



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

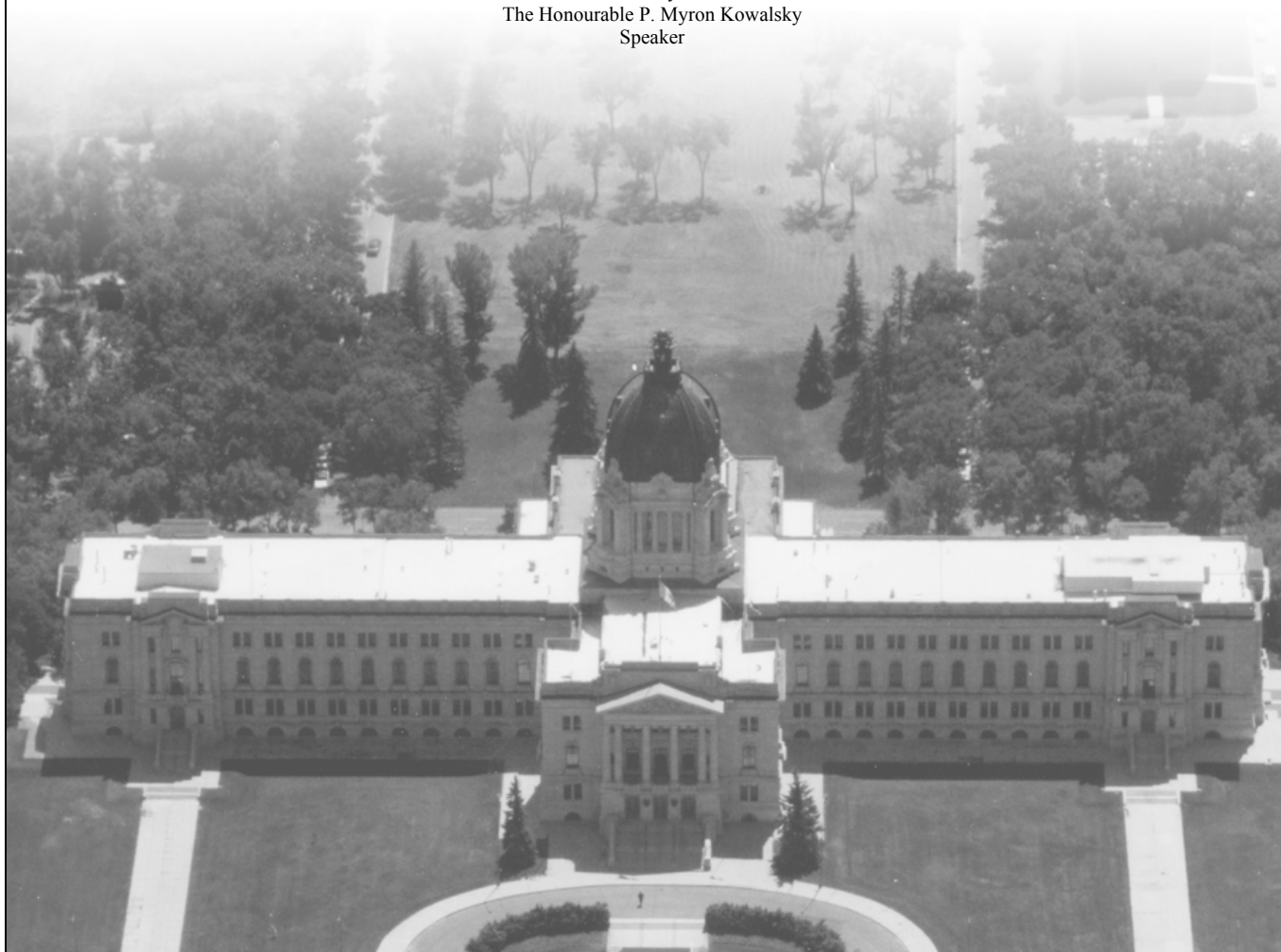
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Honourable P. Myron Kowalsky
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Addley, Graham	NDP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Atkinson, Hon. Pat	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Bakken, Brenda	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
Beatty, Hon. Joan	NDP	Cumberland
Belanger, Hon. Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornerud, Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
Borgerson, Lon	NDP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
Calvert, Hon. Lorne	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
Chisholm, Michael	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
Cline, Hon. Eric	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Crofford, Hon. Joanne	NDP	Regina Rosemont
D'Autremont, Dan	SP	Cannington
Dearborn, Jason	SP	Kindersley
Draude, June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
Forbes, Hon. David	NDP	Saskatoon Centre
Gantefoer, Rod	SP	Melfort
Hagel, Glenn	NDP	Moose Jaw North
Hamilton, Doreen	NDP	Regina Wascana Plains
Harpauer, Donna	SP	Humboldt
Harper, Ron	NDP	Regina Northeast
Hart, Glen	SP	Last Mountain-Touchwood
Heppner, Ben	SP	Martensville
Hermanson, Elwin	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Higgins, Hon. Deb	NDP	Moose Jaw Wakamow
Huyghebaert, Yogi	SP	Wood River
Iwanchuk, Andy	NDP	Saskatoon Fairview
Junor, Judy	NDP	Saskatoon Eastview
Kerpan, Allan	SP	Carrot River Valley
Kirsch, Delbert	SP	Batoche
Kowalsky, Hon. P. Myron	NDP	Prince Albert Carlton
Krawetz, Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
Lautermilch, Eldon	NDP	Prince Albert Northcote
McCall, Warren	NDP	Regina Elphinstone-Centre
McMorris, Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
Merriman, Ted	SP	Saskatoon Northwest
Morgan, Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
Morin, Sandra	NDP	Regina Walsh Acres
Nilson, Hon. John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
Prebble, Hon. Peter	NDP	Saskatoon Greystone
Quennell, Hon. Frank	NDP	Saskatoon Meewasin
Serby, Hon. Clay	NDP	Yorkton
Sonntag, Hon. Maynard	NDP	Meadow Lake
Stewart, Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Taylor, Hon. Len	NDP	The Battlefords
Thomson, Hon. Andrew	NDP	Regina South
Toth, Don	SP	Moosomin
Trew, Kim	NDP	Regina Coronation Park
Van Mulligen, Hon. Harry	NDP	Regina Douglas Park
Wakefield, Milton	SP	Lloydminster
Wall, Brad	SP	Swift Current
Wartman, Hon. Mark	NDP	Regina Qu'Appelle Valley
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney

The Assembly met at 10:00.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cypress Hills.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I rise on behalf of constituents of the region of Cypress Hills to present a duty. . . I'm sorry, to present a petition related to the increase in crop insurance premiums again this year. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take all necessary steps to reverse the increase in crop insurance premiums and the reduction in coverage.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition was signed by constituents from the communities of Gull Lake and Webb.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Rosetown-Elrose.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have another petition from the Rosetown-Elrose constituency signed by people who are concerned about recent changes to the crop insurance program which results in large premium increases for insured farmers while overall coverage is reduced. Mr. Speaker, the prayer of this petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take all necessary actions to reverse the increase in crop insurance premiums and reduction in coverage.

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition are from the communities of Demaine and Beechy.

I am pleased to present this petition on their behalf.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Wood River.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I rise in the Assembly with a petition from citizens of southwest Saskatchewan that are extremely concerned about the condition of Highway 43 and the impact it has on the economic side of it, and the safety side of the individuals there. And the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to

repair Highway 43 in order to address safety concerns and to facilitate economic growth in rural Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by the good citizens of Gravelbourg and Limerick.

I so present.

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

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Assembly today, actually this morning, to bring forth a petition signed by the citizens of rural Saskatchewan that are concerned with the crop insurance premium increases. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take all necessary actions to reverse the increase to crop insurance premiums and the reduction in coverage.

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition are from Unity, Leoville, and Spiritwood.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Arm River-Watrous.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise yet with another petition with many citizens opposed to the closure and possible reduction of services to Davidson, Imperial health centres.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure the Davidson, Imperial health centres be maintained at the current level of service at a minimum of 24-hour acute care, emergency, and doctor services available as well as lab, public health, home care, and long-term care services available to users in the Davidson, Imperial areas and beyond.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens of Davidson, Regina, Lloydminster, and Saskatoon.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again in the House today to present a petition on behalf of citizens in west central Saskatchewan concerned with the funding for the Unity senior lodge project. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that citizens of Unity and district remain in the community for this necessary service that will bridge the gap between independent living and long-term care.

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

Mr. Speaker, this particular petition is signed by the good folks from Unity, Saskatoon, and Denzil, Saskatchewan.

I so present.

Clerk Assistant: — The following petitions for private Bills are hereby presented by members and laid on the table as follows:

By Mr. Heppner, of the Bethany Bible Institute in province of Saskatchewan;

By Mr. Toth, of the Fountain of Life School of Ministry in the province of Saskatchewan;

By Mr. McCall, of the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association in the province of Saskatchewan.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and hereby read and received:

A petition concerning repairs to Highway 15 from the junction of No. 20 east of the village of Semans;

And addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 50, 65, 69, 72, and 97.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Thunder Creek.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 29 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Highways and Transportation: what was the total cost of the recent overhaul and refit of the Riverhurst ferry? Who was the general contractor awarded this job? What was the tender price for the job? Did the general contractor hold a bid bond? How much downtime was experienced by the Riverhurst ferry in the 2003 season following the refit and overhaul?

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Moosomin.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 29 ask the government the following question:

To the minister of Investment Saskatchewan: for each of the suppliers, consultants, contractors, and financial institutions used by the government in the discussions and negotiations with Broe industries over the development of the Belle Plaine ethanol project, what was each paid for

their services, and how much did each receive from the Government of Saskatchewan as its share of the cost?

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Prototype Vehicle

Mr. Trew: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to share an outstandingly successful happening. On Wednesday right here in Regina, the Saskatchewan Research Council unveiled the world's first pickup truck fuelled by a combination of hydrogen and diesel fuel.

This prototype vehicle is a heavy-duty pickup truck with a 6.6 litre turbocharged diesel engine that can be operated on diesel fuel alone or on a combination of hydrogen and diesel fuel.

Mr. Speaker, the development of hydrogen as an alternative fuel is a key part of a green and prosperous economy. And with this move the Saskatchewan Research Council is helping to make Saskatchewan the national model in researching and demonstrating hydrogen as a new source of energy.

Mr. Speaker, this cleaner energy technology will help Canada address climate change and build an efficient and sustainable economy for the 21st century. And yesterday's unveiling is proof positive that this new economy will not only happen in Saskatchewan, but that we are playing and will continue to play a big role in its development.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure all my colleagues will join me in congratulating everyone involved in this project, in particular the Saskatchewan Research Council and their partners, Ecce Energy Corporation, on the success of this prototype and wishing them every success with this technology in the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Wood River.

2004 Snowbirds

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I had the distinct pleasure of attending the formal acceptance show for the 2004 Snowbirds. 431 Air Demonstration Squadron, better known as the Snowbirds, represent a tradition of excellence as ambassadors; demonstrating the skill, professionalism, and teamwork of the men and women of the Canadian Forces. While not a combat unit, the Snowbirds exhibit the skills and courage that Canada's combat forces count on to contribute to world peace and security.

Mr. Speaker, the Snowbirds are a Canadian national institution, flying Tutor jet aircraft in the colours of the Canadian flag. The team represents the vibrant spirit of this nation, thrilling audiences across the continent with precision formation flying and crisp solo aerobatics.

Mr. Speaker, now in their 34th season, the Snowbirds have

flown 1,902 air shows for over 100 million spectators. The 2004 team will perform 65 shows at 41 locations across North America. Also, the Snowbirds are proud ambassadors for the Children with Intestinal and Liver Disorders — acronym CH.I.L.D. — Foundation. The objective of the relationship is to provide greater awareness for CH.I.L.D. and its goals through activities such as public appearances and air demonstrations.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Major Steve Will and his 2004 team for an excellent acceptance show demonstration yesterday, and wish them all the success for a successful 2004 air show season.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Saskatchewan Protective Services Medal Presentations

Mr. Addley: — Mr. Speaker, as we go about our daily lives there are many things we too often take for granted, including those people who are there to protect us. Yesterday in Saskatoon, 43 of our province's protective services personnel received the Saskatchewan Protective Services Medal from the Lieutenant Governor.

Mr. Speaker, the recipients include RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) members from Warman, Swift Current, Saskatoon, and Rosthern; municipal police from Saskatoon; fire protection personnel from Dundurn, Saskatoon; and National Defence and Correctional Service Canada employees from Saskatoon.

This medal is our province's way of honouring individuals who have given 25 years or more of exemplary service, protecting lives and properties of citizens. Mr. Speaker, it takes a commitment and a special kind of individual to persevere in a profession that typically demands so much and often puts them in harm's way. Theirs is not an easy job. Our protective services personnel are ensuring people in this province have the best possible opportunity to develop their full potential in a safe and secure environment.

Mr. Speaker, I express my gratitude and I'm sure the gratitude of all residents of this province to those receiving the Saskatchewan Protective Services Medal.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Martensville.

Valley Trails Wildlife Supper

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A week ago today I had the privilege of attending the Valley Trails wildlife supper. Valley Trails basically covers the area between Saskatoon and Duck Lake and then between the rivers.

The MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) has for a decade or two been the one that have been asked to emcee the

affair. And I always consider it a privilege to follow big Bill Neudorf in that area, and it was always a hard act to follow.

Anyways, the evening is always an exciting evening. There's all sorts of wildlife meets out of there, and then the awards that are given out for the individuals that have the trophies. A lot of young people are out at that, a lot of kids are out at that, and that's great as well.

Unfortunately when I got there to get the program, the president of the association said we have a glitch. And I thought well, I wonder what the glitch is. The glitch was they had no speaker.

What had happened, Mr. Speaker, was that they had invited a member from SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management) about two and a half months earlier and said he could come, and the day before, he got a note from this individual from SERM saying, due to NDP (New Democratic Party) cuts, I cannot come.

Due to NDP cuts, the member from . . . person from SERM could not come and address the wildlife federation. What a shame, Mr. Speaker. What a shame.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

2004 Saskatchewan Literacy Awards

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On Wednesday evening at Government House the Saskatchewan Literacy Network acknowledged the accomplishments of six individuals and groups at the 2004 Saskatchewan Literacy Awards.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Literacy Awards recognize volunteers, professionals, corporations, programs, and adult learners for their contributions in support of literacy in the province.

And, Mr. Speaker, the recipients of the 2004 Saskatchewan Literacy Awards are: in the corporate category, McDonald's restaurant won for their support of raise a reader program. In the category of the volunteer literacy worker, the winner was Adeline Steinley of Cypress Hills Regional College. And Larry Crook of Saskatoon won in the professional literacy worker category.

(10:15)

Regina Home Economics For Living Project received the awards in the project category.

As well, Mr. Speaker, Katherina Aguilera of Saskatoon and, I'm very pleased to say a constituent of mine, Flora Sylvester of Buffalo Narrows were recognized in the learner category for overcoming great difficulties in learning to read.

Mr. Speaker, I was in Prince Albert that evening and could not attend this event, and I'm really sorry I missed it.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure all of my colleagues will join me in

congratulating Ms. Sylvester and all the recipients of the 2004 Saskatchewan Literacy Awards on their contributions and their accomplishments. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melfort.

Melfort Constituency Provincial Hockey Championships

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Melfort constituency hockey world closed the season with bragging rights to three provincial championships. The Naicam AA Bantam Vikings claimed the AA Provincial Championship by defeating Weyburn with a two-game total-goal series of 11 to 7 in the championship series. This victory earned them a chance to experience the Western Canadian Bantam Championship in Fort Saskatchewan.

The Melfort Grapes Pee Wee Girls claimed the female Pee Wee B Championship after beating Maple Creek in the best of two championship playoffs. Their first game was won handily and the second game was won with a small margin of 2 to 1.

And last but not least, the LeRoy Braves provincial B champions played a memorable season with only two losses in the regular season. They were undefeated in both the Long Lake Hockey League playoffs and the provincial B playoffs.

Mr. Speaker, and members, please join me in congratulating the team members, coaches, support staff, and families of these teams for their successful hockey season.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

United Way Tribute Luncheon

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since 1935, concerned Regina citizens have been working together to find ways to care for those in the community who are less fortunate and in need of support. Today, Mr. Speaker, that group of caring citizens has evolved into an organization that this year will invest more than \$2 million into programs and services to help develop healthy children, strong families, and supportive communities.

I'm speaking of course of the United Way. Yesterday I had the privilege of attending, along with the Minister of Community Resources and Employment and the member from Regina Walsh Acres, the United Way of Regina's 2004 Tribute Luncheon.

During the luncheon, the United Way of Regina paid tribute to the thousands of people and volunteers who support their efforts every year and to a select group of community leaders for their contributions.

The Investors Group volunteer awards went to two energetic women, Amy Balfour and Tammy Beck from Ranch Ehrlo.

Raynard and Joanna Kirsch and Audrey Roadhouse received President's awards in recognition of their outstanding voluntary and philanthropic efforts.

Farm Credit Canada and Harvard Broadcasting received Distinguished Corporate Philanthropy awards.

Mr. Speaker, these individuals, these members of the corporate community, and the United Way, all demonstrate a deep-rooted commitment to the people of Regina. I ask all my colleagues to join me in thanking them for their efforts and congratulating them on their fine accomplishments. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melville-Saltcoats.

Commitments Made During Election Campaign

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, rural municipalities are angry with this NDP government and rural municipalities are angry with this Premier. And yesterday just made them more angry and more frustrated.

Mr. Speaker, one SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) delegate after another told me how disgusted they were that this Premier wouldn't even stand in the House and explain his election promise about property taxes. And, Mr. Speaker, the Premier should know the Speaker cannot recognize him when he's hiding under his chair.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier made a promise to deal with the property tax issue. When is this going to happen?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the minister responsible for Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — We had a good day yesterday, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — We sat down with the executive, the board of directors, staff members, the president of SARM. We sat down as a cabinet, and we discussed matters that are of concern to all residents of this province. We discussed the ideas that might lead to some solutions to a very difficult problem.

Mr. Speaker, so far the only solution seems to be, write the big cheque. But, Mr. Speaker, this problem requires a lot more effort than that. The delegates, the delegates who are attending the SARM convention have got some real concerns. They've got issues that need attention. Mr. Speaker, the government recognizes that attention is being paid to their issues. We have to find solutions; we need the opposition's help to find solutions.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, if that government had a good day yesterday, I don't want to miss it if they have a bad one.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, on the day the Premier launched his election platform he said, and I quote, Mr. Speaker:

It is a platform that provides . . . the room to receive the recommendations of the Boughen Commission on the funding of education.

Those were the Premier's words, Mr. Speaker. But now we know he didn't mean a word if it. In fact yesterday one delegate said, and I quote, Mr. Speaker:

If (an agreement) was signed in blood by Mr. Calvert . . . it wouldn't be worth the paper it's written on.

Mr. Speaker, why did the Premier make these promises if he had no intentions of keeping them?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think that members opposite will recognize and applaud the Premier for yesterday when the SARM delegates, when the SARM delegates appeared here at the legislature. The Premier went out onto the front steps to greet them. He talked to members . . . delegates to that convention on the way out of the building, on the steps of the building. He encouraged the president of SARM to come forward and talk to him in front of the media.

All of the debate was in front of the public, in front of all of the delegates, and there was a general understanding that there's a . . . We recognize on this side of the House that there are concerns that have to be met, and this government is going to take steps to meet those concerns within the fiscal realities of this province and with the co-operation of the Board of Directors of SARM who seem willing to sit down to discuss solutions.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Well, Mr. Speaker, to the minister, they may have applauded that Premier if they could have found him hiding under his desk.

Mr. Speaker, in the last election that Premier promised to lower taxes. And what did he do? He raised taxes. That Premier promised the lowest utility rates in country. No, not on, Mr. Speaker. In fact now we see SaskPower may even ask for an increase. He also promised, Mr. Speaker, to lower the

education tax on property, and yesterday he had a perfect chance to follow up with that promise. And from the reports I get this morning, he didn't even come close.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier stand today and explain to the public and Saskatchewan taxpayers what happened to these promises?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And what about the member of Melville-Saltcoats' own words, Mr. Speaker, that I quoted back to him yesterday in the House? The member had said that they couldn't even keep up to reducing property taxes in this fiscal year, Mr. Speaker. No new tax increases and no addressing that particular issue. But this government, Mr. Speaker, with the fiscal problems that we have in this province . . . Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order. I recognize the Minister of Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank . . .

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And Saskatchewan's problem isn't Saskatchewan's alone, Mr. Speaker. All across this country, provinces are having difficulties with financing health care.

This morning we hear of Nova Scotia's budget where they promised in an election campaign a 10 per cent tax cut across the board in the province of Nova Scotia. Today in the budget they had to drop that tax cut because of the pressures on health care in that province.

Mr. Speaker, they stand every day in the House to say we need more money in health care. We put more money in health care, Mr. Speaker — \$160 million.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ethanol Industry Projects

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, if you hear the minister and hear the Premier, I guess it's okay if you don't keep your promises if other people are doing the same thing, Mr. Speaker. Children hear from their parents every day that that's not acceptable behaviour, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this Premier promised to cut taxes in the election campaign; this budget raised them. The Premier promised to look after seniors; he'll be closing long-term care beds. And you remember, Mr. Speaker; the Premier promised that he had a plan that he was going to build an ethanol plant at Belle Plaine. Do you remember that one, Mr. Speaker?

They pitched a big tent, and they had a kind of a little picnic there. And they bused out kids, Mr. Speaker. Premier jumped on a backhoe, and they had a photo opportunity. And, Mr. Speaker, do you know what's there today at Belle Plaine? An empty field and two posts where the sign used to be that said, future home of this ethanol plant. There is no ethanol plant there. The field is as empty as the Premier's promises.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — The question for him today is: how many taxpayers' dollars did the Premier spend on his imaginary ethanol plant?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Industry and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I know that the Leader of the Opposition will want to get up in his place and express his happiness that Husky Oil has announced that they're constructing 180-million-litre ethanol plant in Lloydminster, Mr. Speaker. I know the member from Lloydminster will certainly be pleased that Husky Oil is making a major new investment in Saskatchewan, and I know the member from Weyburn should be very happy that \$25 million ethanol plant is going ahead in Weyburn.

And what we're doing, Mr. Speaker, through the policies of this government in taking the tax off fuel-produced-and-consumed ethanol in Saskatchewan and in mandating the blending of ethanol, we are building this industry, Mr. Speaker. The industry is being built, and we will continue to build that industry in partnership with the private sector, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the Minister references the project in Lloydminster where there will be no provincial government money. Now, Mr. Speaker, that minister and the previous ethanol minister said there would be no way we'd ever have an ethanol plant in the province without the NDP risking taxpayers' money — that's what they said. It's happening, Mr. Speaker, despite this NDP government, not because of it.

Mr. Speaker, he didn't, the minister didn't come close to answering the question, but according to a freedom of information request done by the Saskatchewan Party, the total bill to date on the imaginary ethanol plant for taxpayers — the total bill — is \$2.2 million. Forty per cent of it is the taxpayers' share according to this freedom of information request. That's 866,000 taxpayers' dollars for a project that doesn't exist. There was never a deal, Mr. Speaker, for this project. Would the Premier please stand up and explain to taxpayers how spending \$866,000 on an imaginary ethanol plant is good for the province of Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Industry and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well you know, Mr. Speaker, it was made known by this government that as long as there was no private sector money developing ethanol we were prepared to partner with the private sector. We also said, Mr. Speaker, that if the private sector would build the ethanol industry in Saskatchewan that it was not up to the government to build the ethanol industry.

Now here you have an opposition, Mr. Speaker, which on one hand likes to say that there's never any private sector investment in Saskatchewan, which of course isn't true because we have record investment in oil and gas, forestry, and mining in the province, but never mind that. On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, when we have major private sector investment building the ethanol industry in Saskatchewan, do we hear anything enthusiastic or supportive from the opposition? No, Mr. Speaker, instead they get up and criticize. And what we do, Mr. Speaker, we don't have time to sit around and criticize because we're too busy working with the people of Saskatchewan to build.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, there's a credit, there's a credit card company that would be interested in this Premier's ethanol story for one of its commercials, Mr. Speaker. Let's take a look at the costs of this project: project management fees, \$438,000; consulting and public relations, \$181,000; legal fees, \$171,000; damage to the Premier's credibility — priceless. There are some things that money can't buy but, Mr. Speaker, for everything else the Premier has the taxpayers' MasterCard — \$866,000.

There was never a deal. There was never a project. It was all about politics for the Premier. It was all about a coming election campaign. Will he stand up today and apologize for using the community of Belle Plaine and for betraying taxpayers of \$866,000?

(10:30)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Industry and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, Mr. Speaker, you know day after day we hear the negativity of the opposition; that's what we hear from the opposition. But what I want the people of the province to know, Mr. Speaker, is last year we had record investment in oil and gas drilling in this province, Mr. Speaker.

In the last few years, we've had two of the world's largest ethanol . . . the largest oriented strand board plants built here in the province of Saskatchewan at Meadow Lake and at Hudson Bay, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, last year the Saskatchewan economy was the fastest growing economy in Canada, and we expect to see growth of about 4 per cent this year in Saskatchewan, growth on growth.

Part of that, Mr. Speaker, will be investment at the Husky ethanol plant in Lloydminster; part of it will be the ethanol plant

in Weyburn, which are going ahead. And I would have thought, Mr. Speaker, that those members would support that and be enthusiastic about it, but I think their job is just to be critical, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, according to the freedom of information response we received, all the bills for this are not yet in. How much more taxpayers' dollars will be spent on this? How much more can taxpayers expect to see in terms of the bill for this project — question to the minister.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Industry and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the opposition has asked for information. In a spirit of openness and accountability, of course the government has provided the information, Mr. Speaker. We have provided the opposition with the information about the costs of this project.

And I would say to the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, that when you're trying to actually do things and build, whether in the private sector or the public sector, sometimes you invest. Sometimes there are ventures. Sometimes those ventures don't succeed. Most of the time they do.

But, Mr. Speaker, we have seen in this province a change whereby the private sector has come forth as a result of the regulatory framework the government has created, and the private sector is going to invest in the construction of ethanol in this province, Mr. Speaker.

And the main point I would say to the Leader of the Opposition is there are positive things happening, and he should get off the doom and gloom and help us build Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Well the minister, the minister, Mr. Speaker, talks about sometimes you make an investment in this project and sometimes . . . Generally speaking, the projects should not be imaginary, Mr. Speaker. Generally speaking, they should be more than just political ploys, more than a sign in a field at Belle Plaine to say that you're building an ethanol plant, when there's no deal, Mr. Speaker. Let's be clear here. The Premier bused in school children. In fact there's a bill for the buses on this freedom of information request. He bused in school kids for this announcement of a deal that didn't exist.

He climbed up on a backhoe. He put on a hard hat, Mr. Speaker, and had a big revival tent meeting in Belle Plaine for a project that didn't exist. And in the bargain, the taxpayers got hung with a bill for \$866,000.

The Premier owes some apologies here. That's the question to

him today. Will he stand up, and will he apologize to the people of Belle Plaine for using them and to the people of the province for blowing \$866,000?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Industry and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the difference between members on that side of the House and members on this side of the House is this: members on that side of the House like to tell young people in this province that there is no future in Saskatchewan. Members on this side of the House, led by the Premier, like to tell young people, Mr. Speaker, that there is a great future in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — And is any member of this side of the House going to get up and apologize for, almost on a daily basis — and yesterday I was at Robert Usher Collegiate speaking to young people — about the great opportunities there are in Saskatchewan and about the great things that happen in Saskatchewan? No, Mr. Speaker, because we don't consider it our jobs to tell young people that there's no future in Saskatchewan. There's a great future in Saskatchewan. We're going to keep telling them that, and we'll never apologize for it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Facilities for Universities

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. During last fall's provincial election, the Premier made many promises that he had clearly no intention of keeping.

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Would the member start again? I will ask the member to start again in full time.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Premier. During last fall's provincial election, the Premier made many promises he clearly had no intention of keeping, like his promise to build a new academic health sciences facility at the University of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the deputy minister of Learning confirmed what most people in Saskatchewan already figured out. You just can't trust the word of this Premier or any of the promises in his phony NDP election platform because according to the deputy minister, there's no money for an academic health sciences facility at the University of Saskatchewan this year.

Mr. Speaker, why did the Premier mislead the people of Saskatchewan by promising a new health sciences facility in Saskatoon when the Premier had no intention of keeping his word?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Learning.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Well the member opposite should understand fully that the academic health sciences centre at the University of Saskatchewan is in the planning stage. Money has been provided for planning; planning continues.

I don't understand why the member seems to think that there's something off-kilter here.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, we're seeing a little bit of a pattern here. Whether it's the SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) strike, the reaction to the Boughen Commission, or the academic health sciences centre, it's delay, delay, delay from this . . . that side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier may not like hearing the truth, but the truth is that he promised a health sciences facility in Saskatoon, and now the deputy minister of Learning says it won't happen. And the minister says wait for next year.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier will have to forgive the people of Saskatchewan when they simply don't trust his word any more.

The Premier also promised to build a new laboratory building at the University of Regina and the University of Regina made the mistake of believing him. Now the NDP say there won't be any lab building built this year at the University of Regina. Mr. Speaker, it's yet another NDP broken promise. Why should anybody believe a word of this Premier or the NDP government?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Learning.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, I always appreciate the advice of that member opposite. Sometimes we take it; sometimes we don't. Fortunate for the students at SIAST, we didn't take his advice, or we'd be still 20 more days in cooling off as opposed to at a collective agreement which has been negotiated.

I appreciate the advice that he has on the health sciences building. I can advise him that that is proceeding to move forward. The university understands that. We understand that. The department understands that. I have no idea why the member opposite doesn't understand that.

With respect to the laboratory building at the U of R (University of Regina), we continue to recognize that there needs to be a new laboratory building at the U of R. The question is what the size and scope of that is, and what the cost is, and how that fits in the university's operating budget that doesn't put pressure on tuition.

I assume that the member opposite could ask these questions in estimates. I'm always happy to answer them here in question period, but he should first of all do his research.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, I can assure this House that this member understands a promise is a promise.

Mr. Speaker, the University of Regina was so confident that the NDP would actually honour its promise, the University of Regina was actually so confident that the promise would be honoured that they cleared off the land to get ready for an official sod-turning ceremony. Now they didn't actually pitch a tent or bus in a few hundred kids or hold a wiener roast like the NDP did when the Premier held his phony ethanol announcement at Belle Plaine, but the result was the same, Mr. Speaker — another broken NDP campaign promise.

Mr. Speaker, why did the Premier make an election promise to build a new health sciences facility at the U of S (University of Saskatchewan) and a new laboratory building at the University of Regina when he had absolutely no intention of keeping his word, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Learning.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — The promise is made; the promise will be kept. We're moving forward on both of those files. I don't understand why the member doesn't understand this. The universities understand this. We understand this.

He talks about us pitching a tent. He talks about us bringing in people for it. I'll tell you what. When we go and we pitch the next tent on the academic health sciences centre and we open that building, we'll be there. We'll provide the tent. Why don't you ask your former leader to come forward and provide the balloons that he had left over from that little election campaign that you people thought you were going to win?

We wait and we make sure the plan's done. We make sure the blueprints are there. We make sure the funding is in place. We make sure it's sustainable. Then we make sure the project and the promise is kept.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Commitments Made During Election Campaign

Mr. Wall: — Please, please, Mr. Speaker — through you to the government — please don't pitch any more tents in the province of Saskatchewan. We've had enough NDP tents.

Mr. Speaker, people in this province are asking how they can believe the word of their Premier. He promised to cut taxes. He promised to look after seniors, Mr. Speaker, to protect government jobs, to hire more police officers, to build an ethanol plant at Belle Plaine, to build a health science centre at the University of Saskatchewan, a lab building at the University of Regina. But he's raising taxes, and he's closing long-term care beds, and he's firing government workers. He's not keeping his promise with respect to police officers. There's no Belle Plaine ethanol plant. There will be no lab building at the U of R when they hoped there would be. There is no health

science centre going to be constructed at the U of S.

Mr. Speaker, the question to the Premier is pretty clear. We're going to give him a chance to answer that question that people have of him today. Why in the world should they trust what he has to say?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, you know they say the proof is in the pudding. When we went to the people of Saskatchewan in the fall, we made a number of commitments that will carry this government through its term.

Among those commitments was a commitment to the best public health care in Canada that we could possibly build. It is a commitment to a green and a prosperous economy, Mr. Speaker. It's a commitment to making Saskatchewan first choice for our young people.

Now, Mr. Speaker, since the days, since the days of that election campaign, we have worked with the private sector to see the announcement of the tremendous ethanol capacity that we're going to build in Saskatchewan — a capacity that began with solid planning, that has worked through the process of regulation, that has worked with the private sector opposed to being offside to the private sector. We're building a tremendous ethanol capacity in the province.

Now what do we hear today from the Leader of the Opposition? I think I'm going to ask him a question. Will he stand in the House today and tell us today the position of the Saskatchewan Party when it comes to building industry in Saskatchewan? Does he take the position, as they have taken in past, that they would never partner with the private sector, that they would never partner?

If the answer is they've changed their position and today they would partner with the private sector, then I ask the Leader of the Opposition: would he do due diligence on any partnership with the private sector? Let's hear some answers from the Leader of the Opposition just for once.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we will continue to forward to the people of this province a plan to build an enterprising and entrepreneurial economy. Mr. Speaker, we will pledge to do things differently in this province. We've been trying the same thing for six decades in Saskatchewan in terms of growing the economy. It is time to ask the Dr. Phil question: how's that working for you so far, Mr. Speaker? It's not working, and a change is coming.

And compare that, Mr. Speaker, if you will, to the NDP's plan to keep young people here. The minister talked about it earlier. The member for Saskatoon Sutherland highlighted for a young person in Saskatoon the reasons why he should stay and not move to Alberta. And here's a couple of them. The fact that we

have the Internet here, Mr. Speaker, isn't that marvellous? And get this; the NDP reason why you should stay in Saskatchewan — in Saskatchewan I can use a pay phone for a local call for 25 cents. In Alberta, in Alberta it costs 35 cents, and it has for several years now, Mr. Speaker.

The answer is clear. The question is clear. The Premier made promises with respect to an ethanol plant. It's an empty field; it's as empty as his promises. Will he apologize to the people of Belle Plaine and to the province for wasting almost \$1 million?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, a few of us last night were able to attend a reception provided by the Brewers of Canada. Four young men stood on the platform there and said to us why it is they've chosen to make their futures in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. They've chosen because we are a province of innovation. We are a province that believes in its future. We are a province that's building the fundamentals of education, the fundamentals of the economy based on a plan that's been extended by this government, is being pursued by this government, and will be fulfilled by this government as opposed to the kind of plan that we get from the Saskatchewan Party.

What did we hear in the election? We'll slash all the taxes, throw the province into deficit and debt, and somehow that is supposed to produce a growing economy of 100,000 people.

(10:45)

The people of Saskatchewan rejected that kind of thinking. They rejected that plan, and now even the Saskatchewan Party leader has rejected it by his Web site.

Mr. Speaker, today, today the member of North Battleford stood and said that yesterday was a good day for the Government of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, any day that New Democrats are in government and the Saskatchewan Party is in opposition is a good day for the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Why is the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford on his feet?

Mr. Chisholm: — Mr. Speaker, I would request leave to introduce guests.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The member may proceed, the member for Cut Knife-Turtleford.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Chisholm: — Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure for me

to you, through you, to this Assembly to introduce students from Glaslyn Central School, seated in the east gallery. We have grade 11 and 12 students accompanied by their principal, Mr. Brian Goota, and their bus driver, Mr. Mervin Pritchett.

It's a special honour for me, Mr. Speaker, as this is the first school group that I as a rookie MLA have had the opportunity to introduce. I would ask that we all join in welcoming our guests from Glaslyn to their legislature, and I look forward to meeting with them shortly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Beatty: — I request leave to introduce guests.

The Speaker: — The member from Cumberland has requested leave for introductions. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The member may proceed.

Hon. Ms. Beatty: — I too want to welcome the students from Glaslyn. Some years ago, I attended that — not many — I attended high school there, so I welcome them here. And one of the students from Glaslyn, his name is Gordon Stomp. He's the mayor of Air Ronge, and he's in my constituency. So I have some feelings of ties to that high school. I still have some good friends from there, so I too want to welcome them here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Health Care Bursaries

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today it's my pleasure to rise and to announce that we now have more than 600 new and continuing health care bursaries, an investment of \$5 million this year. Mr. Speaker, this confirms our government's ongoing commitment in the Action Plan for Saskatchewan Health Care. This government believes in the high-quality health care system that is accessible to all Saskatchewan residents, and one that is sustainable into the future with the resources available.

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

A part of the action plan involves a detailed strategy to retain and recruit health professionals to the province. The plan includes initiatives to train more health providers, develop a

representative workforce, expand continuing education and development, improve job satisfaction, implement province-wide health human resources planning, and target bursaries to fill vacancies for needed health care professionals.

Mr. Speaker, bursaries will be awarded to Saskatchewan students studying in health-related areas where shortages exist or are anticipated. In exchange these students agree to work in Saskatchewan's publicly funded health care system upon completion of their studies. More than 220 new bursaries will be targeted to Saskatchewan students studying to be registered nurses, registered psychiatric nurses, licensed practical nurses, primary care nurse practitioners, and those studying to re-enter the nursing profession.

As well, a bursary will be offered to seven nurses in graduate studies who agree to teach at one of Saskatchewan's post-secondary educational institutions upon graduation. This initiative will help fill the vacant nursing teaching positions at post-secondary institutions in Saskatchewan.

In addition, the government, in partnership with the Saskatchewan Medical Association, will offer more than 50 bursaries to students and residents studying medicine. The government is also targeting 40 bursaries to those students studying to be emergency medical technicians.

More than 80 new bursaries will be targeted to Saskatchewan students studying many health sciences professions including pharmacy, nuclear medicine, medical radiation and medical laboratory technology, combined laboratory and x-ray technology, cytology, medical resonance imaging technology; physical, occupational, and respiratory therapy; prosthetic and orthotic technology, speech language pathology, audiology, public health inspection, clinical psychology, dietetics, and ultrasonography.

Students receiving these new bursaries will join more than 180 other students with ongoing multi-year bursaries.

Mr. Speaker, our bursary program is proving very successful. Its success in recruiting health professionals played a key role that enable us to expand MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) capacity, a priority this government committed to on budget day.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that investing in students through bursaries is a very effective way of encouraging them to remain in Saskatchewan after they complete their studies. At the same time investing in our young people supports good health system planning and follows through on our commitment of making our province a great place to live and work, today and for the next generation.

Mr. Speaker, I commend all bursary recipients for their commitment to health care in Saskatchewan by returning to work with and serve the people of this province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Melfort, the opposition Health critic.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with pleasure I rise this afternoon or this morning to respond to the minister's statement in regard to the bursaries for health care professionals.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Mr. Burgess and the minister for providing me with an advance copy so that I might peruse it.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to formally and absolutely congratulate the minister and the Department of Health for this new initiative.

Mr. Speaker, people who have listened to me speak on many occasions on the challenges of the health care system will remember and acknowledge that the issue of retaining and training sufficient health care professionals to meet the system's needs is one of the highest priorities that I've articulated over the years. And, Mr. Speaker, this certainly will go a good distance in providing for those extra people that we need in the health care system in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, in looking at the breakdown of the bursaries, I think that they are done in a very thoughtful and intelligent way and that they are allocated in a way that, in relative terms, is going to provide the proper balance of bursaries across the province.

And so I have to rise and say to the minister and the department that this is very good news. And I too would like to congratulate all the bursary recipients and encourage them to build their futures in Saskatchewan for the betterment of the province and the health care system.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 38 — The Credit Reporting Act

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 38, The Credit Reporting Act be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 38, The Credit Reporting Act be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Clerk Assistant: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a second time?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a first time and ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

Bill No. 39 — The Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Amendment Act, 2004/Loi de 2004 modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur l'exécution des ordonnances alimentaires

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 39, The Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 39, The Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Clerk Assistant: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a second time?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a first time and ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

Bill No. 40 — The Fatal Accidents Amendment Act, 2004

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 40, The Fatal Accidents Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 40, The Fatal Accidents Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Clerk Assistant: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a second time?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Next sitting of the House.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a first time and ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

Effect of Budget on Seniors

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Martensville.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the 75-minute debate today there's a very important motion that we put forward. I'll read that at this time and then present it at the end of my time. And the motion will be as follows:

That this Assembly recognizes the particularly harsh toll this year's provincial budget has taken on seniors in Saskatchewan, especially the closing of long-term care beds, further reduction of acute care services, and raising the provincial sales tax which most adversely affects those people on fixed incomes.

Mr. Speaker, as the person responsible for the seniors issues in the Sask Party, I've taken this one on very seriously, and it's been a rather unfortunate situation that this government has created for the seniors in this province. And saying rather unfortunate is probably an understatement — it is highly unfortunate, Mr. Speaker.

There are a whole long litany of things that this government has done that make life much more difficult for seniors in this province. And I'm going to list seven that I've picked today. I know some of the other people that are speaking will have some other ones, and I want to make sure I get these on the record in case my time doesn't allow to address each one fully.

One situation will be, and I'll discuss this further a little later on, is what's happened with utility rates. Very specifically to the motion, Mr. Speaker, the number of long-term care beds. Another one that's very important for seniors is the long waiting lists that this province has. Sales tax. The education portion of property tax. High crime rates.

And one that is . . . permeates the whole NDP philosophy, and what's happened — it was just mentioned earlier on in question period, Mr. Speaker — and that is that the seniors of our province too often find their children and their grandchildren out of province. That's the effect of decades of NDP government, and they have to take that responsibility for that. And we'll be discussing all of those as we progress through this particular debate, Mr. Speaker.

It's interesting to note, Mr. Speaker, on each one of these seven items — each one without fail — during the election, this Premier made a promise. He made a promise on every one of these. He made a promise on utility rates, long-term care beds, longest waiting lists, sales tax, education portion of property tax. He talked about keeping young people here — it affects the last one I mentioned. He addressed crime. He addressed every single one of those. And, Mr. Speaker, to date he has broken every single promise that he made.

Mr. Speaker, in yesterday's situation that we had here, when we had the galleries full of people from the RMs (rural municipality) of the province, there was a discussion afterwards

with some of the media. And printed in the *Leader-Post* today, April 23, is a little bit of a reference, Mr. Speaker, and it's a statement made by Mr. Larry Grant. And I quote:

If (an agreement) was signed in blood by Mr. Calvert . . . it wouldn't be worth the paper it's written on.

Seven issues I just mentioned here. A promise on all seven issues. A promise broken on every seven issues, Mr. Speaker. What a shame, Mr. Speaker. What a shame.

Mr. Speaker, going through those issues that I mentioned. Long-term care beds — we had a discussion on this about a week ago, and I'm sure a little later on today the member from Saskatoon Eastview is going to get up and try and clarify the statement that was headlined so well in *The StarPhoenix*. She told me yesterday she would. I think she's been rankling for the whole week, especially if she's listened to some of the boots and salutes, to find out how the ordinary person on the street is thinking about this, Mr. Speaker.

(11:00)

So let's discuss that. Long-term care beds. We have in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, I believe something like 148,000 seniors. Those are people over the age of 65, and as yet I'm not a member of those, Mr. Speaker. I know the member from Saskatoon Eastview and myself both have a number of grey hair. And we're getting closer to that age, but we're not there yet. One hundred and forty-eight thousand — more seniors than we have net taxpayers, Mr. Speaker, and they're going to cut beds. They're going to cut beds, Mr. Speaker.

Now the statement made last week was, well we'll teach them to live healthier and then they'll die quickly. Well, Mr. Speaker, to live healthy is a good idea. It is a good idea. It'll do marvellous things. We might have a few more people that aren't as sick as often. Myself, Mr. Speaker, trying to take the government's advice, I walk 3 to 5 miles a day, and I'd invite the member from Saskatoon Eastview to join me. But I should say we walk those 3 to 5 miles a day; we walk that in minutes, not in fortnights, so I'm not sure if she'll want to join me on that.

Mr. Speaker, I need to give a very specific example about why I'm so determined on the need for long-term care beds, and that example, Mr. Speaker, was my mother. Born in the North-West Territories in 1901; went to school; stayed home for one year; went back to high school; finished her high school in two years; decided to become a nurse; went to Newton, Kansas and became a nurse and practised her profession for quite a time in the United States; then came home to Saskatchewan, was swept off her feet by a humble farmer; and here I am, Mr. Speaker.

But that's not the story, Mr. Speaker. The story is she lived a very healthy life, did a lot of exercise even when she was well into her 80s. When her grandchildren were around in winter, they'd all go out. They'd make snowmen and play outside in the snow. A very active person, a fairly sprightly person, and that's because of all the work that she did. She didn't just sit around and lounge and gain weight. She kept her weight down, too low sometimes, but a very sprightly and a very feisty woman.

When she was in her late 80s, Mr. Deputy Speaker, she wasn't feeling that well. She was diagnosed after a fair bit of diagnosis as having a severe cancer situation in her stomach. The medical advice was this: if we go ahead and operate, we'll have to remove basically her whole stomach and she'll be living on intravenous for the rest of her life, which really affected the quality of life, or we can do nothing and she will probably live for a short period of time and then eventually just starve to death. Both choices weren't very easy for the family to make. We made the latter choice, Mr. Speaker, because we felt that our mother wouldn't want to live her last years with a whole lot of tubes hooked in.

Well the statement was made by the medical profession, and rightly so, that she should be moved for those last days, as they thought that it would be, to a senior's care home. Unfortunately there was no room there. So she had to languish in a hospital for four months, waiting to get into seniors' care home. She spent in that seniors' care home, I believe, another two and a half to three years.

And that's why I believe we can't just sort of say live a healthy life and these beds won't be needed, we'll be able to close the beds. That's the end of that discussion we had last Friday, that that would be a solution. It's probably a good way to live, and it is a good way to live, Mr. Speaker — no one in this province is going to deny that — but it is not the solution to long-term care bed shortage.

Now we had given the other day by one of our MLAs a particular home that had 15 beds, 10 people waiting. Now, Mr. Speaker, we realize that there may not actually be 10 individuals waiting for that; that's the number of people on the waiting list. They may be transfers from other homes that want to move into these particular ones. There are some of those situations. However, that wouldn't reduce that more by one or two individuals out of the ... from the 10. That would still leave you with approximately eight or nine, eight or nine people that are waiting to get into a seniors' care home.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the seniors of this particular province don't plan and want to be in a seniors' care home. And that's why they stubbornly — and most of us have had to go through this with our parents — they stubbornly fight to live in their own homes independently until the situation just becomes unbearable and impossible. But as family members we have to say we cannot in good conscience, mom or dad, allow you to live here any more. It just isn't workable. That's using all the care facilities that come to homes that are there. It just doesn't work any more. The NDP government has made it more difficult to fit the categories to get into those hospitals.

But that's not the biggest problem. The biggest problem is these people don't want to be in there. So then suddenly something goes wrong with their health. After years of hard work, good living, whatever else, suddenly that happens — it happens to every one of them, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Then suddenly there's a need to get in there and there is a long lineup.

Now admittedly, no one's going to promote that there should be 5 or 10 per cent empty beds in every home. We don't want that. But the number should be very near to the number that needs to get in so it's on almost a perfect equilibrium, as close as

possible.

And there will always be glitches. There are times of the year when, let's say, we have a flu that comes through the province, and we have more people that need to access long-term care homes than some other times. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that number needs to be fairly close.

And this NDP government that already has hundreds of people on a waiting list — people who aren't looking forward to being in there, who don't want to be in there, but who are being forced to be in there because of their health condition — they want to increase the waiting time by decreasing the number of beds.

We can go ahead and do all we want with healthy living. That's not going to account for those large numbers — 10 people waiting in a 15-bed situation. Walking an extra mile a day isn't going to help, Mr. Speaker. If it helped by one, we'd all be happy for that. It doesn't fix the problem. It's still there. And this NDP government needs to address that, Mr. Speaker; Mr. Speaker, need to address a few more of the issues that I brought up.

We also have in Saskatchewan, amazingly, the longest waiting lists in Canada. And I say amazingly, and I've mentioned this before, and I'll mention it again, and I'll mention it right now. In the home of medicare, where medicare is supposed to have been born — and people planned for, most births are planned — people planned for it, they created it, they had a head start on it, when problems came along they should have been able to solve them sooner than everyone else. Why in the world could we have the longest waiting lists in Canada?

That, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is shameful. We squandered, Mr. Speaker, we squandered the opportunity in this province. Where we had a head start on making the best health care system in Canada, we squandered it, and now we have the longest waiting lists.

Part of that is due to the bad planning in health from this NDP government. The other part, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the pathetic economy that this NDP government has created. Pathetic economy, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The longest waiting lists affects our seniors very much, very much, because they are the key users of our hospital and our medicare. We know that. We expect that. That's the way life is, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You usually have your most illnesses sometime before you die. We live healthy in our early years of life and then when the end comes, some sickness comes along and takes us down. We need that service.

Here in the province of Saskatchewan our seniors have to wait longer than anywhere else in Canada. Again shameful, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we would do that to the people of this province, the people who built this province, the people who took care of us when we were young, who provided an education for us, who gave us the opportunities, who made sure that the roads were here for us, who made sure that the educational and health and universities were here for us. They provided all of that for us that are sitting here right now.

And what does the NDP on that side of the House want to do?

Maintain the longest waiting lists, reduce the number of long-term health cares. It is shameful, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Cannington, this motion:

That this Assembly recognizes the particularly harsh toll this year's provincial budget has taken on seniors in Saskatchewan, especially the closing of long-term care beds, further reductions of acute care services, and raising the provincial sales tax which most adversely affects those people on fixed incomes.

I so present.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — Will the members take the motion as read? Is it the pleasure of the Assembly . . . I recognize the hon. member for Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Deputy Chair, I'm not sure that it's a pleasure to rise today on this issue because of the shameful performance of this government. Mr. Speaker, promises were made not just in the election campaign, but for many years prior to the election campaign of 2003. Promises were made many years before the budget of 2004.

The seniors of our province had expectations that had been given to them by governments over time, that if they worked hard in their communities, if they supported health care in this province, if they supported long-term care in this province, that there would be a space available for them in their waning years.

And this is not a new expectation. This is an expectation that goes back decades. And it's not a new phenomena, Mr. Speaker, that NDP governments have broken that promise.

I remember back in the mid-1970s, under the Allan Blakeney NDP government, when long-term care beds were frozen — no new long-term care beds would be put into place. And there are members in this House that sat here when that happened. The member from Saskatoon Greystone was a member of that government that froze long-term care beds in this province. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're still suffering; the seniors of this province are still suffering because of that decision.

Mr. Speaker, this government is abandoning the seniors of this province, the pioneers of this province, the veterans who fought for this province. It's abandoning our parents.

Take a look at what's happening here. 2002 in the budget, the NDP government of the day proposed a change in long-term care fee structures, that the base rate would be raised to approximately \$1,300 a month and the maximum would be capped at \$4,200. And the difference in between the 1,300 and the 4,200 would be related to a person's income. And the tax rate to be applied on that income was 90 per cent — a base of about 1,300 and 90 per cent tax rate on anything earned above that to a cap of 4,200.

And one of the members opposite, and I believe it was the

member from Regina Lumsden said, well seniors in long-term care don't need any money; everything is provided for them. Their clothes aren't provided for them; any small entertainments that they might have, such as a television set, are not provided for them. And yet that member said, seniors in long-term care don't need any money.

And you know what he said about the idea of charging them a 90 per cent tax rate, Mr. Deputy Chair? It's the right thing to do.

Well we raised it in the House, Mr. Speaker, as the opposition, and the seniors certainly raised it with the government. And the government backed off.

Well that member and this government don't like to be embarrassed. So what have they done now? They're taking revenge, Mr. Deputy Speaker, revenge on those very seniors that stood up for their rights. What are they doing? They're cutting their beds now. There's going to be fewer beds in Saskatchewan than there were previously.

(11:15)

You phone around the province to long-term care facilities, Mr. Speaker, and ask them, what's your utilization rate? And inevitably they will tell you it's 100 per cent, every bed is full. Are there waiting lists? Absolutely, they say, we have long waiting lists. It's waiting lists for people who want access to any bed in the province. But it's also waiting lists from people who, because they have to accept any bed, are moved out of their communities, a long ways from home, a long ways from where their loved ones can come to see them on a regular basis.

Most of these seniors . . . And the rates that the government uses is the numbers over the age of 75, it's getting difficult for these seniors to travel easily. They may not even have driver's licences any more, or they may never have had the ability to drive. So how do they visit their partner in a facility outside of their own communities? The government's response is we don't care, it's the right thing to do. That's an unacceptable situation, Mr. Speaker.

You know back in the 1980s I remember the member from Saskatoon Nutana being up on her high horse proclaiming when the government of the day changed the drug plan to put in a \$125 deductible, being on her high horse and saying it's either drugs or food, you're forcing seniors to choose.

Interesting comment. What does it mean, Mr. Speaker, when the NDP government brought in a \$1,700 deductible?

An Hon. Member: — How much?

Mr. D'Autremont: — Seventeen hundred dollars. Mr. Speaker, do seniors now have to choose between food, rent, and clothing because of what this government has done to them? Those are the situations.

The member from Regina Lumsden during the last election campaign goes up to one senior who had a lawn sign supporting a political party — not of his choice — goes to that senior and tells them if you vote for that political party and they win, they

will take away your health care tomorrow, the day after the election. That's what he said.

And when he was questioned by the media about that comment, his response was, that's what's going to happen. Well, Mr. Speaker, that is not the truth; that is not what was going to happen. It was simply a scare tactic that the NDP utilized across this province to gain support. Mr. Speaker, it's a despicable act.

There's one other item I think that's very, very critical. The NDP have raised the price of utility rates across the board for a number of years. The promise is the lowest utility rates in Canada, and it isn't going to happen, and it isn't happening under these . . . But it's an attack on seniors on fixed incomes. They have no ability to offset that cost in any way, shape, or form, and yet the Crown corporations are simply being used as a tool of taxation by this government.

When you pay a dividend of 90 per cent to the government on a false paper profit of \$113 million and extract \$100 million and the Crown corporation has to borrow money to pay for that, those seniors are going to have to pay that money back in increased utility rates. And that's direct taxation on those that cannot afford to pay, Mr. Speaker. That's an attack on seniors. But as this . . . as members of this government like to say, that's the right thing to do. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's the NDP way of doing things and it's not the right thing to do.

And the very concept, Mr. Speaker, that you would want seniors to die quicker to help out with the bed situation is absolutely diabolical.

Mr. Speaker, I'll use the example of my own father-in-law who is 87 years old, who doesn't drink, who doesn't smoke, who worked hard all of his life and was in very good health until the last few years, has cancer and cannot get into a long-term care bed. But he was virtually . . . he was almost qualified for palliative care but can't get in to long-term care. Thankfully the federal government through the Veterans Affairs supports a program in Saskatchewan for veterans; he, being a veteran, took that opportunity and is in federal long-term care. But the province could . . . would not and could not supply a long-term care bed for him even though he has cancer and will soon be in palliative care, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that is a shameful way to treat the seniors of this province who built this province, and Tommy Douglas would be rolling over in his grave seeing this.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — I recognize the hon. member for Saskatoon Eastview.

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I will not be speaking on behalf of this motion, and I will not be supporting this motion. At the end of my remarks I will be moving a motion that basically says we recognize that this year's provincial budget has invested \$160 million in health care and that the top priority of our government is to provide top quality health care services, like long-term and others that are the top priority of the citizens of Saskatchewan.

And it's a good thing that we have a perfect segue from the member from Cannington's comments about my comments last

week because I want to talk about the deliberate misrepresentation and misleading use of those comments. And when we're talking about scaring seniors . . . He just finished speaking about scaring seniors. And I think that that is probably the most despicable thing I've ever seen is to use that tactic to scare the seniors of this province into thinking that in some way this government . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — Order. Order. Order. Order. I simply want to remind all hon. members on both sides that the debate is focused around a motion, and I urge members to use temperate language with respect to each other.

I recognize the hon. member for Eastview.

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, I think it's unconscionable to use the seniors in this province to move your agenda forward. My son told me when I first was elected into politics that I was naive and I was too naive for this job. I was offended and I disagreed with him. But I think it's true because every time this happens, it still startles me and surprises me and disturbs me that we would use the most vulnerable in our society to further a political agenda.

In no way has anybody ever said that to encourage seniors to die quicker or sooner is the agenda of anyone in this Assembly or in this province. When we talk about living healthier longer, people that listen to that understand it. People that look at the games that are being played in this Assembly as being the story, miss the message. And I had many, many calls and e-mails from people who understood the message. And frankly, the editorials of the paper have understood the message and have basically said the opposition is deliberately obtuse.

And as I said in my remarks last Friday to the Speaker, I have hours of good things I could talk about on health care in this province. I'm going to just focus on a few things today to focus the debate basically on long-term care and the things we were talking about — seniors that have options, different options than we have had in the past.

My own father is in a nursing home. He is a veteran and he is in a nursing home. My in-laws are elderly and frail. They don't want to go into a nursing home. They want to remain independent, so we have home care; we have daycare programs. There's respite. We have assisted living and enriched housing. Many, many seniors are interested in that. And for myself, I'm interested in having options.

The member from Rosthern even said seniors are not all that interested in long-term care. That's not their end goal. We had an awful time moving my grandfather into a nursing home. He didn't want to go. He wanted to maintain his independence at home. So it is our view and my colleague's view and this government's view that those options need to be available.

We spend a lot of our time and money in health care treating the end of disease. We need to focus our attention on what we can do as citizens to prevent disease. And it isn't indicting someone for making wrong choices when we start this discussion. It's encouraging and empowering people that they have the ability to affect their own health and how their lives evolve and how they live. And I think that's empowering.

For me, I think that's a wonderful thing. I may not take up the member's offer of the walk, but I'd probably prefer different company.

And also we need to talk about . . . When we spend our money differently, we need to talk about what those options are for people that foster independence, but also foster feelings of good health because the things that you do to . . . the choices that you make — not only how you change your dietary habits but your exercise — they have positive effects on your whole life. There's socialization. There's all sorts of things that people want to talk about when they make their healthy choices to have different options than basically only long-term care.

The Sask Party's own report to the Fyke Commission has said they don't want to see micromanaging at the district level. They want to talk about an inventory of long-term care beds.

The districts have been doing that inventory on an ongoing basis for years. They have a very, very good idea of what we need in long-term care and where we need it and what we will need in the out years as the baby boomer bulge goes through. So it's not that this is not a new idea to the districts, and they do have this data and they do use it in their planning.

They now have their budgets. From this year's budget they now have their global allotments and they are making their decisions based on those assessments. And they are making those decisions about where they can best spend the public's money to deliver the services that we all agree are important to us. And those decisions are going to be difficult because we all know that even \$160 million added into the budget this year is not going to fund the status quo.

And we talk about change, and people resist change. It's pretty difficult to change your attitude. It's not easy for even any of us to change. When my job was changed, I didn't like it. I resisted and I still have feelings of resentment over that 10 years later. It's difficult to change.

It's a change in culture when we started thinking about instead of putting all our money into treatment, we start looking at what we can do to influence our own lives and what us as policy-makers can do to influence our lives. And we have a fair amount of . . . the onus is on us as policy-makers to look at what will be the best use of the public's money.

We really do need to pay attention to evolving diseases like diabetes, which are coming into the population at a younger age. We need to make different choices and we need to empower people to do that. And the calls that I've been getting into my office are quite interesting. Granted there are some who have heard the spin that the Sask Party has put on, and when you talk to them they go, oh, of course; of course that's what I want.

So it really disturbs me that that sort of thing has been used to scare the seniors when really they understand. When I was minister responsible for seniors, I went out and talked to seniors groups across this province and we talked about this very thing, and they got it. Unfortunately those members don't get it. Or if they do get it, as the editorial said, they're deliberately obtuse. And I think the only way you can explain that obtuseness is, it's

just for political gamesmanship.

And that's what disturbs me because seniors are scared that, for some of them they think they are going to be evicted from their bed. That is absolutely untrue. And it really bothers me to see that that's being used on those people. And when they phone in and say, but I don't want to be out of my bed — well nobody is going to do that to you; nobody is going to do that. And I think it just really reflects badly on politicians to use seniors.

When we talked about trust in this building, daily in question period, I would wonder who I would trust with my future as a senior, if all that my future means and my peace of mind means is that it's a game to them. That would bother me, and I would seriously ask myself, could I trust them? And I would surely say, no.

Now when we talk about the choices that people are making, they're phoning in and saying to me, it's time we had this debate; I want to talk about this because I want to know what choices I can make, what difference I can make in my own life and what influence you as a legislator can have on that. So I think it's time to have the debate. And the calls I'm getting are quite . . . they cover a wide range of people — from people in the medical field, people far and wide in this province — not just my own constituents. But many people from around the province have taken the time to pick up the phone and tell me or e-mail me what they think about this comment. And they understand it and they actually support it, and they like the concept.

(11:30)

Now when we talk about living healthier longer, we talk about a long, healthy life. When we talk about dying quicker, we talk about not lingering in dying. Every one of us will choose that because we understand it. When you start thinking about the alternatives, of course this is the logical thing to do.

And I appreciate the people who have called and expressed their views to me. And I appreciate the people who have called that are unhappy and that misunderstood because they were led down that path. And I really appreciate having the chance to talk to them. And I appreciate the health debates that are brought up every time because I have hours that I could speak on them.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will make the motion:

That all words . . .

The amendment, sorry, to the motion:

That all words after "Assembly" be deleted and substituted with the following:

recognizes that this year's provincial budget has increased the funding for health care by \$160 million, and that the top priority of the Government of Saskatchewan is to use the means available to deliver high quality services like home care, long-term care, the drug plan, and acute care, which are all a top priority of the people of Saskatchewan.

Moved by myself and seconded by the member from Wascana Plains.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — The member for Saskatoon Eastview has moved an amendment to the motion. Will members, committee members, take the amendment as read?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — That's agreed. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the hon. member for Regina Wascana Plains.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Deputy Speaker. I'm proud to enter into the debate to second the amendment before the Assembly because our publicly funded, publicly administered health care system is a source of pride for Saskatchewan people.

I have to say that I'm very suspicious of the motives of the members opposite when they rise day to day with outraged indignation to say they wouldn't do this, or they wouldn't do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because they're not putting forward what they would do. Although from time to time members opposite let comments slip — like the member from Weyburn constituency who says, why shouldn't people be able to pay if they can afford to pay for their services, or why wouldn't we privatize the health care system? And then of course it makes sense because of course then they wouldn't do this or they wouldn't do that; a third party would be doing this or that with profit motive in mind.

And, Mr. Speaker, there's not anyone in the province that wants to go there. And that's why trust has not been placed in the members opposite to put forward a privatized health care plan. And that they voted for this government to maintain and support publicly funded, publicly administered health care that has been a gift to the rest of this country, because of the work of the members of the New Democrat Party and the CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) before them.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we talk about a health system, of course part of that discussion always has to be what we are doing to look at curative care and to look at the supports that we put in place for people to live a long and healthy life. But we also have to talk about the broad picture.

As the mover of the amendment says when we . . . All of the kinds of supports that we put forward to seniors which includes . . . As the person moving the motion said, seniors stubbornly want to be in their own homes as long as possible. And of course then we would move into looking at housing being an important, important issue for seniors. And with that in mind, we have social housing for seniors. We've got assisted living mechanisms in place for those who want to stay in their own homes. I think of the housing options, like a life-lease housing option for seniors. There's the home repair program that will make adaptations to help seniors stay in their homes longer.

And the list goes on, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The rehab program, the residential rehab program to assist them with making repairs to their homes . . . there's a long list of the ways that we would support seniors to stay in their homes as long as possible. And that's the first choice for seniors in our province.

But when it comes a time to support services beyond that, we have invested in medicare in this province and urged the federal government to continue to and increase their support for medicare in this country.

Saskatchewan's health care system provides a range of health services and supports to seniors in their communities, in their homes. And all these services are aimed at helping seniors remain healthy and independent Saskatchewan residents. They're eligible for receiving hospital services, medical and public health services, and mental services as insured health services provided by funding from the provincial government administered through Saskatchewan's regional health authorities.

The health budget for 2003-2004 totalled \$2.5 billion which was an increase that year of a 184 million over the previous year and, has been mentioned, this year another increase of \$160 million. So we can look at since 1999-2000 budget an increase of about 33 per cent in health care funding for publicly administered, publicly funded health care for the province of Saskatchewan.

I want to take a few moments to talk about the home care in the province of Saskatchewan because, as we said, for those who want to stay in their home longer, Saskatchewan health care's . . . home care program helps many seniors with their health problems, who may need acute or palliative care or supportive care in order to live independently longer in the comfort of their own home.

The program helps people maintain their quality of life and provides support for people who may otherwise have had to be hospitalized or put into the long-term care system in the province. There's case management and assessment. There's home nursing services. Physical and occupational therapy services are provided at no charge. And for things like meals, personal care, respite, or homemaking, that's based on income and the amount of care that's required, so it's based on the individual.

There are some services that we once had available many years ago only through the hospitals, that we now deliver at home. And some of the examples of that might be, the people who need intravenous antibiotic therapy and palliative care, and they can receive those services now in the comfort of their own home.

Individualized funding makes a difference for seniors as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Action Plan for Saskatchewan Health Care, the provincial government's plan to improve health care in Saskatchewan, provides individualized funding as an option available through the regional health authorities for home care programs.

And what does that mean? That means that people with increased . . . will have increased choices and flexibility in the

way their needs are met. Through the home care program, where individuals are eligible for home care and are responsible, they receive monies to take the responsibility themselves for hiring, for training, scheduling and determining their own staff, managing their payroll, following applicable legislation, and reporting to the health region. This provides yet another flexible option, but is available through the action plan for health.

Much has been said about long-term care and special care homes. And the Government of Saskatchewan is committed to continuing to provide a publicly subsidized, long care system for individuals whose assessed needs cannot be met through the community and home-based services and the housing options that I have mentioned.

And much has been said about saying, where were we trying to go when we looked at the changes that were contemplated to the long-term care subsidizations. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're talking about the very upper-end incomes, high-level incomes who are now capped. And we were asking if they could support a little bit more in the system to allow us to continue the subsidies for all members in the system, that we would have that option remain strong and viable into the future.

The way it translated and the fear that the members opposite portrayed in the communities of us taking away from capital assets and other things that were not part of the equation led us to believe that we need to change the perception of fear that's been created, and we did other things to support that system, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Long-term care services are delivered by almost 200 special care homes and long-term care units in this province. And this totals about 8,600 residents as of March of last year, so it's increased this year as well. Our current ratio of beds per thousand population aged 75-over is second highest in all the provinces in this country.

Typically persons requiring levels of care use special care home services. And to make the best use of special care home resources, individuals are admitted on the basis of assessed needs. Assessments are done by the health authorities. The average cost of a nursing home bed is about \$4,300 per month or approximately \$51,600 annually, so the provincial government currently subsidizes those costs by 77 per cent.

Province-wide cost of care and accommodation in long . . . (inaudible) . . . care services are a priority. The subsidy is a priority to allow those seniors the best care with the income that they have available to them.

And of course as I've mentioned that these are income-tested charges based on annual income plus their earned interest . . . that's not personal assets such as land, houses, bank accounts. They're not taken into account when determining this. And that's exactly what the members opposite said we were trying to do when they mentioned the members' opposite comments.

With those kinds of comments, Mr. Speaker, I haven't even been able to get into the move that we have to improve surgical care lists. There's the Saskatchewan Prescription Drug Plan. There's the Saskatchewan Aids to Independent Living, There's

many, many aspects to the support that we give to deliver care for seniors in this province.

And that's the reason why I stand with great pride to support the motion that's before us from the member from Saskatoon Eastview, and would have wanted to spend many, many hours more in the Assembly talking about the things that we do to support seniors living a long, healthy, comfortable life in their homes or long-term care homes in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — I recognize the member from Rosetown-Elrose.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I am pleased to rise and support the motion put forward by my colleague from Martensville, and seconded by my colleague from Cannington, which states:

That this Assembly recognizes the particularly harsh toll this year's provincial budget has taken on seniors in Saskatchewan, especially the closing of long-term care beds, further reductions of acute care services, and raising the provincial sales tax which most adversely affects those people on fixed incomes.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's been interesting to listen to this debate. And I've heard my colleagues stand up and speak on behalf of seniors, defend seniors. And then I've listened to the members on the opposite side, the NDP members, and what did they do, Mr. Deputy Speaker? They lectured the opposition for defending seniors and for standing up for seniors. I think that that is a terrible way to conduct a debate. I think that the NDP should reconsider their strategy because it's a terrible strategy.

I happen to know that many, many seniors watch the debate in this House, and I'm guessing that there are hundreds, perhaps thousands of them watching. And they saw my colleagues in the Saskatchewan Party speak up in their defence, and then they saw NDP members ridicule and put down the Saskatchewan Party MLAs that were speaking on behalf of senior citizens. I believe senior citizens are beginning to recognize the truth of the NDP, that they care nothing about their needs and concerns, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

You know, it used to be that when I went to school and when you went to school, Mr. Speaker, we were taught about myths. And there are a lot of myths going around. I mean, one of the old myths was that the earth was flat. And of course we know that that caused explorers to fear going out and exploring new horizons because they were afraid they'd fall off the earth.

Well myths have been replaced by urban legends, and there are just a number of urban legends floating all over cyberspace right now. But a new urban legend that has unfolded over the last few years is that the NDP in Saskatchewan cares about seniors.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that urban legend is false. The NDP care nothing of seniors, and this budget that they introduced last

month conclusively proves that the NDP is attacking seniors, as they are many people in the province of Saskatchewan. And myths and urban legends need to be debunked, and that's what the Saskatchewan Party is doing. And we do not need to be lectured by the member for, particularly from Eastview who should be also defending seniors rather than lecturing my colleagues here on the Saskatchewan Party side of the House.

(11:45)

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was in my community here in Regina — I have a home here in Regina as well — and a neighbour came up and said, you know I've been NDP all my life; in fact I've been pretty involved with the NDP. And he said that when the NDP government was considering raising long-term care fees a few months ago prior to the election, that he wrote his MLA, an MLA here in the city of Regina. And he said he had a petition that he wanted this MLA to present in this legislature — a legislature that belongs to the senior citizens of Saskatchewan as much as any of us.

And he said his NDP MLA from Regina refused to bring that petition and present it in the House, a petition that was opposed to the increase in long-term care fees. So he had to go to my colleague, the member from Melfort, to get that petition tabled in the House, to respect his views on the NDP's decision to raise long-term care fees for senior citizens. He said, you know I worked hard for the NDP all my life, but that was a real eye-opener. And he said to me, he said, you hold those guys accountable; you go after them. He said, I'm particularly disappointed that all of my support over all these years means nothing as I now become a senior citizen and watch how they treat me.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my own community of Rosetown, my own constituency needs a new long-term care facility. The community have been working on this project for a long time. They have all of the money committed to contribute to this project from the constituency, from the community. The town of Rosetown is committed. The rural municipalities around Rosetown are committed to this project. All they need is the provincial government and the Minister of Health and his colleagues on the other side of the House, the NDP, to agree to fund this project.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the project wasn't needed I wouldn't get up in the House and speak in support of it. But I want you to know and I want the people of Saskatchewan who are watching to know and I want the NDP on the other side to know that right now senior citizens are forced to live long-term care in a basement under the hospital. It's not safe. It is frustrating for them. They don't have proper lighting. They don't have windows. Can you imagine after contributing for decades to the province of Saskatchewan and then needing long-term care, to be put into a basement, a place that's not safe, a place that if a fire was to ever break out, would put their lives at risk . . . Mr. Deputy Speaker, everyone in Rosetown knows that it's not right. They know that it's not proper treatment for senior citizens. They know they need a new facility, and they also know that they're prepared to do their part. They will put forward the money required to build this new facility if the NDP will do their part. The NDP have been dragging their feet. The NDP have been pleading poverty.

The people of Rosetown know that the money that the NDP have lost outside of the province of Saskatchewan could build that long-term care facility over and over and over again, that a facility could be put in Rosetown, that a facility could be put in every community in Saskatchewan where it's required — if the NDP government had not blown those millions and millions of dollars on Las Vegas type gambling projects all over the world.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the senior citizens of Saskatchewan are beginning to recognize that the old urban legend that the NDP cares about seniors is just that. It's a legend. It's not true. It's a falsehood.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, seniors are on fixed incomes. Seniors on fixed incomes are paying high property taxes, the highest that they've ever seen. Seniors who have needs like the rest of us — they have to buy food; they have to buy personal, you know, things for their personal lives — are now paying more PST (provincial sales tax) on those purchases. It's gone from 6 per cent to 7 per cent. Mr. Deputy Speaker, seniors who worry about their health are now seeing waiting lists so long that they see and hear of seniors who have died waiting for the health care that they require. And they're not just discouraged; they're frightened.

And then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they hear the member from Eastview talking about, well if they just lived healthy lives, then they'd die quicker. And she said that she's been misrepresented. She said the Saskatchewan Party has misrepresented her. I know exactly what the member from Eastview meant. The member from Eastview meant that if you live a healthy life, hopefully when you come to the end of that life, you won't have a long illness — I think that's what she meant — and your time for needing the health care system will be shorter.

But I say to you, Deputy Speaker, she has no scientific basis on which to make that claim. Healthy people at some point in their lives will become ill, and we have no guarantees over whether that illness will be long or short. And my colleague from Martensville discussed his parents. My own father . . . No one lived a healthier life than my father. And, Mr. Speaker, you knew my father. He was a hard worker; he was a healthy eater; he didn't partake of bad habits. And he contracted Alzheimer's when he was in his 80s and he needed a lot of assistance. And he had a strong heart. He lasted for a long time, and it was hard on our family.

There is no guarantee, I say to the member of Eastview, that because you live a healthy life that you're going to die quick. We all hope that but, Mr. Speaker, there's no guarantees. And it is an affront to the senior citizens of Saskatchewan that the member from Eastview would be so callous and to be so inconsiderate to say that, if you just live healthy, you'll die quicker and you won't need long-term health care.

That is disgusting, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that member should apologize to the seniors of this province, as should the NDP apologize to the seniors of this province for bringing down the most hard-hearted budget that senior citizens and the people of Saskatchewan have seen in many, many a decade.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support this amendment or this motion. The amendment put forward by the member from

Eastview just adds to the urban legend. It's not truthful, it does not reflect health care in this province.

And therefore I would encourage all members to support my colleague's motion and to recognize the amendment for the urban legend that it is. I thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — I recognize the hon. member for Saskatoon Sutherland.

Mr. Addley: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy, Deputy Chair, or Chair of . . . I have a speech that I was planning on giving. But I think given what I've heard today, I'd like to take a slightly different tack because it seems that the temperature and the anxiety on this issue seems to be raised. And maybe it's intentional; maybe it's not.

But I don't think anybody in this House has cornered the market on compassion for seniors. I don't think the opposition is necessarily out to get seniors. I don't think that the government is out to get seniors. I know members on that side of the House whose heritage it is to honour and revere seniors. I married into that heritage and I know that senior citizens in that culture and in that heritage hold a very important view.

You know, some might view it as negative in some ways, but realistically when you've reached that age that you can speak with wisdom and the children and the grandchildren and generally the great-grandchildren actually listen to the seniors, and honour and respect them . . . oh.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — Why is the member for Arm River on his feet?

Mr. Brkich: — Leave to introduce guests.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — The member for Arm River has asked for leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — I recognize the hon. member for Arm River.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In your Speaker's gallery are several gentlemen that I would like to introduce. They're here looking to invest in rural Saskatchewan. They've been touring the area around Wynyard and they believe that this is a very good place to invest. They plan on — if the investment goes through — of providing 100-plus jobs, plus exporting some of the material that they're going to be making here back to the Jilin Province. And the Jilin Province I believe is our sister province in Saskatchewan which is very good connections.

I would like to introduce Eugene Frank; he's the spokesperson for the group. There's Simon Lim; he's marketing investment. There's Simon Hu, operator . . . manager of operations. Andy Lim, he's in administration; and George Kecalala in marketing

director.

I would apologize maybe if I was mispronounced an odd name, but I would hope that all members here will join me in welcoming them and I hope that they will find, I know they will find Saskatchewan an excellent place to invest. And I know that my constituency office is assisting them and I hope that the government on their side in Agriculture will help them in any way. I know that they have several meetings with them coming up.

So with that I would like to welcome them here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — Why is the hon. member for Saskatoon Massey Place on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — With leave to introduce guests, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — The Minister of Industry has asked for leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — I recognize the hon. minister.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'd like to join with the member opposite in welcoming these gentlemen to the legislature today as Minister of Industry and Resources and to agree with the member opposite that we do have many excellent opportunities for investment in our province.

We welcome investment and our Department of Industry and Resources would be very pleased to provide any information that we have about programs. We have several programs to assist manufacturers and processors, for example, and we're glad to see the interest in our province. And I just want to also welcome these individuals and wish them much success in pursuing opportunities in our province.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — I recognize the hon. member for Saskatoon Sutherland.

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

Effect of Budget on Seniors (continued)

Mr. Addley: — Thank you very much again, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As I was saying, I do believe that there are members on both sides of the House that really respect senior citizens. I referred to some members on the opposition and their culture. I know members on our side, we have members of First Nations individuals and they honour and revere their elders. And in that community, people who have attained a certain age are very much respected. And I know we have actual religious ministers and they minister to seniors and have probably attended many

and overseen many funerals as well and supported. We've got people within the medical facility, the medical community that, regarding a nurse, that have worked with seniors. And so I don't think that anyone in this House has cornered the market on being supportive of seniors.

I do want to say that it is important that when we take a step back and cooler heads prevail, that we look at the budgeting process as a matter of choices. We want to come up with a process that will meet all of the diverse needs through all of the expectations, right from the birth of a child to pre-school to K to 12 (kindergarten to grade 12) education, and to . . . they want to go on to university or to SIAST and then to have a good economic career here. And then in retirement years, that you actually have good, stable funding and good, stable housing in a safe community and utility rates that are affordable, an affordable place to live. And that when you come to the end of your earthly life, that you will be supported and that you will be ensured that you will be respected.

And I think it was, it was obvious to me when I heard it, and I think to most members, that what the member for Eastview was talking about was what, you know, Socrates and Plato were talking about — the good death. And it's not that you would want to hasten death, it would not . . . not that you would want to bring it on more quickly or get into the aspect of euthanasia, but that when your time comes, that you can have a fairly quick and fairly painless death. And I think that's something that all members would want to have.

And I don't, in my reading of the comments and the situation afterwards, there was no expectation or no intention to try to encourage people to move along or that it's somehow a solution to any kind of budgetary process. I don't think that that is something that should be encouraged in this House. This is . . . it's a very respectful place. It's something that we're very fortunate to be able to serve our members here, and I think sometimes we need to step back a little bit from the rhetoric and move forward. I know that passions sometimes get high, in particular after an election or the term just before the election.

But I think we need . . . It's time to turn the page, from my perspective, Mr. Speaker. I know that my own grandfather . . . I'll tell a couple of stories about my own personal background. My grandfather passed away in his early 90s and, you know, he had a rough life. In some cases he made some good choices, made some bad choices, but generally he was fairly healthy through all of his years. It wasn't until, wasn't till he was something like 92 that he started to have some serious medical problems. And at that point then he went into the hospital and was fully supported.

(12:00)

My other grandfather on my other side, I mean, he passed away before I was born but, you know, he was a no-nonsense person and knew the value of a dollar. In fact my father tells the story that the year that the Highways department decided to keep the roads open in the wintertime . . . and he thought that was the biggest waste of money. Why in the world would you need to have the highways open in the wintertime? Now that's the background that I come from, Mr. Speaker, very much knowing where the dollars are.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the motion that the opposition has put forward, and then the amendment that the member for Eastview has, supported by the member for Regina Wascana Plains has put forward, is really . . . it deals with the same issue, but it's a different perspective on it. You know, on one aspect, one could say that there's so much more that we should be doing for everyone with regards to health care. As has been said in the budget debate, this government and this budget will be adding \$160 million or 6.3 per cent to the health budget.

Now as most people know, most of that, most of the health care budget, or a lion's share disproportionate, is consumed by people in their senior years. People who are 30 years old generally . . . you know, they might break their arm, but that isn't very expensive fix. The expensive fixes are, you know, the heart surgery or the cancer surgery or the knee replacements — those sorts of things. And that generally happens later on at the end of the life. So this \$160 million will largely go toward the seniors. You know, that's where most of the money goes.

Now for myself, a family of five, that \$160 million is equivalent to \$800 per family additional, year over year. And this increase, by the way, is to the base. I know that the federal government announced \$2 billion. That generally is . . . about 60 to \$70 million is Saskatchewan's portion. But that 60 to \$70 million is not built into the base. That is just a basic dollar amount. And next year, if they don't come up with another \$2 billion, we actually are . . . have a 60 to \$70 million hole in our budget that we have to worry about.

The other aspect that . . . The federal government talked about equalization payments. But most people don't realize . . . is the changes to, the federal changes . . . and this goes back 15 years on the drug patent legislation. Used to be that, you know, when the patent ran out, that there'd be generic drugs. Now with the federal changes, that patent is extended, and the drugs companies have found a loophole. They twist it around, add a few little ingredients, don't change what it does, and they can apply for a new patent. So there's quite a bit of responsibility on the federal government to step forward in health care.

Our portion of health care funding in this province has gone up to 44 per cent, and 44 per cent is not sustainable, Mr. Deputy Chair, in the long term. We're going to need more federal funding. I know that our Minister of Health and the federal Minister of Health are meeting. I know the Prime Minister and our Premier has met on equalization. There's some financial difficulties that need to be addressed.

Now I know that the opposition has talked about their motion — and I see my time is coming to an end — but it seems to me that the opposition is deliberately misunderstanding some of the things that this government is doing. And I know there's political reasons to do that, but I would hope that they would honestly take another look, join us in trying to build a better province and a better health care system. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — Members, that concludes the debate portion of the 75-minute timed debate. We now enter comment and question time. I recognize the hon. member for Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to direct my question to the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

The proposal has been made by the government that long-term care facilities will be closed. My question to the minister is in relationship to those facilities. Will this mean that beds will be closed in facilities that have 100 per cent utilizations? If that is the case, where will those seniors be placed? Will they be retained in their own communities? Will they be shuffled off to the other end of the province where they know absolutely no one?

And if the member says that they will not be closing beds in 100 per cent, will she guarantee that? And will she support any motions to maintain the beds in those facilities that have a 95 per cent-plus utilization rate?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — The hon. member for Eastview.

Ms. Junor: — I can't speak for the Minister of Health. This is private members' day, so the question is more in the privy of the minister. My own knowledge is there is no long-term care plan . . . no long-term care bed closure plan. And the districts, as far as I understand, have got their global budgets. They're now in the planning stages, and they will determine how they spend their money within their regions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — I recognize the hon. member for Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the member for Cannington. Mr. Speaker, my question . . . after the long, verbose statements made by both the member from Cannington and the member from Martensville, talking about all shortcomings they see in this provincial budget and all the negativity they portray about this budget, Mr. Speaker, I have two questions. The first, do they support, do they support the initiatives for home care in the upcoming budget? And in fact . . . or in the budget, pardon me, Mr. Speaker. And do they support assisting seniors remaining in their own homes longer so that they can have a better quality of life, rather than being placed in nursing homes, Mr. Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — I recognize the member for Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What we support is that seniors have the best quality care that they need in this province, Mr. Speaker, for their quality of life, whether it be home care in their own homes or in long-term care facilities, Mr. Speaker.

The budget proposals that this government has put forward is simply downloading the responsibility onto the district boards, forcing them to make the cuts, Mr. Speaker, and that's unacceptable. People should have the opportunity to stay in their own homes, and yet home care within the districts is underfunded, Mr. Speaker. People should be able to be in long-term care if they need it, and that's being underfunded, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So this government is failing the seniors of this province, both in long-term care and in home care, Mr. Speaker, and that's unacceptable to the seniors of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — Why is the hon. member for Cypress Hills on his feet?

Mr. Elhard: — With leave to introduce guests, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — The hon. member for Cypress Hills has asked for leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — I recognize the hon. member for Cypress Hills.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for obliging me at this late moment. I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce a group of students from the Cabri School. This is the third student group we've had in the legislature from Cypress Hills in the last few days, and we're very glad to welcome this particular group: 12 students, they're in grade 8 at Cabri, and they're accompanied by teachers John Irving and Denise Andreas, and they've got some chaperones and drivers, I'm sure, with them as well: Shari Jackson, Roxanne Knittel, and I guess it's Angie Olson, and Erin McKinlop.

And I'd like to welcome them personally. I appreciate having this group from Cabri in my time in the legislature; this is the first time Cabri's been to the school that I recall. And through you and everybody else, I'd like to show them our appreciation for their visit. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — I recognize the hon. member for Carrot River Valley.

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

Effect of Budget on Seniors (continued)

Mr. Kerpan: — Mr. Speaker, I want to ask a question of the member for Saskatoon Eastview. In the past number of years I've been involved . . . in my political life I've been involved with justice and justice issues, and have actually spent a good part of my time in her constituency doing public meetings.

Whenever I ask seniors if they feel comfortable and safe in their own community, almost to a person they'll say no they do not. I want to ask the member why this government has broken all of its promises and especially as they relate to seniors; and why have they not . . . have failed to live up to their promise to provide more police officers for Saskatoon and all of the province so that seniors and all citizens of Saskatchewan could

at least feel safe in their own community?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — I recognize the member for Eastview.

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I was campaigning in the '98 election I visited many, many seniors in their homes, and what they told me was their top priority . . . was that they wanted access to health services close in their community.

So what has happened in Eastview is the first in the province. A seniors' primary health centre is now in Eastview, so seniors can access their health services really close to home. In one complex, they can actually go in their housecoat and slippers down to access primary health care services. There's a lab tech there. There's a primary health care nurse. Other services come there, through there, including doctors.

This is what the seniors in Eastview told me when I was campaigning that that was their top priority. They wanted to see those services close to home, and that's what we have done as a government. We have provided those services and primary health care to the seniors in Eastview.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — I recognize the hon. member for Saskatoon Sutherland.

Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I still have three minutes of my speech . . . it was cut off, the time, but I'll forgo that.

My question is to the member for Martensville. Why did he vote against \$2.5 million for higher priority surgeries? Why did he vote against \$2 million for the purchase of a new MRI? Why did he vote against \$1.8 million for diagnostic testing for capacity? Why did he vote against \$6.6 million for cancer agency? And why did he vote against \$2 million to expand renal dialysis? Why did he vote against \$16 million for the drug plan, a 10 per cent increase? Why did he vote against \$1 million, \$2 million annualized for a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder provincial plan?

I would ask that member, why did he vote against all of these measures that are listed in the budget, many of them which are directed towards seniors, if not directed specifically, but are utilized largely by seniors?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — I recognize the member from Martensville.

Mr. Heppner: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, we had a government that presented a budget. This budget was presented by a government that said they would provide the lowest utility rates for seniors in the country. They haven't done that. That's shameful. I would not support a government and anything they do when it comes down to breaking that particular promise.

They promised there would be more long-term care beds. They

haven't kept that, Mr. Speaker. How can I support a budget from a government that doesn't keep its promises? Mr. Speaker, they said they would shorten the long-term waiting lists. We have in this province the longest waiting lists in Canada. Why would I support a budget created by a government that would tell an untruth about that, Mr. Speaker?

They said there would be no sales tax. The Premier stood up, and he said there was no stomach for it. He said no, no. How could I support a budget from a Premier that would say there was no stomach for a tax increase, and then he increases the tax by 1 per cent, Mr. Speaker?

He said that there was going to be attention paid to the education portion on . . . of education on the property tax. It's not in the budget. How could I support a budget that is wrong on that area, as well?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — I recognize the hon. member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My question is also for the member from Martensville, and it would simply be, was the elections in October of last year . . . have they been fulfilled and has this been justified?

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — The member for Martensville.

Mr. Heppner: — Okay. Somebody was home; we were just waiting for the light to go on.

Mr. Speaker, virtually all of the promises that this NDP group and their leader, the Premier, made in that last election have been broken — virtually all of them. I have no doubt that they're all going to be broken.

Utility rates, broken; long-term care beds, broken; longest waiting lists, broken; no sales tax, broken; attention to be paid toward the education portion of the property tax, broken; taking care of our agricultural problems, broken.

Increased fees, those were put in place.

Children, give an opportunity for youth to stay in the province, broken. Safety for our youth, safety for our seniors, those 200 police officers — broken. Time after time after time, every promise we've found in the NDP's list of promises have been broken, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — I recognize the hon. member for Dewdney.

(12:15)

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the member from Martensville. Is he in favour of changing drug

patent laws to provide and allow for cheaper medication for seniors and all citizens of the province?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — I recognize the hon. member for Martensville.

Mr. Heppner: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we're talking about finding funds and finding ways to accommodate and to finance our health programs, we realize the costs are going up. We realize there are all sorts of costs in there. But just today in question period, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we discussed the amount of money this government lost and held in the Crowns — that they lost in the Crowns outside of this province. We're virtually surrounded, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with losses. And they took pride in that. They defended that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — Order. Time has expired.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Trew): — I recognize the member for Regina Elphinstone.

Motion No. 1 — Government's Commitment to Young People of Saskatchewan

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy, Deputy Speaker, I believe is the term being bandied around here. It's a pleasure today to get up and speak to a motion that says, and I quote from the motion which I will be moving at the end of my remarks, and I'll be seconded by the member from Sask Rivers:

That this Assembly recognize the government's on-going commitment to the young people of Saskatchewan and that the initiatives in the budget will continue to build a bright future for the youth of this province.

Now this wasn't the most . . . it wasn't the easiest budget to put together, Mr. Speaker, and there was some tough choices made. But I think there were some fair choices that accurately reflected the priorities of the people of Saskatchewan, and the priorities that we brought to the people in the election in the fall that was concluded on November 5, which resulted of course in an NDP government.

Now one of the top priorities in this budget has been focusing on children, youth, and opportunity. This included \$1.2 billion for education, which was a 3.8 per cent increase over last year. It also included \$24 million in capital improvements for K to 12 schools, and \$16 million for post-secondary institutions.

Now my seatmate is from Saskatoon Fairview, Mr. Speaker, and the good news on high schools for Saskatoon — both on the east side and the west side — I know is very welcome news in this regard, Mr. Speaker.

This has also meant increasing the post-secondary graduate tax credit to \$1,000 over four years. Now this year in the budget, we've increased the tax credit — the only such tax credit in the country, Mr. Speaker, I might add — from \$350 to \$500.

We're launching the Young Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan program. We're creating 200 new child care spaces, and we're increasing the child benefit payments for single parents. And I'll have more to say about these each individual items later on, Mr. Speaker.

As well we recognize that creating opportunity for young people means a healthy province in terms of prenatal to postnatal and in terms of the opportunities that people have for education and for research in the health care section.

Now this has meant that of course we put \$2.7 billion into health in this budget which is at 44 per cent . . . which represents 44 per cent of all government spending in this budget. That's an increase of \$223 million in spending, and 72 per cent of that global spending increase is going to health care.

Now of the \$160 million going to health care, \$115 million goes to salaries, benefits, medical fees for service to help attract and retain qualified health professionals. And today, Mr. Speaker, we heard the Health minister speak about how the target of 600 health care bursaries has been achieved which is tremendous. It includes \$46 million in facilities and equipment, including \$27 million in capital and \$19 million in diagnostics, Mr. Speaker.

Now if we're . . . We have a commitment in this government to take on the challenge of waiting times, and certainly providing the resources for diagnostics is critical to that effort. But it's also critical to have the people to run those facilities and, you know, certainly our money is where our mouth is on that regard.

We're also putting forward \$6.6 million to the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, a group that does tremendous work, and I can speak to this on a first-hand basis, Mr. Speaker.

We're putting forward \$1 million for prevention projects, enhanced diagnosis and assessment for fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and other cognitive disabilities. Now in terms of the investments that we can make in a preventative sense, Mr. Speaker, taking on the challenge of FASD (fetal alcohol spectrum disorder) is so important in terms of getting kids off to a good start in life so that the deck isn't stacked to them, you know, right before they come out of the womb. This is so important.

Another measure in this budget was 72 more training seats for the nursing education program. And of course, you know . . . Again, Mr. Speaker, if you're going to provide quality health care, you need the people to do it. And we've been ramping up the number of education seats in the health sector, and this is part of that effort.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, to get back up to the question of prevention, we're also increasing funding to the Kids First program for 60 new families to enter the prenatal program and to receive support.

Now this works with families from when the mother is pregnant — prenatally, again, this enters into the question of FASD and prevention efforts there — but working with families that may not have that . . . the skills to cope in terms of, you know, running a household, how to get the best nutrition during a

pregnancy to have a healthy baby, and then the proper upbringing of that child unto entry into the K to 12 system.

Now if we can, again, if we can get these kids off to the best possible start, Mr. Speaker, that's going to pay a dividend in terms of, in terms of a healthier society, in terms of healthier citizens, in terms of more productive citizens, and say, you know, there's a benefit to be gained in terms of better, better outcomes for people, better opportunities. But there's also a penalty that we're going to pay if we don't make sure that these . . . that the appropriate investments are made at this critical age — you know, from prenatal to age five — to get these kids off to the best possible developing in terms of cognitive gains, in terms of just their basic health from nutrition, and in terms of growing up to know that they are loved and well supported, Mr. Speaker, and that they have a stake in society, and that this is something that we can do together.

So health care is also an important part of this effort, Mr. Speaker.

Another critical element of our plan to build that . . . to prepare Saskatchewan for that next generation is supporting communities.

Now in this budget we saw an investment of \$295 million to fix the roads and to build even better highways. And you know, Mr. Speaker, the highways aren't where we need them to be, but I think over the past three years we've dedicated a substantial commitment to improving them. There have been a . . . The roads are much better. And I think the reports on that are quite good. We're not quite where we need to be and that's . . . we've got a plan to move forward in the future to increase that infrastructure. And it's important in terms of tourism, in terms of the economy, in terms of making that environment better for . . . to put the appropriate elements in place for that environment that will be conducive to job creation, to a better quality of life, Mr. Speaker.

Now in that effort, it includes resurfacing 325 kilometres of highways, continuing to twin the Trans-Canada and the Yellowhead highways. And, Mr. Speaker, I know that the twinning efforts, certainly on the No. 1, it's making those, you know, not just . . . it's not just making the transportation better, it's making those highways more safe.

And one of the first experiences I had with death was in high school where I had friends heading out to Brandon and, you know, were hit head-on by a car coming westbound just outside of Virden, and three of the four kids in the car died.

And you can't help but think that if that highway had been twinned, that wouldn't have been the problem, that tragedy would not have occurred. And I know that tragedy has occurred for far too many families, Mr. Speaker. And I think that by twinning both on our western border and our eastern border, this is not just a good economic investment but it's a good investment in the health and the well-being of our people.

In terms of building safe and vibrant communities, we're investing a further \$10 million in revenue-sharing grants for municipalities, which is a 13 per cent increase over last year and the third \$10 million increase in three years. Mr. Speaker,

obviously our municipalities are vital partners if we're going to build a better Saskatchewan for all our people, and we want to make sure that they've got the resources appropriate to their responsibilities and to make sure that they've got the funds to bring to bear as we build safe and healthy communities.

And you know again, Mr. Speaker, we have a plan for more in the future, but it's . . . We're doing what we can with the resources we have and we're backing the priorities of our people and we're putting our money where our mouth is. And I'm going to put a little water in my mouth now, Mr. Speaker. There we go.

Now of course agriculture is very important to this province and, you know, there's a lot of young people that'd like to get into farming, and that's why this government has committed \$1 billion over four years in provincial support for the agricultural policy framework and income support program. Now again, those are real dollars, Mr. Speaker. And you know, out of scarce resources we've made, we've backstopped this important priority. Real dollars — real dollars, not the hot air variety, Mr. Speaker.

We've also invested \$12.6 million for affordable housing construction under the provincial housing policy framework. And coming out of a community like north central, Mr. Speaker, in Regina, housing is a critical issue to our neighbourhood and to other areas that I represent in the city. And this is a program that's been a long time coming, Mr. Speaker, and I'm very excited to see that we're finally going to start the dollars flowing this year.

It builds on some important work that has come before, but in terms of housing you know you think about the basic needs of people — there's food, shelter, and clothing. And obviously shelter is so important if you're going to be able to provide for your family, and if you're going to give them that good quality of life and give them the conditions so that they can take advantage of the opportunities that we have in this great province of ours, Mr. Speaker.

So I think that that housing initiative is . . . more details are coming very soon, Mr. Speaker, and I'm very interested and excited to see that go forward — very hopeful.

We've also put forward \$211 million in job training and job creation. And again, this is something where we differ I think from the opposition in that we believe we can partner with different sectors in society; certainly in terms of economic development that we can partner with business, that we can partner with First Nations and Aboriginal people, that we can partner with the co-operative sector to provide jobs for the people and to create wealth and to build on that economic progress that I think we have seen in this province.

We're also putting forward \$200,000 which is, you know, no small amount of money to launch the Green Team which is a summer student employment program focused on environmental management and energy conservation.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know that the environment is a huge priority for people of that 18- to 35-year-old group and certainly from the early grades in school. You think about, you know,

how we're taking care of this planet of ours and what we're going to be doing to maintain it for future generations. And young people want to make a contribution to that effort for good stewardship, for building a green and prosperous economy, for doing things that make sense, Mr. Speaker, in terms of energy conservation, in terms of green energy initiatives. And I really look forward to the opportunity that this provides for young people to get in there to make a difference and to have their say.

A fourth pillar of this budget, Mr. Speaker, is that of fiscal management and accountability. Now we've reduced the . . . We'll be reducing the dependence on the Fiscal Stabilization Fund by 40 per cent from last year in this budget. We're improving our summary financial results by over \$380 million since 2002-2003. We're introducing a summary financial plan, a consolidated look at all government departments, Crowns, agencies, and boards. And we're introducing a new general revenue four-year financial plan that will generate a \$42 million surplus over the next four years and meet the requirements of the provincial balanced budget Act.

Now as somebody who came of age in the 1980s, Mr. Speaker, as I know . . . or, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I know you yourself did, you think a lot in politics about fiscal responsibility. And I think that's been a main concern for this government. I think we're building on the legacy that we inherited from the Romanow government. And we're building on the reconstruction job we had to do, Mr. Speaker, in terms of repairing the destruction of the 1980s.

(12:30)

Now some members opposite may differ with that opinion, and I understand why that may be the case because of course they lined up with the Grant Devine administration. So I think I know where they're coming from. And I won't give them much more attention than they deserve, but we are concerned about fiscal management and accountability, Mr. Speaker, and we'll strive to ensure that in this budget.

Now something that's critical to education, to the . . . If you're going to have opportunity, Mr. Speaker, education is important. Education is the great leveller in our society. It's the means by which you take advantage of opportunity; it's the means by which you can identify opportunity, Mr. Speaker. So obviously education is critical to building a green and prosperous economy, to building a better Saskatchewan for our young people.

Now we've, as I'd said earlier, Mr. Speaker, we backed that up with a record investment of \$1.2 billion in education and training in this budget. And again that's real dollars. It's not just wish we may, wish we might — that's cash on the table, Mr. Speaker.

We've introduced the graduate tax credit. We've increased it to \$500 this year, and we're going to increase it to \$1,000 by 2007. And again, Mr. Speaker, this provides an incentive for young people to start their career right here, and again the only one like it in all of Canada, Mr. Speaker.

The foundation operating grant to school divisions will increase

by \$18 million to \$527 million to support high-quality K to 12 education. Now if we're going to have good teachers in the classroom, if we're going to have good infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, obviously you have to pay for it somehow. And again on this side of the House, we're putting our dollars into the budget; we're putting our dollars into these programs. And I guess, Mr. Speaker, our record speaks for itself. It's the second-highest increase in the budget, and we're going to be continuing to build on that.

We've added \$1 million to CommunityNet to enhance the provision of high-speed Internet access for K to 12 students and teachers in remote schools.

Now in question period today, the Leader of the Opposition, he took a bit of a different approach. He actually mocked the kind of access to the information highway that we have here in Saskatchewan. And I found this interesting because I've heard him speak on other occasions about the importance of connectivity and things like that. But I guess, I guess anything for a cheap laugh, Mr. Speaker.

But CommunityNet is critical if we are going to provide the tools to our people to build a 21st century economy, to build a 21st century education system. And certainly with the large province we have, with the far-flung geography, the population concentrations . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. I appreciate that members want to participate in debate, and they will have the opportunity as time goes on. But I would ask members to give their attention to the member who has the floor.

I recognize the member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So given the change in heart of the Leader of the Opposition and the apparent change in the importance of the Internet, I think that I would like to do a little remedial instruction on what CommunityNet is and its importance to the province.

Now CommunityNet is a broadband, high-speed, province-wide telecommunications network that will provide both virtual private networks and province-wide high-speed access to the Internet for education, health, and government services at a cost similar to the lower . . . the former lower speed network access.

Now in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, we have, we have access to high-speed Internet, the likes of which that we don't have anywhere else in Canada. And why do we have that? Because we have SaskTel, a Crown corporation — one of the best telecommunications companies in Canada, if not North America — working in partnership with communities, with schools, with health institutions, with First Nations to make sure that we have that vital tool in our people's hands so that they can get access to the information so that they can have that rapid communication that is so critical to these modern days.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, so what does, what does CommunityNet do for educational institutions, teachers, students, libraries? Well it helps them to search the Internet efficiently. It helps them to access shared applications, to access, use, and share academic resources from anywhere in the

world including high-quality resources developed here in Saskatchewan. It helps them to access on-line distance education such as the exciting developments we've seen in Campus Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and to communicate with staff and students in other offices or other communities or indeed around the world, Mr. Speaker.

Now it's, it's interesting that since we've begun this program, who's been connected to CommunityNet, Mr. Speaker? Well 880 of 880 Saskatchewan schools, including 85 First Nation schools have been connected; 30 regional college facilities have been connected; 310 . . .

An Hon. Member: — How many?

Mr. McCall: — It was 30. The member from Northeast was just looking for a little reclarification there. Thirty regional college facilities have been connected; 310 of 310 health facilities have been connected; 256 of 256 government offices have been connected; and 154 of 162 provincial public libraries have been connected. You know, we've got a little bit of work to do there, Mr. Speaker, but we're certainly coming along.

Now CommunityNet is available in 366 communities, and SaskTel offers high-speed Internet service in 237 communities. We're leading the way, Mr. Speaker. And we're able to do that because we on this side have a commitment to public enterprise, and it's, I think, served the people of this province well in terms of high-quality services, in terms of well-paying jobs for people, in terms of providing a dividend back to the general coffers, to general revenues that in other instances, Mr. Speaker, goes into the coffers for the stock options and to the high money of . . . Pardon me, Mr. Speaker. Now I mention CommunityNet because that's just one area where we are leading the country, Mr. Speaker.

And I would like to point out some other facts about education in Saskatchewan. We have the lowest high school drop-out rate in Canada. I think that's tremendous, Mr. Speaker, because again, education is critical if we are going to have . . . if we are going to build that better future.

Again, with regards to Campus Saskatchewan, secondary students in Saskatchewan can now take 75 different courses on-line, with many more being developed for on-line delivery. And again, in a province like Saskatchewan, that's easy to draw and fun to say, it's — with big geography — it's important that we get that access out there.

Now we have, additionally, Mr. Speaker, we have a post-secondary sector that serves more than 100,000 students and learners through two universities, five federated colleges and five affiliated colleges, three Aboriginal institutions, SIAST in four campuses, eight regional colleges, Lakeland College, 52 private vocational schools, and the Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission. And again, Mr. Speaker, that's 100,000 people — that's one in ten in some kind of post-secondary education.

And again, Saskatchewan people are committed to learning; they're committed to broadening their horizons in this land of the broad horizons for sure, Mr. Speaker, and this . . . you know, they're making good on that every day.

Now there are many other measures, Mr. Speaker, that are important to building that better future for the province, but in the interest of sharing some of the time with my seconder, I would like to wrap up my comments by saying that you know, we have a commitment on this side to try to build that good economy, to build that good education and training opportunities for our young people, and we've put our money where our mouth is. And we've done that consistently over . . . since 1991. And certainly from pre-'82, Mr. Speaker.

We've done that in innovative ways like community schools. I, myself am a product of Kitchener Community School, a project brought in by the Allan Blakeney government under then Education minister, Doug McArthur. And you know, it's . . . I guess those are the kind of things I think of when the opposite side likes to mock the contribution that a person like Allan Blakeney made to this province. And you know in a place like north central Regina, Allan Blakeney and the NDP made a tremendous contribution to improving the quality of life that we have in a community like that. And I guess I don't understand what they mean by the mockery and apparently neither do most of the voters in that constituency, Mr. Speaker.

We have in this budget the increase to Kids First, which again builds . . . that's . . . you know gets in on that ground floor with kids to make sure that they're able to avail themselves of opportunities. We have the increases to K to 12, the increases to post-secondary education, and on, Mr. Speaker. There are a great number of other opportunities for young people that I wish I had the time to talk about today, Mr. Speaker, but in the interests of giving my seconder a good crack at the issue, I will now move the motion and state that . . . and so move:

That this Assembly recognize the government's ongoing commitment to the young people of Saskatchewan and that initiatives in the budget will continue to build a bright future for the youth of this province.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre, seconded by the member for Saskatchewan Rivers:

That this Assembly recognize the government's ongoing commitment to the young people of Saskatchewan and that initiatives in the budget will continue to build a bright future for the youth in this province.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Saskatchewan Rivers.

Mr. Borgerson: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's my pleasure to speak to this motion and to speak to the multitudes that sit before me.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as an educator for the past 30 years, the future of young people has been an essential part of my life. I've been honoured to have been a teacher, a principal, internship supervisor, university instructor, and a faculty member and program coordinator for Prince Albert SUNTEP

(Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program) centre. In all of those roles the centre of my thinking has been children and youth, and so I'm pleased to be able to speak to the motion presented by the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

When I first spoke in this House, I talked about the common ground that we all share — friendship, family, community, respect. The future of our young people is a part of our common ground. As combative and confrontational as we sometimes pretend to be, we can all agree on this. We all want a good future here in this province for our children, our grandchildren, and for future generations.

We speak this common ground every day without even noticing it in our members' statements, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in this House. Every day we recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of young people. This is our common ground. In many ways our members' statements are more important than the theatrics of question period, the confrontation and inquisition of question period. Our members' statements are not theatre; they are real stories, our stories, stories about accomplishments by the people of this province, and many of these stories are about our young people.

As the media, like theatre critics, slide quietly in for question period and then out again, looking for controversy, they often miss the real stories of this province.

In this session we have acknowledged and celebrated Junior Achievement Awards in Saskatoon; the Provincial 4-H Public Speaking Awards; the First Nations Winter Games; a youth forum on sustainability; the Robin McCallum youth conference; the Eston-Holman student exchange; the Kindersley Junior Klippers; Tri-Town Thunder winning the Junior B championship; Yorkton schools' fitness awards; a Métis Nation hockey tournament in Meadow Lake; the 26th Annual First Nations University of Canada Powwow; the achievement of a young musician of Eaton; student artwork on the farm safety calendar; a student from Young raising \$1,200 for Telemiracle; youth action now; the grand opening of the Aboriginal Head Start program facility in north central Regina, and two students from Churchill High in La Ronge attending the World Summit on the Information Society.

(12:45)

Mr. Speaker, in our members' statements, we celebrate the young people of this province over and over, and we applaud on both sides of this House. And, Mr. Speaker, when students visit the Assembly, we are genuinely delighted to see them. We crane our necks to get a look and we applaud them. And so when it comes to youth, we stand on common ground in this Assembly. We all want to celebrate youth and we all want a good future for young people here in this province.

As I have gone door to door in rural areas of my constituency, I meet many parents whose children are at the U of S or SIAST or have landed jobs in the city. Some have sons and daughters who want to stay on the farm in spite of drought and BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy), and some have daughters and sons who have left the province for training, employment, for quick bucks in the oil sands.

There will always be young people who choose to leave this province, for a while or for good. This was true when I was young; this is true today. But now more than ever there is a need for all of us to do more to give young people a future here. This is a priority that I have, that this government has; a priority shared with other provinces as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, last year the Canada West Foundation conducted a comprehensive poll of 3,200 citizens across Western Canada from Manitoba to BC (British Columbia). The poll asked people to indicate their top five topics in terms of government priority. Among westerners overall, health care was at the top of the list. Number two on the list was retaining young people. In Saskatchewan, 79.2 per cent of the respondents placed youth in the top five. No surprise really. But here's the interesting part: in Manitoba retaining youth was also at the top at 77.5 per cent, and in Alberta, retaining youth was also in the top five at 61 per cent. Even in Alberta this is a concern and a priority.

So there is common ground here in this Assembly and in the West, a common purpose to keep our young people here and make Saskatchewan a good home for future generations. Good work has been done, but we all recognize that there is much more to do.

We have the second highest minimum wage in Canada next to Manitoba. We're in fourth place in terms of youth employment ages 15 to 24. We have had the lowest high school dropout rate in Canada. Our high school completion rate at 84 per cent is higher than the national average of 81 per cent. In Saskatchewan there are 27 undergraduate students per 1,000 people compared to 24 nationally. This is good, but it's not enough. We can do better and we will, as a government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have the highest proportion of young people in the country right here in Saskatchewan. Many of them are Métis and First Nation. When I've gone door to door on the four First Nations in my constituency I met so many young people, bright, humorous, thoughtful, all with hope for a good life, a good future here where we live.

Some have completed high school. Some are considering SUNTEP (Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program) or ITEP (Indian Teacher Education Program) or ISWEP (Indian Social Worker Education Program) or the Aboriginal nursing program or SIFC (Saskatchewan Indian Federated College). Some simply want good employment and the training that will take them there.

And so we have a great challenge ahead of us with exciting possibilities. Most of our young people stay in this province and take up productive lives. But what can we do to make sure that more young people have a future in this province, good jobs, and a good quality of life? I look forward to this challenge in the months to come and I see it as a collective process.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, many years ago I took a teaching position in Ile-a-la-Crosse. And there, with my students, we pioneered what I've called collective theatre or collective creation. The students and I would circle up and talk about the issues that mattered in their lives. They would share their ideas and eventually choose a topic for the next play that they would

create. They would then explore those ideas through improvisation, through storytelling, and various techniques. And in the end, they would create a play.

These plays were performed . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the member opposite, the member opposite has just broken the second and third commandments of heckling.

The plays that we created were performed all over the North, in Cree and English. We used what we called an oral script, which involved the play evolving and changing from performance to performance. It was always a work-in-progress, always a work-in-progress.

And so plays were created like Sakitawak Kayas, Napew, and Scrip Van Winkle and on and on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as an educator of 30 years I have learned so much from young people and still do. But one of my greatest learnings has involved this idea of a work-in-progress, of a collective process, of trusting in the ideas and creativity of others, of inviting those ideas and of creating a time and place to make them happen. I believe this government has built a foundation for such a process.

Our 2004 budget includes \$1.2 billion for education — a 3.8 per cent increase from last year. It will fund 200 more child care spaces in this province, and at the other end of the spectrum it will provide another \$16 million for post-secondary institutions and another 24 million in capital improvements for K to 12 schools, including a project in Ile-a-la-Crosse involving a school and hospital complex. This complex will replace the school where I learned about collective theatre and the hospital where my daughters were born.

This government will advance the School^{PLUS} initiative across the province. Nearly half of our school divisions will be involved. Mr. Speaker, I have visited many schools and classrooms over the years and I've spent many, many hours in community schools. In the best of those schools there is a real sense of family, of community. There is humour and caring and a wonderful balance of individual attention and working together, and the community is ever present and involved.

I can remember walking into Queen Mary Community School in Prince Albert one day and it occurred to me as I walked down the hallway . . . Well the first thing I noticed, of course, was that the signs on the doors, the names of the teachers were all familiar to me because they were all graduates of the SUNTEP program, SUNTEP teachers, and so a few of us used to call that hallway SUNTEP street.

But the other thing I noticed was that there were various adults I was meeting in the hallway. And if you didn't know them, you wouldn't be sure whether it was a teacher or an administrator or a social worker or a counsellor or a parent or a parent volunteer. This is what School^{PLUS} is all about. The presence of parents, human service providers, and community members in the school, all contributing to the learning and well-being of our young people. A sense of working together, a collective process at work.

I would add that within School^{PLUS} are many smaller initiatives, one example being the Community-Teacher Engagement Fund in support of small local projects that support students' well-being and school success.

Mr. Speaker, it is my belief . . . Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is my belief that meeting the needs of young people lies not only in major initiatives. It will result from small but significant initiatives as well. Many small initiatives often add up to more than a few grand ones. For example, CareerStart will provide for nearly 10,000 youth opportunities. The post-secondary tax credit will increase from \$350 to \$1,000 over the next four years. Green Team summer opportunities, summer employment opportunities, will be created for young people interested in energy management and energy conservation. Young Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan will be launched to encourage and support young people as they set up small businesses in this province. This program will target 150 youth.

There are many more initiatives that will continue under this government. All of these initiatives and more are part of this government's youth strategy. They are, I would argue, part of a work-in-progress — not that much different from the collective work I spoke of earlier.

I say again to the members on both sides of this House, and to those who watch these debates, contribute your ideas. And as we work together and share ideas, there will be more initiatives in the months and years to come.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a common purpose in this government to focus on the young people in this province. We are doing this through our continued support of public education in this province — another 45 million this year. We are doing this through a number of creative initiatives that we can build on, and we are doing this in other significant ways as well.

Our increased dollars to health care demonstrate our commitment to public, not-for-profit health care in Saskatchewan. While the Fraser Institute and its political proteges try bit by bit to break down the people's trust in public health care, this government and this party will continue its role as a steward of public health care in this province.

We will continue to lead the way in health care reform in this country, and by so doing we will leave a legacy for the young people of this province. This year's budget, as difficult as it is, is plain proof of that commitment.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I will take the opportunity to acknowledge some people in the health care field. My mother has been in health care for the past week and a half and has received wonderful health care at the Pasqua Hospital here in Regina. And so I would like to use this as an opportunity to thank the nurses, the doctors, and all of the staff at Pasqua Hospital for the wonderful care that they've given my mother in the hospital there after having a hip replacement.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Borgerson: — And I would also like to thank all of the people who work at the Assiniboia Union Hospital for the work

that they're . . . for the contribution they're giving to my mother's recuperation at this time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Borgerson: — My mother is a strong believer in public health care, and an even stronger believer now.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a green and prosperous economy is another commitment of this government. It too will involve and invite a collective process of ideas building on ideas in the course of this government's term.

Nothing can be a greater legacy for our young people than to safeguard and protect our environment. Everything — our economy, our recreation, our health, our sense of well-being — everything depends on how well we take care of our soil, air, forests, and water. We should remember this on Earth Day, which was yesterday, and we should remember this every day.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Borgerson: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, our budget this year has enshrined our Crown corporations. These are important to the people of Saskatchewan. They employ over 9,000 people. They present the lowest package of utilities in this country, but more importantly they are a part of our heritage and our very way of thinking. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they also contribute to individuals and communities and particularly young people right across this province.

SaskTel has numerous initiatives that it contributes to: career fairs, technology fairs and science camps, summer hire program, co-operative education, job shadows, technology for women, take your kids to work, work placements, high school partnerships, computers for schools, school earth program, balloon program — numerous initiatives from SaskTel. They also make a great effort to hire young people and to hire Aboriginal people.

We're approaching the evening of the Aboriginal Youth Achievement Awards in just a few days, at which time Aboriginal youth right across this province will be recognized with the assistance of SaskTel.

Post-secondary scholarships are provided by SaskPower, Sask Water, SaskEnergy, and SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance). All of our Crown corporations actively recruit youth and particularly Aboriginal youth for current, future, and summer jobs.

And finally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I grew up beneath Bonzo Peak in the very south of this province. And there was no greater . . .

(13:00)

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. It now being past 1 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. Monday. I ask all hon. members . . . 1:30 p.m. on Monday. I ask all hon. members to have a pleasant weekend.

The Assembly adjourned at 13:00.

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Premier

Hon. P. Atkinson
Minister of Crown Management Board
Minister Responsible for Public Service Commission

Hon. J. Beatty
Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation
Provincial Secretary

Hon. B. Belanger
Minister of Northern Affairs

Hon. E. Cline
Minister of Industry and Resources

Hon. J. Crofford
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Minister Responsible for Disability Issues
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