



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
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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

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Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Atkinson, Hon. Pat	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Beatty, Hon. Joan	NDP	Cumberland
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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 Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of the 600 children under six years old in the Saskatoon Silver Springs constituency regarding a much needed elementary school in the Arbor Creek area of Saskatoon. The prayer of the petition reads as follows:

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

The petitioners today come from the Sears Cove, Wright Crescent, and Eastman Cove area of northeast Saskatoon. I so present, Mr. Speaker.

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 of southern Saskatchewan that are extremely concerned that the withdrawal of lab services at the Lafleche and District Health Centre will cause undue hardship to residents, particularly seniors. 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 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 the good citizens of Lafleche and Woodrow. 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 central Saskatchewan and in my constituency that are very concerned with the potentially dangerous situation arising in our health care system there, and that is with the lack of doctors. 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 improve timely access to medical treatment.

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

Mr. Speaker, signatures to this petition are all from the fine community of Shellbrook. I so present.

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

Mr. Kerpan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise today to present a petition on behalf of residents of the province of Saskatchewan who are concerned that closures of schools would cause undue hardships in their communities, especially those of young students. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary actions to ensure that the Imperial, Govan, Nokomis, and Drake schools remain open.

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

Mr. Speaker, signed by citizens of Nokomis.

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

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to read a petition from the citizens of Saskatchewan concerned with the conditions of Highway 368, starting 4 miles south of Lake Lenore to 4 miles south of St. Brieux, and has seriously declined over the last number of years. 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 Prince Albert. I so present.

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

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here with citizens that are concerned about the underfunding to schools:

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 Imperial, Govan, Nokomis, and Drake schools remain open.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will pray.

This particular petition is signed by the good citizens from Nokomis and Lanigan, Regina, Govan, Drake, and Duval. I so present.

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

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to present a petition requesting an allocation of funding for a school in the neighbourhood of Stonebridge in Saskatoon Southeast. The prayer states:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by citizens from Gordon Road in Stonebridge in Saskatoon Southeast. I'm pleased to present it on their behalf. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to rise today with a petition that the citizens of Imperial, Govan, Nokomis, and Drake and surrounding areas are well served by the schools in their community. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary actions to ensure that Imperial, Govan, Nokomis, and Drake schools remain open.

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

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

Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased today to rise and present a petition calling for increased highway signage, and 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 action to increase highway signage at the junction of Highways 6 and 39.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by people from Radville, Saskatoon, Ogema, Lake Alma, and Midale. I so present.

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

Mr. Chisholm: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition to improve safety and security at Cochin, Saskatchewan. There's been a significant increase in the number of break and enters and vandalism within their village. 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 ensure that the severity of the crime problem in the resort village of Cochin is recognized by the provincial government, and that the provincial government will work actively with the community to find a solution to the problem.

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

Mr. Speaker, the signators are from Battleford, North Battleford, Cochin, and Saulteaux First Nations. 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 the citizens of Wilkie who are concerned about their health care services. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Wilkie Health Centre and special care home maintain at the very least the current level of services.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good people from Wilkie and district. I so present.

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 Martensville.

Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 62 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for SaskPower: how many \$45 rebates for Energy Star qualified programmable thermostats were given out during the duration of the rebate program?

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 62 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for SaskPower: how many wall-mounted household thermostats that contain mercury were turned in to SaskPower's mercury thermostat recovery program during the time SaskPower was offering \$45 rebates for Energy Star qualified programmable thermostats?

Thank you.

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

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice I shall on day no. 62 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Agriculture and Food: what was the number of applicants for the crop insurance program for the year 2005?

Also a similar question for 2006 and also 2007. I so present.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to be joined today by a group of grade 5 students who are in the west gallery. They're here from Deshaye Elementary School and they're joined with their teacher, Mrs. Rockthunder and Mrs. Weber. They also have three chaperones with them, Mrs. O'Connor, Mrs. Grad, and Mrs. Probe.

And I would ask that all members join with me in welcoming them here. I look forward to meeting with them and talking with them a little bit about the legislature later on today. So again please join me in welcoming these students.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Chisholm: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you and to this Assembly I'm pleased to introduce a group of visitors in the east gallery from Turtleford Community School. We have 24 grade 8 students accompanied by their teachers, Colleen Nelson and Christie Milne, and seven parent volunteers. I look forward to meeting with them for pictures and for a little visit after, and I would ask that the Assembly welcome them to their legislature.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour today to be able to introduce to you and through you to members of this House a former colleague in ministry in the United Church, Stewart Mills. Stewart served in many pastoral, or for many years here in Saskatchewan as a United Church minister from '63 to '99 and then retired to Calgary.

Stewart is accompanied today by his partner, Charles Thompson. Charles was born in Vancouver and has been a fashion designer in Calgary for many years. And I'd ask all members to welcome them here. I would note that Stewart in his time in Saskatchewan served charges in Milestone and at Knox Met here in Regina. So please join me in welcoming them to our Assembly. Thank you.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to the Assembly two people in your gallery, both employed in my office here in the Legislative Building recently.

And first of all I'd like to introduce Gaylene Anaquod from the Muscowpetung First Nation. Someone will recognize the name if you're from southern Saskatchewan. Anaquod, her father Glen Anaquod is an elder from Muscowpetung and I think he's quite well respected in First Nations. As well Gaylene worked for the First Nations University of Canada for quite a number of years I believe and currently now is obviously working in my office. We're thrilled to have her working here in the Legislative Building.

As well again, Mr. Speaker, seated beside her is Mitch Villeneuve, who is our summer student for the second year in a row. He's, I believe, finishing his third year or just finished his third year at the University of Saskatchewan. He's an ardent student of politics and challenges our office on a daily basis. We are thrilled to have him back again. Would you please join me in welcoming both of my guests to the Assembly today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Women of Distinction Awards

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last Thursday night the YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association] hosted its annual Women of Distinction Awards here in Regina. The judges sifting through the nominations did not have an easy job as more than 73 nominations were received from across southern Saskatchewan for just 12 award categories.

This year's award for leadership in community enhancement went to Sandy Wankel, the founder of North Central Family Centre. Mr. Speaker, I know that many of my colleagues in this Assembly have visited the North Central Family Centre and witnessed the incredible work that Ms. Wankel is doing in Regina's inner city. She is a tireless worker and a selfless woman with a vision and direction when it comes to helping children and families in north central Regina.

When accepting her award at the event, her thoughts were again of the centre's clientele. She said, and I quote:

I accept this award on behalf of all the exceptional women who walk through our doors — volunteers from all walks of life who work so hard at the centre. Their passion is just unsurpassed.

This year's Life Achievement Award went to Renu Kapoor. Other award recipients included Lynn Severt, Brenda Joyce Niskala, Val Skamanis, Neelu Sachdev, Marjorie

Dressyman-Lavallee, Darlene Rude, Margaret Skeel, Darleen Jelinski, Jackie Hall and Peggy Black, and this year's Young Woman of Distinction, Candyce Bakke.

I would ask all members to join me in congratulating all of these women of distinction.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

National Nursing Week

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May 7 to 13 is National Nursing Week — the time set aside to recognize the significant contributions that nurses make to the health of Canadians.

In Saskatchewan we are fortunate to have highly skilled nurses committed to providing the best possible care to their patients. Anyone who has come in contact with the health system as a patient or in support of family or friends can attest to the vital contribution that nurses make to our health care system and in our communities.

Mr. Speaker, nurses are in short supply around the world. Here in Saskatchewan we are addressing this issue with our health workforce action plan, a comprehensive, detailed strategy developed in consultation with nursing organizations and other health provider groups and designed to improve health care in Saskatchewan by keeping and attracting health care professionals.

Mr. Speaker, our efforts are working. In the first six months of the recruitment grant program, 75 nurses accepted grants. And of the past two graduating classes from the nursing education program of Saskatchewan, over 90 per cent accepted positions in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I extend a heartfelt welcome to nurses coming to Saskatchewan, as well as to new Saskatchewan nursing graduates. At the same time I offer my sincere appreciation to all nurses currently working in Saskatchewan's health system for their hard work, commitment, and dedication.

I ask all my colleagues to join me in thanking our nurses for their ongoing contributions to the health system and in wishing them the best this week.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[13:45]

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

Nurses Show Dedication Despite Workplace Problems

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to join with the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] in recognizing National Nursing Week, May 7 to 13. It's a week that we recognize the many contributions that nurses

make to our daily lives and to health care, as well as to promote nursing as a career opportunity. But that's about where it ends, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we are all too familiar with the work environment faced by many nurses in Saskatchewan under this current government. Many nurses would like to work full-time, permanent positions but are faced with part-time positions and dozens of calls per week asking them to come and work overtime. Our nurses face burnout because of too many overtime shifts, not enough nurses, and work-related stress and injuries. According to the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses in a recent press release, and I quote:

Out-migration, chronic illness and long-term disability, coupled with looming retirements will force the closure of hundreds of beds and scores of facilities . . . [across this province, Mr. Speaker] in the next three to five years, with [the] sharply reduced service access to service and much longer waiting lists.

Mr. Speaker, this government has neglected our nursing sector for far too many years, Mr. Speaker, and as the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses have said, it's a decade of inaction by this NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, the official opposition would like to thank all nurses in this province, be they registered nurses, psychiatric nurses, or licensed practical nurses for their dedication and commitment to the people of Saskatchewan despite the working conditions they are faced to work in under this NDP government.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Congratulations to Northern Nursing Graduates

Hon. Ms. Beatty: — Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to share with the members of the Assembly that 26 new nurses have graduated from the First Nations University of Canada, Northern Campus, through the nursing education program of Saskatchewan, also called NEPS. Mr. Speaker, NEPS is a four-year program. Graduates earn a Bachelor of Science in Nursing that certifies them to work anywhere in the world.

I am particularly pleased, Mr. Speaker, that 19 of these new nurses are from the central and northern regions of the province and more than half of the 26 nurses are First Nations and Métis women. Each of these students have chosen to take positions in hospitals and community clinics that are close to home. As well, Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud to say that three are from my home First Nation, Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation, and one is from my home community of Deschambault Lake.

Mr. Speaker, last year the program's first graduating class consisted of seven graduates. This year's numbers are almost four times that and speaks to the overall reception and success of this program in the North.

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

the members of the 2007 nursing education program of Saskatchewan graduating class. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Saskatoon Business College Centennial

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, the Saskatoon Business College is one of a few businesses in Saskatoon celebrating its centennial in the year 2007. Founded in 1907 by Mr. E.A. Marshall, the Saskatoon Business College has been owned and operated by the Chapman family since 1951 when it was purchased by schoolteachers Fred and Helen Chapman. Today it is in the third generation of the Chapman family and they are still at the helm as the college enters its second century.

Times have certainly changed from when the college was founded, and the college has always managed to keep up with technological advances. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatoon Business College started teaching its students to use computers before any other vocational school in the province.

In 1987 the college became the province's only nationally accredited vocational college. Today the Saskatoon Business College offers classes in 16 different diploma programs and trains more than 300 students a year in business, computer, and health-related programs.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Chapman family and the Saskatoon Business College on the occasion of its 100th anniversary, and to thank the college for turning out well-educated and well-rounded students, for providing Saskatchewan business with top-notch employees, and for giving back to the community by participating in such things as Shinerama fundraising for cystic fibrosis. I'd ask that all members do the same. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Women of Distinction Awards

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Thursday evening I, along with a number of my colleagues from the Assembly, had the great pleasure of attending the Regina YWCA Women of Distinction Awards. Mr. Speaker, it was an extremely successful evening, both enjoyable and inspiring, and I want to thank the organizers and volunteers of the event and each and every one of the nominees for their ongoing contributions to the community.

Mr. Speaker, this year's YWCA Women of Distinction are: Sandy Wankel for community leadership and enhancement; Lynn Severt for contribution to a rural community; Neelu Sachdev for cultural heritage; Marjorie Dressyman-Lavalee, for education; for entrepreneurship, Darleen Jelinski; for leadership and management, Val Skamanis; Margaret Skeel for science, technology, and environment; for teamwork, Peggy Black and

Jackie Hall of Hall & Rae; Darlene Rude for wellness, recreation, and healthy living. And this year's Young Woman of Distinction is Candyce Bakke. Brenda Niskala received the Jacqui Shumiatcher Arts Award. And, Mr. Speaker, the winner of this year's Woman of Distinction Lifetime Achievement Award is Renu Kapoor.

Congratulations to all nominees and recipients. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Broadcaster's Comments

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After last week's theatrics by the NDP [New Democratic Party] government in this Assembly over the cover-up of fraud in the NDP caucus office in 1992, I thought it would be appropriate to share the following commentary with members opposite. Here's what Rawlco's Murray Wood had to say in his *Wood File* last Friday. And I quote:

The NDP is punching back when it should be accepting Glenn Hagel's resignation from cabinet and moving on. Why? Well, it probably speaks to political strategists in general.

The problem is they think we're gullible when really it's just that most people are cynical and don't really expect them to be honest. Everyone but those with the NDP kool-aid coursing their veins can see the fifteen year old fraud case was mishandled.

The NDP should have been more open and honest in 1992, they should have turned the information over to police and there should have been a public statement made.

Now for the NDP to go into this angry attack in the legislature over the theft of \$20 or something from someone's purse in the Saskatchewan Party caucus room, to insist it's the same thing is of course ludicrous.

One was public money, the other was out of someone's private purse or do [you] . . . think maybe they don't understand the distinction. They think we're that gullible.

Mr. Speaker, I couldn't agree more. The people of Saskatchewan deserve more than deflection from this NDP government. They deserve an apology.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

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

School Closures

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is a very sad and devastating day for many communities around

the Regina area. Nine schools have announced to be closing as of the end of this school year, and who knows how many more announcements are pending. School boards have been put in a very difficult position as a result of this NDP government's underfunding of the K to 12 education system and its overreliance on property tax.

Mr. Speaker, why has this NDP government failed so many rural communities? Where is the leadership from this NDP government on such an important issue?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I will agree with the member opposite; this is a very difficult day for many communities. But in his comments about funding . . . this NDP government has increased the foundation operating grant by 52 per cent over the past decade — that's over \$200 million. And during that time, Mr. Speaker, we have continued to see a decrease in enrolment. And we can talk about 15 per cent or fifteen and a half, thereabouts, but that equates into 27,000 students. It's a huge drop in enrolment. And, Mr. Speaker, during that time also we have continued to see mill rates increase. So, Mr. Speaker, the school boards are seeking to reach that balance, providing the services in the best way that they can with the resources at hand.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, this minister has been in charge of this portfolio for the past two years and has done absolutely nothing to prevent school closures in this province. The Finance minister used to be the minister of Learning when he rammed down school board amalgamations down everybody's throat in rural Saskatchewan. He said at the time that it was needed to have more effective and efficient delivery of education. How in the world is closing nine schools in one school division effective education?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I have learned in this portfolio is that there's a great deal of communication and discussion which goes on amongst the boards, amongst the department, amongst the various levels in the education sector. This we have worked towards, the point in time where we have regional pooling of resources. We have seen that steady decrease in enrolment right across the province and a shifting in the demographics in the province of Saskatchewan. Everyone involved realizes that we needed to make some changes in the school divisions, and this amalgamation has begun that process of change.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, they can talk to the

member from Canora. There's a number of statements where he talks about the school system not being sustainable when he was directly involved, and he understands this process.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we're talking about nine schools in one school division will be facing closure. Does this minister have any idea of the devastating effect that is going to have in each and every one of those communities, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, what has this government done to create any sort of economic regeneration in rural Saskatchewan? Absolutely nothing. And because of it, schools in this province are closing under their watch. Mr. Speaker, how can she stand in her place and defend that nine schools are closing in one division?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Well, Mr. Speaker, in May of 2004 when the Boughen report was brought forward with a number of recommendations, as we are working our way through that, the opposition stood in this House day after day after day and tabled petitions against Boughen. Then they say, well you had Boughen; why didn't you implement it?

In January of this year out in this rotunda, the member from Melfort said, we have this wonderful plan of schools of necessity. Mr. Speaker, he didn't tell anyone that that was just repackaging a factor that has been within the foundation operating grant for a number of years. They've expanded that and added the geographic factor.

But, Mr. Speaker, he's home in Tisdale, and what does he say? Well this may not work. It may not save these schools. And then he turns around and — which I find the most offensive — the Save our Schools rally he stands out there and says, communities should be involved and parents should be involved. But on CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] Radio he says, let the school boards make the decision.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, I'm surprised that minister would bring up the Boughen Commission. They were told as a government not to cherry-pick the Boughen Commission, and that's exactly what they did. And what they did cherry-pick is raising the PST [provincial sales tax] by 1 per cent, and it didn't go back into education, Mr. Speaker. It's ironic that she would be bringing it up.

This government has failed to provide leadership on this file, to give school boards support. This government has failed to give

school boards the tools necessary to keep some of these schools open. The government has done nothing but fail rural Saskatchewan, and it's not a wonder why when you see how many rural seats that government represents, Mr. Speaker. It's all about politics for this government.

When will this government do the right thing and provide tools for school divisions so that their only option is not rural school closure?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, we've continually increased the funding to the foundation operating grant and made a number of changes where we will be able to continue improving on the accessibility and the viability of our education system here in Saskatchewan.

But, Mr. Speaker, I ask the opposition . . . They dance on both sides of this one. It depends on the crowd they're in front of. One day they want parents to be involved. Next day they say, well leave it alone; the school boards shouldn't be involved. Then they're saying, well implement Boughen. Well no, we're tabling petitions that we don't like Boughen.

When their policy states that they will look at a continual decline in the cost of government, and then they talk about streamlining education and getting rid of the duplication, they need to explain what they mean.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:00]

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

Caucus Personnel and Personal Information

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on Friday a number of media outlets were reporting that the government was in the process of negotiating a severance package with Jim Fodey who resigned in the wake of the NDP fraud scandal. Unfortunately the Premier didn't seem to know any details when he was asked by reporters to respond on Friday morning.

Mr. Speaker, the bigger issue is, if Jim Fodey truly resigned, why is he receiving severance? Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: will Mr. Fodey be receiving a severance package and if so, how much?

The Speaker: — Order please. I would like to advise the Assembly that the question is out of order. However I will allow a response if there's a minister that wishes to respond. The Chair recognizes the member, the Minister for the Public Service Commission.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, there is a bigger issue than Jim Fodey. And the bigger issue is this: we have a

Leader of the Opposition that is trying desperately to become the next premier of Saskatchewan. We have a group of men and women over there that are trying desperately to form the next government.

But here's what I heard from the members opposite, particularly their Justice critic. And he said that the decision to post the police report on the website, the decision to talk about the police report was that they thought somehow that the police hadn't done their work. Well, Mr. Speaker, there is a separation between state and the police. And why is it that the members over there act like a star chamber and that they should decide who gets charged in this province and who doesn't — not the police.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, my question was about a severance package being given to Jim Fodey, and I find it rather odd that the NDP would even talk about negotiating. That's because last December the Board of Internal Economy unanimously passed a new directive which specifically outlines how much severance caucus employees are to receive if they were in fact eligible to receive a severance. This new policy applies to all caucus employees both in government and in opposition.

Mr. Speaker, why is the NDP negotiating a severance package with Jim Fodey? Why aren't they just following the directives of the Board of Internal Economy?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, as I said, these men and women want to become the next Government of Saskatchewan, and their Justice critic talks about a judgment call. It was their judgment, the Sask Party's judgment, to post people's private, personal information on the website. It was their judgment to release a confidential police report, Mr. Speaker, that was illegally obtained. That was their judgment. They talk about judgment over there. And we have the member for Canora saying he'd do it again.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we don't live in a province where Big Brother's in charge. Now, Mr. Speaker, what we need to know, what we need to know is what gives them the right to decide whose information should be posted on a website and whose information shouldn't? And what would they do if they had access to all of our personal information, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to inform the minister that there is a specific policy for calculating severance for any

caucus employee. It was passed by the Board of Internal Economy on December 14, 2006, and it applies to all employees of all caucus offices. In fact Mr. Fodey was one of the people who drafted this policy. And the Government House Leader introduced the motion in the December 14 meeting.

Why is the government ignoring a Board of Internal Economy directive? And why is the NDP ignoring the rules of this Assembly by negotiating a severance package with Mr. Fodey?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — The question is the behaviour and the judgment shown by the members of the opposition under the leadership of the member from Swift Current. These are the men and women that are lusting for power. They want to be in charge of the public purse, so they can hand it over to their friends. Well, Mr. Speaker, there are some bigger principles at stake here, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, is it their job to conduct the police investigation? No, it isn't. Is it their job to determine whether or not the police did a good job? No, it isn't. Then why is it, Mr. Speaker, why is it . . .

The Speaker: — Members will come to order. The Chair . . . Order. The Chair recognizes the Minister for the Public Service Commission.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Why is it, Mr. Speaker, that their Justice critic — the only lawyer in their entire caucus — would say on May 2, wouldn't it be appropriate, wouldn't it be common sense that they would want to go ahead and lay charges, and he was talking about the police, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I hope the public understands that these people want to be able to direct the police and direct the prosecution in terms of charges being laid.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, here's another pretty big problem for the NDP. The NDP has consistently said that Jim Fodey resigned in the wake of the NDP fraud scandal. The Government House Leader has repeatedly stated that he received inaccurate information from Mr. Fodey, and as a result Mr. Fodey did the honourable thing and resigned.

However the Board of Internal Economy severance policy clearly states that severance is only payable to a caucus employee who is terminated without cause. Mr. Speaker, the NDP said Jim Fodey resigned. The severance policy says severance is only payable to employees who are terminated without cause. Why is Jim Fodey entitled to severance?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — So, Mr. Speaker, here we have it. We have a Justice critic, their only lawyer in their caucus. He's an experienced lawyer. He's an officer of the court. He's a member of the bar.

The Speaker: — Order please, members. Order. The member has a right to be heard. Minister for the Public Service Commission.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — He's a member of the bar. He's a former CEO [chief executive officer] and chairman of the Saskatchewan Legal Aid Commission, and he's a legislator. But he's unable to recognize a police report when he sees it. He feels he has no duty to report this illegally obtained police report to the authorities. And obviously, Mr. Speaker, he feels he has no ethical responsibility to uphold people's private, confidential names, phone numbers, and addresses, and instead he posts it on their website, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is apparent that the minister does not understand the policy because there have been no answers to my questions.

Mr. Speaker, Jim Fodey would have been well aware of the board of internal . . . policy. In fact he was one of the people who drafted it. He would have known that, in order to receive a severance, he would have to be terminated without cause. Yet the NDP says he resigned.

Mr. Speaker, very simple question to the minister: did Jim Fodey truly resign? And if so, will the minister table his letter of resignation?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I spent the entire weekend all over the city of Saskatoon and my colleagues did as well. Well, Mr. Speaker, here's what they're talking about. Here's what they're talking about. They're talking about a group of men and women who are lusting for power and they'll do anything to get it.

And, Mr. Speaker, you know what else? They will put anybody's private information on their website, Mr. Speaker. They even have little secret cameras in their caucus office, Mr. Speaker, spying on people to try to find out who's stealing. Well, Mr. Speaker, they didn't go to the police, Mr. Speaker. We . . .

The Speaker: — Order please. The Chair recognizes the

Minister for the Public Service Commission.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — So, Mr. Speaker, what do they do? Do they go to the security people at the legislature? Absolutely not. They put a secret little camera in someone's office spying on employees, Mr. Speaker. Then they find out . . . Well it really is Big Brother over there spying on employees. Then they find out someone stole. And what do they do? They let her go, Mr. Speaker. They didn't go to the police, Mr. Speaker. Did they contact the next employer to say, you might have a problem on your hands?

They talked about criminal record checks. We're all supposed to have them, Mr. Speaker. But they didn't do their due diligence . . .

The Speaker: — Member's time is elapsed.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Flooding at Fishing Lake

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year, as a part of a summer tour, I had the pleasure of visiting with the residents, permanent and temporary, at Fishing Lake. They wanted to talk about Highway 310. But a number of them also raised concerns about the potential damage of flooding in subsequent years and already some flooding that was occurring last summer when the member for Kelvington-Wadena and I were there.

I was there again last Thursday to see first-hand the flood destruction, Mr. Speaker. I know the Premier has been there as well. Property owners there — the Premier will know — are very frustrated by the lack of a plan, a coordinated plan from this government to protect their lives and the belongings and of course their investment. They're upset because this didn't have to happen. There was a long-term solution available to this government and more importantly to the people of Fishing Lake.

Question to the Premier is this: will he commit today to begin work on the drainage ditch at Fishing Lake as soon as the water levels subside, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the people at Fishing Lake have a major problem with the amount of water that's there. They've been working with the local people and the Fishing Lake watershed authority at a number of different projects including the one that the member talks about, but that's not the only project that they're working on.

Mr. Speaker, the Fishing Lake watershed authority has been seeking advice from various places to figure out what to do. The proposal that the member opposite raises had a number of other problems that shifted the water downstream and caused a

lot of problems for other communities. Those kinds of issues are being dealt with.

But, Mr. Speaker, I ask that that leader stay out of this place because they're going to solve it themselves.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Are you . . . Well, Mr. Speaker, the people of the Fishing Lake area are very concerned because that's been the attitude of this government for 10 years.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Solve it yourself. There is a long-term solution that's available to this particular destruction. Mr. Speaker, we know as regards the ditch, the drainage ditch, that First Nations are on side. We know that most of the farmers, the vast majority of the farmers are ready to sign the easements that are necessary for this to happen.

The government could have acted sooner; it chose not to. Now the Premier made some announcements not too long ago about helping the folks with the damage, and those are welcome. But what's needed is action, immediate action on this long-term solution. Will the minister or the Premier, better yet, stand in his place and commit to that action starting this year, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is this, that the Minister of Corrections and Public Safety, the Minister of the Environment were in Fishing Lake, also Waldsea Lake. I was there. The Leader of the Opposition has been there. The member has been there. Mr. Speaker, there is no question — there is no question — that we are resolved, together with that community and with the neighbouring communities, to lower the level of Fishing Lake, to get the water drained as best as we possibly can this summer. And to that effect, Mr. Speaker, to that effect, I have appointed a professional engineer to lead this on behalf of the province, to work with the communities.

Mr. Speaker, we are determined to bring the water levels down in Fishing Lake in a manner that is environmentally sustainable and that works with the local community. But make no mistake about it; we are determined to lower the water of the lake at Fishing Lake.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Flooding Disaster Assistance for Farmers

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr.

Speaker, once again we see this NDP government caught flat-footed. The north-central region is flooding as their leader has just said, and many, many acres are under water out there. And we also even have saltwater lakes that are overflowing onto the land and into dugouts, Mr. Speaker. There's a disaster in the making. Will the Minister of Agriculture today tell us what he's prepared to do to help the farmers in that area?

[14:15]

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

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at this point we have made clear that we are not planning on any additional funding. We have revised our crop insurance program. The federal government's cover crop program is still in place, and we believe that the amounts that will be provided through this program will help for the un-seeded acreage piece.

With regard to flooded pastures, Mr. Speaker, we have been in contact with producers in the area who are facing issues of flooding, and we have made available to them lists of pastures available. We've assured them that there are community pastures available with room for 1,000 cow-calf pairs. There are a number of First Nations that have pasture available, and in *The Western Producer* there's also a significant listing of people who have pasture available for people who are facing flooding in their pasture lands.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, as the minister's aware, last year this government saw fit to put a \$10 acre payment in place on top of the \$15 federal dollars that came in. And that was on top of what crop insurance would cover. Why does the minister seem justified in his thinking today that farmers don't need that this year? Farmers last year in the Porcupine area needed that drastically and called on that government to help, and the government came to their aid — \$10 an acre. Why does the minister see fit that that's not needed in the area this year where flooding is taking place?

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

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Well, Mr. Speaker, that has been explained in the paper, and I am sure the member opposite has read the explanation in terms of the amount of money that's going out.

But I'm surprised that the member opposite also pushes on this because, when asked in terms of what they would do around support for weather related issues — should the government jump in and put support in? — the member opposite says no, not necessarily, that shouldn't happen. And I've got a number of quotes where he doesn't think the government should step in to provide support.

Mr. Speaker, we've revised crop insurance to make a difference for these people. They will not be paying the deductible on their whole farm, Mr. Speaker. They'll be paying it only on the quarters that are affected. And we think the revisions there will be helpful, and it will be comparable to what others, who are putting in crops, are getting in return for their crop insurance. Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, when this year's budget came out, and we all know that this government spent about 700 million more than they took in, but on top of that, they made cuts to the Agriculture budget in Saskatchewan.

I wonder, Mr. Speaker, and I think farmers are beginning to wonder is that why this government's not willing to put their \$10 an acre in place on top of the other programs that are out there. The need is the same as it was last year. There's no disaster plan in place. And from my understanding, that minister is one of the main ones that's dragging the disaster plan from being put in place because he won't get to the table and honestly negotiate, Mr. Speaker.

So will the minister answer us one way or the other? Is he not putting \$10 an acre in because they cut the Ag budget, or is he not putting money in because he doesn't value our farmers?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is obviously very ignorant about what has happened, Mr. Speaker. He simply does not know the work that has gone on in this field.

Mr. Speaker, there has been no dragging of feet. Mr. Speaker, we have clearly looked at this issue, and we have provided support and will continue to provide support through the structure in the system. And if he doesn't know about it, that's no reason to get up here and cast innuendo on this side of the House or on this member, Mr. Speaker.

We have worked hard to make sure where there is need that we put that support in place. And we have worked hard to press the federal government to put their proportional support in place. Mr. Speaker, this government is in front of the issue, and we are making sure that the needs are met. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Government Whip.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government I will be tabling responses to written questions 1,307 through 1,316 inclusive.

The Speaker: — Responses to questions 1,307 to 1,316 inclusive have been submitted.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 68 — The Status of the Artist Act, 2007

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, prior to making my remarks for second reading on Bill 68, I would ask leave of the House to make introductions.

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave for introductions. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. The Chair recognizes the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, there are several guests who are with us today in the gallery and on the floor — in your gallery and on the floor, Mr. Speaker, — who take significant interest in the workings of the committee and also the development of the legislation that's before us.

I'd like to introduce them to you, Mr. Speaker, and through you to all members of the House. I would ask that they would just simply give a wave when I acknowledge them by name, and then we can welcome them all together when I've introduced them all.

First of all I'd like to introduce three members of the minister's advisory committee on the status of the artist, and here together with us are the Chair, Barbara Young, Patrick Close from CARFAC Saskatchewan [Canadian Artists Representation le front des artistes canadiens Saskatchewan Inc.] and Allen Lefebvre.

Here as well from the Saskatchewan Arts Board is the executive assistant for legislative services and access and privacy officer, Sandi Desjarlais; and Sabrina Cataldo, who is communications strategist for the Arts Board. From SaskMusic is the executive director, Noreen Neu, and from the Saskatchewan Arts Alliance are the executive director, Marnie Gladwell, as well as Sheila Roberts, the consultant researcher on status issues.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say thanks to the many organizations from the cultural sector who have come here for this second reading, and the guests in the gallery and the floor are here to represent a wide range of the arts and culture sector. I want to

particularly acknowledge, Mr. Speaker, the contributions of the minister's advisory committee on the status of the artist. It was their vision and sustained effort that have been instrumental in laying the groundwork for the Bill. I would ask all hon. members to join together to ask, to say welcome to these prominent representatives of the arts and culture sector here in the province of Saskatchewan.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 68 — The Status of the Artist Act, 2007 (continued)

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, having introduced our guests, I am pleased to take my place today to move second reading of Bill No. 68, The Status of the Artist Act, 2007. Mr. Speaker, the Government of Saskatchewan is committed to making life better for Saskatchewan artists and to ensuring artists can build and maintain viable careers right here in Saskatchewan. A thriving arts community is essential to our high quality of life in Saskatchewan. It is also important that individual artists have access to the supports that acknowledge their contribution to the provincial economy.

The ministerial advisory committee on the status of the artist has done some very thoughtful work in support of artists and the arts sector. The result of the committee's work was a comprehensive strategic plan to improve the living and working conditions of the artists, and I deeply appreciated that work when it was presented to me some many months ago.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have adopted the committee's recommendations as our plan of action for artists. We see this as a multi-year process. The one element of this plan requires legislative changes, legislative changes relating to individual contracts and artists' access to collective bargaining — these both for professional artists, Mr. Speaker.

Last fall I introduced Bill 40, The Status of the Artist Amendment Act, 2006, and I introduced it for the first reading. Simultaneously I referred the Bill to the Standing Committee on Human Services for public hearings and I would like to thank the Chair and the members of the committee for the good work they did in providing access to those with an interest and vested interest in the arts and culture sector to bring their comments forward and to put them on the public record.

I asked the committee to review the proposed Bill as well as to discuss several matters related to collective bargaining for professional artists. I'm pleased today to give second reading then to The Status of the Artist Act, 2007. This statute is based on proposals recommended by the ministerial advisory committee on the status of the artist, and by the Standing Committee on Human Services. With this new legislation, Saskatchewan becomes only the second province in Canada to provide self-employed professional artists access to collective bargaining mechanisms and processes. As I've said, this legislation introduces the model of professional relations where artists are able to engage in collective bargaining with engagers.

Some of you may be aware that there is a federal model of

professional relations for artists. And rather than reinvent the wheel, we have chosen to model a system here in Saskatchewan after that federal system. The system will provide for the negotiation of scale agreements, scale agreements; agreements that lay out the minimum terms by which an artist can be engaged — not the maximum, but the minimum. Artists will be free to negotiate individually for contracts above these scale agreements, above these terms.

The system will be one based on sectors, generally defined by artistic disciplines. However based on the advice given to us by both the minister's advisory committee and the Standing Committee on Human Services, there are also some distinct differences. Artists' associations wishing to pursue the negotiation of scale agreements will be required to provide written evidence of support from their members when applying to represent a sector. Therefore artists themselves — artists themselves — will determine when and under what circumstances they will engage in collective bargaining. While the system is defined by sectors, Mr. Speaker, the negotiation of scale agreements will take place between artists' associations and engagers' associations.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation appoints the Saskatchewan Labour Relations Board as the regulatory body for professional relations in the arts in Saskatchewan. The expertise of the board will greatly benefit participants in this new system of professional relations. The legislation also includes a requirement that an engager, when retaining the services of a professional artist, enter into a written contract with that artist. Without documentation, the contract is difficult to enforce. Written contracts provide a measure of security for artists, and that is important.

Last fall I made a commitment to artists that I would have this Bill considered by the legislature in this spring session. Because of the complexity of the proposed Bill, there was not enough time to translate it and still introduce the Bill in this spring session. I have chosen to propose the repeal of the current status of the artist Act, Bill 40, a bilingual statute, and table a new status of the artist Act, 2007, a unilingual statute. At the first opportunity I will table an amendment to this Bill to make it again into a bilingual statute.

This Act is one more step in our continuing efforts to strengthen the arts sector, bringing increased diversity and vibrancy to our province's quality of life. And therefore, Mr. Speaker, accordingly and with great pride I move second reading of Bill No. 68, The Status of the Artist Act, 2007. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation that Bill No. 68, The Status of the Artist Act, 2007 be now read a second time. The Chair recognizes the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With leave to introduce guests.

The Speaker: — The member for Kelvington-Wadena has requested leave for introductions. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to members. I'm pleased to join with our minister today in welcoming the individuals who have worked tirelessly for all sectors of the artists in our province, especially since the minister has introduced Bill 40 last fall. On behalf of the official opposition, we commend all of you for your commitment to artists and your commitment to enhance the lives of artists in Saskatchewan.

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 68 — The Status of the Artist Act, 2007 (continued)

Ms. Draude: — I have learned a lot about the lives of artists in the number of years since I was given the opportunity to shadow the minister of arts and culture, and especially more since we've had the introduction of the Bill last fall. We've had the opportunity to focus on the lives of artists, and I can tell all members of the legislature that we're in unanimous agreement that many if not all of the artists in Saskatchewan have a standard of living that is not acceptable.

The minister's own committee put forward many, many recommendations that would hopefully improve the lives of artists, and we spent hours in committee listening to testimony from individuals in all the sectors.

[14:30]

We were disappointed with the original Bill, that the Bill only talked about collective bargaining and the other side of the issue — the side that would talk about marketing and improving the economic atmosphere in the province and the number of people who are living here and therefore capable of buying the many works of arts or listening to our artists — was not addressed.

The process that the minister used in putting forward the Bill, allowing individuals to put forward their ideas, was very useful. As a committee, it didn't allow us to come to a consensus on this particular Bill but it did allow us to learn a lot about the needs and concerns of people in the artistic sector in our province.

The Bill that was given to the Assembly last sitting day is a new Bill. It's not Bill No. 40 that was withdrawn as the minister just stated. And the committee, in camera, we had many hours of discussion over the Bill that the artists had spoken to us about. As much as I care and my colleagues care, none of us are artists or none of us are engagers on the big scale.

We've had the opportunity to send the Bill that the minister brought into the House last Friday to people who were involved, and we're looking forward with much enthusiasm to hearing back from them in an expedient manner. The second reading process is well known to most members of the artists' community and members in this House. Once the opposition

has heard from those involved, we look forward to discussions in this legislature on the status of the artist in Saskatchewan. And at this time, I would like to adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Kelvington-Wadena that debate on second reading of Bill No. 68 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 31

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Taylor that **Bill No. 31 — The Regional Health Services Amendment Act, 2006 (No. 2)** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to join in on the debate, the adjourned debate of Bill No. 31, An Act to amend The Regional Health Services Act. This Bill has been before this House in adjourned debates for quite a length of time. It was introduced in the fall session. It was a specified Bill that could be carried over and has gone through this spring sitting.

And you know, it's interesting. There's been quite a long period of time where stakeholders, I know, have been raising their concerns with the Bill. And after that length of time that we've had from the fall through all winter through this spring session, we're still hearing the same concerns. They haven't been sorted out or rectified on behalf of the stakeholders, for the stakeholders. Mr. Speaker, there is still some huge concern regarding this Bill moving forward. And I have just recently spoke to a couple of those stakeholders and certainly understand the concern that they may have.

Last week when this Bill . . . And, you know, the issues are the same. They are the same from when this Bill was introduced in the fall because this Bill talks about some issues that were in a previous Bill, and that Bill had been pulled. It was never pushed through the House. It was never passed because there were such concerns with that piece of legislation — The Ambulance Act. And, Mr. Speaker, there have been changes in this regional health services Act that mirror those same concerns that caused, you know, these stakeholders to have huge concerns.

It's interesting that they, even though they didn't pursue it, I guess it would have been about a year or so ago, they've reintroduced it in this Act to make those changes. And it comes up with the same number of concerns. So it has been ongoing, those concerns. They're legitimate, and the government has failed to deal with them. The member from Cypress Hills last week spoke to this Bill and went over the concerns that the

stakeholders have and really did identify them very, very well.

There are some positive parts to the Bill, though. First of all I should acknowledge that. The Provincial Auditor has pointed out that the formal service agreements need to be in place with service providers. That's not the issue. It's later on in the Act.

Now we certainly don't disagree with the auditor. And we believe that there needs to be service agreements put in place, and those are extremely important. However there are parts of the Bill that go past that, and they specify some time frames that will just not sit well with service providers.

And the first one is the fact that a one-year notice can be given without cause to terminate a contract or for a contract not to be re-signed. Now as I said, the member from Cypress Hills talked about this very, very well and went through the problems that would have as a business owner knowing that you could have your contract terminated within a year. But my question is — and what I still haven't heard an answer for it — is, why does the government want to put these in place?

I agree that there needs to be agreements, service agreements, put into place. But why are they specifying that only a one-year notice needs to be given? The other huge problem area is that, you know, if there are some issues with a provider, for example, a 14-day notice to stop payment, to cease payments is required. That's hugely problematic for the service provider. And my question is, why do they want these put into place? It really seems like it's a hammer hanging over the head of these contractors, for example.

And the one that comes to mind and the one that I've talked to is the ambulance operators through their organization of SEMSA [Saskatchewan Emergency Medical Services Association]. Why does the government want to have the hammer hanging over their head? Has there been a lot of problems with the ambulance services provided — be it public or private but mainly private in this situation? Has there been a lot of problems with the private service providers in the ambulance area over the last number of years? And I'd be very interested in hearing the government's rationale as to why they need this.

I have been the Health critic for two years and I haven't had really too many concerns. I mean, the concern may be when a person is sent a bill after using an ambulance that they maybe didn't realize or they don't have insurance or whatever. There are those concerns. But those aren't the concerns that are being addressed in this Bill.

And I can't speak for the member from Melfort who was the critic for five years prior to myself becoming critic, but I don't remember there being a lot of concerns that can't be worked out on a mutually agreed basis with our private ambulance operators.

And yet this is the second time in my memory that the government has come forward with amendments to the Act to try and put these provisions in place. And it really does seem like a hammer. That's what they're saying: it's like a hammer hanging over our head. It's going far too far, way too far. If there are problems — for example the service is not complying

— they need to improve.

I mean there is nobody in the ambulance business that wants to see that. There's lots of peer pressure, I'm sure, within the private providers and through SEMSA to make sure operators are following along and providing proper services. There is no one in the province that wants to see an operator not doing the job that they're supposed to be doing.

But to come in with an Act like this and with a hammer like this, that if they are not providing the proper services, the government can cease payment within 14 days, it doesn't give them time, you know, if they are having issues, to get that worked out. And I know the ambulance operators have talked to people in the department and just on a casual basis they say, yes but we won't be using . . . I don't think we'd ever have to use that. That seems, yes, a little severe but, you know, I can't see us ever implementing it. Well if you're not going to implement it, why are you putting it into the legislation? It is a threat hanging over their heads.

It's the same as the one-year termination of a contract. They say, oh I can't see . . . And the evaluation of companies. Well I can't see health authorities wanting to just assume companies . . . But we would like to have that in there anyway. Well if you have that, those clauses put in the Act and you don't plan on using them, I'd far rather see them dropped from the Act. And I would ask the minister as we move this Bill forward to seriously look at that, to seriously look at dropping section 36.1 from the Act that talks about compensation for termination or non-renewal of a written agreement — dropping that section from the Act because that is the issue that ambulance operators are having a huge problem with. The evaluation of a business under fair market value is a huge concern because they're only given the 12-month contract.

The other area is section 37, the cessation of payment if a dispute arises. Now I don't know — I've been here long enough I should know, but I don't know — all the implications of, all the implications of dropping those two sections of the Act, of dropping 36.1 and also 37.

Because if the minister would say that yes we can drop those; we don't need to have that hammer hanging overtop of private operators; we could drop those — and it still addresses the concerns that the auditor has put forward — we would strongly agree with that.

I haven't heard the department or the minister's point of view as to why they have to have those sections in this Act. But if it's because operators are not doing the work that they're supposed to be doing, I believe there are other ways to deal with those operators — not having the heavy hand or the hammer, as I've referred to it, hanging over their head.

As I said, there are many sections, many pieces in this Act that we agree with that follows along with the auditor's recommendations. But there are problem areas and those are the two problems areas. The member from Cypress Hills, as I said last week, outlined why those are problems.

But my biggest question again and again — and I still haven't had an answer; I still can't seem to get it through my mind — is

why the government wants to put these onerous pieces of legislation into force. Because I don't see it doing any good for the whole industry.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'll be moving this Bill to committee, and at that time I'm certainly going to be spending a lot of time . . . And I would ask the minister, who is listening intently — he's nodding at least, he's listening intently — that I would ask the minister to look at those two pieces in the Act and see what the ramifications are if they just dropped those two sections. The Act can go through as it is, but those two sections are extremely problematic. And I'll be interested to know what the minister has to say.

Are those two amendments to the Act, section 36.1 and section 37, targeting something other than ambulance operators? Because what I see of that is it really is targeted towards the ambulance operators. Now if it's also targeted to meet some other private contractors, I'd be very interested to know that because right now it looks like the only people that these two sections will affect will be the operators, the private operators in our province. And if that's the case, I can't see any problem with dropping them.

We've gone through this before in this House with legislation that was introduced, and the minister at that time decided — or maybe the House Leader at that time decided — to pull the Bill. And it wasn't then put through to committee or then of course passed through the process to third reading and then to proclamation.

But it seems like they're bent on putting this through. And so I'll be very interested to ask the minister why specifically ambulance operators, if that's what these two amendments are targeting. If they're targeting other private contractors, I'd be very interested in knowing that. But if it's just targeting ambulance operators, then I would love for him to have the evidence of all the problems they've had in that industry that calls on a government to put such a heavy-handed approach into legislation, Mr. Speaker. So at this time I will move this Bill to committee.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion proposed by the Minister of Health that Bill No. 31, The Regional Health Services Amendment Act, 2006 (No. 2) be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

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

The Speaker: — To which committee shall this Bill be referred? The Chair recognizes the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 31, The Regional Health Services Amendment Act, 2006 (No. 2) be referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Health that Bill No. 31 be referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt that motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. Bill 31 stands referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services.

Bill No. 59

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Hagel that **Bill No. 59 — The Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation Amendment Act, 2007** be now read a second time.]

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this Bill makes some very significant changes to the Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation, and particularly in how the Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation relates to the legislature in that sense of, is it a Treasury Board Crown — which it is today — and how it reports to the legislature, or should it be a CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan], a Crown Investments Corporation Crown, which would report to the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations but whose money would go first through CIC rather than going directly into the general funds of the province of Saskatchewan.

[14:45]

And that's a significant change, Mr. Speaker. And I guess in listening to the minister's comments on this particular Bill, there was no real good explanation as to why that was a desirable thing to do. What was the benefits to Saskatchewan of doing that? There was certainly some discussion, or when you read through the Bill you see some opportunities for employees. But while it may be good for individual employees there, what good is it to the province of Saskatchewan? What benefit does making this change give to the province of Saskatchewan?

From what I can see in reading the Bill and listening to the members, the minister's comments, there was no clear evidence given as to why there was a benefit to Saskatchewan. He had some opinions on why it might benefit, but no clear evidence that would substantiate making a major change like this. What benefit is it to the province of Saskatchewan if the net income of the Gaming Corporation comes directly to the GRF [General Revenue Fund]? What is the benefit to Saskatchewan of those funds being filtered through CIC?

If they come to the General Revenue Fund, they go into the, basically into the tax revenues collected by government, and government then distributes them for whatever purpose government designs — the General Revenue Fund money for

hospitals, health care, highways, social services, whatever the case may be — the general expenses of government. If it goes through CIC, then those revenues can be utilized for other measures before it gets into the General Revenue Fund through the issuance of a dividend by CIC.

So what it can mean is that the money coming from the Gaming Corporation could be utilized in one of the other Crown corporations as a subsidy to the other Crown corporations. We saw that a couple of years ago where CIC provided a \$31 million subsidy to SaskWater. So the money from gaming could be going to fund SaskWater Corporation. It could be going to fund expansion of the grain car fleet. Now the government is going to paint a number of the grain cars green, so money for gaming could be going to that rather than going into the General Revenue Fund to be utilized for the construction of highways, Mr. Speaker.

So the government has not presented a good argument as to why this change needs to happen, to go from a Treasury Board Crown to a CIC corporation, a subsidiary of CIC. So I think there is some explanations there that the government needs to put forward as to what benefit is there to Saskatchewan.

When you read through the Bill, there's a number of other issues, Mr. Speaker, as well. By making this change, it allows the corporation to change its head office to anywhere else in Saskatchewan. So does that mean that the government is contemplating moving the Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation head office out of Regina to some other location in Saskatchewan? It's not clear, but it certainly makes that opportunity available to the government to make that kind of a move.

And is that going to be of benefit to the employees, or is that going to be an impediment to the employees that are already employed at the Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation? Is that a benefit or an impediment to the landowner . . . excuse me, the property owner where they're renting space, be it the Crown itself through SPMC [Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation] — SPM [Saskatchewan Property Management] now — or some other agency, Mr. Speaker? And if it moves, then who benefits?

There's some questions there that the government hasn't even addressed at all in the minister's statement on this particular issue. So I think that's an issue that needs to be brought forward. It needs to be clarified.

There are also some other issues in this particular Bill in relationship to the Gaming Corporation that I think the government needs to give some very clear explanations on. And one of it deals with the officers and employees that not . . . and the Bill itself says, notwithstanding The Public Service Act. And then they go on to list some things that they can make changes to their compensation. They can make . . . their remunerations. They can make changes to their pension benefits. All of this can be outside of The Public Service Act.

Why is that, Mr. Speaker? Why are these employees either being advantaged or disadvantaged, as the case may be, in the changes that would be available to the Gaming Corporation that are not available to other sectors of the government, Mr.

Speaker? Why are they being given an exemption from The Public Service Act in terms of remuneration or in terms of pension benefits, Mr. Speaker?

It also says that the corporation can appoint or engage any professional, administrative, technical, or clerical personnel that it requires. Well, Mr. Speaker, I would assume that as a Crown corporation, Sask Gaming Corporation already has that ability. Obviously they have employees. They have employees in the necessary technical areas. They have employees that understand the gaming industry and the mechanics of the gaming industry. They have professionals when it comes to accounting and to law, to legal matters. They have administrative personnel. So why does this need to change? Again I think the minister needs to be able to explain why this is included in the Act and who benefits. Why is this in there?

It also gives the corporation the ability — notwithstanding The Public Service Act — to give an exemption to determine the salaries and remunerations of the personnel appointed, appointed, or engaged, Mr. Speaker, in relationship to clause (a) which is the appointment or engagement of any professional, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill begs very significant answers from this government as to what they're changing and why they're changing it, and what's the rationale for making those changes, Mr. Speaker, because clearly the Bill itself and the explanatory notes that the government provided with this piece of legislation do not provide those answers.

It also goes on, Mr. Speaker, in our other section, to talk about the gaming corporation's ability to participate in joint or other ventures with any corporate body, organization, partnership, firm, or entity. Well, Mr. Speaker, up until this point in time, we've really only had two entities in the gaming industry in Saskatchewan. We have the Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation on one hand, and we have SIGA [Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority] on the other, Mr. Speaker.

Now there's already a partnership agreement there. There's arrangements between those two entities in place for ... particularly dealing with the net returns on gaming from either entity. But does this envision, Mr. Speaker, allowing now more parties to come into gaming in the province of Saskatchewan? Does this allow MGM or Harrah's or any of the other major syndicates, gaming syndicates, to enter into the province and now become owner-operators of casinos in this province in partnership with the Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation?

And if you think back to the SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company] days, partnerships become a very loose definition of arrangements that this government is prepared to make with corporate entities. It seems like, if you go back to SPUDCO, that there was a 50/50 relationship within the partnership. And for six years, that was the assumption made by everyone in this Assembly until we found out that it was actually ... the share values of these corporations, I believe, was \$149 by government and \$1 by the other corporate entity or that kind of a ratio anyways.

So when you're talking about partnerships or when you're talking about joint ventures with other entities, it really brings

into question, Mr. Speaker, exactly what the Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation may be entering into — what kind of relationship and a relationship with what entities, with whom, Mr. Speaker? Because I believe there's a huge gaming industry around the globe, and not all of them would be welcome in Saskatchewan in my opinion. So I think the Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation, in entering into ventures with outside entities, needs to be extremely careful. And under the current system, that was not available. You had two entities, Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation and SIGA, that were active in this province, and it was limited to that, Mr. Speaker.

This Bill also talks about, and the government talks about, the acquisitions and disposals of property with Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation, and this line bothers me, Mr. Speaker. It says, "(a) acquire, by any means." Acquire by any means, Mr. Speaker. Exactly what does that mean? Any means seems very ominous, Mr. Speaker.

In this province under the NDP, we have seen this government acquire corporate entities by any means of nationalization and expropriation. Does that mean that the government is envisioning expropriation of property at some point in time? Are they going to invite partners? Are they going to invite joint ventures into the province and then turn around and expropriate them, nationalize the industry, Mr. Speaker? That's going to be encouraging for people looking to invest in Saskatchewan if that's what the government's interest in this particular area is.

I think that's a very dangerous wording in this particular piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker; "acquire, by any means" I think has very dire consequences for investment in Saskatchewan if those particular words are allowed to remain in this particular Bill, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of other issues that need to be dealt with on this particular Bill.

When it talks about the amounts payable to the General Revenue Fund, previously the net revenues of the Gaming Corporation were returned to the GRF, the General Revenue Fund. Once it becomes a CIC Crown, that will no longer take place. Rather the money will be passed on to CIC, and CIC will make a determination then whether or not any of that revenue is actually passed forward on to the government in the Consolidated Fund through their dividend payments. So there will be no direct transfers of money, and some of that money may be utilized for other purposes within in CIC, such as capital investment perhaps through the Victoria Capital corporation that receives money from CIC for investments, Mr. Speaker.

So I think there's a number of areas in this Bill that need to be very seriously reviewed by the government, and to give them the opportunity to do that, Mr. Speaker, we will allow this Bill to pass on to committee.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion moved by the Minister Responsible for Gaming that Bill No. 59, The Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation Amendment Act, 2007 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Clerk: — Second reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — To which committee shall this Bill be referred? The Chair recognizes the Minister Responsible for Gaming.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 59, The Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation Amendment Act, 2007 be now referred to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister Responsible for Gaming that Bill No. 59 be referred to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. Bill 59 stands referred to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies. The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, in order to accommodate the good work of the standing committees on Human Services, Crown and Central Agencies, and Intergovernmental Affairs and Infrastructure, 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 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 15:00.]

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