



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

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The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

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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

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — Before I introduce guests, I would ask leave of members to make a personal introduction on behalf of Commonwealth Day.

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Thank you, members. As hon. members will know, today is Commonwealth Day, a day that is celebrated throughout the Commonwealth. Seated in the Speaker's gallery are a number of guests who are here to hear the Queen's Commonwealth Day message.

First I want to extend my welcome and congratulations to the two students present who are winners of the Commonwealth essay competition. Several other members of the Canadian Club and the Royal Commonwealth Society are seated in the Speaker's gallery. I want to especially acknowledge the Canadian Club sponsorship of the essay competition.

In particular I am pleased to introduce Dr. D. Michael Jackson, the president of the Canadian Club of Regina, who was instrumental in the development of the Commonwealth Day essay contest for Saskatchewan. Mr. Jackson is accompanied by his wife, Helen. I would ask them to rise and ask members to welcome them to their Chamber here today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, seated in your gallery, and to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, is Ms. Robin Holmes. She is from Spiritwood High School, and she is the recipient of the \$500 for the Commonwealth Day essay contest. Seated with her is her father, Eric, and her teacher, Mr. Kurtis Hamel. Today they had a busy day. They toured the Legislative Assembly, then on to Government House. They had a luncheon that was hosted by His Honour the Hon. Dr. Gordon L. Barnhart, the Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan.

They're here to view the proceedings and later take in the celebration of Commonwealth Day where Robin will receive her cheque for \$500. So I'd ask all members to please welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you it is certainly my pleasure to introduce a couple of

very special guests as well. They're seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. I welcome Ms. Dayna Galger who lives within my constituency. Ms. Galger is a 17-year-old who attends Archbishop M.C. O'Neill High School here in Regina. Ms. Galger is here to receive an award for her essay "Enhancing Changes in Youth" as part of our Commonwealth Day recognition.

The essay question that was posed to the writers asked them to describe changes that their country could make that would enhance the lives of young people. I would like to highlight some of Ms. Galger's suggestions that were contained within the essay because they were good ideas — the need to address gang violence and prevalence, noting the need for our community- and school-based enriched opportunities and supports; needed support for continued advances in technology, specifically medical technology; concern around our consumeristic society; the need for environmental action; a challenge to create a more affordable and accessible post-secondary environment; the importance of addressing obesity and health concerns; a rationale for a more welcoming democratic environment for our youth; and the need to ensure that Canada has respectful relations within the international community.

I found Ms. Galger's essay, Mr. Speaker, to be engaging, mature, and it reaffirmed the optimism that I have for youth within our province and their contributions that they'll make to our country and to our Commonwealth.

Accompanying Ms. Galger is her very proud grandmother, Mrs. Audrey Warner, and I also recognize Mrs. Warner. And I'd like to bring to the attention of all within this Assembly that this is the daughter of Ms. Betty Lynn Galger, who we all know through member services who serves our Assembly.

I ask all members to provide a very warm welcome and to thank her for her role within our Commonwealth. Thank you.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to present a petition in support of the government's policy on green vehicles. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government ministers named in this petition to follow their own platform and government policies and trade in their Jeep Libertys for vehicles that are on SGI's 2008 list of recommended fuel-efficient vehicles.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray, [Mr. Speaker].

And the people who signed this petition are from the great community of North Battleford, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition on behalf of Saskatchewan seniors, and it includes the concerns over housing and the major impact on Saskatchewan's senior citizens that our growing economy and housing market have had. And what it's translated into is challenges for many renters, and that includes senior citizens. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to act as quickly as possible to expand affordable housing options for Saskatchewan's senior citizens.

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

Mr. Speaker, I so present.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition calling for wage equity for CBO [community-based organization] workers. We know this is a big issue when it comes to retaining workers in our communities who provide a very important service. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the development and implementation of a multi-year funding plan to ensure that CBO workers achieve wage equity with employees who perform work of equal value in government departments.

And these people come from communities throughout the province including Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, Dundurn, Wynyard, and Nipawin. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to present a petition on behalf of rural residents of Saskatchewan who again feel like they're being left behind by this government. And this has to do with respect to quality and affordable drinking water, Mr. Speaker. The prayer reads as such:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to financially assist the town of Duck Lake residents for the good of their health and safety due to the exorbitant water rates being forced on them by a government agency and that this government fulfills its commitment to rural Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is under signed by the very good residents of Duck Lake, Saskatchewan. I so present.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today to present a petition in support of a new Saskatchewan Hospital. Mr. Speaker, the petitioners note that Prairie North Regional Health Authority has indicated the construction of a new Saskatchewan Hospital at North Battleford is a priority and have committed resources to develop preliminary facility and site plans. Mr. Speaker, the petitioners ask:

... that the Legislative Assembly call upon the Government of Saskatchewan to immediately recommit funds and resources for the continued development and construction of a new Saskatchewan Hospital at North Battleford and provide the Prairie North Regional Health Authority with the authority necessary to complete this essential and much-needed project.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by residents of The Battlefords. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand and present a petition in support of expansion of the graduate retention program. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately expand the graduate retention program to include master's and Ph.D. graduates.

Mr. Speaker, the individuals who signed this petition are students from the University of Regina, students from the University of Saskatchewan, as well as a number of health care professionals in Saskatchewan who hold graduate degrees. I so present.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present petitions on behalf and in support of this government addressing the challenges with the education portion of property tax. This is needed by Saskatchewan families and business who are being hit especially hard by the implications of reassessment here in 2009. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to stop withholding and to provide significant, sustainable, long-term property tax relief to property owners by 2009 through significantly increasing

the provincial portion of education funding.

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

And these petitions, Mr. Speaker, are signed by the good folks and concerned citizens of North Battleford. I so present.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

International Women's Day

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, International Women's Day, recognized annually on March 8, is a time to pay tribute to past achievements and reflect on the future political struggles for better pay, working conditions, and fairness for women. There were many events that took place this past weekend to recognize this occasion, and I'd like to highlight a few of them that several of my colleagues and I were pleased to attend.

The Prairie Lily Feminist Society hosted an event which featured Dr. Lynda Haverstock as the keynote speaker. Lori Whiteman of Saskatchewan Sisters in Spirit gave a short presentation and was grateful that some of the proceeds from the evening were being provided to their grassroots organization that supports the families of missing and murdered women.

Grandmothers 4 Grandmothers Regina presented the Sisters for Sisters benefit concert featuring Brittany Kraus, Bev Zizzy, Louisiana Jane and the Zydeco Hurricane, and Little Miss Higgins. All proceeds raised are being donated to the Stephen Lewis Foundation.

The Humboldt and District Labour Council held an International Women's Day tea. Speaking to residents, I recognized the work of unions in advancing the status and economic security of women through better pay and benefits and also advocating on behalf of women.

Mr. Speaker, at a time of systematic ideological attacks on the rights and economic well-being of women by conservative-minded governments, New Democrats reaffirm our vision of a firm and caring society where women have equal access to societal rewards and receive support instead of barriers from their governments in securing a better quality of life for women and their loved ones. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Yorkton.

Kinsmen Telemiracle

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For 33 years the Kinsmen Telemiracle Foundation has raised money to improve the quality of life and the independence of hundreds of Saskatchewan residents. This weekend Saskatchewan people

helped Telemiracle raise more than \$3.8 million. All the money stays in Saskatchewan to assist people with special needs and those that require assistance in accessing medical treatment.

The annual telethon truly reflects the Saskatchewan spirit, Mr. Speaker. From Saturday night to Sunday afternoon, the phones rang non-stop as Saskatchewan people opened their hearts. It's a testament to the generosity of Saskatchewan people. In these trying economic times we still found the capacity to give to those that need it most. In the words of Telemiracle 33 chairman, Lorne Steinke, "This gives me a real different perspective on life and how people live it, and where people's hearts are."

Saskatchewan Crown corporations have been supporting Telemiracle since its inception, and I'm pleased to announce that both SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] and SaskTel made generous donations this year. SGI staff contributed 13,000 and the corporation matched that amount, making their total donation 26,000. SaskTel raised 3,000 from staff and 30,000 from the corporation.

Telemiracle is a very worthy cause and I'm proud of SGI and SaskTel's staff commitments to the people of Saskatchewan, and I'm proud the Crown corporations' commitment to the people of the province and their needs. I'm proud of the people of Saskatchewan for their answer to the call of those in need. I'm honoured to be a member of this government representing the people of this province, and I'm both honoured and proud of the Kinsmen of this province, and to be one of them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Women with Disabilities Luncheon

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My colleagues from Saskatoon Massey Place and Saskatoon Fairview and I had the pleasure of attending the ninth annual Women with Disabilities Luncheon on Friday, March 6. Held in recognition of International Women's Day, this luncheon celebrates the wonderful contributions women make, including those living with a disability.

This year's guest speaker, Tannis Hancock Stang, a teacher in the Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools system, inspired us all with her message of living a full and balanced life. Tannis sustained a spinal cord injury in her grade 11 year, causing quadriplegia. This did not stop her living her dreams or accomplishing her goals.

She's become a teacher and is very active in wheelchair racing. She firmly believes we have choices in life and it is what we do with those choices that determine where our lives lead us. It was indeed a very powerful message for all of us.

[13:45]

This year the winner of the Woman of Distinction award went to Bea Short. In 1960 Bea contracted polio, but with therapy

and persistence she achieved independence. She has three children and entered the workforce in 1972. She started driving in 1975. She continues to live in her own home and does her own shopping. She won't use a motorized scooter, as she firmly believes in fitness. It was noted that in all of this adversity, she was a role model for all of us.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating North Saskatchewan Independent Living Centre for hosting this very wonderful event. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Martensville.

National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing Comes to Martensville

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Thursday, March 5, I joined the Minister of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport at a very special announcement. Representatives from the Canadian Tire NASCAR [National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing] series, as well as representatives from NASCAR in the United States, were in Saskatoon to announce that NASCAR is coming to Saskatchewan.

On July 29, NASCAR will be making a pit stop at the Auto Clearing Motor Speedway, located just south of Martensville. The NASCAR Canadian Tire series makes stops in places like Montreal and Edmonton and now Martensville.

The Auto Clearing track is an excellent facility, and it's the result of hard work by so many dedicated people. Herman Hordal is in charge of marketing and business development for Auto Clearing Speedway, and Trent Seidel is the president of the Saskatoon Stock Car Racing Association. Both of these men and so many other volunteers have worked tirelessly to build and improve the track as well as to promote racing within Saskatchewan.

The mayor of Martensville, Giles Saulnier, has also been a great ambassador for Martensville, Saskatchewan and the track. He has found a sister city in Martinsville, Virginia, the home of Martinsville Speedway, a track that draws up to 80,000 spectators.

The benefits of having NASCAR at our Martensville track are many. Tourism will benefit as spectators are drawn to Saskatchewan for the race. New people will discover our fabulous province. Local businesses, hotels, and restaurants will see an economic benefit as people come to Saskatoon and Martensville.

I'm very proud of all the hard work of the folks on this team like Herm, Trent, and Giles, and everyone else involved in getting NASCAR to Saskatchewan. They dreamt big and made sure that their dreams are realized. I welcome everybody to Martensville this summer for the races.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Shevchenko Honoured on Ukrainian Literature Day

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker:

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

Gain knowledge, brothers! Think and read,
And to your neighbours' gifts pay heed,
Yet do not thus neglect your own . . .

Mr. Speaker, these are the words of Taras Shevchenko, Ukraine's most famous poet. Not only do we honour this poet and painter on March 9 but, Mr. Speaker, March 9 has also been proclaimed Ukrainian Literature Day in Canada. Taras Shevchenko was born on March 9, 1814 and died on March 10, 1861. Shevchenko, though born into serfdom and experiencing extreme hardship in his life, still produced some of Ukraine's most lasting poetry. His poetical source of inspiration was the peasant traditions of his boyhood. He chose to write of his love for the underprivileged, the peasant farmers, an independent Ukraine, and human rights for all.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday I attended a concert sponsored by the Ukrainian Canadian Congress to commemorate Shevchenko. All those in attendance were treated to fine music, poetry, songs, and speeches on Shevchenko's life. I want to especially thank the congress, but also the following who participated in the event: Cecilia Kachkowski, Larry Balion, Dibrova Choir, Katya Khartova, George Hupka, the Holosy Choir, Anna Patarova, and the Dibrova Mandolin Ensemble.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating all the participants who made it possible to remember Ukraine's poet and artist. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Prince Albert Citizen Inducted into Hall of Fame

Ms. Wilson: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday, as the world celebrated International Women's Day, the member from Prince Albert Carlton and I were able to take part in honouring one of Prince Albert's finest. Every year the Prince Albert Council of Women celebrates International Women's Day by hosting a reception to honour that year's inductee into the Prince Albert Hall of Fame.

Donna Strauss is the executive director of Family Futures in Prince Albert and is this year's very worthy inductee. Donna is an advocate for both young children and young parents. Through her job and other volunteer activities, she has impacted the lives of many teen mothers. One of her main focuses is to see improved and increased services in the Prince Albert area for children and their families.

What touched me the most about Donna was her humble acceptance of this award. She said, and I quote, "I have done so little compared to all there is that remains to be done." And while there is a lot more to be done for the children and families of Prince Albert, Donna is making a real difference each and every day.

So, Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join in with me today in congratulating Donna Strauss on receiving this incredible honour and thanking her for her investment in the lives of so many individuals in the Prince Albert area. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mennonite Leaders Honoured

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, on Friday I had the pleasure of being invited to attend a Mennonite Historical Society event at Valley Christian Academy in Osler. The event focused on the history of the Bergthaler Mennonites and paid tribute to Bishop Abram Buhler and Bishop John D. Reddekopp. Leonard Doell and Reverend Abe Buhler presented the remarkable history of the Bergthaler Mennonites, a people who came here to flee persecution and to have the freedom to live out their faith as pacifist Christians.

Reverend David Buhler paid tribute to his father, Abram Buhler, who led the Bergthaler Mennonites from 1949 until 1975. John D. Reddekopp, who served as bishop from 1975 until he retired in 1996, was honoured by his daughter, Frances Saggs, and grandson, Linsay Martens. Bishop Buhler and Bishop Reddekopp led their faith community with great distinction, and their legacy lives on.

Bishop Buhler helped establish the Warman Mennonite Special Care Home. Bishop Reddekopp founded Valley Christian Academy, a kindergarten to grade 12 school that educates hundreds of students each year. And both bishops had a profound impact on their communities.

While listening to their stories, I was reminded of our provincial motto: “from many peoples, strength.” Our province is great because of the strength and resilience of our people, people like Abram Buhler and John D. Reddekopp. I ask all members of the Assembly to join me in acknowledging the exceptional contribution of these bishops and the Bergthaler Mennonites in making Saskatchewan a better place. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Drinking Water

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, safe, clean, affordable drinking water is a fundamental right, but hundreds of people in Duck Lake are paying more for water these days, with bills increasing from \$32 a month to \$167 a month or more. Some are being forced to choose between clean drinking water or eating nutritious food, and some have already been threatened with loss of water service as of today, Mr. Speaker. Many seniors live on fixed incomes and are finding it difficult to find the extra money. Single-income families are also affected.

To the minister: does she believe that all Saskatchewan people and all Saskatchewan communities have a right to safe, clean, and affordable water?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am the minister in charge of SaskWater, and I believe that question pertains to SaskWater and my responsibilities, although I’m somewhat surprised by the question because in the example given, the contract that was entered into was done so by the previous government. We follow the parliamentary fashion of allowing those contracts that are entered into to be honoured, and indeed that’s what SaskPower has done . . . or I mean SaskWater has met with the community of Duck Lake on several occasions to ensure that they get safe, reliable drinking water.

SaskWater put forward a proposal. It was deemed unacceptable by the community of Duck Lake. That proposal was withdrawn and Duck Lake has decided to pursue services elsewhere.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Morin: — Abandoning responsibility for the rural residents of Duck Lake is going to be a very cold comfort to the people that are being cut off from their water services today. Anyways we’ll go on.

Mr. Speaker, in a statement on SaskWater website reads, “Communities offering quality water are able to retain and grow their populations; attract business and industry; expand community services; and assure resident health and well-being.”

Mr. Speaker, Duck Lake is a town of approximately 600 people. It certainly can’t retain and grow its population by jacking up people’s water bills, but that’s exactly what the town of Duck Lake has been forced to do since being ordered to build upgrades to its water system by the provincial government. The government that’s currently in place should be the ones to take responsibility.

Since the member from Batoche hasn’t been able to get action on this file, I’ll ask the question on his behalf. To the minister: what assistance is she prepared to offer Duck Lake families who are paying more for water?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, under our government we have set aside billions of dollars for infrastructure money. The federal government has a Building Canada fund which communities can access as well, and in part that money can be

used for water infrastructure projects.

I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that over the years there are . . . If the member's concerned about water quality in communities, there are many communities in this province that have well systems that are private wells.

The NDP [New Democratic Party] did a little bit of sampling on that on an ad hoc basis, but nothing really secure or letting people know exactly what their water was like. So this year we did free water testing for 120 wells in the town of Hepburn to ensure that they have quality water, and we're working with them to make sure that they're aware of those results.

Mr. Speaker, we are doing everything that is within our responsibility to allow communities know what their water is like and to assist them in making upgrades where necessary.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, the residents of Duck Lake would like an answer. The residents of Hepburn, I'll ask their questions on another occasion.

Mr. Speaker, communities are under enormous pressure these days, particularly in rural Saskatchewan. There are limits to what they can do with the property tax base they have. They've been waiting in vain for the education property tax relief the Sask Party has promised for years but has not delivered.

And water system upgrades are expensive. Communities are asking for help to provide clean, safe, and affordable water. At a time when the Sask Party is funding other infrastructure, why are Duck Lake residents facing such big increases in their water bills to pay for water system upgrades? Why isn't the Sask Party stepping up to the plate?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party government has made the assurance that the Crown corporations will provide the best possible service for all Saskatchewan residents. That's indeed what SaskWater has done in this instance. They've provided the service there and provided a contract that was done under the previous administration. That contract was honoured by this government. Costs have increased, and Duck Lake has chosen to look elsewhere for that provision of services. In Saskatchewan it can be done by the private sector or SaskWater comes in.

SaskWater operates on a commercial basis, on a break-even basis. They lost a little bit of money under the NDP every year and they continue to be in that break-even system. That's exactly what we're doing.

What we can do — and my hon. colleague has alluded to it — is provide infrastructure funds for communities to decide if it's

an important thing for their community to access those funds. And that has been done, more so than ever before by governments, including that one opposite. And that's how we address the issue, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Morin: — It's too bad that the two ministers that have gotten up to answer the questions so far wouldn't actually meet with the residents of Duck Lake when they were asked to do so.

Mr. Speaker, Duck Lake is building water system upgrades, and residents are faced with huge increases in the cost of water — increases that many of them simply can't afford.

But Duck Lake is not the only town facing concerns with the quality of its drinking water. Other small communities are faced with a similar challenge — how to replace water supply and treatment systems while keeping water bills affordable. As of March 6, there are more than 140 precautionary drinking water advisories and 54 emergency boil-water orders currently in effect in Saskatchewan, according to the Environment website.

Again to the minister: when will the Sask Party step up to the plate and provide communities like Duck Lake with the help they need to keep water safe, clean, available, and affordable?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, it's obvious that the member opposite isn't actually listening to the answers. This government has set aside billions of dollars for infrastructure. The federal government has money in place through Building Canada. We have given municipalities \$100 million in per capita funding to take care of projects that couldn't have otherwise been met. There is money on the table, Mr. Speaker, and communities are stepping up. Approximately 75 per cent of the 569 municipal waterworks have met the December 2008 upgrading timeline for compliance on turbidity standards.

And if we go back to the NDP's record on any of this, Mr. Speaker, I think Yens Pedersen, NDP leadership candidate, said it best about the NDP on any topic:

Does the NDP have a plan? Do we even know where we want to go? We have not identified any measurable goals . . . So it should come as no great surprise that we don't have a plan . . . This is a frustration shared by many in . . . [my] party . . .

We need some measurable goals, and we need a plan.

I couldn't agree more.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina

Coronation Park.

SaskTel Services

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Thursday the Deputy Premier was asked to confirm to the House that the government had in fact snapped off another piece of SaskTel and outsourced the teleconferencing calling. We received no answer, so I'll try today with the minister responsible here. Will the minister confirm today that this government has snapped off another chunk of SaskTel and outsourced conference calling?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:00]

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Hon. Deputy Premier did take notice of that question. I was prepared to answer that question today, and I will do so as part of my answer to the hon. critic.

Today the members raise a couple of important points about the outsourcing policy that has existed in SaskTel for a number of years. First policy is regarding communication, and certainly in communication we want to communicate as best we can with Saskatchewan companies, and that's what we're undertaking to do. I've met with SaskTel and asked them to ensure that they communicate with companies in the best way they can by providing that information on the website and using other best practices such as requests for qualifications because that's where we want to go with this particular instance.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Coronation Park.

Mr. Trew: — Well, Mr. Speaker, it would be nice to get an answer. We know that the conference calling function is being outsourced. We know that. What we don't know is the name of the company that it's being outsourced to.

In January we asked for the name of the company and nobody had any idea who it was. Last Thursday the Deputy Premier was asked for the name of the company, and he danced around the question. Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan, the very shareholders of SaskTel, have every right to know. It's a simple question that deserves a straightforward answer. To the minister: will he drop the secrecy and tell the people of Saskatchewan the name of the company that the conference calling function has been outsourced to?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that the hon. member asked that question because it's time that we had a debate on this right now. And I hope he indulges the Leader of

the Opposition, that we can continue through the whole question period because, Mr. Speaker, that's how important SaskTel is to this government and to this province.

SaskTel is an innovation company. Do you know what innovation companies do, Mr. Speaker? They outsource because things become routine in innovation companies. So they outsource what becomes routine so they can reinvest those savings into innovative aspects. That's what we're doing in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — That's what the good people at SaskTel are doing — the managers and the board of directors. And, Mr. Speaker, I may offer, that's where that government got into trouble when they started directing the corporation into things that they shouldn't have been into, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Coronation Park.

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, it's not much of a debate when you get nothing but spin from the government. The Sask Party is weakening SaskTel by snapping off pieces one at a time.

Mr. Speaker, lets talk about DirectWest, which has always been a profitable company. Yet we learned this government has decided to sell off EZ Finder phone books, a piece of DirectWest. Whenever the NDP disposed of an asset, an independent business analysis was done.

To the minister: did the Sask Party government have an independent analysis done before they chose to chunk off the EZ Finder phone books portion of DirectWest, or did they make this decision all on their own?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, I want to keep talking about the outsourcing policy because we haven't finished that debate. But I will answer the member's question, opposite.

EZ Finder, the Alberta phone book portion of DirectWest Canada, has been losing money for a number of years. Yes, it was one of those operations by the previous government that lost money year after year, where money had to be diverted from other profitable sources within SaskTel to subsidize that company. An offer was made to SaskTel's board of directors and an offer was accepted. That's good news for people in Saskatchewan because we no longer have to subsidize that operation.

Again what we will do in SaskTel and in Saskatchewan is the Sask-first policy, where we will use that money in Saskatchewan to ensure that we provide that service across the province. That's what this government's commitment has done.

That's what we've been doing in spades. And that's why people across this province are very pleased with what this government's doing.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Coronation Park.

Mr. Trew: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the lack of an independent analysis demonstrates a lack of transparency and, frankly, responsible management on the part of the Sask Party.

Mr. Speaker, EZ Finder phone books is a portion of DirectWest's expansion division and a piece of SaskTel, and it was sold to Canpages. And once again, the people of Saskatchewan, the shareholders of SaskTel, left absolutely in the dark as to the process that was used.

To the minister: the people of Saskatchewan have a right to know the buyer of a piece of their company, how the buyer was chosen. Was the sale an open process? Was it publicly tendered? Or was it simply by invitation only?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, a news release was issued. All kinds of buyers were sought. But what happens when you have a company that's losing money? It's not very interesting to many corporations. There were many . . . Companies that do a similar business were consulted. Canpages came forward with an option, and we felt it was necessary to stop the bleeding, stop the red ink, stop what was started under that government. And we stopped that, and we communicated that well to Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, what's more important . . . And we have the SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] convention coming up in Saskatchewan. One year ago at my first SARM convention people in Saskatchewan said, what is SaskTel doing for rural Saskatchewan? We need more Internet service. We need more cellular service. For 17 years the NDP did nothing. What did the Saskatchewan Party government do? What did the Saskatchewan Party do? We provided that service, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we provided that service. And that's what we're doing, and that's what we'll continue to do.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Coronation Park.

SaskTel's Investments

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, I've seen tops with less spin than that minister just tried. At the same time this government was selling a piece of SaskTel's phone directory service off, they were acquiring almost \$4 million worth of preferred shares in another phone directory company — Canadian Phone Directories holdings Inc. The holding company appears to be

directly related to Canpages.

To the minister: directly or indirectly, does SaskTel now own preferred shares in Canpages, the company that bought EZ pages phone books?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, that's indeed the case. This wasn't a totally cash deal. It was a situation where when you have a money-losing company — and the members opposite will know all about entering into many of those — that's what the situation was. You have to get creative with the financing, and that's what they did. Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Speaker . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, in this particular instance, this company was scheduled to lose \$13.4 million because of the actions of the previous government, Mr. Speaker. That did not sit well with me; that did not sit well with this government, Mr. Speaker. Any dollar that we can recoup, any dollar that we can save in this instance for the people of Saskatchewan, for the shareholders of SaskTel, that's indeed what we will do. That's why I tasked the board of directors and senior management to come up with any deal possible to ensure that we have the taxpayers of Saskatchewan's best interests in mind. That's what we did, Mr. Speaker, and we saved the taxpayers some money in this instance.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The last time this group of men and women in government got creative with the financing, this province ended up \$16 billion in debt.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, this is all very, very interesting. The very same day that SaskTel announces publicly the sale of EZ Finder phone books, the government gives authorization to SaskTel to acquire almost \$4 million, \$3.7 million of preferred shares in Canadian Phone Directories holding company which is, Mr. Speaker, essentially the same company — Canpages.

So my question to the minister: was one of the conditions of the sale of EZ Finder phone books that the province acquire this \$4 million, or \$3.7 million of preferred shares?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, if nothing was done in this instance, this company would have lost \$13.4 million — the entire investment that was made, Mr. Speaker. This is exactly, exactly the situation. As I explained in the previous question, we ensure that we save every dollar we can for Saskatchewan residents, whether they're in a bad deal or not. We've taken over that bad deal that was entered into. And yes, we've asked for any type of funding arrangement that would benefit the Saskatchewan people, and that was creative, yes, Mr. Speaker.

You know what else was creative, Mr. Speaker? When it comes to financing budgets in Saskatchewan, when it comes to the debt in Saskatchewan, paying off 40 per cent in the first year — that's creative.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — That opposition said it couldn't be done. They lack that creativity. And, Mr. Speaker, that is why they are sitting there and that's why they will sit there for a very long time.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, when the sale of EZ Finder phone books was announced to the people of Saskatchewan, the shareholders of SaskTel, the public announcement said it was for "an undisclosed amount." Well, now we know, Mr. Speaker, without public announcement that the people of Saskatchewan now have preferred shares in Canpages, the company that bought EZ Finder phone books. What we don't know is what percentage of the sale is reflected in those preferred shares, Mr. Speaker.

And so to the minister: will he just drop the secrecy, be open with this legislature and the people of Saskatchewan, and tell us today, did you receive any cash for the sale of EZ Finder phone books? Or was the sale entirely these preferred shares which now you have the government and the people of Saskatchewan investing in?

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Well I am happy to provide the answer for the member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition. There was cash and there was shares involved; it was a combination. And I'm happy to say that because every dollar in cash, every dollar in those shares, when they are liquidated, will save money for Saskatchewan people. That the times of losing \$13.4 million we all know about — that tapped into, the dot-coms that the members opposite . . . Retx, and others like that — we all know that they lost substantial amounts of money for Saskatchewan people. We don't even have to touch the Navigata story, Mr. Speaker.

What we're doing today here is making the best out of a bad situation that was entered into by those members opposite and ensuring that we get as many dollars as we can back for

Saskatchewan shareholders, the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, mine was a very direct question to which we did not receive an answer. The question is how much, how much in cash did the shareholders of SaskTel, the people of Saskatchewan get for EZ Finder phone book or how much in preferred shares? Why won't the minister just answer the question? They were very quick to put out a news release telling us that they had sold this asset. Why, Mr. Speaker, won't they tell us how much they received for it and how it's been received?

This is an example, Mr. Speaker, one more example of the secrecy and spin that we get from this government and the complete lack of transparency. We discover in January that they've created a P3 Secretariat. Didn't announce that. We discover they've cut funding for the First Nations University of Canada. We didn't know about that. We find out find now they've outsourced conference calling. We find out now, without announcement from this government, that in fact they are outsourcing the email services of Tel. What's next, Mr. Speaker?

My question is not to the minister. My question is to the Premier: when will he change this pattern of spin and secrecy and become transparent to the people of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, I was very clear in my previous answer. We had a decision to make. We could write off \$13.4 million because of a losing corporation that that government entered into or we could try to preserve as much capital as possible. We entered into a cash and share deal. Indeed we did, Mr. Speaker.

That was in the best interest and that decision was made at the board level and by senior management, the same senior managers for the most part — the obvious examples were removed — but for the most part that were there under the NDP government. Those are the very best people that made that decision. They made that decision, and if the members opposite know of somebody better, then they should tell me about that, that's for sure.

[14:15]

Mr. Speaker, the outsourcing, the outsourcing debate is something that we have to have here in this legislature, Mr. Speaker, because if the members opposite, if the Leader of the Opposition opposite is telling me that he is against outsourcing, then he has to look in the face of every small-, medium-, and large-sized business in this province because that's what they do, Mr. Speaker. They provide those services the best they can. They take out services and outsource them. That's what . . .

The Speaker: — Minister's time has elapsed. I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Transparency in Government

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Here is a government that will not address the concerns of the residents of Duck Lake which are brought to this legislature. They will not answer one question in question period.

Now, Mr. Speaker, they like to be the government that attaches first to everything. I have a little list here: ForestFirst, *Children First*, patient-first, Sask-first. What comes last with this government, Mr. Speaker, is transparency. What's coming first now is spin and secrecy.

So again to the Premier: will he try something new? Will he put transparency first?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the people of the province of Saskatchewan should be able to expect transparency from their government. I think they should be able to expect to know when transactions have occurred in the Crown corporations, Mr. Speaker, and certainly that's the case. There's a public policy process in place we've inherited from the previous administration on significant transactions. We follow that same process today. There's obviously processes in this Legislative Assembly with respect to transparency. We're also following that, Mr. Speaker.

What's very transparent is that we've reduced the debt of this province by 40 per cent in the first full budget year of the government. What is transparent is that we have moved like no other government in the history of this province to fund infrastructure, Mr. Speaker. What is transparent is that we've provided the largest single-year income tax break for the people of the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. What is also clear is the days of six years of cover-up under SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company] are over, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — What is also clear is that the days of losing of millions of taxpayers' money on out-of-province investments in the Crowns is over. We're investing in building in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education, Deputy Premier.

Improvements to Education Infrastructure

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last month the Premier announced government's plan to address the

potential economic downturn by advancing \$500 million from the ready-for-growth initiative. Mr. Speaker, on February 9 I visited Balfour Collegiate in Regina to announce what this economic booster shot would mean for Saskatchewan schools.

Nearly \$142 million is being advanced so that projects planned for the next few years can get started now. This means, Mr. Speaker, this means that the 18 major capital projects we announced for 15 communities across the province last year will be jump-started with this financial boost.

Getting a head start with the design may make the difference of starting construction this summer or next spring, instead of late in 2010. This means projects such as those in Hafford, Elrose, and St. Mary's in Saskatoon will be fully realized sooner than earlier planned.

Twenty-three million dollars of the 141.7 million is being moved forward to this year for school maintenance projects. For schools this means improvements that may not have been completed until late this year or into 2010, they may now be finished before fall.

Mr. Speaker, this means seven school will be more accessible to people with disabilities; 10 schools will have new or improved relocatable classrooms that respond to the ebb and flow of student population; 31 schools will be renovated to improve learning environments and expand services such as daycare spaces in two Saskatoon schools; and 44 schools will have their roofs repaired. The benefits are far reaching and will improve learning environments for over 35,000 students enrolled at 102 schools in 64 communities.

Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to be joined at this announcement by Mr. Roy Challis, president of the Saskatchewan School Boards Association. President Challis said, and I quote, we have consistently vocalized the view that in many areas new schools are desperately needed, and that many of the 730 schools in which our children and youth live, learn, and grow are in dire need of attention. We are extremely pleased that the government has listened and demonstrated their commitment to including the needs of Saskatchewan's young people in their stimulus/infrastructure plans. The money will indeed be put to good use in communities across the province, Mr. Speaker.

This funding is part of government's effort to ensure that any signs of economic doom and gloom will not affect our progress. Our education, community, and business partners can be confident that government is committed to seeing these projects through to completion.

We recognize the importance of schools that are in good condition, accessible, and responsive to the needs of students, teachers, and the community. We also recognize how these projects stimulate local economies and build pride in our communities. With this record capital funding, we are securing the future of our youth and our communities by investing in them today. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the minister for providing the brief of his minister's statement before session started here today.

Certainly any chance the opposition and this critic has to provide the opportunity to impress upon this government and to the people of Saskatchewan the importance of investing in our education infrastructure deficit, we'll take that opportunity.

I think it's noteworthy to mention right now, Mr. Speaker, that it's argued that we have close to \$2 billion in deficit in our infrastructure here right now, Mr. Speaker. We have construction inflation that has been a very challenging and concerning environment. If that's 15 or it's 20 per cent, for example, Mr. Speaker, we're accruing that deficit at \$400,000 a year. So \$140 million, yes, let's welcome those dollars to the education sector. Certainly we have roofs to fix and new dollars that are needed. But let's also make sure that we understand those in the context of how big our deficit is and how big that deficit's growing. So we want to see continued progress on this file, Mr. Speaker.

We look forward to having the opportunity this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, in estimates, to detail this spending a little bit more. And I do note that of the 18 major capital projects, 11 of those were ones that were already announced in the spring budget, specifically within spring spending. So the only reason those must be reappearing, Mr. Speaker, are cost overrun and new estimates that are far beyond what was initially in place. So again we have questions around cost overrun and construction inflation, Mr. Speaker.

I know the minister spoke here that the reason for this announcement was this big booster shot, as he puts it. Well, Mr. Speaker, this side of the House is interested in what sort of an analysis has been put forward by his ministry to be able to detail what this actually means in terms of jobs and how it's going to be put forward. This announcement is two months early for many of those other projects that already were committed to next year. I don't believe, Mr. Speaker, that that brings these projects online in a significantly more expedient fashion. However, the minister might be able to clarify that in estimates.

We do, Mr. Speaker, articulated by our Finance critic, have significant concerns on this side of the House when we see a booster shot that could quite possibly simply be painting a picture of revenue concerns for next year — taking dollars that were supposed to be committed next year, spending them this year out of our insurance fund, and next year paints a picture that there might be some concerns around revenue.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the proof in the pudding will be what's put forward in the education budget that's going to be released here in a mere couple of weeks, Mr. Speaker. And if we see an incredibly bold and continued push by this minister and this ministry, at that point we'll have good words to share.

At this point, we're concerned why spending that was supposed to occur next year is happening now; how concerned should Saskatchewan people . . . about our revenues next year. And let's continue to move the line on this file because the schools and the children in our province deserve it, Mr. Speaker. Thank

you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

MESSAGE FROM HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

The Speaker: — Members, I would invite members and the guests who have joined us this afternoon to rise for a message from Her Majesty the Queen, Head of the Commonwealth.

This year the Commonwealth commemorates its foundation sixty years ago. The London Declaration of 1949 was the start of a new era in which our member countries committed themselves to work together, in partnership and as equals, towards a shared future.

We can rightly celebrate the fact that the founding members' vision of the future has become a reality. The Commonwealth has evolved out of all recognition from its beginning. It has helped give birth to modern nations, and the eight original countries have become fifty-three. We are now home to nearly two billion people: a third of the world's population. Across continents and oceans, we have come to represent all the rich diversity of humankind.

Yet despite its size and scale, the Commonwealth to me has been sustained during all this change by the continuity of our mutual values and goals. Our beliefs in freedom, democracy and human rights; equality and equity; development and prosperity mean as much today as they did more than half a century ago.

These values come from a common responsibility exercised by our governments and peoples. It is this which makes the Commonwealth a family of nations and peoples, at ease with being together. As a result, I believe we are inspired to do our best to meet people's most pressing needs, and to develop a truly global perspective. That is why the modern Commonwealth has stood the test of time.

But as we reflect upon our long association, we should recognize the challenges that lie ahead. Nearly one billion people of today's Commonwealth are under 25 years of age. These are the people that this association must continue to serve in the future. It is they who can help shape the Commonwealth of today, and whose children will inherit the Commonwealth of tomorrow. To help them make the best of their opportunities, our young men and women therefore need the opportunity to become active and responsible members of the communities in which they live. I am pleased that the Commonwealth recognizes this, and is determined to continue to put young people at its centre.

The call that brought the Commonwealth together in 1949 remains the same today. Then we joined together in a collective spirit — built on lasting principles, wisdom, energy and creativity — to meet the great tasks of our times. As the Commonwealth celebrates its sixtieth birthday, its governments, communities and we as

individuals should welcome that achievement. Together, we should continue to work hard to deal with today's challenges so that the young people of today's Commonwealth can realize their aspirations. In that way we can look to the future with confidence.

Elizabeth R

Please be seated.

Again I want to extend a special thank you to the Canadian Club and members of the Royal Commonwealth Society who have joined us today for this message from Her Majesty, and our essay winners. And I extend an invitation to members of the Chamber, to our guests who have joined us in the gallery, and to legislative staff to join the Speaker and his staff in the Speaker's office, room 129, at your leisure for cake and tea following the business of the Assembly.

TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

The Speaker: — Also I would like to lay on the Table before orders of the day that, pursuant to section 67 of *The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, 2007*, I hereby inform the Assembly of the membership of the Board of Internal Economy effective January 28, 2009: the Hon. Don Toth, Chair, Speaker; the Hon. Dan D'Autremont, Executive Council representative; the Hon. Christine Tell, Executive Council representative; Ms. Doreen Eagles, MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly], government caucus representative; Mr. Glen Hart, MLA, government caucus representative; Mr. Len Taylor, MLA, opposition caucus representative; Mr. Kevin Yates, MLA, opposition caucus representative. Signed by the Lieutenant Governor, Dr. Gordon Barnhart.

I as well lay on the Table the report of the Information and Privacy Commissioner regarding *The Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2008*, Bill No. 72.

[14:30]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

**Bill No. 79 — *The Education Amendment Act, 2009*
(No. 2)/Loi n° 2 de 2009 modifiant la Loi de 1995
sur l'éducation**

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of *The Education Amendment Act, 2009* (No. 2). Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce changes that lengthen the time a school may be designated as a school of opportunity from two years to three years. This change will better ensure the impact of the changing Saskatchewan economy can be more fully realized in the community before the effect on school enrolments is assessed.

Mr. Speaker, this government recognizes that schools are

important to rural communities when there are opportunities for economic growth on the horizon. As members know, the schools of opportunity designation was introduced last year to make sure that the potential for future economic growth is considered before changes are made to a school.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that we also worked with education sector partners to develop a new process for reviewing schools in school districts. The amendments to the school review process have lengthened the legislative consultation and review process, more fully engaged the community in the review process, and formalized public communication as the school review progresses.

Education partners raised no objections when they were again consulted on the lengthening of time a school may be designated as a school of opportunity to three years. In the event that submissions are received prior to enactment of the change to the term, a transitional provision has been included in the amendments.

Mr. Speaker, because of this change to schools of opportunity, communities will have additional time to assess the potential for economic and population growth. This additional time also provides a measure of security for our students, families, and communities. I am pleased to move therefore that *The Education Amendment Act, 2009* (No. 2) be now read a second time.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Minister of Education has moved second reading of Bill No. 79, *The Education Amendment Act, 2009*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion? I recognize the member from The Battlefords.

Ms. Atkinson: — With permission to introduce a guest, with leave.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In your gallery today is someone who has recently, over a year ago, moved to Saskatchewan from France. His name is Alfons Shoshi. He came here under the immigrant nominee program, skilled worker category, and he's now a permanent resident of Canada. He loves our weather. He loves the cold weather, and he comes from Nice, Mr. Speaker, which is in the warm part of France, the French Mediterranean. I would ask all of my colleagues to welcome Mr. Shoshi to our legislature and welcome him to Saskatchewan and Canada.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 79 — *The Education Amendment Act, 2009*
(No. 2)/Loi n° 2 de 2009 modifiant la Loi de 1995
sur l'éducation
(continued)

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased today to rise on Bill No. 79, *An Act to amend The Education Act, 1995* at second reading. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the explanation provided over the last couple of minutes by the Minister of Education, Mr. Speaker, in regards to the legislation in front of us. I have just a few comments today in response, Mr. Speaker. However I think that there should be, for the record, some description, some explanation in my remarks, Mr. Speaker, as to what the Bill itself actually says.

So, Mr. Speaker, I refer to some explanatory notes provided by the ministry, Mr. Speaker, with regards to the Act, and I will quote from that right now, Mr. Speaker:

A school of opportunity may be designated by the Minister for up to three years during which time the school would remain open as the community implements its plan to increase enrolments.

In late 2008, Cabinet directed that schools of opportunity should be allowed to continue for an additional year (from two to three years) so that the impacts of the changing Saskatchewan economy could be more fully realized in the community before the impact on school enrolments is assessed. The increase to three years will allow the community that additional year.

Given that some submissions to designate a school as a school of opportunity may be received prior to the extended period of three years being enacted, the ability of the Minister to extend the period from two to three years for these submissions is required.

That's the explanation, Mr. Speaker, provided by the ministry. I do find it interesting, Mr. Speaker, that the ministry — and more importantly the minister — has chosen to bring forward a new Bill, Bill No. 79 as opposed to amending in committee, Mr. Speaker, *The Education Amendment Act* which is currently before this place. Mr. Speaker, an expansion of this limit by a year, Mr. Speaker, could've been done and could've been done much more quickly, Mr. Speaker, on the Bill that's currently in front of the House, instead of introducing this brand new piece of legislation.

So, Mr. Speaker, the only reason that I can think of as to why the government would want to introduce a new Bill, as opposed to amending a Bill in front of the House, Mr. Speaker, is to bring to the attention of the people who would be interested in this, Mr. Speaker, the fact that this change is being brought forward, Mr. Speaker. An amendment, as practical as that might be, does not highlight the change as much as an independent Bill, Mr. Speaker.

Therefore, given that, what the government is doing with this Bill is simply highlighting a matter they could do in another

way, Mr. Speaker, simply tells me that this Bill in front of us today is no more than a political exercise, Mr. Speaker. A political exercise that indeed is meant to alert the public to a direction that the government wants to take, without taking into account sort of the practical we-can-do-this-more-quickly-another-way method of achieving the same goals.

Mr. Speaker, so given that the government has chosen to take matters in a new Bill as opposed to an amendment, Mr. Speaker, they are in fact almost setting this up to take longer than would be practical, Mr. Speaker. A new Bill doesn't necessarily get passed in this sitting of the legislature, Mr. Speaker. An amendment to the existing Bill, Mr. Speaker, has a better chance of being passed in this sitting, Mr. Speaker. And therefore I think that the government has to take that criticism into account when they are speaking to their stakeholders, Mr. Speaker, about why they wish to pursue this matter.

The other question that this legislation raises, Mr. Speaker — since it's not an amendment to an existing Bill, but rather a new Bill, Mr. Speaker — the question that it begs to be asked is, what's the long-term strategy here? Mr. Speaker, an amendment, you'd easily see that as being dealing with current circumstances. A Bill, Mr. Speaker, greatly expands what one would think of as the reasons behind why the Bill is being brought forward in this way or why this change is being brought forward in this way. So there must be a long-term strategy, Mr. Speaker. Or if there isn't, why isn't there a longer term strategy here, Mr. Speaker?

For example, you know, the question that the stakeholders are probably asking is, how do you put a time frame on an opportunity? Why do you put a time frame on an opportunity, Mr. Speaker? If it's timely to support communities that are growing, why is it two or three years? That's the bottom line, Mr. Speaker. Why isn't it another number? Why isn't it an infinite number, Mr. Speaker?

If a community is growing or a community can prove that it's growing, why doesn't the legislation take that into account? Certainly, Mr. Speaker, that's something that the Bill — a stand-alone Bill — should take into account. As opposed to what the government, as I said earlier, could be doing, amending a Bill to provide some additional opportunity, especially to some communities that are maybe in this process of dealing with school of opportunity and more importantly, Mr. Speaker, economic growth within that community. So of course, Mr. Speaker, some communities are going to ask that simple question and also the question about why limit this period of time.

So, Mr. Speaker, although the minister indicated in his remarks that they have consulted with stakeholders, Mr. Speaker, and stakeholders are generally supportive of this legislation, I don't believe, Mr. Speaker, that all the information was on the table when stakeholders were discussing this explanation that the minister brought forward.

We have seen, as a result of question period in the last few days, that this government is lacking in transparency in the way in which they manage the information coming out of this place. Mr. Speaker, because there are other ways of doing the same thing, because there are needs to examine long-term plans —

not only of this ministry, Mr. Speaker, but of all activities of this government, Mr. Speaker — the opposition is going to have to spend a considerable amount of time explaining all of the circumstances to the stakeholders, Mr. Speaker, and getting a reaction back from the stakeholders that is specific to having access to all the information, not just the pieces that the government wishes to release.

So, Mr. Speaker, at this time, knowing that we have a considerable amount of work to do, and numerous members whose ridings may contain schools that could be considered schools of opportunity, Mr. Speaker, I would move that debate on Bill No. 79, *An Act to amend The Education Act, 1995* be now adjourned.

The Speaker: — The member from The Battlefords has moved adjournment of debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In order to facilitate the standing committees on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice, as well as Human Services, I move that this House do now adjourn.

The Speaker: — Before placing the motion, just a reminder again to invite members and legislative staff to join the Speaker for tea. If you'd like tea and cake and extend a congratulations to our essay winners for the Commonwealth Day, join us in room 129.

The Government House Leader has moved that this House to now adjourn in order to facilitate the work of committees. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried. This Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 14:43.]

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