



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

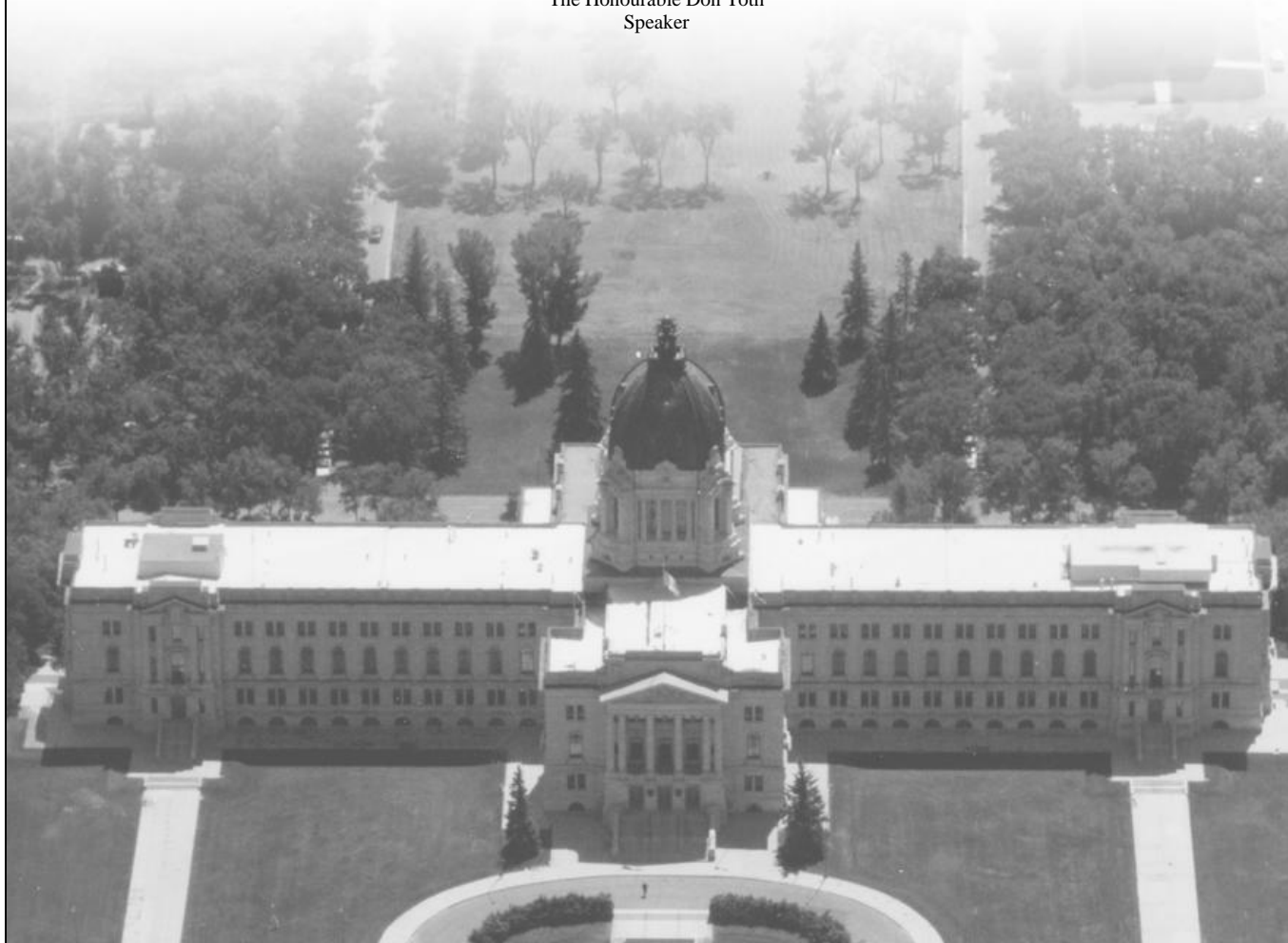
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Speaker — Hon. Don Toth
 Premier — Hon. Brad Wall
 Leader of the Opposition — Lorne Calvert

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
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Belanger, Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornerud, Hon. Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
Boyd, Hon. Bill	SP	Kindersley
Bradshaw, Fred	SP	Carrot River Valley
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
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Krawetz, Hon. Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
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McCall, Warren	NDP	Regina Elphinstone-Centre
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McMorris, Hon. Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
Michelson, Warren	SP	Moose Jaw North
Morgan, Hon. Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
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Norris, Hon. Rob	SP	Saskatoon Greystone
Ottenbreit, Greg	SP	Yorkton
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Reiter, Jim	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Ross, Laura	SP	Regina Qu'Appelle Valley
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Taylor, Len	NDP	The Battlefords
Tell, Hon. Christine	SP	Regina Wascana Plains
Toth, Hon. Don	SP	Moosomin
Trew, Kim	NDP	Regina Coronation Park
Van Mulligen, Harry	NDP	Regina Douglas Park
Wall, Hon. Brad	SP	Swift Current
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Wilson, Nadine	SP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Wotherspoon, Trent	NDP	Regina Rosemont
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney
Vacant		Cumberland

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for the Highways and Transportation.

Hon. Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all members of the legislature, I would like to introduce a group of 26 of our public servants. They're in the east wing of your gallery, Mr. Speaker. They're here to participate in the parliamentary program for public servants. They represent a variety of branches of government including Government Services, the Ministry of Health, Information Technology Office, the Legislative Assembly Service, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, the Office of the Provincial Secretary, the Public Service Commission, Ministry of Social Services, and the Ministry of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport.

Mr. Speaker, the program includes an in-depth history and tour of the Legislative Building, and they're going to be the recipients of briefings by the Legislative Library, the Legislative Assembly Clerk's office, and Executive Council. They're here to observe proceedings this afternoon, to watch the behaviour of their elected representatives in question period. And we're going to meet with them a little later this afternoon and probably have to explain the whole process because I'm sure that the questions will come freely after they observe this proceeding here today.

So, Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the House to welcome warmly this group of public servants.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased this afternoon to join with the minister and welcome these officials from the public service here today. It's not often that we get to see such a bright and brilliant group of young civil servants here today. And, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition we'd like to join in with the minister and welcome them to their legislature.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatchewan Rivers.

Ms. Wilson: — Mr. Speaker, I have some friends and neighbours who live in my constituency in the west gallery. They are the Cyr family. The parents are Odille and Edgar Cyr, and the children are Elise Chand, Jean, Leon, and Ivan Cyr. So I would like you all to welcome them here at the legislature today.

They have met with the member and the minister from Kindersley. So we've had a very good morning thus far. Thank you.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's with a great deal of pleasure I rise and present a petition on behalf of my constituents in Moose Jaw. And it has to do with the closure of the South Hill liquor store, which was made without notice — which was a rather shabby treatment of employees — and without any consultations with the citizens in the constituency. And the petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reassess its decision to close the South Hill liquor store, allowing it to continue to serve the people of Moose Jaw and provide valuable revenue to the people of this province.

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

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, I present petitions today in opposition to the government's Bill 5 and 6, the essential services Act and The Trade Union Act. And the prayer reads as follows:

We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan urge the new government to withdraw both Bills and hold broad public consultations on labour relations in the province.

And as duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

The petitions are signed from people of Shellbrook, Leask, Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, Regina, Central Butte, Saskatoon, Battleford, Nipawin, Borden, Wakaw, Dundurn, Osler, Clavet, Strasbourg, Langham, Warman, Fox Valley, Leader, Richmond, Burstall, Zehner . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Richmond, Balgonie, Pilot Butte, Colonsay, Burr, Lanigan, Raymore, Cudworth, White City, Emerald Park, Flaxcombe, Kindersley, Coleville, Coronach, Assiniboia, Fife Lake, Cupar, Dysart, Southey, Craven, Lestock, and Fort Qu'Appelle, Mr. Speaker. I so present.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Massey Place.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to present a petition concerning the Sask Party government's decision to axe Station 20. The petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately restore funding to the Station 20 project.

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

Mr. Speaker, the individuals who signed this petition are from the communities of Grandora, Wolseley, St. Brieux, and Saskatoon from both sides of the river, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from The Battlefords.

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to table a petition today, a petition in support of property tax relief for renters. The petitioners acknowledge that during the election campaign there were two specific promises with regards to property tax relief.

The petitioners humbly pray and call upon the Legislative Assembly to be pleased to cause the government to immediately implement the NDP's plan to provide property tax relief to homeowners and renters.

These petitioners, these petitioners, Mr. Speaker, these petitioners are all from The Battlefords, from The Battlefords.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney.

Changing the Rules

Mr. Yates: — Well, well, well, Mr. Speaker. Only three days after the government used its majority to unilaterally change the rules, they changed them back, Mr. Speaker. But this time they did it the right way. They had the unanimous consent to do so. Mr. Speaker, the government panicked. They didn't consult or negotiate with the opposition. They pushed the panic button, and we had a three-day panic drill exercise, Mr. Speaker. I see the need for school students to have routine fire drills, but it is hardly necessary to have our province's leaders panic and a three-day panic exercise to follow.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, I see the need for school students to have a routine fire drill, but it is hardly necessary to have our province's leaders panic and a three-day panic exercise to follow. Mr. Speaker, we told them they didn't need to change the rules. They had adequate time to pass their agenda. They didn't listen. Mr. Speaker, it is appropriate to say I told you so and hope the government shows greater competence in the future.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Carrot River Valley.

Heroism Following Nipawin Explosion

Mr. Bradshaw: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak of tragedy and bravery. Everyone knows by now of the natural gas explosion in Nipawin and the tragic loss of lives of two people and the injuries of several more. Our thoughts and prayers go out to these families as material things can be replaced but lives cannot.

Mr. Speaker, there was also bravery involved. People like Mike Van Dorpe, who ran back into the fire to pull a victim out of a burning truck. It's our volunteer fire departments of Nipawin, Carrot River, and Choiceland. These brave men and women are volunteers who at the drop of a hat will put their lives on the line to save someone else's. It's our first responders, another group of volunteers, who make their commitment of helping mankind a priority.

Mr. Speaker, this is a tragedy, but as I have described, this is Saskatchewan. And we Saskatchewanians know how to stare adversity down. Some people call a player who can make a hat trick in the playoffs a hero. Mr. Speaker, my heroes are people like Mike Van Dorpe, the Nipawin, Carrot River, and Choiceland volunteer fire departments, and the people of northeast Saskatchewan. Those people are my heroes, and I ask this Assembly to recognize them.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police Charity Ball

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, this past Saturday evening within my constituency it was my honour to attend the 2008 RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] Charity Ball along with the member from Regina South. The RCMP have long been supporters of our community's needs through this charity ball. According to Sergeant Serge Robitaille, the genesis for the RCMP ball can be traced back to the early days of the force. This year's charity, The Casey Foundation, was created in May 2005. Its ongoing goal is to see children with autism receive services to assist them with their unique needs. Their website states, and I quote:

It is the mission of The Casey Foundation to enrich the lives of children with autism. By assisting with the costs involved in accessing available services, we hope no child need be prevented from [the] developing to their fullest potential.

Mr. Speaker, the foundation was created by a Regina mom, Alexis Leippi, whose son and foundation namesake, Casey, was diagnosed with autism when he was three. Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to thank Alexis Leippi and her son Casey; The Casey Foundation board of directors, supporters, and volunteers; co-hosts, the RCMP Training Academy Depot Division and "F"

Division; and the many volunteers, donors, and participants that made the 2008 charity ball a resounding success and provided The Casey Foundation with needed resources.

I ask all members to join with me in extending this gratitude.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatchewan Rivers.

Flooding in Paddockwood Area

Ms. Wilson: — Mr. Speaker, this past Friday I went out to the RM [rural municipality] of Paddockwood to tour the flooding that has occurred there and which is still threatening to cause even more damage. With my constituency assistant, Marcus Abrametz, I toured the RM to see the damage and how they have coped with it. I had the opportunity to go to the RM building and talk with the administrator, Kathy Borysuk. She was extremely capable and helpful and I could see that she had things well under control.

I also had the chance to speak with the reeve, Brent Zbaraschuk, over the phone. He wanted to pass on how good relations are with the Minister of Highways and Infrastructure. During this flooding the ministry even offered to use their gravel pit so the RM could begin repairing their roads, as the RM's gravel pit is now under water. It is my pleasure to pass on his thanks to our ministry for their help and co-operation to an RM in need.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that all members will join me in thanking those who have worked so hard to repair the damage done by the flooding not only in Paddockwood, but in all areas of the province that are affected by spring runoff.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

[13:45]

Clay Serby Roasted and Toasted

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on Saturday evening I, along with several colleagues from both sides of the House, attended the Clay Serby Roast and Toast Dinner in Yorkton. It was an extremely well-attended event with guests from Yorkton and area, many who travelled from all over Saskatchewan and from out of province as well.

Both the dinner and program were excellent. Mr. Speaker, the list of roasters and toasters was extensive and included family members, community members, business and social contacts, as well as political friends and colleagues. Although all of them had a story to tell that brought laughter to the crowd, each one of them spoke of a man who gave selflessly and energetically to the causes he believed in.

In the words of the Leader of the Opposition, "I couldn't imagine a more dedicated deputy premier." And former Premier Romanow described how, when he had a tough portfolio to deal

with, he knew the person who could take on the responsibility was Clay Serby.

Clay's two beautiful daughters, Kirsti and Stacey, offered personal anecdotes, not to mention an amazing tribute through song. Others, including the Manitoba Minister of Agriculture, spoke of his sports prowess, his political escapades, and some stories that should perhaps remain in the past, Mr. Speaker.

The testimonials that we heard that evening were insightful, whether they were humorous or serious. However the most touching compliment to Clay occurred after the event was over, and I returned to my hotel. The clerk at the desk expressed her admiration for Clay, telling me that he was her social worker when she was only the tender age of five. And that had it not been for Clay, she isn't sure whether she would be in the position that she is in today with a successful life and two children heading off to college.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to invite all of my colleagues to join me in thanking Clay Serby, his partner Trish, his two daughters, Kirsti and Stacey, for the service and sacrifice that Clay gave for the betterment of his community and the province of Saskatchewan. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Sutherland.

Pork for Food Banks

Ms. Schriemer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Friday the Premier, along with the ministers of Agriculture and Social Services and representatives from the Sask Pork, announced a major donation to the food banks of Saskatchewan. The province is providing \$440,000 in funding to process sows culled through the national cull breeding swine program.

The processed pork will be donated to food banks and charitable organizations across the province. This funding will result in 700,000 pounds of processed pork for needy Saskatchewan families. The finished product has a retail value of approximately \$2 million. This funding will provide enough pork to last the Saskatchewan food bank for one year.

While we continue to support our hog producers and work to address the challenges they face, we are pleased to partner with them to create a bright spot in this otherwise difficult situation. I would like to thank Mr. Bill Hall of the Food Banks of Saskatchewan and Mr. Paul Merriman of the Saskatoon Food Bank. I would also like to recognize Joe Kleinsasser and Neil Ketilson of the Sask Pork for their support and contributions to the project.

Sask Pork will be coordinating the project with the food banks of Saskatchewan, provincial meat processors, Jay's Transport, and other groups to process and distribute the finished product to needy families in the province.

It is truly the Saskatchewan way to take a negative situation such as this and find an opportunity to turn it around and create hope rather than fear for children and families in our great

province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Massey Place.

Saskatoon Bakery Receives Torch Award

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand today and extend my congratulations to John and Audrey Matuszewski, two constituents of Saskatoon Massey Place. John and Audrey are the owners of Nestor's Bakery in Saskatoon. On Wednesday, March 19 the Better Business Bureau of Saskatchewan awarded the annual Torch Awards to deserving Saskatchewan businesses. I'm very pleased to inform this legislature that Nestor's Bakery was the recipient of the Hospitality and Personal Services Award.

In describing the purpose of the Torch Awards, the Better Business Bureau states that it wants to spotlight actions of businesses that display ethical leadership, either through ongoing social responsibility or the value-based resolution of a specific ethical dilemma.

Mr. Speaker, I can't think of anyone more deserving of this recognition than John and Audrey. The Matuszewskis have operated their business on 20th Street for many years. Over this time, they have earned a well-founded reputation of being honest, generous, and hard-working people. They operate Nestor's Bakery in a manner that demonstrates they truly care about their community. I also know the Matuszewskis are proud of their heritage and are active members of their church.

And to cap it all off, I can personally attest to the quality of their pies and bread. If members haven't visited Nestor's, I would encourage them to stop by and pick up a loaf of their signature Uncle John's multi-grain. Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of this legislature to join me in congratulating John and Audrey Matuszewski and all the staff of Nestor's Bakery for receiving this special recognition. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

Climate Change

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the last time that the Minister Responsible for Environment was on her feet in the Assembly, the only question that she answered was whether or not she was capable of reading briefing material. Maybe today will be better for her.

The Sask Party has always held dubious opinions on climate change. In a debate on the Kyoto Protocol, the member for Estevan once said, quote, "Scientists don't agree. They can't assure us that there is a trend to global warming."

The member for Biggar once assured the Assembly that, quote,

"There's also significant debate within the scientific community about the validity . . . that man-made greenhouse gas emissions are causing climate change to global warming."

My question is to the Minister of Environment. Has the Sask Party changed its views, or is the science of climate change still subject to debate?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for the Environment.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member opposite for her question. All she has to do is go to the Minister of Environment website and check out the information there. And during the campaign, she could have checked our platform where we clearly committed to the targets adopted previously in the province to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

So if she's looking to see our position, Mr. Speaker, it has been perfectly clear that we are doing what we need to do in this province to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as opposed to the opposition who allowed greenhouse gas emissions to increase by 62 per cent over the last 16 years, which is double the national average.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

Ms. Morin: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party seems to be long on words and short on action. Mr. Speaker, the now Minister Responsible for Government Services once claimed that, quote ". . . if the agreements — the CO₂ agreements, Kyoto — come into place, that will be a severe impediment to Saskatchewan . . ."

I believe that the consequences of climate change, regional flooding, droughts, and the spread of pine beetles might be a more serious impediment to our province, Mr. Speaker. The Sask Party has now abolished the Office of Energy Conservation established specifically to help address climate change in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

My question is to the minister. Why should the people of Saskatchewan take anything that the Sask Party says about climate change seriously when they view measures to address it as impediments to Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for the Environment.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would point out to the member opposite that in a backgrounder that was

released by the NDP on September 5, 2005, when they were doing their press release on the money that they were going to use from the sale of the upgrader, the Office of Energy Conservation was going to be rolled into a climate change secretariat so the NDP were going to be doing away with the Office of Energy Conservation.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

Ms. Morin: — As I said before, long on words, short on action. Perhaps she didn't realize that that was part of a major plan with experts on the environment to be taking care of the whole situation . . . [inaudible] . . . climate change.

But, Mr. Speaker, the current Minister of Enterprise and Innovation, a minister that soon will be the Chair of a board responsible for developing economic policy in our province once said that it's, quote, "[Now] not that the scientific community can even agree as to whether or not . . . global warming is occurring outside of normal cyclic temperature swings or, if so, if it is a man made or caused by natural events."

Mr. Speaker, one of the first acts of the Sask Party government was to abolish the climate change secretariat, a body that could have helped our province minimize its contribution to climate change. My question is to the minister. What does the minister know about climate change that would cause her to abolish the climate change secretariat? Does she believe that climate change is simply caused by natural events?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of the Environment.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And for all the member's indignation over the climate change secretariat, I would point out that the NDP [New Democratic Party] had nothing more than a press release. It was not established.

And if she would look at the budget, as I said in committee last week, this government has committed \$1 million to have the Ministry of Environment be the lead agency for climate change, as opposed to the opposition when they were in government, who had no lead for climate change. They had pieces of it in Industry, pieces of it in Environment, pieces of it in CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan]. We are going to house it within the Ministry of Environment with a \$1 million budget and four FTEs [full-time equivalent] of experts who can help us out on this file.

And I might point out too, Mr. Speaker, that the member opposite said that the climate change secretariat, quote, "would have the clout it needs within government to make sure programs are comprehensive enough." And, Mr. Speaker, I would submit that on this side of the House, the ministers and the ministries have the sufficient clout, and we don't need another outside agency to do that work for us.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

Ms. Morin: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan are looking forward to see what that clout will finally bring us, since they still have no plan to address how they're going to meet those targets.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan have no illusions about how important climate change is to the Sask Party. They have said that the science of climate change is subject to debate, that it's caused by natural events, and that measures to address climate change are impediments to the prosperity of this province. Consistent with these views, the Sask Party has abolished the Office of Energy Conservation, disbanded the climate change secretariat, and cut the funding for climate change initiatives to less than 15 per cent of what it originally was, Mr. Speaker.

My question is to the minister. Will the Sask Party government spare the people of Saskatchewan the rhetoric and admit that it has no intention of addressing climate change, a phenomenon that its members clearly do not believe in?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for the Environment.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The amount that was originally allotted to climate change initiatives in this province under the NDP was \$7.5 million in the '07-08 budget. In this budget we have added to that, \$10 million to a total of \$17.5 million. I'm not exactly sure where the member's getting her information from, other than this press release that was issued last fall from the sale of the upgrader.

And I would point out, Mr. Speaker, again for all of her indignation, the NDP, when they had the opportunity, introduced no legislation, no regulations. They had no target specific to industry or SaskPower. Their plan was to, and I quote ". . . complying with industry's mandatory emission reduction obligations under the federal climate change plan."

They had no provincial plan for industry in this province. They were going to default to the federal regulations.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Meewasin.

Release of Confidential Documents

Mr. Quennell: — The Justice minister admits he knows the name of the suspect in the case of the unlawfully obtained police files but won't name him. On three separate instances during media scrums with reporters, the Justice minister said he did not personally know the subject. Only under persistent questioning by the press on Thursday did the minister finally admit he had a relationship with the suspect.

Mr. Speaker, this question goes directly to the minister's credibility. Why did he provide false information about knowing the suspect in the case of the unlawfully obtained police files? What is he trying to cover up?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, in our country we have a Charter of Rights. We have a presumption of innocence. I was surprised and disappointed when the member from Meewasin indicated to reporters last week, quote, "that he might be obliged to release the name of the suspect" who will in fact not be charged.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I have a challenge for the member from Meewasin. I challenge him to look into the cameras today. I challenge him to speak directly into the microphone and state clearly and unequivocally that he would, if he was Justice minister, release the name of that suspect. I challenge him to do that today, knowing that he is not just speaking to the members in this House but that he is speaking directly to each and every prosecutor in this province and each and every law enforcement officer in this province. I challenge him today to make that statement in this House.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Meewasin.

Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, if I was Minister of Justice, I would act like I was a lawyer for the people of Saskatchewan and not a lawyer for the suspect.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, on April 14 the minister was asked if he knew the suspect personally. His answer was no. On Thursday April 17, the minister volunteered the suspect is, and I quote, "somebody that I don't know."

Later the minister was asked point-blank if he had ever had a conversation with the suspect, responding, quote, "I have not." Seconds later he was asked again, but this time his answer was quite different. It turns out the minister has written a letter on the suspect's behalf about the time the police files were dropped off at the chief of staff of their caucus's home.

Providing contradictory statements on his relationship with a suspect brings into question that minister's ability to continue on as Saskatchewan's Minister of Justice and Attorney General. To the minister: will he step aside while the commissioner, the Conflict of Interest Commissioner investigates?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:00]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I've tried my best to be open and candid with the media and with the members in this House. I've done that, and I've done that without trying to compromise justice.

When I stated I did not know this suspect, I was correct in that I did not know this suspect within the context of this file. I clarified with the media that I had written a letter on behalf of this individual two or three years earlier regarding an unrelated matter. This clarification was made, Mr. Speaker, immediately rather than following the pattern of the NDP cover-up which lasted for some 16 years.

The Saskatchewan Party has quickly moved to correct mistakes, misstatements. The NDP have consistently tried to play down their role in this scandal, Mr. Speaker. The scandal arose in 1992. Why did it take 16 years and the pressure of Police Chief Cal Johnston to end this? Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Meewasin.

Mr. Quennell: — Well, Mr. Speaker, rumours continue to swirl around this Justice minister's involvement with the suspect in the case of the unlawfully obtained police files, a suspect the minister knows the name of. The minister has put contradictory statements on the public record about his relationship with the suspect saying at first that he had never spoken to the suspect and then admitting he had done work on the suspect's behalf — three days later, not immediately, Mr. Speaker. And now the Premier's chief lawmaker is admonishing the Regina Police Service for its treatment of the suspect.

To the Premier: in the face of escalating concern over this minister's actions, will he tell his Justice minister to step aside until the Conflict of Interest Commissioner investigates?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, in 1992 the NDP caucus was involved in a fraud involving their caucus funds. To avoid political embarrassment, they tried to cover it up. Many of the members still sit in the legislature today. In . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — In 1994 Pat Lorjé pushed the NDP caucus to try to get them to do the right thing and to be upfront with the police. Those same members did not. They chose to avoid having the story come out. In 2007 Glenn Hagel stood in this House and tried to tell the media and the members of this legislature that he had been upfront with the police. Only after Police Chief Cal Johnston made an unprecedented late-night news conference did the entire story come forward — 16 years it took, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Northeast.

Saskatchewan Government Insurance

Mr. Harper: — Mr. Speaker, the Coachman Insurance Company is one of SGI's [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] out-of-province investments that the minister does not approve of. Like many businesses, it started out slowly but now is extremely profitable. Last year alone Coachman generated \$26 million in revenue for SGI. In spite of these success and these investments, the minister responsible has said that he intends to interfere with the company's affairs and prevent further out-of-province investments.

My question is for the minister. Why does the minister believe that the people of Saskatchewan does not want to see SGI invest out of province when those investments bring millions of dollars of profits to our province?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Crown Corporations.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the question. The member opposite wasn't at the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] briefing that this was explained at quite in length, with great detail.

Mr. Speaker, the question was regarding the priorities of the Saskatchewan Party, and certainly out-of-province investments continue not to be a priority. Operating SGI for the people of Saskatchewan, certainly there's more business that can be done in Saskatchewan. Things like Coachman Insurance, which lost a substantial amount of money, are not a priority for this government.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Northeast.

Mr. Harper: — Mr. Speaker, last week the minister responsible made it very clear to this Assembly that he intends to interfere with SGI's operation and to force the organization to comply with the views of the Sask Party. SGI is a very well-managed and highly profitable corporation that provides great benefits to Saskatchewan people.

The question to the minister: why does the minister believe that he and the Sask Party know more about what is in the best interests of SGI than those who operate it?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Crown Corporations.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you again to the member for the question. Mr. Speaker, it is very clearly said here in the House and in committee and in other areas that we will operate the Crown corporations like businesses, providing the service at the lowest possible cost for Saskatchewan residents. That's the commitment that we made to the people of Saskatchewan on November 7. That's the commitment that they voted for, as the results we see in the House today. And that will continue to be the commitment of this government now today and into the future as we operate SGI in an efficient manner.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Northeast.

Mr. Harper: — The Crown corporations of Saskatchewan are run by experienced professionals that have made them strong and highly profitable. But last week the minister responsible admitted that he is willing to directly interfere with SGI's operation. And he said in this House and I quote, "I want to be clear for the members opposite that yes, we will impose our views on the Crown corporations."

My question is for the minister. What else, what else will the minister do to interfere with the operations of SGI and the other Crowns? What else?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Crown Corporations.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, obviously the member opposite is trying to make something out of nothing here. What I said was indeed if he calls running a business in an efficient manner interference, that's indeed what I will do. Mr. Speaker, that is our . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. *Hansard* clearly, clearly has the record of what exactly was said that day in the House. And I continue to operate with no apology whatsoever that this government will operate SGI in a businesslike fashion, providing the service to Saskatchewan residents. And there are improvements that can be made — contrary to what members opposite may think, that there's improvements that can be made — within the province of Saskatchewan. That will be the focus of SGI. That will be the focus of this government, providing the service at the lowest possible cost for Saskatchewan residents. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

Essential Services Legislation

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, in the committees last week, the Minister of Labour had much to say about the parliamentary system, ministerial responsibility, continuity versus change,

nexuses, tapestries, synergies, and even Peter Gzowski, Mr. Speaker. But unfortunately, unfortunately I don't think he actually understands the role of the official opposition. So let me help him out, Mr. Speaker.

Official oppositions hold government to account for heavy-handedness, like when a government fires quasi-judicial boards or refuses to meet with stakeholders. Official oppositions guard against cronyism and patronage, like when a government appoints a political friend to a cushy position with, say, a \$60,000 raise. And official oppositions expose utter incompetence like when a government breaks a promise or introduces legislation it doesn't even understand.

To the minister: does he have any idea who is included in his legislation?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, there's some reassurance. Last week the member opposite perhaps got a little bit agitated, but I can at least see he was listening.

Mr. Speaker, what I can say is offer great reassurance to the people of Saskatchewan that we're dealing with a piece of moderate legislation. That is, in Alberta and PEI [Prince Edward Island], the governments don't allow employees to strike. In British Columbia the legislation can apply to any employer. It's not the case in Saskatchewan.

And more importantly, the federal government, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland require the union and employer to negotiate an essential services agreement, and I'm happy to report, Mr. Speaker, that model will be used in Saskatchewan as well.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that answers the question appropriately, but I'm happy to make further reference to Peter Gzowski.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, the questions are simple. Mr. Speaker, who is in and who is out? That's the fundamental question this minister is either unwilling or unable to answer.

The Speaker: — Order. Please allow the member to place his question.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, who's in and who's out? The president of the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses seems to have an idea about who's included. At a press conference called this morning to point out the government's failure to substantively address concerns about Bill 5, Rosalee Longmoore told reporters this: that she expects all SUN [Saskatchewan Union of Nurses] members from all three classifications to be affected by

this Bill.

To this minister: is this the case? Does every nurse fall under the scope of this Bill?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. The scope actually is going to ensure that the people of Saskatchewan, up until this point not being served by essential service legislation, the scope is that the people of Saskatchewan — that is all across Saskatchewan — will have the protection of at the one point having the right to strike guaranteed and on the other hand ensuring that there's public safety guaranteed.

That's the balance that we've achieved, Mr. Speaker. It's drawn on the best practices from across Canada, Mr. Speaker. And the key question, Mr. Speaker, is whether the members opposite will be voting for this legislation, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, still no answers, but I have something else. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Labour told this House all along that he had complete confidence in the Department of Justice officials who wrote this Bill. He's never really explained why, if he has such confidence, he's had to hire Kevin Wilson to give him legal advice. We now know that Wilson made over \$50,000.

Can the minister answer some very basic questions about his decision to hire Wilson? To the minister: what legislation has Kevin Wilson provided advice on; how much has he earned since the end of January; and how long will the minister have to pay Wilson for his advice? And most importantly, what is the exact nature of Mr. Wilson's legal advice?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, it's a well-known matter of course that the previous government ensured that there was appropriate legal representation and expertise available, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, what I can say is Mr. Wilson has provided expert advice and research to me on obviously the two Bills under consideration and a number of other areas, Mr. Speaker, and I'm delighted with the service that Mr. Wilson has provided. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, still, still no answers. But, Mr. Speaker, I have this to say, that this minister has raised the bar of incompetence to a whole new Olympian level.

But, Mr. Speaker, if the minister can't answer simple questions about his own legislation, I wonder who can. I wonder if Kevin Wilson can. By the end of January, Wilson, as I have mentioned, had earned over 50,000 from the taxpayers of Saskatchewan. And who knows how much more he's earned since then. Maybe he knows who this Bill covers.

To the minister: will he bring Kevin Wilson into the next committee meeting so that we can finally get some answers? And if not, Mr. Speaker, can he at the very least promise us this: Mr. Speaker, please, please, please no more pontification on his immense knowledge of the parliamentary system, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, as we look across Canada, we see that every province has essential service legislation in place, save a couple. We're one, Mr. Speaker, and we're moving forward on that Bill, Mr. Speaker.

Why would we move forward on this Bill, Mr. Speaker? We'd move forward to ensure that the people of this province have public safety guaranteed during times of labour disruptions, Mr. Speaker. That means that at times when we have surprise storms that the highways will be plowed. Mr. Speaker, we ensure that people . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — We ensure, Mr. Speaker, that . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, we ensure that people in need can have access to health care. That is, kids have access to care. We saw during the CUPE [Canadian Union of Public Employees] strike, Mr. Speaker, that kids weren't getting the adequate care at the Royal University Hospital. We've seen previously that cancer care was not being provided, Mr. Speaker, in earlier strikes. Mr. Speaker, we saw previously that people with disabilities have been affected by threats of strike. Mr. Speaker, we're acting of the people of this province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, a lot of words. And after over a year of study in Saskatchewan Party backrooms, four months after introducing the Bill in the House, and after what the minister has said are extensive backroom private consultations and after finally tabling the amendments, the Minister of Labour still doesn't know who's in the Bill.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister even know after the Bill is passed? It would be irresponsible to go ahead as planned. It would be irresponsible, Mr. Speaker, to ram this legislation through which the minister himself has admitted he doesn't understand. Will the . . .

[14:15]

The Speaker: — Order. I would ask the member to place his question.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Will the minister finally do the right thing, finally do what the people of Saskatchewan want? Will he finally send these Bills to public hearings?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate the concise nature of the question at the end of a drawn-out monologue. Mr. Speaker, what's key here? What's key here, Mr. Speaker, is to turn and say the people of Saskatchewan want to know how the official opposition's going to be voting when it comes to essential services.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Why is the member on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Before orders of the day I would like to ask for leave to make a statement about the Nipawin disaster, Mr. Speaker.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Corrections and Public Safety.

STATEMENT BY A MEMBER

Nipawin Explosion

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Friday, April 18, at approximately 11:15 hours in the morning, the town of Nipawin declared a local state of emergency following a gas explosion that levelled buildings and created significant damage to other property.

I am saddened to report we also learned that the explosion took

two lives and as the RCMP confirmed for media and the public on Sunday, those deaths were two members of the same family, Jack Boxall and Brent Boxall. I can only imagine, Mr. Speaker, the tremendous grief the Boxall family and their friends and neighbours are experiencing today.

The Premier extended the province's sympathies to the families of the dead and injured in his own message on Saturday. And, Mr. Speaker, I repeat that expression of condolence in the House today.

Yet, Mr. Speaker, in the face of such difficult circumstances, another story unfolded. The story was characterized by heroism, selflessness, and the ability of a community to come together in a time of crisis.

Often when life-threatening situations or crises strike, people run away, Mr. Speaker. But this was not the case in Nipawin. The RCMP, fire, and other emergency workers ran in and risked their lives for the safety of others. This action is exactly why some people choose other types of careers, Mr. Speaker. For those in law enforcement, firefighting, and EMS [emergency medical services], it's how they are; it's who they are; it's what they do, Mr. Speaker.

The Nipawin community under the leadership of Mayor Glen Day banded together to bring help and solace, to care and to support. Mr. Speaker, the actions of the residents of Nipawin over the weekend characterized just what Saskatchewan people are made of, where helping our neighbours is a way of life.

The local fire service and the services from Carrot River and Choceland who provided assistance should also be commended for the quick action in a response whose speed no doubt prevented further destruction.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to acknowledge the work of those men and women across government and from a number of other organizations who marshalled an emergency response within minutes of the first reports of the unfolding situation. Representatives from the RCMP, the Kelsey Trail Health Region, the Salvation Army, SaskEnergy, and the ministries of Health, Social Services, and Corrections, Public Safety and Policing mobilized to coordinate the response to tend to the injured, to secure the site, and to work to prevent further property damage and injury. They have all been at the site and at other locations working tirelessly throughout the weekend to restore services and ensure that Nipawin residents could safely return to their homes.

I visited the site of this tragic event in Nipawin on Saturday, Mr. Speaker. I saw the devastation first-hand. But, Mr. Speaker, what struck me the most was the community — neighbours helping neighbours, residents, health care providers, police and fire services, utility companies and government agencies — all working together around the clock.

Mr. Speaker, in today's paper is the incredible story of Karen Bilec, a licensed EMT [emergency medical technician] who raced to help the injured just moments after her own family's home was completely destroyed by the blast.

On Saturday I learned about the efforts of RCMP staff sergeant,

Jeff Roscoe, and the other members of the Nipawin detachment, who were on the scene immediately and were instrumental in assisting the injured and evacuating the area. Some of these officers were off duty from the night before, Mr. Speaker, and responded without being called. This demonstrates their true dedication to the job.

Mr. Speaker, these are just two of the examples of the courageous and immediate responses to the horrific events. There were dozens more. In typical Saskatchewan fashion, I'm sure none of these people would think of themselves as heroes. But that's exactly what they are, Mr. Speaker. Everyone pulled together for the grieving, for the injured, for those forced to evacuate. People did not run away but opened their arms and hearts for the community.

Mr. Speaker, in the days ahead, the RCMP, the fire commissioner's office within my ministry, and SaskEnergy will be conducting a thorough investigation. This will determine how this explosion happened and what we can do to prevent such a tragedy from ever happening again. I understand occupational health and safety will also be conducting an investigation, as is always the case when a worker is killed on the job. We will learn from these lessons, from this tragic event, Mr. Speaker.

But today I want to thank everyone involved in responding to the Nipawin explosion. I thank them for their courage, their compassion, and their dedication to Saskatchewan people. And I extend to them my own deepest appreciation and that of the Government of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Yates: — With leave to make a statement, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The member has asked for leave. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave is granted. I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like first to thank the minister for sharing his statement. Mr. Speaker, the official opposition will also join, like to join with the minister and offer our condolence to the Boxall family as well as to recognize the very important work of the emergency workers in and around Nipawin.

Mr. Speaker, what we saw in Nipawin on Friday is truly an example of the character of Saskatchewan. People bonded together. They worked together to ensure that the very best outcome could be achieved out of a very difficult situation, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the fire officials, the RCMP, and the EMS officials in Nipawin and area need to be commended for their hard work, their dedication, and their willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty. But most importantly, Mr. Speaker, I think that we all need to give the people of Nipawin and surrounding area our great appreciation for their

willingness to come together to help those in need in their community. And as I stated earlier, Mr. Speaker, this is truly about the character of Saskatchewan and the people of Nipawin exemplify that. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Questions Taken as Notice

The Speaker: — Prior to orders of the day I want to clarify a statement I made last week. Last week the Minister of Finance took notice of questions directed to the Minister of Health. During question period the following day, the Minister of Health stood to answer the questions. Under rule 19(3), “Questions taken as notice may be answered at a subsequent Question Period.” Following question period, the Speaker asked that in future ministers rise to respond during the final minute of question period. In that way they would not hinder the flow of questioning in question period.

After further discussion with the government and opposition House leaders, it was agreed that ministers could rise at any time during question period to respond to a question taken by notice provided they did not disrupt the flow of a specific line of questioning. I want to thank the government and opposition House leaders for their thoughts and input regarding the application of rule 19(3).

And one further personal announcement. On Friday morning our son and daughter-in-law presented my wife and I with our second grandchild, a son, Hunter Graham, 8 pounds, 9 ounces. Mother and baby are doing well, and grandparents are elated.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READING

Bill No. 29

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Krawetz that **Bill No. 29 — The Education Amendment Act, 2008/Loi de 2008 modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur l'éducation** be now read a second time.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's with a great deal of pleasure I rise to make some comments on this Bill. It's caused a fair bit of excitement, I think, across the province and especially in rural areas.

Many areas of the province had been looking forward to the introduction of The Education Act and to see what changes were made and what were being proposed by the Saskatchewan

Party government. And there's a number of reasons for that, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there has been a great many changes in the education field across the province over the last few years, and I know that many in rural Saskatchewan feel that their hopes and dreams for their community were really being ignored with the way the school review process was being held.

And, Mr. Speaker, for the past year and before that, the Saskatchewan Party has been making some promises and commitments and raising hope throughout the province that they would do things differently. They would have a different look at the education system. They would look differently at how education is delivered in rural Saskatchewan.

And I think first and foremost when you look at the reaction when the Bill was finally tabled, went through first reading, I don't believe that this Bill meets those expectations one iota. And we can see that quite clearly from the comments. The headline on the one website that I was on the other day said, “SARM Unhappy with Education Amendments.” And I quote from the president of SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities], President Dave Marit:

The time line of moving it to ten months doesn't give a community near enough time to do due diligence on the opportunity for growth and what to do with the facility once the school is gone.

So what we've seen — and really Mr. Marit wraps it up quite nicely — instead of putting in any type of process that would support the school system, any type of a process that would encourage retaining schools in small communities and rural communities, all this Bill has done, it's done some minor tinkering and it has changed the notice, the timeline of notice that has to be given to communities for schools that are under review. Instead of notice being given in February, that notice will now be given in October.

And, Mr. Speaker, this really contrasts with what's been said over this past year. And I will go back to the *Moose Jaw Times-Herald* on April 18, 2007. So what we're looking at is almost a year ago, Mr. Speaker, and what the now Premier said at that time is, and I'll quote from the newspaper article.

Wall said the party would end closure for most of 50 schools by designating funds to schools of opportunity and schools of necessity.

Schools of opportunity would be schools where local leaders and business identify pending development that needs schools to attract population. Schools of necessity are schools where “too much time is spent on the bus.”

Wall said that instead of spending more money on busing “we think the money should go to classrooms, more teachers.”

So that's the kind of comments that this Saskatchewan Party was making around the province and, Mr. Speaker, I was at a number of meetings and a number of rallies, one out in front of this building, where a number of commitments were made, hopes were raised. And, Mr. Speaker, that is the most appalling of all of this, is that while we played on people's emotions, the

Saskatchewan Party went out, they built up people's expectations, built up their hopes, played with the emotions in a very difficult situation, and then have not followed through.

Quite clearly they have not come through. They have not made the changes that people expected. They have not anywhere close to meeting the expectations that they built over the whole process of education across Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, even earlier this year we can go back to when the Saskatchewan Party was already government and the Premier was making a speech. There was some comments that were posted in *The Southwest Booster*. And what was the headline on this post? It was "Wall keeping promises in supporting schools." And what his comments were in the article, and I'll quote:

"We have called for a much more rigorous process, when we were in opposition we called for a much rigorous process before a decision could be taken to close a school, because once you close a school it's almost irrevocable. How do you re-open them? So are all the questions being asked around . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I'm finding that there's a few too many private debates taking place at this time and I would ask members to recognize the opportunity of members to respond when they've been recognized. The member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

[14:30]

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'll go back and I'll start again on my quotes from *The Southwest Booster*. And these were comments that the Premier made, and he was Premier at this time because these comments were made in February of this year. And I quote:

"We have called for a much more rigorous process, when we were in opposition we called for a much more rigorous process before a decision could be taken to close a school, because once you close a school it's almost irrevocable. How do you re-open them? So are all the questions being asked around economic opportunity? We're going to work on our designation about what we call schools of opportunity, which would preclude closure if they receive that designation."

"And then there's the remote schools. At some point you're going to ask kids to be on a bus for too long, and so decisions need to be made on that basis. So we haven't changed that. We're still committed to those."

Well, Mr. Speaker, we look at schools of opportunity and what have they done? Well we're all waiting and all the schools are waiting because they haven't got their criteria drawn up. And what we're talking about is \$1 million that's been put into a pool for schools of opportunity. One million dollars for a school in a remote area of Saskatchewan or an area that's booming — that doesn't work. That's not anywhere near enough money to address the issues around the province.

And when we talk about schools of necessity — which the

members opposite talked about again and again and again — well let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, what they've done. They have taken the description last year from small remote schools. They have put it into this year's funding manual. And you know what they've done? They changed the title. Now small remote schools are now schools of necessity — changed the title. There's not one criteria, there's not one change in the requirement for a school of necessity. That's the kind of commitments that these people are angry about that they were not, they were not even close to addressing in The Education Act.

There's many things and, Mr. Speaker, I know some people will say I'm not talking about the same thing. But I am because they're all directly connected. They all have to do with education. It's multi-faceted the way education is developed and delivered across this province. All of these pieces of legislation from the operating grant to The Education Act — and it goes on and on — it's all intertwined and it all has a huge impact on education in our province.

So, Mr. Speaker, it even goes to later this spring than the comments from the Premier in *The Southwest Booster*. And here we have the member from Thunder Creek who attended all of the community meetings for the Prairie South School Division, and he made these comments when talking about schools of opportunity, schools of necessity, and he said:

"The criteria are being flushed out now, and I'm not sure of exactly what they'll be yet, but in the next few days, I understand the minister of education will have those criteria out to the boards and they'll be laid out in detail and the boards will have a good idea on how to apply them."

And this was from the member from Thunder Creek and it was quoted on February 1, 2008. Well you know what? We still haven't seen the criteria. And you know what? There's a lot of regulations that have to be written to back up any of the changes that are being made.

So while we're sitting here saying, well isn't this wonderful and they're going to be telling us how they met one more of their campaign commitments, well to meet it to this extent, in my view and the view of many parents across Saskatchewan and especially in rural Saskatchewan, this is not a promise kept by any means. It's been danced around. It's been dodged. And there is no way that this is a promise kept. And, Mr. Speaker, we've seen the full impact of that when we had a couple in the rotunda last weekend and what was it they said? "An 'F' for [the] Saskatchewan Party." And from the article I want to quote just a couple of comments:

Parent lobby groups fighting to keep schools open gave the provincial government a failing grade Thursday for its proposed changes to the rural school closure process.

And it's quite telling in Mr. Lewis's comments when he's quoted in the article. And his question that he asks is important I think for each and every one of us to really ask when we are looking at this piece of legislation.

"The question that has been asked [to me] by a lot of

different people is, 'Who is this helping?'" Lewis said.

Who is this helping? It's playing politics with a very difficult situation in any community. It doesn't anywhere near meet the commitments and the promises and the hope that was delivered by this Saskatchewan Party previous to the election and in the few months following the election. They aren't keeping this commitment. They aren't looking at actual fact to the issues of education in rural and small communities across this province. And, Mr. Speaker, it's clear from the comments that we see over and over again.

And even Mr. Lewis in his comments last Thursday here at the legislature said:

"We're just at a loss to wonder where a lot of the things they spoke about a year ago, where are those promises now?"

Mr. Lewis is accurate and there is many people across the province that are wondering where they are.

And after assuming office last November, the Saskatchewan Party government urged school boards to consider stepping back from school closures to see what legislative changes were coming. Lot of disappointment out there, Mr. Speaker. Many school boards did step back. Is there any support coming? Nothing for schools of opportunity. That's at least a year away.

We've seen some fluctuations in the grant. But I think more and more what we're seeing is the disappointment — the disappointment of communities, the disappointment of students, and the disappointment of citizens right across the province. And, Mr. Speaker, when we look at this, there's a list of schools that are up for closure and what the Saskatchewan government is doing is fiddling away at the edges. They're not keeping their commitments, keeping the promises they made to people.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have a number of more stakeholders that we need to talk to about this piece of legislation. So at this time I would move that we adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — The member from Moose Jaw Wakamow has moved that we adjourn debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly . . . The member from Moose Jaw . . . Order. The member from Moose Jaw Wakamow has moved to adjourn debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried. I recognize the Government Deputy House Leader.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — In order to accommodate the good work of the committees, I move that this Assembly do now adjourn.

The Speaker: — The minister has moved that this Assembly do now adjourn. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried. In order to facilitate the working of committees, this Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 14:38.]

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Elhard	1031
Yates	1031
Wilson	1031

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Higgins	1031
Iwanchuk	1031
Brotten	1032
Taylor	1032

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Changing the Rules

Yates	1032
-------------	------

Heroism Following Nipawin Explosion

Bradshaw	1032
----------------	------

Royal Canadian Mounted Police Charity Ball

Wotherspoon	1032
-------------------	------

Flooding in Paddockwood Area

Wilson	1033
--------------	------

Former Member Honoured

Morin	1033
-------------	------

Pork for Food Banks

Schriemer	1033
-----------------	------

Saskatoon Bakery Receives Torch Award

Brotten	1034
---------------	------

QUESTION PERIOD

Climate Change

Morin	1034
-------------	------

Heppner	1034
---------------	------

Release of Confidential Documents

Quennell	1035
----------------	------

Morgan	1036
--------------	------

Saskatchewan Government Insurance

Harper	1037
--------------	------

Cheveldayoff	1037
--------------------	------

Essential Services Legislation

Iwanchuk	1037
----------------	------

Norris	1038
--------------	------

STATEMENT BY A MEMBER

Nipawin Explosion

Hickie	1039
--------------	------

Yates	1040
-------------	------

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Questions Taken as Notice

The Speaker	1041
-------------------	------

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READING

Bill No. 29 — The Education Amendment Act, 2008/Loi de 2008 modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur l'éducation

Higgins	1041
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GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN CABINET MINISTERS

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Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan Crop
Insurance Corporation

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Minister of Energy and Resources
Minister Responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs

Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff
Minister of Crown Corporations

Hon. Dan D'Autremont
Minister of Government Services
Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan Liquor and
Gaming Authority
Minister Responsible for the Information
Technology Office

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Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations
Minister Responsible for Northern Affairs

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Minister of Highways and Infrastructure
Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission
Provincial Secretary

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Minister of Health

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Minister Responsible for Immigration
Minister Responsible for the Workers'
Compensation Board

Hon. Lyle Stewart
Minister of Enterprise and Innovation

Hon. Christine Tell
Minister of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport
Minister Responsible for the Capital City Commission