to the interest rate of the debt that is now maturing?

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — I understand that the reason the numbers work — in the simplest of terms — is that the debt that's retiring, we have nothing retiring at a rate of more than 10, and we're not expecting to look at a rate of much more than

6 on anything we're financing new. So these are going to be relatively close I think as they work out, is my understanding.

The second issue that impacts somewhat is we are dealing with somewhat higher than normal cash balances. So in fact this may reduce some of our borrowing need.

[15:15]

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Mr. Minister, then going back to my comments initially, the \$40 million less cost for debt servicing for last year, from the estimate to the forecast, what were the main factors that contributed to \$40 million less debt servicing costs?

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — It did in fact have to deal with cash balances.

**An Hon. Member:** — Mr. Minister, getting back to your comments regarding the federal government . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** — Excuse me. I recognize the hon. member for Silver Springs.

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. To the minister, getting back to federal-provincial relations and the comments that he made regarding the federal government, on behalf of the official opposition, I'd just like to extend our co-operation in dealings that he has with the federal government.

His predecessor, the previous minister of Finance, invited me to attend a meeting with the Senate committee regarding equalization. I think it sent a powerful message to that body when both the opposition and the government attended and made the case for Saskatchewan. So I'd certainly extend our co-operation and any assistance that we can be as he talks about equalization with the federal government or any other relation that will be a benefit to the people of Saskatchewan.

At this time I'd like to, Mr. Chair, thank the minister and his officials today and look forward to providing the funding necessary to provide people of Saskatchewan with the programs that they've paid for through their tax dollars.

**The Deputy Chair:** — Thank you. Members of the committee, the resolution before the House is:

Resolved that a sum not exceeding \$1,207,151,000 be granted to Her Majesty on account for the 12 months ending March 31, 2007.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt this resolution?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** — That is carried. There is a second resolution that I would invite the Minister of Finance to move.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair. I would move:

Resolved that towards making good the supply granted to Her Majesty on account of certain charges and expenses of

the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007, the sum of \$1,207,151,000 be granted out of the General Revenue Fund.

**The Deputy Chair:** — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance:

Resolved that towards making good the supply granted to Her Majesty on account of certain charges and expenses of the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007, the sum of \$1,207,151,000 be granted out of the General Revenue Fund.

This is the resolution. Is there any debate on it? Are members ready for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Question.

**The Deputy Chair:** — All those in favour of the resolution.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** — That is carried. Any dissenting? So that is carried. I recognize the Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair. I would move that the committee rise and that the Chair report that the committee has agreed to certain resolutions and ask for leave to sit again.

**The Deputy Chair:** — The Minister of Finance has moved that the committee rise and report the resolutions just referred to. Is it the pleasure of the committee to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** — That is carried.

#### FIRST AND SECOND READING OF RESOLUTIONS

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the Chair of committees.

**Mr. Prebble:** — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, the Committee of Finance has agreed to certain resolutions, has instructed me to report the same, and to ask for leave to sit again.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — When shall the resolutions be read a first time? I recognize the Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. I would move that the resolutions be now read the first and second time.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The minister has moved that the resolutions be now read the first and second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Carried.

**Deputy Clerk:** — First and second reading of the resolutions.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — When shall the committee sit again? I recognize the Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Later this day.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Later this day. I recognize the Minister of Finance.

#### APPROPRIATION BILL

##### Bill No. 65 — The Appropriation Act, 2006 (No. 1)

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. By leave of the Assembly, I move that Bill No. 65, The Appropriation Act, 2006 (No. 1) be now introduced and read the first time.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The Minister of Finance has moved that Bill No. 65, The Appropriation Act, 2006 (No. 1) be now introduced and read the first time. Is the leave of the Assembly granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Carried.

**Deputy Clerk:** — First reading of this Bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — When shall the Bill be read a second time? Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — By leave of the Assembly and under rule 57(2), I move that the Bill be now read a second and third time.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Is leave of the Assembly granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Granted.

Moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 65, The Appropriation Act, 2006 (No. 1) be now read a second and third time.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Question.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Carried.

**Deputy Clerk:** — Second and third reading of this Bill.

## SECOND READINGS

**Bill No. 62 — The Municipal Revenue Sharing  
Amendment Act, 2006**

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister for Government Relations.

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Madam Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 62, The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 2006. As many members will know, The Municipal Revenue Sharing Act establishes a key element of the provincial financial assistance for urban and rural municipalities. These amendments will give legal effect to decisions announced in the 2006-07 budget.

The Bill establishes the amount of the funds available this year to both the urban revenue-sharing pool and the rural revenue-sharing pool. As you will recall, Madam Speaker, the fiscal circumstances of the province late in the 2005-06 fiscal year enabled our government to provide municipalities with a supplementary top-up to revenue sharing of just over \$12 million.

That, Madam Speaker, brings us to the 2006-07 fiscal year and the Bill that I present today. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to announce that this Bill provides for an ongoing increase this year for urban revenue sharing of \$7.4 million and for rural revenue sharing of \$4 million. This, together with funding for northern municipalities, represents an increase of \$12.2 million to revenue-sharing grants provided to municipalities from last year's budgeted amount.

Madam Speaker, this means that over the last four years, through various increases, our government has provided over \$102 million more in municipal revenue sharing than municipalities would otherwise have had. Municipalities are now receiving over \$42 million more annually to assist in their day-to-day expenses and operations. Madam Speaker, this year's revenue-sharing program in total will distribute over \$97 million to municipalities in this province. That is a 76 per cent increase over what was provided through revenue sharing in 2001.

Our government is committed to increasing revenue sharing as resources permit to ensure stable, sustainable long-term funding for municipalities. This increase means an additional \$5.3 million in unconditional funding for cities. For towns, villages, and resort villages, the increase is \$2.1 million. And for rural municipalities, Madam Speaker, the increase is, as I indicated, \$4 million.

My officials have consulted with the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, the cities, and the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities on how to distribute the funds this year. Their views have been considered.

The cities have agreed to make further progress in implementing a new distribution strategy by using a two tiered system. Saskatoon and Regina will each receive a \$63.01 per capita payment, and all other cities will receive a \$75.01 per capita payment. All towns and villages will receive an additional \$10.13 per capita payment over what was received

last year through the revenue-sharing program. It should be noted, Madam Speaker, that these per capita increases are made using the 2001 census Canada population figures.

We will be pursuing discussions with the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association over the coming year regarding the distribution formula for revenue sharing for town and villages. The distribution formula needs to be updated. Next year the 2006 census figures will become available. This may provide the opportunity to begin to update the formula.

Madam Speaker, individual rural municipalities will receive unconditional revenue-sharing grants as determined by a formula that includes both a transportation and a service component. This formula is based 85 per cent on the road system in each RM [rural municipality] while the remaining 15 per cent is based on a three-year rolling average of expenditures such as protective services or culture and recreation services. This formula was developed and implemented in consultation with the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities a few years ago.

In addition, Madam Speaker, the formula for rural municipalities provides a degree of equalization for municipalities with different fiscal capacities as costs will be adjusted based on the taxable assessment of each RM and on the varying costs of providing services.

There are two other aspects of this Bill that bear mentioning, Madam Speaker. First, as I noted earlier, the province's fiscal situation late in the last fiscal year enabled the government to pay just over \$12 million to municipalities as a top-up to revenue sharing. At the recommendation of the Department of Justice, this Bill includes some minor amendments to the wording in section 4 that will ensure proper statutory authority exists to exceed the maximum amount payable in revenue-sharing grants if this situation arises again in the future.

Second, members will note that this Bill includes a repeal of section 10 concerning grants to organized hamlets. These provisions, Madam Speaker, will be moved and added to The Rural Municipalities Revenue Sharing Regulations. This will provide more consistency in where the formula for rural revenue-sharing grants are described. All the other formula for rural revenue-sharing grants are currently found in those regulations. Moving the organized hamlet grant section to the regulations will also provide an opportunity to review the grants with the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities.

In closing, Madam Speaker, I'll remind all members that this Bill will help to provide for over \$97 million of revenue-sharing grants to be distributed amongst all Saskatchewan municipalities. Madam Speaker, this funding is critical to the prosperity and well-being of all communities and municipalities in Saskatchewan, and I urge all members to support this Bill.

Madam Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 62, The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 2006.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The minister has moved second reading. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly . . . I recognize the member for Arm River-Watrous.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a . . . to get up to talk on this particular Bill. This Bill is very important to all the residents of Saskatchewan, whether you're in a city, whether you're in a village or a town or a resort. And I've met with many RMs, many towns in my constituency and there's a few points I would like to just put on record that they want me to pass.

And one of them is, they would always like to know is that they were going to be guaranteed a set amount of money coming in so they can plan. Budget for a few years in advance is what they would like, so they would know from year to year what they are going to get; especially on capital projects as your waterworks are changing, your sewer infrastructure — a lot of them are having to update that. And they would like a steady stream of knowing in advance of always the money they're going to have so you can plan.

[15:30]

Another issue is with the smaller towns I have and the resort area. Unfortunately they're losing people and a lot of the grants are on per capita at that end of it. So their money is shrinking even though the government may be increasing a little bit at one end. But because you're going back to per capita, they're also losing. And when the new census comes out, unfortunately some of my towns are going to be — especially the smaller ones — are going to be dropping in people. So that makes it a little more of a challenge too with them because, unfortunately, it still costs the same amount of money to supply safe drinking water, for garbage removal, for all the services that they're entitled to at that end of it.

So those are some of the issues that have been raised with me over the years and I hope that we can pass it on to the government, is . . . One of them is a steady funding so they can plan years in advance because it's getting expensive to run services on, whether it is garbage disposal, on the rules, regulations out there, whether they . . . Some of them are talking about doing some regional, going into some regional development, whether it's a pipeline being brought in or on a garbage disposal on a regional end. But you also need to know what kind of funding they're going to be getting.

And also to the towns, that they can kind of plan for years in advance, because these are going to be huge capital projects if you're bringing in pipelines at that end.

And also, is it the per capita? They would like that addressed.

This particular year with the flooding out our way, we have extra costs with the towns. The town of Kenaston, Bladworth, some of the towns I know on No. 11 Highway have to spend extra money this year.

Bladworth, in fact, was pumping water for I think about four days steady. So, you know, that diesel and gas adds up and also paying somebody to maintain it. So there's extra costs this year that they normally don't have from year to year and one of them is water with that. In fact, they had quite a bit of trouble just protecting the sewer system — the pumphouse — around it. They had to bag it with sand so it didn't get surrounded with water and contaminate the well at that end.

And I know other towns had that trouble with flooding this year because we even had . . . Out our way, we haven't had this kind since '74. So I know that that puts another little pressure on the drain on the money.

So with that, with this particular Bill, I would like to send it out to some towns. And I know that other MLAs would probably like to talk on this particular Bill because it, like I say, it affects every town and village and major city in Saskatchewan.

So with that, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would adjourn debate on this particular Bill.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Adjourned.

### **Bill No. 63 — The Corporation Capital Tax Amendment Act, 2006**

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of Bill 63, The Corporation Capital Tax Amendment Act, 2006.

This Bill incorporates the recommendations of the Vicq commission that was previously commissioned by the government and incorporates those incentives that I had indicated in the budget speech. Specifically this Bill undertakes so that effective July 1, 2006, the corporation capital tax rate will be reduced by one-half to 0.3 per cent; on July 1, 2007 the rate will be reduced to 0.15 per cent; on July 1, 2008 the tax will be eliminated.

While the corporation capital tax will still apply to financial institutions and Crown corporations, the tax will be eliminated on all new capital investment as of July 1 of this year, impacting approximately 1,100 private sector corporations should they decide to take advantage of the changes.

In addition to implementing Vicq, the government has also gone one step further, as I had indicated that we had undertaken to make sure new capital was exempt from the corporate capital tax as of July 1.

In conjunction with the phased elimination of the general corporate capital tax rate, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Bill reduces the corporate capital tax resource surcharges rates levied on resource production.

These changes, although not initially contained in the Vicq commission report, were embarked upon as a result of discussions with the resource sector. These changes will reduce in total the corporate capital tax revenue by 48.8 million in this fiscal year. And when fully implemented, the corporate capital tax reforms will reduce revenue by approximately \$120.2 million.

Over the next four years we anticipate this, combined with the corporate income tax reforms, will see an incentive to business of approximately \$620 million. In so doing we believe that these changes will help make Saskatchewan businesses more competitive. They will help attract new investment and new jobs. And they will help ensure that Saskatchewan is the best place in Canada to live, to work, and to raise a family.

As such I am pleased to move second reading of The Corporation Capital Tax Amendment Act, 2006.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Deputy Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance. I recognize the member for Melfort.

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak briefly on second reading of An Act to amend The Corporation Capital Tax Act.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I think that this piece of legislation has been a piece of legislation that has been looked forward to for some time in this province as we struggle to become competitive with neighbouring jurisdictions. Madam Deputy Speaker, I think that this particular legislation indeed is, from my reading of it, implementing the recommendations of the Vicq report which reviewed the corporate tax regime in this province and made these recommendations very clear.

I also am mindful of the fact that the opposition Finance critic was the first presenter to the Vicq commission and highlighted the fact that this type of competitive changes had to be made in order to make our jurisdiction able to compete with our neighbours on both sides and indeed internationally.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we are quite confident that the business sector is going to welcome these changes, and we would like to communicate directly with them to judge the specific impact that these changes are going to have. And in order for that to happen, at this time I would move to adjourn debate.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Debate adjourned on this motion.

## ADJOURNED DEBATES

### SECOND READINGS

#### Bill No. 60

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Quennell that **Bill No. 60 — The Evidence Act/Loi sur la preuve** be now read a second time.]

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Southeast.

**Mr. Morgan:** — Madam Deputy Speaker, we have had the

opportunity to review this Bill and to do some preliminary consultation with regard to this Bill.

We recognize that our evidence Act in its present form has not been amended in any significant form for nearly a century. It was an old Act when I was in law school, and it's been little changed since. We recognize the need to move forward with this type of legislation and to have this type of legislation made consistent and compatible with our federal legislation because often proceedings in courts and tribunals will pass through courts where both federal and provincial laws are applicable. So for that reason, we are supportive of this Bill going forward.

We note as well that this Bill deals with updated technologies and allows for a recognition that documents will be presented in electronic format or that tape recordings may be presented as well as a variety of other things. It will be necessary, Madam Deputy Speaker, as this type of technology continues to grow, that we continue to review our legislation and make changes that will ensure that the legislation maintain an up-to-date compliance with all the various current technology as it comes in. And we also have to recognize that technology is growing at an exponential rate, so the work for legislators and the work for people in the Department of Justice will continue to grow in that area.

We note as well that this Bill contains recognition of the change in society, that we have a large number of couples that are not living in a traditional marital relationship. We now have a number of pieces of legislation that recognize common law relationships. And this Bill will go to dealing with the competence and compellability of witnesses that are involved in common law relationships, and specifically addresses issues of spousal violence and issues where somebody may be required to testify either for or against a common law spouse, which is clearly a recognition of where our society is at today's date.

We recognize that a codification of a lot of common law is now embedded in this statute, and this will make work easier for our police officers and for our Crown prosecutors. It's appropriate at this time to recognize the hard work that is done by our Crown prosecutors and by our police officers. And legislation that makes their work easier or easier to identify things that have to be done is certainly a necessary step in the right direction. And we support that aspect of the legislation.

We note as well, Madam Deputy Speaker, that it contains provisions to allow underage witnesses or witnesses under 14 to testify, or witnesses that have diminished mental capacity, and deals with video recordings or recordings where they're able to provide evidence from afar. It deals with credibility and identification of individuals and a large number of things that represent current or more up-to-date practices in law enforcement.

It also recognizes that evidence is given in a sworn form before a variety of administrative and other tribunals and makes revisions to allow where that evidence can be used or where it cannot be used in dealing with other matters. So it is a recognition that our society has now progressed beyond merely the Court of Queen's Bench and other adversarial court processes but that we've now embodied a number of other administrative tribunals. And it deals with the applicability and

how evidence is brought before those tribunals, and it also deals with how that evidence may be used in other tribunals.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the opposition is prepared to let this Bill go to committee. In committee we will have a number of questions for the minister, and I may just as well use this opportunity to give him and his department officials a heads up on this. We will have specific questions regarding the consultation process that took place between members of the Law Society, the Canadian Bar Association, and law enforcement officials.

So for whatever benefit that gives the minister, it may make things easier as this Bill goes through committee. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, we're prepared to vote on this Bill at this time.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Is the Assembly ready for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Question.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 60, The Evidence Act be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Carried.

**Clerk Assistant:** — Second reading of this Bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — To which committee shall this Bill be referred? I recognize the Minister of Justice.

**Hon. Mr. Quennell:** — I move that Bill No. 60, The Evidence Act be referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 60, The Evidence Act be now referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Carried. This Bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services.

#### Bill No. 61

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Quennell that **Bill No. 61 — The Evidence Consequential Amendments Act, 2006** be now read a second time.]

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Southeast.

**Mr. Morgan:** — Madam Deputy Speaker, this Bill is the companion legislation to Bill No. 60. It deals with the changes that are necessary to ensure that this Bill can be available and used in both official languages. As such it should be moved through committee in tandem with the main Bill, No. 60, and as

such we are prepared to let that Bill be voted into committee as well. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Is the Assembly ready for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Question.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 61, The Evidence Consequential Amendments Act, 2006 be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Carried.

**Clerk Assistant:** — Second reading of this Bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — To which committee shall this Bill be referred? I recognize the Minister of Justice.

**Hon. Mr. Quennell:** — I move that Bill No. 61, The Evidence Consequential Amendments Act, 2006 be referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 61, The Evidence Consequential Amendments Act, 2006 be referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Carried. This Bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services.

[15:45]

#### Bill No. 50

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Quennell that **Bill No. 50 — The Queen's Bench (Mediation) Amendment Act, 2006/Loi de 2006 modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Cour du Banc de la Reine (médiation)** be now read a second time.]

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Southeast.

**Mr. Morgan:** — Madam Deputy Speaker, there is a saying that a poor negotiated settlement is still better than a well-litigated judgment. I'm not sure that I entirely agree with that statement. However there is no doubt that we are at a point in our society where we recognize mediation and where we recognize other alternate dispute resolution methods of dealing with disputes between people. This Bill addresses some of those issues and tries to put into legislation the ability to have disputes mediated rather than to go forward with litigation.

Some years ago, in 1998, pilot projects were implemented that required mandatory mediation to take place in Queen's Bench



matters at the close of pleadings and before examinations for discovery took place. That experiment, through the hard work of people like Ken Acton who is the designated head mediator for the province, proved to be enormously successful.

I think I'd like to add at this time that the success of that depends a lot on the nature of the litigants and the type of encouragement that's given to them by their lawyers before they participate in the mediation process.

In any event, Madam Deputy Speaker, the successes that took place as a result of that pilot project caused the legislation to be amended in 1998, and now mandatory mediation takes place throughout the province. As well as that, the Small Claims Court has got a mandatory mediation meeting or a early settlement date where the litigants meet with the judge as soon as the claim is being filed.

This process has proved to be enormously successful. It brings people together. It puts a human face on the negotiation and on the process and allows people to explore possibilities for settlement before the cost and expense of litigation precludes settlement going forward. One of the changes that will take place is that now, if parties are willing, they can go to a mediation before the claim has even been filed or served, which is another step forward to try to reduce the expense of litigation and to explore every possible settlement process or option that's available.

The process is a fairly straightforward process. You meet separately with the mediator, then a joint meeting together, and the mediator tries to explore options without being judgmental, induces some discussion and some information sharing and tries to see whether there is common ground. In some cases where a settlement isn't negotiated at the mediation, often the seeds of a settlement are sown, and the settlement will take place later on. As part of the process and part of the legislation, the information that's shared and the without-prejudice comments that are made cannot be used or cannot be brought up in a court later on if the matter is unsuccessful in being settled.

We recognize the complexity and the expensive nature of legal proceedings. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, this Bill will go a long ways to try and reduce that for litigants. It is not solely because of the nature of the Bill, but it is also because of the competence, professional nature of the people that work in mediation services.

We feel it's appropriate to recognize as well not just mediation services but the various processes that are available in place of litigation. There's a number of alternate dispute resolutions. The Law Society has for a number of years made courses available so that lawyers can be designated as mediators and undertake a mediation process as well. And for the last 15 to 20 years, lawyers have been undertaking mediation with some significant degree of success, particularly in the area of matrimonial dispute where people come to the process with a great of emotional turmoil in their lives.

As well, Madam Deputy Speaker, one of the more interesting things that has come forward and being used is the collaborative law process. There is groups of lawyers that are now participating in the collaborative law process. One of the

interesting aspects of that is that the lawyers actually become parties to the contract and sign an agreement before they start — that if the process is not successful that they will not represent either party in the event that the litigation goes forward. So the lawyers in fact actually have a vested interest in seeing and ensuring that settlement goes forward.

Lawyers such as Brad Hunter in Regina and Kathryn Ford in Saskatoon have been leading the charge on this, and there is now a collaborative lawyers' group. They meet regularly and have done a lot of work to try and expand that process. People that are going through matrimonial or other disputes are usually at a time in their life where they are burdened with a great deal of emotional baggage, going through an exceptional amount of turmoil. And having a collaborative process is far better than going through a process of family law court.

And I say that with greatest respect to our family law judges, but it's certainly better to sit down and try to put your position forward, negotiate, and work with the things that are there.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we are supportive of the provisions of this Bill. We've had some opportunity to discuss and do some consultation and are certainly prepared to see this Bill proceed to committee. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Is the Assembly ready for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Question.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 50, The Queen's Bench (Mediation) Amendment Act, 2006 be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Carried. To which committee shall this Bill be referred? I recognize the Minister of Justice.

**Hon. Mr. Quennell:** — I move that Bill No. 50, The Queen's Bench (Mediation) Amendment Act, 2006 be referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — It's been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 50, The Queen's Bench (Mediation) Amendment Act, 2006 be referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Agreed. Carried. This Bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services.

#### **Bill No. 54**

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Taylor that **Bill No. 54 — The Cancer Agency Act** be now read a second time.]

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Biggar.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 54, The Cancer Agency Act. It's a very timely Bill to be able to get up and speak about those types of health care items that we are experiencing in this province. And as we are well aware of the cancers, really the plague of humanity that is going through people's lives. And we all have relatives and friends and neighbours who have or have had cancer.

And it certainly is a terrible disease and also a disease, Madam Deputy Speaker, that has many different forms. It's certainly not a disease that has one type of characteristics and it certainly takes a different type of treatment to cover all the different cancers that are out there in society.

This Bill, as the minister outlined, mainly has changes to the governance. We understand it repeals The Cancer Foundation Act and replaces it with The Cancer Agency Act which I understand is supposed to be an update to how the system is working right now or in some cases is not working in this province. It goes on to say that the changes in governance and accountability to bring the cancer agency in line with requirements of the regional health authorities.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, it encourages the regional health authorities to work with the cancer agency for delivery of cancer care, as well as to help evaluate cancer care in the province. And the Bill is supposed to bring greater expectations in terms of accountability and transparency, as far as the legislature for tracking and reporting of the various aspects of treatment and so forth.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, it certainly is very important to see how this Bill will work in conjunction with the amendments to The Regional Health Services Act, a Bill that is coming up shortly. And we understand that there's been a major review of the cancer agency in the province. And you can certainly understand we have many questions for the minister as to whether these legislative changes are a result of that review, and we certainly will speak to all the stakeholders concerning this Bill. And the Bill is a fairly extensive piece of legislation that requires careful review, and we certainly will, as the official opposition, do that.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, when we speak of cancer and the cancer agency and the regional health authorities, one of the obvious things are waiting lists and the shortages of oncologists. Those are two very, very important areas that has to be discussed. In Saskatchewan there's currently two times . . . has two times the national average to see an oncologist for the first time and that was before the province lost three oncologists. And the waiting lists have increased ever since.

And as we know in this province, as more and more of our young people leave the province for better job opportunities and futures in other parts of the country, our demographics are aging, and so that will continue to be an increasing demand on our health care system. As we know, as more people leave the province that's less tax revenue to come into the province coffers, and so there's going to be a continuing demand on our budget to fund and look after the health care of our

ever-increasing aging population.

We have brought up, the Saskatchewan Party has brought up a number of cases recently concerning waiting lists. And as recently as this week we spoke about Emily Morley, who was told that they were . . . this person was on a three-month waiting list to see an oncologist for the first time after a secondary cancer was found. So those types of issues are certainly very disturbing to see. People that have cancer certainly want to get the treatment started. It's well known that the earlier the treatment, the better results for cancer treatment. And people are finding themselves waiting on waiting lists in this province for treatment, for all sorts of treatments but in particular cancer treatment.

We in Saskatchewan have spoken about the cancer drug Avastin, presented many petitions in this province concerning the government not funding Avastin. This is a very expensive drug and people that have serious types of cancer that the . . . prostate cancer I understand, that the drug treats, these people are really looking to this Avastin as a last resort. And to date the government is not funding the use of Avastin in this province.

So there are many aspects of health care that are quite disturbing. And so we hope that this Bill will address some of those concerns. We see that government laws and regulations certainly haven't improved the health care system in the past. Throwing money at the health care system obviously hasn't improved or fixed the problems in the health care system in Saskatchewan. So there certainly has to be other methods, other types of thinking that needs to take place in order to get this health care system that Saskatchewan people are . . . in the past were very proud of and really, well a world leader in the health care field in past decades.

But certainly nowadays we see that the Saskatchewan health care has many, many problems in it. We are falling behind other jurisdictions in Canada and certainly are falling behind in the rest of the world. And we just looked at the extraordinary waiting list that people in Saskatchewan have to wait on before they can get treatment of all sorts of medical procedures.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, we will certainly, as the official opposition, we will be doing our due diligence and doing our work. We will be speaking to all the stakeholders involved concerning this Bill 54, cancer agency Act, and we will review it very carefully. But at this time, Deputy Speaker, we would like to move to adjourn debate.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble):** — The hon. member for Biggar has moved adjournment of debate. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble):** — That is carried.

[16:00]

#### Bill No. 51

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed

motion by the Hon. Mr. Taylor that **Bill No. 51 — The Regional Health Services Amendment Act, 2006** be now read a second time.]

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

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you. It's a pleasure to speak to The Regional Health Services Amendment Act, 2006, mister deputy deputy. I would like to speak about some more aspects of the health care system in the province. As we all know, in this province has been constant changes to the regional health authorities. We have gone from 32 regions down to 12. And the question everyone is asking is, is our health care system any better off today than it was before all those changes?

And I think many, many people in this province say that this health care system in Saskatchewan is not better off any more. There has not been any improvements. Certainly many, many procedures are now centralized in the larger centres, where we have very long waiting lists. And out in the regions, in the rural areas we lack, in many cases, just the basic health care in many communities. So it certainly has not improved the health care to many people in this province.

And we see that there's a continuing communication barrier between regions. There's shorter waiting lists for some procedures in other regions. And there doesn't seem to be any communication between the two regions where people can move from one region to another to get more timely treatment and operations and procedures that are needed.

Now this Bill I understand is focused on rearranging the regional health authorities and it initially left out the cancer authority from the mix until this previous Bill was introduced.

This Bill is supposed to bring accountability measures to the cancer agency which will be the same as the regional health authorities. And the government and the minister claim that there'll be direct accountability to the minister, greater public access to the decision-making process, and a clear delineation between responsibilities of board and management. But there are many, many questions remain concerning the operation of our health care system in this province and in particular the regional health authority.

We only need to look to the Provincial Auditor, the reports that the regional health authorities need improved reporting and accountability. Of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this begs the question, does the current model that is supposed to bring accountability and transparency to the regional health authorities work? And I think most people in this province would say it does not. You know, if people are not involved at every level, if it's not transparent, there doesn't seem to be any accountability — well the system will not be working.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Provincial Auditor claims that there needs to be clear performance goals. He lists a number of items that is needed: tighter control over bank accounts, improvements to the equipment and inventory and records. Health care dollars that are precious, there needs to be a more clear understanding where the money needs to be directed to as far as patient care, and again, you know, really transparency and

accountability in general.

It's interesting to see that some regional health authorities don't have a clear understanding as far as inventory of equipment in their own facilities — can't understand how an organization could operate, could give the services to patients when they don't even have a knowledge of what type of equipment they have in inventory. Obviously the records are not being kept very well.

When we look to changes in the regional health authority we certainly, as a Saskatchewan Party, we have brought up a number of concerns very recently. Look to the situation where there was the emergency room was actually closed. There was a patient that was outside on the street waiting for the emergency to open. People had to call an ambulance to come to basically stabilize this individual until the emergency room opened, which is bad enough, but this fellow also got a bill to pay for the ambulance to come to look after him while they were waiting for the emergency room to open. Those types of things are totally unacceptable in this province.

Another example is phoning in on a hotline to see where a person, a patient is on a waiting list and to get a recorded announcement saying that they — the hotline — will phone back in a number of days because there's a waiting list on the waiting list hotline for information. Totally, totally unacceptable again.

And then of course the very tragic case of baby Paige where treatment was not given on a timely basis to that young child, where the parents finally had to, in frustration, take it upon themselves to take their young baby to Edmonton for treatment which raises all sorts of questions about referrals, who is picking up the cost of procedures. I think it's generally accepted in this province that a patient had to be referred by a doctor from Saskatchewan to go out of province to get treatment and be paid by the government. And now we hear . . . we understand that that has not been the case. But it's not widely known, so people have been really waiting on these waiting lists a long time and not knowing they had other alternatives.

And certainly in this baby Paige situation where the minister's own assistants did not know that this was the case and did not recommend to the MLA that phoned — the member from Humboldt — and to the patient, parents that yes, they could go to Edmonton on their own and get treatment for their child and the government would pick it up, pick up the costs. So these are very, very disturbing situations where people's health are put at risk because of how the health care system is working or not working in this province.

And the CEO of the Saskatoon Health District on the radio has said, quite frankly admitted that this is not a one-off situation, that it does happen and it does happen every now and then. And this situation is totally unacceptable that people's . . . really their lives are put at risk because of the health care system really breaking down.

We talked to doctors and nurses who are doing great work. They're overworked. They're working long shifts. There's a shortage of nurses, other health care professionals, and this is putting a great strain on those health care professionals. We

only have to look at the situation that I brought up from a mother of a young nurse that had just graduated that's working in Regina, that she's only been working as a nurse for a few months and is already burnt out. These types of situations cannot go on where the front line health care workers are under that tremendous workload and stress and still expect to give quality health care to individuals.

So there's signs in the health care system that it's not working, that it's breaking down, and the people of Saskatchewan deserve better. So certainly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will be speaking to many people concerning the Bill 51, regional health authority Act. We will speak to the stakeholders. And so at this time, I'd like to move to adjourn debate.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble):** — It's been moved by the hon. member for Biggar that debate on Bill No. 51 be adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble):** — That is carried.

### Bill No. 53

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Thomson that **Bill No. 53 — The Economic and Co-operative Development Amendment Act, 2006** be now read a second time.]

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

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, mister deputy deputy speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to The Economic and Co-operative Development Act and the amendments to that Act, although in reading through the Bill, I find very little reference to either economic or co-operative development, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

This Act in fact is dealing with the Information Technology Office. And it does mention economic growth, but when you look at the Bill, the only segment of the economy that will be growing under these changes to this Act is the Information Technology Office which is a government agency. There's no real economic development here for anyone else other than the government. And so I'm not exactly sure how you count that as economic and co-operative development, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because this is about growing the Information Technology Office.

You know, in the original Act, in the statutes it explains what the terminology and the interpretations are of certain words. And it talks about what a department is. It talks about what a government department is. It has a slightly different terminology for that. And it talks about the minister. So this Act applies to departments and government departments and the minister.

But now under this amendment they're adding a whole new area that has not been applied to ITO [Information Technology Office] before. It applies to the definitions of a prescribed

public agency. It means a public agency that is prescribed in the regulations for the purposes of this Act. So that means that the minister can make changes from time to time without ever coming to the legislature, without people finding out what the Act means, the changes to the Act, the regulations, until they're implemented.

It goes on to interpret what the meaning of a public agency is. And that means the Legislative Assembly Service and the office of any officer of the legislature. You know, that's this building and the Law Clerk and the Clerk's office and, you know, the child Ombudsman, the Child Advocate, the Electoral office — those kind of agencies — which is not a problem because they're all directly funded by the taxpayer through the auspices of this legislature. So in essence while they're independent officers and independent office of the legislature, they're still part of the government.

It talks about a Treasury Board Crown corporation or designated Treasury Board Crown corporations as defined in The Crown Corporations Act of 1993. So now we include under the definitions of this Act, the things that this Act applies to is all of the Crown corporations as well.

Now we have seen the huge amount of money that was spent on Information Services Corporation, ISC. The original budget for that, I believe, was supposed to be \$20 million, and it grew over time to over \$107 million. Finally that corporation — after I think it is seven years — has finally actually turned a profit for once which is a good thing, but they have a huge IT [information technology] service.

Does that mean that ITO, Information Technology Office, is going to take over now the operation of ISC? I don't think it does, but this Bill gives them the ability to do so. Not likely to happen, but the potential is there. But in a lot of other areas, that potential may very well be realized because it says, part (iii): "... any ... board, commission, institution, body or person that derives its ... [funding] in whole or in part from the Government of Saskatchewan."

You know, in the province of Saskatchewan where the economy is 45 per cent government controlled, that takes in just about everybody. So the ITO has the ability to be involved in the lives directly of 45 per cent of the economy. And not only just the economy because it says, anybody who derives funds in whole or in part. So that includes any municipality that would receive a government grant. That means any school board that would receive a government grant.

And as we have just seen under the school board amalgamations, this year every school board is receiving government grants through the foundation grant system. Next year that'll likely change; there'll be one school board that does not. But every other school board would fall into this category.

It means every health board. It means potentially every First Nation because First Nations receive funding from the provincial government. It means the Métis Nation. It means a good many of the non-governmental organizations of this province that receive any government funding. It means the rec boards in every community if they receive a government grant of any sort. The museums or anybody else who receives a

government grant could fall under this category. It also means — because it says persons — anybody who gets a pay cheque from the government could also qualify.

[16:15]

So this gives ITO a very, very broad scope of involvement in the provincial economy when it talks about economic development co-operation. You know, if you want to develop a high-tech industry in this province, an information-based industry, you want as many diverse sources bringing their ideas forward. It's not by having one single stream that you can maximize the opportunities in high tech. It's by having that huge mass of ideas. And some of them will percolate up and be winners. And some will be mediocres. And some of them will fail. But if you develop one huge department, one huge source of ideas in this province, then you end up with one idea.

You need to have the diversity. And this piece of legislation has the ability to limit the opportunities for high-tech industries in this province because obviously when the government economy is 45 per cent of the revenue generation in this province and one entity has the entire resource of accessing that 45 per cent, then you stifle the rest of the economy, the ability of the rest of the economy to grow and to percolate.

And I see this particular piece of legislation very much having that ability. You know, it does have . . . somebody mentioned here just now, one of my colleagues, that it does very much have the smell and feel of George Orwell's *1984* where Big Brother is watching everything you do because this Bill — ITO under this possible interpretation — has the ability to access virtually every piece of personal information you have.

You know, if let's say the government went into some sort of a partnership to develop a piece of technology with the credit union system, now ITO has a hook onto the credit union system. Doesn't mean that the credit union system has to take ITO services, but they now have the ability to do so. And so, you know, what can happen? Well we've seen ministers in this House not provide the House with the whole information.

We saw it today with the Minister of Health saying that the public has the right to go outside of the province of Saskatchewan to another province to access health care with three exceptions — those being MRIs, being cataract surgery and bone density. And that's what he was saying last night in estimates on Health; that's what he said early on in question period today. And then later on in question period, he started qualifying. Not just those three items, but he started qualifying other things why you may not be able to go out of the province.

So, you know, an assurance from a member opposite saying oh no, no, this is all voluntary . . . Excuse me, but I'm a little apprehensive because we don't always get the information . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . My colleague again has a good idea there — school board amalgamations.

The government offered I believe it was \$150,000 to two school boards that might wish to amalgamate. If they wanted to do that, they would give them some seed money of \$150,000 to help them over the costs of amalgamation. Well that went on for a few years; there was a few people, a few of the school

boards that took it up. My own was one of them. Then all of a sudden it wasn't going fast enough for the government, and they forced everybody, all the school boards — rural school boards I should point out, not urban school boards — rural school boards to amalgamate.

Although, although it's interesting to note — and the current Minister of Finance was the minister of Education at the time — that there was one rural school board that did not, was not forced to amalgamate. And I believe that was the La Loche school board. And when I asked the minister, well if there's cost savings to be had from administration and other areas with all of the other school boards, why wasn't there any cost savings to be had from that particular school board? And he had no answers, but they were not going to amalgamate that school board.

Well politically we know why that was. Because the minister for that constituency, that's his home community, and didn't want it to happen. So it didn't happen. It had nothing to do with the economics of any of the school boards. It was all about politics in that particular case. And Mr. . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — And where's the relevance in that?

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — The relevance to the Bill, to answer the member from Regina Dewdney there, is you can't necessarily trust what any one of those ministers has to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's the relevance to the Bill.

If the members opposite would answer the questions properly instead of simply giving nonsensical sentences even to written questions then perhaps there would be some trust in . . . But there is no trust because those members don't answer even the simplest of questions. That's the relevance to this Bill. The fact that ITO is being put into a position of being able to take the information from each and every one of us and centralize it into one location controlled by one entity I think is a reason for apprehension in this province, particularly given the actions of some of the members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Bill also goes on to give the minister some responsibilities when it comes to expenditures that will be taking place within ITO. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is again an expansion of what is in the original Act. And again we have to wonder why it's taking place and why it's being allowed.

To also talk about, comment on the member from Regina Dewdney's comments from the other side of the House, in the explanation notes that are sent out with any Bill, clause no. 4 talks about existing provisions and it lists as the title here, responsibilities of ministers. The minister is responsible. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in my 15 years in the House, I have only known one government NDP member to accept responsibility for himself or his department, and that was Bob Mitchell a number of years ago. Everyone else has the universal NDP sign of this, which means not me; it's the other guy's responsibility.

And they do that day in and day out, Mr. Speaker. We see it with the Minister of Health. It's not his responsibility, it's the district health board in Saskatoon. It's not the minister of Education's responsibility, it's the school boards'. It's always

somebody else's responsibility. So when you include in the explanation notes that the minister is responsible, it's a misnomer and a travesty because no minister on that side of the House other than Bob Mitchell has ever accepted any responsibility for their own actions or that of their departments.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think there's a good number of questions yet to be asked about this. I think the government needs to take a serious look at where they're going with this, that they don't stifle the innovation and growth of high-tech industries in this province simply to build one huge department within government. Therefore I would move that we adjourn debate.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble):** — The hon. member for Cannington has moved that debate on Bill No. 53 be adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble):** — That is carried.

#### Bill No. 52

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Forbes that **Bill No. 52 — The Meewasin Valley Authority Amendment Act, 2006** be now read a second time.]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble):** — I recognize the hon. member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm certainly pleased to be able to enter into debate on Bill No. 52, an Act that amends The Meewasin Valley Authority Act. There are a number of issues in this Bill but some of it is merely updating the Act to modernize it. There's references to Acts, other Acts, that are no longer in existence because they have been amended, so that is somewhat of the housekeeping nature of the Bill.

There's also references to additional land that will be included and come under the authority of the Meewasin Valley Authority, Mr. Speaker. The provisions within the Bill, even though it was just introduced fairly recently in the legislative process, I believe that we can have most of our concerns that we may have with the Bill answered in committee provided that the minister's prepared to provide us with the maps to show us exactly where . . . you know what land is being brought under the authority of the Meewasin Valley Authority and so on.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I move this Bill to committee I would just like to say a few things about the valley that runs through Saskatoon and the good job that the authority is doing with managing the resources of the Saskatchewan River Valley and the very positive attributes of the valley that adds to the city of Saskatoon. I think anyone who has taken the time to walk along the river's bank and take time to, as the saying goes, to smell the roses, certainly appreciates the good work that the Meewasin Valley Authority is doing in regulating development along the river valley and making it a real plus and a real asset to the citizens of Saskatoon, and in fact all citizens of the province. And it's something that we truly can be proud of.

So and as I said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think those additional questions and concerns that we do have, I think we can have them answered in committee. So I would move that this Bill proceeds to committee.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble):** — Thank you. The question before the Assembly is a motion by the Minister Responsible for the Meewasin Valley Authority that Bill No. 52, The Meewasin Valley Authority Amendment Act be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble):** — That is carried.

**Deputy Clerk:** — Second reading of this Bill.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble):** — To which committee shall this Bill be referred? I recognize the Minister Responsible for the Meewasin Valley Authority.

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — I move that Bill No. 52, The Meewasin Valley Authority Amendment Act, 2006 be referred to the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Infrastructure.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble):** — It has been moved by the Minister Responsible for the Meewasin Valley Authority that Bill No. 52, The Meewasin Valley Authority Amendment Act be referred to the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Infrastructure. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble):** — That is carried. This Bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Infrastructure.

#### Bill No. 48

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 48 — The Parks Amendment Act, 2006** be now read a second time.]

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

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Deputy Speaker. It's a pleasure to get up to talk to this particular Bill dealing with the parks and leases and fees. This is another Bill that affects a lot of people. Affects the people that use the parks but also probably affects the people more than anything, are the people that are in the parks, whether it's owners, cabin owners. There's businesses that operate within the parks. There is golf courses that operate inside the parks. There is also leases. A guy I know . . . Different cattlemen will lease land from some parks to use for business at that end of it.

So this particular Bill, and it addresses . . . it can affect a lot of people. It can affect every one of these persons that I mentioned. And some of the ones that look at this, on the

explanation, it says, "... a service fee determined by the minister ..." And also, "... a land lease fee ... [to be] determined by the minister ..."

Well when you read that, with this particular government ... Because I can remember a couple of years ago there was quite an uproar in a lot of the parks about the service fees that they were charging at that particular end and that they felt they weren't getting services for the fees that they were being charged.

I think a lot of parks, there were some down south that some of the fees were going up that people were paying for leases were doubling or even tripling. And at that particular time they weren't even given assurances that they would ... these were long-term leases. They were year-by-year. They could be taken from them.

So there is a huge concern out there with people that are leasing within the parks and I think this is what this particular Bill deals with. I know that it also deals with possibly some fees that people that are using it ... I can remember it wasn't that long ago when this government weren't going to even open the parks till June at that particular time. It raised quite an uproar at that end of it and they finally came to their senses and finally opened at the right time at that particular time.

And then let's not forget the wiener roast tax that came on that this government put on people that wanted to use the tax. I thought, you know, people were under the impression that the parks were there for their use, that they paid taxes, that they don't have to pay every little fee any time they want to go burn some wood or even for any little service the department provides.

And I know at the golf course I've got a particular one or two ... I've got one golf course in my own constituency that leases from the park and I know they weren't very happy with the government arrangements that was going there. He didn't mind what they were charging but he said there was no ... they were getting no service, no update. It was up to the government to actually fix the roads.

The roads are so bad coming in that the golf carts coming into the trail were driving in the ditch because they couldn't drive on the road coming in. There was holes at least this size in there coming in to the park. As they came in and as the road winds through the golf course they ... And that is maintained by the government. And do you think that they would spend a nickel on them roads? And you know how much that they were charging that particular golf course owner for a lease on that particular time? I think it was around that \$50,000 mark. It was a huge amount of money that they were paying there at the lease on that particular thing.

It's something this government does constantly, is very good at taking money but not very good at fixing anything, especially when it comes out to rural Saskatchewan. And it's even showing now on their parks that I know that we've had stories of other parks being run down, unfortunately. You know, we have beautiful parks but yet the buildings aren't being maintained. And you know why? Because these guys are cutting staff like they usually do. They cut front line staff. Do

they ever look at the upper administration in Regina here? No they'd never touch that, but they will cut staff.

I can remember there was another park and I think that was a northern park, wasn't it, where they ripped up some flowers. They ripped up some flowers. I remember that was a couple of years ago. It was another uproar in the paper that the people that planted, volunteer people had planted in this particular park and that they came and tore them up because they said, oh we can't maintain them because we don't have the staff, you know.

And they wonder why people are kind of dissatisfied with the way things are being run. And with this particular Bill, when you start saying that a service fee is determined by the minister, it makes the people, the business owners in them parks, nervous because I know that they've had a lot of disagreements.

I'll get back to the golf course owner. That was never resolved. He said, you know, if they provide me, I don't mind paying a good lease money but he says, provide me with some service in that area. He said, first of all, the road through the park was no good and then the highway coming up to the park was beat, was all beat up with holes and people couldn't even pull their boats down there any more. He was basically losing business at that end of it. And what's this government do to address it? You know, nothing.

You know, when it comes to business owners in this province or it comes to people leasing land, this government seems to ride rough over them any way they can because basically this government has an attitude that if they don't own it that they're not interested in it. They probably feel that every business in the park should be owned by the government when it comes right down to it, at that end of it.

This government always seems to go back to their socialist roots at times especially when it comes to business. And let's not mistake that this government has a heavy socialist roots game of ... I would even go back to as far as originally starting even with a little bit of communism even starting in, when they started with that old CCF [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation], and then they kind of smooth it over. But they were still heavy socialists at that end of it.

And it seems like they're not in favour of really working with the businesses out there in them parks that are maintaining and providing services, whether it's cooking food or golf carts or just different services out there. I know that they haven't been providing any help for that.

You know, just like in rural Saskatchewan it seems like everything they do, I think they've lost contact so much with rural Saskatchewan that they have no idea what's going on out there any more. They have no idea the population loss that's going out there. They have no idea of the job loss that's going out there and the hurt that's going out there, never mind in the ag community but just in all the towns. Because I don't know if they check the census, but they're all losing. You know, the parks are going to be probably, unfortunately, even down for use because we're just losing people. We have a beautiful province and the government over there can't even look after the parks or provide good service at that end of it.

So with that, Madam Deputy Speaker, with this particular Bill, with the regulations, I think we definitely have to talk to business owners and lease owners at that, to find out if they're happy with some of the changes on this particular Bill. So with that I would adjourn debate.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Carried.

### Bill No. 55

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Cline that **Bill No. 55 — The Reclaimed Industrial Sites Act** be now read a second time.]

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Cypress Hills.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Madam Deputy Chair. It's a pleasure to speak to this particular piece of legislation this afternoon. I have to admit that my interest in this Bill was prompted by the minister's comments. I only heard some of what he had to say in his introductory comments when the Bill was brought to the House, but he used a few words that caught my attention.

And unfortunately the attention that I thought he was paying in this particular piece of legislation was to a different area than what I had assumed, but he had talked about the uniform legal framework for returning Crown land held under surface lease back to the province. And of course, Madam Deputy Speaker, I don't think anybody in the province has more Crown land that is leased to people — individual operations and ranchers — than I do in the Cypress Hills. But in this particular case the Crown lease that the minister was talking about had to do with mineral leases and mining operations in the province.

Now having read the legislation, having read the minister's comments, having looked at the supplementary notes provided on the legislation, it's pretty clear that this minister has introduced legislation that hopefully will serve an important and practical purpose going forward. But I think there's some serious questions that need to be asked about this particular Bill and what its implications will be for not just the province, not just for the environment, but for the mining industry.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is a piece of legislation that brings into being quite a series of legislative frameworks and a whole new bureaucracy, frankly. I would like to just go through the Bill briefly. It's cited as The Reclaimed Industrial Sites Act, and this is some of the activity that this particular piece of legislation will accomplish. It will define and identify a closed site. Now for the purposes of this particular piece of legislation a closed site is an industrial site at which all decommissioning, remediation, and reclamation measures have been carried out and transitional phase monitoring has been completed.

This legislation introduces the Institutional Control Monitoring and Maintenance Fund. It introduces the institutional control

program. It also introduces the institutional control registry, the Institutional Control Unforeseen Events Fund, and some other miscellaneous items as we go through the legislation. What we have here are two new and separate initiatives, the institutional control program and the registry that accompanies that program.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think it's common knowledge and widely accepted that Saskatchewan has a very strong presence in the mining industry. We are a key player. We've seen an extensive amount of mineral development in this province; some fairly recently, some in years past. But there is tremendous potential going forward.

And I think we want to make sure that that industry is developed in a manner in which the province can enjoy the benefits, that the companies that make the initial investment can profit and prosper in this province, that the people of the province will have the assurance that the activities undertaken by the mining industry are done in accordance with acceptable environmental standards and so forth.

So there's no debate about whether or not this type of legislation might have some merit. But what we're not sure about, Madam Deputy Speaker, is how this particular piece of legislation will be implemented and how it will be used in the future to the benefit and/or detriment of the industry and the province as a whole.

I noticed the minister in his remarks, when he introduced the legislation, tried to give the House the assurance — and the people of Saskatchewan by extension — that this particular piece of legislation had been developed as a co-operative venture with several government departments involved, as well as the complete input and participation by the mining industry. In fact he says it was developed with their input and advice every step of the way. On the surface of it, Madam Deputy Speaker, that's pretty reassuring. And I'm sure that that's what the minister intended.

However as was suggested by one of my colleagues earlier, we're not sure on this side of the House that we can take that at face value. We've heard this government give assurances of full co-operation and of stakeholder input and full consultation on so many pieces of legislation over the last number of years that have proved to be somewhat less complete than the government had indicated.

And as a matter of fact, I think the important concern of the official opposition with this particular piece of legislation is to verify that the minister and the government departments involved in bringing this piece of legislation forward, that the industry really did play that consultative role, that co-operative role, that full, participatory role that the minister alluded to when he introduced this legislation.

And I think we will be very interested to talk to the industry in the next number of days and weeks to determine their level of interest and support for this piece of legislation or whether in fact they might have concerns and whether their input was actually found its way into this piece of legislation, whether in fact their input is recognized in this particular piece of legislation.



Madam Deputy Speaker, as I indicated at the outset, this Bill allows for the creation of two different funds. And if I understand the legislation correctly, when a mine site or an industrial site is decommissioned, there are going to be certain requirements of the owner and operator of that site. And if those rules and regulations that are in place today are met by the owner/operator of that mine site, they would be given approval to participate in this registry program. But not only do they get the opportunity to be registered and a participant in the registry; they have to pay for the privilege.

Now one of the things that I find interesting at this point is that no indication anywhere exists in this Bill as to what those financial obligations might be on behalf of the players. What will the expected cost be to the participants in this registry to have their mine site registered as part of this process? How wide is the variance? What is the total cost? Is the cost worth the price to be paid by these players, by these mining companies?

There is one fund that will be developed as a result of the registry and the fees charged to be part of the registry. And there will be other charges associated with the second fund which is for unforeseen events. And this will allow the government to have access to revenues to deal with problems that arise quite unexpectedly long after the site has been abandoned by the original owner.

I don't think anybody would necessarily disagree with the merits or the intent of this kind of legislation. I think there is justifiable concern on the part of the public that reclamation projects be done appropriately and that there be no long-term negative impact to the environment and to society as a whole. But I think they have reason to wonder whether or not this is the appropriate and necessary way to achieve that.

[16:45]

There is no precedent, as I understand, for this piece of legislation. The minister said that this is the first of its kind in the country. I don't know if he drew on the experience of jurisdictions elsewhere around the world that may or may not have tried to undertake this type of registry program, but I think the jury is certainly out on this particular piece of legislation, whether or not it will work.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think there are a lot of questions that need to be answered, and I think that the intent of the official opposition is to try and seek some of those answers. And in the time frame we've had to date, in the short time we've had this piece of legislation available to us, that hasn't been possible.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would move that we adjourn debate on this Bill.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Carried.

## Bill No. 56

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Quennell that **Bill No. 56 — The Residential Tenancies Act, 2006** be now read a second time.]

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Southeast.

**Mr. Morgan:** — Madam Deputy Speaker, this Bill is codification and an update of the existing legislation. It brings into the Bill and incorporates a lot of changes that are now sort of common law based on what the Rentalsman practices are using.

I think we should recognize the hard work and competence that the Office of the Rentalsman has. As MLAs we receive complaints and issues of concern about a variety of different government agencies. And fortunately for us the Office of the Rentalsman produces very few complaints. When you delve into them, usually complaints are unfounded so we're . . . it's one of the agencies that we're well pleased with the work. There's hard-working, competent individuals in the Saskatoon office that I've recently had dealings with, Jodi Bernath and Darlene Wiwchar, both extremely competent, professional people that take their job very seriously.

The Office of the Rentalsman provides a low-cost, expeditious remedy for both landlords and for tenants. The concerns that we have heard about this Bill, Madam Deputy Speaker, are the issues dealing with not providing . . . or providing more reasons before a tenancy can be terminated by a landlord and whether that's going to create a new body of law or problems for landlords.

We also continue to have concerns. I hear complaints from landlords about the amount of the damage deposit and the enforceability of damage deposit claims. We will probably want to speak to this more and deal with this as this Bill proceeds through committee. We're prepared now to allow this Bill to proceed to committee and vote for it.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Is the Assembly ready for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Question.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 56, The Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Carried.

**Clerk Assistant (Committees):** — Second reading of this Bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — To which committee shall this Bill referred? I recognize the Minister of Justice.

**Hon. Mr. Quennell:** — I move that Bill No. 56, The Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 be referred to the Standing

Committee on Human Services.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 56, The Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 be referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Carried. This Bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services.

#### Bill No. 57

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Quennell that **Bill No. 57 — The Residential Tenancies Consequential Amendment Act, 2006/Loi de 2006 portant modification corrélative à la loi intitulée The Residential Tenancies Act, 2006** be now read a second time.]

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the minister for Saskatoon Southeast.

**Mr. Morgan:** — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The member.

**Mr. Morgan:** — It's all right. It's just a matter of time. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Appreciate the kind offer but we'll wait until after the next election, Madam Deputy Speaker.

This Bill is a consequential Bill dealing with the Bill No. 56. It deals with the various housing co-operatives that are providing low-cost and affordable housing and allowing people to participate in acquiring housing at lower income levels than they might have in the past. It is a Bill that should proceed through committee in tandem with and in conjunction with Bill No. 56. And as such, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would be prepared to use my ministerial waiver to allow this Bill to proceed to committee. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Is the Assembly ready for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Question.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 57, The Residential Tenancies Consequential Amendment Act, 2006 be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Carried.

**Clerk Assistant (Committees):** — Second reading of this Bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — To which committee shall the Bill be referred? Minister of Justice.

**Hon. Mr. Quennell:** — I move that Bill No. 57, The

Residential Tenancies Consequential Amendment Act, 2006 be referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 57, The Residential Tenancies Consequential Amendment Act, 2006, be referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Carried. This Bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services.

#### Bill No. 59

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Higgins that **Bill No. 59 — The Education Amendment Act, 2006/Loi de 2006 modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur l'éducation** be now read a second time.]

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Melfort.

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. And I am a little bit hurt that you didn't refer to me as minister in deference to the fact I've been here a lot longer than my colleague.

However, I am pleased to be able to speak to the Act to amend The Education Act, 1995, and to make a few points.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there are two main components to this legislation and both of them are very important. The one component addresses a long-standing request by the school boards association to make the school fiscal calendar coterminous with the school year. And so as part of this legislation, school boards will prepare, in this adjustment period of time, budgets for eight months and then for a further 12 months beginning with the fall. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, that certainly is a worthwhile endeavour for this to happen.

The other issue that is very important in this legislation is the creation of local school advisory committees. As we recall, with the amalgamation of school districts there was a great deal of concern about local accountability and local involvement with the future of their schools with the districts becoming very large, and that there would be potentially a disconnect between the governing school board and the community schools.

And so the department conducted a study by Craig Melvin who went around and looked for a methodology and made some recommendations to the department in regard to creating a body, if you like, that would properly reflect the aspirations and needs of the schools in communities and the much larger boards of education.

And out of that, we get the recommendation for these new local school advisory committees. And there's a couple of points that I think have to be made in the principle of this before we go to committee when we can explore the details.

And the first principle is that there has to be a connection between these local school advisory councils and the boards of

education. They can't be disconnected and they can't function outside of the collaborative process and the ultimate responsibilities that are held by the boards of education. I don't think it is meant in any way to take away from the responsibilities of the local school advisory committees, but their mandate is much more broad and much more involved with the whole life of the school than there used to be with various organizations. That would be parent-teacher local boards, or whatever was the format for them in the past. And so when these bodies are created they have to be done in collaboration with the mandate of boards of education, and I think that it's very important that that is clarified.

The second thing is, is that we should have some flexibility, particularly since this is new, not only to the rural boards but also to the urban boards. In the rural centres, communities are very involved with likely a single school in their community. And that makes sense for there to be the school advisory committee in that community to advise on the future needs of the school, and in most instances it's a K to 8 [kindergarten to grade 8] or K to 12 school. And that makes sense.

In the urban locations it might not make as simple a sense as to have one of these advisory committees for each individual school facility. And I think that under this legislation, as I understand it, there is a possibility for local schools to amalgamate, if you like, their community advisory councils but it has to be approved by the minister of Education before this can happen. I would hope that we could have a less onerous kind of a process that might be the simple approval of the local board of education, who are much closer to the issue. And once they make that approval that they advise the minister of the fact they've approved that these three schools, for example, in an urban setting in a community neighbourhood, are actually going to work together with one school advisory committee instead of three. And so I think there has to be that common sense practicality that is exhibited in the creation of these bodies.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we know that the minister will be very willing to address some of these issues and concerns, and if need be entertain some amendments in terms of clarifying these responsibilities in this legislation when we go to committee. We certainly think that by and large this legislation is important and needed in order for this amalgamation process to continue. Boards of education have by and large contacted us and say, we need this change in the fiscal framework so that we can have the calendars coterminous with the school year. That's an important initiative. The assumption has been made already and they're planning for this, so that this needs to be mandated by the passing of this legislation.

And certainly we approve and support the concept of the local school advisory committees. We have some of these technical issues that we would like clarification on, but we would certainly support that that would happen in committee.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Deputy Speaker:** — To which church does the minister belong? The hon. member has moved that we would be ready for the question. Is it the agreement of the Assembly?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Carried. The question before the Assembly is a motion by the Minister of Learning that Bill No. 59, The Education Amendment Act, 2006 be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Carried.

**Clerk Assistant (Committees):** — Second reading of this Bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — To which committee shall this Bill be referred? I recognize the Minister of Learning.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — I move that Bill No. 59, The Education Act be referred to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — It has been moved by the minister that Bill No. 59, The Education Amendment Act, 2006 be now referred to the Committee on Crown and Central Agencies. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Carried. This Bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

**Clerk Assistant (Committees):** — Committee of Finance.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Committee of Finance. I now leave the Chair.

#### COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

**The Chair:** — It now being the hour of 5 o'clock, this committee stands recessed until 7 p.m. this evening.

[The committee recessed until 19:00.]

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