



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

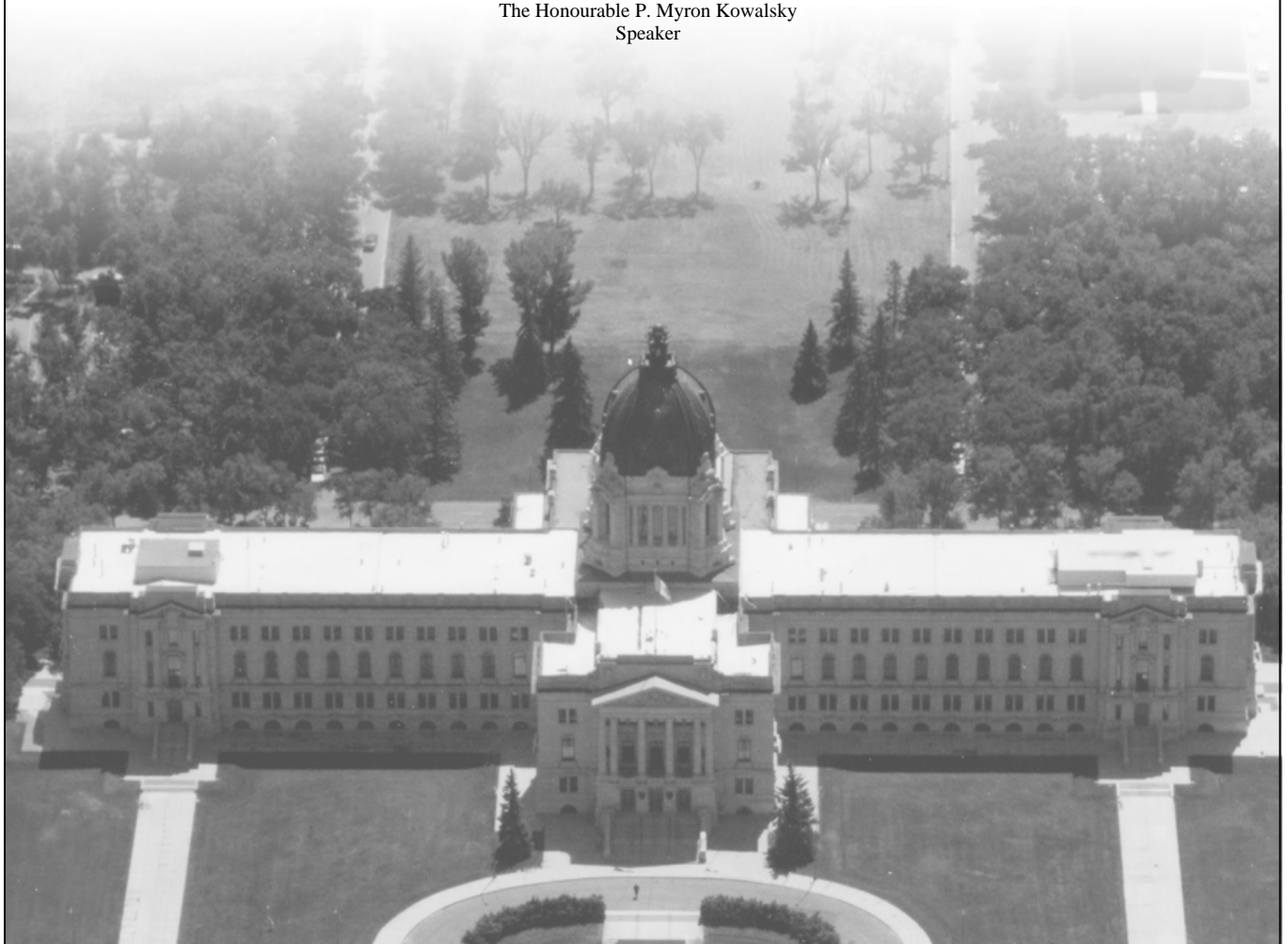
Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of

The Honourable P. Myron Kowalsky
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Addley, Hon. Graham	NDP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Atkinson, Hon. Pat	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Beatty, Hon. Joan	NDP	Cumberland
Belanger, Hon. Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornrud, Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
Borgerson, Lon	NDP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
Calvert, Hon. Lorne	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
Chisholm, Michael	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
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
Duncan, Dustin	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
Forbes, Hon. David	NDP	Saskatoon Centre
Gantefoer, Rod	SP	Melfort
Hagel, Hon. Glenn	NDP	Moose Jaw North
Hamilton, Doreen	NDP	Regina Wascana Plains
Harpauer, Donna	SP	Humboldt
Harper, Ron	NDP	Regina Northeast
Hart, Glen	SP	Last Mountain-Touchwood
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, Hon. 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, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney
Vacant		Martensville

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly a pleasure again today to begin the proceedings by presenting a petition on behalf of the good folks from the communities of Grenfell, Cowesses, and Broadview regarding a dialysis unit in the Broadview Union Hospital. 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 a strategy that will see a dialysis unit placed in Broadview Union Hospital.

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

I so present.

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

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my duty and my privilege to present a petition on behalf of constituents of Cypress Hills concerned about Highway No. 18. 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 ensure that Highway 18 from Claydon to Robsart is repaved at the earliest possible time to ensure the safety of drivers in the area and so that economic development opportunities are not lost.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, once again today the petition is signed by individuals from the community of Maple Creek. I so present.

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have petitions to present today on behalf of a constituent from Carnduff. The prayer reads:

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

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

These petitions come from the communities of Gainsborough, Oxbow, Carnduff, Glen Ewen, Regina, another small community, of Regina as well, Mr. Speaker. I so present.

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

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on behalf of citizens who are convinced that things are not yet fine on Highway 49. The prayer of their petitions reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to repair Highway 49 in order to address safety concerns and to facilitate economic growth and tourism in Kelvington, Lintlaw, Preeceville, and surrounding areas.

Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise on behalf of the petitioners today who are from the great community of Preeceville, Saskatchewan. I so present.

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

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too am pleased to rise today on behalf of people who would like the government to know that things are not divine on Highway No. 49.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause this government to repair Highway 49 in order to address safety concerns and facilitate economic growth and tourism in Kelvington, Lintlaw, Preeceville, and surrounding areas.

Everybody that has signed this petition is from Preeceville. I so present.

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

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition from people who are behind improving Highway 49. Mr. Speaker, the prayer of the petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to repair Highway 49 in order to address safety concerns and to facilitate economic growth and tourism in Kelvington, Lintlaw, Preeceville, and surrounding areas.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition come from the communities of Preeceville, Yorkton, and Saskatoon. And I'm pleased to present it on their behalf.

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

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition to do with the lack of funding for the drug Avastin. The prayer reads:

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

The signatures, Mr. Speaker, are all from the city of Melville.

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

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with the lack of provincial government funding for the cancer drug Avastin. And the prayer reads:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals from the communities of Carnduff and Alida. I so present.

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

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to be able to present a petition on behalf of Saskatchewan citizens who are very upset with this government's move to turn a portion of Highway 22 back to gravel. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to upgrade and maintain Highway 22 so it can return to being a safe and economical route for the Earl Grey and area families and businesses.

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

Signatures to this petition, Mr. Speaker, come from Regina, Earl Grey, Lumsden, and Silton. I so present.

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

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have several pages of a petition with citizens concerned of the safety of the Bruno access, which is on Highway No. 5, which is a very narrow highway. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to upgrade the Bruno access road off to Highway No. 5.

And the signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from Bruno, Meacham, and Drake. I so present.

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

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again today I rise to present a petition on behalf of constituents of mine who are very concerned about the spaces for the Estevan Daycare Co-operative. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to review the decision to deny the requested spaces for the Estevan Daycare Co-operative.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this is signed by folks from Estevan. Thank you.

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

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have another petition from the citizens of Biggar concerned about their health care services. The prayer reads:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens of Rosetown, Biggar, 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 present a petition from parents in the constituency of Saskatoon Silver Springs, urging the government to make public their 2006 capital priority list so the much needed elementary schools can be built in the Arbor Creek and Willowgrove areas of Saskatoon. The prayer of the petition reads as follows:

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

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

The petitioners today live on Staigh Crescent, Kerr Road, and Wright Crescent in northeast Saskatoon. I so present, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Assembly today to bring forth a petition signed by citizens of Saskatchewan, and the prayer reads as follows:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition are from Saskatoon,

Broadview, and Regina. I so present.

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

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition calling on the Government of Saskatchewan to upgrade Highway 20 to primary weight status.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that Highway 20 be upgraded to primary weight status to ensure the economic viability in the surrounding areas.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

This particular petition is signed by the good citizens from Jansen, Lanigan, Guernsey, Drake, Humboldt, and Wynyard. I so present.

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

Mr. Dearborn: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in the Assembly today and present a petition on behalf of citizens concerned with the government's failure to fully fund the cancer drug Avastin. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I believe this petition is signed from the good citizens in the southeast of the province at Carievale and Carnduff. I so present.

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

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to present a petition that this is the first time in the province's history that the government has denied coverage of a cancer drug recommended by the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency. And the prayer reads, Mr. Speaker:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

From the good people of Carnduff, Saskatchewan. I so present, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to rise in the House today to present a petition to urge tougher sentences for sex offences against children. I will read the prayer for relief

which is somewhat lengthy, but I'll try and be as quick as I can.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to create a website that provides information about high-risk offenders who live in the province or are going to be released in the province, take all steps available to speed up the public disclosure process so the communities are alerted to the presence of known sex offenders in their community as soon as possible, and finally, lobby the federal government for tougher sentences for sexual offences against children, tougher measures to keep track of offenders once they are released from a correctional facility, and a review of the dangerous offender designation process.

And as duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I so present. Thank you.

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

Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition urging the government to fix Highway 36. And I'll read part of the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to invest the needed money to repair and maintain Highway 36.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the people of Coronach; Thorsby, Alberta; and Big Beaver, Saskatchewan. I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order petitions tabled at the last sitting have been reviewed and pursuant to rule 15(7) are hereby read and received.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader, the member for Moose Jaw North.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to introduce to you and through you to the all members of the Assembly, 29 Roman Catholic priests who are seated in your gallery today, Mr. Speaker. Together they make up the National Federation of Presbyterial Councils. And the presbyterial council is an important element in the function of the Catholic Church in our country, Mr. Speaker.

Every single Roman Catholic bishop has a council to advise him, and the priests who are with us today, Mr. Speaker, are the heads of those councils from across Canada. They're senior members of these councils of priests, and it's their job to give advice and good counsel to their local bishops. They meet once a year somewhere in Canada, and I'm very, very pleased that this year they chose to meet in Western Canada and extra

pleased by the fact that this year the host is the Archdiocese of Regina.

They'll be with us for a short period of time this afternoon. They'll be leaving at about 2 o'clock to take a tour of the Legislative Assembly building, and then they will be going from there to Moose Jaw for, among other things, a tour of 15 Wing and the spa. And so, Mr. Speaker, I promised that I would not single out any individual and I will honour that promise. But suffice to say that when they are doing their tour over in Moose Jaw in 15 Wing, one among them will be in very, very familiar territory.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all hon. members to show welcome to these Fathers from across Canada who play an important leadership role.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[13:45]

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

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On behalf of the official opposition, it gives me great pleasure to join with the Government House Leader in welcoming all of the Roman Catholic priests that are here from across Canada today. I certainly am a member of the Prince Albert diocese. Bishop Blaise Morand is my bishop. And it is a great pleasure that you would come to Saskatchewan, in particular to Regina.

But I would inform you that the whole of Saskatchewan doesn't sit south of the No. 1 Highway. A great and important and beautiful part of this province is north of the No. 1 Highway and on your next trip to Saskatchewan please include a trip to the beautiful northern part of our province.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, Mr. Dale Backlin, sitting in your gallery. Mr. Backlin is an emergency medical technician in Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region and is the coordinator of the public access defibrillation program.

Mr. Speaker, Dale is not the only EMT [emergency medical technician] in the family. His wife Christine is also a paramedic and together they have two children. Dale is the chairman of the Saskatchewan College of Paramedics and he is very excited about the pending adoption of The Paramedics Act which we will begin second reading on today, Mr. Speaker. He is very excited about this because it will provide the Saskatchewan College of Paramedics the right to govern the emergency medical service workers in this province.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan residents are proud of all the hard work that the emergency medical service workers provide, and I

would like the Assembly to join me in welcoming Mr. Backlin.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group seated in the western gallery. The group of course is the north central inner city youth employment program. It's this year's group. They were here for a visit and a meeting and a lunch with the Premier, the Minister of Northern Affairs, and myself today. We're having a bit of a tour after the question period and it's been great to see them here.

This group, Mr. Speaker, has been on the job since spring. They've been working around north central and in through the inner city helping clean up, pitching in with the community association, and helping to do a great job putting that best foot forward in north central.

I'd ask you, Mr. Speaker, to join me in welcoming Greg Bellegarde, Jonas Big Eagle, Kyland Bowman, Crystal Campeau, Nathan Campeau, Dustin Dubois, Lee Habersstock, Tasheena Keewatin, Tyler McKay, Greg Morin, Stuart Mosquito, Andrew Norton, Murray Quewezance, Daniel Runns, Lance Severight, Melissa Whitehawk. And they're accompanied, Mr. Speaker, by the program coordinator, Murray Giesbrecht, program supervisor, Candace Olson, and with Carol Kaip from the Department of Community Resources.

This is a group that's been doing tremendous work in through north central and the inner city of Regina, Mr. Speaker. They're moving on to jobs. They're moving on to education with construction careers. They're working with places like Conexus and with the Regina Exhibition Association and we're very proud of them and the work that they're doing. So I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming to their Assembly, the north central inner city youth employment program. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Congratulations to the Town of St. Brieux

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today is a special day for St. Brieux, Saskatchewan. Today, November 8, 2006, St. Brieux becomes a town. Congratulations to the outgoing mayor, Paul Leray, for all that you've done not just for St. Brieux but for Saskatchewan. Congratulations to St. Brieux and the new mayor, Pauline Boyer. We wish you and St. Brieux all the best in the future.

Mr. Speaker, St. Brieux is not just a town, it is a community working together to build a future. This community recently had another big day. On October 28 it was the grand opening of the St. Brieux daycare centre. It is a completely new building of

over 3,600 square feet that is licensed for age six months and up. Mr. Speaker, the new daycare is already full with 128 children registered.

St. Brieux has already had people moving to this thriving community because of the lifestyle and services it has to offer. Mr. Speaker, some say they are lucky because they have Bourgault Industries. The truth is it has been through the hard work of the people and of the community and that's what has built St. Brieux. The harder they work, the luckier they get.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask everyone here to join me in congratulating St. Brieux. Vive la St. Brieux.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Aboriginal Veterans Day

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today is a very special day for Aboriginal people and all Canadians, as today marks Aboriginal Veterans Day. This marks an occasion to recognize, to honour, and to celebrate the contribution and achievements of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit veterans of war and peacekeeping efforts.

Mr. Speaker, the contributions of Aboriginal veterans cannot be overstated. Most of the Saskatchewan contingent who served in the two world wars and Korea came from isolated areas of the province. In addition to the usual immense challenges of war, Aboriginal soldiers had to also overcome unique cultural challenges. In many cases, Mr. Speaker, they had to learn to speak English and to adjust to a foreign European culture.

This did not deter them. They signed up in large numbers. Aboriginal soldiers served with pride and distinction. Many were highly praised for their skill, for their bravery, and decorated with honours and awards. Many paid the ultimate price for our freedom today. They lost their lives and never came home.

We owe all Aboriginal soldiers, past and present, and their families and their communities a debt of gratitude. Mr. Speaker, their contributions — their courage, their sacrifices, and their accomplishments — will never be forgotten. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Addictions Conquered

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to recognize two young men who have changed their lives and the lives of their families. The first young man is Troy McLeod. He's 27 years old. Troy is a First Nations young man who spent his life in the foster care system. He spent seven years addicted to drugs, including cocaine and crystal meth. He graduated the year-long program at Teen Challenge, went through the transitional program of intern and staff in training

which allowed him to earn a living while giving back to others. He went on to university and got married. Troy has been accepted into the medical program at the University of Saskatchewan, having just passed his MCAT [medical college admission test].

The second young man is Stephen Safinuk who, a little over two and a half years ago, was in a Saskatoon hospital not expected to live from crystal meth and cocaine overdose. Steve was not expected to revive from a coma and then not expected to be little bit more than a vegetable if and when he did. He did come out of the coma and one month later entered Teen Challenge. Steve later graduated and after a year-long recovery program went into the year-long transition of intern and staff in training program. Steve is currently a member helping other young men overcome their addictions to cocaine and crystal meth.

This young man, with nowhere else to turn, is now living a drug-free and successful life contributing back to society. His future is great. He's just been accepted into Hillsong university in Australia for July — one of the most prestigious programs in the world.

An example of young men with long-term care that can be cured. It would be nice if this NDP [New Democratic Party] government would help fund faith-based treatment centres instead of putting up roadblocks.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Gary Tinker Federation Wins Spirit Award

Hon. Ms. Beatty: — Mr. Speaker, last week in La Ronge the Gary Tinker Federation for the Disabled was presented with one of the Saskatchewan Spirit Awards for Community-Based Organizations.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier, along with myself and the Minister of Community Resources, presented the award to Gary Tinker, the founder and chairperson of the federation, in recognition of the work it has done on behalf of people with disabilities in the North.

Mr. Speaker, the Spirit Award was created as a way to honour and recognize the work done by human service community-based organizations throughout the province. The Gary Tinker Federation truly deserves this award. The federation provides education, training, and employment services to about 240 people with disabilities who live in the North.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members to join me in congratulating Gary Tinker, George Ward, Randy Stomp, and all the federation staff and board members on receiving this award and for all their good work. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for

Weyburn-Big Muddy.

Weyburn-Big Muddy Youth Win Awards

Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I have more good news from the young people of Weyburn-Big Muddy. In September I had the great honour of attending the Saskatchewan Weekly Newspapers Association annual Junior Citizen of the Year banquet. Mr. Speaker, of the five award recipients that night, two are from the Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency.

Christa Lynn Bruneau of Willow Bunch was recognized for her community and school involvement. This past year she was on the SRC [student representative council], the yearbook committee, and was her class valedictorian. And for three years Christa has helped her mother run a hot lunch program.

Mr. Speaker, eight years ago Christa's younger sister became very ill and had to travel to the Toronto sick children's hospital. With her mother away for months at a time, it was up to Christa to keep the household running. A few years ago her mother contracted West Nile virus, leaving the then 15-year-old Christa Lynn as the primary caregiver for her little sister. Not surprisingly, Christa Lynn's goal is to become a nurse.

Mike Ehman is a name that the members of this Assembly may remember as I spoke about him last week. When Mike isn't busy co-inventing a step-climbing wheelchair, he's being recognized for his community involvement. Mike received the 2006 SaskEnergy Community Spirit Award.

The best word that describes Mike is leader. A recent graduate of the Weyburn Comprehensive, he was involved in team sports. He's very musically inclined, starring in many school musical productions and in choir. He mentors for Big Brothers and Big Sisters and spoke on behalf the RCMP's [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] D.A.R.E. [drug abuse resistance education] program to elementary school students, just to name a few of his contributions to our community. Congratulations to both of these deserving young people. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Community Planning Day

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, November 8 is recognized as Community Planning Day here in Saskatchewan. Every year throughout Canada and in more than 30 countries around the world, this day is set aside to celebrate the valuable contributions that sound planning has made to people's quality of life.

As well, Mr. Speaker, Community Planning Day promotes the awareness and involvement of elected officials and the public in community and regional land use planning and highlights the valuable contributions that sound community and regional planning make to our communities and environment.

It's therefore fitting that later today my colleague, the Minister

of Government Relations, will give second reading to a new planning and development Act to help provide the tools needed to advance Saskatchewan as a leader in environmental protection, the green economy, and ensure that today's Saskatchewan families benefit from our strong economy.

Mr. Speaker, setting aside a day to highlight the profession of community planners reinforces the contribution that they make to land use planning and multi-jurisdictional planning projects in our province.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the Assembly to join me in congratulating the Association of Professional Community Planners of Saskatchewan on their contribution to our province and in recognizing Community Planning Day. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Oyate Safe House

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday we got a glimpse of the NDP government's real agenda. We saw first-hand how they intend to handle the questions surrounding the Oyate Safe House. They refused to answer the questions and instead choose to run and hide. This government will pull out all stops to prevent the people of Saskatchewan from finding out the facts. They are clearly covering something up.

The Minister of Community Resources says he welcomes scrutiny. What does the minister think scrutiny is? He refuses to answer the questions posed to him in this Assembly. He refuses to appear before the Public Accounts Committee. He fails to provide the briefing notes from the only two meetings he had with the Oyate board of directors. The NDP prevented the former deputy minister of the department from appearing as a witness before the Public Accounts Committee.

Yesterday in the rotunda, the Government House Leader and former minister of Community Resources could not say the word witness. He deliberately avoided the word, even though it was right there in front of him. Maybe the Government House Leader needs a refresher on the word witness. A witness is not someone who sits at the back of the room and whispers occasional answer. If I dial up my Google, I find a witness is someone who speaks, who testifies verbally, who provides answers.

The people of Saskatchewan are demanding answers. What they get instead is a government that is more interested in protecting itself from public scrutiny. This government is obviously trying to run and hide. They are clearly more interested in their own. . .

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:00]

ORAL QUESTIONS

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Investigating the Delivery of Health Care Information

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier this year the Minister of Health for this government launched an investigation into the poor treatment that baby Paige received in the Saskatchewan health care system. Baby Paige is today receiving treatment.

Mr. Speaker, Doug Bonderud has passed away. And yet the minister refuses to launch any kind of investigation, even though it's pretty clear that the information that could literally have helped save Doug's life was not provided to him by that health care system.

I remind this minister, in light of some of his answers yesterday, it's not the role of the College of Physicians and Surgeons to investigate Department of Health officials who failed to provide the correct information on out-of-country coverage that may have been available to Doug Bonderud. Mr. Speaker, why won't the minister launch an investigation into this terrible tragedy so the family can get some answers and so that it can be prevented from happening to anyone else?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Over the years the Department of Health has recognized that from time to time citizens may need additional information with regards to the care, quality of care, or delivery of care throughout the province. And as a result, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Health over the years has ensured that citizens have access to investigation processes that go beyond the overall work that can be done from the minister's office.

Mr. Speaker, for citizens of this province who have concerns about the delivery of care from a physician, a simple request to the College of Physicians and Surgeons will get some answers. Mr. Speaker, for citizens who have complaints or concerns about the quality of care, there are ways in which those can be addressed through the quality of care coordinators. Mr. Speaker, for those who are concerned about the overall nature of the delivery of programs from any department, Mr. Speaker, a simple request to the Ombudsman will help to fill those needs.

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

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, let's consider that in this case a consultant, a medical consultant, a doctor with Sask Health was in contact with the family and with Doug. No information was provided about options, or certainly inadequate information was provided. The quality care coordinator was contacted in this case, Mr. Speaker. We've already been through this. We've already been through this.

Yesterday the minister said, and I quote, "If there's evidence where the system has failed a Saskatchewan family, then of course we want to be in a position to respond immediately to that." When a reporter asked the minister if the system failed in this case, here's what he said, "Again without an investigation, evidence, and conclusions, I can't form an adequate opinion on that."

Mr. Speaker, that's what he said yesterday. So by his own words, will he now commit in this Assembly today that he's prepared to investigate this particular situation, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated the avenues of investigation are available to any citizen in this province who feels that either an individual or the system has failed them. Mr. Speaker, the system has designed these programs and policies to ensure that citizens have access to information.

On the basis of those independent investigations, whether it's by the college or the provincial quality of care coordinators or the Ombudsman, Mr. Speaker, it's through the recommendations or the review and later recommendations from those officials, Mr. Speaker, that we can properly address the situation from the department's perspective.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage this citizen and other citizens to consider all the options available to them to get the answers to the questions that they need and deserve.

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

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, this citizen's name is Crystal Bonderud. She's here again and she has done all of that. Her family has done that. It was Doug's last wish that all of these things be done on behalf of him, frankly, and on behalf of others that might find themselves in this situation. She's done all those things. Now it's time for the minister to show some leadership, to take his responsibility and act based on the request that has come, based on his own words.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. I know his schedule is busy, but will he, Mr. Speaker, take a few minutes today to meet with Crystal so she can outline for him this particular case because it's one of a number that have been presented about a lack of information being provided by the system of health care he is responsible for, to patients who need that information. She wants to know if the government will reverse the decision not to provide compensation for Doug's emergency surgery at the Mayo Clinic, as the government's policy allows them to do. And she wants to know, as do we and do the citizens of the province, what is this Premier going to do to ensure that this does not happen to anyone else again, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government of the province of Saskatchewan I met with Mrs. Bonderud the other day. And, Mr. Speaker, I found the information that she presented does her case, her family, and her late husband proud. She is representing her case very well.

Mr. Speaker, I have advised Mrs. Bonderud that there are a number of ways in which she can access information independent from the Department of Health. Mr. Speaker, a request to either the College of Physicians and Surgeons, a quality of care coordinator investigation, or, Mr. Speaker, a request to the Ombudsman will yield information, independent information on which further direction may be taken by this government.

But, Mr. Speaker, those citizen protections are in place. They've been in place for a number of years to address exactly this situation, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, apparently during the course of these discussions, the minister has indicated — and his motives are well placed if this is the case — that when he became aware of this situation in the newspaper on or about the September 23 as others in the province were aware of what was happening to the Bonderud family, that he was moved by what he read and wanted to have his officials look into the matter.

So I want to ask the minister if he did that. What investigation began at that point? And if there was some work that had begun then, why will he not now agree that there should be an investigation made public to find out what can be avoided here in the future and also to deal with the issue of the compensation that is owed to the family because this was an emergency surgery that was needed at the Mayo Clinic, Mr. Speaker?

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I have indicated before on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan, around 30 to 35,000 procedures are done for Saskatchewan people every day within the health system. Mr. Speaker, there are times, there are times when there are difficulties within the system where citizens feel that they need additional information. Mr. Speaker, there are processes in place to ensure that these matters are addressed.

Mr. Speaker, when I review the information based on that policy which I am directly responsible for, Mr. Speaker, I find that the policy has represented about 1,500 people who received out-of-country advice and support in the last year at a cost to the province of about \$10 million. Mr. Speaker, the physicians know about this policy, and throughout the system, Mr. Speaker, people have access to this information.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier. We know now from questions, from the comments that Crystal has made publicly . . . We know in part because of the minister's admissions that in this particular case the quality care coordinator did not provide the total information about options available to that family. Neither did the medical consultant employed by the Premier's department, by Sask Health. Mr. Speaker, this information wasn't provided. In this case it's not rhetorical or hyperbole to suggest that the information could literally have saved a life. I think that's pretty serious.

Will the Premier commit to take a couple of minutes today to meet with Crystal; get her side of the story; commit to review the government's decision not to compensate the family for the costs at the Mayo, number one; and number two, look at the overall issue of communication to families and patients so this can be avoided in the future, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I have indicated publicly, Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated publicly, every case that comes before Sask Health, whether it's made publicly in this Chamber or through the media or whether it comes through the mail or a telephone call, every case that comes before Saskatchewan Health or a regional health authority, Mr. Speaker, is looked at to ensure that whatever happened in a specific case will have an impact on the way in which future care is delivered.

Mr. Speaker, we have developed a lot of processes within our hospitals, within our physicians' community, within the department at large. Many systems have been put in place to ensure that we learn from information that comes to our attention.

Mr. Speaker, there's no question in my mind that the information that has been gathered to date and that information that would be available to us in the future through investigations available to the family will ensure, will ensure, Mr. Speaker, that the quality of care in this province improves.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Oyate Safe House

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Community Resources has now had 24 hours to reconsider. Will he now ask the former deputy minister to appear before the Public Accounts Committee as a witness which was agreed to by the whole committee, including the former minister of DCRE [Department of Community Resources and Employment]?

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

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much for the question,

Mr. Speaker. And I will point out that one of the things that has been very abundantly clear here is that questions were asked of the opposition and answers were provided.

Mr. Speaker, as the House Leader explained time and time again — and once again I'm sure he can explain to the opposition if they can't get it — is that it has been a long-standing tradition that in committee work that the current deputy minister is responsible for answering questions when it comes to a specific department, Mr. Speaker. We have upheld that long-standing tradition.

And, Mr. Speaker, it should be pointed out, as minister, we are going to take the lead role. As deputy minister, we're certainly going to encourage that individual to take the lead role and to be very forthright, open, honest, and accountable when it comes to answers, Mr. Speaker. And that's exactly what we're trying to do. We're trying to provide answers, solutions in a go-forward basis that's going to really help with the issue of child exploitation on Saskatchewan streets, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Merriman: — Mr. Speaker, I'll remind the minister that the former deputy minister was called because the deputy minister who was there couldn't answer the questions.

And you know, the cover-up continues. Yesterday members of the ministerial department staff told the Public Accounts Committee that there were minutes and notes at two meetings that the minister had with the Oyate board. Now all of a sudden, Mr. Speaker, we can't get those notes. We can't get them. Mr. Speaker, will the minister commit today to bring those minutes to this House?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, to set the record straight, the former deputy minister of my department was there, Mr. Speaker. And the former minister was there providing answers to the current minister who has the responsibility to answer questions. It's been a long-standing tradition. There is no cover-up, Mr. Speaker, as that member alleges, Mr. Speaker.

And furthermore, when we had the discussions, Mr. Speaker, what we did — and I very publicly told the media — is that those discussions that we had, that the dates that he makes reference to, I primarily told both Chief Daywalker and I'm not sure the other individuals that were there, that, one, we told them the purpose of this meeting is to advise you that the advocate is now engaged and the auditor is now engaged. We asked them for their full co-operation. That was the extent of this unofficial meeting to let them know what is coming down the pipe, and that we required their full disclosure and full co-operation. End of story, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Merriman: — Mr. Speaker, the one person who could answer the questions didn't say anything. Even the questions directed to the current deputy minister, he never even referred to the former deputy minister.

This minister says he welcomes public scrutiny, but he won't let the former deputy minister appear as a witness before this Public Accounts Committee. It's a cover-up, Mr. Minister, just like Channel Lake, just like SPUDCO[Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company], except this one's worse because it's involving children at risk.

Mr. Speaker, will this minister then agree to come before this committee and answer the questions correctly?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:15]

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

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, this has got to be one of the most inept critics I've ever met in my entire political career. He knows that the Public Accounts Committee and the various committees that we have is an opportunity for opposition members to ask bureaucrats specific questions. That's the venue in which they get to ask bureaucrats the questions.

Now he wants me to become a bureaucrat to answer his question in a different venue. I'm here answering questions in this Assembly where he should be asking, Mr. Speaker. And I welcome the scrutiny, Mr. Speaker. And furthermore . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order, order. Order. The Minister of Community Resources.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. I'll point out to that member how it works in case he doesn't know, is that in these public committees that we have, him as an opposition member can ask very specific questions of the bureaucrats. That's how it's set up, Mr. Speaker. That's his venue that he can option.

Now the other thing is I'm responsible for the Assembly here, and I'll answer questions here, Mr. Speaker. Bottom line, if you have specific questions on the administration of programs or departments, you go to Public Accounts. If you want an answer from the minister, you come to the Assembly. So if that member can't function on two fronts, he needs . . .

The Speaker: — Member's time has elapsed.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I don't want him to be a bureaucrat. I want him to be a minister,

and I want him to do his job as the father of these children and the responsibility he has.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Merriman: — And I beg to differ with this minister. He stands up in the House and he talks, but he doesn't answer questions. Yesterday I asked him where were the notes and the minutes from his meeting with the safe house board. He never answered that question. Twice we asked it. Yesterday I asked him how it was possible to conduct an investigation into nepotism when there were no meetings with the board for almost a year. He didn't answer that question.

On Monday I asked what specific steps were taken to investigate allegations of financial impropriety. He didn't answer that one either. I asked him about allegations that wages were made to staff. He didn't answer that one. October 31, I asked about criminal record checks. No answers. On October 27, I asked about his briefing on the safe house. No answers, just the same old garbage and personal incense. Mr. Speaker, when will he answer the questions in this House about those children's safety?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, once again I'll point out to the people of Saskatchewan, the all-party committee, when it talked about children being exploited on the street, recommended we have First Nations involvement. This government set up the office of the advocate, and we got the advocate involved, Mr. Speaker.

What we're trying to do in Saskatchewan is provide some solutions. And yes, hard lessons were learned. We've never denied that. But you know what today, Mr. Speaker? All the questions were answered, Mr. Speaker. Oyate is closed. There is some very strict conditions that must be met before any money is moved again, Mr. Speaker. So we're making good progress. And one mustn't forget, Mr. Speaker, that this was not a secure facility, that this was a voluntary program where we're trying to help reach out to the kids.

And what is happening, Mr. Speaker? Once again that member is answering . . . questions that have been answered time and time again through the Provincial Auditor's report, through the advocate's report, through the committee work, and the list goes on, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Shortage of Health Professionals Impacts Rural Hospitals

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday we received word of another rural hospital forced to shut its doors to patients because of a lack of doctors.

The Preeceville hospital will be closed all next week to emergency, in-patient, and outpatient services. Mr. Speaker, the closure will also affect the medical clinic in the town . . .

The Speaker: — Order please. Order please. Just a . . . Let's carry on now. The member for Canora-Pelly.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, essentially what you have here is the entire shutdown of services for the hospital in Preeceville. Can the Minister of Health explain how this could have happened on his watch? Will the minister tell this Assembly and all the people in Preeceville and area what steps is he taking to ensure Preeceville hospital will not have to go through this type of shutdown again?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I hope the member opposite is not suggesting we maintain hospital services without doctors or without health professionals operating.

Mr. Speaker, the regional health authorities have taken steps to ensure the safety and security of the patients and the people who are ill in the Preeceville area when there is a shortage of professionals. And, Mr. Speaker, we have indicated for months that there is a shortage of physicians and other health professionals.

Mr. Speaker, we have taken action. We have taken very strong action this year, Mr. Speaker. We have just concluded negotiations of a new contract with the Saskatchewan Medical Association. Together we have \$25 million worth of additional resources available for physician recruitment and retention initiatives. Mr. Speaker, the list of incentives available for physicians in rural Saskatchewan is too long to present today because you'll cut me off. But, Mr. Speaker, we are taking action.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Krawetz: — The minister is on record, the minister is on record as saying that the suspension of hospital services in rural Saskatchewan is a fact of life. Well I have another fact of life for that minister. The people of Preeceville are supposed to go to other communities like Kamsack or Canora for health services, but they are already bursting at the seams.

Kamsack is shut down right now because of a lack of health care professionals. Now both Canora and Yorkton are to handle a huge number of patients. And to top it all off, Mr. Speaker, no one can travel from these communities today because of a massive ice and snow storm. Now what are these people supposed to do?

To the minister: how does the minister plan to handle this situation? We have a health care crisis that is causing a domino

effect, and he says it's a fact of life. When will this minister do something meaningful to keep hospitals open and allow people of rural Saskatchewan to receive the health care that they deserve?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I assume that those who pay attention to these matters are going to notice that he quotes me again saying it's a fact of life. You read the *Hansard* from my answer a couple of minutes ago, Mr. Speaker. I didn't use the word facts of life — another creation of the members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the regional health authorities are taking steps to ensure the safety and security of patients in that area. And, Mr. Speaker, on a provincial basis the types of things that we've been doing to attract physicians to rural Saskatchewan include the rural practice establishment grant program, the rural practice establishment grant program for foreign-trained physicians, the regional practice establishment grant program, the undergraduate medical student bursary program for rural Saskatchewan, the rural practice enhancement training program, Mr. Speaker, the specialist re-entry program, the rural emergency care program, the locum service program, the rural travel assistance program, the rural extended leave program. Mr. Speaker, you will find . . .

The Speaker: — The member's time has elapsed. The Chair recognizes the member for Canora-Pelly.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the minister wants to talk about provincial initiatives. Well let's take a look at how Preeceville, which has just become the latest of a long list of hospital shutdowns that this Minister of Health has presided over. There's been Kamsack, Spiritwood, Arcola, Big River, Central Butte, and now Preeceville has the dubious distinction of being added to this list.

Mr. Speaker, my question to this minister is, is he going to provide the public with a hotline that they can call to tell them which hospital is shut down and when? Mr. Speaker, we already have a hotline for highways when they are shut down, so it's not much of a stretch to extend that to something as equally important as health care. Mr. Speaker, will the minister do this, so people of Saskatchewan can know which hospital he plans to shut down and when?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite is a Member of the Legislative Assembly, and he has constituents that rely on him on occasion to provide information to them.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is aware that we have the

Saskatchewan HealthLine that provides 24-hour-a-day care information to the people in his community. Mr. Speaker, when regional health authorities have to take steps to provide secure and safe care to the people who live in the constituencies, the first thing they do, Mr. Speaker, is contact the ambulance services. Anyone who phones 911 in this province, Mr. Speaker, has immediate access to the most local health care emergency facility, Mr. Speaker.

We have taken every effort to provide for the care and safety of Saskatchewan people when emergencies like this take place. Mr. Speaker, the work of this province has seen, over the last four years, an increase of physicians in Saskatchewan; 9 per cent, Mr. Speaker, over the last four years. We are not stopping. We are going for better, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, Mr. Speaker, this isn't a new problem that this minister has been confronted with. Mr. Speaker, from the *Canora Courier* of May 15, '04, the headline reads, "Canora without resident doctor for two days. Acute care patients had to be transferred to Kamsack Hospital." That's May 5, 2004.

From a headline of CBC News [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] dated Friday, October 13, it says, "Doctor, nurse shortages forcing rural hospitals to suspend services." From that article, it says:

Some hospitals in rural Saskatchewan are suspending services as they try to cope with the ongoing shortage of nurses and doctors.

The town of Kamsack in east-central part of the province is the latest in a series of small communities that has been forced to restrict [its] hours . . .

Today I bring up the example of Preeceville. We have had Canora, Kamsack, and Preeceville — three hospitals in my constituency that have been forced to close. What is this minister doing to ensure that we do not have to have those hospitals closed ever again in the future?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This government, in co-operation with the Saskatchewan Medical Association, have been working on position recruitment and retention issues for quite some time, Mr. Speaker. And the most recent agreement with the Saskatchewan Medical Association recognizes very clearly that we have situations that we have to address in rural Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, the member opposite could read any newspaper in the province of Alberta about rural hospitals in the province of Alberta facing similar situations regardless of the dollars that are available in that province to our west.

Mr. Speaker, this is a challenge facing rural communities across Canada. We are facing it together with the people of the Saskatchewan Medical Association and the communities where these shortages exist. Mr. Speaker, this is a true partnership of communities, physicians, regional health authorities, and the province. We are determined to address this issue in a comprehensive manner.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Shift in Business Practices for Department of Highways and Transportation

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan's economy is booming. The headlines in Saturday's *Leader-Post* says it all, "Jobs, Jobs, Jobs . . ."

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

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You mention the word, good economy, and the opposition goes wild. Last Friday's employment figures show a huge increase in seven straight months of record levels over the previous year. Just about every economic indicator in this province is up: manufacturing, natural gas, urban housing, international exports. And our success, Mr. Speaker, is due to the hard work and ingenuity of the people of Saskatchewan.

It's also due to focus and deliberate action by this government. We've reformed personal taxes, restructured resource royalties, reformed business tax. We've cut the PST [provincial sales tax] and — foreign to them — a notion of balancing the books. More is coming, Mr. Speaker.

Transportation is the primary enabler of economic development in this province. Exports account for about 70 per cent of everything that we do. Our key industries are dependent on efficient access to global markets to survive.

[14:30]

In recognition of the key role transportation plays, this government will be bringing forward a bold and visionary new strategy before the end of this session. There will be challenges in implementing this strategy. For the last few years inflation, shortage of key inputs like oil, asphalt, concrete have been major challenges for all transportation agencies. On some of the major contract items, triple digit inflation rates have not been uncommon. Obviously this affects the amount of work the department can deliver in a given year. Another challenge is capacity of the road building and the heavy construction industry.

We have been investing heavily in transportation. We've invested \$1 billion over the last 10 years. This year's original transportation budget of 345 million was the highest in the province's history, and we added 25 million to that this spring.

But we're not alone in investing in infrastructure. Municipal governments, federal, and other provinces and industries are all competing for industry capacity.

Mr. Speaker, the sheer scope of the strategy we will be bringing forward will put more pressure on industry capacity. We intend to deal with this challenge to give Saskatchewan the kind of transportation system it deserves. We've been working very closely with the Road Builders and Heavy Construction Association of Saskatchewan. And we've been looking for ways to help the industry ramp up its capacity, helping us deal with inflationary challenges at the same time.

Our partners have told us that one thing the government can do is put as much work on the market early as possible. This does two things. It helps to secure industry capacity in advance of peak demand. And it helps the department secure more competitive bid prices. The department's been working on the practice of publishing a winter tender schedule for many years, and it's allowed the department's contractors to mobilize early in the spring.

Today I'm announcing a significant shift in business practices for the department. While details of our new transportation strategy will be released before the end of this session, we're taking steps to ensure its goals will be met. We're committing to the people of Saskatchewan and our partners in the road building industry that we will be more aggressive in terms of putting work on the market as early as possible. This will of course be subject to the resources appropriated to the department by the legislature. But the policy direction is already paying results.

On November 1 a major resurfacing contract, Highway 1 East, closed. Today and tomorrow the remaining surface contracts on Highway 16 close. And with the final tenders for twinning the Yellowhead between Battleford, Lloydminster, and the Trans-Canada Highway, this whole Trans-Canada system from border to border will have been let. And it's only the first full week in November.

To further advance this policy direction, I'm pleased to announce this government is providing the department with an additional \$8 million for winter crushing contracts — this in addition to the planned winter tender schedule. This ensures the department can deliver its 2007-08 preservation program. It reduces the amount required for crushing in '07-08, effectively putting 8 million into next year's fiscal plan, and it brings the amount that this government has invested in highways and transportation this year to nearly \$380 million.

We know what transportation means to this province. We've seen two investments in canola crushing plants in Yorkton worth \$200 million and a \$30 million ethanol plant for Melville announced recently, all because of access to highways and rail infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan needs a state-of-the-art transportation system to continue to grow. This government is committed to delivering that system.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to reply to the minister's announcement or his ministerial statement. It seems that he just likes to hear himself talk because this is an announcement about an announcement that's coming towards the end of session. And it just makes me wonder, Mr. Speaker, that this is just another announcement before the NDP convention, coming up just to save the political hide and just put something out there to say that they're doing something.

Well we know, Mr. Speaker, particularly this minister and this government makes a lot of announcements, especially before elections. Then after the election they don't follow through on these announcements. So once again we see this minister, who unfortunately has no credibility in this province whatsoever because of having to apologize to the people of Saskatchewan for misleading the legislature on the SPUDCO affair, now is making announcements about an announcement coming up so it's timed around the NDP convention to make them look good for their base back home.

Well, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, if this government had made these announcements five years ago, we'd already have the results of those announcements in place today. We wouldn't be talking about announcements about to do future work. We'd have the work done.

And you only have to look, Mr. Speaker, at places like St. Brieux, which my colleague from Batoche talked about becoming a town. Bourgault Industries there would not today have to move their finished product to export to the United States by driving north and then finding a half-decent highway to take it south. If this plan was in place now, they'd be exporting their product by driving south to the United States border, Mr. Speaker.

And once again we see this government and this minister stealing Sask Party ideas, and we're happy to give them some ideas because they obviously don't have any of their own.

We have talked about dedicating all of the fuel gas tax to road construction. Well, Mr. Speaker, we hear that they're going to do something on that. That's good if they do it, Mr. Speaker.

We talked about having a four-year rolling plan so industry and the public and citizens of Saskatchewan know what's going to be happening in their area in the future. And these are the type of things that has to be done. And unfortunately, or again, we're just hearing about announcements of maybe doing some of these projects in the future, Mr. Speaker.

We talk about having early closing dates for tenders. This is something, Mr. Speaker, that the industry has been calling on for more than a decade. And now they're saying they're going to do that. Well let's hope that they do, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we in the Saskatchewan Party, we'll be watching this government. We'll see if they come through with the announcements and adequate transportation strategy by the end of session. We hope that they do, Mr. Speaker, not for any political benefit for any political party but for the good of this

province, Mr. Speaker.

Imagine if this government had a plan five years ago and built highways and constructed highways and maintained highways to an adequate rate in this province. We would know that economic development in this province would have taken off many years ago because businesses and people in Saskatchewan would have already known where their highways were going to be. And they'd be able to work and build their facilities, like ethanol facilities and value-added facilities, like packing plants, in an area where they knew there was proper infrastructure.

So at this time, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank you. And we will certainly be watching the government to see if they follow through on their announcement of an announcement.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 24 — The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2006/Loi de 2006 modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la réglementation des boissons alcoolisées et des jeux de hasard

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member responsible for Liquor and Gaming . . .

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 24, The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2006 be now introduced and read for the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister Responsible for Liquor and Gaming that Bill No. 24, The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2006 be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a second time? The Chair recognizes the minister.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Next sitting of the House.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 25 — The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, 2006/Loi de 2006 sur l'Assemblée législative et le Conseil exécutif

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 25, The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, 2006 be now introduced and read for the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Government House

Leader that Bill No. 25, The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, 2006 be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall this Bill be read a second time? The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

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

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 26 — The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Consequential Amendments Act, 2006

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 26, The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Consequential Amendments Act, 2006 be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Government House Leader that Bill No. 26, The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Consequential Amendments Act, 2006 be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall this Bill be read a second time? The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

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

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Government Whip.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government I wish to table responses to written questions no. 13 to 22 inclusive.

The Speaker: — Responses to questions 13 to 22 inclusive have been submitted.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 1 — The Labour Standards Amendment Act, 2006

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

Hon. Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of The Labour Standards Amendment Act, 2006. I will move formally second reading of the legislation at the end of my remarks.

This legislation introduces Saskatchewan's 10th public holiday, Family Day, to be observed annually on the third Monday in February. It gives me great pleasure to submit Saskatchewan's newest statutory holiday, a privilege not had by anyone in this legislature for more than 30 years.

Family Day is one more way to ensure our families feel real benefits from Saskatchewan's strong and prosperous economy. Mr. Speaker, as we all enjoy the benefits of that success, we cannot forget the Saskatchewan people who help make it a reality, nor ways to sustain that growth and productivity. We recognize both with the addition of Family Day, a reward for Saskatchewan people and a move towards work and family balance. Let us not forget that balance is essential for the productivity of this province. Creating a healthy work-family balance facilitates easier staff recruitment, higher retention rates, lower absenteeism, and a stronger commitment to employer organizations.

Statistics Canada estimates that stress-related disorders due to overwork alone cost Canadian businesses \$12 billion a year. Recent studies have shown that employees today have more home life demands placed on them than ever before. Working parents may be caregivers to both young children and elderly parents. Another public holiday reduces employee stress by helping them to balance those obligations to work and family.

Saskatchewan people need that help now. A survey taken eight years ago by a specialist from Carleton University business school revealed that in a sample group of 5,400 of our province's employees, almost all of them full-time workers, 57 per cent reported elder care responsibilities. That data also showed that over one-fifth of employees spend half a day a week providing that care. Mr. Speaker, as the baby boomers retire, the importance of maintaining that work-family equilibrium will only continue to grow.

Now, Mr. Speaker, many European countries have recognized the benefits in offering a greater number of holidays. French and German workers enjoy 13 public holidays, Portugal has 15, and Sweden observes fifteen and one-half public holidays each year. Now we too are in a position to offer Saskatchewan people this wonderful reward in recognition of their hard work throughout the year.

Mr. Speaker, our economy is thriving. In fact a September 7, 2006 story in the *Leader Post* reported, and I quote, "... productivity (as measured by GDP per employed person) has increased 23 per cent in Saskatchewan from 2000 to 2005, compared with ... 16 per cent nationally during the same period."

This economic progress must bring with it social progress in order for our families and our youth to realize its benefits in a real and meaningful way.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people deserve it. We deserve it. And years from now the generations that come after us will benefit from this legacy — one that recognizes, values, and rewards a commitment to family, however individuals choose to define it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I invite all hon. members to support Family Day by passing this legislation. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to move second reading of Bill No. 1, The Labour Standards Amendment Act, 2006. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:45]

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Labour that Bill No. 1, The Labour Standards Amendment Act, 2006 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? The Chair recognizes the minister for Lloydminster.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure and a privilege to be able to respond to this particular Bill that the hon. minister has just made motion. This is probably a very welcome addition to what's going on in particularly my area of the world. As you know, Alberta has a Family Day and they've had that Family Day for some time. In a community like Lloydminster, it's very awkward to know exactly which time frame people are working on and so that the job allocation becomes very difficult. And that will clear up much of the confusion in my particular community.

There's benefits to this, but there's also some problems that maybe has not been fully addressed. Maybe the consultation process might not have been in place for any length of time on this, other than it may be announced in the Throne Speech is probably a pretty good idea.

There's lots of activity that's going on in our country, Mr. Speaker, a lot of economic activity. And in my area again — I'll refer to that — there's a considerable amount of wealth being generated because of the oil industry particularly. The oil industry doesn't work just on workdays and stop during the weekends. It doesn't stop during statutory holidays. People are going to continue to keep working no matter if there's a statutory holiday or not. All it does is create scheduling problems. It creates problems for future budgeting planning.

And so that there's lots of people working in this economy that in fact can't take a particular statutory holiday other than maybe the employees that are working for, say, governments, teachers, and so on.

But in the health field, health providers continue to work whether it's considered a statutory holiday or not. The scheduling becomes critical, and in fact the budgeting, as I mentioned, becomes problematic because now you have people that are going to work that are in fact going to be considered being paid on overtime. And if they're working on a statutory holiday, that's exactly what they deserve.

But there's lots of wealth being generated in this province, and it's being generated on a day-to-day basis and not just on days that are considered non-statutory. So statutory holidays I think have a real advantage. I don't argue with that, but there's lots of considerations.

And I noticed in the Act that there's reference to other Acts that this statutory holiday legislation affects. And it's very interesting to note that for instance in the legislation that pertains and regulations that pertain to health boards . . . to education boards, there is a certain number of days that have to be . . . that students are in fact in school. With another statutory holiday, how does that work into the planning for the school boards and the attendance days?

Maybe if it's a family holiday, maybe it's better to have the extra day in that case, if we're talking about families, maybe the extra day is better during the spring or the summertime so that families can in fact enjoy the beautiful outdoor weather here that we have in Saskatchewan.

Interesting to note, Mr. Speaker, that one of the other Acts that is affected is The Correctional Services Act. And it says here, and I quote that the “. . . Family Day must be included to allow offenders . . . [to be] scheduled for release on that day to be released on the preceding day.” Well in that particular case, here we have an offender that not only gets his sentence reduced by one day, but he gets a holiday right afterwards. It's one of those anomalies that seem to be quite odd in applying it to all the different Acts that have to be considered.

All in all, Mr. Speaker, the Family Day has a lot of values. This Family Day of course has to be considered in terms of the costs to the economy and to make sure that the economy doesn't suffer extensively because of maybe the non-planning or the non-consultation. It's a situation where I think people will recognize that another statutory holiday does have value. But most people continue to be working, and that has to be calculated into whether it actually costs more or not. I know there's going to be revenue generated for the government because working on those days results in overtime or extra wages and therefore higher tax return to the government.

So these are all considerations that I think we have to consider, and other people are going to wish to be able to address this particular issue. And I adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Lloydminster that debate on second reading of Bill No. 1 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Bill No. 2 — The Provincial Sales Tax Amendment Act, 2006

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

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased today to rise to move

second reading of Bill No. 2, The Provincial Sales Tax Amendment Act, 2006.

In the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, you heard our commitment to making life better for Saskatchewan families. A key part of that plan is ensuring that Saskatchewan families today can enjoy the benefit of our strong and prosperous economy that has resulted because of the changes that this administration has made.

As I announced late last month, we believe that one of the best ways that we could do this immediately was to have a significant reduction in the PST, from 7 per cent to 5 per cent. That two-point sales tax reduction, Mr. Speaker, will put \$325 million back in the hands of Saskatchewan families and businesses on an annual basis. These benefits are far-reaching of this tax cut. A lower PST means lower costs for consumers, lower costs for families, lower costs for municipalities, lower costs for public institutions. It means more business for retailers.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to say that despite the cut that we made to the PST, we have maintained the tax credit at its previous levels. This tax credit provides lower-income families with a sales tax rebate of up to \$364 a year for families that earn less than \$37,579 — less than \$38,000 a year.

Mr. Speaker, our 5 per cent PST rate is now the lowest of any province in this country outside of Alberta. And I would say this. That while Alberta has no sales tax, as we know, they have a health care premium of over \$1,000 on average families. Their health care premium accounts for more to an average family in costs than what our sales tax does here in Saskatchewan. And that's an important difference between our provinces.

Mr. Speaker, this tax reduction builds on the other initiatives of this administration. It builds on the decisions that we've made to help make Saskatchewan a more affordable place to live, to work, and raise a family. This includes the business tax reforms that I announced in April of this year that are eliminating the general corporate capital tax, that are reducing the corporate income tax rate, that are increasing the small-business income threshold from 300,000 to 500,000 to recognize that small businesses are growing in this province. And it deals also with . . . builds also on the strength of the changes we made for manufacturing and processing sector.

More recently in this Assembly, I've announced more changes to help this economy grow by cutting the small-business tax rate and by making changes to the dividend tax credit. This year alone, Mr. Speaker, with this Bill being passed, we will have cut taxes for businesses and families in this year by more than half a billion dollars. That is a significant cut. That is a significant benefit, and that is a real benefit because of a growing economy.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — When combined with the royalty restructuring that we undertook for potash, for uranium, for oil, for gas, when combined with the changes that were introduced to the personal income tax structure, when combined with our record of growing the provincial economy that has seen our

GDP [gross domestic product] boom forward, that has seen more jobs created, that sees more people working, we have a plan before this Assembly and before Saskatchewan people that speaks to the strength of Saskatchewan's economy, the strength of Saskatchewan's people and provides real benefits to them.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Our record of tax relief demonstrates that we are making life better for Saskatchewan's families and businesses today. And we are building a better future for our young people right here at home.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill introduces amendments that will implement a reduction of the sales tax from 7 per cent to 5 per cent. I look forward to answering questions and entering into the debate further as we deal with this in committee review. Mr. Speaker, with that I move second reading of The Provincial Sales Tax Amendment Act, 2006.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 2, The Provincial Sales Tax Amendment Act 2006 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? The Chair recognizes the member for Lloydminster.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and respond to this particular motion on the Act to amend the PST. Actually it's a very welcome Act. It's something that we have recommended to this government ever since I was first elected in 1999, and I'm glad that this government is finally listening to some sense about reducing the tax in this province and reducing the burden that is placed on the average person and the average business in this particular province.

I think that is admirable. I'm glad that you took the advice that we supplied to you and through to the Vicq commission that other taxes be reduced as well. I would hope that this government would continue to take that advice and look at something to do with the reduction of the burden on property tax. Because that is a burden in this province that the people are finding a real burden and it's becoming to be a real bind on the people that are forced to pay, particularly the education portion of that property tax.

The minister, Madam Deputy Speaker, talked about how this is going to affect the young people in this province and I would have to relay an experience that I had very recently, in fact just last weekend when I was travelling from a meeting in Vermilion. We stopped to have a coffee at a restaurant and in this restaurant there was a young lady that was serving us coffee. I asked her if she was a resident of Vermilion and trying to lead her into a conversation why she was enjoying the labours in Vermilion. She told me that she had just arrived in Vermilion from LeRoy as a matter of fact and this arrival was very recent and she began working in this restaurant, I think it was only about six or seven days ago.

And I asked her why she was moving through from LeRoy from Saskatchewan into Alberta. And she said there was several reasons. One of them was that there was an opportunity to

actually go to school in Alberta. She was looking for the reduced waiting time to get into the Alberta colleges as opposed to SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] here in Saskatchewan and so she was on her way through stopped. And I said is it because of opportunity, or why did you stop here in Vermilion? And her response was that she could make . . . She started at \$18 an hour and that is why she stopped in Vermilion. I said, would it be advisable to think about coming back to Saskatchewan? And her response was, only if there's opportunity. Only if there's opportunity.

[15:00]

Now do you think that the reduction in the PST will be a factor in people coming back to Saskatchewan? Maybe I'm not the one to comment on it because again, in my community, the PST for those people that live in the Saskatchewan side of Lloydminster, under The Lloydminster Charter, do not pay PST on those items that are exempted for their personal use. So the PST is not a particular item, but there is still considerable growth advantage on one side of the border as to the other. And I think that's an important concept. PST, I don't think, is a major factor.

But I'll tell you, one of the things that is a factor is people's memory about the implementation of PST. We've always had a PST in this province certainly as long as I can remember, but it's funny how that cycle goes with PST. It's always implemented, it seems like, after an election and reduced just before an election. Even though there is an election promise, as in 2003, there would be no tax increase — that was the words, no tax increase — the PST in fact was increased by 1 per cent.

Now let's just talk about this. The Minister of Finance talked about the nearly half-a-billion dollars that was going to be an advantage to the people of Saskatchewan. Now if you calculate this a little more in depth I believe that the 1 per cent PST was put on probably back in 2004, late 2003 — after the election — maybe the budget in 2004. It was in place for all of the rest of 2004, 2005, and up to this point in 2006 and by calculation that's just over about 30 months. When you calculate the months that the 1 per cent is in place at about \$160 million per year collectively, that's something over \$400 million.

That is about the same as the minister says now he's going to be giving an advantage to Saskatchewan. They've already collected that. They've been using it for the last 31 months, and now they're generously giving it back to us in a PST cut. And the PST cut is probably, by his calculation, about \$325 million. That is NDP economics. And returning the benefit back to the people, apparently that's one of the pillars that they were wanting to sell the Throne Speech on. Anyway on that particular pillar, how is that going for the people of Saskatchewan in particular?

The PST cut is in fact the right direction. We believe tax cuts do give an incentive for additional economic activity. There is a leap of faith involved. That is one of the recommendations that we offered to both the Vicq commission and to this government, and I am very pleased to see that they are now acting on it.

A little bit surprised, Madam Speaker, that the announcement

would be done with little fanfare with just a ministerial statement rather than some kind of a press release. And in fact that information didn't circulate very well.

I was at a meeting just at the end of last week with a realtor in my hometown and she asked me — she had heard that the PST was going to be dropped by 2 per cent — when was that going to take effect, she asked? I said in fact it has. It was taken effect at midnight the night of the announcement. And she said she's never heard of it. There's been no information sent to her, and she does sell a lot of real estate into the Saskatchewan province. No indication. And she now has to redo her books to find out just what is still owed based on lack of information that went to that business as an example.

It is a good idea. I am glad they took our advice and I would adjourn debate.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Lloydminster 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. 8 — The Paramedics Act

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I rise today to move second reading of The Paramedics Act. In developing this legislation the government has consulted closely with the Saskatchewan College of Paramedics, organizations that represent the firefighter sector members, and regional health authorities to develop an Act that will regulate approximately 1,800 emergency medical service personnel in our province.

Emergency medical responders, emergency medical technicians, advanced EMTs, and paramedics work throughout the province offering rapid and reliable emergency services to the citizens in our cities and rural and northern communities.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan people depend on the quality services provided by these emergency professionals. I want to express the government's gratitude to the Saskatchewan College of Paramedics and its members for the contributions they make to health care every day.

Dale Backlin, chairman of the College of Paramedics, was with us today here, Madam Deputy Speaker, in the gallery for question period. Mr. Backlin deserves the thanks of the people of this province and this government and his colleagues for the hard work that he engaged in, in order to bring about the Act as it appears today. Our thanks to Mr. Backlin.

The vital role these individuals play in our health care system makes the passage of The Paramedics Act all the more

important. Self-regulation will give the Saskatchewan College of Paramedics the legal authority to register, license, and discipline emergency medical responders and all levels of emergency medical technicians. The registration of volunteer first responders will continue to be the responsibility of Saskatchewan Health.

For 20 years paramedics have been licensed by the department under The Ambulance Act. In this arrangement the department's emphasis has been solely on registration, focused on whether the practitioner has the necessary qualifications to be licensed to work in the profession.

The Paramedics Act contains all the newer features of professional legislation and is more responsive to our changing health care system.

Public accountability provisions have been incorporated into the new Act. For example, public representatives will now be included on the association's council and discipline committee. Discipline hearings will now be open to the public, and the college will file an annual report on its activities with the Minister of Health. As is the case with other health professions, bylaws that potentially affect the public will require the minister's approval.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the legislation reflects the government's broader goal to improve the quality of health services and access to care while ensuring that our health system is sustainable into the future. By working with health partners such as the Saskatchewan College of Paramedics we will continue to provide strong emergency services throughout our province, recognizing that these services will continue to evolve to reflect changing service needs.

As part of our government's commitment to quality, accessible health services, The Paramedics Act will serve the profession and the province well into the future. The Saskatchewan College of Paramedics fully supports the new statute and is willing to assume the responsibilities that it entails. With that, Madam Deputy Speaker, I move second reading of the Bill. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — Question? I recognize the member from Moosomin.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm pleased to be able to rise in the Assembly today and to address a few points regarding The Paramedics Act, Bill No. 8, that we have before us this afternoon.

As we look at health care across the province of Saskatchewan — and I'm sure many members in this Assembly are certainly aware of the work that paramedics, EMTs, emergency service workers across this province have done for years and the quality of that work — in many cases we have, Madam Deputy Speaker, we have community-based organizations, we have ambulances that run under these organizations. And over the years, certainly in the area I represent, our hats go off to the work and the tremendous care that has been provided by these caregivers.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when we talk about The Paramedics Act, and the minister talked about health care in the province of Saskatchewan and it . . . Certainly from what we heard even in question period today, it's paramount that we do have individuals across this province with training that will be available to the men and women across this province should they at any time find themselves with a medical need, and find that they happen to be living close to or in a community where they may have just found out just a few moments earlier that their hospital is not available to them as we heard this afternoon.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, that certainly is a concern to the people living in many rural communities. The fact that we have had over the past number of years or the past few years situations where individuals were informed about a day or two prior to, say, a long weekend that their hospital, the emergency services, were not available — that they would have to go to another community to receive those services. In some cases, Madam Deputy Speaker, it's not just easy for an individual, for a family member, or for a business person, should someone face an emergency, to transport or meet the emergency needs of that individual. And yet, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think that this is where paramedics certainly come in and provide an adequate — not just an adequate but an excellent service to their communities.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as we look at the Act as well — and I believe from what the minister had indicated it allows the College of Paramedics to become the regulators and the register of paramedics, the licence and discipline — it gives the College of Paramedics and places responsibilities on their shoulders in regards to emergency services across the province of Saskatchewan to individuals that are involved.

One thing we have in the past and will continue to do into the future and certainly in regards to this piece of legislation as well is to talk to interested parties that may be affected by the legislation. And we certainly . . . My colleagues and I would certainly be willing as well to talk to the College of Paramedics in regards to this piece of legislation and the impact it will have on each and every one of us across the province — not just the individuals providing the services to the communities and to the province.

Madam Deputy Speaker, one of the things I've seen over the years in regards to emergency services we have — whether we've got community-based organizations and we've got privately run services — we've seen at times where there have been some conflict in regards to some of the community-based organizations or some of the privately funded organizations as to who should get the call if an emergency arrives.

And I know a number of years ago, in a community not that far from my hometown, that there was certainly indeed some very important issues that were, that were faced by the community as an issue arose about . . . Actually it was a traffic accident on No. 8 Highway north of Rocanville. And the Rocanville community has a very good volunteer EMT organization that takes pride in the work and the time and effort they put into ensuring that they've got the training, and adequate training. And of course they were the closest service and they were automatically called out.

Unfortunately the private provider, who happened to be another 15 minutes away, felt that that was an area that they were responsible for. And I'm pleased to say that after a fair period of discussion, the two . . . the ability of both organizations was recognized and that there was a working agreement put in place so that there weren't the animosities that had been created at the time. They were overcome. And they learned how to work together and provide the services to meet the emergency needs of people in the area.

And of course, Madam Deputy Speaker, that many of my colleagues represent areas where we have major industry moving forward such as potash mines or such as mining organizations, Madam Deputy Speaker. Or even as I mentioned yesterday, we've got manufacturing taking place in rural communities. And many of these manufacturing plants as they look at a place to establish look at what emergency services are available should they ever need to call on them.

And Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to . . . I'm proud to say that we have, in the area I represent and certainly across this province, many individuals who have dedicated themselves to train and train themselves to provide the emergency services that are so desperately needed. And we want to say thank you to each and every one of them for the work they've done.

[15:15]

As in regards to this piece of legislation, we would want to ensure that this legislation will recognize the ability of all emergency service workers to provide the excellent care and to be available to provide that training.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, in view of the fact that we believe it's important that we ensure that everyone has had a voice or has been able to explain to us whether they have concerns, what those concerns are, and make sure that we've addressed them appropriately, I move to adjourn debate.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Moosomin 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. 4 — The Education Amendment Act, 2006
(No. 2)/Loi de 2006 modifiant la Loi de 1995
sur l'éducation (n° 2)**

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Learning.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 4, The Education Amendment Act, 2006 (No. 2). And I'm pleased to outline today for all members the background and substance of the series of amendments to The Education Act, 1995 that are included in this amending Bill.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I'd like to speak briefly about the two primary changes to the Act. First, there are a series of amendments to enhance the process for the formation of

minority faith school divisions. Secondly, there are a small number of changes related to implementing school community councils.

Members will appreciate that in view of the broad range of matters covered by the Act, and as part of the ongoing renewal of our education system, there is a constant need to update its provisions to reflect changes in the system, to remove outdated provisions, and to address issues of law, policy, and administration as those issues arise.

In a moment I will outline each of the specific amendments involved. First, however, I want to emphasize that these amendments have been prepared in consultation with the Saskatchewan School Boards Association and are fully supported by the association, including the Catholic section and the public boards caucus, both of which are key components of the association.

The first series of amendments are proposed in the spirit of strengthening the process for the formation of minority faith school divisions. Madam Deputy Speaker, these amendments will provide enhanced support for minority faith communities in establishing a separate school division. Informed minority faith community discussion and input is an important part of the process. In the interest of students, the proposed amendments will provide an enhanced process of notice and consultation.

They will allow minority faith electors and the minister more time to consider a proposal to establish a separate school division and to obtain the necessary information to make an informed choice. And they are consistent with other provisions in the Act.

The changes include: increasing the number of electors required to petition the minister from three to six to ensure increased participation; requiring petitions be submitted to the minister by November 1 for the school year prior to that in which the separate school division is to be established, and this will ensure enough time for the establishment process to occur and for both the existing public board of education and the new separate board of education to plan and budget for the upcoming year; and increasing the public notice period from 8 to 30 days prior to submission of a petition to the minister to allow additional time for public notification.

Amendments to clarify and strengthen the democratic process include further changes to the public notification and consultation process, specifically, requiring petitioners to notify the public 10 days prior to the public meeting, to publish and provide copies of the notification to electors upon request to ensure that electors have access to the complete petition in advance of the meeting.

Extending the period of time between the public meeting and the poll being taken of minority faith electors for or against the petition for at least 3 days to 21 days. And this provides electors with more time to consider the proposal and obtain additional information. And requiring that notification of the poll be published in at least one local newspaper and posted in at least six public places in the proposed separate school division at least 10 days before the day of the polls.

Mr. Speaker, the governance and operation of a school is a very serious responsibility. Before a school is established, it is important that communities understand the implications of what they are undertaking. And the proposed amendments will ultimately strengthen the process for the formation of minority faith school divisions by enhancing consultation and increasing participation of the electors in the community.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill also includes amendments that can be described as housekeeping amendments with regards to legislative changes passed in the spring 2006 for the establishment of school community councils. I would like to remind you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that school community councils are a new entity in our pre-K to 12 schools. The councils will ensure that parents and community members, in both urban and rural areas, will have access to the same opportunities for involvement in their children's learning and the same framework for local governance.

As such, Madam Deputy Speaker, it's important that our intent in the legislation of school community councils be as clear as possible to guarantee their successful implementation for the 2007-08 school year.

Very briefly, the changes are and the proposed amendments will outline the process to allow school community councils representing more than one school to separate into more than one council if it is in the interest of the community and outline the process by which to do so; clarify the membership of school community councils and their terms of appointment and remove reference to the board of trustees from the Act, as boards of trustees no longer exist due to the creation of the school community councils.

Madam Deputy Speaker, all of the amendments that I have outlined can contribute to ensuring that The Education Act, 1995 remains up to date and that it continues to serve the various needs and interests of all those involved in the delivery of pre-K to 12 education services to Saskatchewan students, families, and communities.

As I have previously indicated, the Bill has been prepared in consultation with our education partners, the Saskatchewan School Boards Association. And I am pleased to move therefore that Bill No. 4, The Education Amendment Act, 2006 now be read a second time.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Saskatoon Southeast.

Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's my privilege to rise in the House to make comments with regard to The Education Act and the amendments that are being proposed to this.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I've had the privilege of serving on the Saskatoon Public School Board for a period of time and was its Chair for a time as well. I'm watching this particular Bill with some considerable interest.

As you're likely aware, the Saskatoon Public School Board had

a companion separate school division, St. Paul's separate school division, and we enjoyed a good working relationship with that school division. And I think this type of legislation deals with the relationship of how a new separate school division will come into play and what the process should be to ensure that the reasons are valid and that they support a minority faith.

I think most citizens of the province are aware that the right to create a separate school board or school division goes back to when the province came into being in the Constitution Act which created the province, allowed for — and it becomes actually part of our constitution — allows for the establishment of a separate school division for the minority faith. It's interesting to note that it's not always a Catholic school division that becomes the minority faith. In some school divisions, it is a protestant faith that becomes the minority faith.

So we have some interesting balances that go back and forth. And there is . . . questions often arise as to whether the school divisions were established to promote and protect and preserve a minority faith or whether they're being used for another purpose.

And I think there is concern being raised now whether this is something that's being used to prevent the closure of schools. And we have to recognize, Madam Deputy Speaker, that this right exists as part of our constitution. And as legislators, if we are going to in any way limit or fetter that right, we want to do so with due cause and appropriate deliberation.

What this Bill does is outline timelines. It outlines procedure, how notice is to be given. So at first blush it appears to have had some considerable scrutiny given to it by the draftspeople of the legislation.

We will of course want to engage in some consultation with both separate and public school boards and with the School Boards Association. We've had some initial consultation and found support for the Bill, but we would not be doing our role as an opposition party if we did not proceed with some care and go through a more extensive consultation process over the next while. We'll want to be making sure that there is a comfort level and that people have appropriately and carefully looked at the ramifications that may flow from this.

Something else I would like to comment on is, you know, frequently the comment is made, the devil is in the details. So in this case because it does deal with timelines, with notifications, and the publicity of it, we are limiting what was until now an absolutely unfettered right in this province and we're now outlining a process for exercising that right. We want to make sure that we comply with principles of fairness, with principles of natural justice, and that we don't do anything that would in any way limit or abrogate the rights that are there. So this is something that we will want to deal with carefully.

We note that a lot of the issues that have arisen are because of the heavy-handed and ham-handed administration that the former Education minister, now the Finance minister, whom I can hear beeping from his seat for no good reason . . . Because of his ham-handedness in school board consolidation and school board amalgamation, this side of the House approaches this type of thing with some trepidation and some need for care

because we would not want to see that same individual be put in charge of this process. He created no end of animosity.

This is an individual that had approached school boards in the past when we had 120 school divisions in this province, told the school boards, we think you should amalgamate and limit your numbers. The school boards agreed and said how many do you think we need. And they amalgamated and voluntarily amalgamated, reduced their numbers to 90, which was the target that was set by that very minister, whom I can hear loudly agitating from his side of the House, Madam Deputy Speaker.

That minister had the commitment from the school boards that they would, through amendments to The Education Act, through consultation, voluntarily agree to that kind of consolidation. And after they had fulfilled their end of the bargain that man, who has the power to legislate and control them, decided not good enough and decided he was going to do something else.

I find it frightening that we have now put that very same individual in care of the province's finances. The Education Act is something, Madam Deputy Speaker, that's very important to all of us, as is the finances of this province. And to have that former Education minister now as the Finance minister is somewhat troubling and somewhat distressing, Madam Deputy Speaker.

This side of the House will, as it always does, handle these things with care, caution, and due respect for the ratepayers and the taxpayers of this province. We will ensure that there is adequate and appropriate consultation and that a good process is developed with the people that will have to live under and work under this Act.

I know that that minister is not capable of doing that. He's demonstrated in the past when he was the Education minister and it's certainly clear that that's . . . His attitude today in the House certainly indicates he has not learned anything from the difficulty he had when he was Education minister. I question the wisdom of the Premier from changing him from Education to Finance minister. The Education Act was something that was probably beyond his capability at that time. And to put him in charge of the treasury of the province is certainly somewhat, somewhat distressing at this point in time.

[15:30]

Madam Deputy Speaker, this particular Bill has got other aspects of it that require consultation and some care as well. It deals with school councils. And these are the groups that have not been recognized appropriately or adequately in legislation in the past, so it's referred to by the Learning minister as part of housekeeping amendments. To those people that work and those people that are parents, these things are . . . some that have some significance to them. And to many of the people, it's a lot of significance, and it's things that are very important because it's the care and upbringing of their children. It's how their children relate to the education system and how the parents and community members are treated by the boards of education, by the administration.

So the makeup of those groups to be brought into legislation is

probably a very appropriate thing. But we would want to ensure that there is once again consultation with boards of education, with parents' groups, with parents and individuals. Consultation is not, is not a bad thing.

And once again we will want to proceed very carefully and very appropriately to ensure that the timelines that are outlined in there are appropriate, that they're workable, that the other routine amendments are things that we can as an opposition party live with. And that as we go into the next election, we will want to be able to say either that we did or did not support this piece of legislation, and that we made that decision, whether we will support it or not, based on good, careful consultation and deliberation with the ratepayers and with the taxpayers of this province and, more importantly, with the parents and with the children that are going to be affected by this legislation.

We are dealing with a piece of legislation that has significant long-term ramifications, deals with a constitutional right. And it also deals with a fundamental religious right. One of the fundamentals of us, of our citizenship as Canadians is the right to religion and the right to select a religion, participate in a religion. This is one of the situations where our constitution and our laws allow that religious program to be woven and interwoven into a school program. It is a right of the minority faith in this province to have that right. And we want to ensure that that right is given appropriate and due credit in the legislation, and don't wish to abrogate that right unnecessarily, Madam Deputy Speaker.

We appreciate the input that we have received already. But given the pressure that the government opposite, members opposite of the NDP are putting on by closure of schools, this is something that's symptomatic of the pressure that an incompetent, tired, aged government may well have. And we as an opposition find it somewhat difficult with Bills like The Education Act. We're sort of effectively . . . and I use the analogy, it's like trying to drive the car from the back seat when you're not really having your hands on the steering wheel. We're doing it, and we're doing it fairly effectively because that government is not capable of doing it any more.

They've lost the ability to govern. They've lost the ability to relate to the citizens of this province. And albeit we're in opposition, we will continue to put forward ideas. We will let them steal those ideas and try and call them their own.

The people of the province know that those ideas came from the Saskatchewan Party, and they accept and respect that a lot of the ideas that are being put forward are really Saskatchewan Party ideas. And I think most of the people in the province look at the things like The Education Act, look at like things like the changes to the PST, look at many of the things that are coming forward, and they recognize that those ideas are actually Saskatchewan Party ideas.

And those people, Madam Deputy Speaker, are waiting, and waiting impatiently for the next election so that they can actually say, you guys don't have to go through the trouble of driving from the back seat. We're going to put you in the front seat where you belong, and we're not even going to let those people in the car next time. We're going to put them right outside completely. Madam Deputy Speaker, I would move

adjournment of debate.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

**Bill No. 15 — The Municipal Financing
Corporation Amendment Act, 2006**

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

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. After that incoherent baffle-gab from that incompetent Sask Party member opposite, I'm sure that all members here will appreciate the opportunity to discuss this very exciting municipal financing corporation Act amendment that I'm proposing.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — The Municipal Financing Corporation of Saskatchewan, believe it or not, was not invented by the Saskatchewan Party. It was not even, I think, ever referenced in any of their material. Nevertheless I'm sure in a few minutes they'll claim credit for all the work that's done.

The truth however, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that the Municipal Financing Corporation was established in 1969. Its mandate is to provide an attractive long-term financing alternative for municipalities, school divisions, and regional health authorities. Well I'm sure that members opposite will somehow claim that they created the school divisions and the health authorities and the municipalities. This Act however does provide useful tools for those members should they ever get their hands on the public treasury to be able to make sure that we still have a sound financial regime in this province.

Let me say this, Madam Deputy Speaker. Other provinces have similar organizations to this one in Saskatchewan. British Columbia, Alberta, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador all have similar arrangements.

The Municipal Financing Corporation has a Crown corporation governance structure; however its operations are administered by employees of the treasury and debt management division of the Department of Finance. As of December 31, 2005, the corporation had debenture investments of approximately 23.8 million, and these debentures had been purchased from some 49 different users.

The corporation is governed by this particular Act, The Municipal Financing Corporation Act. I should note that the Act has not actually been updated, except for some consequential amendments, since 1978. The Act currently states that the corporation can only lend money by purchasing debentures. This reflects conventional lending practices from the 1970s; however it is rarely used today. Debentures are

costly to print and administer, and financial institutions have difficulty processing them. As such they virtually disappeared from the banking system.

Other provinces with similar organizations do not issue debentures in the same manner as this corporation.

As such we are proposing to amend the legislation to create greater flexibility in the manner in which the corporation lends money. The relevant legislation — in this case the corporation's deals with their potential clients — are covered through The Cities Act, The Municipalities Act, The Education Act, The Regional Health Services Act. This however permits the corporation to allow them to borrow money in other ways. The proposed change to this legislation would mirror those other pieces of legislation and will enable the Municipal Financing Corporation to lend money in any form.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am indeed pleased to move second reading of The Municipal Financing Corporation Amendment Act, 2006.

The Deputy Speaker: — Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Saskatoon Southeast.

Mr. Morgan: — Madam Deputy Speaker, it's my privilege once again to rise, and I heard from the Finance minister saying that we were going to take credit for this. And actually, Madam Deputy Speaker, we're not.

This type of vehicle is part of the financial shell game that that government plays with the people's money in this province. And I'll tell you exactly how that shell game works. It's something like the same type of ruse that they play with the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. They create a separate Crown corporation, and they create that Crown corporation solely for the purpose of having money sitting in there so that they can lend it back to themselves and finance things over a period of time.

During my period of time at the school board, they created the Education Infrastructure Financing Corporation which sole purpose was so that the school boards could finance new schools. And the government's share, usually roughly 50 per cent, would be paid for by the school board borrowing money from the Education Infrastructure Financing Corporation and paying the province back after the province had decided whether they were apt to pay its proportionate share in each successive year that the commitment had been made.

Why they wouldn't have showed it on their books and why they wouldn't have said this is going to be a five-year commitment on our part to pay it out is (a) so that they didn't have to make a long-term commitment and (b) so that they didn't have to show the real liability. And the ones that showed the liability were these school divisions throughout the province, in some jurisdictions referred to as economic off-loading and downloading onto a lower level of government.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, they did away with the Education Infrastructure Financing Corporation because people in school divisions had staff and were reasonably sophisticated and looked at it and said this is nothing but a shell game. It's

not acceptable. It's the government playing games when it should be nothing more than a line on a financial report saying this is a five-year commitment or a three-year commitment or whatever it is. This is what the school board share is; this is what the government share. No, no. We'll create a separate corporation. We'll hide it. We'll get it off our books.

And frankly, at the time, there was a number of newspaper commentators referred to it as Enron type of accounting, where these off balance sheet entities were created. And that frankly, Madam Deputy Speaker, is what the Municipal Financing Corporation does. It moves things off of the balance sheet of the municipality or off of the school board, as this amendment that's in here is intended to deal with.

And for that government to stand there and sort of stand up and say oh what a wonderful idea we've had, it's nothing more than a matter of taking a line off a balance sheet and creating a Crown corporation for it. No wonder the people of this province have lost faith and lost confidence in that government when they're not sophisticated enough or capable of standing up and saying yes, we're financing this over a period of time. This is a road; this is a bridge; this is whatever it is. This is how we're going to structure that.

People in this province are used to financing their homes with a mortgage. Why we have to play this kind of game and rather just show it that we're borrowing over a period of time . . . There shouldn't be an issue in doing that. But obviously that Finance minister — whom I heard from at some length during the last presentation — clearly is doing the same thing here and is wanting to stand up and take credit as if this is some new idea. Well in 1969, he wasn't old enough to vote, and so it was an idea that it came about certainly before he was active in governance of any kind, and he's continued along with this kind of a game. And fair enough, that's the process that's there.

But for him to stand up today and stand up in this House and say this is something clever, that he should be given any kind of credit for, it's not appropriate. This is a minister, Madam Deputy Speaker, that's not capable of handling education issues.

He's certainly demonstrated that his role with the Department of Finance is his own personal ambitions to become the leader of the New Democratic Party or maybe as they now say, the Saskatchewan New Democratic Party or the New Democratic Party of Saskatchewan. And the Municipal Financing Corporation is just one more bridge that he sees to his leadership aspirations. And, well, I don't know what goes on in their caucus. In our caucus we don't have issues; we don't have people that have that kind of untrammelled ambition. We work as a team. We want to build this province, Madam Deputy Speaker. We believe in this province and we're willing to have our careers as being part of that.

And we certainly don't want to . . . I don't want to be campaigning for the Finance minister or campaigning against him. I leave him to raise his own money. I take some issue when that Finance minister put out a report last year that spent massive amounts of money, millions of dollars — hundreds of thousands at any event if not millions — circulating information as to how great it was, with his picture on it and advertising on

television which certainly looked like a leadership campaign to me, Madam Deputy Speaker.

We're here; we deal with the everyday things in government like the Municipal Financing Corporation. We're not off playing the kind of game that the Finance minister wants to play and frankly, Madam Deputy Speaker, I leave it to him to plan his political career. The citizens of this province I think have had enough of that Finance minister. They will focus on things like the day-to-day things that this government from this side of the House will look at, not like the NDP will look at.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it's my privilege to move adjournment of debate.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — The member for Saskatoon Southeast 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. 13 — The SaskEnergy Amendment Act, 2006

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

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. Let me begin by saying that if the members opposite think that the strength of The Municipal Financing Corporation Act is going to propel me to the premiership, I can assure you The SaskEnergy Amendment Act will put me right into 24 Sussex.

I am very pleased to rise today to move this important second reading Bill of The SaskEnergy Amendment Act, 2006. This Act is the governing legislation for SaskEnergy, Madam Deputy Speaker, and its subsidiaries. Madam Speaker, the proposed amendments are meant to improve the operations of SaskEnergy and in particular the proposed amendments include increasing the maximum number of board members. It will permit SaskEnergy to pursue the transportation of energy-related products other than natural gas, clarify the power SaskEnergy has in dealing with safety hazards proposed by encroachments over or near pipelines and related facilities, and it undertakes some housekeeping matters.

[15:45]

Madam Speaker, the amendment in this Bill increase the maximum number of board members that may be appointed from 10 to 12. SaskEnergy is seeking a greater number of board members to deal with some of the growing demands that are placed on the board in terms of corporate accountability — particularly those duties carried out by board committees like the audit committee. In addition to increasing the number of board members that can be appointed, we will make sure that this corporation, SaskEnergy, is in line with those being appointed to SaskPower and SaskTel in terms of number.

Madam Speaker, the amendments to expand section 15 of the

Act to permit SaskEnergy to transport energy-related products and by-products other than gas on a non-exclusive basis, I think, are positive ones. SaskEnergy wishes to have the ability to pursue opportunities to utilize its assets and expertise in new but related ventures. These opportunities might well include the transportation of such items as carbon dioxide, hydrogen, or ethanol. Currently the Act only contemplates the transportation of natural or manufactured gas.

Two other proposed amendments arise due to the anticipated ability to transport energy products other than gas. The section of the Act will be amended to allow for the leasing of equipment that's not used in relation to the distribution of gas. And similarly, an additional proposed amendment would make it an offence to interfere with the distribution or measurement of any substance other than gas by the corporation.

A further amendment modifies section 36 of the Act to give SaskEnergy and TransGas the ability to reroute a pipeline where there's an encroachment by a building or a structure. Currently the only specific authority in the Act rectify this safety hazard is for SaskEnergy or TransGas to remove that building or structure. Obviously it's preferable that SaskEnergy or TransGas could have the additional option of simply rerouting the pipeline and/or moving the related facility.

Madam Speaker, Deputy Speaker, the proposed amendments delete certain subsections in the Act that are no longer applicable, which I trust will meet with the favour of the members opposite. With these changes, I am very pleased to move second reading of The SaskEnergy Amendment Act, 2006.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Moosomin.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's my pleasure to stand in the Assembly and to speak to Bill No. 13, The SaskEnergy Amendment Act.

Madam Deputy Speaker, over the past number of months we've seen that there have been some dramatic changes in the price of oil and natural gas across the province, certainly around the world. For a lot of Saskatchewan residents who rely on natural gas for their heating fuel, one of the positive sides in regards to the SaskEnergy was the fact that natural gas actually did decrease, and we have seen some minor increases in the past few months. And I'm certain for the members opposite and particularly the Minister of Finance, they wouldn't want to see a major hike in natural gas prices because I believe it was last spring they offered a support mechanism or a subsidy to people that were relying on natural gas for their services.

However I might add, Madam Deputy Speaker, that as I look at the legislation before us, the minister has indicated that this new legislation will allow for SaskEnergy to expand its business offerings, such as transportation of carbon dioxide, hydrogen, and ethanol.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, as I've indicated, as people have been faced with the crunch — the higher costs of heating oils

and the higher costs of gasoline — we have seen a major expansion and debate taking place into alternative fuel sources which I believe, Madam Deputy Speaker, will certainly not only be a benefit to consumers but will also be a benefit to producers in the province of Saskatchewan, whether it's individual companies that are doing research or exploration for natural gas or the agriculture community as we look at the expansion of the ethanol and the biodiesel industry in the province of Saskatchewan.

We've also seen expansion of carbon dioxide and its use in the recovery of heavy oil in the province of Saskatchewan.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this piece of legislation, while it allows for some changes to SaskEnergy, also raises some questions as to whether or not it will impact, say, some of the private development that we would like to see in the province of Saskatchewan.

The Government of Saskatchewan in the Throne Speech has talked about building a more progressive community, a community that is open to welcoming people back to the province of Saskatchewan, enhancing the ability of people, and making the province of Saskatchewan a better place to live. And certainly the legislation, I believe, is opening the door for SaskEnergy to possibly meet some of those needs.

But also we would certainly like to encourage the government to look at avenues whereby we can encourage the private sector and their involvement in the area of energy distribution in the province of Saskatchewan and in that way, Madam Deputy Speaker, encouraging economic activity and involvement in and around Saskatchewan by suppliers outside of SaskEnergy.

It's certainly, I believe, important, Madam Deputy Speaker, as we look at building the province of Saskatchewan, as we look at expanding the opportunities in Saskatchewan as a place where people can come and not only live and grow but to invest in, we need to ensure that as we change legislation, as we expand legislation, or as we bring legislation more up to date in regards to the needs of Saskatchewan people and companies like SaskEnergy that we are not only — in meeting the needs of one company — that we are not limiting the ability of other companies and specifically private companies to meet the needs of Saskatchewan people.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as I look at energy needs across the province, as we look at the needs of men and women and individuals when it comes to heating their homes across this province, or whether it is fuel needs in regards to transportation, Madam Deputy Speaker, we have seen a greater enhancement over the past number of years. We have seen the use of natural gas and hydrogen fuels as well in public vehicles. And certainly I think the city of Regina in a number of their buses is now using natural gas.

So what we have seen in the past number of years, we have witnessed the move from just relying on one fuel source to the other many fuel sources that we have available to us in the province of Saskatchewan, and new sources of fuel that certainly will be available in the future as we move forward and as we look at alternative sources of fuel as well.

So the piece of legislation before us, while we look at the expanding role of Crown corporations we would also want to ensure that this role does not infringe on the ability of allowing other companies of coming in and providing a service to the people of Saskatchewan.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when I talk about expanded roles of moving gas and we talk about hydrogen and ethanol, we are quite well aware of the debate that is taking place across this province in regards to ethanol production. And as an agriculture producer, and I know producers across this province, while we have seen some positive upward movements when it comes to our commodities in the past number of months, Madam Deputy Speaker, that doesn't necessarily mean we will continue to see those price increases. Because of the fact the price increases have come as a result of other areas of the world and namely, Australia, where they had environmental conditions that have impacted their crop production. And as a result of the shortages and the shorter crop that they're seeing and the demand that around the world for these commodities, the Canadian farmers are able to benefit from these commodities.

And so at this time what we certainly are seeing some positive movement in regards to the prices for our grains, we also note that in general over the long term we're going to have to look at alternative sources of energy, and ethanol is one of those commodities. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, pipelining may be the way as well to move some of these commodities into the marketplace, move them to the consumer rather than . . . through a pipeline rather than always by truck transportation.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Bill before us certainly, as the minister's indicated, is creating new and different ways and ensuring that as we expand the pipeline system or the distribution, that we are also not impacting other avenues of pipeline movement of natural products to the source.

And so it's imperative that we have indeed regulations and guidelines in place to ensure that we are indeed meeting, not only meeting the needs of consumers but meeting the needs of corporations and of companies like SaskEnergy. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, my colleagues and I will be looking very closely at this piece of legislation to ensure that while it is meeting the needs of one particular company, that it is also . . . the changes will not impact potential customers down the road and companies down the road who would like to do business in the province of Saskatchewan.

Therefore at this time I would move to adjourn debate.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Moosomin 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. 12 — The Planning and Development Act, 2006

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

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Madam Deputy Speaker, at the conclusion of my remarks I will be moving second reading of Bill No. 12, The Planning and Development Act, 2006.

This Act, The Planning and Development Act, 2006, replaces The Planning and Development Act, 1983, continuing a long tradition of planning in this province. This Act builds upon the principles and concepts of the existing legislation and provides municipalities with the authority and flexibility to effectively manage land use and promote community development.

Today is officially Community Planning Day in Saskatchewan, which coincides with World Town Planning Day. Community planning is about building communities that make Saskatchewan the best place for young people to live, work, and build strong futures; building communities that provide strong services, attractive and safe environments, and livable neighbourhoods — communities with quality and adequate health care and human services, diverse arts and culture, adequate and affordable housing, and efficient transportation. Planning is an essential cornerstone of good governance. Community planning is a prerequisite to making Saskatchewan, again, the best place for people to raise families, work, and build strong futures.

Mr. Speaker, in the fall of 2005, Government Relations initiated extensive stakeholder and public consultations in response to requests from municipal, business, and community stakeholders for legislation that was responsive to local and emerging land use planning needs. These consultations were undertaken with municipal governments, associations, industry sector groups, academic institutions, environmental agencies, the heritage sector, planning districts, the transportation sector, professional associations, First Nations and Métis communities, and provincial departments.

Subsequent to the consultation, a review committee representing over 50 stakeholder organizations was established. This committee made an invaluable contribution to the development of this new legislation. Madam Speaker, stakeholders brought forward a wide range of planning issues including matters of municipal planning capacity and authority, provincial planning policy, clarity and consistency in municipal planning documents, timeliness and predictability of local development decisions, regional planning inclusive of First Nations participation, planning needs in the North, and support for economic development that recognizes and maintains environmental integrity.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to report that, in addition to collaborating with stakeholders, public consultations were undertaken in developing this Act. In May and June, 16 public open house meetings were held throughout the province including four northern meetings. The input from these consultations has been instrumental in developing this new Act and will make a substantial contribution to building a sustainable future for Saskatchewan communities.

The information gathered is detailed within a report called *Building a Sustainable Future, The Planning And Development Act Review: A Summary Of Stakeholder Discussions*.

[16:00]

Madam Speaker, this new legislation addresses stakeholders' requests for more local autonomy, more flexibility, additional planning tools, greater clarity and streamlining of community planning processes, and enhanced interjurisdictional opportunities for communities to plan. I will take just a few minutes to elaborate on the key provisions of the Act.

Broadly stated, the purpose of the Act strongly supports the vision established for this province as one of the have provinces, a place with strong communities, 21st-century infrastructure, creative economies, reflective of provincial priorities yet respectful of their environment.

The new Act maintains a voluntary community planning system that encourages municipalities to undertake planning to meet the economic, social, environmental, and cultural goals of their communities. This legislation continues to support municipal land-use authority to further the development of sustainable communities. This Act provides subdivision-approving authorities with greater autonomy, planning tools, and flexibility consistent with their capacity to be responsible for local planning decisions independent of the province.

Madam Speaker, the legislative provisions provide additional flexibility for approving authorities in several ways. For example, approving authorities can set their own public notice requirements and delegate development decision for site plan control, discretionary uses, and direct control districts to the development officer. These mechanisms streamline the review time for development and as such will be advantageous to both industry and the municipality.

This new Act also responds to stakeholders' requests for one type of statutory policy plan for managing community development by replacing the development plan and the basic planning statement with an official community plan. This plan provides policy direction for orderly growth and development consistent with municipal and provincial interests. In order to achieve planning documents consistent with the purposes of the Act, Madam Speaker, stakeholders identified the importance for the official community plan to be prepared under the direction of a professional community planner.

Madam Speaker, this Act contains a number of provisions applicable to all municipalities that streamline and expedite review processes. This is important for sharpening the province's competitive edge for economic development. The new Act contributes to an environment that allows for more flexibility and predictability with respect to subdivision, development appeals, decision making, and site planning. In addition subdivision provisions have been updated and clarified for consistency with Information Services Corporation, land titles, and planned registration processes.

Madam Speaker, the existing planning district framework is being enhanced by creating more interjurisdictional or regional opportunities for municipalities to plan together. Provisions encourage the participation of First Nations and other organizations such as regional economic development authorities in district planning commissions. Our history of co-operation in this province bodes well for joint planning ventures where communities can address both opportunities and challenges.

District planning is an important mechanism for intermunicipal planning, coordination of planning bylaws between jurisdictions, sharing of resources, and improving municipal planning capacity. District planning processes support the municipal associations, clearing a path initiative for sector specific planning.

Provisions in the Act also provide municipalities with the option to establish a corporate district planning authority. This provides an opportunity for municipal councils to delegate planning responsibilities to the authority in order to collaborate on the delivery of planning services and other appropriate services determined by the municipalities.

Madam Speaker, this Act enhances northern planning opportunities by providing authority comparable to southern planning districts to include participation by other government agencies, First Nations, and northern communities. The North is positioned for substantial economic growth, and it is essential that tools are provided for the coordination of municipal planning and zoning. The participation of Aboriginal peoples and communities are integral to this process.

Madam Speaker, transparency and public participation and community planning processes continues to be viewed as essential to good planning and as such has been maintained. The provisions for development appeals and subdivision appeals have been combined. More flexibility is provided in the organization and operation of development appeal boards, including the opportunity for municipalities to establish district development appeal boards. Also the requirements for determining appeals have been clarified and are now consistent for both the local development appeal board and the Saskatchewan Municipal Board.

Madam Speaker, this Act, in addition to expanded options for development appeals, provides for voluntary dispute resolution for planning or subdivision disputes which reduce the length and complexity of appeals.

In closing, this Act responds to requests from municipal, business, and community stakeholders for legislation that is responsive to both local and global challenges. This new Act underscores our confidence in the ability of local governments to use their authority to plan and facilitate development. Madam Speaker, this new legislation fosters co-operation and partnerships among municipalities, governments, Aboriginal people, and all citizens to engage in planning, investing, and building the future of our communities.

This new Act is a planning foundation for a strong, prosperous economy. I would urge each and every member of the House to review and to support this Bill. And therefore, Madam Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 12, The Planning and Development Act, 2006.

The Deputy Speaker: — Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Moosomin.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Speaker, it's certainly an honour to be able to stand and speak to Bill No. 12, The Planning and Development Act, 2006. Madam Deputy Speaker, as we look across the province of

Saskatchewan, we note there have been and will continue to be ongoing changes as we move into the next century and even just moving forward the next few number of years.

And we look at changes that have been taking place that certainly have been impacting rural governments, municipal governments, and both rural and urban. When it comes to the changes that we see, whether it's with the infrastructure in the province of Saskatchewan, whether it's with infrastructure within communities and rural municipalities, Madam Deputy Speaker, we certainly note that there have been some radical changes.

We note over the past number of years when it comes to agriculture in the province of Saskatchewan, we have moved quite dramatically from the smaller family farm units to the larger, if you will, corporate or larger farm units where parents working together with sons and son-in-laws, or brothers working together are now actually working around farm units where they used to be about 1,000 acres per family unit, now in the 5 to 10,000 acres, and in some cases farm sizes that are in the 15 to 25,000 acres, Madam Deputy Speaker. And with that comes some challenges. And we've seen that when it comes to changes as we've moved from total grain involvement to larger livestock operations.

And I note specifically the intensive livestock operations. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, what we have seen, the intensive livestock operations have really created some significant debate in rural Saskatchewan as communities determine, and people even, local farm families may say, no I don't want an intensive livestock operation in my area. And so then they go to their local RMs [rural municipality] or local towns and are asking, asking their administrators and asking their councils, what can we do as individuals make plans and submissions to the province in regards to these intensive livestock operations.

Now whether this piece of legislation is going to impact those ILOs [intensive livestock operations] significantly, whether there's going to be demands that are going to be made available to people in regards to how they approach council as to a proposal to move forward with an intensive livestock operation . . . and then subsequently the availability of people who may be somewhat opposed or have some questions . . . to ensure that at the end of the day, when municipal governments are planning for their development of land and projects in their area, Madam Deputy Speaker, I believe the long-term goal is to ensure that individuals not only have the ability to move forward with the economic plans that would enhance their ability to survive on the family farm, but as well to recognize the fact that people who may not have the same views when it comes to, say, intensive livestock operations or feedlot operations or — as we see in my area of the world — the Natural Valley Farms and packing plant they've put in place in their slaughter facilities.

Challenges have now come to the forefront that haven't been there before. And as the minister's indicated, what I have noted it's certainly imperative that we bring all of the stakeholders together, that we give them the tools as they look to plan their communities, to plan when it comes to land use in creating — certainly what the minister's indicated — that Saskatchewan's a place for young people to live, work, and build strong futures. And I couldn't agree more with the minister in that regard.

I believe that we all want to see this province to move forward. We all want to see economic development. But we want to see development done in a way that doesn't, doesn't infringe on the rights of individuals to live a life of quality and without interference from the effects of services that may be provided by other individuals in the communities.

The minister talked about building communities with quality and adequate health care and human services, diverse in the arts and culture. And while not all small communities may be able to provide those services, I do know, Madam Deputy Speaker, that across this province we have communities that are very diverse in the culture, in the arts, and in thinking of affordable housing and also thinking of transportation.

And as I think of manufacturing plants such as Seed Hawk in the province in my area, Madam Deputy Speaker, some of the issues that manufacturers deal with when they start to expand their facilities and are looking for employees, they recognize that families that would like to come and work in these facilities are also looking for the ability to enjoy and have access to affordable housing. But they will only come to the community as well if they recognize that there is quality and adequate health care available in those communities.

So when it comes to community planning and development, there's a number of needs that need to be looked into. And we need to ensure that these needs not only are being met but we've got adequate regulations in place that allow communities and community planning committees to recognize what responsibilities they have so that they will not be held responsible or liable should they make a decision and somebody down the road — say 10 or 15 years — comes back and says, well we don't believe you made the right decision at that time.

And the legislation we have before us today, certainly there's a fair bit of information in this piece of legislation as it tries to address a number of the issues. And I'm sure that the 50 stakeholder organizations who were consulted with and came forward with ideas, no doubt, Madam Deputy Speaker, there were differences of opinion in the stakeholder group as they came forward with recommendations to government. And we certainly would be pleased to take the time to go over some of the recommendations to get a better handle and try to understand them.

And Lord knows, I don't understand everything that's in the legislation that we've just had brought before us. But the intent is to try to get a better understanding of what is in this legislation before we would move it forward into committee.

The minister talked about regional planning and one of the things that I believe, and I agree with the minister on, is the regional planning inclusive of First Nations participation. And we recognize in this province, we do have a fairly large First Nations population. We have a growing First Nations population. And I am pleased to say that, even in the constituency of Moosomin that I represent, there are a number of First Nations leaders that are moving forward with economic development, with plans, because they realize as well we need to include First Nations peoples. We need to include First Nations youth as we move forward to build the province of Saskatchewan. And I note from the minister's comments that

there was inclusion of First Nations peoples in the development of this plan and of this piece of legislation.

[16:15]

Madam Deputy Speaker, this certainly is a piece of legislation that I think needs to be looked at very carefully. We need to look at it very closely. We need to ensure that a number of the questions that have been raised in the past — that maybe they will be raised in the future — that there is adequate provisions in the legislation to ensure that everyone's voice has been heard. And that as communities move forward under this piece of legislation that they can feel comfortable that the decisions they make at the end of the day will be decisions that will be made, that they will make, that will enhance and build the province of Saskatchewan.

Now the minister made a comment about the Act supporting the vision established for the province as one of the have provinces. And over the past few years as a result of oil activity this province of Saskatchewan certainly finds itself in a positive financial position because of oil activity. And I believe, Madam Deputy Speaker, we will continue to see strong activity in the field of oil as the demand around the world for oil increases and as populations grow.

One of the problems we do have, while we are a province with a stronger economic performance because of the activities of the oil community, we continue to have a province that we have continued to see population loss in sound economic times. And I trust that with this piece of legislation, with some of the proposals that are coming forward, that we will indeed begin to see some population growth in the province of Saskatchewan as communities and municipalities begin to plan building for their futures — and with the anticipation that people will begin to look at moving back into the province of Saskatchewan because of the economic activity, because of the resource opportunities we have in the province of Saskatchewan.

The minister mentioned that the Act maintains a voluntary community planning system that will encourage municipalities to undertake planning to meet the economic, social, environmental, and cultural goals of their communities. And there again, Madam Speaker, I believe those are certainly issues that we need to continue to work with.

We need to recognize that municipalities have goals and aspirations as well as to how they are going to build their local government, build their community, work with communities. And when I say work with communities, one of the most recent elections, there was a situation where there were some differences of opinion with the local RM and the community in the election of a new reeve, that one of the comments I read in the paper was the reeve commenting on the fact that they want to build some of the relationships between their RM and the local community that may have been under stress for the past number of years.

And so, Madam Deputy Speaker, as we talk about planning and development in local governments across the province, whether they're municipal governments or whether they're First Nations governing authorities, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think it's imperative that we indeed offer them a piece of legislation that

will give them the ability to move forward and to ensure that there are guidelines and there are avenues that they can follow that they can work with to build their communities.

And so, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think as we look at the Act and the number of issues that are involved in this planning and development Act, 2006, I think it would be imperative that we adjourn debate and do further review before we move forward with this piece of legislation. So therefore I move to adjourn debate.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member for Moosomin 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. 6 — The Youth Drug Detoxification and Stabilization Amendment Act, 2006

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Healthy Living Services.

Hon. Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of The Youth Drug Detoxification and Stabilization Amendment Act.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there are some young people in our province who need our help. They are addicted to drugs or alcohol and are sometimes resistant to treatment. We must remember they could be our children or those of our relatives, our friends, or our neighbours. These children have an important place in the future of this province. We as a society have a responsibility to ensure that we have viable options to enable young people to get healthy and secure their futures.

The Youth Drug Detoxification and Stabilization Act supports a strategy to help these children. It serves as a last resort measure for parents, legal guardians, and judges, when a young person's substance use has damaged their decision-making ability to the point they present a risk of their own safety or to the safety of others.

Madam Deputy Speaker, The Youth Drug Detoxification and Stabilization Act allows for involuntary detoxification and stabilization of youth through an order by two physicians for a period of up to five days. There's also the possibility of an extension for a maximum of two additional five-day periods. As well the physicians may issue a community order for a young person to receive detoxification and stabilization services in his or her own home community for up to 30 days.

Since its proclamation in April of this year, more than 60 young people have received detoxification and stabilization at our interim secure care facility in Regina. They have also been connected to resources and supports in their home communities to assist them in remaining substance-free.

We recognize that involuntary care of any kind is a sensitive issue. We have therefore been monitoring the implementation of the Act and continue to consult with groups and individuals

such as the Children's Advocate, the Information and Privacy Commissioner, police, physicians, parents, and others to ensure the Act supports the needs of those who are most vulnerable in our society.

Through these consultations, Madam Deputy Speaker, we determined that three amendments could strengthen the legislation. We believe it's important to provide a care plan for youth upon their release from the secure care facility if possible. This will ensure youth admitted into the secure youth detox centre will be assigned a caseworker within his or her home community. It will also strengthen expectations that regional health authorities will prioritize and provide appropriate services to youth under this Act. This amendment will help young people to continue their journey of healing.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we also believe it is important to be clear about the roles and responsibilities of those who are involved with the care and transport of the youth. Amendments regarding police transportation will clarify that police have the authority to transport youth from the first physician assessment to the second physician assessment.

Finally, privacy and access to personal information are sensitive issues. We must strike a delicate balance between access for those who are providing care and ensuring the maximum privacy for young people and their families. Therefore we will clarify who can have access to a youth's personal health information file and will provide regulating power regarding the retention and destruction of personal health information files.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this Act is just one aspect of our government's plan to combat addictions. Project Hope is a three-year plan that is providing additional treatment spaces, more training for professionals, more education and prevention efforts, and a practical continuum of care for people with substance abuse issues.

This Act is the final piece in the care continuum. The end result, Madam Deputy Speaker, is a province in which every child has the best possible chance of growing up free from addiction. Our focus is on making life better for Saskatchewan children and families.

With that, Madam Deputy Speaker, I move second reading of this Bill.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — The minister has moved second reading. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Melfort.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise today and to speak on Bill No. 6, An Act to amend the Youth Drug Detoxification and Stabilization Act.

Madam Deputy Speaker, certainly this is an important topic for our Assembly to consider and to pay a great deal of attention to. When we speak about youth, we speak about our children. We speak about the children of this province, the children of families that are having difficulties dealing with drug abuse.

And they need every bit of help and support that this province and this Assembly can lend to these young people.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I certainly do not detect in this piece of legislation anything that is particularly offensive and troubling insofar as this legislation goes. It's pretty clear in my opinion that if there were some ambiguities about the original piece of legislation, that this amendment and the amendments in this Act will clarify in terms of who can access young people and who can potentially transport them from facility to facility or facility to physician, examination, or help. That is very valuable and useful insofar as it goes.

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think that I would be remiss if I didn't take one comment that the minister mentioned — and I wrote it down quickly, and I hope I'm quoting accurately — when he said that this piece of legislation is the final piece in the continual care continuum in regard to Project Hope, or something to that effect.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm disappointed that the government would admit that because I don't think that we're anywhere near finished in terms of the quest or the challenge that we have in order to meet the needs of young people. This government has not provided any support in a meaningful way to long-term detoxification. And certainly I'm no expert on this, but I am led to believe, and I understand that certain drug abuse problems are not solved in the short term. They need long-term care facilities to help these young people break the tremendous hold that these drugs have on these young people. I haven't heard the minister say that they're willing to support and help in a meaningful way the efforts of faith-based organizations in terms of providing of long-term care for the youth of our province.

I think that this government is barely scratching the surface in terms of what is needed to help young people put a new challenge to their lives and to get a hold of their lives and get a hold of the demons that they're facing in terms of drugs and find meaningful and long-term peace in their lives and value in their existence.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is indeed a useful piece of legislation insofar as it goes, but I think that it certainly is important that we understand and commit ourselves as a legislature to making sure that we're doing everything possible to help these young people.

We talk about the fact that we give lip service in some instances to the fact that the youth are the future of this province and of this country. I think that's true, and I don't think that we should be willing — because we haven't turned over every stone and explored every opportunity on how we can help those youths that need our special help and support — that we should rest easy and indicate that this is a final piece in the process.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I know that we're looking very much forward to talking to people who are attempting to work in this field and attempting to provide long-term treatment for youths with substance abuse and who are working in the field. And I know that they are going to want to comment on the pieces of this legislation — not only insofar as what's in this legislation; it's what more needs to be done in terms of

providing those long-term solutions that our youth in this province very much need. In order for that to happen and to be facilitated, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would move to adjourn debate.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Melfort 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. 7 — The Public Health Amendment Act, 2006

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is with pleasure that I rise today to move second reading of an amendment to The Public Health Act, 1994. Madam Deputy Speaker, this amendment is an important step to authorize the creation of regulations that will allow restaurant information to be released to the public. The amendment provides the authority to regional health authorities to make restaurant inspection information public and is the first step to changing the way this issue is handled within the province of Saskatchewan.

[16:30]

Saskatchewan Health, along with our health system partners, has been working to make the changes needed to ensure the public has access to this information. We know that food safety is an important health issue for Saskatchewan residents and we want to ensure that they have access to credible, reliable inspection information. Officials are already working on drafting new food safety regulations which will outline the details of the restaurant inspection information to be made public.

As soon as the amendment to The Public Health Act is passed by this legislature, we will circulate a draft of the proposed regulations to industry, regional health authorities, and other stakeholders for their review and comments. We have also consulted with representatives of the Consumers' Association of Canada and the Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association regarding the disclosure of restaurant inspection information.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan Health and public health officials from the health regions have already established a working group to develop a framework for disclosing this restaurant inspection information. Consultations with our health partners will determine the exact nature of the information to be made public and the most appropriate way to do that. They will look at the best method for getting this information into the hands of people who want it.

We know that the local and city health departments in other provinces that provide this type of information employ a variety of measures to share it with the public. We want to use the method that best suits our Saskatchewan residents. We know that there has been considerable public interest in making this

kind of information widely available, and we are proud to say that today we are laying the legislative groundwork to make that happen.

This legislative amendment now authorized work to go forward on the making of these regulations that will govern how the restaurant inspection information is disclosed. Once the safety regulations are passed, the amendment also grants regional health authorities the ability to disclose the information to the public.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, because of all the initial work that has been done by officials from Saskatchewan Health and the health regions, we are confident we can achieve our goal of having these food safety regulations in place by the end of March 2007. So with that, Madam Deputy Speaker, I move second reading of this Bill.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — The minister has moved second reading. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to . . . I recognize the member for Melfort.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak on Bill No. 7, An Act to amend The Public Health Act.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I have the pleasure to have been in the restaurant industry for 25 years and so I am very well familiar with the important work that the health inspection safety officers do in regard to making sure that the procedures and protocols that are established in restaurants are appropriate to protecting the health and the well-being of their clientele or the public at large.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I always felt and I know it's true in the case of the vast, vast majority of restaurant owners that they regard the public health inspectors as a great asset to make sure that the procedures that they have in place are appropriate to safeguard the safety of the products that they're serving to their clients because there is nothing that's worse for business than to have some sort of a problem occur in regard to the safe use of the food that they serve.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I think that it is important as well that the public has a right to know what the result of this inspection work and this consultation work that occurs between the public health inspectors and restaurant owners results in. And it is a consultative process. I know in our case over the years we would have inspectors that would come in and go over our premises and look over the procedures and practices that we had in place to make sure that they were appropriate.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, there were improvements that we were suggesting that could be made. There were things that we learned by way of the industry that could be improvements to have a higher standard of health safety in our restaurants. And we would share them with the health inspectors as well. And so it was very much a dialogue and a communication. But there was a formal report at the end of the day and I think that the public has a right to know what's in those reports in order to make sure that the highest level of safety is maintained.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I also would like to say on the record I truly do hope that there is a great deal of common sense that is applied in these instances as well so that we don't end up with coming up with standards and ideas and procedures that are simply completely impractical and unnecessary because we don't take the time to communicate between the public health inspectors and the restaurant industry as to how this stuff might be implemented. I'm encouraged by the minister's comments to say that there is going to be consultation on a pretty broad basis with the stakeholders in the industry, and I think that will serve the public very, very well.

I know the restaurant industry and members in it and perhaps even public health inspectors look forward to commenting on this Bill. And in order for that, for that to be facilitated, I would move to adjourn debate at this time.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member for Melfort 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. 9 — The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code
Amendment Act, 2006**

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Madam Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code Amendment Act, 2006.

This legislation recognizes that our older citizens can continue to make contributions in the labour market. Mr. Speaker, many people do not understand why reaching an arbitrary age should be sufficient to require them to leave the labour force. This government agrees that people should not have to retire simply because they have reached a specific age. But currently collective agreements and employers' policies are not violating the Code by requiring the employees retire at age 65.

Madam Speaker, this Bill will change the definition of age in the Code to include persons over 65 years. This removes from the Code the protection for mandatory retirement policies. Employers will no longer be able to require employees to quit working because they have reached a certain age. And collective agreements cannot specify retirement age, as this would now be considered to be contrary to the Code in the absence of special circumstances.

The bona fide occupational qualification exception currently in the Code recognizes that in certain occupations such as firefighters and police, advancing age relates to the ability to perform the duties required for the job.

This Bill responds to concerns from members of the public who object to being forced to retire before they are ready. This change also responds to the concerns of those who have taken time out of work to raise their children. As a result, they may have spent fewer years in the workforce and had less opportunity to accrue pension benefits.

This Bill recognizes that immigrants to our province have sometimes joined the workforce here later in their lives. Madam Speaker, the amendments also address concerns about anticipated labour shortages as a consequence of an aging population by removing a barrier for individuals who wish to remain in the workplace.

The Code currently includes an exception that permits distinctions based on age in Acts and regulations in relation to services to the public. As a result of this exception, the requirement that a person must be 19 years old to purchase alcohol is not discriminatory.

There's also an exception in the Code for a regulation or law that allows age distinctions in the purchase of property. It is proposed to repeal these provisions and include a general statement that age distinctions in any Act or regulation are not discriminatory with respect to any area covered by the Code — that is with respect to employment accommodation and services to the public.

A few statutes include provisions that set a mandatory retirement age. The Municipal Employees' Pension Act and The Public Employees Pension Plan Act are being amended to include a provision prohibiting mandatory retirement.

The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Act is also being amended to provide that no employee shall be required to retire at a specific age. This new provision will apply to invalidate the mandatory requirement provisions in The Liquor Board Superannuation Act, The Power Corporation Superannuation Act, and The Public Service Superannuation Act.

The regulations under The Public Service Act, 1998, provide for mandatory retirement in public sector at age 65. The regulations are being amended to ensure consistency with the Code.

Finally, Madam Speaker, the amendments provide some time, a year from Royal Assent, for phase-in to allow for renegotiation of collective agreements that have a mandatory retirement clause and revision of human resource policies that mandate retirement at a particular age.

Almost every jurisdiction allows age distinctions in employment for the operation of a bona fide retirement superannuation or pension plan, or to a bona fide group or employee insurance plan. Saskatchewan's Code already includes such a provision.

The exception for employee pension plans and disability plans allows plans to include actuarial-based criteria for the purposes of contributions and payouts. These provisions will not be changed by this Bill.

Likewise employee pension and benefit plans are not changed by these amendments. What is being changed, is removal of the protection for mandatory retirement policies from The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of an Act to amend The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code and to

make consequential amendments to other Acts and to the public service regulations, 1999.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Melfort.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you. Madam Deputy Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to a Bill that we suggested. It's almost as if there's a bad echo in this building because I would swear that it sounded very much as if it was being directly lifted from our policy and being entered into the debate on the Assembly. So I'm glad that the Justice minister was able to at least read our policy and even, even better, to actually do a pretty fair job of drafting it up into meaningful legislation.

So I would certainly commend him on getting it largely right, because usually, usually when the members opposite plagiarize our ideas, they usually don't understand it well enough to actually make a decent job of the drafting of the legislation. So they did at least get it right in this instance, so I thank you for reading very carefully our policy.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it really is strange for me to be speaking about the idea that someone who at 65 years of age is being recognized as still having something very valuable and meaningful to potentially commit and to provide for their place of work. I know it seems like only yesterday. When I was 15, I thought that my father, who would have been about 40 years of age at that time, must be ready for retirement at any moment. But now that I'm much closer to the magic age myself, it seems like people have a great deal more to contribute than I would have thought all those many years ago. And so I think it's very, very important that we grab the opportunity for people to continue to contribute as is appropriate in their workplaces and in the places where they are doing so much good work.

And so, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am very sure that we will find a great deal to support in this piece of legislation. We're looking forward to hear from people who are directly affected by this — employees, employers, and people in the trade unions. And in order for that to be facilitated, I would move to adjourn debate.

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

Some Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Bill No. 10 — The Limitations Amendment Act, 2006

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Madam Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Limitations Amendment Act, 2006.

The Limitations Act was passed in 2004 and came into force on May 1, 2005. That Act reformed what had been an archaic and complex limitation system by instituting a completely new

limitations regime.

The Act provides for a basic two-year limitation period for civil legal actions. The two-year period starts to run from when the claimant first knew or ought to have known that the injury had occurred, that the injury appears to be attributable to the defendant's act or omission, and that a legal proceeding would be an appropriate means to seek to remedy it.

In addition the new Act includes an ultimate limitation period which bars all actions after 15 years in the events giving rise to the claim. The amendments being proposed at this time change provisions so that they more clearly reflect the original intent of those provisions.

The first change relates to the provision respecting acknowledgment of a debt. An acknowledgment restarts the running of the limitation period from the date of the acknowledgment. The Act provides that the acknowledgment must be in writing and must be made to a claimant.

Prior to the coming into force of The Limitations Act, The Contributory Negligence Act provided that if any one of two or more persons responsible for damage to a plaintiff satisfied a judgment, he or she could sue any of the others for reimbursement of that person's fair share of the damages. This concept was included in The Limitations Act which provides that, for claims when contribution indemnity is sought, the two-year limitation period starts to run from the day the first alleged wrongdoer is served with notice of the claim.

It is not clear what constitutes notice for the purposes of this provision. The amendment will provide that the period starts to run when the first alleged wrongdoer is served with a claim. This provides for more certainty and is consistent with the intent that the period should start to run from when the first person becomes a defendant.

[16:45]

An amendment deals with claims based on court judgments or orders for payment of money. This provision maintains the long-standing limitation period of 10 years from the date of the judgment or order. The current placement of this provision in the section respecting the ultimate limitation period creates an uncertainty as to whether discoverability and the basic two-year limitation period applies to those actions. Discoverability is not relevant for these claims and the two-year period is too short for renewal of a court judgment for the purposes of enforcement.

The 10-year period is also consistent with the 10-year limitation period for these claims in other provinces. This Act creates a separate section for these claims with a specified 10-year limitation period applicable to these claims.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that the current provisions do not appear to have resulted in problems. However it is desirable to make the changes to ensure clear interpretation and to prevent future problems for persons using this legislation. Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act to amend The Limitations Act.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice

that Bill No. 10, The Limitations Amendment Act, 2006 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? The Chair recognizes the member for Melfort.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Irrespective of the fact that I am not a lawyer, I will attempt to comment on this Bill which I am sure, I'm sure, I'm sure is widely debated and much loved in the legal circles, but for the rest of us lay people, it is rather confusing.

Mr. Speaker, I do understand that what this will do is provide limitations on the period of time when changes can be made on property claims. And so, Mr. Speaker, I think that that is an appropriate piece of legislation to have drafted.

I know that the subsections in the amendments that are on the actual Bill are very brief and very technical. You know, such things as in:

5 Subsection 11(2) is amended by striking out “or” after clause (a) and substituting “and”

And I know that's scintillating stuff for many people, but I am trusting those people who are very much conversant and interested in the details, in what is being implied in this to make sure that this is done carefully. I know that our research department has looked at this and are saying that there are stakeholders that they wish to consult in order to facilitate making sure that all of these technical amendments are appropriate. And in order for that to be facilitated, I would move to adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member from Melfort that debate on second reading of Bill No. 10 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Bill No. 11 — The International Interests in Mobile Aircraft Equipment Act/Loi sur les garanties internationales portant sur des matériels d'équipement aéronautiques mobiles

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

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of The International Interests in Mobile Aircraft Equipment. Mr. Speaker . . .

An Hon. Member: — I want to hear lots about this Bill.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — When I have the opportunity to continue, Mr. Speaker . . . The International Interests in Mobile Aircraft Equipment Act provides for implementation of the convention on international interests in mobile equipment and its protocol on matters specific to aircraft equipment in Saskatchewan.

The convention and protocol create an international, central registry that will enable the registration and search of convention-based interests in aircraft equipment. Mr. Speaker,

the convention and protocol are founded on the principle that a sound legal framework that facilitates the creation, perfection, and enforcement of security interests in aircraft equipment will provide confidence to lenders and institutional investors. This will in turn make it easier to attract domestic and foreign capital in the purchase and sale of aircraft equipment.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation's based on an Act prepared by the Uniform Law Conference of Canada which has been recommended to all provincial jurisdictions for implementation. The Act has been identified by the federal government as a priority for provincial and territorial implementation. Once a majority of provinces and territories have passed implementing legislation, Canada would then be in a position to ratify the convention and its protocol.

Mr. Speaker, it should be noted that the aircraft protocol applies to used aircraft as well as to smaller aircraft. Accordingly smaller Saskatchewan operators seeking to buy or sell internationally will have better access to credit and protection for their security in these transactions.

Mr. Speaker, I invite all members of this House to join me in supporting the implementation of this convention and protocol to increase certainty and therefore efficiency in the financing of mobile aircraft equipment. Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act respecting International Interests In Mobile Aircraft Equipment.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 11, The International Interests in Mobile Aircraft Equipment Act be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? The Chair recognizes the member for Melfort.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak briefly on Bill No. 11, An Act respecting International Interests in Mobile Aircraft Equipment. Mr. Speaker, you know I think that this actually is a fairly important piece of legislation given the fact and the reality that aircraft and airline companies have equipment that is located in our province. And if they do, they're going to want to make sure that those assets are protected and are appropriately treated so that there cannot be unilateral action taken against this equipment. And if we're going to have aircraft companies based in Saskatchewan, we have to ensure that the treatment of their equipment is also of a standard and a par with other jurisdictions in Canada and around the world.

And so I understand that, on first blush, it sounds as if this is legislation that doesn't make a whole lot of sense. But I do understand that this is a fairly important piece of legislation — particularly if our province wants to be competitive in the aircraft and airline industry — in order to make sure that the standards and protection of assets are similar in our province as they are in other jurisdictions.

And certainly this legislation is fairly comprehensive. The Act is 91 pages in length. And it is a new Act; it's not an amendment to existing legislation. And so that I think it's important that this is properly reviewed and scrutinized by the

people that are going to be affected by it. My understanding — and briefly looking at this information — is that it does meet the challenge of the standards and protection that we are looking for. And I look forward to hearing from the industry. And in order to make that possible, I would move to adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Melfort that debate on second reading of Bill 11 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Bill No. 5 — The Oil and Gas Conservation Amendment Act, 2006

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Industry and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to present to the House for second reading, legislative amendments to The Oil and Gas Conservation Act. These amendments update and make the new orphan well and facility liability management program more equitable and sustainable.

This legislature provided approval in the 2001 session for Bill 10, amending The Oil and Gas Conservation Act in order to eliminate the Oil and Gas Environmental Fund and replace it with the Oil and Gas Orphan Fund. Bill 10 has not yet been fully proclaimed.

Over the last years, our Department of Industry and Resources has been working with the oil and gas industry, other provincial departments, and stakeholders to amend the current regulations to create a new orphan well and facility liability management program. During that consultation it was determined that changes and corrections were needed in Bill 10 to address issues which arose in developing the new program as well as some related housekeeping amendments.

As we make these changes I want to remind the House, Mr. Speaker, that the oil and gas industry contributes a great deal to the Saskatchewan economy. It creates jobs, builds capital investment, and creates opportunities for businesses and communities across our province. It is the key economic driver for prosperity in Saskatchewan, ranking above agriculture in provincial gross domestic product.

Since March 2002 our government has provided improvements to the sector, including enhanced taxation and royalty changes, to help Saskatchewan continue to be competitive with other jurisdictions. This sector and the tax and royalty changes we have made will continue to bring more investment to our province, and jobs and opportunities to Saskatchewan people. The Oil and Gas Conservation Amendment Act, 2006 contains the necessary changes to make the program fair and equitable. It will come into force along with the proclamation of the balance of Bill 10 and the regulatory changes to implement the new program.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the one policy change, it was

originally intended that the orphan fund levy would be imposed only on inactive wells and inactive upstream facilities. The industry stakeholders are concerned that the current wording attempts to marry two different concepts, one concept being the prevention of inactive wells, and the other an industry funding mechanism to pay for orphan wells and facilities. This union creates an unsustainable and inequitable funding mechanism.

Mr. Speaker, a company could simply walk away from its inactive wells since there is little or no economic value. As the number of levy contributors shrinks, a smaller number of companies bear a greater economic burden. At some point there would be no more contributors left and the taxpayers would be required to absorb the cost of dealing with orphan wells and facilities. The amendments under this legislation regarding this policy change will remove references to inactive from the regulations in order for the orphan fund to apply to all wells and upstream facilities.

Other minor housekeeping changes will change the definition of an upstream facility, add a provision to require a first-time applicant under the oil and gas orphan well fund to submit a fee, remove the requirement for forms to be prescribed in the regulations, and fix inconsistent language and a typing error. Mr. Speaker, I now present The Oil and Gas Conservation Amendment Act, 2006 for second reading.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Industry and Resources that Bill No. 5, The Oil and Gas Conservation Amendment Act, 2006 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? The Chair recognizes the member for Lloydminster.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to quickly comment on this particular amendment as proposed by the minister. One of the things that is so essential in any industry or in any business is the ability of that business to have confidence, confidence both in the legislation — in how it's interpreted, in how it's going to be changed — and also confidence that there is a transparent route to do that, and also come confidence in the future.

Some of the things that are bothersome is that even though amendments have been made to this Act before, as the minister alluded to, they have not been fully proclaimed to this point. And now we're changing some of the conditions again, so that that level of confidence from the oil industry is, I think, not there, and needs to be more consultative with the oil industry. And there's a lot of things that need to be addressed here from both the stakeholder point of view, their assessment of what this is all about.

I do notice that they are moving closer and closer to what the Alberta industry is very much like. First of all there was royalties and tax rates, and now we're into the environmental. I wonder if that's the NDP version of Alberta envy. I would at this time move, Mr. Speaker, debate adjourn on this amendment.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Lloydminster that debate on second reading of Bill No. 5 be

now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried.

Bill No. 14 — The Environmental Management and Protection Amendment Act, 2006

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Environmental Management and Protection Amendment Act, 2006.

These minor housekeeping changes are made in response to concerns expressed by operators of waterworks and sewage works about duplication of effort and unnecessary costs associated with the sections of the Act that required them to in some cases triple register an interest for the same project on the same parcel of land.

[17:00]

Mr. Speaker, some municipalities and pipeline associations must register the same project when a permit to construct is issued, when a permit to operate is issued, and when an easement is required. The proposed amendments remove the requirement for governments to oversee multiple registrations of interests on properties, thereby eliminating provincial government involvement that had created unintentional and unnecessary bureaucracy in the land control process.

While the amendment may reduce revenue to the Information Services Corporation on the order of \$10,000 per year, the owners of the new systems will be encouraged to continue voluntarily registering easements to protect their investment and infrastructure, offsetting some of the loss of income to ISC [Information Services Corporation].

Mr. Speaker, none of these amendments will impact public health or the environment and they will save the owners of affected water and sewage works considerable time and money. Mr. Speaker, I now move second reading of The Environmental Management and Protection Amendment Act, 2006.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of the Environment that Bill No. 14, The Environmental Management and Protection Amendment Act, 2006 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? The Chair recognizes the member for Lloydminster.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And again quickly I would like to respond to this particular amendment as proposed by the minister. I was pleased to hear the minister refer to less government involvement in making these things work a little bit better, putting the onus on the people that have an invested interest and an interest in terms of making it work. And I think that's certainly the right direction.

I realize that it's housekeeping and these issues need to have further consultation. We want to get a feedback from SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association], from SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities], from the chambers, and I would therefore . . . I would adjourn debate on this amendment.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Lloydminster that debate on second reading of Bill 14 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

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

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 17:02.]

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Premier

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Minister Responsible for Seniors

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Minister Responsible for Immigration
Minister Responsible for the Public
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