



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

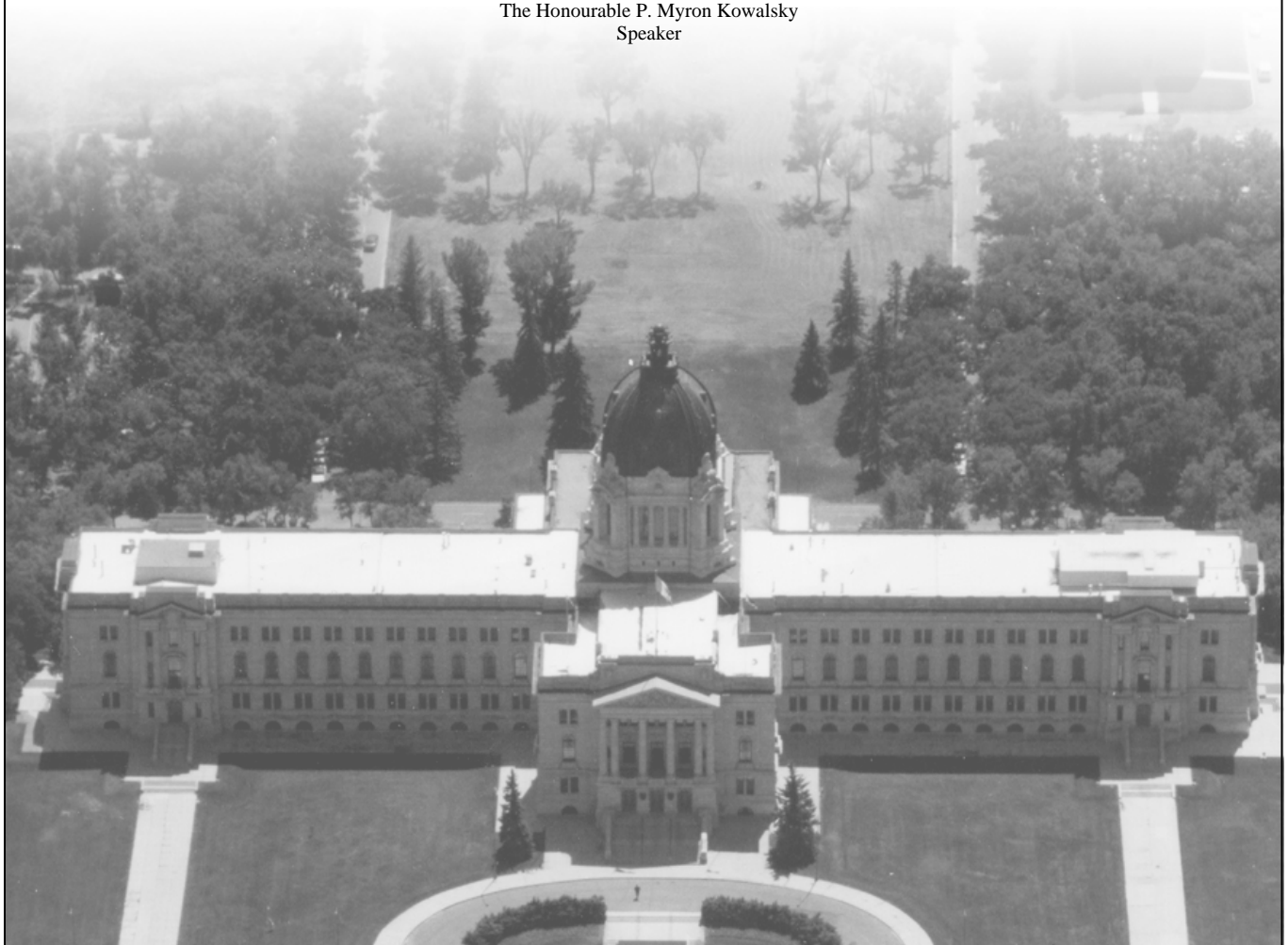
Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**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
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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
Gantfoer, Rod	SP	Melfort
Hagel, Hon. Glenn	NDP	Moose Jaw North
Hamilton, Doreen	NDP	Regina Wascana Plains
Harpauer, Donna	SP	Humboldt
Harper, Ron	NDP	Regina Northeast
Hart, Glen	SP	Last Mountain-Touchwood
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. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present again today and this petition I am going to present is regarding the drug Avastin. And I read the prayer:

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

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

The petition I present today is signed by the good folks from the community of Moosomin. I so present.

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

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of constituents of Cypress Hills regarding the deplorable condition of Highway 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 is in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, today's petition is signed by individuals from the communities of Frontier, Eastend, and Claydon. I so present.

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have petitions to present 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.

As and in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

These petitions come from the great community, Mr. Speaker, of Regina. I so present.

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

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to rise again today on behalf of people who are concerned about Highway 49. The prayer 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.

The people who have signed this petition are from Yorkton and Okla, and I think everybody from Lintlaw. I so present.

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 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 signators, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Crooked Lake; Kelowna, BC[British Columbia]; and Indian Head. I so present.

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 Lemberg, Wolseley, Glenavon, and Montmartre. 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 of citizens concerned of the safety of the Bruno access road on the very narrow Highway No. 5. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

And the signatures, Mr. Speaker, are all from Bruno. I so present.

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

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to present a petition on behalf of citizens of this province who have grave concerns over the condition of Highway 18. 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 invest the needed money to repair and maintain Highway 18 so it can return to being a safe and economical route for Saskatchewan families and business.

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

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by folks from Estevan, Macoun, Swift Current, and Bienfait. I so present. Thank you.

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

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to present another petition from the citizens of Biggar. The prayer reads:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens of Biggar and district.

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to once again rise in this House and present a petition on behalf of frustrated parents across Saskatchewan who for the past seven years have been lobbying this government for a dedicated children's hospital within a hospital in 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 a provincial children's hospital in Saskatoon.

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

The petitioners today come from the provincial constituencies of Saskatoon Eastview, Saskatoon Greystone, and Saskatoon Silver Springs. 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 present a petition signed by citizens of

Saskatchewan that are very concerned about the NDP [New Democratic Party] two-tier health care system. 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, signatures of this petition are from Wolseley; Calgary, Alberta; Robson, BC; and Lemberg. I so present.

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

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from citizens calling 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, Nokomis, Drake, Watson, Humboldt, and Lanigan. I so present.

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

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition that I'd like to present on behalf of citizens that are very concerned about the gravel highways in this province, particularly those highways that were returned 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 Earl Grey and area families and businesses.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signatures to this petition, Mr. Speaker, come from the communities of Earl Grey, Southey, and Bulyea. I so present.

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 regarding the often promised but never delivered provincial children's hospital in Saskatoon. I will read the prayer for relief:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to implement an allocation of

financial resources in this year's budget to build a provincial children's hospital in Saskatoon.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by citizens from Saskatoon, Vanscoy, and Warman. I'm pleased to present on their behalf. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today and present a petition to urge the government to repair Highway 36:

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.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good people of Coronach and Regina. I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 22 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy: does SaskEnergy have a partnership agreement with Weatherford Canada Partnership, and if so, what is the agreement for?

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

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 22 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: were percolation tests done on groundwater in the rural municipality of Corman Park in the year 2005 and 2006? And if so, what were the test results?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice I shall on day no. 22 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for SaskWater: has SaskWater paid out any funds to cover legal expenses for

former minister of SaskWater, Carol Teichrob in the year 2000?

And I have a similar question for 2005, similar question for 2004, and a similar question for 2003. Thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the legislature, two distinguished guests who are seated in your gallery. And I'll ask them to stand. His Excellency, Mr. Lu Shumin, ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Canada, and Mr. Liu Wutong who is the second secretary to the ambassador. Accompanying them is Deborah Saum.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan and China have enjoyed long-standing commercial, academic, and intergovernmental relationships, relationships which we greatly value. Just to put it in perspective, in Saskatchewan about 5 per cent of our international trade goes directly to China. It's about three-quarters of \$1 billion. So these relationships we have with China are very important.

Today marks the first occasion that Ambassador Lu comes as ambassador. He has been in our province many years before, and he's renewing his sense of what Saskatchewan is. I know that I had a chance to meet with him this morning and some of the other ministers have as well. I know that we all value the relationship that we have with China. I know that the Premier will be having a chance to meet with him as well. But I ask all members to welcome them to Saskatchewan and welcome them to the friendship that we have here for them.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[13:45]

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

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the official opposition it's a pleasure, it's an honour to join with the minister opposite in welcoming His Excellency, Ambassador Shumin, and Mr. Wutong, the second secretary, here to the Legislative Assembly.

On behalf of the opposition, we certainly want to reinforce some of the remarks of the minister opposite about the importance of the relationship not only between Canada and China but between, specifically between our province of Saskatchewan and China.

Increasingly, Mr. Speaker, it's obvious that Saskatchewan is well positioned with respect to the global economy and some of the economic powerhouses we see develop around the world — in China and in India, soon in Brazil, perhaps in Russia. We are in a position, Mr. Speaker, a positive one because we have what the world wants. We in many respects have what China will want in terms of an export and trade relationship.

And what we want then, what we desire, is that relationship and that friendship. And so we join with the minister and the government in welcoming our special guests to the Assembly today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Massey Place, the Minister of Industry and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. And having just returned from China, I certainly want to join with others in welcoming the ambassador and his assistant to the legislature.

And, Mr. Speaker, I also want to introduce to you and through you to the Legislative Assembly some special guests who are members of the Saskatchewan Geographic Names Board who are sitting in your gallery. I would like to introduce the Chair of the board, Mr. Gib Macaulay; the secretary to the board, Mr. Art Marbach; and someone who's no stranger to the Assembly, Keith Goulet, the former MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] for Cumberland who is also a member of the Geographic Names Board.

And, Mr. Speaker, these gentlemen are here today for an announcement that is being made concerning the adoption of a new commemorative naming program for the province of Saskatchewan. Later on in the House I'll look forward to presenting a ministerial statement outlining this important new program, and I'm happy that our guests could be here for this announcement.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members to welcome these guests to their Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the opposition Saskatchewan Party, we would like to welcome these gentlemen to their legislature and want to commend them on the work and the tasks they undertake.

As a province, we've had a long history of interesting place names — Arm River, Wood River. That's just the ones on this side of the House, not to mention a few . . . and we look forward to hearing more about them when the minister makes his statement later on. And we want to welcome them to their legislature. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Athabasca, the Minister of Community Resources.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure and honour to introduce a number of students from northern Saskatchewan who travelled many, many miles to be here, and they're in the west gallery, Mr. Speaker. And as the member for Athabasca, again it is may

pleasure to introduce to you and through you to my fellow members of the Assembly 16 grade nine students from Minahik Waskahigan School, which is Pinehouse. And of course they're from the great community of Pinehouse Lake and . . .

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

And I told them, Mr. Speaker, that I'm very honoured that they're here today and that this Assembly is theirs and that they have nothing to fear here. These are educated northerners that are going to do a fantastic amount for their community and for the province.

And to also welcome the students is important, but to also recognize Ron and Jacquie Skage. They have been working with the school in the Pinehouse for a number of years. I don't want to give the years because that will give an idea of what their age is, but they've certainly committed.

And it's amazing, Mr. Speaker, how connected we are in this world. The Minister of Learning — who of course would know that there's a brand new school being built, has been built in Pinehouse — she had her cousin teach in Pinehouse many, many years ago. And that cousin was Bill Green. I think it was about 20 years ago Mr. Green was teaching in Pinehouse, and she was alluding to that.

But certainly I want to tell the people of Pinehouse, welcome to your Assembly, and to ask all members of the Assembly to welcome this very, very special group. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the east gallery I would like to introduce a gentleman to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly, Mr. John Schmeiser, a Saskatchewan native son who has seen fit to stop at the legislature today on his way through the province.

John is the executive vice-president for the Canada West Equipment Dealers Association based in Calgary. And that association represents 400 equipment dealers in the four western Canadian provinces. That's an association I'm reasonably familiar with because of my previous life as a salesman.

But I'd also like to acknowledge the role that John played in an invitation that was extended to me back in early summer to attend the North American Equipment Dealers Association annual meeting for leaders. And I had an opportunity to speak to this gathering in St. Louis. I appreciate the invitation that was extended to me through John's office, and I'd like to offer my appreciation to him directly and ask all the members here to welcome John to his Assembly today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Sutherland, the Minister of Healthy Living Services.

Hon. Mr. Addley: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my great privilege to introduce some fine guests in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. They are individuals that have worked very hard over the last number of years to protect the health of people in Saskatchewan.

And if they could give a brief wave . . . June Blau is the president of the Saskatchewan Coalition for Tobacco Reduction; Lynn Greaves, the vice-president of the Saskatchewan Coalition for Tobacco Reduction; Rhae Ann Bromley, communications director, Heart and Stroke Foundation of Saskatchewan; Paul Van Loon, health educator of The Lung Association of Saskatchewan; and Donna Pasiechnik, from the tobacco control coordinator for Canadian Cancer Society, the Saskatchewan branch. And if I'm not mistaken we also have Keith Karasin, yes, from the CEO [chief executive officer] of the Canadian Cancer Society, Saskatchewan branch as well.

And these people, Mr. Speaker, are all part of organizations that have been active participants in tobacco control in Saskatchewan for a number of years. And I'd ask all members to welcome them to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Addley: — Mr. Speaker, I also notice there's three guests sitting behind them. Geoff Leo's mother is here, as well as Geoff Leo's spouse and their daughter. And unfortunately Geoff had to step out and probably go to work, but I can say that Geoff is one of the finest and best-dressed reporters that we have here in the Assembly, and I'd ask all hon. members to welcome them here.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join with the member opposite in welcoming to the people gallery that he had mentioned, whether it's the cancer society or heart and stroke, all those members. Quite often when we see somebody in the gallery if they're a former member, we'll say they're no stranger to this Assembly. Well they're not former members, but I believe they're no strangers to this Assembly. We've seen them in gallery many, many times, and they do great work to promote good health in our province. So I'd like to on behalf of the official opposition, welcome them and thank them for the work they do.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to introduce three guests seated in your gallery. With us today from Saskatoon, we have Derek Tallon, Leland Kreklewich, and Cole Scholz. These three gentlemen are students at the University of Saskatchewan. They're also members of the Saskatchewan Party Youth Association. And, Mr. Speaker, they're part of a larger contingent from Saskatoon

that have come down today to meet with their counterparts here at the University of Regina.

Mr. Speaker, I did say that they're part of a larger contingent. Unfortunately the other members couldn't be here today because they're having a . . . so successful of a run at signing up new members on campus. So I'd ask all members to welcome them today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Recognizing the Need for Affordable Housing

Hon. Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today is National Affordable Housing Day and November 20 to 25 is Affordable Housing Week right here in Regina.

Mr. Speaker, the need for affordable housing is ongoing, and this government has developed and continues to develop strong partnerships among all three levels of government, the public and private sectors, non-profit organizations, First Nations and Métis organizations, and others to help meet that need.

Mr. Speaker, I'm talking about organizations like Habitat for Humanity, the YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association], Ehrlo Community Services, the Salvation Army, Regina Rescue Mission, and initiatives like the Pasqua urban housing project all of which are fine examples of the diverse partners working together to provide stable and affordable home environments.

Mr. Speaker, progress is being made. In 2004 we introduced HomeFirst, a five-year, \$200 million action plan to bring safe and affordable housing and home ownership within reach for thousands of low-income families. And this year among many other initiatives, we've increased the maximum income limits that determine eligibility for affordable housing programs and the centenary affordable housing program, which means many more people will qualify.

Mr. Speaker, our collective commitment to meet affordable housing needs in Saskatchewan communities has never been stronger. Along with our partners, we work hand in hand to strengthen communities and improve the quality of life for all Saskatchewan people. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

True Spirit of Giving

Ms. Harpauer: — I would like to commend four young ladies for all that they do throughout the year to raise money for Telemiracle. These young girls have the true spirit of giving, and they are willing to give many hours of their time and their energy to try to make life a little easier for others that are less

fortunate than they. They have the compassion that helps make Telemiracle a huge success each year, and they are fine examples of why we are all so proud to be from Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this will be the second year that these four young friends from Saskatoon have joined together to plan and carry out a number of fundraising activities. They hold a penny drive and a bottle drive. They host a movie night. They get donations from different companies and hold raffles. They use their own artistic talents and create crafts and pictures and then hold an art sale to sell their items. Finally, Mr. Speaker, they host a turkey supper. These young girls are so organized that the dates for this year's Telemiracle supper has been set and will be held on March 2.

Mr. Speaker, the four young ladies that are so deserving of our commendation and best wishes for all their efforts. They're even more amazing you consider their ages. Mr. Speaker, they are Rebecca Gera, grade 8; Sho-shauna Peters, grade 7; Rebecca Turn, grade 7; and Brittany Serveright, grade 7.

To see such determination and self motivation for the benefit of others truly demonstrates how very special Saskatchewan's young people can be.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Melfort Wishmaker Parade

Mr. Gantefer: — Mr. Speaker, everyday people join together to perform amazing feats, and today I am pleased to acknowledge the efforts of a group of outstanding people from communities in the Melfort area who went above and beyond in their efforts in their efforts to coordinate and host the Melfort Wishmaker Parade. This is a parade that raises funds for the Children's Wish Foundation of Canada. The foundation is dedicated to working within the community to fulfill heartfelt wishes to children diagnosed with high-risk, life threatening illnesses.

The coordinator of this event, Amy Tremblay, who tragically lost her young daughter to cancer, has worked tirelessly to ensure its success. This is the second year of the Wishmaker Parade in Melfort, and I am thrilled to say that in 2005, 145 walkers raised \$28,500 and in 2006, 239 walkers raised \$25,000 for a total of \$52,000.

Mr. Speaker, Melfort raised more funds in the past two years combined for the Wishmaker Parade than any other community in Saskatchewan, including Saskatoon and Regina. Mr. Speaker, Melfort Wishmaker Parade has had the largest number of participants in the province for the past two years, and the local area businesses from Melfort and St. Brieux have contributed \$9,000 to the funds raised.

Mr. Speaker, and members of the House, please join me in congratulating Amy Tremblay and all of those who participated in this walk for their outstanding success.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Office of the Treaty Commissioner Recognized for Excellence in Education

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan's Office of the Treaty Commissioner has been selected by the Canadian Race Relations Foundation to receive the foundation's biennial Award of Excellence for Education in the Public and Private Sector.

In presenting the award, the foundation's specifically recognized three main components of the OTC's [Office of the Treaty Commissioner] public education program: the speaker's bureau, aimed at the general public and the corporate world; the learning centre, aimed at providing a treaty learning environment for the general public; and the teaching-treaties-in-the-classroom component, aimed at students in the formal education system.

Mr. Speaker, I was minister of Learning at the time the teaching-treaties-in-the-classroom program was introduced. And I am extremely proud that since then, through the good work of teachers, administrators, and elders this program has placed a resource kit of treaty-related learning materials in every school for K to 12 in the province and trained more than one-third of Saskatchewan teachers in how to use it.

Mr. Speaker, this award reinforces recognition the OTC received previously from the United Nations for the effectiveness of its public education programs in combating racism. Mr. Speaker, I congratulate Treaty Commissioner, Judge David Arnot, and members of the OTC on the work that they have done that has earned them this prestigious award. To quote Judge Arnot:

... racism exists in our province. As a community we have a long way to go. Yet the Canadian Race Relations Foundations has honoured the people of Saskatchewan with a national award that suggests progress is being made.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

[14:00]

Cadets Earn Duke of Edinburgh's Award

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to honour two young cadets from my constituency in becoming recipients of the Duke of Edinburgh Award. In a ceremony this past weekend at Government House, Lieutenant Governor Dr. Gordon L. Barnhart presented the Duke of Edinburgh Silver Award to Sergeant Kristine Kostyniuk of Imperial. Last month at a presentation on a local level, Corporal Kolby Kostyniuk, also of Imperial, received the Bronze Award.

Both Kristine and Kolby are members of the 553 Sherlock Squadron Air Cadets and also brother and sister. This is the first time in squadron's 19-year history that a member has received this prestigious award.

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award is an individual challenge involving four different areas of endeavour — service, expedition, exploration skills, and physical fitness. Each participant must take part in all sections and show effort and improvement in each order to qualify for an award at the bronze, silver, or gold levels.

In addition to receiving this prestigious award, Kristine, also one of 15 cadets from Saskatchewan this year, who was awarded her gliding licence and wings at the regional gliding school in Gimli, Manitoba. As well as Kolby is one of the only five cadets for Saskatchewan who was awarded his technical course qualification badge in aircraft servicing at Army Cadet Summer Training Centre, Blackdown, at CFB [Canadian Forces Base] in Borden, Ontario.

I would ask all members to please join me in congratulating Kristine and Kolby on their awards and achievements.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Saskatchewan's Economy

Mr. Iwanchuk: — You know, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the Assembly we are focusing our energies on making life better for Saskatchewan families, on building a stronger economy where everyone in Saskatchewan benefits, on making Saskatchewan the best place in Canada for young people to live, work, and build their futures. Ours is a bold vision, Mr. Speaker, and a positive one especially in comparison to the negativity of the members opposite.

And how is Saskatchewan doing, Mr. Speaker? The latest numbers say it all. There are more people working in Saskatchewan than ever before. Full-time jobs are up almost 23,000. Youth employment is up over 8,000. And there are almost 22,000 more jobs in the province this October than the year before.

Manufacturing shipments are up. Urban housing starts are up. International exports are up. Retail sales are up. Natural gas and oil production are up. Value of building permits are up, Mr. Speaker.

And thanks, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the ongoing, sound fiscal management practices such as our decision to cash fund the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, the province's credit rating keeps going up as well.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, good news for Saskatchewan is bad news for the Saskatchewan Party. And pretty much everything is going up here in Saskatchewan except their chances of winning the next election.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Foam Lake's Fundraising Achievements

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, 2006 was an extremely hard year for the town of Foam Lake. Two major fires took a bite out of the downtown core. Yet in spite of adversity, the town continues to have a strong sense of community.

The well-known Breasts of Friends group have continued their cookbook fundraising. With a net profit of \$20,000 from the sales of their second book, they've remodelled two rooms in the palliative care suite in the Jubilee Home in Foam Lake. One room is for the patient and the other for the family room.

The patient's room is equipped with the latest in palliative care equipment for the comfort of the patient, and the family's room is located in the next room and is equipped with a complete kitchenette unit for the convenience of family members while they remain with their loved ones. This was all done in loving memory of four young people who have lost their lives to cancer. They were Lisa Streelasky, Jonathon Sereda, David Stinka and Chad Gray.

September 9th was national Terry Fox Run. Between the two Foam Lake schools and the town, they brought in a total of more than \$8,000. Students and townspeople did all the work, collecting the pledges and doing the run. For the last eight years Anne Reynolds was called the heart and soul of the Terry Fox Run in these schools. She was presented a Terry Fox T-shirt on behalf of the Foam Lake Masonic Lodge with gratitude for the countless hours she toiled in making this run a success. This year's run was dedicated to the memory of Chad Gray who passed away at the age of 28 due to cancer.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say that, despite hardships, the town of Foam Lake stands tall and continues to pour out community spirit with a lot of hard work and dedication. Foam Lake's greatest asset is the positive attitude of their people.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

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

Combatting Population Decline

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one thing is clear and the people of the province know it, and that's this NDP government — specifically this Premier — have been driving people out of this province for years.

Now the province's bureau of statistics, the province's own bureau of statistics has published some numbers on out-migration. And they show the problem is getting worse instead of better. Since the Premier took office, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has lost over 37,000 people in net out-migration — 37,000 people in five years since he became the Premier of

Saskatchewan. That's practically the population of Moose Jaw or the population of Prince Albert.

How could that be happening, Mr. Speaker, especially with all the potential in this province? How could this NDP government be overseeing the driving out of 37,000 Saskatchewan people in five years?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Cline: — You know, Mr. Speaker, I recently attended an event sponsored by the Saskatchewan Young Professionals and Entrepreneurs where they released a paper about how to really build Saskatchewan. And one of the things they say, Mr. Speaker, is:

... we would do well to hold up, as examples, those who have either migrated to Saskatchewan instead of away from Saskatchewan and those who have left and have since returned. It is vital to accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative [Mr. Speaker].

And this government, Mr. Speaker, is going to listen to the young people of this province who recognize, Mr. Speaker, that jobs are up. In the last quarter the population was up, and it's turning around, Mr. Speaker, and the economy is up. What we need to do is follow their advice — accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative over there, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the worst part of the government's own statistics with respect to population is that about two years ago is roughly the time that oil prices really began to ramp up, and there was an increased economic activity in the province of Saskatchewan. Yet the last two years, the last two years are the worst years for people leaving the province of Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan lost over 9,500 people to out-migration two years ago; 9,000 more last year — over 18,000 people in the middle of a boom, Mr. Speaker. It's absolutely incredible. Only in NDP Saskatchewan could that be happening.

Thirty-seven thousand since the Premier, since the Premier took office — and I wish he'd answer these questions — 18,000 in the last two years. If he's asked the Minister of Industry to bail him out on this, I'd be interested in an answer as to how their great economic plan for the province has managed to lose 37,000 people in the middle of a boom, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, Mr. Speaker, we have the Young Professionals and Entrepreneurs telling us to be positive if we want to build Saskatchewan. And you know, even the Leader of

the Opposition, speaking recently to the Regina Chamber of Commerce, had this to say in announcing a so-called plan. He said this, Mr. Speaker, "We should promote the benefits of Saskatchewan to young people." That's what he said, Mr. Speaker.

But what does he do and what do he and his colleagues do every day, Mr. Speaker? They're just negative about Saskatchewan day after day, Mr. Speaker. But you know, Mr. Speaker, people are starting to benefit, to see the benefits of the province and they're starting to move back. And lots of them have been quoted in the media, Mr. Speaker. And here's a young couple that moved back from Calgary and this is what they had to say: "Instead of scraping by and having my whole cheque going to rent, we are living comfortably and now I own a house."

And that's the kind of life you can have in this wonderful province and they should promote that, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to inform the minister opposite — and I know he will welcome this; I know the Premier will — that this party, this group of women and men on this side of the House are working hard to do the most positive thing we could possibly do for the province of Saskatchewan, and that's get rid of that NDP government on the other side of the House.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — And I would point this out as well, I would point this out as well to the minister. The same letter that his seatmate quotes from where they say that we don't promote the province, that I don't in my responses, Mr. Speaker, in that same letter what do I say? I said to this young lady who wrote about opportunities in Saskatchewan, "The province of Saskatchewan has so much potential and it's very promising to hear ambitious youth such as yourself showing an interest." The mistake I made was referring her to that government because that would discourage anybody, Mr. Speaker.

Does the minister have any thoughts on the question: 37,000 people in five years and in the last two years, the last two years, in a boom, we've lost over 18,000 people. How could that be, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Cline: — What we need, Mr. Speaker, is for the Leader of the Opposition to be consistent. And he is not consistent and he has no plan, Mr. Speaker. And I want to tell the Leader of the Opposition this. He doesn't have to listen to me and undoubtedly he won't, Mr. Speaker. But I want to quote Roger Thomas, the senior vice-president of Nexen. And what does he say about Saskatchewan? He says, "It's a great place to

do business.” That’s what he says, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to refer to the fact, Mr. Speaker, that New Holland is shutting down a plant in the United States — and what are they doing, Mr. Speaker? They’re expanding in Saskatchewan. And the member from Saskatoon Silver Springs was with me at that event, Mr. Speaker, where New Holland said this was a great place to do business.

And I want to point out to that leader of that party, Mr. Speaker, that drilling for oil and gas in Alberta will go down 12 per cent this year, it’ll go down 28 per cent in BC, and in Saskatchewan, it . . .

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I can’t believe the minister wants to use the example of Nexen. That was a previously Saskatchewan headquartered company. It was a Crown corporation, Mr. Speaker. Yes. Yes. And it was . . . And it was privatized . . . And it was privatized . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I’m glad the Minister of Finance is interested in the rest of this. The company was privatized. There was legislation on the books that required its head office to stay in the province of Saskatchewan. And who changed the legislation, Mr. Speaker? It was the NDP government opposite. They changed the legislation and then guess what happened, Mr. Speaker? The NDP deputy premier got a \$300,000 job with that company in Calgary, Mr. Speaker. And that’s the kind of decision making, that’s the kind of absolute mess that they’ve made of the economy of the province, that we would lose, that we would lose 18,000 people in two years.

To the Premier: he let Nexen go, quickly followed by his main competitor, Dwain Lingenfelter. When will he stop letting 18,000 young people leave this province every two years?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Industry . . . Order please. The Chair recognizes the Minister of Industry and Resources.

[14:15]

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, Mr. Speaker, we could listen to the negativity of the Leader of the Opposition or we could listen to a city councillor from the city of Swift Current I recently saw in Saskatoon — I think the Leader of the Opposition knows him well — who told me that there was a shortage of industrial land in the city of Swift Current, which that member represents, Mr. Speaker. Or we could look at the *Leader-Post* of October 27 which says this, Mr. Speaker, it says, “Firms scramble for industrial real estate.” It says, Mr. Speaker, “. . . serviced lots

are selling like hotcakes.”

So we have a Leader of the Opposition that says nothing is happening in the economy, and we have a member of the Swift Current City Council telling me they’re short of industrial land. And we have the *Leader-Post* saying, “. . . serviced lots are selling like hotcakes.” Because, despite what he says, things are going well in the province of Saskatchewan and the people know it, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Wait Times for Cancer Care

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Health rejected figures in this week’s *Globe and Mail* on wait times for cancer treatment. The newspaper said Saskatchewan patients are waiting 11.9 weeks for radiation treatment for breast cancer. The minister said those figures were wrong. He dismissed them as unreliable. Eleven point nine weeks is over 80 days. That’s roughly the same time that was cited by the Health Quality Council’s report last month on breast cancer treatment. The minister is now saying the Health Quality Council’s numbers are wrong? Which one is it, Mr. Speaker? Is the Health Quality Council’s numbers correct, or is that minister’s numbers correct?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The provinces collectively in December 2005 met to discuss wait time guidelines, Mr. Speaker. And at that time they agreed on a two-year process by which the benchmarks would be set and reports on how to achieve those benchmarks would be provided by each provincial government. Mr. Speaker, December 2005, less than a year ago, that meeting took place and those four-week benchmarks were set in place. Mr. Speaker, the provinces have until December 2007 to report on matching and meeting those benchmarks.

Mr. Speaker, the province of Saskatchewan is currently working with the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency to develop our process of determining a consistent-with-other-provinces guideline, Mr. Speaker . . .

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, the Health Quality Council’s report is very clear. It states that 25 per cent of women start treatment within 85 days or less; 25 per cent wait 160 days or more. The report says that variations that are that large mean that there’s extreme inconsistencies in treatment in this province. The report says there’s much room for improvement.

Why is the minister now telling the media that wait times are below 42 days, which contradicts the Health Quality Council? I'll put my money on the Health Quality Council every time. Will he address the issue of what the Health Quality Council says are the realistic wait times?

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And certainly I support the work of the Health Quality Council and said on numerous occasions in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, about how much we value the work that the Health Quality Council does for the people of Saskatchewan. But, Mr. Speaker, the work that *The Globe and Mail* presented yesterday firmly indicates, Mr. Speaker, that there are discrepancies between the provinces as to how wait times are calculated.

Mr. Speaker, we are working collectively to ensure that we come up with a formula that allows every province to be compared apples to apples, not apples to oranges, Mr. Speaker. In the case of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, we now have a formula that other provinces are looking at as the way to determine and calculate wait times. We are continuing to work with the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency. But, Mr. Speaker, let it be said . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McMorris: — That minute sure slips by in a hurry. Betty Lou Palko of Hudson Bay, who we've talked about before, had a biopsy to confirm that she had cancer October 16. She had surgery the following week. Now she's being told that she'll have to wait at least three months to start treatment. Some time is needed for healing after the operation. However, her real life experience seems to contradict the minister when he says the wait times that he has quoted in this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, how could somebody have to . . . how come anyone would have to wait three months for treatment in this province when the Health Quality Council says that's far too long?

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Again, Mr. Speaker, as I'd indicated when the Health Quality Council report came out, I indicated to the member opposite, to the media, and to the people of Saskatchewan that we welcomed the report of the Health Quality Council, and more importantly the Health Quality Council had shared their data with the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency in advance. Mr. Speaker, they had already begun working on issues relating to reducing those wait times.

Mr. Speaker, we now are close to being — because we have recruited, fully staffed, within the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, Mr. Speaker — we have just brought online in October a brand new linear accelerator which is doing additional testing for the cancer agency and for patients. And, Mr. Speaker, we have now got in place, working towards helping us meet our guidelines under the national accord, the wait times task force,

Mr. Speaker, that is helping us to bring better efficiency through to the system.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Gayle Posehn was watching TV last night and saw the article on this very issue. She was so outraged that she phoned the minister's office this morning. Mrs. Posehn was told that she would have to wait 60 days before the cancer clinic would even call her to set the date for radiation and chemotherapy.

Mr. Speaker, the minister's saying those numbers are wrong. But, Mr. Speaker, the Health Quality Council is stating those numbers would probably be pretty close to being correct. The two ladies that I have just cited today would say those numbers are correct. When will he quit downplaying the extremely long wait for treatment in this province? In BC the wait time is 11 days, in Alberta it's 21 days, and in Manitoba it's 14 days. In Saskatchewan the mean time is 91 days. Mr. Speaker, women in our province should not have to wait three times as long for treatment as women in other provinces.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And as I indicated yesterday to the media and as I indicated to the member earlier today, the way in which those numbers have been calculated across Canada are apples to oranges, Mr. Speaker. The start times and the end times are not the same in each province and as a result of that, Mr. Speaker, these numbers are . . . We cannot compare one province to another using those numbers.

That having been said, Mr. Speaker, we are aware that our wait times are too long and, Mr. Speaker, we have been working on this with the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency and with the oncologists in this province to ensure that we can do better. And in fact, Mr. Speaker, this year alone, as members opposite are aware, the budget that we're currently in provides \$73 million to the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency — that's a sixteen and a half per cent or a \$10 million increase over last year. Mr. Speaker, the bulk of that is to reduce wait times.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Government Funding for Community Facilities

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, last week the NDP government announced a \$100 million building communities fund. It's to be used for capital projects such as rinks, museums, and art galleries. On Monday night in committee, the Leader of the Opposition and I asked for the program criteria so we could talk about it to our constituencies. But the minister's answers were vague and unclear. In fact, he really didn't have answers at all.

Surely this government would have some idea on how it's going to spend the money and hand it out before they announce the funds. For the sake of all the members in the House and for our constituents, can the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation please outline the criteria for this fund?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, the building communities program will come into existence soon and the criteria will be announced when the program is announced. They're still being developed, Mr. Speaker. And when they are, everyone will know clearly what they are.

They're intended to address, Mr. Speaker, a very important infrastructure concern that Saskatchewan has in concert with every other province across the nation. A quick assessment of just the swimming pools, arenas, and rinks, Mr. Speaker, would point to here in Saskatchewan a need, if you were to refurbish or replace those which were in need of that, a \$750 million challenge just for that, just in Saskatchewan alone.

Consequently, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has joined with other provinces across the nation, unanimously asking the federal government to come together in preparation for our 150th anniversary of Canada, in the same way that Canada did as we came to the centennial of this great nation, to come together with a program. And I would ask the Leader of the Opposition whether he would support that as well.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning's *StarPhoenix* editorial states under the headline, and I quote, "Hagel's fund' public paid electioneering":

In turning loose the perennially jolly Hagel to play Santa in a business suit, the targets will be venues with the potential to provide maximum political payoff.

There's no criteria. The minister has no answers. And this government isn't being accountable. And one has to ask: is this government just running around the province handing out cheques willy-nilly for a pre-election campaign to buy votes?

If this is truly an arm's-length program — and it's supposed to be — will the minister promise the House today that he won't be the one with the cheque at the end of his arm when it comes time for doling out money and photo ops?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Well, Mr. Speaker, there was a time, there was a time in the history of Saskatchewan when the Leader of

the Saskatchewan Party worked in one of the offices on the third floor of this building in which cheques were handed out willy-nilly. I'm sure that's where the idea comes from. Well, Mr. Speaker, willy-nilly is dead, Mr. Speaker.

There is a project that needs to be done here in Saskatchewan that has been ignored for too long. When we're concerned about quality of life in the province of Saskatchewan, surely sport, recreation, and culture facilities are part of that picture. And as we have had opportunities to address infrastructure over recent years, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately communities have always felt the priorities of roads, sewers, and bridges. And I understand that.

Mr. Speaker, this is a chance for Saskatchewan to take the next step, to provide for Saskatchewan people facilities to address the quality of life in our province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I think we should review this situation. We have \$100 million in a new fund. We are on the eve of an election. We're not one word from this government on criteria or on accountability. Does that sound familiar to anyone? They say, those that don't pay attention to history, those that don't pay attention to history are bound to repeat mistakes.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister . . .

The Speaker: — Order please. Order please. I invite the member to put her question.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is this: is this the NDP version of Fair Share Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — How can we possibly trust this NDP government, that it won't be using taxpayers' money to prop up their sinking political fortunes across this province on the eve of an election?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Well, Mr. Speaker, Fair Share Saskatchewan. I'm sure the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party had a great deal to do with the design of that disastrous program.

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker. Does the hon. member suggest that as we are at this stage in our term of office, that somehow the government should cease to function? Well clearly not, Mr. Speaker. There's a need to be addressed.

And, Mr. Speaker, there are two sides to this legislature — one

side that is concerned about Saskatchewan people and one side that's concerned about the Saskatchewan Party.

Well I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we are concerned about families being able to share the benefit of life in Saskatchewan and that this will be a place for young people to build a future. Mr. Speaker, that's where we're going. If we have to drag them kicking and screaming, then I guess that's what we're going to have to do.

[14:30]

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes . . . Order, please. Order, order. I would ask members for order, please. And the Chair recognizes the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I think the minister wants me to remind him that Fair Share Saskatchewan did not help Devine and it's not going to help the NDP government either. Mr. Speaker, in 1967 we built rinks and halls . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please, order. Order, order. The Chair recognizes the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 1967 we did build rinks and halls over this province. But under this NDP leader, Saskatchewan continues to lose people — 37,000 people in this province since he became leader.

Mr. Speaker, there is a huge need for infrastructures and we need it in rural Saskatchewan and urban Saskatchewan. But we want to make sure it's going to be fair for everybody and it's not just to buy votes in a seat where this government thinks they have a chance of winning.

Will you promise this legislature it'll be fairly shared right across this province?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Well, Mr. Speaker, yesterday in question period I asked if there were any over there who were candidates for the Devine government or to try and be a part of the Devine government. We got one, we got one here today. Yesterday the only one who dared to put up his hand, Mr. Speaker, was the youngest one who's being booted out so that they can try and bring back one of the old guard.

But, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, let us be very, very clear. This is not government done the way when the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party worked on the third floor of this building. Those days are dead.

Mr. Speaker, we are interested in moving forward. And part of that picture is the quality of life that young people will know. Young people will hear it and will come to Saskatchewan as part of building their proud futures in the province of Saskatchewan. That's where we're going.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

New Commemorative Naming Program for Geographic Features

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to again recognize the members of the . . .

The Speaker: — Order please. I would ask Assembly to come to order. Order please. The Minister of Industry and Resources, and I'd like you to start over.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would again call attention of the Assembly to the presence of the members of the Saskatchewan Geographic Names Board who are with us today, namely the Chair, Gib Macaulay; member, Keith Goulet; and secretary to the board, Art Marbach. Other members who are not in attendance today but who could be recognized are Doug Chisholm, Eva Weisner, Stewart Raby, J. W. Brennan, Arok Wolvengrey.

And I'm pleased to announce today that the Saskatchewan Geographic Names Board has approved the adoption of a new commemorative naming program for the province of Saskatchewan. The new program will supplement the existing geographic names program that recognizes armed forces personnel and merchant sailors who lost their lives during the Second World War and the Korean War.

The new commemorative naming program will honour individuals who have lost their lives and those that have made significant contributions to the province of Saskatchewan. Natural geographic features including lakes, rivers, points, and bays predominantly in Saskatchewan's North will be named in their honour.

Candidates for selection will fall under the following three categories. Firstly, Armed Forces including Canadian army, navy, regular, and reserve forces and peacekeepers while on active duty on United Nations sanctioned missions. Secondly, police officers and emergency response personnel including but not restricted to federal, provincial, and municipal police forces, Professional Fire Fighters Association, and emergency medical technicians while on active duty. And thirdly, Saskatchewan people of prominence who have passed away, including Saskatchewan people who have made important contributions to the province.

The Saskatchewan Geographic Names Board falls under the responsibility of the Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan and exists under The Geographic Names Board Act to handle and recommend requests for naming of geographic features within Saskatchewan.

To date, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Geographic Names Board, which was originally established in 1947, has named 3,913 northern lakes, peninsulas, bays, rivers, and islands after those who sacrificed their lives for Canada. As with the original

program, families of those honoured in the commemorative naming program will be contacted and receive a commemorative scroll as well as research about the named geographic feature.

The new commemorative naming program is a natural extension to the original geographic names program. In recent years the board has received numerous requests to expand the scope of the original program. This new commemorative naming program addresses that need.

Thanks again to the members of the Saskatchewan Geographic Names Board for their work in developing a fitting recognition to Saskatchewan's heroes. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, we're pleased to join with the government members and welcome these gentlemen and thank them for their continuing work and to appreciate and recognize the changes that our province is going through.

I note Doug Chisholm, one of the members who is not here today, is a well-known northern photographer. I'm familiar with his work, and I'm pleased to see that these people are participating in this process.

It's been in the past, Mr. Speaker, part of our culture to have unique and interesting and novel names. To name a few — Elbow, Eyebrow, Climax, Moose Jaw, Arm River, Wood River, Carrot River, Thunder Creek, Swift Current, Last Mountain, Touchwood, and Big Muddy. And those are only just to name a few.

As time passes, Mr. Speaker, and we enter the second century of our province, we have a large group of individuals who need to be recognized. These are people who have made significant contributions to our province, and some have made very substantial sacrifices and some who in military endeavours have made the ultimate sacrifice. And it's appropriate that our province recognize the contribution of these individuals, and it's very appropriate that those individuals now have their names immortalized by having points of interest named after them.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to conclude just by pointing out that I understand that current protocol indicates that it's inappropriate to use names of current sitting members for naming purposes. However we understand that come next spring a new name might be available, and that name would be Calvert creek. Mr. Speaker, thank you.

The Speaker: — Order please. I would just . . . Order. Order please. I would just . . . Order. Order. I would just remind members that either directly or indirectly they should not be using names of members sitting in the House. Order. Order. Order. Order.

Why is the Premier on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — I seek leave to introduce a guest.

The Speaker: — The Premier is requesting leave for introductions. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. The Chair recognizes the Premier.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank all members. Joining us during question period in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, is Señor Enrique Lobo. Señor Lobo is with the Mexican embassy in the agricultural office. Minister Lobo and I and several others were just an hour or little more ago burning the brand at Agribition.

Señor Lobo and the other international visitors are here at Agribition, this tremendous trade show that happens once a year in our province. And this year we are celebrating the international visitors. So I would ask all members to welcome the minister to the legislature this afternoon.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — And why is the member from Rosetown-Elrose on his feet?

Mr. Hermanson: — Asking for leave also to introduce guests.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. The Chair recognizes the member for Rosetown-Elrose.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And on behalf of the official opposition, we too would like to extend our greetings to Señor Lobo — I hope I have pronounced the name correctly — a minister from Mexico who is here visiting our great farm exhibition, Agribition.

We're proud of the Agribition and we're so glad to see visitors come from around the world, particularly distinguished visitors like our guest from Mexico. We hope you enjoy our warm hospitality and take back our greetings to your fine country. And thank you for attending the legislature this afternoon.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Government Whip.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government, I'll be tabling responses to written questions 59 to 70 inclusive.

The Speaker: — Responses to all questions 59 to 70 inclusive

have been submitted.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 37 — The Court of Appeal Amendment Act, 2006/Loi de 2006 modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur la Cour d'appel

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

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

Currently Saskatchewan has a nine-member Court of Appeal. This is a larger Appeal court than is needed in this province. An amendment will reduce the size of the court to seven judges, effective as vacancies occur.

The former chief justice of the court suggested these changes and in speeches to lawyers' organizations indicated the reduction in the size of the court would be appropriate in light of the workload of the court. The appropriate time to reduce the size of the court is this autumn so that the legislation is passed before or at the time that some of the more senior judges decide to retire. The government is confident that reducing the size of the court will not impact timely access to the court.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of An Act to amend The Court of Appeal Act, 2000.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 37, The Court of Appeal Amendment Act, 2006 be now read a second time. The Chair recognizes the member for Melfort.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to speak briefly on Bill No. 37, An Act to amend The Court of Appeal Act, 2000. Mr. Speaker, clearly the intention of this Bill is very straightforward. It reduces a number of judges on the Court of Appeal from nine judges to seven judges.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not too sure if this is the NDP's way of dealing with the labour shortage or indeed the population drop is such that we no longer need as many Appeal Court judges in this province because of our diminishing requirements or specifically what the intent of the legislation is.

Mr. Speaker, I think, in my experience, that the Court of Appeal has required that there are sufficient judges in order to hear the cases brought forward to it. And I would hope that this isn't the short-sighted move by this government, and we will end up in the very near future having to increase the number of seats in the Court of Appeal.

I'm sure that our Justice critic will want to consult with the judiciary and the legal profession to see if this action is appropriate to the number of judges that this province needs, and in order for that to happen, at this time I'd move to adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Melfort

that debate on second reading of Bill 37 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. 38 — The Wildlife Habitat Protection Amendment Act, 2006 (No. 2)

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of The Wildlife Habitat Protection Amendment Act, 2006 (No. 2).

Mr. Speaker, The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act currently protects 1.4 million hectares of natural uplands and wetlands in the province's agricultural areas. This habitat provides food, water, and shelter to more than 400 species of wildlife. The intent, Mr. Speaker, of the Act is to conserve wildlife habitat while allowing traditional and compatible uses to continue.

[14:45]

Much of the land under The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act is leased to cattle producers who use it for grazing or hay. Mr. Speaker, agricultural producers who lease this land have proven to be good stewards. As a result, wildlife is benefiting.

Today, Mr. Speaker, we are recommending that 275 hectares of land be removed from the Act. The 275 hectares are made up of parcels of Crown land that lessees have expressed an interest in buying or in some cases trading land they currently own for land protected under the Act. Upon approval Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food will sell the land to the lessees at fair market value or trade it for an equivalent parcel. Some of the land the lessees want to buy or trade has existing important natural values located on the land. We will continue to protect those values through conservation easements.

Mr. Speaker, we are also proposing to add another 1,246 hectares of suitable Crown land under The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act to compensate for these withdrawals. This reflects the no net-loss policy of the province and will ensure important habitat values are protected.

Mr. Speaker, I now move second reading of The Wildlife Habitat Protection Amendment Act, 2006 (No. 2).

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of the Environment that Bill No. 38, The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act, 2006 (No. 2) be now read a second time. The Chair recognizes the member for Melfort.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon and to speak on Bill No. 38, An Act to Amend the Wildlife Habitat Protection Act.

Mr. Speaker, in the minister's comments he mentioned that this was a trade-off of important wildlife protected acres or hectares that have played a very important role in preserving the natural

habitat in our province, and I think that is very definitely an important thing to have this balance. And in order to maintain the balance in harmony with proper use of these parcels of land, the minister has acknowledged that by and large this land is used for ranging cattle in the southwest part of the province. And I think that over the years, the ranchers and cattlemen in that part of the province have been very good stewards of this land that the government has established as Crown land for the protection of the habitat and the natural wildlife that's on it.

Mr. Speaker, the official opposition very much supports the concept that if land is taken out of the wildlife protection protocol, that other land is placed into it so that we're not losing protected acres of land or hectares of land that are being used to protect wildlife.

Mr. Speaker, as well as that, I think it's important that if ranchers have made an important case for their desire to purchase some of these lands and so therefore it's being taken out of the habitat protection, that that is also an important consideration so that these farms remain and these ranches remain viable and appropriate to continue to do the business of raising livestock and protecting the other habitat that's under their lease arrangements.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the Environment critic for the official opposition is going to want to speak to some of the ranchers in that area to make sure that this balance of removing land from protection and establishing new land for protection is appropriate and is going to fit in a harmonious way with the needs of the ranching community in the Southwest. In order for that to be facilitated, I would at this time move to adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Melfort that debate on second reading of Bill 38 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. 39 — The Tobacco Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Healthy Living Services.

Hon. Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to give second reading of The Tobacco Damages and Health Care Costs Recovery Act.

Mr. Speaker, joining us for this important day are a few of the people who have been instrumental in the success of the tobacco control strategy in Saskatchewan: June Blau, president of the Saskatchewan Coalition for Tobacco Reduction; Lynn Greaves, vice-president of the Saskatchewan Coalition for Tobacco Reduction; Rhae Ann Bromley, communications director, Heart and Stroke Foundation of Saskatchewan; Paul van Loon, health educator, Lung Association of Saskatchewan; Donna Pasiechnik, tobacco control coordinator for the Canadian Cancer Society, Saskatchewan branch; Keith Karasin, executive director of the Canadian Cancer Society, Saskatchewan branch.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Addley: — Mr. Speaker, we know that tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of diseases and premature death in Canada. We also know that the financial and human cost of tobacco-related disease is enormous. This legislation enables Saskatchewan to initiate litigation against the tobacco industry to recover the health care costs of tobacco-related disease.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation, which follows similar statutes adopted by British Columbia, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Manitoba continues our efforts to protect the health of Saskatchewan people and raise further awareness of tobacco-related illness. This legislation changes the basis for lawsuits against the tobacco industry. It enables the province to pursue an aggregate lawsuit for health care costs of individuals treated for tobacco-related illness and disease.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is a leader in the war against tobacco. We've taken decisive steps and shown leadership in tobacco control initiatives like our smoke-free public places legislation and ban on the promotion and display of tobacco products where children have access. We want our young people to be empowered and to make healthy choices and to grow up tobacco-free. And we want to hold the tobacco industry accountable for the ravaging human and financial cost that tobacco has on our society.

Based on Health Canada reports on the effects of tobacco use nationwide, we estimate that every year in Saskatchewan more than 1,000 people die from tobacco use. We estimate the health care costs associated with tobacco use at about \$145 million a year. Mr. Speaker, this legislation enables us to hold the tobacco industry, not taxpayers, accountable for the costs of treating smoking-caused illness. This legislation and the litigation it enables will also expose the practices of tobacco manufacturers and raise more awareness about the hazards of tobacco use.

With this legislation, we're sending a message to the tobacco industry that they need to take responsibility for the damage tobacco leaves in its wake. With that, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of this Bill. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — The Minister of Healthy Living Services has moved second reading. I recognize the member for Melfort.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and to speak on an Act, Bill No. 39, to recover damages and health care costs from manufacturers of tobacco.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the official opposition has had a long-standing practice of co-operating in every way possible with the government in dealing with the tobacco-related diseases that are facing Saskatchewan people. Certainly in the past we have very much supported the initiatives that would destabilize and denormalize the use of tobacco in our province. And if there is any disappointment that I think we all share in this House, that there's still far too many people using tobacco

and tobacco products. And there's far too many young people that are still starting to use these products even though the information is so overwhelming and compelling of the serious damages that will happen to people if they engage in the use of tobacco products.

Madam Deputy Speaker, many years ago, when most of us in this House were young people, the knowledge wasn't so clear cut and so definitive in terms of the harmful side effects of the tobacco industry. And in my opinion, in many instances the tobacco industry has benefited inappropriately from the sale of tobacco and have been able to walk away from any responsibility for the diseases that clearly science has identified as clearly related to the side effects of tobacco consumption.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I think this legislation, at least in the initial wording of it, seems to do the job in terms of allowing the government to enter into direct lawsuits either, I suspect, individually or with other provinces if that's appropriate. It would seem to me, in a very quick reading of this, it gives the government the flexibility it needs in order to enter into various types of suits that could indeed try to recover from the tobacco industry some of the health care costs that our provinces have incurred over the years and continue to incur as a result of tobacco-related diseases.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I hope that if this is what the legislation indeed covers off . . . and I know our health critic is going to want to speak to the members of the coalition that has been promoting this type of action in order to denormalize and destabilize the use of tobacco to make sure everything has been included. And I think as well, Madam Deputy Speaker, it's probably appropriate for us to speak to people in the legal profession as well to make sure from a legal standpoint that there has nothing been overlooked in permitting the province the maximum flexibility in order to pursue these manufacturers of tobacco.

And finally, Madam Deputy Speaker, if all of these things can be met — that indeed it shows that we have given ourselves the capacity to pursue legal suit for the recovery of these costs — I trust that the government will indeed embark on that kind of a venue in a timely way, and we won't just simply threaten and postpone or pretend that this is an action that we need and then not take concrete action either alone or in concert with other provinces in Canada.

Tobacco use needs to be denormalized. It needs to be destabilized. And the manufacturers of tobacco have to get a clear message in our country that we do not think that they should get a free ride and that they should be held accountable for the tremendous ravages of the diseases related to tobacco on our citizens.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, we're very positive with the intent of this legislation. And for the reasons that I laid out, in terms of consulting with the people that are indeed involved and have been involved in the destabilization of tobacco and the legal community, in order to allow those consultations to take place, at this stage I would adjourn debate.

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.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 34

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Atkinson that **Bill No. 34 — The Labour Market Commission Act** be now read a second time.]

The Deputy Speaker: — Recognize the member for Cypress Hills.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's a privilege to be able to stand in the House again today and comment on this particular piece of legislation. It seems like just a day or two ago that I was doing this very thing when the legislation was being proposed through ministerial statement. And much of what I said then I think I could probably repeat today with the same kind of sense of importance and urgency. The fact of the matter is, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I greet this piece of legislation with a mixture of optimism and real concern.

And I guess the optimism is largely around the role of this commission and the good work that is envisioned for this particular commission and the objectives of the commission as outlined in the legislation. The real concern, Madam Deputy Speaker, comes as a result of the news we heard today.

During question period earlier today, we learned that by statistical analysis, by the province's own statistical branch, that this province has lost 18,000 people in the last two years — 18,000 people have been lost to the province of Saskatchewan, to the economy of Saskatchewan in the last two years. Out-migration has taken that number of people out of our population numbers. And over the last five or six years that number swells to something in the neighbourhood of 35, 36, 37,000 people.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, as I understand it by what the government has said, there are something in the neighbourhood of 12 to 15,000 jobs in this province currently available going unfilled — that there are just not the individuals, not the bodies, not the skilled people here to fill those jobs. Well when you compare that with the news we heard today about 18,000 having left the province in the last two years alone, that means we could have filled every one of those vacancies that exist in this province, if those people had felt that their opportunity and their future was here.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there has got to be a reason why that number of people would leave the province in this short period of time. There has to be an underlying cause. And while this Labour Market Commission is going to be tasked with the job of researching labour market trends and establishing linkages with the regional and sectorial planning bodies and so forth, the

fact of the matter is, Madam Deputy Speaker, that we would not have the crisis in labour today if this government hadn't overseen, or presided over, the out-migration of 18,000 people in the last two years.

[15:00]

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, it's no wonder that Saskatchewan's unemployment rate is so low. When you have a job vacancy number in the range of 12 to 15,000 and you have that many people leaving the province, there's work available for everybody. And it's going to be a real challenge not just for this government but for the commission that this particular piece of legislation speaks to, to address that shortage.

I do find a weakness in this particular piece of legislation in that while it strikes the commission and establishes a mandate — and I mentioned two of the objectives of the commission already — but while it has done that, there does not appear to be in the piece of legislation any obligation on the part of the minister to whom this commission will report. There's no obligation on the part of the minister to accept the reports or to act on the information that the commission will have derived as a result of its efforts. So I think that might be something that we want to be mindful of as we look at this piece of legislation going forward.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this particular Bill referred to as An Act respecting the establishment of the Saskatchewan Labour Market Commission outlines, as I indicated, several priorities of undertaking. And we talked about providing advice to the minister on provincial, regional, or sectorial labour market issues to establish linkages to regional and sectorial planning bodies, and to examine sectorial labour market plans.

There's a third priority area of study for this particular commission, and that is to research and provide analysis of provincial, regional, and sectorial labour market issues, to foster co-operation among unions, among business, First Nations and Métis organizations, including the training institutions of this province and the provincial government to develop the labour market strategy. And finally to communicate and consult with both labour, business, and government, First Nations and Métis organizations and so on. And then to do anything else prescribed in regulations. We don't know what that might be at this point yet, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I want to acknowledge the fact that there has been a considerable amount of good work that has gone into the creation of this particular piece of legislation, most of the credit for which goes to the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour and the provincial chamber of commerce.

They had representatives who came together and said, look we've got a labour issue in this province. It's problematic right now. There is going to be a growing need for skilled labour in this province as the economy develops and as it expands into a variety of different areas, as we look to expanding the development of our natural resources and maybe refining some of that activity here. The innovative agenda that is going to come to bear on some of that activity is going to create a demand for more and more skilled people in our economy. So they took the initiative to come together and to hammer out

what this particular commission might look like.

In fact, Madam Deputy Speaker, it replaces the former Labour Force Development Board in a couple of different ways. It replaces it in terms of mandate and it replaces it in terms of structure. And as I understand it at this point, it's anticipated that this particular commission will have somewhere in the range of 21 people serving on its board. It will be able to strike subcommittees that will look at specific issues and it will be a little more focused . . . excuse me, Madam Deputy Speaker, a more focused approach to developing a labour force strategy for the province.

If there's a downside, I assume that it might be that while several institutions are named as players in this particular commission, not all institutions are going to be involved. I believe the universities in the province have been omitted from this, and I think that might create some level of concern at that particular level of capacity in the province. But nevertheless, I don't think that those are major issues and that they are issues that will cause any impediment to the particular piece of legislation that's before us.

So I do want to say, Madam Deputy Speaker, that although there are some questions about how this commission . . . how the commission's work will be regarded and responded to by the government, I think the idea is appropriate and is probably worth pursuing. And as a matter of fact, because of the importance of this subject matter to the future of this province, I would suggest, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the House take this opportunity to move this piece of legislation forward to committee.

The Deputy Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the Minister of Advanced Education and Employment, Bill No. 34, The Labour Market Commission Act, that the Bill now be read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Second reading of this Bill.

The Deputy Speaker: — To which committee shall this Bill be referred?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Madam Deputy Speaker, I move that Bill No. 34, the Saskatchewan labour market commission Act be referred to the Standing Committee on the Economy.

The Deputy Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister for Advanced Education and Employment that Bill No. 34, The Labour Market Commission Act be referred to the Standing Committee on the Economy. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Bill No. 35

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Thomson that **Bill No. 35 — The Infrastructure Fund Act** be now read a second time.]

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member for Wood River.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today and talk a little bit about The Infrastructure Fund Act. Apparently the purpose of this Bill is to create the Saskatchewan Infrastructure Fund and it states that money will be transferred from the GRF [General Revenue Fund] into this fund, but also money can be transferred from this fund back into the GRF. The point of this fund as outlined in the Bill is to build community infrastructure to improve capacity for social and economic development in Saskatchewan and community-related recreational centres.

Now it's very interesting, Madam Deputy Speaker, that \$100 million is set aside so quickly for infrastructure when we're approaching an election. It's also interesting to note what kind of consultation has been done with municipalities, urban and rural, with reference to the establishment of this fund. And I would submit that there's been no consultation done on this Act at all. It's quickly throwing together a Bill to create incentives prior to an election.

And I can just imagine, I can just imagine people sitting around a room over there saying, I think we're in political trouble. How can we, how can we get a little bit of our vote back? Well let's throw \$100 million at it and see how it bounces. Well what's the criteria going to be? Well it just doesn't matter what the criteria is. We'll just tell the people of the province we have \$100 million for you, trust us. Well I don't quite buy that.

So we probably look at the minister of youth, culture, recreation and he's probably saying, hmm, have I got a plan. They want a new arena complex in Moose Jaw. This could be my way to try and win an election. Well it looks like there's problems in North Battleford maybe too because they're building an arena I understand. Now there's enough money in the 100 million to cover off these two arenas. And would that be described by people of this province as nothing more than electioneering? We will take \$100 million and maybe we can buy some votes in North Battleford. Maybe we can buy some in Moose Jaw. So I'm wondering if those two ministers figure that they're in political trouble and that's why they wanted to established this fund.

It's very, very interesting, Madam Deputy Speaker, that no criteria would be established before the money is thrown out to the public. And I have to really look at a statement made by the minister in committee when he was asked about the criteria. And he said, "Projects would be dealt with each on the basis of their own merit and there could be the possibility of projects that are already under way."

On the basis of their own merit. Who is the determining people about what the merit of a project is? Like my colleague from Cypress Hills . . . How about the arena in Shaunavon? Who's going to determine if that merits consideration? How can

anybody possibly say, well they will be considered, when there's no criteria for the project?

The way this come out right now is if the project happens to be in Moose Jaw and the project happens to be in North Battleford, that's the criteria. Well we might find another couple of places. Let's see. Where could we possibly . . . We might have to put something into Regina South because I think that minister's in trouble too, so maybe we'd better put some money into Regina South.

Well there's lots of other places where there's trouble on the political front for the NDP government, Madam Deputy Speaker. And I don't know where all this \$100 million is going to go. And I don't believe that they even know where it's going to go.

All we have to do is look at some of the past projects. The Community Initiatives Fund was one. That was kind of set up after the NDP government failed to honour the 10 per cent of VLT [video lottery terminal] revenues for the communities. They said in true socialist fashion, we know better than the people of the communities, so we're going to take this money into a central fund called the Community Initiatives Fund and we'll dole it out to those that meet the criteria. Well unfortunately, Madam Deputy Speaker, I know in my area people applied for funds out of this. Well I'm sorry, you don't meet the criteria.

So I'm very, very worried about how they're going to establish criteria for this fund because if you happen to be from an area where we're not going to be able to get votes, I'm sorry, you don't qualify.

Now we also know . . . And I remember the minister of the day when questioned in estimates said . . . There are an awful lot of people and communities that have projects that they've asked for money from the Community Initiatives Fund, and they were denied. And the minister stated, and I can't give you the exact quote, but the minister stated in estimates that everybody who qualified for money from the fund were given funds.

There's a key word in there, Madam Deputy Speaker — those who qualified. Well who sets the criteria again? It's a group of men and women sit around a table and look at where we can get votes. That's going to be the criteria.

So in that particular year, Madam Deputy Speaker, there was something in the neighbourhood of \$7 million taken from the Community Initiatives Fund and guess where it was put? Back into General Revenue Fund. Doesn't that sound a little bit like this project right now where it says in the Bill that money can be transferred from the GRF to this fund, but it can also be transferred from this fund back to the GRF?

So if you read between the lines on this, it's those that qualify, those that qualify. If you're from Regina South you can qualify for it. But oh by the way, the rest of you don't qualify so we can slough this back into General Revenue Fund if we so desire. So we're only interested in putting money into where we can attempt to buy votes.

Madam Deputy Speaker, look at where the \$100 million . . .

let's just look at \$100 million and the possibilities. My colleague from Saskatoon Silver Springs today in a petition talked about the children's hospital in Saskatoon, or lack thereof. Seven years. Now how many children's hospital would \$100 million provide? We're only looking for one. But how many could it provide? And so now, now we've got \$100 million as a slush election fund and yet no children's hospital.

I'm wondering, I'm wondering if the group of men and women that sat around the table and said, let's throw \$100 million out there that we can use, I wonder if they considered something like revenue sharing — \$100 million in revenue sharing. Well I can see from the socialist perspective that doesn't work because we'd be sharing money with the municipalities and gosh, they might be able to do with it what they want. We won't have control over it.

So this is that whole attitude again. We have to have central control. We have to have central control over everything and we will decide. We as the NDP government will decide whether we're going to get votes in that area or not, and that's going to be the determining factor who's going to get money.

How about \$100 million in education portion of property tax relief? Wouldn't that have gone a long way to help the people in the province on a tax relief basis? No, probably not because how many votes are they going to get generally in the province? When you're down in the polls, now they've got a ton of money into specific areas.

[15:15]

Madam Deputy Speaker, the NDP government talks about transparency. Well this one is very, very transparent. Everybody in this province can see through what this government is doing with this \$100 million infrastructure fund. And they also . . . And the member from Athabasca always talks about, we welcome scrutiny. Well I can assure you, I can assure everybody that this will be under the scrutiny of people from this province.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it was very interesting in today's *StarPhoenix* how transparent this is. Here is the article from, the editorial from the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix*. And we heard some of it before. But this is how transparent this fund is. And the headline is, and I quote: "'Hagel's fund' public paid electioneering."

And there's some very, very good quotes in here. Election coming, ". . . watch for the spigot on the public treasury to open wider."

It's referred to as "Hagel's nifty fund", and I'm quoting: ". . . what's lacking in . . . government spending decisions is any indication that there's long-term vision."

No long-term vision. And it's really great. And we heard about it in question period.

In turning loose the perennially jolly Hagel to play Santa in a business suit, the targets will be venues with the potential to provide maximum political payoff.

That's how transparent this whole fund is.

And a quote again, Madam Deputy Speaker, from the article. And to me, it rings very, very true. And I quote: ". . . Premier Calvert and his government are rushing to buy votes by spending every nickel and then some."

Madam Deputy Speaker, I know there's other people that wish to speak to this Bill. But I would like to, I would like to . . . I would just like to close my remarks by reiterating to members opposite that you can take \$100 million, Madam Deputy Speaker, and you can attempt to buy votes, but you can't buy imagination. You can take \$100 million in an infrastructure fund and try and buy some votes. But I would suggest, Madam Deputy Speaker, there's no amount of money that will buy any credibility for those men and women on that side. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, you can attempt to buy votes around this province, but I would tell you that there's no amount of money that can buy integrity for those men and women.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member for Humboldt.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am very pleased to be able to enter the debate on The Infrastructure Fund Act. And as my colleague before me said, it should be probably more appropriately named the election slush fund Act. But at any rate it appears the minister isn't partied out from going around the province through the centennial year and having numerous photo ops. He seems to think that he needs another \$100 million worth of photo ops as he goes around the province. Only this time, Madam Deputy Speaker, he's going to choose strategic communities — and don't think he won't. That is what this is going to be about. It's going to be choosing strategic communities in which to spend this \$100 million.

There's a number of issues that I would like to bring up while I speak to this Bill, because I think The Infrastructure Fund Act flies in the face of a lot of other things that this government's been doing.

I know yesterday I brought up the issue of the Community Initiatives Fund that was given to the community of Bradwell. And there was a criteria for that fund. The minister doesn't seem to be sure what the criteria is going to be for this new fund, for this new election readiness fund, but there was a criteria for the community initiatives grant. And Bradwell filled out their application and I've gone through the criteria that they needed to follow. It was on the website at one time. That criteria has changed now of course. But I went through it and nowhere in the listing of ineligible projects and costs, nowhere in that list, Madam Deputy Speaker, does it say anything about in-kind contributions of either materials or labour. It is not considered an ineligible expense.

And I looked at Bradwell's application and Bradwell's application was very clear. It stated it very clearly that part of their expenses in their application was going to be in-kind contributions of labour and in-kind contributions of materials. And that's common especially, Madam Deputy Speaker, in rural Saskatchewan. Because everybody in the small

communities pull together and they donate what they can, be it their time, be it their equipment, be it materials that they have — quite often on their farms. They will donate it to a project that is for the betterment of the community.

And yet the minister wants to claw back part of these funds, even though it went through the process. So what process is going to be in place for the new fund? Is it going to be as poorly organized as the process was in place for the Community Initiatives Fund? Is it going to be as incompetently run as obviously the process was for the other fund that was run through his department?

I look at, again, the government's material on the community initiatives grant and I see, how will the applications be evaluated, Madam Deputy Speaker, and it said the proposal will be assessed for eligibility. Point two is, once the proposal is deemed eligible, the proposal will be evaluated against established criteria. So it's looked through not once, but twice. They decide in the first go-over of the application of whether or not it will qualify. Then they go over it again to make sure that it meets the established criteria.

Bradwell did that. It passed both processes. They received their funding. They built their project and then the department wants their money back. So is that how poorly this new grant money is going to be available?

And we really have to question that because in your small communities, I think it's very, very important that they know precisely what's eligible and what isn't. Once they receive the funds, it is a significant hardship in the smaller communities to have to return those funds. If you've got an NDP government clawing that money back, it's extremely hard for your small communities to come up with those funds to pay it back.

It's also interesting in that particular project, and it'll be interesting to see what criteria will be on this new election readiness grant, what the criteria will be. Because in your smaller communities, especially in rural Saskatchewan — but it's not unique to rural Saskatchewan, it's also important to urban — is volunteers, volunteer material, volunteer time. And I know that the member from Regina Wascana Plains has spoke to that in this Assembly on October 30. And I would like to quote from what the member had to say. She said:

... the Premier approached me three and a half years ago to engage with the voluntary sector and work collaboratively to establish a Saskatchewan context with the Canadian volunteerism initiative. During the International Year of the Volunteer, Ed Broadbent was commissioned to do a report on volunteerism in Canada, and in that report he identified that a healthy voluntary sector is extremely important to a civil society and is also an economic engine to the economy.

And I agree. I absolutely agree. Later on the member said:

Mr. Speaker, community-based and voluntary organizations are the backbone of the high quality of life Saskatchewan families enjoy. Saskatchewan people volunteer more than any other jurisdiction in Canada and that's by no accident. Through the voluntary sector

initiative, we have worked hard to achieve and maintain [the] ... distinction ... [that] we're going to continue working hard to strengthen our position as a national leader in voluntary participation.

And I agree with that as well. I believe that volunteers are extremely, extremely important. But in the case of Bradwell, that is the funding that was pulled. It was the funding that was allocated to cover the volunteers. The administrator for the community of Bradwell wrote me a letter, and I think he worded it far better than even I could in that letter.

He had received a letter from the minister's department, Mr. Brown, and Mr. Brown stated that the funding, a certain amount of funding would have to be returned, that they were clawing it back. And the reason that he gave was because they do not recognize volunteers' in-kind contributions.

Mr. Thurmeier wrote in his letter to me and I would like to quote:

Obviously Mr. Brown and others responsible for this program have never traveled Saskatchewan or they would understand that volunteer labour and "in kind" support are the most vital, critical and important part of any recreational, cultural and heritage project and their costs. In fact most small communities would not have any facilities without this crucial support.

As anyone from a small Saskatchewan community or having any understanding of rural Saskatchewan, knows, we do not have the money to contract out every project. We must rely on Saskatchewan's outstanding community spirit and volunteerism.

And how do the NDP value that strong community spirit? How do the NDP value the volunteerism that makes these community projects happen? They don't. They don't. They say they are worth nothing. They say that they are worth nothing, Madam Deputy Speaker, and that is a disgrace.

It is fine to have all the words saying that we love our volunteers. It's fine to give them awards. But let's put some action behind all of it because volunteers are absolutely crucial. It is fine to talk about recreation and culture and all of that happening around the province. It is extremely important. But a major way to support all of that in rural Saskatchewan is to support the volunteers who, quite frankly, will make it happen. Without them, it will not. It simply, simply will not.

Madam Deputy Speaker, my colleague spoke earlier on ... You know, we are wondering on this side of the House where the money is going to be allocated. We think it's very important. We will be scrutinizing that very closely. There is speculation not just in this House. There's speculation in the general public that this is going to be strategically placed and awarded to communities where it will be of a political advantage to the NDP. And it's a lot of money. But I really must wonder like where did the NDP go so badly off track? Where are their priorities?

I live in a community that has now been waiting for infrastructure money for over 10 years for a hospital. Over 10

years Humboldt has waited for this government to commit funding to their hospital and actually make the project happen. And every year it's a photo op. It's an opportunity. It's promised. It's promised. It's promised again. And it has never ever truly happened. The money that's needed has never been sent to Humboldt. The project ground has never been broken.

So when you look at this, when Humboldt and the community of Humboldt and the surrounding communities that are supporting the Humboldt hospital project look at this \$100 million allocated to rinks and museums and recreational facilities, they're going to question, are they going to have to wait 10 years?

If a community is promised money from this grant for a rink, for a museum, for some other facility, if they're promised that money, are they going to have to wait 10 years before they actually get the grant money? And I would say no. They're going to get it right away. All of a sudden that money is going to be available right away. And yet for something as critical as a new hospital, the community of Humboldt has waited year after year after year after year. Where are the priorities?

[15:30]

I absolutely agree that culture, recreation, all of that is essential for rural Saskatchewan, for all of Saskatchewan. It is extremely important. But health care is number one. It is the number one issue. And the NDP know that as well as we do on this side of the House. The well-being of the people of Saskatchewan has to be number one.

Why would a hospital project have a 10-year wait and a skating rink can get their money right away? What happens with the 10-year wait? Well with the 10-year wait, the cost for that project escalated astronomically. It tripled in what it was going to cost. And it didn't just cost the NDP more money. It's costing the communities more money. And it's extremely hard to raise that kind of money in the small communities that don't have a huge tax base.

So I think the people from Humboldt and the surrounding areas, the surrounding municipalities and small towns that are helping to fund the Humboldt hospital are going to be very, very interested to know where this \$100 million is going to go and how it's going to be allocated. And they're going to be watching very, very closely how strategically it will be awarded to the communities that will be to the best political advantage for the NDP.

My colleague mentioned as well an article that was in *The StarPhoenix*, and I don't think he quoted near enough into the record. I think there is a lot of things that is stated in that *StarPhoenix* article that should go in the record because it is a reflection of what the peoples of Saskatchewan are thinking when they hear this announcement. And it is a reflection of how closely the people of Saskatchewan will be watching the allocation of this fund and watching this minister going out and shaking hands with his big smile and awarding money to just certain communities when other communities are waiting for funding for hospitals.

I didn't even mention . . . and I should, Madam Deputy

Speaker. I've received two letters in the last two weeks — one from the village of Muenster, another one from the town of Lanigan — both of which are saying that the regional library system is struggling because of cutbacks in their funding. One is in the Parkland Regional Library system. The other community is in the Wheatland Regional Library system.

Both library systems are struggling to provide the services that they have been providing, let alone expand the services. And yet this is the NDP government that's saying literacy and museums and culture and all of that is a priority.

But we underfund . . . We've got the Finance minister chirping away, accusing me of not liking literacy. How absolutely ridiculous can you get? How absolutely ridiculous can the Finance minister get? You can't say you support literacy and underfund the library system. You can't say that and then underfund it. I know that it's a hardship that the federal government have cut fundings. I understand that. But so has the provincial government. Where is the provincial government's responsibility in cutting funding to the regional libraries?

So I think the Finance minister should check that out when he goes to do his budget for March in 2007. And I think if it's so important, and he's saying it is, that he better not only replace the funding that's been removed from the regional library system but he could also increase it at least, at the very least, by the rate of inflation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, *The StarPhoenix* article that I was talking about before the Finance minister interrupted to add his thoughts on this debate, so I would like to read that into the record. And it states:

. . . the government's creation of an "infrastructure fund" whose sole purpose is to have Culture and Recreation Minister Glenn Hagel criss-cross the province before next year's election and drop a whopping \$60 million [only it's 100 million, Madam Deputy Speaker] into feel-good community projects.

To tap the rainy day fund, the Calvert government at least will have to go through the motions of projecting and justifying budgetary pressures that require it essentially to transfer money from one pocket to claim the books are balanced.

Hagel's nifty fund, however, requires no such bother since it's being sold as bringing to fruition the "Building Communities" program announced in the Centennial year throne speech, and will be used to provide capital funds for everything from museums to art galleries to sports complexes.

Further down in the article, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to quote again:

While sports facilities, museums and art galleries do need public support, what's lacking in recent government spending decisions is any indication that there's a long term vision that extends beyond the next election. In turning loose the perennially jolly Hagel to play Santa in a business suit, the targets will be venues with the potential

to provide maximum political payback.

The long-term paybacks that can accrue to the province by investing in such things as medical research with the potential to reduce the costliest of social programs simply don't fit within this political mindset.

And lastly, Madam Deputy Speaker, and again I quote:

... rather than take a thoughtful approach to public policy that makes the best use of an economic boom everyone knows can't last for ever, Premier Calvert and his government are rushing to buy votes by spending every nickel and then some.

And we agree. With that I would like to adjourn debate.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — The member for Humboldt 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. 36

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the Hon. Mr. Thomson that **Bill No. 36 — The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2006 (No. 2)** be now read a second time.]

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's with pleasure that I rise to address the Bill, Bill No. 36, An Act to amend The Income Tax Act.

I couldn't help but ... When I'm sitting here listening to talk about income tax situation in Saskatchewan, the finance situation in Saskatchewan, and hearing the Minister of Finance talking, it would be an interesting debate to have the former Finance minister, the member from Regina Douglas Park, debate the current Finance minister. I think we would have some interesting debates that would take place there because certainly they're coming at things from very, very different, very different ways, Mr. Speaker.

The current Finance minister, he would have, he would have the polling results in one hand and his financial ideas in the other. Because, Madam Deputy Speaker, this is the way things are done these days in the NDP government — a desperate government who's trying desperately to hang on to power, trying to come up with new ideas, building initiative funds, \$1 billion slush funds, whatever they can get their hands on to try to buy votes. Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would suggest to you it hasn't worked before in this province, and it's not going to work this time.

This time we see some tax measures, Madam Deputy Speaker,

in this Bill, some tax cuts. But of course in typical NDP fashion they try to sneak in a tax increase as well. Well let's just talk about the context of these tax situations, Madam Deputy Speaker. And I think we have to be honest and we have to give credit where credit is due, credit to people who come up with these ideas. The NDP government is trying very hard to slap themselves on the back, to take credit for this. But let's give credit where credit is due.

Let's give credit to the groups that chose to make presentations to the Vicq commission. Let's give credit to the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Regina Chamber of Commerce, the Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce, the North Saskatoon Business Association, even the unions and other groups that took the time to make those presentations. They're the ones that deserve credit. Because at that very time the people were making those presentations, this government and the members opposite were arguing definitely against it. They didn't have the polling results that they know now. They didn't know how much trouble they were in so they came nowhere near implementing the information or the Bill that we have before us, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Let's look at the Vicq commission and what they had to say. On page 36 of the Vicq commission it talks about, and I know members will be interested in this, a marginal effective tax rate that Saskatchewan taxpayers paid — the METR, the M-E-T-R. Jack Vicq talked about it being the highest in Saskatchewan. Now we're familiar with hearing that term time and time again in Canada, Saskatchewan having the highest tax rates in the country for 15 straight years under this NDP government.

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, Mr. Vicq went further. He talked about Saskatchewan having the highest marginal effective tax rate in all of North America. And if I remember correctly, he even said maybe in the entire world with a couple of exceptions. That Saskatchewan would have that dubious distinction under this NDP government 15 of the last 16 years, it's no wonder that we learned today in question period that 18,000 people left this province in the last two years, Madam Deputy Speaker.

It's something that we can't be proud of. We must strive to do better on. It's just something that I'm really sad, and I know that it upsets the Finance Minister. I can hear him chirping from his seat. It's something that certainly is something that we have to be working towards and all that.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, we talk about lowering the corporate income tax rate. It's something that members on this side of the House have talked about. It's something that the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has lobbied for year after year after year. Finally — it's about time — the government is making some moves in that direction.

But again, are we leading the way? No, we're following leaders in other provinces. The small-business tax rate for example in Manitoba is already at 4 per cent. In Alberta — we don't like to make the comparisons to Alberta or certainly the government doesn't like to — they're at 3 per cent. What did Saskatchewan companies have to face for the last 15 years from this government? A small-business tax rate on income between 300

and \$400,000 of 17 per cent compared to 3 per cent in Alberta and 4 per cent in Manitoba. They're six times, five times that what they pay in other provinces.

It's no wonder that people are leaving Saskatchewan, that we have population numbers that are very embarrassing for the government. They don't like to talk about them. But we have to call a spade a spade, and we have to look at that, Madam Deputy Speaker. And it goes back to being honest, and it goes back to being truthful, and it goes back to putting in your electoral platform what you intend to do.

And I challenge members opposite to pull from their files their advertisements that they used in the last election. They talked about how could we possibly afford social programs, health care, education, at the same time as providing competitive tax rates for Saskatchewan people. They said it couldn't be done, Madam Deputy Speaker. They campaigned on that. They advertised on that. They ran a commercial that basically said that. Not one word from them now about that, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, it's something that the Saskatchewan people will remember. They will remember what they heard from this government last time. You know they said we couldn't afford it. All at the same time this government has never raised the basic allowance for people on social assistance in their whole term of office until last year, Madam Deputy Speaker. This government presides over the longest waiting lists in the country.

And they said we couldn't have competitive tax rates. Madam Deputy Speaker, the reason why? They said that the greedy corporations in Saskatchewan would benefit from this, and somehow it would just . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . yes, greedy corporate hucksters is something we've heard and we've seen, we've actually seen in letters from this Premier to the business community. It's something that Saskatchewan people . . . that won't forget.

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, let's look at what Saskatchewan businesses would really want to do with the tax savings that they would receive if the government had decided to do this early in their term.

Number one, invest in new equipment, machinery, and technology — that's what they would do if they had competitive tax rates. What would that do, Madam Deputy Speaker? It would ensure more jobs were created in Saskatchewan. It would enable Saskatchewan young people to stay in this province. Instead we wouldn't have the statistic that we have today of 18,000 people.

What's the second thing that they would do with tax savings, Madam Deputy Speaker, if they were lucky enough to have them in this province under an NDP government for 15 years? Increase employee wages. Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, that's exactly what the government says that needs to be done right now. If they took the advice of the chamber of commerce, of the Saskatchewan Institute of Chartered Accountants, if they didn't ignore them for 15 years, they would have implemented those tax reductions at a time where we would see benefits from it now. I would suggest we wouldn't have the out-migration that

we do especially of our young people if they put their socialist ideology to the side and actually implemented this some 5, 10, 15 years ago.

What's the third most important thing that they would do? Expand my business. That's what Saskatchewan business owners said that they would do, expand their business. And what happens when you expand your business? You hire people. You give jobs to young people, Madam Deputy Speaker. And that leads to the next thing that they would do: hire more employees.

[15:45]

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, this isn't information that's just pulled out of a hat somewhere. This is a survey of Saskatchewan residents across Saskatchewan conducted by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. They're celebrating their 35 years in existence in this province. Some over 5,000 businesses are members of that organization, free to be members, free to contribute their money to it. And I took part in a ceremony on Friday where the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition spoke about the benefits that this group has. So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I suggest that the members opposite listen very closely.

Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker, another thing that companies would do — and I know this is particularly troubling for members opposite — that businesses would convert tax savings into profit. It's a word that the members opposite don't like to hear very much, but it's something that's very important in the business community in this province. You need some profits. You need to be able to take those profits and invest them back in your business or to take some as wages for individuals who have entrepreneurship at heart and have started those businesses.

Madam Deputy Speaker, and again this is a very important list on what Saskatchewan companies would do with the tax savings they would've received if this government chose to listen to these organizations.

Invest in employee training, something else that's very much needed. You know the government likes to pat themselves on the back in what they do, but having companies identify what training's needed would be something new.

And it goes on and on, you know. Increase in charitable donations, lower prices, invest in research and development — all things that could've been done if this government . . . Maybe if they got the polling information 15 years ago that they've got now, they would've acted sooner. I don't know, Madam Deputy Speaker, but we're happy in the sense that finally they've seen the light. It's the conversion on the road to Damascus that the Leader of the Opposition talks about. Finally they're seeing the way to do it. But I would say it's too little too late.

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, of course the NDP in their usual way, they couldn't just implement the tax measures that make Saskatchewan more competitive. What did they have to do? They had to slide in a tax increase. Now of course the Finance minister thought he was being very cute by of course not giving the opposition any information about this at all, sending it over

after he began speaking in the House. And he thinks he slid one by us, that we didn't catch this tax increase. Well wrong, Madam Deputy Speaker. People of Saskatchewan caught this tax increase. They know what this government is up to, and they will judge this government accordingly.

They slid in a tax increase, a 2 per cent drop in the dividend tax credit. Two per cent drop in the dividend tax credit means it's a tax increase.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, in my response I didn't have a chance to even read the information because the minister of course was being cute in his usual way and not providing me with the information that he needs it. Maybe cute's not the right word. Members say there might be another word to describe being cute, but I would say that he was trying to have some fun with me to make sure I didn't have all the information necessary.

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, the fact remains that this government just couldn't bring themselves to implement a growth agenda in this province. They couldn't keep on track of providing fair and competitive tax measures. They had to go and increase taxes, increase of 2 per cent on taxable dividends received by private companies. Madam Deputy Speaker, it's the same old thing — give with one hand; take away with the other. They're giving a half per cent decrease on the small-business tax rate, which is the right thing to do, but they can't . . . Maybe it's just to satisfy the two elements in their caucus, but they have to put a tax increase in there as well.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, they've tried to slide through this tax increase, but it didn't work. Saskatchewan people picked up on it. The opposition picked up on it, and they will have to answer for this.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it's just like the PST [provincial sales tax] where they go and they talk about reducing taxes before an election, and what did they do after the last election? They hiked the PST. It's the first thing they did, and I would suggest it's the only financial measure that they did for the first three years of this administration — they hiked the PST. Well now here they are dropping the PST by 2 per cent. They didn't know what they were going to do. They had a meeting on Monday night. On the back of a napkin, they decided. They had a little vote. And they decided, well 1 per cent would just put us back where we started; we'd better go to 2 per cent.

That might be quite a napkin, Madam Deputy Speaker, because on the back of that is probably the building initiatives fund. Not the criteria because they haven't come up with that, it's just the building initiative fund, the mini slush fund. We've got the major slush fund, and we've got the mini slush fund, but they were both there, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Now I could go on and on about this Bill. It's things that need to be looked at in Saskatchewan. And, you know, I was very disappointed to see that this amendment in the Bill closes off the now defunct child benefit program which has been superseded by the national child benefit program. Now this government goes on and on and on criticizing the federal government about the national child benefit program, but here they are closing off the Saskatchewan child benefit program.

And I know a large part of it was wrapped into the national program, but this government's sitting on \$1 billion, \$1 billion dollar slush fund. I would suggest they could have, they could have done something with this. They could have kept this alive. They could have provided money for it. You know members opposite would say, oh no, we can't do it. We have to look to the federal government for leadership. We have to look to the federal government to do anything. Madam Deputy Speaker, I would suggest that the government could have done something, could have used a little bit of that billion dollar slush fund to do that.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, we're going to let this Bill go to committee because Saskatchewan people will decide. Saskatchewan people will have the opportunity to decide what to do. This Minister of Finance, he rose in this Assembly and he presented a budget. And members opposite, they clapped and they roared and they talked about how great this budget was.

Well the Saskatchewan people, they didn't have an opportunity to vote on that budget. Members opposite here did. We sure did. But members in Weyburn-Big Muddy had an opportunity to vote on that budget, and what did they do, Madam Deputy Speaker? Madam Deputy Speaker, the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy is sitting in this legislature on this House today, and I would say it's directly responsible to his hard work and to the work of the Minister of Finance for presenting a budget that Saskatchewan people could not, could not believe in, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan people will get a chance to hold a referendum. It'll be a referendum on these tax Bills that are coming forward. It may be a referendum on the next budget, the billion dollar budget that will be spent by this Finance minister. But I would suggest to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, it will be the same result. The same result that we saw in Weyburn-Big Muddy is the same result we will see across this province. The same result we will see in Regina South, in Moose Jaw North, in Moose Jaw Wakamow. We will see the same result in Athabasca, in Saskatchewan Rivers, in Greystone, Madam Deputy Speaker, in Saskatoon Eastview.

In every constituency across this province, Saskatchewan people will have a chance . . . Yes, even in Saskatoon Silver Springs they will have a chance to vote on this budget, Madam Deputy Speaker. And I would suggest that they better make room for Saskatchewan Party members on that side of the House. Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 36, The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2006 be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk Assistant: — Second reading of this Bill.

The Deputy Speaker: — To which committee shall this Bill be

referred? I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. I move that Bill No. 36, The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2006 be referred to the Standing Committee on the Economy.

The Deputy Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 36, The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2006 be referred to the Standing Committee on the Economy. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Bill No. 32

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Thomson that **Bill No. 32 — The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Amendment Act, 2006** be now read a second time.]

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's certainly a . . . I've been looking forward to enter into the debate on this Bill. This is the Bill that this government finally and reluctantly put forward to deal with the long-standing issue of underfunding to pensions for former civil servants, Madam Deputy Speaker.

It's something that a group of retired civil servants have asked for for many years, and the provisions in this Bill only partially fulfill what those retirees have asked for. It's something that they've been working on for many, many years, Madam Deputy Speaker. I know this was one of the first issues that was brought to my attention shortly after my election to this House back in 1999.

And I've had a constituent who has worked tirelessly on this issue and finally, through the co-operation of the members on this side of the House and the association of retirees, we were able to embarrass this government into taking action, Madam Deputy Speaker — action that they took reluctantly. But they were forced into doing . . . at least partially addressing this, Madam Deputy Speaker.

This government and those people on that side of the House pretend to be the protectors of the working men and women of this province. They like to stand in their places and tell everyone that will listen to them that they are protecting the rights of the working men and women in this province. And particularly they pretend to be the protectors of the civil servants that provide the valuable services to the people of this province.

But yet, Madam Deputy Speaker, when those civil servants retire, basically what they've done is they've ignored them. They've ignored them for many, many years and refused to address this issue. Now the Minister of Finance chirps from his

seat that he did this great thing. But if it hadn't have been for the fact that the retirees in the spring session filled these galleries and we asked embarrassing questions of him, Madam Deputy Speaker, this issue would still wouldn't be addressed, that any increases in their pensions would be at the whim of this government, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And we should look at the record of this government and that Minister of Finance. In the press release the Minister of Finance proudly proclaims that this issue has been addressed in an ad hoc manner for us since 1965 and that there was only 8 years where there was no increase given to this group of retirees.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, for the information of those people that may be viewing these proceedings and for the members of this House, two of those years came in this century. In the year 2000 the retirees under this plan received a zero per cent increase in their pension. And also the same in 2004, Madam Deputy Speaker. They did receive a reasonable adjustment to their pensions in 2003. Just a mere coincidence that that would coincide with the last provincial election? And then what did those people get from this government after the 2003 election? A big fat zero as far as an increase, Madam Deputy Speaker.

This is the regard that these people have for those retired civil servants that have worked tirelessly for this province and the people of this province. It's absolutely shameful, Madam Deputy Speaker, as to the way they have been treated. Yet they stand in their place and they proclaim to anyone who will listen, to the world, that we are the protectors of the working people of this province. It's a great example of say one thing and do another, as we see it so often in this province from those members on that side of this House, from this NDP government, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as I said, this issue and this Bill is the result of actions taken by the association of retirees that are under these defined benefit plans. They came to this House, they filled the galleries. My colleague, the Finance critic, the member from Saskatoon Silver Springs, asked the questions on their behalf. And then what happened after that?

[16:00]

And I believe the only reason why we have this Bill today is because those retirees, they surrounded the Premier and forced him to deal with the issue in front of the cameras, Madam Deputy Speaker. And at that time the Premier agreed that he would meet with them at a future date along with his Finance minister. And I understand, Madam Deputy Speaker, that that meeting took place on July 13 with representatives of the retirees, the Finance minister, and I believe that meeting took place in the Premier's office . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . or in the building. The Finance minister hollers that it was some other room in this building.

But nonetheless I'm not sure . . . You know, as a result of this meeting, I really wonder whether the Finance minister was there. Because the Finance minister's recollection of that meeting differs substantially from the other people's recollection of what took place at that meeting. But nonetheless the meeting took place on July 13 and apparently the Finance

minister was there along with the Premier and, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to quote from a letter that was sent to the Premier on November 14 by a Mr. Alf Zimmerman, president of the Saskatchewan Retirees Association.

And before I quote from the letter I should just state that in this letter to the Premier Mr. Zimmerman points out that the indexing of the pension was not the only issue that needs to be dealt with. The Finance minister, he stands up and says, well we did much better than Alberta and we did much better than Manitoba and look how great we are. We're looking after our people. But what he fails to tell everyone is that there are a number of other issues that need to be dealt with which the other provinces in fact have dealt with. Things like medical, dental, and health benefits. Addressing the lost benefits that took place since 1965, Madam Deputy Speaker. Improvements to spouses' allowances and standardization of death benefits. None of those issues were addressed. The only thing that this minister did is said, well we'll give you 70 per cent of CPI [consumer price index], we'll do some . . . and we're so much better than everyone else.

Well in fact when you look at the total package of what this government is offering versus what's been offered in the other provinces, Manitoba and Alberta, perhaps the indexing in Manitoba and Alberta is slightly lower but they have addressed these other issues. So when you put the whole package together the retirees in our two neighbouring provinces on either side are much better off than our people here in Saskatchewan, Madam Deputy Speaker. . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And the minister chirps from his seat. He should stand up and address these issues. He should meet with . . . once again with the retirees and address these issues.

Getting back to the letter, Madam Deputy Speaker. Mr. Zimmerman writes in his letter, he says — and now I'm quoting — he says:

Mr. Premier, our recollection of discussions at that meeting include your direction to Finance Minister Thomson and his staff "to develop a package, satisfactory to both sides, and bring forward the necessary legislation to be dealt with at the Fall sitting of the Saskatchewan Legislature."

Mr. Zimmerman goes on to say,

Mr. Premier, our interpretation of those [directions and your] discussions and your directive to Minister Thomson was that there would be some consultation respecting the resolution of our concerns and the required provisions of the enabling legislation. To this date your directive for consultation has not taken place.

And this letter was written on November 14, the date that that minister, or shortly after the date this minister tabled the legislation. So the understanding of the representatives of the retirees at the July 13 meeting is that there would be consultation.

Well the only consultation that was done was a telephone call from the Minister of Finance to Mr. Zimmerman the day that the legislation was announced. There was absolutely no

consultation, Madam Deputy Speaker.

So here once again we have a government that . . . an NDP government that says we consult with the people. They consult with the people like they consulted with the people of northern Saskatchewan when they introduced their new fire management strategies. There was no consultation.

Particularly, that minister failed to consult at the direction of his Premier. I wonder how that's working over there, Madam Deputy Speaker . . . Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm guessing that there are more problems behind the scenes than we see in public, Madam Deputy . . . Mr. Speaker. We keep changing slots here. Sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I said earlier, we have a government here that pretends that they're the protectors of the working men and women of this province, particularly the civil servants. If someone should dare make a remark that may reflect poorly or be perceived to reflect poorly on the working men and women, they jump to their feet and say, that's not correct. You can't do that.

Yet what do these people do? Once they're done . . . Once the public servants have provided their service to the province of this . . . to the people of this province, they say, we don't really need you any more so just go away. We'll give you some money, but we're not going to deal with the issues and force them to take action like filling the galleries and corralling the Premier in the rotunda before we get some action on this Bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think we need . . . Because that government didn't consult with the various groups that are affected by this legislation, we certainly need to do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And we will be taking our time to do that. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would move now that we adjourn debate on this Bill.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble): — The hon. member for Last Mountain-Touchwood has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 32, The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Act. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Bill No. 9

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Quennell that **Bill No. 9 — The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code Amendment Act, 2006** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Well it's a pleasure to stand today and speak to Bill No. 9, the Human Rights Code amendment Act. Mr. Speaker, as the minister

outlined, this Bill deals with the removal of mandatory retirement exemptions in the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's very interesting the timing of this, of this Bill. I go back to a time in 2004, the Leader of the Official Opposition, the member from Swift Current, asked the official opposition, the Saskatchewan Party — both caucus members and the members of the party — to go out, hold public meetings, have private meetings, go out to the people of Saskatchewan and ask for policy ideas for the good of the province, for the future of Saskatchewan.

And I remember, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I was at one of these public policy meetings that was held in North Battleford. And we were sitting there and there must have been 100, 150 people in the room. And there's a gentleman, stood up and said he was 60 . . . he had turned 65 years old and he was working for Crop Insurance, Saskatchewan Crop Insurance, and he was forced to retire from the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance. He liked the job, Mr. Deputy Speaker. He enjoyed it. That was something that he really wanted to continue to do but he had to retire from that job. Mr. Speaker, it was . . . at that meeting it was obvious that this is something that had to change for the good of the province, for the good of the people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the party took this information incorporated in Saskatchewan Party policy . . . and I believe it's one of the 100 ideas that was put forward in conjunction with the centennial of the province as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This gentleman's idea went to the party policy convention, was then adopted by the party, and is part of Saskatchewan Party policy.

And we see today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the NDP government has stolen another very good idea from the Saskatchewan Party. And it's interesting that the NDP government have been doing this consistently for quite some time, taking good ideas from the Saskatchewan Party, incorporate into their Bills and laws that are, that are being introduced. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this gentleman, you know, really speaks to why this law needs to be changed. And certainly Saskatchewan Party, naturally we support it because it was our idea to begin with.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, since 2004, and when this gentleman stood up in this policy meeting in North Battleford, we have seen, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a tremendous shortage of labour in the province. With the oil boom and the economic activity going on in Alberta, it's drawn many young people from Saskatchewan to work in Alberta and it's left a shortage of labour in Saskatchewan. And this is certainly one of the methods that will be important into filling that gap in the labour shortage in Saskatchewan.

Of course not everyone that's turned 65 may want to work, but it's their option. It's something that'll be their decision. As we know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, people in the private sector have never had any restrictions on that. If you own your own business you can work as long as you want. But within the labour laws of Saskatchewan, of course until this Bill is passed, people that turn 65 have to retire.

As we know, there's been a considerable change in the quality of life and the life expectancy of people in the western world. And that's no different in Canada and in Saskatchewan. Now 65 years old is not old at all. Forty, fifty years ago it certainly was. But we see now that people that are in their 60s and their 70s are able and willing to work at their jobs, at the profession that they've been working at. And they enjoy doing that. And they will be allowed now, once this Bill is enacted, to continue to work on into the workforce after they're 65.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we . . . As I just mentioned, people are living longer. They're not only living longer but they are living healthier longer as well. So this is certainly a win-win situation for the people of Saskatchewan, for the economy of Saskatchewan in this time of labour shortages. And as we know now because people are living longer, there's also an added demand on pensions, both the Canada Pension and private pensions, Saskatchewan Pension Plan. So people knowing that they are going to live, now it's quite possible that what . . . not only possible. People are living now not only into their 80s and 90s and over 100, so their pensions are going to have to be in place in order to address their financial needs once they do go into retirement years, Mr. Speaker. So certainly it is important that people are allowed to work longer and earn more income later in life.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we know, a number of people, mainly women in the past, have stayed home out of the workforce as they raised their children. And so that's kept them out of the workforce and of course also not paying into a pension plan like Canada Pension or the Saskatchewan Pension Plan or private pension plans, because they were at home raising the children. So this allows those people to work longer to put in more years and put in more money into pension plans so that they can live good, comfortable lives in their retirement years, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And we also know that immigrants that come to this country come at various ages, so they also have the ability to earn money longer so they can have a more comfortable life in their retirement years as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now this Bill, as I understand it, will change and change the laws dealing with pensions, the collective agreements, and of course directly to the Human Rights Code. Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is some outstanding issues, I understand. As it said in the news release, the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission began recommending elimination of the restrictive definition of age 10 years ago.

And I understand, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there is a court case under way and that court case will have to be dealt with before this comes into force, I understand, and so certainly we don't want anything to hold this up. As it says in the news release:

"As the amendments will not come into force until one year after Royal Assent, the Commission will await the decision of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Tribunal in the mandatory retirement case of Louise Carlson versus [the] Saskatoon Public Library Board and the Canadian Union of Public Employees for guidance on protections against age discrimination in the intervening period," Ms. Scott added.

So that's interesting to keep note of that as well.

[16:15]

Mr. Speaker, the other aspect of allowing people to work after they're 65 is really a . . . There needs to be some kind of a safety mechanism, if you like, to not have people that are working that may not be up to the job. And I understand in this Bill that there is some requirements concerning certain industries like construction and mining, oil field and so on that there is a process that will look into that type of situation.

And so we certainly don't want people to be put in a situation where they're a danger to themselves and a danger to other employees at the work because of any physical or mental concerns that they may have. And they may not realize that they have these. I mean that's the fact of life, that as we have certain disabilities through illness or sickness and the aging process, people are just not maybe just as quick on the job or on their feet as they once were. And so there has to be certainly this process in place so that the safety of workers and the individuals themselves are looked after in those particular industries.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Human Rights Commission applauds the proposed amendments to end mandatory retirement. And as we know, other provinces have done this. I believe British Columbia has already brought in this law. So it's not something new to the province. So hopefully any concerns that may have developed in British Columbia . . . There may have been problems and hopefully they've been addressed there. So hopefully this government has been in contact with British Columbia and seen if there's any problems that may develop that can be looked after before this law is brought into place.

It's interesting. Just as an example, my father, he's going to be turning 80 years old this spring. And certainly he never did intend on retiring. And even though he's grown older and he's slowing up somewhat, he's still actively involved in the cattle business. And he goes out and he checks the cattle and he delivers salt to the cattle and also cuts ice in the dugouts.

So it's certainly something people that have been doing, especially in the agriculture sector have been doing as long as they're able to because it's a way of life. And certainly it's . . . I believe, and I think there's a lot of evidence to suggest people that are growing older, the more active they remain, the healthier they'll be, the happier they'll be, and more productive they will be. And so I certainly think that situation applies to people that are working in other jobs in the economy. If they have a need to get up every morning and go to a job, even if it's a part-time job — it doesn't have to still remain a full-time job that they once had — but come in on a part-time basis to work at jobs. And I believe that our citizens of the province will be happier and healthier and live even longer, healthier years into the future.

So certainly in the Saskatchewan Party, as I mentioned, we certainly believe that this is a Bill that should be introduced. It's been part of our Saskatchewan Party policy that came out of our public policy meetings that we held. This gentleman in North Battleford was the one that was his idea that he brought forward. We certainly picked up on that and believe in this Bill,

Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I just wanted to go back, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the words that the minister stated in *Hansard* and he said that and I quote, "This change also responds to the concerns of those who have taken time . . . [off] work to raise their children," as I mentioned, and which have had "fewer years in the workforce and . . . [of course] less opportunity to accrue pension . . .".

I think that's very important that that is an important aspect of this Bill that we feel that is important so that people have that opportunity to work longer in the workforce.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, the Saskatchewan Party certainly supports this Bill and I know other members of the Saskatchewan Party want to speak to this Bill and so I at this time would like to move to adjourn debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble): — The hon. member for Biggar has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 9. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble): — That is agreed, that's carried.

Bill No. 3

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Thomson that **Bill No. 3 — The Fuel Tax Accountability Act** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is a very important Bill. Although I have to say that the government bringing forward a piece of legislation that mandates taxes be spent on the actual thing they're collected for is a surprise to me.

After 15 years in this Assembly, this is the first time this government has ever mandated that the taxes they collect actually get spent on the purpose they collected them for. So I think this is actually a very positive step forward that the Minister of Finance would finally recognize that taxes collected for a purpose be spent on that purpose. And this tax deals with the fuel tax that is collected from the people of Saskatchewan, and now this NDP government is proposing that that fuel tax actually be spent on the highways.

What a novel idea. What a novel idea. It's such a good idea, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Saskatchewan Party had it in its platform previously, and that the minister is recognizing again another good Saskatchewan Party idea.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — But after 15 years of this government collecting the fuel taxes that I've been in this House . . . the 15 years that I've been in this House, and the government collecting that fuel tax, they have never yet managed to spend

the amount that they have collected on the roads, the byways, and the highways of this province. Haven't happened yet.

So I'm wondering when the minister presents this Bill, when the government presents this Bill, when the Premier presents this Bill, is he somehow questioning the commitment of the Minister of Highways in actually spending the money collected on the highways and roads that they have to put it in legislation? You know, the government has always said, we are putting money into the highways; we are spending the proper amount. And yet now with this piece of legislation, they're saying you will spend all the money collected from the fuel taxes on the highways.

I even look at this year's budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The government is proposing to spend \$344 million on highways and infrastructure.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — That's a significant amount of money. Unfortunately even in 2006-2007 budget, it doesn't match what the government was collecting. They were proposing to collect \$371 million and spend 344 million. But that's a little short, short about \$30 million. Now I'm sure the ... [inaudible interjection] ... That's right. About the amount of money that the current Minister of Highways misplaced when he was SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company] minister, Mr. Speaker. He says he keeps it in a shoe box. It must be some shoe that's all I can say.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the minister is spending \$344 million out of the 371 they collect in fuel taxes. But what he fails to mention in talking about this is the approximately 80 to \$85 million that the federal government sends Saskatchewan for highways and infrastructure, and that's included in that 344 million. So they're taking credit for the federal expenditures on highway and infrastructure in this province.

Now I should say that while the NDP government is under spending the money they collect on highways and roads in this province, the federal government is doing exactly the same thing. Yes, they are even worse. They collect ... As a percentage they put even less in than the NDP government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we could get both the NDP government and the federal government to spend their entire amount of money collected for fuel taxes, maybe in 10 to 15 years we could finally get the highways back into the condition they were prior to this NDP government.

There is also some more money that this government collects, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from vehicles that the minister has failed to put into this piece of legislation. And that's the motor vehicle fees that are collected through SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] on your licence. And the minister says, and why would we put that money in? Because that money is collected from motor vehicles just like the fuel tax is. They are both utilized in the same mode of transportation so it would be appropriate to put both of those amounts of money into highways, roads, and byways, both rural and urban.

Now I can see that the minister has a very quizzical look on his

face because he has never considered all of the money that has come. Yes, and he is busy ... [inaudible interjection] ... Yes, well figuring perhaps. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't want to describe his total actions but he is still quizzical about where this money is. And I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the people of Saskatchewan are just as quizzical about where this money is, what it's being spent on, and why it isn't being spent on highways.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think this government in passing this legislation that all of the money from fuel taxes should be spent on highways and roads is a good thing, and I think it's time this government was held accountable for not having done so in the past.

And I look forward to seeing next spring's budget to see whether or not the minister is including all of Saskatchewan's fuel tax, giving credit to the government, the federal government for the portion they pass on to Saskatchewan. So you'll have that total. So now we're looking at ... Let's take the '06 numbers. We would end up with approximately \$450 million to be spent on highways and infrastructure. That will start to make a small dent in repairing the damage caused by this government to our roads.

Perhaps we will cease to see roads, highways like No. 8. Instead of being repaired, this government's been turning them back to gravel. This was one of the original highways in Saskatchewan. You can tell by the number. No. 8, it's one of the first ones. And this government is turning it back to gravel, Mr. Speaker. That's a true shame that they're allowing our heritage to be so destroyed.

And how is this happening, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Why are highways like No. 8 in such terrible shape? No. 9 is starting to go to pieces. No. 18, No. 13, No. 47 and 48 in my area, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are in terrible shape, not to mention those higher number roads like 318 and 361. Those, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are ... You can't even call them numbered highways. Numbered goat trails perhaps, but not numbered highways.

And the fact is the current Minister of Finance came down into our constituency here a while back and drove down No. 8 Highway ... [inaudible interjection] ... You see, he says a bad highway it is, and ripped his muffler off. He tells me the other day that he's no longer driving that car — he's now driving a car that the Premier once drove — so I'm not sure what kind of shape it's in.

But I would certainly invite the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Highways to take a drive down No. 47, cross on No. 48, down No. 8, so they can get an appreciation of the highways in southeast Saskatchewan. And once he gets down on No. 8, over the bad stretch there, he can head west to come back to Regina on 361. And I would suspect that when he gets done that tour, his next visit with his automobile or van — whatever he may be driving — will be to the repair shop, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

[16:30]

One of the areas that this government collects a significant amount of tax on is aviation fuel. They collect it from every

person, every business that uses an aircraft in this province, including the major airports in Regina and Saskatoon. And yet when I look in the highways budget to where they're allocating funds, only one and a half million dollars is being allocated back to aviation and there is a much greater amount of money collected, taxes on fuel, than that relatively insignificant amount. And I suspect and I don't know this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I'm sure that when we get the opportunity in committee to question the minister on this, we can find out how much money and where it's being spent on aviation.

I know that in my own constituency, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the community of Carlyle, they have a reasonably good airport. They had a reasonably good airport that was built in the late 1970s, early 1980s in large part with federal dollars. And that airport has now deteriorated significantly and unfortunately they have been following the Minister of Highways' example and have turned a portion of that hard surface into gravel which, if you know anything about propeller-driven airplanes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, gravel and propellers don't mix well. So it's important. If you're going to have a dirt strip of some kind, you're better off with grass than you are with gravel. And so that's an area, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where this government should be committing some of its aviation fuel tax dollars in providing and repairing airports and runways across this province.

I know that northern Saskatchewan needs airports and some of the money I am sure has been spent in that area. But southern Saskatchewan, the larger communities out in the rural areas need that support as well and that has been very, very sadly lacking from this government for decades, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a lot of money here that we're talking about and there is a need for this government to be appropriating it in the proper manner.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the things that this government is doing is it's allowing for a report to be presented on how the government is making out when it comes to the amount of money being spent on highways and infrastructure versus the amount of money that they've actually collected through the Department of Finance. Well now a report is very interesting, but what's the purpose of the report? The Bill says that the government is to spend all of the money collected for fuel taxes on highways and infrastructure, but there doesn't seem to be any penalty in there if they fail to do so. So what is the deviation here that the report is going to be looking at? If they collect \$400 million in fuel taxes and spend \$200 million, and a year and a half later they put out a report that they only spent 200 versus 400, what difference does it make?

So can the government then save up their money over a four-year period? As when Roy Romanow was the premier, they were going to have a balanced budget over four years. Well is that going to be the situation in this case where the government is going to say, oh no, we're going to put all the money into highways that we collect, but we're going to do it over four years. And that fourth year, just before the election, we're going to dump all the money into the budget.

It's not going to get the highways fixed properly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if that's the kind of an attitude that this government ... And we've seen it happen in too many other areas, Mr.

Speaker, and that's why I am suspicious of this government's motives and methods of operation.

The other thing the government talks about is a plan, that they will present a plan. Well from what I can read in here, their plan is for the next fiscal year — a one-year plan. Well you lay that out in the budget. I suppose that's the extent that this government is now capable of planning ahead because they lack the confidence to move ahead quickly because they don't believe they're actually going to be the government next time around.

If they believed that they were actually going to be the government they would be presenting more than a one-year plan. They would be looking at a plan say, for four to five years on road construction. It would be a rolling plan. So as this year is completed and dropped off, four or five years later you would add that one on, and so people would be able to think and plan. And I know it's difficult for the Finance minister to comprehend a longer-term plan than one year because his career may not last that length of time. But I would encourage him to do so, to give that kind of a consideration.

You know so, Mr. Speaker, there's a lot that can be done with the monies that are being collected from the people of Saskatchewan. There is a lot that can be done with the money that is being collected from the fuel tax by the federal government. Together those could go a long ways to fixing the highways, the roads, the urban infrastructure in this province, including airports across Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I have to wonder though how much thought and consultation has gone into this process by the minister. Have they given consideration? Have they talked with the regional planning boards?

Now those groups across Saskatchewan do have a plan. They have an understanding of which roads, which highways, which streets need to have that kind of a repair. I don't know that this government is actually communicating with those people, or if they do — if there is some communication — if they actually listen to the message that is being received. Because if they did, if they did listen, then highways like No. 8 would actually get repaired rather than simply turned into gravel.

When I look at the economic activity that is taking place throughout the southeast corner of the province, the huge amounts of revenues that are being generated because of the oil and gas activity, and that ... some of that money cannot be returned. They keep that infrastructure in place. I can only conclude that this Finance minister, this Minister of Highways, this Premier are not listening. Because if they were listening they would understand that you simply can't allow your infrastructure to be destroyed and continue to produce in the same manner from the economic resources in that area. It inhibits growth. It inhibits production. It inhibits the economic activity that is taking place. And this government simply chooses to ignore the realities of that situation.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the idea of committing the fuel taxes in its entirety to highways and infrastructure is a good idea. We proposed it a significant time ago. I'm amazed, as I said at the beginning, that this government has finally realized that. I

question its sincerity in doing so. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it needs to as well consult on the plan to have a highway infrastructure maintenance and construction program in place.

And it needs to talk to aviation in this province to determine what happens with the monies that are collected off the aviation fuel tax, as well as the PST on aviation equipment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in this province. And that needs to be returned to aviation as well. So at this time I would like to move adjournment of debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble): — The hon. member for Cannington has moved adjournment of debate on Bill No. 3, The Fuel Tax Accountability Act. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt that motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Bill No. 21

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by Hon. Mr. Quennell that **Bill No. 21 — The Evidence Amendment Act, 2006/Loi de 2006 modifiant la Loi sur la preuve** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is a pleasure to speak to Bill No. 21, The Evidence Act.

Mr. Speaker, this, as the minister has stated, gives people and I assume institutions the ability to make an apology, an admission of guilt without any legal repercussions. And I understand that it would make us the second province behind British Columbia which also removed apologies from being admission of guilt.

This is an interesting Bill. Throughout history any time a person or an institute admitted guilt, it obviously led to possible legal implications. Depending on the type of situation or crime or bad behaviour or whatever, an admission of guilt would automatically be incorporated into a legal process.

And certainly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in our world, in our lives, admission of guilt is very, I think, very important. It's not only important to the person or the group that has been done wrong by an individual or an institution, but I think it's very important that the person admitting guilt . . . I believe it's very important to the person that admits guilt as kind of a cleansing process, cleansing of the soul. I believe we all know that. Maybe not all of us will admit to that. But I think that's something that hasn't been done, certainly in the realm of government and institutions. In the past it's been done, but it hasn't come easily.

And whenever an individual speaking on behalf of a corporation or a government or an individual admits to doing something wrong, I believe it's only after a long time and in many cases being basically forced into that situation before they come to that decision and admit guilt. I certainly feel in our Western world and our Christian heritage that admitting one's

fault is important, is certainly something that, as I had said, is cleansing. And as the minister said in his speech in the first reading that that's an important aspect.

Now you might have to think . . . We'll have to debate whether the admission of guilt in every instance should not bring legal complications or legal aspects to the admission. There are some very serious things that happen in this world — both done by individuals and by corporations or identities or governments or agencies — and one has to maybe rethink that or consider whether this should apply to every circumstance.

Certainly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we only need to look at some admissions of guilt that have happened in this legislature. The Minister of Highways had to apologize for misrepresenting some facts to do with the whole SPUDCO affair. It took him six years to do it. And I think it's unfortunate that he felt and the NDP government felt that they couldn't come clean much earlier. They only came clean after they lost \$36 million. And when it all came to light and it was out in the public, then they felt necessary that there's an apology needed to be made and a recognition of something that was done wrong.

We have a situation going on right now with the Oyate Safe House. There's been no apology. I certainly think that it won't be long till the government will be apologizing for its handling of the safe house.

We have evidence. It's duly reported in the media about the circumstances around that safe house, how children who are disadvantaged and at risk were put in that safe house to be safe, and unfortunately they weren't safe. And we have yet to see this government apologize for its actions, how they really left these young people at risk. We hear about reports, a news report of, I believe it was, a young lady that was beat quite badly, broken bones in her face and ribs. And this took place in a so-called safe house. This is a situation where the government is in charge. As the member has said, that really the government is the parent in charge of these young people.

[16:45]

We also hear reports of these young people . . . The reason why they're in this safe house or they need protection is because they're working the streets as child prostitutes. There's obviously people, pimps, that are using them, and they need a place to get away from these people so that they're safe. And we hear reports that these people, that these young children were not safe. They were being taken out of the so-called safe house. And this is just an example, Mr. Speaker. I think that the government . . . [inaudible] . . . the minister, the member from Athabasca, took the high road initially and say yes, you know there's a problem. We fell short. We didn't look after these young people and we apologize.

I think this issue would have gone away much earlier. We would have been much more co-operative atmosphere in the legislature and in the province to dealing with . . . getting to the point about dealing with that situation at the Oyate Safe House instead of stonewalling and having the Children's Advocate and the Ombudsman coming down and pointing out the errors of the government and forcing them into actions that otherwise they wouldn't take.

If an individual or in this case the government and the minister had come clean earlier, I believe that for the good of the children that need that safe haven that things would have been turned around and changed earlier for the good of those people.

Mr. Speaker, as I'd mentioned the whole SPUDCO fiasco was another situation where if the government had, had really screwed up its courage and admitted its mistakes earlier, it not only would have been a cleansing process . . . But people that lost their livelihood, and it happened to be in this situation two gentlemen and their families who lost everything they own because of the whole SPUDCO affair. These people lost all their savings. They lost their homes. They and their spouses had to go out and get new jobs and start from scratch because of the actions of the minister and of this government which . . . Well we won't go through the whole SPUDCO affair again today, but it certainly was a situation where people trusted in the government, believed in the government, and were let down by this government.

It's also interesting, Mr. Speaker, in our Western world, in our Christian society, the church that I attend, the admission of guilt — confession — is very important. In the church I go to, which is the Roman Catholic Church, there's a general public confession every time you go to church. None of us are perfect. Everyone makes mistakes, and it's recognized when you go to church that you need to confess your sins in a general way. And I think that's important again for the cleansing of the soul and to renew yourself and try to do the right thing in all aspects of your life.

And if you fail or you falter — which we all do at some time in our life — that this provision of confession, omission of guilt is there in order to help us move ahead in our day-to-day lives. And it's interesting, in the Roman Catholic faith there's the public confession that is done. There is also a private confession that can take place just between yourself and the priest. And again that is a more private, personal way of admitting guilt.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very interesting Bill, and I think we're going to have to speak to other groups and individuals how they feel about this Bill and do more research and discuss this further, the implications of admission of guilt. And not being able to be sued or used as evidence in the court of law is something that we just need to do more work on and get our minds around and see how that works out. So at this time, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move to adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Biggar that debate on second reading on Bill No. 21 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Members of the Assembly, I'm advised that His Honour is here for Royal Assent.

ROYAL ASSENT

[At 16:53 His Honour the Lieutenant Governor entered the Chamber, took his seat upon the throne, and gave Royal Assent

to the following Bill.]

His Honour: — Pray be seated please.

The Speaker: — May it please Your Honour, this Legislative Assembly at its present session has passed a Bill which, in the name of the Assembly, I present to Your Honour and to which Bill I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

Deputy Clerk: — Your Honour, the Bill is as follows:

Bill No. 4 - The Education Amendment Act, 2006 (2)/Loi de 2006 modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur l'éducation (n° 2)

His Honour: — In Her Majesty's name, I assent to this Bill.

[His Honour retired from the Chamber at 16:54.]

The Speaker: — Please be seated. 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: — The motion is carried. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10:00 a.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 16:56.]

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GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

CABINET MINISTERS

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Premier

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

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

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

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

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

Hon. David Forbes
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Water Corporation

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Provincial Secretary
Minister Responsible for Gaming
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Government Insurance

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Minister Responsible for Literacy
Minister Responsible for Liquor and
Gaming Authority
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Minister Responsible for
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Hon. Harry Van Mulligen
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Hon. Mark Wartman
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