



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

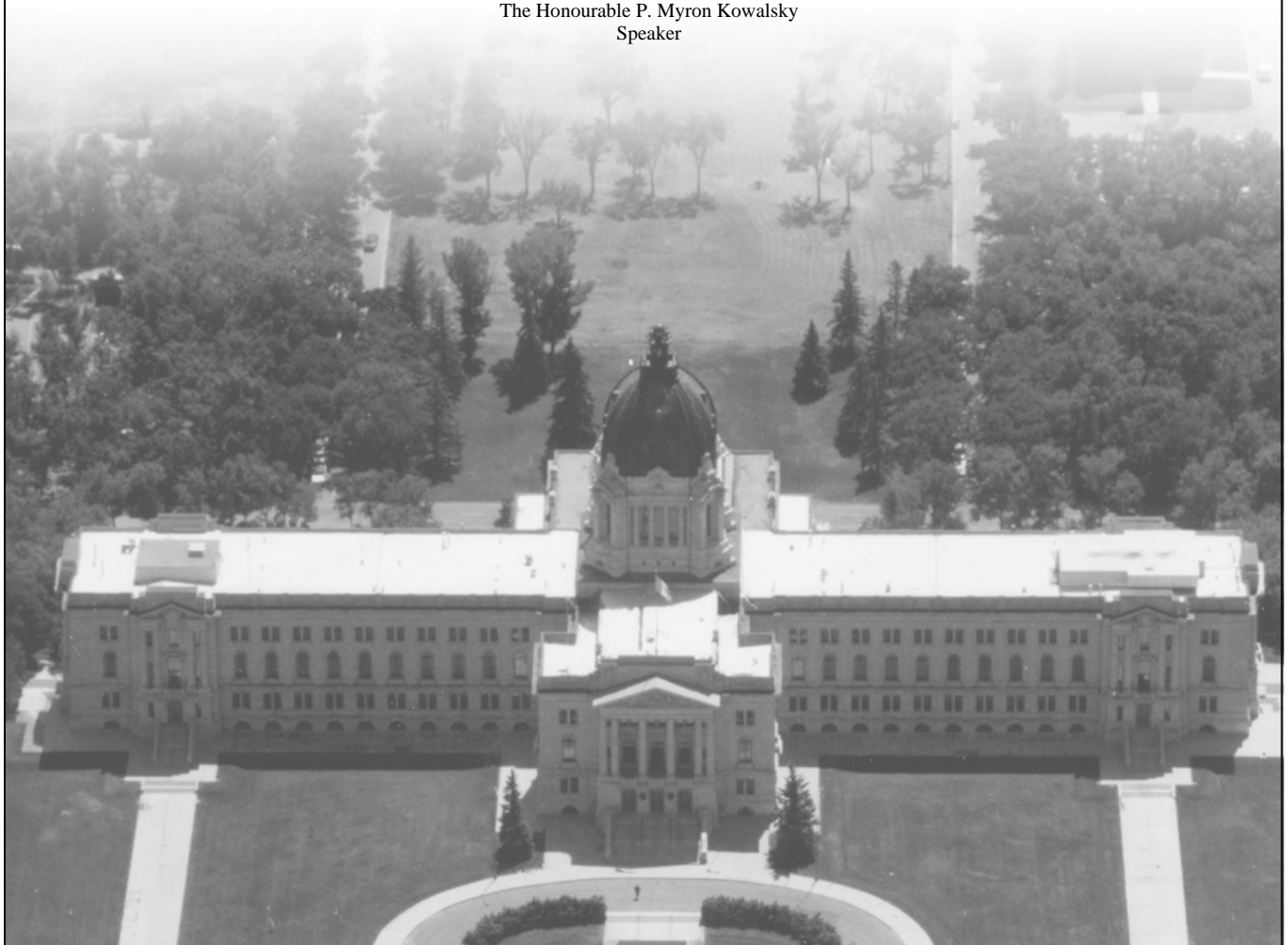
Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of

The Honourable P. Myron Kowalsky
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Addley, Hon. Graham	NDP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Atkinson, Hon. Pat	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Beatty, Hon. Joan	NDP	Cumberland
Belanger, Hon. Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornrud, Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
Borgerson, Lon	NDP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
Calvert, Hon. Lorne	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
Chisholm, Michael	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
Cline, Hon. Eric	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Crofford, Joanne	NDP	Regina Rosemont
D'Autremont, Dan	SP	Cannington
Dearborn, Jason	SP	Kindersley
Draude, June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
Duncan, Dustin	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
Forbes, Hon. David	NDP	Saskatoon Centre
Gantfoer, Rod	SP	Melfort
Hagel, Hon. Glenn	NDP	Moose Jaw North
Hamilton, Doreen	NDP	Regina Wascana Plains
Harpauer, Donna	SP	Humboldt
Harper, Ron	NDP	Regina Northeast
Hart, Glen	SP	Last Mountain-Touchwood
Heppner, Nancy	SP	Martensville
Hermanson, Elwin	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Higgins, Hon. Deb	NDP	Moose Jaw Wakamow
Huyghebaert, Yogi	SP	Wood River
Iwanchuk, Andy	NDP	Saskatoon Fairview
Junor, Judy	NDP	Saskatoon Eastview
Kerpan, Allan	SP	Carrot River Valley
Kirsch, Delbert	SP	Batoche
Kowalsky, Hon. P. Myron	NDP	Prince Albert Carlton
Krawetz, Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
Lautermilch, Hon. Eldon	NDP	Prince Albert Northcote
McCall, 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

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again today I rise on behalf of the constituents of Cypress Hills to present a petition concerning the recent closure of the SaskPower office in the community of Shaunavon. 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 keep the SaskPower office in Shaunavon open to provide full service to the community and surrounding areas.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, today's several pages of petitions are signed exclusively by individuals from the community of Shaunavon. I so present.

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have petitions to present today. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to ensure that the Maryfield School remains open.

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

This petition, Mr. Speaker, comes from the good people of Maryfield. I so present.

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

Mr. Hermanson: — Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition to maintain full service of the SaskPower office at Rosetown. The petitioners note that if the office closes, the citizens of Rosetown and surrounding communities will not have a personal contact with a SaskPower representative and there will not be immediate receipt of payment for customers. Mr. Speaker, the prayer of the petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to keep the SaskPower office in Rosetown open to provide full service to the community and surrounding areas.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition come from the communities of Harris and Rosetown and I'm pleased to present it on their behalf.

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 dangerous practice of transferring patients from one ambulance to another on the highway. 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 cease the transfer of patients from one ambulance to another while en route.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals from the communities of Chaplin and Swift Current. I so present.

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

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And today I return to reading a petition of citizens concerned about safety when driving on Highway No. 5. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

And the signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from Saskatoon, Humboldt, Meacham, and Sunset Estates. I so present.

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

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to present another petition from citizens opposed to possible reduction of health care services in Wilkie. 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 Wilkie Health Centre and special care home 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 Unity and district. I so present.

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to present a petition on behalf of people from across Saskatchewan who for the past eight 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.

Petitioners today come from the provincial constituencies of Saskatoon Riversdale, Saskatoon Fairview, and Saskatoon Silver Springs. I so present.

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

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I rise with a petition from citizens who are very concerned that the withdrawal of lab services at the Lafleche and District Health Centre would cause undue hardship to residents, particularly seniors. And for relief, I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary actions to ensure that lab services are continued at the Lafleche and District Health Centre.

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

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by citizens from several communities that would be affected by such a closure. I so present.

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

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Assembly today to bring forth a petition signed by citizens of Saskatchewan that are concerned with the government's handling of rural school closures:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary actions to ensure that the Limerick School remains open.

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures to this petition are from Wood Mountain and Limerick. I so present.

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

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to read a petition concerning the condition of Highway 368, starting 4 miles south of Lake Lenore to 4 miles south of St. Brieux. And it has seriously endangered the safety of drivers and harms economic growth in the area. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take immediate action and make necessary repairs to Highway

368 in order to address safety and economic concerns.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, it is signed by the good people of Lake Lenore and St. Brieux. I so present.

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

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to rise in the House today to present a petition calling for the widening of Highway No. 5, a highway that runs in perpendicular width through my constituency of Saskatoon Southeast. 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 upgrade and widen Highway No. 5 from Humboldt to Saskatoon.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by good citizens of Saskatoon. I am pleased to present it on their behalf. Thank you.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — 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 Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day 47 move that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing:

For the Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission: please provide the Public Service Commission anti-harassment policy as it existed in the fiscal year '91-92.

I have the same questions going right up to this current year, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 47 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister for SaskPower: does SaskPower allow other companies to utilize the billing distribution network advertising? And if so, what remuneration does the corporation receive for this service?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for

Saskatoon Southeast.

[13:45]

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 47 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Government Insurance: has SGI invested in Western Financial Services? And if so, for what purpose, how much was invested, and what percentage of ownership does that investment represent?

I give notice that I shall on day no. 47 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for SaskTel: how many servers does the corporation have devoted to web hosting?

I further give notice:

To the Minister Responsible for SaskTel: how many servers does the corporation have devoted to web hosting in Saskatchewan?

To the Minister Responsible for SaskTel: how many servers does the corporation have devoted to web hosting located out of the province, and where are they located? And how many servers does the corporation have devoted to web hosting located out of country, and where are they located?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 47 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: does the Saskatoon Health Authority have a current physician resource profile? And if so, how many doctors are currently practising in each area of specialty? And how many positions are currently vacant in each area of specialty, and what are the projected future needs in each area of practice?

I so present.

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

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 47 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Labour: how many retroactive independence allowance payments to injured workers did the Workers' Compensation Board make in fiscal year 2002-03, and what was the total dollar value of those payments?

Mr. Speaker, I have similar questions for all the fiscal years up to '06-07.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I actually have two groups to introduce. And I expect someone from the opposition may also want to respond at the close of these introductions.

Mr. Speaker, you will know that April 9 is the 90th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. It was on that day that thousands of people across Canada and across Europe . . . It's on this April 9 that people will gather to celebrate that 90th anniversary and to honour the soldiers who fought in that very historical battle.

This Canadian victory marked a turning point in the First World War and, as has been observed by many, it marked a turning point in Canadian history. There will be many historians who will agree that after this battle, after the Battle of Vimy Ridge, Canada truly emerged as a sovereign nation. The battle was for many a symbol of Canada's unity and secured our collective future. Earlier today in the rotunda we remembered and we honoured the brave soldiers who helped shape our nation and its destiny.

And so, Mr. Speaker, it is first of all my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly our special guests today from the following veterans' associations. And I might ask that members of the association who are present might just wave as I recognize your particular association. And so, Mr. Speaker, we welcome today members of the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 001. Mr. Speaker, we welcome the Royal Canadian Legion, Saskatchewan Command; the Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans' Association; Saskatchewan First Nations Veterans Association; Saskatchewan Métis Veterans Association; the Polish Veterans Association; Korea Veterans Association; and the Canadian Association of Veterans in United Nations Peacekeeping.

We thank you for your courage. We thank you for all those whom you represent in the Saskatchewan legislature today and in the history of our province and in the history of our nation. And we welcome you today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — And now, Mr. Speaker, with your and members' indulgence, I would like to make some further introductions. In celebration of the 90th of Vimy Ridge, young people from across Canada will be gathering in France for the anniversary. And we are very, very proud of the fact that a number of Saskatchewan young people will be there. Some of them, Mr. Speaker, have already left. These are young people engaged in the 41st Royal Canadian Air Cadets Hercules Squadron. They have left. I'm not sure if they've arrived yet at Vimy, but they're on their way.

But representing them here today and with us is Lieutenant Bob Bray from the . . . Bob, can you give us a wave. And, Mr. Speaker . . .

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — From the city of Regina, from the Roman Catholic school division, a number of high school students will be travelling to France, to Vimy Ridge, for the 90th anniversary. And, Mr. Speaker, I was provided a list of the students who have been with us or continue to be in the gallery. This list, interestingly enough, tells me the size of the jacket they're wearing. I'm hoping it also tells me accurately the students who are with us.

And I would, Mr. Speaker, ask all members to greet the following students who will be travelling to Vimy: Sage Kuderevko, Tyler Braden, Patrick Reed, Braden Carnie, Kayla Turgeon, Melanie Krammer, Abby Putz — someone known to our Chamber — Bryan Brooks, Kristina Kaminski, Megan Kaminski — also known to members of the legislature — Justin Gallagher, Candis Smith, James Kleisinger, Alana Watson, Kaylee Puchala, Lysandra Pyle, and Isiah Dawson. Mr. Speaker, I invite all members to greet these students who will represent us and the province of Saskatchewan and their generation at Vimy Ridge.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join with the Premier in welcoming our special guests to the Assembly here today on behalf of the official opposition. I see a number of people in the audience that I know very well and have known for a number of years, so it's very nice to see them out to commemorate the Vimy Ridge Memorial Day. I know all of the good work that's been done by these members, and it's very, very nice to see you here.

Also with the students, I would like to congratulate you on being selected to travel to Vimy Ridge. It's an experience that I believe that you will hold dear to you forever. I've had the opportunity of visiting Vimy, and it's something that's embedded in my mind and will remain there for the rest of my life. It was a horrific war. It was a horrific battle. And you place yourself into the battlegrounds while you're there and it will be a lifelong remembrance, I'm sure.

On the cadets, the cadets that have left, I would like to congratulate the cadet organization on giving the cadets a chance to visit there. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members again to welcome our guests to their Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know all members would notice that today they've had a special way to be called to the Assembly in conjunction with the ringing of the bells, and that was the playing of the pipes and drums in honour of Tartan Day in Saskatchewan.

Earlier I had the pleasure to welcome them, along with the

member from Elphinstone, and hear from the member and Iain Mentiplay the significance of Tartan Day as a day for us to honour those of Scottish ancestry and their vast contributions to our great province.

Today in the gallery we are joined by members of Camp Balmoral No. 177: Danny Matheson, the chief and pipe major, Marg Willette, and I believe a former chief, Wilma Matheson, has also joined them today.

Now in another group, I've been trying to see if my eyes would focus that distance but I believe there's another group also seated in the gallery who are part of the Sons of Scotland, Camp Balmoral. And I recognize the Mathesons and the Mentiplays. If there's anyone else, if you would like to rise and be acknowledged.

I ask all members of the Assembly to join with me in greeting the Sons of Scotland, Camp Balmoral, on this Tartan Day.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd wish on behalf of the official opposition also to welcome the Sons of Scotland, Camp Balmoral No. 177. Mr. Speaker, my family left Scotland after the collapse of the clans and it's been very many generations since we could call ourselves actual Scots, but we first went to Ireland and then to Canada.

And I can say that the music that we heard on the way in here is the sweetest way I've ever been ushered into the Legislative Assembly in the time that I've been here. And the skirl of the pipes still causes every hair on the back of my neck to stand up after all of those generations.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This morning the Premier and the cabinet had the great occasion to have some breakfast and some information sharing with the Consulting Engineers of Saskatchewan. This afternoon we're joined by a couple of people that were at that breakfast. From the award-winning company in Saskatoon, ENGCOMP, we have Jason Mewis, the president and senior structural engineer; we have Brett Bonin, who's the office manager — and interestingly enough commutes back and forth from Regina to Saskatoon to work — and he is joined by his wife, Bonita. They of course are brought here with the chief of staff in the Corrections and Public Safety office, Darcy Furber.

I should point out, Mr. Speaker, that ENGCOMP is the Consulting Engineers of Saskatchewan 2006 Brian Eckel award of merit winner in the infrastructure category. They were also the 2006 Brian Eckel award of merit winner in the technology innovation category.

So this is a knowledge economy corporation that's based right

here in Saskatchewan — Saskatchewan young people doing a tremendous job in terms of value added in our economy. And the boom that we've got in this province is built on the back of people like Jason and Brett and Bonita. So please welcome them here to their Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you I'm pleased to introduce a lady who occupies a large part of my life, in the gallery today. In your gallery is my mother, Gladys Beasley from Medicine Hat. My mom and dad lived in Saskatchewan for over 50 years and then moved to Alberta.

I think it's a fitting day that she be in the Assembly as she is an English war bride. Her home was in Middlesbrough, England, and she moved here after the war in '46. I know that seeing the veterans here today in uniform will make her miss dad even more. And please, everybody, join with me in welcoming my mother to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Remembering the Battle of Vimy Ridge

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today we celebrate Canada's role in taking Vimy Ridge during World War I and we remember the cost. So much blood was shed, it should be red. Today, 90 years after the fact, we recognize the immensity of Canadian soldiers' success. Many indeed have said that Canada became a nation at Vimy Ridge.

For 20,000 Canadian soldiers — the first wave — that fateful battle began April 9, 1917. The lightest part of their load that day was the some 36 kilograms of equipment that each soldier was required to carry. The far heavier load was the very real prospect of failure to wrest control of the German stronghold in occupied France. History is so different for the action of these Canadian soldiers.

Students from across Canada will be in France. Among them will be teacher Curtis Kleisinger and a group of grade 11 and 12 students from O'Neill and Riffel high schools, as well as Major Reg Tweten and 25 air cadets. Their historic stops will include London, Vimy Ridge, Dieppe, Beaumont Hamel, and Paris.

To celebrate Vimy Ridge, students will each represent a soldier who gave their life at Vimy Ridge. These students are experiencing history where it was made. They're learning why it is said Vimy should be red. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Monday, April 9 is the 90th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, the battle that many historians point to as a defining moment for Canada and one which served to strengthen feelings of nationhood across the country.

After France lost more than 100,000 troops in its attempt to seize the German-occupied Vimy Ridge, the Canadian Corps were ordered to seize the heavily fortified, 7-kilometre-long ridge. Fighting together for the first time in history, all four divisions of the Canadian Corps launched their attack at 5:30 in the morning on Easter Monday, 1917. Mr. Speaker, 3,598 Canadians lost their lives during the four days of battle that resulted in the seizure of Vimy Ridge. There were 49 Canadian divisions represented at the Battle of Vimy Ridge and four were from Saskatchewan: the 5th, 28th, 46th, and the 1st Canadian Mounted Rifles.

Among the many that lost lives at Vimy over the course of the four-day battle was a young Saskatchewan soldier who served as a private in the 102nd Battalion, the North British Columbians. Joseph Peters was a member of the Standing Buffalo Band at Fort Qu'Appelle. He died at the young age of 24 on the first day of battle, Easter Monday.

Mr. Speaker, I would invite all members of this Assembly and this province to pause on Easter Monday to remember the many young men like Joseph Peters who lost their lives in this decisive battle 90 years ago. It was their valiant efforts that turned the tide on World War I.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

[14:00]

Meadow Lake Junior Achievers Excel

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know our Premier, who was in attendance, will want to join me. He was in attendance to present awards in congratulating a group of 11 students from Carpenter High School and Jonas Samson Junior High School in Meadow Lake whose company, All Decked Out Promotions, won Company of the Year honours at the Saskatchewan Junior Achievement Hall of Fame Awards recently held in Saskatoon.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, All Decked Out Promotions' major product — playing cards featuring the logos of local businesses — also received the award for best product design and the company was a top four finalist in the Shareholders Report of the Year category.

Mr. Speaker, All Decked Out Promotions was a first-year company competing with 13 other Junior Achievement companies for these honours. The success of the company speaks volumes about the talents and level of commitment of this group of students and the quality of the advisers working with them.

Mr. Speaker, Amanda Hill served as president of the company

and was also nominated for Achiever of the Year. Brynn Villeneuve was VP [vice president] of finance. She was a top four finalist for Most Valued VP of Finance and was co-winner of the Salesperson of the Year award. Other company VPs include Corinne Hampton, Joe McKay, Kevin Yu, Brittney Bacon, Cole Thompson, and Megan Hewison. The company's directors were Branden Huziak, Kelsey Obrigewitsch, and Nicky Zacharias.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating these outstanding Junior Achievers. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Tartan Day

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 1992, then Kindersley MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] Bill Boyd introduced a private member's Bill that designated April 6 of every year as Tartan Day. Tartan Day is a day on which we appreciate and celebrate our Scottish clans and families and the many contributions they have made and continue to make in building our province and nation. Scotland was the birthplace of our nation's first prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, and of tens of thousands of settlers and immigrants who came to Canada and Saskatchewan.

Since the first Scottish settler families arrived in Saskatchewan in the 1880s, Scottish traditions and culture have been alive and well in Saskatchewan. From highland dancing to pipe bands, Robbie Burns Day to highland athletic competitions, and haggis to scotch whiskey, Saskatchewan people are familiar with many aspects of Scottish culture.

I would like to thank the Sons of Scotland Benevolent Association for their excellent performance of piping and highland dancing in the rotunda of the legislature earlier this afternoon. I would also like to thank all of the volunteers who every year put on a fantastic Scottish pavilion at both Saskatoon's Folk Fest and Regina's Mosaic festival and for continuing to share their culture, traditions, and food with all of us.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition Saskatchewan Party, I am pleased to wish all Saskatchewan citizens of Scottish descent a happy Tartan Day.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Loggie's Shoe Store Celebrates 100th Birthday

Hon. Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today one of Regina's oldest locally owned, independent businesses is celebrating its 100th anniversary. In 1907 two New Brunswick businessmen, J.E. Nicol and H.N. Loggie, arrived here in Regina and established a shoe store.

The city was young, Mr. Speaker — only four years old. The population was about 8,000. And there was a mile of paved street and 49 street lights. Their hope that the city would grow and prosper was rewarded and their business prospered along with it.

In 1914 Loggie bought Nicol out. Bill Childs later joined the firm and bought the business in 1938. Harold Hague returned from serving in the navy in World War II and started with the firm, eventually becoming manager and part owner before buying it out in 1978. All told, Harold Hague has worked 61 years at Loggie's Shoes. In 1984, Harold's son Kelly joined the business and purchased it from his father in 1989 and owns and operates the business to this day.

Mr. Speaker, this morning I had the pleasure of joining the Hague family, Mayor Pat Fiacco, Regina downtown business improvement Chair Dale Greisser, and many others in celebration and for a bit of birthday cake. It was great to see the Hague family in attendance, especially Kelly's sisters, Maureen and Colleen, as well as staff members past and present. It was a special treat especially to see Jerry Rusconi and Dorothy Bell, who between them have decades of work experience at Loggie's.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to take this opportunity to recognize Harold and Kelly for their outstanding contribution to our community. They have made and continue to make a tremendous contribution in so many ways to life in Regina. Congratulations to the Hague family on the 100th anniversary of Loggie's Shoes.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Wishart Dancers Perform at Disney World

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, a trip to Disneyland is coveted by young people as well as those young at heart. In February a group of individuals from the community of Wishart, the Wishart Senior Hopak Dancers, not only enjoyed a trip to Disney World but they were representatives of their community, their province, and their country as they performed twice at the Dock Stage in Downtown Disney, Orlando, Florida.

The Wishart dancers have been in existence for 31 years, and presently they have an enrolment of 54 dancers ranging in age from 4 to 37 years old. Dancers attend from Wishart, Wynyard, Kelliher, Raymore, Punnicchy, Saskatoon, and Regina. And the instructors, Dwayne and Brenda Prokopetz, reside in White City.

When the senior group was performing at the Veselka celebration in Foam Lake in 2006, the instructor of the dance ensemble from Edmonton, Mr. Ken Kachmar, was very impressed with their performance and offered to make arrangements for them to perform at Disney World.

Hard work is required to achieve success at the various high-level competitions that this group would normally compete at. When the word was received, they realized they would have

to be raising a lot of money and would require a lot of hard work needed to raise \$32,000 in six months in a community with a population of 80 people.

That didn't daunt them. They achieved this goal by making and selling 40,000 perogies, two perogy suppers, three steak nights, a game of change night, three auction sales, a Ukrainian golf tournament, and the list goes on. Mr. Speaker, we should be very proud of this group of dancers who showcased Ukrainian heritage at Disney World. Congratulations.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

SGI Auto Fund Rebate

Mr. Yates: — Well, well, well, Mr. Speaker. This week, insured vehicle owners in Saskatchewan are receiving more than just great insurance from SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance]. Mr. Speaker, this week SGI is returning \$100 million to its customers through a rebate on their 2006 auto insurance premiums. A rebate, Mr. Speaker, that Saskatchewan people need to know would not be received if the Saskatchewan Party were in government.

The Saskatchewan Party's Finance critic has made it clear to the people of Saskatchewan that the SGI rebate customers are receiving in their mailboxes is \$100 million that, in quotes, "they would not have spent . . . that they would have been more prudent with."

Mr. Speaker, I find it alarming that at a time that the SGI's Auto Fund is in its strongest financial position in its history, the Saskatchewan Party opposes rebates to SGI customers. Mr. Speaker, what is even more alarming is that the Saskatchewan Party knows that the SGI Auto Fund is prohibited by legislation to receive or contribute money into the General Revenue Fund, yet they would have spent it elsewhere. Mr. Speaker, the only question that remains is, if the Saskatchewan Party opposes your SGI rebate, what would they have rather spent your money on?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

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

Missing Funds

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, since the fall of 2001 the Provincial Auditor has been raising the alarm over lack of proper controls and financial supervision in the Department of Community Resources. The department was not following rules and procedures. Roughly half of the client files examined did not contain enough information to verify the eligibility of applications. There were repeated warnings that the department needed to improve its compliance with established financial procedures.

Mr. Speaker, this morning we learned that \$26,000 is missing from the department's Regina office. An eight-year employee has been fired and three managers have been disciplined. Mr. Speaker, to the minister: why is this still happening? Why is money still going missing?

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

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to point out as the minister that certainly when it comes to the department, the buck certainly stops here. And I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, that I take that responsibility very, very seriously. And what I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, is that as politicians we certainly develop policies and programs. And what we then do is we turn around and we allow the administrators — usually called a deputy minister and a series of managers — to implement the policies and procedures to make sure there's an effective form of governance and certainly making sure that the services are being delivered. What I'll point out, Mr. Speaker, is we put the policies in place, and they must be followed, Mr. Speaker.

It is my understanding on this particular incidence that the policies and practices were not always followed. And what I'd like to report is that my deputy took decisive action by terminating the employee in question and disciplining others that did not have the proper oversight in place, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, the person at the centre of these allegations is a long-time employee with the Department of Community Resources. So was Evelyn Hynes who bilked the taxpayers of Saskatchewan for over \$1 million — money destined for the poorest of poor. Ms. Hynes was able to commit her fraud over a period of 12 years and no one knew that she had a previous conviction for bank fraud because no one did a criminal records check.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: was the employee at the centre of this investigation the subject of criminal records check? And if not, why not?

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

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Again, Mr. Speaker, what I'll point out that it is certainly something that is disheartening and disappointing. There's no question about that, that there's been some good progress made in this particular department. And certainly our deputy has worked very hard with a series of managers to make sure that problems, as they arose, are addressed. And certainly this is an issue that of course is not a very good public story.

And as disappointing and disheartening that this is, we wanted the public to know. And, Mr. Speaker, we wanted the public to know as soon as possible. And as I mentioned in the past, as much as this is not a good news story, we welcome the scrutiny.

And I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that our deputy acted swiftly. Our deputy acted decisively. And the deputy filled his responsibility in his role because his responsibility's role is to make sure that he hires and fires and disciplines staff. And, Mr. Speaker, our deputy done his job. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, this morning the deputy minister of Community Resources said the new controls put in place to prevent fraud didn't work. Also in what absolutely must be the understatement of the year, Mr. Duncan Fisher said this incident and another reported in the media this week will have an impact on the credibility of the department. Well no kidding, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, three managers have been suspended with pay for 10 days as a result of this latest incident. Why were these employees suspended, and what further investigations will be undertaken in the wake of today's revelations?

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

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, I would point out that again it is my understanding, it is my understanding, that policies and practices were not always followed, and obviously this is a weakness that we will address, Mr. Speaker.

Our deputy minister has been instructed and will continue doing so in making sure that we look at all the accountability framework as dictated by the Minister of Finance to make sure that we tighten up and strengthen some of the rules and regulations and the processes attached to that to make sure we do become an efficient department. And certainly that all adds to the credibility, the good credibility of this government, Mr. Speaker.

I would point out that my deputy took decisive action as soon as this problem was very apparent. We became very clear and were very public about it. The employee was terminated. We are now in the process of meeting with the city police. I believe the meeting is set up for Thursday. And, Mr. Speaker, let the city police do their jobs to investigate the matter further. Again I would point out we took decisive action and steps were taken to correct the situation, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Management of Harassment Complaints

Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate that decisive action doesn't happen in every department of this government. Yesterday the Minister for the Public Service Commission said that the NDP [New Democratic Party] government would review harassment complaints made to the deputy minister and associate deputy minister of the Environment back in 1994.

What has she found out? Can she tell us why serious harassment complaints were being ignored?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for the Public Service Commission.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday the members read a letter from a woman or a statement from a woman. I guess my question is did they have the permission of that woman to read the statement? That's question no. 1. So they have put it on the public record that they had the permission of the woman, so that's important to understand.

What I can say is the person, the person who wrote the information in this statement was one of nine complainants who reached a settlement with the government in 2004. The allegations in the statement were considered in the negotiations leading up to the settlement with the nine complainants.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, the minister spoke yesterday about improvements needed in anti-harassment legislation. Public Service Commission's anti-harassment policy states in section PS 807-C and I quote, "It is misconduct for managers and supervisors who know of workplace harassment not to take immediate corrective action."

Managers, supervisors, DMs [deputy minister], ADMs [associate deputy minister], ministers, and the Premier were all told but did not act upon harassment complaints brought forward by Murdoch Carriere's victims. Can the minister explain why she needs new legislation when her government is ignoring current legislation?

[14:15]

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for the Public Service Commission.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, there's no question that every employer in the province of Saskatchewan is to — under the occupational health and safety legislation — to have an anti-harassment policy. And my understanding is that that anti-harassment policy is to be displayed in the workplace. We have asked the members of the opposition whether they have an anti-harassment policy in their caucus office. They've never answered that question, and they certainly never put on the public record whether or not this policy is displayed in the workplace.

But I will say this, I will say this, that in the occupational health and safety legislation, in the occupational health and safety legislation there are provisions that . . . and there is a definition that outlines under what grounds people face harassment, Mr. Speaker. But there's been a larger definition that's been put in legislation in certainly Quebec and Manitoba that deals with personal harassment or psychological harassment. And, Mr.

Speaker, it's our intention to amend our legislation to have that ...

The Speaker: — Member's time has elapsed.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, Murdoch Carriere's victims went to deputy ministers, associate deputy ministers, supervisors, their union, ministers, and the Premier and still received no help. Today the Department of Community Services announced it suspended three managers for lack of oversight and insufficient monitoring. The DM said it's a case of the proper policies being in place but not being followed. The government has suspended three managers for lack of oversight in that department. Why has this government refused to implement the same standards for those who refused to protect Murdoch Carriere's victims?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for the Public Service Commission.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I will say this, that as the members opposite may know, Mr. Terry Scott — who was the deputy minister at the time — is no longer in the employ of the Government of Saskatchewan. The policy certainly has been amended in terms of the complaints, and we are following that process, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the policy that is now in place.

But I will say to the members opposite — and this is important — the members opposite did not agree to any provision when it came to harassment in the occupational health and safety legislation that was introduced in 1993. And it will be really interesting to see whether or not the opposition support a larger definition for harassment in this province so that workers can be protected for a variety of harassments that do take place in the workplace, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, the official opposition is more than willing to consider amendments to improve anti-harassment legislation. However the problem isn't existing legislation. The problem is the NDP government's unwillingness to enforce current legislation. The problem is this government's refusal to find out exactly what went wrong in the Murdoch Carriere scandal and to make sure that it never happens again. The problem is that the NDP would rather ...

The Speaker: — Order please. Order please. Order please. Members are interfering with the member's right to speak in the Assembly. The Chair recognizes the member for Martensville.

Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, the problem is that the NDP

would rather write a big, fat cheque to their buddy, Murdoch Carriere, and hope that the problem just goes away.

Will the Premier finally begin to set the record straight by allowing an all-party legislative committee to investigate the Murdoch Carriere scandal?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for the Public Service Commission.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I think all of the facts are certainly known in ... [inaudible interjection] ... Well the members of the opposition disagree. But I will say this: nine women complained. There was an investigation that took place in 2002. Mr. Carriere was suspended with pay. Then he was disciplined. He was suspended without pay on February 12, suspended for three months. He was demoted three levels, and he was sent to Regina, and he was red circled. And on April 2 he was dismissed, Mr. Speaker.

As the members know, The Public Service Act is very clear. The only person that can dismiss an employee is the permanent head. The permanent head was instructed by the Premier to dismiss Mr. Carriere. It was double jeopardy, Mr. Speaker. The process was not followed, and we ended up settling with Mr. Carriere instead of going to court, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Recruiting and Retaining Health Care Professionals

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan is having a health human resources crisis, and here's the effect the nursing shortage is having on rural Saskatchewan.

The Arcola Health Centre has reduced services again. According to town council member Darren Grimes, this latest crisis developed when two of the six registered nurses retired. They haven't received an application for an RN [registered nurse] in over six months. They're hoping for some new grads. They've been advertising across Canada. They're even trying to bring in nurses from Zambia. The community is worried that this will affect the ability to recruit doctors.

Why is this Minister of Health abandoning rural Saskatchewan by failing to adequately address the nursing shortage across Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to address the question raised by the opposition's new health care critic today. The member, the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, does not understand the nature of health human resources crisis across Canada. Mr. Speaker, any review of literature, media reports, magazine reports from across Canada,

Mr. Speaker, would indicate very clearly what the crisis in work shortages are across Canada.

Mr. Speaker, we are aware, 30 beds in Calgary, Mr. Speaker, are closed every single day, Mr. Speaker, as a result of the shortage of nurses. Mr. Speaker, in British Columbia, the number of nurses right now, vacancies in the province of British Columbia — 2,000, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Member's time has elapsed.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. From the Minister of Health's comments, it's plain that he doesn't even know where the hospitals are in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, Arcola and other communities are concerned that the inability to recruit nurses and doctors jeopardizes the existence of their health centres. Is this the NDP plan — to provide no nurses, to eliminate acute care, to reduce emergency services to a few hours? What happens when there's an accident in agriculture, in the oil patch, or on the highways? Is this the NDP's plan? Is this government trying to starve rural Saskatchewan of nurses so that hospitals and health centres are forced to close permanently?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll just continue the answer from where I left off a few moments ago. Mr. Speaker, in Calgary alone, Mr. Speaker, the shortage of nurses or the vacancies available — 650. Mr. Speaker, the point of my argument is quite clear: that there is a national problem, Mr. Speaker, as far as nurse shortages.

The opposition is demonstrating that they don't understand this crisis in human health resources, Mr. Speaker. And they're also demonstrating that they do not understand what this province has done because, Mr. Speaker, over the course of the last year we have announced not only recruitment and retention initiatives, Mr. Speaker. We have put in this budget an incentive for graduates. And, Mr. Speaker, today — today, Mr. Speaker — I am announcing additional bursaries for students, Mr. Speaker, bursaries that on top of the incentives for . . .

The Speaker: — Member's time has elapsed.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in October of last year, Spiritwood shut down its hospital services indefinitely because of a shortage of doctors. At the time the minister said that the government's new recruitment strategy would help recruit doctors to rural areas. It's been almost six

months, and the hospital is still not able to provide full services. I would say that six months is not just a temporary closure.

To the Minister of Health: when will services at Spiritwood Hospital return to normal?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite is well aware of how hard the Prince Albert Parkland Regional Health Authority is working to overcome the temporary closure at Spiritwood and to ensure that those who live in that Big River-Shellbrook-Spiritwood area, Mr. Speaker, will have access to quality health care.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite are also aware of the work that this government and the Saskatchewan Medical Association and the College of Physicians and Surgeons have done and are doing, Mr. Speaker, on physician recruitment. Mr. Speaker, recruitment efforts are under way. Recruitment efforts will continue to be supported by this government, Mr. Speaker, and I have confidence in the Prince Albert Parkland Regional health care authority to complete the work that they have begun.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, when services in Spiritwood were initially suspended, the Minister of Health said he was concerned that hospital services had not been provided for more than a week. It's been six months.

I have also learned that from May 1 to June 15, Big River will not have a doctor. That means that service . . .

The Speaker: — Order please. Order please. I invite the member for Rosthern-Shellbrook to continue his question.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been six months. I have also learned that from May 1 to June 15, Big River will have no doctor. That means that services cannot be provided at the Big River Hospital. Why has the minister allowed the doctor situation to deteriorate so badly in the Prince Albert Parkland region?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just as with nurses in the province, Mr. Speaker, there are areas of the province that have become hard-to-recruit-to areas, Mr. Speaker. We currently have two of those hard-to-recruit areas in the province with regards to physicians. One of them is that southern part of the P.A. [Prince Albert] Parkland Health Region. Mr. Speaker, the government, the Saskatchewan Medical Association, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Mr. Speaker, and the community are working closely hand in

hand to recruit to that specific hard-to-recruit area.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to support these recruitment efforts through the budget tabled in this House and voted upon the other day. The member opposite specifically voted against that budget which puts additional resources to work to support physician recruitment across this province, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's not just hospitals in rural Saskatchewan that are being forced to reduce services. Unit 5E at the Regina General Hospital will be closing six beds effective April 10 because, from a memo that we received and I quote from the memo, "ongoing staff shortages." Unit 5E provides patient care for general surgery and gynecology. The wait for these surgeries already is ridiculous. How is closing six more beds going to do anything to reduce the waiting lists?

This minister talks every day that the waiting lists are being reduced, but that's not what people in Saskatchewan are experiencing. How can he ever say that waiting lists are shortened when we're seeing reduced services across Saskatchewan and in Regina?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker, and again an emphasis on the opposition does not understand the nature of the crisis in the shortage of health care workers. Mr. Speaker, in the province of Alberta, in the city of Calgary, every day, Mr. Speaker, 30 beds are closed as a result of a shortage of nurses; Mr. Speaker, that Alberta government and British Columbia government, where they're 2,000 short, Mr. Speaker, every day those provinces are recruiting in this province, trying to take Saskatchewan graduates and Saskatchewan nurses out to other jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, we are working hard to be competitive, not only to retain our graduates but to retain the nurses that are working in the units currently, Mr. Speaker, and to recruit from other jurisdictions to fill the vacancies that we have. Mr. Speaker, the recruitment agency is assisting the regional health authorities to do this work, Mr. Speaker. On a policy and fiscal basis, Mr. Speaker, we are doing all that we can to provide the assistance . . .

The Speaker: — Time has elapsed.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, it is under this minister's watch and under this NDP government that we've got the worst nursing retention rate of anywhere in Canada, Mr. Speaker. Mr.

Speaker, and it's not a wonder when I read from the memo that I received regarding unit 5E, it talks about staff that are being run off their feet to try and keep these beds open. I go on to quote the memo. It says:

This was challenging for everyone involved and the decision to close has not been made without a lot of thought and consultation.

But frankly it's a matter of safety. We do not have enough staff to provide safe patient conditions in our main hospitals in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, that's absolutely ridiculous. Under the worst nurse retention rate of anywhere in Canada, how can he stand in his spot and defend his record?

[14:30]

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And again the opposition demonstrates that they aren't willing to listen to or pay attention to the newest numbers that are coming forward, and they keep relying on old numbers and old circumstances. Mr. Speaker, 90 per cent of current graduates, Mr. Speaker, are working in the province of Saskatchewan. That's a heck of a change over the years, Mr. Speaker, under the watch of this government.

And let's deal with some other numbers, Mr. Speaker. In October we announced a recruitment and retention strategy, Mr. Speaker — \$25 million over three years. We put that in place less than six months ago. Mr. Speaker, the latest numbers as of the end of March, 120 individuals have been recruited to the province of Saskatchewan from this initiative in just the last six months. Mr. Speaker, 56 per cent of those are nurses.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, it's clear this minister does not understand the impact of human resource shortages that we're facing in Saskatchewan. And they failed to address it completely in the budget.

According to the Saskatchewan Health employee pension plan, we have 485 nurses that are eligible for retirement. We also have 523 nursing positions that are vacant. That's over 1,000 nurses short in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, what did this minister do to address that problem? He increased the number of seats by a whopping 18. He ought to be ashamed of himself.

What is even worse is when we talk about doctor shortages. What did they do in that area? They increased it by a whopping of four seats. It comes nowhere close to what is needed in Saskatchewan.

When you look at other provinces, such as Manitoba, they have twice as many seats in that province for nursing training. Mr. Speaker, we're far short of what we need in this area, and it's

under that minister's watch. Decisions they made through the '90s has caused problems that we're seeing today. What is he going to do to fix it?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite conveniently ignores all of the initiatives that have been taken by this government — recruitment, retention, and training. But, Mr. Speaker, this budget wasn't just for forecasting for the next 12 months, Mr. Speaker. This budget was forecasting for the next four years, and this budget contains funding for 152 additional nursing seats. Mr. Speaker, currently this budget supports 1,500 students, and over the course of the next four years, Mr. Speaker, on an annual basis, this budget projection supports annually 1,600 nursing seats.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Bursaries for Health Care Providers

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And as I made reference in the question period today, the Saskatchewan government believes in a high-quality health care system accessible to all Saskatchewan residents, and one that is sustainable into the future with the resources available to us.

Mr. Speaker, a key ingredient for a strong health care system is having an adequate number of health care providers. Like many other jurisdictions, Saskatchewan is experiencing shortages of key health care professions. Keeping and attracting key health care providers is one of the biggest challenges facing our health care system, and addressing this challenge is one of the top priorities of this government.

Since 2001 we have directly addressed the retention and recruitment issue in our action plan for Saskatchewan health care and in our health workforce action plan. Mr. Speaker, today it is my pleasure to announce funding for 600 new and continuing and return-in-service bursaries.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — In support of this program the provincial government is devoting more than \$6 million this year to support return-in-service bursary programs in the health care field. Health bursaries will be awarded to Saskatchewan students studying in health-related areas where shortages exist or are anticipated. In exchange, these students agree to work in Saskatchewan's publicly funded health care system upon completion of their studies.

Combined with the recent budget announcement giving a tax break to graduates who settle in this province, we believe that our bursary program is a powerful incentive to keep young

people in Saskatchewan after they've completed their studies. Saskatchewan's lower housing costs are also a big drawing card for young people, as are our short commutes to work, closer proximity to family and friends, and great lifestyle opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, we are targeting our bursaries to Saskatchewan students studying to be nurses. These include licensed practical nurses, registered nurses, registered psychiatric nurses, nurse educators, primary care nurse practitioners, advanced practical nurses, and those studying to re-enter the nursing profession. In addition, the government, in partnership with the Saskatchewan Medical Association, will offer bursaries to students and residents studying medicine.

Also benefiting from bursaries are Saskatchewan students studying in a broad array of health services professions. These disciplines would include audiology, combined laboratory and x-ray technology, cytology, dental therapy, dietetics and nutrition, public health inspection, MRI [magnetic resonance imaging] technology, medical laboratory and medical radiation technology, midwifery, nuclear medicine; physical, occupational, and respiratory therapy; pharmacy, prosthetic and orthotic technology, speech-language pathology, clinical psychology, clinical social work, and ultrasonography.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that investing in students through bursaries is a very effective way of encouraging them to remain in Saskatchewan after they complete their studies. At the same time, investing in our young people supports good health care system planning and follows through on our commitment of making our province a great place to live and work. I commend all bursary applicants for their commitment to health care in Saskatchewan and I look forward to their work and service to the people of this province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to rise and respond to the ministerial statement, and I would thank the minister for sending the statement over prior to hearing it.

I do want to first of all talk about the bursary program to begin with. And well, that will be my remarks around the whole program and the return in service — the bursaries. And it is a good start. Bringing people or keeping people in Saskatchewan is what we need to do.

And it's exactly what I said during question period, that we had the worst nurse retention record of anywhere in Canada. And he's saying, well now it's starting to turn around. And perhaps it is by programs like this, but the problem is is that we've had 16 years of NDP government ignoring the issue. And because we've had 16 years of NDP government and various health ministers over there ignoring the issue, we have fallen so far behind. And we've fallen so far behind that we're seeing hospitals around the province — whether it's in Arcola, whether it's in Spiritwood, it's been in Kamsack — there are hospitals around the province that are closing because they don't have the proper complement of health care professionals.

But what's as alarming as that is now we're seeing our acute care facilities in our major centres like the Regina General Hospital that are having to close six beds because they simply don't have the staff. You know, it's very hard to recruit health care professionals when you hear stories like what we heard from the memo that I read from earlier today where nurses — and all the health care professionals, but nurses — are being run off their feet because they don't have the proper complement of nurses.

We see workers' compensation rates increasing. We see overtime increasing, payments increasing. It's all because of decisions that this government has made over the last 16 years.

Over the last 16 years we had cut the number of nurse training seats significantly down to, I believe, about 120 nurse training seats graduating in one year. Well that doesn't even come close to covering off the number of retirements. So you run with about 120 or 30 nurse training seats for a couple of years, and you have 4 or 500 nurses retiring, you get yourself into the position that we find ourselves in today. We find ourselves in the position where we have 500-and-some seats, 500-and-some vacancies in our health . . . as far as registered nurses. We have 480 eligible to retire.

And the minister in all his wisdom decided that we'd increase the number of training seats by 18. Well that increase, to try and meet the demand of 1,000 in the next year or two that could be vacant — those positions could be vacant — at that rate, within 50 years this government, retaining all their trainees, may finally start to address the issue. It's a sad state of affairs that under this NDP government and under that minister, they would let our health care system fall in such disrepair because they've ignored the human resources problem.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 61 — The Vital Statistics Act, 2007

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would move that Bill No. 61, the vital statistics amendment Act, 2007 be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Health that Bill No. 61, The Vital Statistics Act, 2007 be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — First reading of this Bill.

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — At the next sitting of the House, Mr.

Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 62 — The Vital Statistics Consequential Amendment Act, 2007/Loi de 2007 portant modifications corrélatives à la loi intitulée The Vital Statistics Act, 2007

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would move that Bill No. 62, The Vital Statistics Consequential Amendment Act, 2007 be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Health that Bill No. 62, The Vital Statistics Consequential Amendment Act, 2007 be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — First reading of this Bill.

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — At the next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government we will be tabling responses to written questions no. 964 to 979 inclusive.

The Speaker: — Responses to 964 through to 979 inclusive have been submitted.

MOTIONS FOR RETURNS (Not Debatable)

Return No. 3

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Government Whip.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government we will be converting it to a motion for return (debatable).

The Speaker: — Return no. 3 has been converted to a motions for return (debatable).

[14:45]

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 57 — The Assessment Management Agency Amendment Act, 2007

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At the conclusion of my remarks it will be my pleasure to move second reading of Bill No. 57, The Assessment Management Agency Amendment Act, 2007.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments continue this government's commitment to provide a fair and equitable assessment system for property tax payers in this province. This fairness and equity will be ensured through the necessary amendment to implement a new funding scheme for the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency, more commonly referred to as SAMA.

This new funding scheme will provide the necessary funding from the stakeholder groups of the assessment system to implement the 2009 market value assessment system, and to get on track to meet the legislated property re-inspection requirements. The stakeholders of the property assessment system are the province, municipalities, and school divisions. This funding scheme was developed jointly among government departments and SAMA. Their mandate was to determine a long-term, sustainable, and principle-based funding plan for SAMA.

This new funding plan has been discussed with the assessment system stakeholders in the municipal and education sectors. These consultations have been with the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, SUMA; the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, SARM; the New North; and the Saskatchewan School Boards Association.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments implementing a new funding scheme for SAMA recognize the substantial stake each of the three stakeholders has in maintaining the overall integrity of the property tax revenue base. The property assessment system provides \$1.281 billion in revenue to fund school divisions and municipalities, and is a significant component in determining the allocation of \$594 million in K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] operating grants to the education sector. Ensuring a sustainable assessment system is paramount in making certain that property taxes are collected and grant calculations are done in a fair and equitable fashion.

I want to take just a moment, Mr. Speaker, to highlight the significant characteristics of this long-term funding plan for SAMA. Funding will be a shared responsibility among all stakeholders — the province, municipalities, and school division. Over time, funding proportions will reach 40 per cent, 30 per cent, and 30 per cent for the province, municipalities, and school division respectively for funding SAMA.

Municipalities should not see an increase in their SAMA requisitions until the provincial and school division shares reach their targeted 40 per cent and 30 per cent levels. Until that time,

the increased funding requirements for SAMA will be borne equally by the province and school divisions.

SAMA's future funding requirements will be determined based on a four-year funding plan which coincides with the legislated four-year revaluation cycle. For 2007-08 requisitions for SAMA client school divisions will be funded from the K to 12 operating grant. The future funding mechanism will be reviewed by Learning.

Accountability measures will be developed to ensure the funding partners have timely and meaningful information both about plans and actual results. The plan also envisions an eventual restructuring of the composition of the SAMA board of directors to reflect the new funding shares. However, Mr. Speaker, this will not occur until sometime in the future when the 40 per cent, 30 per cent, and 30 per cent funding shares are reached and after further consultations with stakeholders. At that future time, additional amendments to this legislation related to governance will be required.

Mr. Speaker, the province's new funding requirements under this plan will be set out in this Act's regulations subject to review and approval by government. Government will also finish its previous commitments to fund the development of the Saskatchewan Property Assessment Network, SPAN, and the rental income approach to commercial property assessment required for the 2009 revaluation. This is in addition to annual funding.

The proposed approach, Mr. Speaker, is principals-based. The province will maintain and increase its commitment to SAMA and provide the necessary funding to ensure that the province's interests in the assessment system are addressed. The proposals are built on the principle of attaining an equal relationship in terms of funding responsibilities for SAMA between two local government sectors, municipalities and school divisions, that rely on the property tax base as requested by the Saskatchewan School Boards Association.

It is anticipated, Mr. Speaker, that reaching the 40/30/30 cost sharing could take some years. The transition to 40/30/30 stakeholder funding means that once achieved, each of the stakeholders will share proportionately in any required funding changes which should result in maximum levels of transparency and accountability to all stakeholders for SAMA.

The concept of fixed funding shares based on the interests of each of the funding partners will provide greater certainty and equity for all parties into the future. Mr. Speaker, these amendments will require SAMA to prepare for consideration by stakeholders a four-year funding plan tied to the assessment revaluation cycle. One of the primary benefits of this approach will be to provide the necessary level of certainty to SAMA for successfully implementing revaluations. It also places the onus on SAMA to manage the year-to-year variations in required assessment activities and expenditures within the plan over the four-year revaluation cycle.

The approach will provide more certainty to the funding stakeholders. It will improve transparency and accountability. Provincial funding will remain subject to the annual provincial budget process and consideration by the legislature.

SAMA is currently required to consult with the funding stakeholders annually as part of its budget process. The multi-year funding plan approach means that the stakeholders will have an opportunity to review SAMA's objectives and planned expenditure at the start of each revaluation cycle in the context of what the agency hopes to achieve for that revaluation.

SAMA will have to anticipate and plan for major capital or operational changes well in advance of their implementation so that the appropriate approvals and funding are in place.

SAMA will have to propose and justify expenditure requirements for the next four-year budgetary period in the context of a plan for the revaluation cycle. The specific 40, 30, and 30 allocation formula will ultimately enable each stakeholder to clearly identify the impact of the SAMA budget proposal on their sector as soon as they receive the proposed budget. To ensure, Mr. Speaker, a high level of accountability to stakeholders, the new funding arrangement will necessitate the development of additional accountability measures for SAMA including, but not limited to, the annual reporting of SAMA's progress within the four-year plan.

This builds, Mr. Speaker, on SAMA's current practices and will not only identify financial and staffing variances but will also provide an explanation of the changes relative to their implications for meeting the goals and objectives of the revaluation cycle that is underway. The measures would be developed in consultation with the stakeholders.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, we have consulted on this funding plan with the local government associations. Comments received from the SAMA board and associations representing local governments have been generally favourable. However, Mr. Speaker, both the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities and the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association suggest that the provincial share of SAMA's funding should be greater than 40 per cent. This current percentage is linked to provincial interests in the assessment system that have been in the Act since 1994 and that provide a rational policy basis for determining what the appropriate provincial share of the costs of funding SAMA should be. The cost outside of the provincial interests are for the most part for assessment valuation services to continue to be funded by SAMA client local governments.

In 2004 a review of SAMA operations determined that the education sector was a major benefactor of the assessment system and that they should begin to fund a portion of SAMA's costs. This change was made with the endorsement of the Saskatchewan School Boards Association. School divisions rely heavily on property assessments whether to levy their own property taxes or to distribute provincial grants among school divisions. Given this interest, education sector funding for SAMA is entirely appropriate. It is proposed that this should be on a par with municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed amendments, I believe, will serve to strengthen The Assessment Management Agency Act and form a strong financial planning base for achievement of the next revaluation in 2009 and beyond. Mr. Speaker, this government recognizes the importance of a fair and equitable property

assessment system. To provide such a system, it is important that SAMA has sustainable and long-term funding from the province, municipalities, and school divisions. And these amendments will ensure this.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 57, The Assessment Management Agency Amendment Act, 2007.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Government Relations that Bill No. 57, The Assessment Management Agency Amendment Act, 2007 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? The Chair recognizes the member for Melfort.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After that scintillating presentation by the minister, I'm at a loss as what I could possibly add to the Act, Bill No. 57, to amend the assessment management agencies.

Mr. Speaker, as part of the minister's comments, he certainly alluded to the fact that accurate assessments are an important function of property tax formulas and that all three levels of jurisdictions — the school boards, the municipal associations, and the province, all benefit and have a responsibility to share in the costs.

I note, as well as the minister did, that the formula that was adopted by the government is certainly not one that was asked for by either of SUMA or SARM. SUMA I understand asked that 60 per cent of the funding come from the province and 20 per cent each from the municipalities and school divisions. SARM offered a suggestion of 50 per cent from the province and 25 per cent each from the municipalities and school divisions.

And of course the government, in its infinite wisdom of unloading more costs onto municipalities and school divisions, decided on a 40/30/30 basis. And this will be an extra cost for both of these other jurisdictions which take away from funds they would have available for important programs delivered elsewhere.

So, Mr. Speaker, I do understand that these regulations have to be updated, but certainly I note that the consultation process that occurred between SUMA and SARM was largely ignored in terms of the funding. And I hope that in other areas where amendments are being made and contemplated that the advice of SUMA and SARM haven't been ignored as well.

Mr. Speaker, in order for us to properly consult with SUMA, SARM, and the school boards, I at this time would now move to adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Melfort that debate on second reading of Bill No. 57 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried.

[15:00]

**Bill No. 58 — The Municipal Revenue Sharing
Amendment Act, 2007**

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Well, Mr. Speaker, this is a fortunate day for the members because I have the opportunity to move, at the conclusion of my remarks, second reading of Bill No. 58, The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 2007.

As many members will know, Mr. Speaker, The Municipal Revenue Sharing Act provides the authority for a key element of the provincial financial assistance for urban and rural municipalities. The Bill establishes the amount of funds available this year to both the urban revenue-sharing pool and the rural revenue-sharing pool. It also determines the split in funding within the urban pool between cities and towns, villages and resort villages. These amendments will give legal effect to decisions announced in the 2007-2008 budget.

Mr. Speaker, our government has committed to increased revenue sharing, as resources permit, to ensure stable, sustainable, long-term funding for municipalities. This Bill and the budget decisions it enacts demonstrate our commitment to municipal governments across this province.

For 2007-08, Mr. Speaker, we are providing an historic increase of \$30 million in revenue sharing to municipalities. This is a 31 per cent increase, which brings the total revenue-sharing pool to \$127.3 million, its highest level in the history of the program. This increase means an additional \$11.7 million in unconditional funding for cities. For towns, villages, and resort villages, the increase is \$4.2 million. For rural municipalities, Mr. Speaker, the increase in revenue sharing is \$11.7 million, including both unconditional and conditional infrastructure grants.

Throughout the past year my officials and I have consulted with the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, the cities, Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, and at the municipal forum on how to distribute the funds this year. Their views have been considered and acted on where consensus with the province and each other could be reached.

Our priorities with regard to revenue sharing address three specific areas: increasing operational funding across the board, addressing inequities among communities, and providing funding for infrastructure and transitional issues.

The cities will now receive a total of \$46.8 million. In 2007-08, all cities will receive an increase of \$12.84 per capita in their revenue-sharing grants. Saskatoon and Regina will each receive an additional \$12 per capita. This will provide a total per capita payment of \$87.85 to all cities. This adjustment brings all cities to the same level of funding per capita and removes an inequity in the distribution of revenue sharing to the cities that had existed until now.

Towns and villages will receive an additional \$4.2 million in

unconditional operating funding. This will bring the maximum amount payable to towns, villages, and resort villages to nearly \$20.7 million. These funds will be distributed according to an updated formula for small urban communities.

The updated formula will use the new 2006 census Canada population figures. Mr. Speaker, here again we will address the inequities in the distribution of revenue sharing. Previously the distribution made use of both the 1996 and 2001 census data as well as municipal assessments and financial information dating back to prior to the 1997 province-wide re-evaluation, information that was a decade old or more.

Rural municipalities, Mr. Speaker, will receive an increase of almost \$11.7 million. This will provide rural municipalities with a total of \$49.6 million in revenue sharing. Of the increase, \$7.36 million will be allocated to the conditional grant programs, of which \$5 million has been set aside for the municipal primary weight corridors program. With the addition of another \$5 million next year, this program will receive \$10 million in targeted funding.

About \$1.65 million will be available to the bridge program. And \$700,000 has been allocated to a program we have named Communities in Transition, which is intended to assist those municipalities dealing with the infrastructure and environmental liabilities they assume when a village reverts back into an RM [rural municipality]. The details of these programs will be developed in consultation with the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities.

The remainder of the increase, \$4.34 million, will be allocated to unconditional grants for RMs and organized hamlets, bringing the total unconditional portion of the rural revenue-sharing pool to \$38.7 million. This will be provided to individual RMs based on a formula that includes a transportation and a service component. It is estimated, Mr. Speaker . . . It is based 85 per cent on the road system in each RM while the remaining 15 per cent is based on a three-year rolling average of expenditures such as protective services or culture and recreation services.

In addition to the urban and rural revenue-sharing amounts set by this Bill, northern municipalities also receive part of the total \$127.3 million. This is provided for by regulation under The Northern Municipalities Act, so it does not appear in this Bill.

Once it has been passed and received the assent of the Lieutenant Governor, this Bill will come into force retroactively. It will be effective as of April 1, 2007, the first day of the province's 2007-08 fiscal year.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I remind all members that this Bill will help to provide more than \$127.3 million of revenue-sharing grants for municipalities. All urban communities will receive an increase in their grants. We will address some historical inequities and we will provide increased funding for critical infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, this funding is critical to the prosperity and well-being of all communities and municipalities in Saskatchewan and I urge all members to support this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, having said that, I move second reading of Bill No. 58, The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act,

2007.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Government Relations that Bill No. 58, The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 2007 be now read a second time. The Chair recognizes the member for Melfort.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that I stand in awe of the minister. This legislation is 12 lines long and the explanation took more than 10 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, I certainly think that adjustments from time to time in the municipal revenue-sharing formula is important, and it is also important to note that while this legislation is in total, gives us summary totals, many of the individual RMs and cities and communities are going to be very interested in what it means specifically for them. And, Mr. Speaker, I know that many of them are anxiously looking forward to what the specific amounts of their revenue-sharing grants are going to be in their specific jurisdiction, and I know they're going to want to communicate and transmit this information and their concerns to the official opposition. In order to allow them to do that, at this point I would move to adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Melfort that debate on second reading of Bill No. 58 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. 59 — The Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation Amendment Act, 2007

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister Responsible for the Gaming Corporation.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon I'm pleased to introduce the amendments contained in Bill No. 59, The Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation Amendment Act, 2007. By introducing this legislation, our government recognizes that the highly regulated gaming industry is in fact a commercial industry and that the Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation is one of the most commercial entities under the provincial government's purview, generating profits that benefit all Saskatchewan people through programs and services.

This Bill will allow the Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation or SGC to be designated as a Crown Investments Corporation entity and allow it to be integrated into the Crown Investment Corporation's subsidiary governance model and capital allocation framework. This legislation, changing the status of SGC from a Treasury Board Crown to that of a wholly owned CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan] subsidiary, better reflects the corporation's commercial nature as a dynamic and innovative player in our province's economy generally, and a growing tourism industry in particular. And of course in particular in the cities of Regina and Moose Jaw.

The corporation will benefit specifically from the governance framework of a CIC Crown. This government's Crown governance model has received national recognition. The Conference Board of Canada has stated that the governance practices of our Crown boards are among the best in Canada — public or private. The Institute of Public Administration of Canada Governor General's Award for Excellence in Public Service went to CIC in 2000, in the year 2000, in recognition of the governance, strategic planning, and performance management systems developed for use in our Crown sector. Our Crown corporations play such an important role in Saskatchewan's economy and society because they very effectively maintain that critical balance, Mr. Speaker, that critical balance between business success, good governance, and good public policy.

This designation will be effective January 1, 2008. And the transition, from the perspective of SGC stakeholders, will be transparent and rather innocuous.

The Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation Act currently requires that SGC transfer 100 per cent of its annual net income to the General Revenue Fund. The government then distributes an amount equal to 25 per cent of the SGC's net income to each of the Community Initiatives Fund or the CIF and the First Nations Trust or FNT. The \$2 million of the annual payments that flow to the CIF are then allocated to the Clarence Campeau Development Fund. All of these, Mr. Speaker, for positive social purposes as a result of profits received in the Gaming Corporation to assist people in the province of Saskatchewan.

The change in status of the corporation to a CIC Crown will not impact the funding obligations to the Community Initiatives Fund or the First Nations Trust. In fact this Bill specifies that SGC will continue to provide direct payment to the General Revenue Fund in accordance with the 2004 Gaming Framework Agreement.

SGC will continue to pay 50 per cent of net income directly to the GRF [General Revenue Fund] for its distribution to the Community Initiatives Fund and the First Nations Trust. The net income after these fund payments will be subject to CIC's dividend policy.

SGC requires an appropriate financial structure so as not to impede its ability to operate in such a commercial environment. Since its inception, the Gaming Corporation has been financed solely by debt capital. It has not received any equity financing from the government, nor has it been allowed to build up any retained earnings. And this financing structure is not conducive to a commercial entity needing capital for renovations, asset replacement and upgrades, and the introduction of new technologies and product offerings.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this government is proud to report that the Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation enjoys a workforce that is near 50 per cent Aboriginal representation. That's very important to us. SGC can boast having one of the most inclusive workforces in the country — in the country. Furthermore, the corporation's current workforce of 1,008 has an average age of only 32. An average age of only 32, Mr. Speaker. And this track record for attracting and retaining youthful workers generally and Aboriginal people specifically

must be maintained. And expanded business opportunities for SGC translate into advanced opportunities for this relatively young and diversified workforce.

This transfer of SGC from a Treasury Board Crown to a CIC Crown is intended to facilitate SGC's need to develop business growth opportunities that will translate into greater opportunities for employee advancement and job growth. And for example, Mr. Speaker, a responsible gaming software product called iCare, that's small I, capital C, iCare, has been developed by SGC for its own internal use and is in full operation. This software allows casino operators to interact with those gaming patrons who may be at risk in terms of developing problem gaming behaviours.

This software product and the associated program represents leading-edge thinking in terms of social responsibility aspect of gaming and today is the only — I underline only — automated system available for this purpose in the world, Mr. Speaker. SGC believes there is a global market potential for this product. However, SGC has insufficient personnel and financial resources to devote to the marketing, sales, and development of the iCare software and program.

Unlike other commercial Crowns, which are traditionally financed through some combination of debt and equity, SGC as a Treasury Board Crown currently sees 100 per cent of its profits paid directly to the General Revenue Fund. This leaves no internally generated capital for strategic business opportunities, and hence limited opportunities for employment advancement. By amending the legislation to convert the Gaming Corporation to a CIC Crown, the corporation will be in a better position to respond to future opportunities, thereby creating further jobs and advancement opportunities for SGC's relatively young and diversified workforce.

As a wholly owned subsidiary of CIC, the Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation will operate within an award-winning governance model and will continue to ensure its processes are transparent, placing the highest emphasis on being accountable to the people of Saskatchewan.

Following the conversion of SGC to a CIC Crown, the gaming framework agreement will be kept whole — that's important — with the First Nations Trust and the Community Initiatives Fund continuing to receive the same level of funding. And so, Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to move that Bill No. 59, The Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation Amendment Act, 2007 be now read a second time.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[15:15]

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister Responsible for the Gaming Corporation that Bill No. 59, The Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation Amendment Act, 2007 be now read a second time. The Chair recognizes the member for Melfort.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to arise and speak briefly today on Bill 59, an Act to amend the Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation. Mr. Speaker, the

substantive change that's going to occur in this piece of legislation is that the Gaming Corporation is going to move from a Treasury Board Crown to a Crown Investments Corporation Crown.

Mr. Speaker, the minister outlined some of the important considerations that have gone into the restructuring of the Gaming Corporation in this manner, and it's important that the commitments that have been made to the funding commitments are substantial and are completed. I understand that from the minister's comments they are going to be maintained.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's also important because the activities that the Gaming Corporation does is quite socially sensitive, and there has to be an extra level of transparency and accountability to make sure that this agency is meeting the greater social good for the province of Saskatchewan and simply is not putting our citizens in jeopardy as they try to enhance their bottom line and enhance the net worth of the corporation.

Mr. Speaker, there are many implications in this legislative change, and I know that the people affected are going to want to consult with the official opposition about these changes. And in order to facilitate that at this time, I would move to adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member from Melfort that debate on second reading of Bill No. 59 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. 60 — The Revenue and Financial Services Amendment Act, 2007

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

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I can tell members if they liked the Assessment Management Agency Act and they liked The Municipal Revenue Sharing Act, they are going to love The Revenue and Financial Services Amendment Act.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I am very pleased today to be able to rise and move second reading of Bill No. 60, The Revenue and Financial Services Amendment Act, 2007.

Mr. Speaker, Part III of The Revenue and Financial Services Act governs the administration and enforcement of most of the province's taxes. This includes the PST [provincial sales tax], our fuel tax, tobacco tax, liquor consumption tax, and corporation capital tax. We are going to, through this legislation, consolidate all these provisions. And as such we have greatly reduced the volume of legislation required, and we have established a simplified, more consistent administration for all of these taxes.

Several of the provisions which are contained in the Act are being made to update old provisions that may, in some cases, not have been dealt with in over a decade. For example, most businesses now maintain their accounting and tax records in an electronic format. Therefore we need to update our record keeping requirements to specifically address electronic records. This will be of obvious benefit to businesses as they comply with their tax obligations, and Finance staff will be able to complete the reviews and audits more quickly.

We're also going to modernize the penalties that apply to audit assessments. While retaining the current 10 per cent penalty that applies to audit assessments, we are however going to make an amendment to the section to remove the \$25,000 maximum penalty cap. This change will affect very few people and very few businesses, but it is intended to address problems we have encountered with a few very large corporations that have concluded it is less expensive to wait for an audit and pay then the maximum penalty than it is to maintain proper records. For obvious reasons, we cannot allow this practice to continue.

We are also going to increase the amount of the penalty applicable to audit assessments for taxes collected and not remitted. When a business collects tax from its customers on behalf of the province, it is essential to hold those funds in trust until they are remitted to the province. Unfortunately some businesses experience cash flow problems, and there is the temptation to use tax collections to pay for other obligations. Obviously it's important that there be an effective deterrent in place to discourage this practice.

Therefore we are going to increase, through this legislation, the penalty applicable to audit assessments for tax collected but not remitted to 25 per cent of the amount assessed. We are going to add an additional penalty equal to 100 per cent of the amount assessed if a business has collected the tax and deliberately diverted those funds for other use. This is a much more severe penalty and a much more effective deterrent should business consider using taxes that they have collected from their customers to pay other debts. Its use will obviously be reserved for repeat offenders and situations involving serious or blatant tax evasion.

This Bill is also going to revise the provision that governs the disclosure of tax information. The current tax provisions do not provide for us to share information with other government agencies or departments. We do believe that in select circumstances it is in the public interest to ensure that the government be able to carry out all of its programs and initiatives in the most efficient way possible for those people that are taking part of it. This is particularly true, particularly true for income-tested programs.

Therefore we are going to amend this section to allow information obtained by Finance to be shared with other departments and agencies on a select basis that require the information for use in administering provincial programs.

Finance also occasionally gets requests for statistical or general information that could be helpful to a business organization or regulatory agency. To accommodate these requests, we are going to propose amendments that will allow us to provide this kind of information.

The final change being made in this Bill is to add authority for the government to enter into particular tax agreements with First Nations. The purpose and nature of these agreements would be to substitute provincial sales taxes on-reserve with a similar tax imposed by the First Nation itself. This provision we believe will provide a more level playing field by establishing the same price for goods on-reserve and off-reserve and provide for a more level playing field between businesses on-reserve and off-reserve. This co-operative approach to taxation is similar to a program currently being used by the federal government with respect to the GST [goods and services tax] on several reserves, and we'd like to be able to explore this approach with Saskatchewan First Nations. The amendments contained in this Act would allow us to do so.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, these amendments will help us to carry out our tax administration duties more effectively and more efficiently. And I would invite all members to scrutinize the Bill and to support it when it comes time. As such, I move second reading of The Revenue and Financial Services Amendment Act, 2007.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 60, The Revenue and Financial Services Amendment Act, 2007 be now read a second time. The Chair recognizes the member for Melfort.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak on Bill No. 60, An Act to amend The Revenue and Financial Services Act.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the intent of this legislation is indeed worthwhile in that the stated objective is to update and modernize and to consolidate some of the taxing provisions that currently exist in regard to provincial tax collection from a number of sources. Mr. Speaker, I think that that is a worthwhile exercise as long as the affected businesses and jurisdictions have been properly consulted.

I also note that, in the information that I've received, it also contains special provisions to allow for the electronic transmittal of information and to make sure that the electronic records, if they're done in computerized bookkeeping systems, are also maintained appropriately and accurately.

Mr. Speaker, as well there is increased fines or penalties for serious breaches of remitting taxes in an appropriate way. And I very much hope that the provisions that are in this legislation are consistent with legislation in other provinces, so we don't again create an unfair advantage for other provinces as compared to our businesses in recognizing that businesses have a social responsibility to keep proper and accurate records and to submit those taxes that are appropriate. However I think it's important that we don't create an environment here that is more onerous than in other jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, I think the provision in terms of the possibility of consulting with First Nations reservations in regard to a harmonization of taxes is a good idea. I think that the stated objectives are worthwhile as long as the consultations between the Government of Saskatchewan and the First Nations

governments are respectful and inclusive.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of aspects of this legislation that are going to require consultation between the official opposition and stakeholders, and in order to allow that to happen, at this time I'd move to adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member from Melfort that debate on second reading of Bill No. 60 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, in order to accommodate the good work of the standing committees on the Economy and on Human Services, I move that this House do now adjourn.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

[The Assembly adjourned at 15:22.]

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Elhard	1181
D'Autremont	1181
Hermanson	1181
Stewart	1181
Harpauer	1181
Weekes	1181
Cheveldayoff	1181
Huyghebaert	1182
Allchurch	1182
Kirsch	1182
Morgan	1182

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel	1182
---	------

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Draude	1182
Harpauer	1182
Morgan	1183
McMorris	1183
Hart	1183

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Calvert	1183
Huyghebaert	1184
Hamilton	1184
Stewart	1184
McCall	1184
Draude	1185

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Remembering the Battle of Vimy Ridge	
Trew	1185
Huyghebaert	1185
Meadow Lake Junior Achievers Excel	
Sonntag	1185
Tartan Day	
Stewart	1186
Loggie's Shoe Store Celebrates 100th Birthday	
McCall	1186
Wishart Dancers Perform at Disney World	
Draude	1186
SGI Auto Fund Rebate	
Yates	1187

ORAL QUESTIONS

Missing Funds	
Harpauer	1187
Belanger	1187
Management of Harassment Complaints	
Heppner	1188
Atkinson	1188
Recruiting and Retaining Health Care Professionals	
D'Autremont	1189
Taylor	1189
Allchurch	1190
McMorris	1191

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Bursaries for Health Care Providers	
Taylor	1192
McMorris	1192

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 61 — The Vital Statistics Act, 2007	
Taylor	1193

Bill No. 62 — The Vital Statistics Consequential Amendment Act, 2007	
Loi de 2007 portant modifications corrélatives à la loi intitulée The Vital Statistics Act, 2007	
Taylor.....	1193
ORDERS OF THE DAY	
WRITTEN QUESTIONS	
Iwanchuk	1193
MOTIONS FOR RETURNS (Not Debatable)	
Return No. 3	
Iwanchuk	1193
GOVERNMENT ORDERS	
SECOND READINGS	
Bill No. 57 — The Assessment Management Agency Amendment Act, 2007	
Van Mulligen	1194
Gantefoer	1195
Bill No. 58 — The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 2007	
Van Mulligen	1196
Gantefoer	1197
Bill No. 59 — The Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation Amendment Act, 2007	
Hagel	1197
Gantefoer	1198
Bill No. 60 — The Revenue and Financial Services Amendment Act, 2007	
Thomson	1198
Gantefoer	1199

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

CABINET MINISTERS

Hon. Lorne Calvert
Premier

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hon. Eldon Lautermilch
Minister of Highways and Transportation
Minister of Property Management
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Transportation Company
Minister Responsible for the
Forestry Secretariat

Hon. Warren McCall
Minister of Corrections and Public Safety

Hon. John Nilson
Minister of Environment
Minister Responsible for the Office of
Energy Conservation
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Power Corporation

Hon. Frank Quennell
Minister of Justice and
Attorney General

Hon. Clay Serby
Deputy Premier
Minister of Regional Economic and
Co-operative Development

Hon. Maynard Sonntag
Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations
Minister of Crown Investments Corporation
of Saskatchewan

Hon. Len Taylor
Minister of Health

Hon. Andrew Thomson
Minister of Finance
Minister Responsible for Information Technology
Minister Responsible for
SaskEnergy Incorporated

Hon. Harry Van Mulligen
Minister of Government Relations

Hon. Mark Wartman
Minister of Agriculture and Food