



FOURTH SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

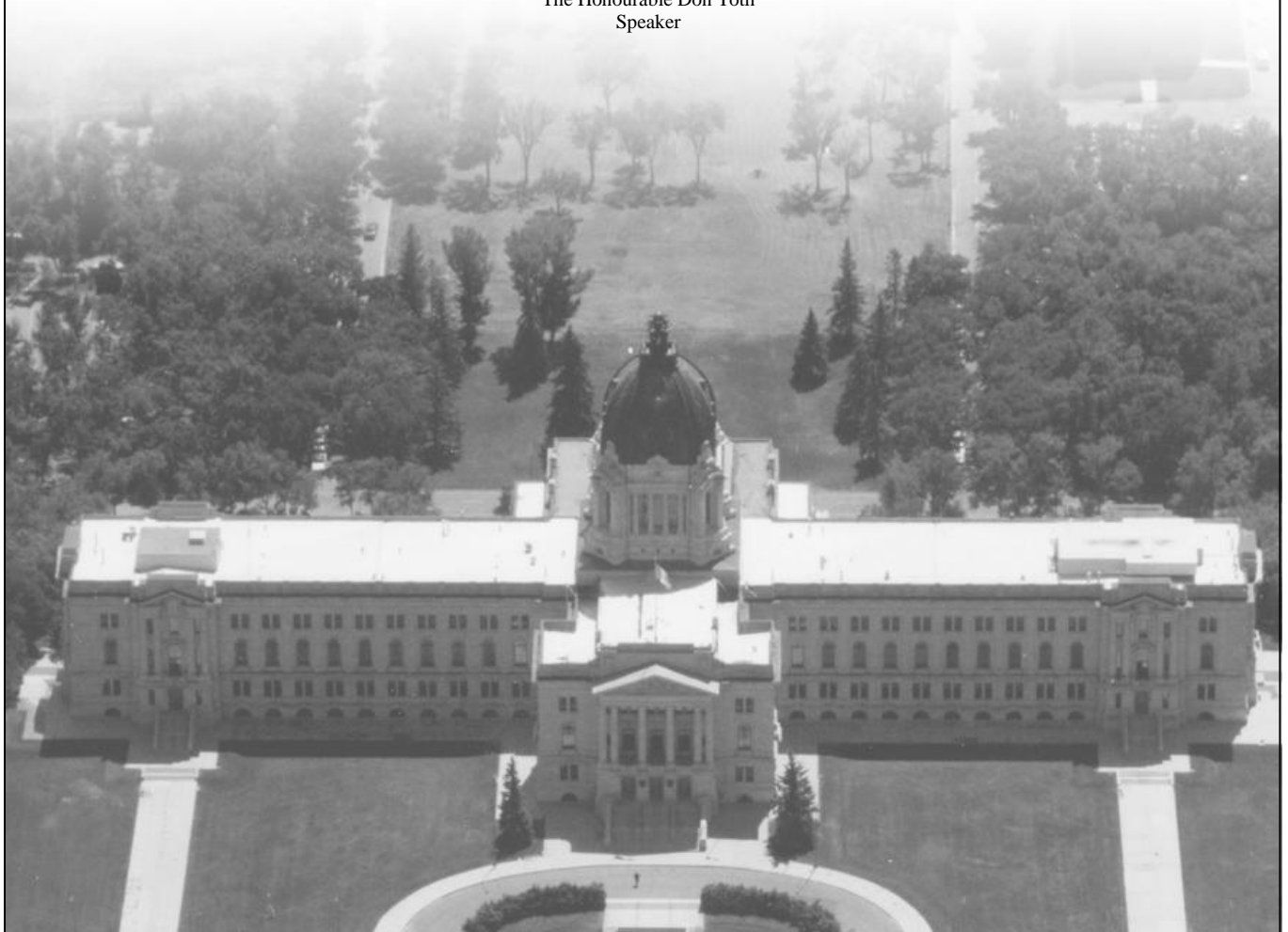
of the

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 — Dwain Lingenfelter

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Belanger, Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornerud, Hon. Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
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Bradshaw, Fred	SP	Carrot River Valley
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Morin, Sandra	NDP	Regina Walsh Acres
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Norris, Hon. Rob	SP	Saskatoon Greystone
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Tell, Christine	SP	Regina Wascana Plains
Toth, Hon. Don	SP	Moosomin
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Wall, Hon. Brad	SP	Swift Current
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Wilson, Nadine	SP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Wotherspoon, Trent	NDP	Regina Rosemont
Wyant, Gordon	SP	Saskatoon Northwest
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour for me to be able to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly, and to our guests, a hero of the Jeux Canada Games, the Winter Games, Mr. Speaker.

Her name is Aerial Arthur, and she is from the constituency of Saskatoon Sutherland. Her MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] will be talking about her in a little bit. She's joined by her parents, Shelley and Scott, also obviously from Saskatoon Sutherland, Mr. Speaker. And she was a gold medallist in terms of her individual efforts; as well, she earned team gold, Mr. Speaker. She has big dreams as well for the future, and obviously the chance of those dreams coming true look pretty good from this perspective and from her vantage point today.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that we had a chance to meet a little bit earlier on and she gave me one of her targets, one of her winning targets. And to say that it was an absolute bull's eye is an underestimation, an underdescription of exactly what that target looked like. So we're all very, very proud of her as a great Saskatchewan young athlete. We want to wish her the best, and we want to welcome her and her parents to their Legislative Assembly today.

And, Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet, in the west gallery is a long-time friend who is visiting us from afar. I see Margo Weir has joined us in the gallery. Not long ago her not-quite-as-good half, John Weir, joined us, and we had the chance to say hello to him. And Margo is a friend from a number of years back — not too many years back. And we just want to tell her how great it is to see her even from this distance, and maybe we'll get a chance to talk a little bit later on. We want to welcome her to this Legislative Assembly as well, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to join with the Premier and welcome Aerial and her family here to the legislature. It's young people like Aerial that really leaves us with the comfort that Saskatchewan is in good hands and the future of Saskatchewan is in good hands. And we wish her well in future endeavours, whether it be sports or academic, whatever she chooses. And also a congratulations on the gold medals at the Jeux Canada Games.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health, the member from Indian Head-Milestone.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly, I

want to introduce 35 students from McLean School. They're grade 5 and 8 students. They're seated in the west gallery. Mr. Speaker, their teacher is Alexis Zerr and their chaperone is Crystal Hrbachek, Mr. Speaker. They've come in from McLean, which is not too terribly far out of the city of course down the No. 1 Highway, to see the proceedings. I look forward to meeting with them after and hopefully a picture on the steps, Mr. Speaker.

I understand that later on this evening, they're putting on a play in their school. It's called *A Nose for the News*, Mr. Speaker. I think that's very fitting that they would be in this place today, and then doing the play later on this evening. So, Mr. Speaker, I would like all members of the Assembly to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Estevan.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all members of this Assembly, I'd like to introduce someone that's very special in my life. Seated in your gallery is my sister Edna, and she is no stranger to this gallery. But I must say, Mr. Speaker, that it's often said that you can't choose relatives, but even if you could, she would be number one on my list. I'd like all members to join me in welcoming Edna to her legislature.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the legislature, 17 grade 12 students from Sheldon Williams Collegiate who are in the east gallery. It's a law 30 class that's taught by Helen Sukovieff and they're also accompanied by a chaperone, Brennen Schmidt. And so we welcome them here to this legislature. I ask all members to welcome them.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed on behalf of residents that wish to bring to the government's attention a very serious matter, that is the issue of facing ever-increasing rents that are simply making life in Saskatchewan unaffordable.

Mr. Speaker, the petition also speaks to the issue that a majority of Canadians now live in provinces with rent control guidelines, including Manitoba, British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec, and Prince Edward Island. Mr. Speaker, the petition also touches on the public policy paper, *Increasing the Affordability of Rental Housing in Canada*, which calls for both incentives for building new rental properties and instituting rent controls. The authors say, and I quote, "The greatest attraction of second-generation rent control is the protection it offers sitting tenants against the severe deterioration of housing affordability caused by high rent increases — in effect, it protects against economic eviction." And, Mr. Speaker, the prayer reads:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: to cause the government to immediately enact rent control legislation that protects Saskatchewan tenants from unreasonable increases in rent.

Mr. Speaker, these petitions are signed on behalf of residents in La Ronge, Radville, Weyburn, Regina, Yorkton, Veregin, Saskatoon, Manor, Maple Creek, Rouleau, and Stanley Mission. I so present.

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

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today again with a petition in support of maintaining quality health care services:

And the petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Saskatchewan humbly showeth: that the Government of Saskatchewan ought to recognize the need for timely access to comprehensive and quality health care services for all communities within the province, including Wakaw and surrounding areas, and that the disruption of emergency services and in-patient services at Wakaw Hospital will not serve the needs of the residents of this community or the surrounding area; and

That the cuts in access to timely and accurate diagnostic and laboratory services within the community of Wakaw and the surrounding area will also not serve the needs of the residents.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to commit to maintain quality health care services through the commitment of necessary funding to address critical retention and recruitment issues.

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

The signatures on these petitions, Mr. Speaker, are from Saskatoon, Wakaw, Vanscoy, Waldheim, and Cudworth. I so present.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to present a petition on behalf of my constituents who live in the neighbourhood of Hampton Village. And it's about the need for a new school for their children:

We, the undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan, wish to bring to your attention the following: that Hampton Village is a rapidly growing community in Saskatoon with many young families; that Hampton Village residents pay a significant amount of taxes including education property taxes; that children in Hampton Village deserve to be able to attend school in their own community instead of travelling to neighbouring communities to attend schools that are typically already reaching capacity.

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan cause the provincial government to devote the necessary resources for the construction of an elementary school in Hampton Village so that children in this rapidly growing neighbourhood in Saskatoon can attend school in their own community.

Mr. Speaker, the individuals who signed this petition are residents of Hampton Village. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Prince Albert Northcote.

Mr. Furber: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise again today and present a petition in support of potash royalty review because, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people are the owners of a 1,000-year strategic resource; the owners of this resource benefit and deserve the maximum possible benefit on the return of this resource; and also that there is a new norm for potash in the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, the prayer reads:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: to cause the government to begin a comprehensive, transparent, and public review of Saskatchewan's potash royalty system with a view to maximizing the return from this strategic resource for its owners, the people of Saskatchewan, who wish to use these additional potash royalty revenues for needed investments in health care, child care, education, affordable housing, infrastructure, and other social programs, as well as public initiatives such as debt repayment.

Mr. Speaker, today's petition is signed by good folks from Churchbridge and Saskatoon. I so present.

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

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise yet again today to present a petition on restoring funding equity to Regina Catholic schools. Regina Catholic schools received \$275 less per pupil than Regina public schools, amounting to a funding inequity of \$2.7 million in total. That funding inequity places program delivery and staffing levels at risk and we're already seeing some of the effects of that, Mr. Speaker. The Government of Saskatchewan has denied Catholic school boards in the province representation on the government-appointed committee mandated to develop a long-term funding formula for Saskatchewan school boards. And the petitions reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to address the funding inequity between Regina Catholic schools and Regina public schools that provides \$275 less per pupil funding for Regina Catholic school students, totalling \$2.7 million, and make known that the continuation for another school year of funding inequity places program delivery and staffing levels at

risk in Regina Catholic schools; and in so doing, immediately restore funding equity to ensure that every student in Saskatchewan, whether enrolled in a Catholic or public school, receives equitable resources to ensure every student in Saskatchewan has access to a quality education.

Mr. Speaker, these petitions are signed by the residents of Regina. I so present.

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

Mr. Quennell: — I thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today to present a petition signed by citizens of Saskatchewan concerned about the detrimental effects that Bill 160 would have on human rights law if enacted. And the prayer reads as follows:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan withdraw Bill 160 from consideration by the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan and hold extensive public consultations informed by a public policy paper before any amendments to the Human Rights Code, the law that supersedes all others in our province, are even considered.

And today the petition is signed by residents of Davidson, Saskatoon, Warman, Langham, and Regina, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present petitions on behalf of concerned residents from across Saskatchewan as it relates to the mismanagement of our finances by the Sask Party. They allude specifically to a record that includes running of deficits and increasing debt at a time of exceptional highs in revenues, Mr. Speaker, historic highs in revenues, this year alone increasing our debt by \$548 million, Mr. Speaker. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly condemn the Sask Party government for its damaging financial mismanagement since taking office, a reckless fiscal record that is denying Saskatchewan people, organizations, municipalities, institutions, taxpayers, and businesses the responsible and trustworthy fiscal management that they so deserve.

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

These petitions today are signed by concerned residents of Yorkton, Kamsack, Esterhazy, and Sturgis. I so submit.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Prince Albert Northcote.

Prince Albert Youth Receives Terry Fox Award

Mr. Furber: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Terry Fox

Award is presented each year by the city of Prince Albert to an individual under the age of 21 who best emulates the ideals and inspiration of Terry Fox. At the Prince Albert City Council meeting last week, 16-year-old Catlin Anderson was presented with his award and is the 2010 Terry Fox Award recipient.

Mr. Speaker, Catlin has a degenerative disease which affects his central nervous system. At one time he could walk and talk as most of us do. Now he's confined to a reclined wheelchair and can only communicate through nodding and shaking his head.

Catlin was nominated by Michelle Handstede who is his EA [education assistant] support teacher at St. Michael Community School, a school where I have previously worked, Mr. Speaker, and it's situated in Prince Albert Northcote. Michelle states that, despite his disability, Catlin comes to school every day with a smile on his face. And on his nomination form, Michelle wrote that "Catlin exemplifies Terry Fox because he perseveres despite the obstacles that disability put in his way. Like Terry Fox, Catlin does not give up. Through each new obstacle and each new challenge, he continues with determination and greets the world with his warm, beautiful smile."

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join with me in congratulating Catlin Anderson on being the 2010 Terry Fox Award recipient. Additionally I would like to ask that we acknowledge Sharon Anderson, Catlin's mother; Michelle Handstede, his EA support teacher; and all of the students and staff at St. Michael School. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[13:45]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Yorkton.

Daffodil Days

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Cancer is blind and encompassing. It affects people of all ages. Mr. Speaker, in one way or another, everyone in this Assembly has dealt with the cruel reality of the effects of cancer.

Far too many families suffer tragic losses due to the disease that can be highly treatable. For this reason, April marks cancer month in Canada. During this month there will be multiple initiatives that will be enacted, not only to raise awareness of the disease but also promote advocacy, fundraising efforts, research, and treatments. Many of these initiatives are spearheaded by the dedicated volunteers of the Canadian Cancer Society.

The Daffodil Days fundraiser is an excellent example of the advocacy work done by the Cancer Society. Throughout the month of April, volunteers will be busy delivering and selling bright yellow daffodils and daffodil pins to help raise money to support the fight against cancer.

I invite all members of this Assembly to join with me in recognizing the hard work and dedication of the Cancer Society. And further, Mr. Speaker, fundraisers such as Daffodil Days epitomize the giving and empathetic Saskatchewan spirit. These daffodils are a symbol of life and hope, and I hope and pray we can all encourage our friends and family to buy a bunch.

And, Mr. Speaker, we can also use Daffodil Days as an opportunity to keep the survivors, along with those currently fighting the disease, in our thoughts and prayers and keep in our memories the ones we have lost. I'm thinking of you today and every day little buddy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Green Lake Remembers Leslie Sayese

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last month the town of Green Lake held their second annual fish derby. The community's rallying around the event to fundraise as well as honour the memory of a loved one.

Leslie Sayese was a resident of Green Lake, Saskatchewan. Leslie worked for Saskatchewan Environment and Leslie loved to work both outdoors and play outdoors. He made it both his occupation and recreation. After succumbing to cancer three years ago, the community planned a fishing derby to honour Leslie's memory.

Jeff and Cindy McKay, also of Green Lake, have spearheaded the event. The couple decided that something needed to be done to help heal the community but to also carry on their friend's passion for the outdoors. In its first year, the derby raised more than \$800. This year, Mr. Speaker, the proceeds doubled to just over \$1,600. All the proceeds raised are donated for cancer research. The event started out small, but the organizers hope to expand and grow the derby. They hope to further their sponsorship and build on the success each year.

Mr. Speaker, Green Lake is showing their community spirit, volunteerism, and compassion for each other. I knew Leslie from our high school days and he was always friendly and outgoing. The local arena is also named after his father, Mervin Sayese, and I know that his mother, Alice, and the entire family are very proud of the work and the memory of this father and son.

Mr. Speaker, Green Lake is a stronger community because of this event, the volunteers, and of course, the memory of Leslie Sayese. Thank you.

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

Saskatoon Athlete Wins Double Gold

Ms. Schriemer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise in the House today to recognize Aerial Arthur, a Saskatoon Sutherland constituent. She's accompanied here today by Shelley and Scott, her parents.

Aerial won two gold medals for Saskatchewan in air rifle target shooting at the recent Jeux Canada Games held in Halifax on February 14th and 16th. Although she is just 13 years old, she was competing against other air rifle high performance athletes from other provinces in Canada. The age limit for these athletes is under 21 years of age and she was one of the youngest.

Aerial competed in air rifle in the women's individual and team events. There were 17 other athletes in the individual event and

nine provinces in the team event. Her score for individual was 103.7 out of a possible 109. And her first team match, she scored 392 out of 400. Mr. Speaker, female Olympians must shoot 393 out of 400. Not only is her young age significant in attaining this lofty goal, but also of note is that Aerial has only been in this sport for a year and a half.

It is a well-known fact, Mr. Speaker, that participating in sports can improve our youths' physical and mental fitness as well as improving their social skills. Mr. Speaker, Aerial is just getting started. We wish her well in all of her future endeavours, and maybe one day we will be cheering Aerial on at the Olympics. Mr. Speaker, I invite all in the Assembly to congratulate Aerial today. Thank you.

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

Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, the week of April 17th to 24th is National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week in Canada. This week gives us an opportunity to show our support for the thousands of Canadians waiting for organ transplants. As we speak, there are over 3,100 people in Canada who are on waiting lists for the most precious gift that a person could possibly receive, the gift of life in the form of one or more organ donations.

Mr. Speaker, last year, according to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, 247 Canadians died waiting for that gift of an organ transplant. Seven of those were in Saskatchewan. Every one of those deaths was an ultimately preventable tragedy. While we remember those who have died waiting for the gift of life and express our gratitude to those who have given that gift, we also recognize that more needs to be done to ensure that these preventable deaths are prevented.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all Saskatchewanians to make the noble decision to give the gift of life by placing the orange organ and tissue donor sticker on their provincial health services card. And during this coming week, I call on all the people of Saskatchewan and the members of this Assembly to remind the Saskatchewan Party government that stalled transplant programs and Saskatchewan transplant patients being forced to seek their care in Alberta is not acceptable in this so-called new Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan patients and Saskatchewan families deserve better.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Wascana Plains.

Junior Achievement Business Hall of Fame Awards

Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Wednesday the 2011 Junior Achievement Business Hall of Fame Awards were held right here in Regina. Mr. Speaker, the awards were a great night that honoured the entrepreneurial spirit in Saskatchewan. The banquet gave the attendees the opportunity to encourage the next generation of business leaders and innovators that will lead our economy.

I would like to thank the entire board of directors for their work in organizing this event in honouring the enterprising youth of Saskatchewan. As our provincial economy continues to lead the nation, it is very important that our young entrepreneurs are given the support that they need to help build the future of our province. Congratulations to the students for their remarkable achievements, and thank you to everyone who supported Junior Achievement in the goal to inspire and prepare young people to succeed in the global economy.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to advise the Assembly that Mr. Gavin Semple was inducted into the Junior Achievement Hall of Fame. Mr. Semple is the CEO [chief executive officer] of the Brandt Group of Companies, a business that is located right here in Regina.

Mr. Speaker, I would like all members to join me in congratulating all the winners and nominees, and that we may continue to encourage our young entrepreneurs. Thank you.

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

National Wildlife Week

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, long before the term nature deficit disorder was coined, the Canadian Wildlife Federation recognized the need to celebrate Canada's species and spaces. National Wildlife Week, a flagship program of the Canadian Wildlife Federation, was proclaimed by an Act of parliament in 1947. The primary purpose is to connect Canadians with nature and pay homage to our country's natural heritage and contribute to its conservation through awareness and education programs nationwide.

This year during National Wildlife Week, the Canadian Wildlife Federation is urging Canadians from coast to coast to get outside and go for a walk. Health Canada estimates that Canadians spend close to 90 per cent of their time indoors, and indoor air can be 10 times more polluted than outdoor air. Mr. Speaker, by making this connection with nature, we will be supporting the Canadian Wildlife Federation and its mission to celebrate what we are so lucky to have an abundance of here in Canada — vast spaces and wildlife to learn about and enjoy.

Mr. Speaker, National Wildlife Week isn't going to change the world or slow the pace of video game obsessions. But it does provide an opportunity to introduce a little balance, something most of us strive for day to day. I would ask all my colleagues to congratulate the Canadian Wildlife Federation and the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation for all their efforts in making a world a better place to live. Thank you.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Affordable Housing Issues

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, last week the Sask Party announced it was borrowing money, more than \$200 million to lend to home developers to build housing in the range of

\$300,000 a unit. Currently there are many houses on the market in this price range. Why is the Premier using taxpayers' money to finance developers to build housing stock that already exists on our market?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Social Services.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, this seems to be a change of tune for the members opposite because we've been talking about affordable housing, and they've been saying there's a need for more. And that's what we are definitely doing is making sure that this province is going to have 4,600 new homes in this province over the next five years.

Mr. Speaker, this is an important initiative, one that we've been hearing about not just in the cities but in the rural areas as well. As our population increases, we do need more units. And that's what we're doing, and working not just with government but with municipalities and stakeholders to make sure there are units right across the province for the people that not only live in our province but are moving in.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, for that minister to speak of \$300,000 houses as affordable houses just speaks to how out of touch that government is, Mr. Speaker.

Affordability and accessibility of housing is a major issue across this province. Families and people across the province cannot afford the massive rent increases that they're facing, such as just this past Friday here in Regina where many families and individuals faced rent increases between 60 and 100 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker. Many families can't save the down payment to enter into the homes that this member is speaking of and are simply losing ground, Mr. Speaker, yet this Premier's plan does not deal with either of those problems. Instead he is financing developers with taxpayers' money to build housing that is already available. Why has this Premier failed to address the real challenges for renters and prospective home buyers?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Social Services.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, the statement just made by the member opposite underlines the fact that they don't understand that as we build units then they actually free up the rental supply. People can actually have some home ownership themselves. They'll move out of spaces, and it'll make rental units more affordable for people in the province.

Mr. Speaker, that's why we're doing it right across the province. That's why we've opened up student units in Saskatoon. That's why we're working with people right across the province to make sure if people can own a home they'll move out of a place that's now rented, and there'll be places for people to move into in this province as they increase the population in our province.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, those houses are already on the market, and people can't afford to enter them. The Sask Party is not dealing with the actual problem and are in fact using taxpayers' money to depreciate the value of their homes. Remarkably the Premier stated this purpose in his budget speech just last week, and I'll quote the Premier from his budget speech last week. I quote, "It'll probably lower housing prices down . . . That's what happens when you increase the supply of housing . . ."

Mr. Speaker, causing a house that was worth 295,000 to depreciate to 275,000, for example, does not address the fact that prospective homebuyers can't save up the down payment. And it does nothing to deal with the many families and individuals dealing with massive rent increases, Mr. Speaker, and it creates a whole host of problems of its own. How does this Premier honestly believe that this is good policy?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Social Services.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, part of the housing policy that we put forward, or the plan that we put forward, actually helps people with the down payment. There's two initiatives that we're putting forward. They're actually based on what the city of Saskatoon is doing, that it's going to allow people to work towards the down payment. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, we understand that a \$180,000 home, if we can put some down payment toward it, will allow people to actually have home ownership.

I think the members opposite are very confused because the member from Fairview said last week that they're concerned about driving house prices down in the province. So really, the only criticism the NDP [New Democratic Party] have of our affordable housing plan is that it's going to create affordable housing. I don't understand what they're talking about. They're very surprised all the time. They're acting like we're cancelling Christmas. What we're really doing, Mr. Speaker, is giving the people in the province an opportunity to have what most people in the world want, and that is a home.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, highlighted again, it just, it focuses in on the fact that this Premier and this government simply don't get it, Mr. Speaker. This Premier authored and doubled down on a failed policy, this failed policy. And it doesn't fix the problem for renters or homeowners, and in fact uses taxpayers' money to lower the values of their own homes and remove personal equity. This is neither good policy nor fair. Many families have utilized equity in their homes and many new homeowners, for example, have no interest in seeing the value of their mortgage exceed the value of their home.

The impact of the Premier's plan could be devastating. The policy fails in so many ways. Mr. Premier, how do you believe this is fair?

[14:00]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for

Social Services.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, what is fair in this province is allowing people to actually own a home, allowing people to have a place to live in their, maybe it's a rental unit where they can be proud of where they're living.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite tried to talk about our housing announcement last week when speaking for the mayor of Saskatoon, when he said the mayor is not very happy. Well I think maybe they should understand that Mayor Atchison can speak for himself. And he does expect that the members opposite will allow him to do that. And maybe he expects that people should apologize when they use their words that is not complete, Mr. Speaker.

I also want the members opposite to realize that what we're doing has increased the vacancy rate in Saskatchewan now. It was 1.2 per cent under those people; it is 2.5 per cent under us.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — So, Mr. Speaker, this government has \$200,000 for a program to assist a few families in Saskatoon with some down payments. But they have over \$200 million to build housing stock that already exists with taxpayers' money. And we have a Premier who stated in his speech just last week that the stated goal of that program is to reduce the price, the value of homes, Mr. Speaker. The fact that taxpayers are going to fund the depreciation of their own homes, Mr. Speaker, does not solve the problem at all. And it creates a whole host of other problems.

What's interesting, Mr. Speaker, is that this Premier in this case advocates intervention into a market that's already well served, but won't intervene when families are facing rental increases of 63 to 100 per cent, Mr. Speaker. My question to the Premier: how do you justify this to Saskatchewan people, using their tax dollar to reduce the value of their home?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Social Services.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, this is obviously NDP logic or lack of logic. What we need to do is have more homes in this province, make sure that people that are coming into these homes can actually have ownership.

Mr. Speaker, we've built new units. We have new units under construction at this time. Housing starts are up by 115 per cent. You know why? Because everybody knows it's a value to living in this province. There's an advantage in this province, and we want to make sure that everybody shares in what we know is the Saskatchewan advantage.

Mr. Speaker, the people in this province need to have equity in their homes, and we are helping them do that so everybody can have a standard of living they're proud of. And the members opposite obviously don't understand it. What they'd like to do is go back to the days when people were leaving the province in droves, when we only had to build highways with roads going out of the province because nobody was coming back in again.

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

Funding of Education

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, we have seen the Sask Party government undermine our education system and treat education professionals with disrespect in many ways over the last few years, and this pattern of behaviour is continuing. Recent internal correspondence shows that the Sask Party government has broken its earlier commitment and is now threatening locally bargained teacher benefits.

To the minister: why is the government so intent on showing that it does not value teachers, that it has now flip-flopped on funding area-specific teacher agreements?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I have said time and time again that this government is committed to fund teachers once the agreements have come to the end, in which case we will have the money available. We will not leave the school divisions so that they cannot afford to keep the positions of teachers that they have, Mr. Speaker.

We have also continued to increase funding to the school divisions so that they can have a full complement of staff that they feel would best serve the students within this province, Mr. Speaker. In addition we have, in a very short three years, dedicated more money for capital funding so that they have better and safer schools in which to hold classrooms, Mr. Speaker, than was done in the last eight years.

The Speaker: — The minister may wrap up her remarks.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, we have dedicated more money to capital funding within our province to ensure safe and great schools for our teachers and our classrooms. And so therefore, Mr. Speaker, we have committed a lot of dollars towards education in this province.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, here's what the Deputy Premier said on May 7th, 2009, about locally bargained teacher benefits: "If there are additional expenses because it's been a negotiated contract done in good faith, those will be recognized by the ministry." But a couple of weeks ago, the Minister of Education had her deputy send a letter to school boards saying, "School divisions are to budget assuming there will be no incremental funding forthcoming as a result of any future increased costs related to locally bargained teacher benefits."

So the government rips away the ability of school boards to raise money and breaks its promise on a funding formula. And the same government says to those school boards, by the way, when we promised there would be money for locally bargained teacher benefits, we didn't mean it.

To the minister: what kind of message does this send to teachers to break a promise to fund their local agreements?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As he has in the past, this member takes something out of context. So I will help him understand this better. Mr. Speaker, the letter was sent because we are in transition funding. While we're in a transition funding model, Mr. Speaker, we have told the school divisions we will fund their LINC [local implementation and negotiation committee] agreements as they are negotiated for that year.

What they need to be mindful of, Mr. Speaker, as was done in the past with the previous government, as will be done when the new formula is implemented, the LINC agreement will be part of the entire funding. It will not be incremental funding in the middle of the year. That is only going to happen while we're in transition, Mr. Speaker.

So this is the final year that there'll be incremental funding for LINC agreements as they increase. After that, Mr. Speaker, we will go back to the way they were done under the NDP, which one member from Walsh Acres is saying is ridiculous. Well that's what they did.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, we're in a situation of transitional funding because that minister broke her promise about providing a stable funding agreement. Let's look at this government's shameful track record on education. They took hundreds of EAs out of our classrooms. They broke a promise on a new education funding formula. They've allowed provincial negotiations with the teachers to collapse because the teachers bring a fair, reasonable, and competitive offer to the table. And now they're threatening local negotiations of teacher benefits too.

The lesson could not be more clear, Mr. Speaker. The Sask Party does not value the work of teachers and is not committed to excellence in our education system. To the minister: when will she put an end to this pattern of behaviour? When will she properly value the work that teachers do in our province?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Once again, Mr. Speaker, I need to remind the member opposite the promise that was made by the Saskatchewan Party government was that we would reduce the reliance on property to fund education. We kept that promise, Mr. Speaker.

We said we would work towards a new funding formula that would see more equitable funding among the school divisions, something that was totally ignored by the members opposite, even though they thought they'd fixed it because they had a minister previously, Mr. Thomson, who said that he had fixed it, but in fact it wasn't so. But we have a funding formula that's very complex. We need to work with the stakeholders, which we are doing, Mr. Speaker. And they understand that it needs, it's going to take a lot of work. They want a good formula and they recognize that it's going to take some time to get it in place.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, everyone knows the minister is dragging her heels on the new formula because of political considerations, not because of considerations what's in the best interest of Saskatchewan students.

Mr. Speaker, this minister's failed leadership is hurting our education system. Here's a rundown of the Sask Party government's track record. They ordered a reduction in the number of educational assistants. They broke their promise on a long-term educational funding formula. They've caused negotiations with the STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation] to crash, and now they are breaking their promise on meeting the financial needs for locally bargained conditions.

Through it all, the minister hides behind the Saskatchewan School Boards Association, despite taking away the ability of boards to collect taxes. Her government now controls all of the purse strings for education, but she and her seatmates assume none of the responsibility when it comes to the decisions. To the minister: when will she stop the blame game and admit that her actions are causing problems in our education system?

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I know the member opposite has this insatiable need to put the blame game into every one of his questions, and I have blamed absolutely nothing on anybody. We're working together with all the stakeholders, and there is some understanding of what needs to be done, Mr. Speaker, unlike when they had an Education minister, Mr. Speaker, who in the past said, and I quote:

We have fixed the equity in the system so we no longer have an education system that the rich being able to provide a system 25 times better than those in the poor ridings.

That was in 2006. The NDP claimed that the system was fixed. Mr. Speaker, well that wasn't true. We have a quote from this particular year where we're again in transition that says, and I quote:

We have managed past budget cycles without a funding formula and we would do so again this year. One more year of uncertainty is better than a flawed funding mechanism that we will have to live with for a long period of time.

Mr. Speaker, that was from the Good Spirit School Division. They had to live with a flawed system for a long period of time. They're willing to get the system right, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, if the minister is not passing the buck, why does she defer every question to the SSBA [Saskatchewan School Boards Association] when given the opportunity to provide a comment? If the minister is not passing

the buck on responsibility, why does she blame the trustees and the school boards when it comes to failed negotiations when everyone knows she has the majority at the table? Mr. Speaker, let's be clear about this government's misplaced priorities.

The Sask Party's recent budget has \$5 million to subsidize beer retailers, but absolutely nothing for important local teachers' benefits. That speaks volumes about their spending choices. Despite the minister's rhetoric, the government actions are clear. They're disrespecting teachers at the provincial bargaining table, and they're disrespecting teachers at the local bargaining tables. Yet they've got millions to give to provincial beer retailers. It's no wonder why a teacher in my constituency wrote a letter saying, "Actions speak louder than words."

To the minister: does she recognize that putting beer retailers ahead of teachers and children was short-sighted and reckless? When will this government make education a top priority?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, the government trustee bargaining team has a spokesperson in the same manner that the STF bargaining team has a spokesperson. We have blamed no one here. We are certainly not blaming the school divisions. In the past for LINC agreements, Mr. Speaker, the school divisions had to find the funding within their budget. While we're in transition, our government has funded the LINC agreements exactly what the increase is. We, when we have a new formula, will be going back to them finding the money for their LINC agreements within the budget as a whole. We will not directly fund the LINC agreements. It will be found within their budgets, and the school divisions will negotiate accordingly.

Mr. Speaker, from his own city with the public school division, Ray Morrison had this to say. He said, if the new Sask Ed funding formula created the winners and losers, deferring for a year is probably a good decision. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member Saskatoon Eastview.

Capacity of Health Care System

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today on the front page of the *Leader-Post*, the headline is, moms and babies being transferred out of the province due to capacity issues at Saskatchewan hospitals. The story says 78 moms and/or high-risk babies have been transferred out of the city since August. Last week and again this week, the minister said the mother baby unit is fully staffed and fully funded.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: if the unit is fully funded and fully staffed, why are we sending 78 mothers and babies out of our hospital to other cities?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, as I had mentioned over the last couple of days regarding the issue of mothers and fathers, expecting mothers and fathers in this province, their safety and the importance of the best quality of health care is paramount throughout the whole . . . all of the health regions,

Mr. Speaker. The neonatal intensive care unit, which is different than particularly the mother baby unit, but the neonatal intensive care unit has seen some capacity pressures, Mr. Speaker. We are working with the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region on plans to address the increased demand of the neonatal intensive care unit.

Mr. Speaker, over the last number of years, we have experienced a census of about 18 births or 18 babies accessing those services on a daily basis, Mr. Speaker. That has increased up to about 23. The health region is quoted as saying that they've looked at this. It looks like it's more than a blip. They're going to have to do some more revamping, Mr. Speaker, and addressing some staff issues. As we move forward, Mr. Speaker, we're working with the health regions to ensure that happens.

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

Ms. Junor: — Last year the health regions asked for a 7 per cent increase in funding and they were given half of that. They were told to find efficiencies, which is a nice way of saying cut staff and cut programs.

Mr. Speaker, SUN [Saskatchewan Union of Nurses] has raised issues about staffing levels in the mother baby unit in two official processes. Sharon Garratt, executive director of women and children's health with Regina Health Region says, "There was some flexibility in the space that was built. We need to look at the staffing resources as well."

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: there is space at the unit but there needs to be more staff. When is the minister going to listen to the nurses who work in the unit, and now even the director, and increase the number of staff?

[14:15]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, they are two separate areas. The mother baby unit, which I said and the health region has said, has been fully staffed. And the neonatal intensive care unit for the facilities or the beds that are, the spots that are there have been staffed. They are looking at increasing the number of those spots, Mr. Speaker, and as a result we'll be looking at increasing the staff. That's what I said in the previous answer, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite obviously didn't listen to that.

But we are working with the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region to increase the capacity because the census is running at about 23 births a day, Mr. Speaker. We're working with the Qu'Appelle Health Region to ensure that that staffing complement will be there. That staffing complement has a much better chance of being there, Mr. Speaker, since we've increased the number of nurses in this province by 850 in just three short years, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, if we would be under the old NDP, Mr. Speaker, they would never have increased the number of nurses because they were too scared to set a target to increase the number of

nurses.

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

Ms. Junor: — I hope, Mr. Speaker, I hope the minister realizes now that he's become a joke with his 16 years. People are laughing at him for the most part, not listening to it.

It's the minister, Mr. Speaker, that's determining the capacity of the unit by failing to fund the health region properly, and families are paying the price. By sending mothers and their babies out of the province, the minister is separating them from family and support groups because the minister won't pay for the family member's travel expenses to go with the mother. And who's paying for the mother and baby to come home?

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: it's his lack of funding that's forcing mothers and babies out of the province and separating them from their families. What's he doing to ensure that mothers have family members with them to support them if they are out of the province, or out of the city?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, certainly we are working with the health region. As I said, we want to ensure that we have the proper complement of staff to meet the increased needs that we're seeing throughout the province. That's what happens when you have a growing province, never experienced under the NDP, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite may say that I'm a joke as the Minister of Health, but I can tell you there are other pundits that have been looking at what's been happening in the health system. They don't like me to quote Lewis Draper, Mr. Speaker, so let me quote someone else, Murray Mandryk. What did Murray Mandryk have to say about the health care system? Murray Mandryk had to say, this is what he had to say, "The NDP may have once owned the health care issue, but the Sask. Party is winning the battle over it everywhere."

Mr. Speaker, that might be a joke to them, but it's not a joke to the rest of the people in this province.

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

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, the minister should get current and read what's happening today. All the minister has done is ignore the red flags that are being raised, and now he passes the costs on to the families. There is a problem at the mother baby unit and that's the minister's lack of attention and lack of action.

Mr. Speaker, 78 mothers or babies have been sent out of the hospital since August. On March 20th, a baby died in the unit. SUN has on two official occasions raised concerns about staffing levels. The director of the unit says there's space but they need staff. The family of baby Cambria was told there needs to be more staff.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: will he finally listen, do his job,

and immediately increase the funding so the staffing can be put in place in that unit and keep our mothers and babies here?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, as I said in my previous answers, this government has done a lot to increase the number of people working within the health care system. But not only have we increased the number of people working in the health care system, we are working on training more Saskatchewan people to be able to fill those demands well into the future. For example, Mr. Speaker, under the NDP, we were down to less than 100 seats for nurses training, Mr. Speaker. By the end of our mandate, we'll be at 700 training seats for nurses in this province.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, we've gone a long ways to improving the health care system, and again some of the pundits would agree with that. Mr. Speaker, to quote Murray Mandryk, and I don't think Murray's outdated, not whatsoever, Mr. Speaker. Others may, but I don't. Mr. Speaker: "The Saskatchewan Party is now seen to be as good or better at health care providers than the NDP," Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, you may not believe everything that Murray says. But, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you when we're out in rural Saskatchewan and urban Saskatchewan, they're seeing the increase of nurses, Mr. Speaker. They're seeing the increase of physicians, Mr. Speaker. This health care system is greatly improved over any year under the NDP.

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — With leave to introduce guests.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Social Services has asked for leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Social Services.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to the members, all the members in the House I'd like to introduce a good friend of mine and to many members in the House, Mr. Burl Adams. He lives in Kelvington. He's a business person. He works for the North East Terminal. I know he's very interested in politics and very helpful in politics. I welcome you to your legislature and ask all my colleagues to help me welcome Burl Adams to his legislature.

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

Mr. Yates: — I ask leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave's been granted. I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wish to stand today and introduce a guest behind the bar that's well known to all members of this Assembly, a member who served in this Assembly for a number of years and who is currently the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker — Mr. Rick Swenson.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would now like to adjourn the House to go to committees.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has moved adjournment of the House 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: — Carried. This Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 14:22.]

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Wall	7101
Higgins	7101
McMorris	7101
Eagles	7101
Nilson	7101
Draude	7110
Yates	7110

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Higgins	7101
Junor	7102
Brotten	7102
Furber	7102
Morin	7102
Quennell	7103
Wotherspoon	7103

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Prince Albert Youth Receives Terry Fox Award	
Furber	7103
Daffodil Days	
Ottenbreit	7103
Green Lake Remembers Leslie Sayese	
Belanger	7104
Saskatoon Athlete Wins Double Gold	
Schriemer	7104
Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week	
Junor	7104
Junior Achievement Business Hall of Fame Awards	
Tell	7104
National Wildlife Week	
Morin	7105

QUESTION PERIOD

Affordable Housing Issues	
Wotherspoon	7105
Draude	7105
Funding of Education	
Brotten	7107
Harpauer	7107
Capacity of Health Care System	
Junor	7108
McMorris	7108

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