



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

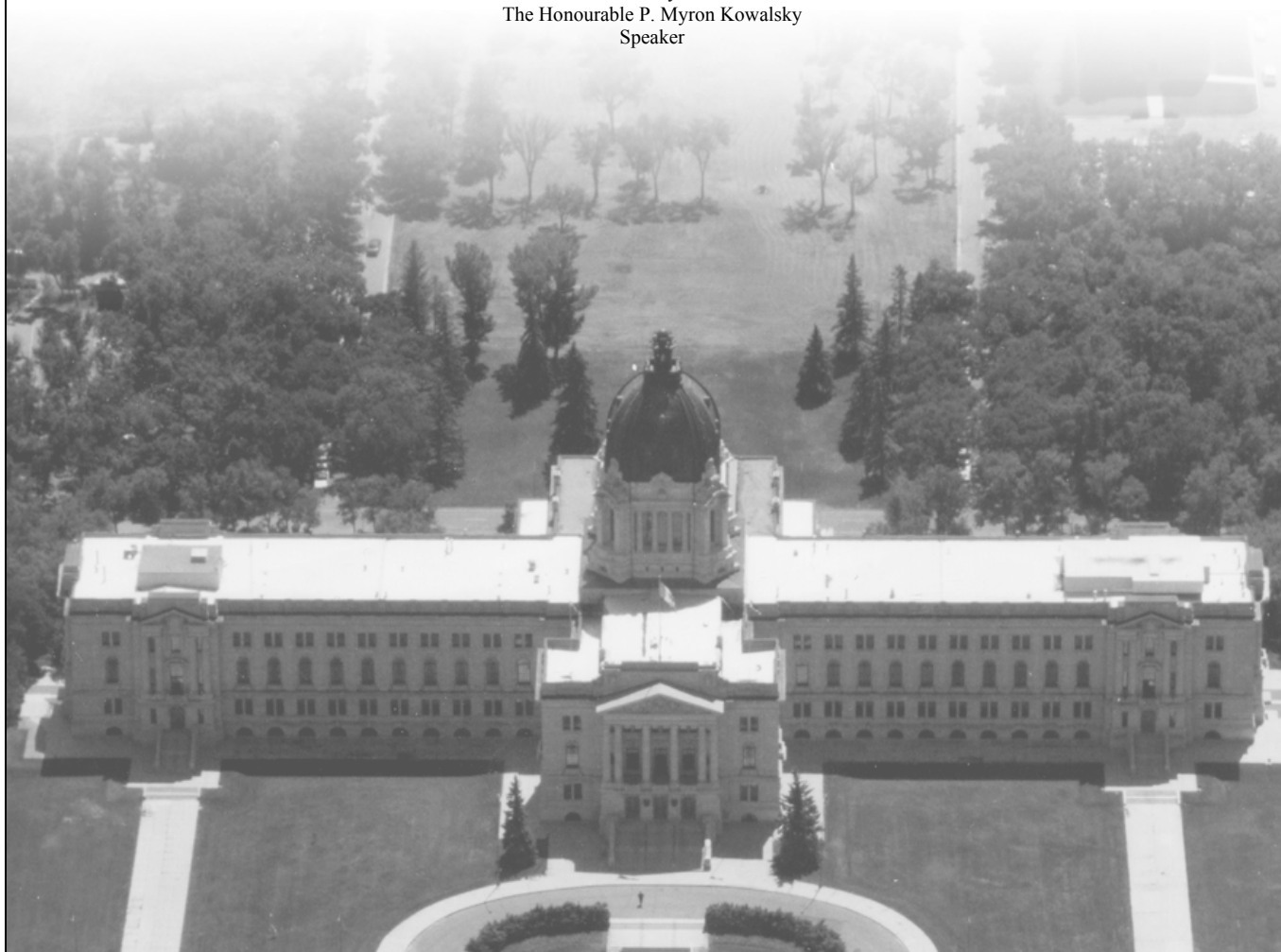
of the

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
Gantfoer, 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 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to present a petition on behalf of a number of residents from the Broadview and surrounding areas regarding a renal dialysis unit for their facility to facilitate and assist many people who need dialysis in the area and help alleviate some of the costs that they face. And I read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray the your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary step, action to implement a strategy that will see a dialysis placed in Broadview Union Hospital.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by people from the communities of Broadview, Whitewood, Mr. Speaker, from the communities of Wolseley, McLean, Montmartre, Indian Head, Carry the Kettle First Nation, Cowessess First Nation, and Wawota. I so present.

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

Mr. Addley: — Mr. Speaker, I hereby present a petition for a private Bill on behalf of petitioners from the Concentra Financial Services Association in the province of Saskatchewan.

I also hereby present a petition for a private Bill on behalf of petitioners from the Saskatoon Foundation in the province of Saskatchewan.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Cypress Hills.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of constituents from Cypress Hills concerned about the impact of forced amalgamation of school districts. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to reverse the decision to force the amalgamation of school divisions in Saskatchewan and continue reorganization of school divisions on a strictly voluntary basis.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, these two pages of petitions are signed by constituents from the community of Gull Lake. I so

present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have petitions to present today. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to reverse the decision to force the amalgamation of school divisions in Saskatchewan and continue reorganization of school divisions on a strictly voluntary basis.

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

And these petitions, Mr. Speaker, come from the good citizens of Swift Current, Gull Lake, and Webb. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Swift Current.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I again rise on behalf of residents of Swift Current concerned about the deficiency in residential support offered to people with lifelong disabilities. The prayer of their petition 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 provide the funding required for additional residential spaces for Swift Current residents with lifelong disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, the petitioners today are from Swift Current, McMahon, Rosenhof, and Pambrun. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today on behalf of people who are concerned about the growing scourge of crystal meth in our province.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause this government to take the necessary action to implement a strategy that will deal with crystal methamphetamine, the education, prevention, enforcement, and treatment.

The people that have signed this petition are from Rama, Invermay, and Margo. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Rosetown-Elrose.

Mr. Hermanson: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition concerning the provincial government's response to the Boughen Commission and the fact they are just picking pieces of the recommendations to the detriment of the entire report. Mr. Speaker, the prayer of the petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon.

Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to reverse the decision to force the amalgamation of school divisions in Saskatchewan and continue reorganization of school divisions on a strictly voluntary basis.

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition are from the communities of Rosetown, Herschel, and Sovereign. And I'm pleased to present this petition on their behalf.

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

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition to do with forced amalgamation. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to reverse the decision to force the amalgamation of school divisions in Saskatchewan and continue reorganization of school divisions on a strictly voluntary basis.

The signators, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Yorkton, Melville, Fenwood, Goodeve, and Saltcoats.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Thunder Creek.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise as well to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with forced amalgamation of school divisions. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to reverse the decision to force the amalgamation of school divisions in Saskatchewan and continue reorganization of school divisions on a strictly voluntary basis.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals all from the community of Craik. I so present.

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

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again today I rise to present a petition on behalf of constituents of mine who are very concerned about the forced amalgamation of school divisions. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to reverse the decision to force the amalgamation of school divisions in Saskatchewan and continue reorganization of school divisions on a strictly voluntary basis.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this is signed by citizens of Estevan, Midale, Tribune, and Oungre. I so present. Thank you.

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

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of constituents of Weyburn-Big Muddy who are very concerned about the flawed CAIS [Canadian agricultural income stabilization program] program. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to ensure that the CAIS program receives adequate provincial funding, the funding formula is changed to ensure equal access to compensation, and to contribute funds to the latest BSE assistance package released by the federal government.

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

And the petition is signed by residents of Weyburn, Riceton, Assiniboia, Bengough, Viceroy, and Moose Jaw. I so present.

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

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here signed by citizens to halt crop insurance premiums and coverage reductions.

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens from Kenaston and Hawarden. I so present.

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

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present another petition to revisit the effects of the TransGas Asquith natural gas storage project. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately address the concerns of all individuals affected by this project, pay 100 per cent of the costs involved to rectify disruptions to water supplies, produce an environment assessment study encompassing a larger area outside the scope of the project, disclose the project's long-term effects on these areas, and consider alternative sources of water for the project.

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

Signed by the good citizens of Moose Jaw. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to present a petition on behalf of citizens who are gravely concerned with this government's plan to force the amalgamation of school divisions. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to reverse the decision to force the amalgamation of school divisions in Saskatchewan and continue reorganization of school divisions on a strictly voluntary basis.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signatures to this petition, Mr. Speaker, come from the communities of Melville, Duff, Fenwood, and quite a number of citizens from the city of Regina have also signed this petition. So I'm pleased to be able to present it on their behalf.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member from Moose Jaw North.

Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I hereby present a petition for a private Bill on behalf of petitioners from the Soeurs de la Charité de Saint-Louis in the province of Saskatchewan.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and pursuant to rule 14 are hereby read and received as addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 637, 640, 715, and 720.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 87 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for SGI: which investments held by SGI or any of its subsidiaries were subject to an independent third party review in 2005, and what were the results of the review?

I have similar questions, Mr. Speaker, for 2004-2005 . . . or 2003, excuse me. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Swift Current.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 87 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Community Resources and Employment: how many new residential spaces for individuals with lifelong disabilities were funded for Swift Current in the 2005-2006 provincial budget?

I so present.

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

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice I shall on day no. 87 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for Agriculture: what percentage of money allocated for the 2003 CAIS program has been paid out to the Saskatchewan producers?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 87 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for SaskPower: what is the cost charged by SaskPower to villages, towns, and cities per street light in their jurisdiction?

And I'm also asking on day no. 87:

To the Minister Responsible for SaskPower: what is SaskPower's policy regarding dates for turning on Christmas lights and decorations? And what is the policy regarding any village, town, or city that does not adhere to this policy?

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

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I shall give notice on day no. 87 I will ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy: which investments held by SaskEnergy or any of its subsidiaries were subject to independent third party review in 2003, and what were the results of the review?

In addition I shall ask the government the following question:

Which investments held by SaskEnergy or any of its subsidiaries were subject to an independent third party review in 2004, and what were the results of the review?

And also:

Which investments held by SaskEnergy or any of its subsidiaries were subject to an independent third party review in 2005, and what were the results of the review?

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

Mr. Kerpan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 87 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for SaskPower: which investments held by SaskPower or any of its subsidiaries were subject to an independent third party review in 2003, and what were the results of the review?

Mr. Speaker, I have similar questions for the years 2004 and 2005. Mr. Speaker, I will also ask the government on day no. 87 the following questions:

To the Minister Responsible for SaskTel: which investments held by SaskTel or any of its subsidiaries were subject to an independent third party review in 2003, and what were the results of that review?

I have similar questions for the years 2004 and 2005.

Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet I should give notice that I shall on day no. 87 ask the government the following questions:

To the Minister Responsible for Crown Management Board: which investments held by Crown Investments Corporation or any of its subsidiaries were subject to an independent third party review in 2003, and what were the results of the review?

And I have similar questions for the years 2004 and 2005.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet I give notice that I shall on day no. 87 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for SaskTel: was a third party review completed prior to DirectWest purchase of Midwest Marketing? Who was hired to conduct the review? What fee was paid by SaskTel for the review? And will the review be tabled, and if so, when?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 87 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: have any facilities run by community-based organizations that provide addiction services been closed? If so, please provide the names for the years 2000 to the present.

Second question:

Have addiction programs previously provided by those closed facilities been cancelled? If so, please provide the names. And are any addiction programs previously facilitated by CBOs now being provided by regional health authorities? If so, please provide the names.

[13:45]

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, today I am very, very pleased to introduce in your gallery five young men and their coach. About two weeks ago, a little bit more, they were in Pinerolo, Italy, representing our province and our nation in the

World Junior Curling Championship. Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to introduce to the House today the World Junior Curling Championship men's team, from Saskatchewan, from Canada, the Kyle George team.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I would like members to greet them individually. Let me say, however, they are all, all from the north end of the city of Regina. That I think has made some Regina members very, very proud. I would invite the members of the team to stand as I introduce them: skip, Kyle George; third, Justin Mihalicz; second, D.J. Kidby; the lead, Chris Herbert; and the alternate, Dustin Kidby; and their coach, Dwayne Mihalicz. Please let us welcome and congratulate them.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition, we want to join with the Premier in welcoming Kyle and his teammates and Coach Mihalicz to their Legislative Assembly and to thank them for representing not only our province, but our country so well, for coming back safely from Italy, and most importantly, for coming back from Italy with the championship. We want to congratulate them on their efforts.

And I especially note Dwayne as well, the coach, who has also represented Saskatchewan proudly at the Brier in curling. We just want to join with the Premier and ask all members to again welcome this great team to their Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Beatty: — Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce to you, in your gallery, delegates who are in Regina attending a conference of Canadian Government Houses. And there's far too many of them, so maybe I'll just ask them to wave.

Mr. Speaker, the conference delegates are from across Canada and represent Government House management, Government House Foundation . . . [inaudible] . . . groups, national historic sites, and private secretaries to lieutenant governors.

This conference is the first of its kind and will provide a useful exchange of information and ideas on how each of our government houses can best serve the people within our jurisdictions across this country.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that we have been able to host this conference during our province's centennial and that delegates have been able to enjoy not only our provincial hospitality but also the opportunity to see phase 1 of the Government House heritage property centennial project. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in welcoming the delegates.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, I would like to join the hon. minister in welcoming the delegation here this afternoon. I see Dr. Jackson up there and his delegation. I welcome you all. I hope you enjoy your visit to Regina, and I hope you have safe travels. So I ask all members to join me in welcoming them to Regina, on behalf of the official opposition.

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I would like to also introduce to you a constituent of mine. Seated in your gallery is Darcy Hill of Torquay. Darcy is a grade 11 student at the Estevan Comprehensive School, and he maintains a 90 per cent average, and he plans to enter politics when he has completed his university. So I ask all members to join me in welcoming him to this legislature today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to recognize in the west gallery this afternoon, Gail Schuster. She's a constituent of mine from Yorkton. She's served for many years as the senior executive on a number of community-based organizations in the city, worked for some time with SecurTek, and is between jobs today and is here visiting with her daughter who is at the University of Regina. So I'd like to welcome Gail to the Assembly today and have all members of the Assembly join me in welcoming her here this afternoon.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — While I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I want to have on the public record, I want to say to Mr. Kyle George, his cousin . . . or his uncle, Tom Seeley, is a very good friend of mine in Yorkton. And Tom tells me that Kyle has learned all of his curling skills from him. And I want Kyle to know that I've watched Tom curl, and you didn't get any of your skills from Tom. Welcome. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of the legislature two people who are seated in the top row to the far right of your gallery. And these two people are Sue Cherewyk, who is one of the organizers of the Parkinson's curling classic, which is going to be held in Regina this weekend.

And seated beside her — and I'll ask her to wave — is Phyllis Fox from British Columbia. Phyllis is the mother of Michael J. Fox and, as many of you know, Michael was diagnosed with Parkinson's a few years ago and has founded and continued to

operate a Parkinson's research foundation in the United States.

This is the seventh consecutive year that Phyllis Fox has attended the Parkinson's curling classic here in Regina and to date this event has raised over \$350,000, all of which remains in Saskatchewan. We're one of the leading researchers for Parkinson's disease in the world.

We're privileged to have Dr. Ali Rajput and his son Alex at the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] who have been doing a lot of work around Parkinson's, and this event supports them.

I'd ask all members to welcome these two, but especially to welcome Mrs. Fox to Saskatchewan again.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation on welcoming the delegates who are here today from across Canada with regards to heritage structures and particularly to introduce to the members of this legislature one member, one of the delegates in attendance here today who also happens to be a constituent in The Battlefords.

I'd like to introduce to you and through you, to the members of the legislature, Mr. Speaker, the mayor of the town of Battleford, Ms. Gail Sack who is at this conference because of Government House. And we all are aware of the sad and tragic loss of the original Government House in the town of Battleford a couple of years ago. And we wish Gail well here, in her visit to Regina and our legislature. Thank you.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are two people in the west gallery that I would like to introduce to you and through you to the rest of this House, one who has attended this House on a number of occasions, Mr. Dave Morgan — if Dave would just make a wave.

And I'm informed by his cousin, the Hon. Minister for Industry and Resources, that though the minister himself is a very good politician, Dave would probably be a much, much better politician. And so, we'd like to welcome him to this House, and we would like to thank him for the tremendous work that he has done in the area of addictions in this province. Mr. Speaker, I would ask members to join me in welcoming him.

And the other person I would like to introduce is Melanie Dolton. Melanie is new in our office as a ministerial assistant. She is from a farm in Preeceville, and was most recently a reporter with the Melfort newspaper, and I think will be a very welcome addition to the office of the Minister of Agriculture.

So I'd like you to welcome both of them to this House.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

2005 National Aboriginal Achievement Awards

Hon. Ms. Beatty: — Mr. Speaker, I am extremely pleased that tonight I, along with some of my colleagues including the Premier, will be attending the 2005 National Aboriginal Achievement Awards in Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, this is one of Canada's showcase Aboriginal events and the only one of its kind in North America.

Since 1994 the National Aboriginal Achievement Awards have been inspiring and empowering First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people through the recognition and celebration of powerful role models.

Mr. Speaker, this year 14 outstanding individuals will receive awards for their achievements in a variety of fields including the arts, business, law, community development, health, heritage, medicine, public service, science, and sports.

I want to mention one recipient in particular, Mr. Speaker. Dr. Eber Hampton, who has been director of Harvard's American Indian program, who has served as the Chair of the department of education for the College of Rural Alaska, and who is currently president of the First Nations University of Canada here in Saskatchewan, is being recognized for his contribution in the field of education.

Mr. Speaker, tonight's event is being hosted by Saskatchewan's own Andrea Menard and Michael Greyeyes and will feature top Aboriginal performers from across Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating this year's recipients of the National Aboriginal Achievement Awards, for their successes, and especially for being such positive role models for the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit youth who will follow in their footsteps. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Bottled Water Company from Broadview

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to speak about a thriving small business in the community of Broadview. Mr. Speaker, Gene's Water Care is finding new ways to market their line of bottled water called Imibe. The Broadview company recently began designing custom labels for their bottled water for companies and events such as weddings and . . . said the owner of the company, Gene Ottenbreit. This enables the company to sell directly to customers.

Recently, Mr. Speaker, a new salesman for the competition

walked into the Co-op Convenience Store in Broadview and immediately took note of the Imibe bottled water sitting in their cooler and asked their store manager, what is this, as he's seen it all over the area. To which the manager replied, it's the best water in the world. And he was speaking truthfully, Mr. Speaker, for Gene's Water Care entered a water tasting competition in Berkeley Springs, West Virginia, February 26 and 27, and their Imibe bottled water won first place in the 2005 Berkeley Springs International Water Tasting competition.

Mr. Speaker, the criteria for determining the best tasting water is based on the taste, smell and texture of the water. Winning the competition gains the company recognition within the industry.

Mr. Speaker, congratulations to Gene Ottenbreit, his wife Gaylene and their son Darren on a very successful business enterprise.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Saskatchewan Budget 2005-2006

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Saskatchewan budget for 2005 and 2006 is a budget about building Saskatchewan for the next century. Based on a strong economy that is setting job records in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, the centennial budget is Saskatchewan's 12th consecutive balanced budget and contains no tax increases, Mr. Speaker.

But what does it contain, Mr. Speaker? A \$6.7 million centennial university tuition grant that will allow our two universities to hold tuitions at 2004-2005 levels for the centennial year. It contains \$6.5 million in new funding for youth initiatives. It contains over \$55 million in property tax relief — \$110.1 million over two years, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, the 2005-2006 Health budget contains a record \$2.9 billion, that is an increase of over \$190 million over last year.

This budget, Mr. Speaker, contains the education spending of \$1.2 billion, up almost \$75 million over last year. And, Mr. Speaker, when including teachers' pensions and benefits, the total education spending climbs to \$1.33 billion.

Those are just a few of the highlights in this budget, Mr. Speaker. This budget marks year two of our four-year fiscal plan, a plan that continues on the path of sound and reasonable financial management to make Saskatchewan an even better place to live, work and raise your families, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

New Biodiesel Facility

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise today to talk about a new business, a \$50 million biodiesel facility

that is being built. Mr. Falk Beindorff, a German immigrant now living in Canada says I want to make the biodiesel hub of North America.

This plant will include crushing facilities along side the biodiesel manufacture that will use canola from more than 355,000 acres. That translates into a 100,000 tonnes or three — excuse me, 30 million gallons of biodiesel.

[14:00]

Mr. Speaker, this will mean over \$8 million of increased personal income, he says, and it will be a win for farmers. The plant will create 45 permanent jobs in the plant as well as 300 indirectly related to the biodiesel. The annual revenues are expected to exceed 53 million. A University of Missouri study concluded that long-term economic implications of a 100,000-ton biodiesel complex would generate as many as 6,000 temporary and permanent jobs for the region.

Mr. Speaker, the only fly in the ointment on this proposal is that the plant is being built in Minot, North Dakota, Mr. Speaker — Minot, North Dakota — with the intent of using canola from Manitoba and Saskatchewan to meet the demand. Mr. Speaker, that's a pity. Why is it not here? Perhaps because of an NDP [New Democratic Party] government.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Economic Developer of the Year

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great pleasure and honour to stand in the House today to recognize an outstanding member for the Battlefords who has been chosen as the Economic Developer of the Year by the Saskatchewan Economic Developers Association.

Ryan Bater is the general manager of the Battlefords Regional Economic Development Authority. For those of us who have had the great pleasure of working with Ryan over the past years, this award does not surprise us as we have all witnessed the incremental growth of our economy driven by his commitment to our community.

As members of this House know, building community — economically and socially — takes dedication and drive. In Ryan's words, and I quote:

I think that what we do in economic development is extremely important. A lot of the work we do goes unnoticed because it's the little things . . . What makes it important is that it's about people. People own those small businesses and . . . work at them, and I guess the importance of our work comes down to creating opportunities for people and creating a healthy community and a healthy province.

Ryan is also the general manager of a three-REDA [regional economic development authority] alliance created to foster expanded economic development activities in west central

Saskatchewan. This initiative is the only project of its kind in Saskatchewan and represents a new and innovative approach to economic development in the province.

I am confident that the economic future of the Battlefords and of this province will continue to grow and prosper under his direction, vision, and commitment. I ask all members of the House to join with me in congratulating Ryan Bater on receiving recognition as the Economic Developer of the Year.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Rosetown-Elrose.

Eston Panthers Win Two Titles

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The headline on the front page of the *Eston Press Review* reads, "Panthers win two titles in six days." The Panthers are the Eston midget female hockey team. The team is based in Eston but also draws on players from Rosetown, Kyle, Fiske, Kerrobert, Dinsmore, Eaton, Beechy, Elrose, Kindersley, and Outlook.

The first title, the Provincial Championship, was won on March 14 in Wilcox where they defeated the Notre Dame Hounds 2 to nothing after a 1-nothing win at home. The second title was earned on March 20 when the Panthers outscored the North Battleford Sharks 3 to nothing at home, to take the North Sask. Female Hockey League Championship. They had previously tied the Sharks in the Battlefords.

Team members include Caitlin Veronelly, Michala Jeffries, Kylie Waite, Amanda Swan, Katelyn Ptolemy, Kristin Bews, Laura Connor, Brittney Erlandson, Shelby Davey, Amanda Howe, Brooke Thome, Aleisha Moore, Robbi Phillips, Shelby Nisbet, Kristen Graham, Crissy Brown, J.J. Marshall, Susanne Schulz, Kali Gillanders, and Aline Charpentier.

Congratulations to these fine athletes and their coach, Blyth Stevenson; assistant coaches Glenn Connor and Kelly Stevenson; trainer Carole Stevenson; and manager Fern Howe. We say, well done Panthers.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Spartan Girls Basketball Team

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some reference has already been made to this in the legislature, but I am also very pleased to take this opportunity to tell my colleagues about the success of a talented basketball team from my constituency.

Mr. Speaker, the Meadow Lake Spartan Girls Basketball Team recently won the gold medal in the girls' 4A final at the Hoopla Provincial Championships. Originally in third place, Mr. Speaker, the Spartans played two extremely close games against Weyburn and Caronport to win the championship title.

Mr. Speaker, in one game the Spartans were tied at half time, down in the third quarter, and then came back in the last quarter with a 8-nothing run to move on to the final game. The Spartans faced another close game in the final but stepped up their defence in the fourth quarter and came out on top with a tally of 78 to 57.

Mr. Speaker, the top scorers in the last two games were Kristin Gislason, Sheylee Belanger — yes they're related, Mr. Speaker — and Shyla Pickett. I also want to recognize the hard work of all the players who contributed to the team's success. It takes dedication, commitment, and talent to excel at this level of competition.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure my colleagues will join me in congratulating the Meadow Lake Spartan Girls and coach Carla Waterman on their achievement. I wish them the best of luck in the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

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

Population and Employment Statistics

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, according to the latest numbers from Statistics Canada, Saskatchewan's population dropped by about 1,000 people since last fall, Mr. Speaker. In this our centennial year, at a time when our resource prices are very high, in an environment of \$50-plus in terms of the price per barrel of oil, in that environment in a province that has more resources than most nations, that has all of this potential, would the Premier please explain to the Assembly and the people of the province how his policies are resulting in a population loss?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Industry and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well as usual, Mr. Speaker, we get half the story from the opposition but not the whole story, because of course what Statistics Canada really says is that in 2004 the population of Saskatchewan went up, Mr. Speaker. It went up by 837 people. Now that's not a huge increase, Mr. Speaker, I'll grant you. But when the Leader of the Opposition is saying our population went down and it actually went up, Mr. Speaker, we see the games that the Leader of the Opposition tries to play.

And you know, if the Leader of the Opposition would take note, Mr. Speaker, of what it says in the media these days — "Banks bullish on province's outlook"; "Sask. tops growth rate." And by the way, our growth rate for 2005 will be twice the national average in investment. So where are we going, Mr. Speaker? We're going up, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the Statistics Canada numbers are

clear. We are losing population since last fall. And more to the point, Mr. Speaker, over the last three years, over the last three years in Saskatchewan here's what Statistics Canada has to highlight as our population growth: point zero two per cent — 165 people over three years, Mr. Speaker. The government added more government jobs than that in the last budget, Mr. Speaker. That's the population growth for the last three years.

What about the province of Manitoba? Seventeen thousand more people in that same period of time, Mr. Speaker. This Premier presides over that population record and the worst job creation record in the dominion of Canada since he took the job.

Mr. Speaker, the question is to the Premier: why are his policies letting down the future, the promise of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Industry and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, Mr. Speaker, as anyone can see, they don't just have a Wailing Wall in Jerusalem, Mr. Speaker. The opposition over there is a wailing wall as well.

But I want to say to this House and to the people of the province, Mr. Speaker, that contrary to the constant doom and gloom that we hear from the so-called Saskatchewan Conservative Party, Mr. Speaker, what do the numbers really say? The numbers really say, Mr. Speaker, that in the last year the number of jobs in Saskatchewan has done what, Mr. Speaker? It's gone up by 11,400, Mr. Speaker.

And you know, the *Leader-Post* recently had an editorial, Mr. Speaker, that says that the "Saskatchewan's economy is performing robustly." It says that the jobs are up and the economy has a definite spring in its step. It says that the good news in the economy and the increased jobs are welcome news, Mr. Speaker. I think that news is welcome to everybody but the Leader of the Opposition.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister is right about something. The opposition, the Saskatchewan Party and the people of the province do not welcome the news that we continued to lose population over the last quarter of last year and early in the months of this year. We don't welcome the news that we have the worst job creation record under the NDP in the country over the last five years. We do not welcome the news that this government continues to squander the amazing potential of this province, Mr. Speaker.

Now the government seems to not have any ideas. The editorials the minister refers to have confirmed that as well. The government is bankrupt of ideas in how to turn this amazing potential in our economy around.

We direct this minister and this Premier to our 100 ideas for Saskatchewan's future. He should check out no. 58, 66, 62, 91,

8, 10, 83, 71, and 69. And maybe most importantly, will the Premier check out idea no. 100? That would see an election in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Industry and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, while I'm referring to some of the things actually going on in the province instead of the doom and gloom from the Leader of the Opposition over there and the wailing and gnashing of teeth we hear every day, I would like to refer the Leader of the Opposition to a report from March 8 which indicated this, Mr. Speaker. It indicated . . . It's from the Fraser Institute, the conservative cousins of the opposition over there. It said:

Saskatchewan has vaulted past Alberta to become one of the best places in the world to invest in mining [Mr. Speaker].

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — We're at the top, Mr. Speaker. And because of what this Premier has done, Mr. Speaker, in the world of oil and gas, we're seen as a good place to do oil and gas as well, Mr. Speaker. And we're also, because of the policies of this government, seeing \$1 billion of new investment in forestry, Mr. Speaker.

And what these policies of this government are doing, Mr. Speaker, has resulted in 11,000 jobs in the last year. And that's progress, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Legislation Regarding Health Care Workers

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister responsible for public sector compensation stood in her place and attempted to mock our concerns about negotiating in good faith with public sector unions. I find that ironic, Mr. Speaker, when in fact this NDP government has a Bill on the order paper that will circumvent The Trade Union Act. Bill 88, an Act to amend the labour relations reorganization Act takes away the right for health care workers to choose their union. Section 3 of The Trade Union Act on rights of employees states, and I quote:

Employees have the right to organize in and to form, join or assist trade unions, and to bargain collectively through a trade union of their own choosing;

I repeat, their own choosing.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister: how can this NDP government purport to abide by The Trade Union Act when it continues to introduce legislation that circumvents the Act?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would say to the member opposite, he may not be aware, but The Trade Union Act does not allow for decisions to be made in multi-employer bargaining units by the Labour Relations Board. And what the health labour relations Act put in place a number of years ago was restructuring for unions and regulations that defined the restructuring process when there were some massive changes made in health districts.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, let's review what that minister and this government has done over the last nine years. She makes reference to a change. The first change was in the Dorsey Commission, put in place a system that said, we need stability, and we need this stability to determine what we're going to do. Four years later, they passed an Act that said, we will extend this for another five years.

Today, Mr. Speaker, this very Bill extends that again. Now for that government to sit there and say, well we need stability, and it takes them nine years to determine a path? Bill 88 takes away the right of these workers from applying to the Labour Relations Board to choose their own union. Why does this NDP government want to circumvent The Trade Union Act and take away workers' rights?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, I would say to the member opposite he should maybe do a little bit of research on The Trade Union Act, and that The Trade Union Act does not allow the board to make decisions in the cases of multi-employer bargaining units, which the health authorities encompass in their bargaining units. Mr. Speaker, the health districts and workers in the health care industry have undergone a couple of substantial reorganizations over the past number of years. This was put in place to provide stability, to put in place processes to provide for those multi-employer bargaining units, for adjustments in the contracts, and for time for those changes to take place with stability within the labour movement.

[14:15]

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Krawetz: — It's going to take that minister at least nine years to get stability. Yesterday the minister responsible for public sector compensation stated, and I want to quote, "You have to look at specific occupations and what their issues are."

That's exactly the point of the medical laboratory technicians and technologists who have been thrown into four different unions and are subject to four different collective agreements. This forced arrangement does not address the issues of wage parity and working conditions specific to these workers.

The NDP government had ample time to redress the situation and ensure that the rights of these health care professionals are upheld in accordance with The Trade Union Act. When will this NDP government abide by The Trade Union Act and drop this legislation?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, part of the intention of this piece of legislation is to allow the Labour Relations Board and The Trade Union Act to make decisions in the cases of multi-employer bargaining units, which the Labour Relations Board has no ability to do. So when the health authorities had have been restructured, there would have been no ability under The Trade Union Act for these employees to seek any redress under The Trade Union Act.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite should do his homework and realize what he's talking about before he stands up in question period.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Krawetz: — I will continue to stand up on behalf of these technologists and technicians who have submitted letters that are also cc'd to the Minister of Labour asking for that minister to correct the wrong of eight or nine years ago. That is what these letters are asking for, Mr. Speaker.

This government doesn't like a provision in The Trade Union Act — it simply introduces legislation to circumvent it. Medical technicians and technologists are tired of being pushed around by this government. They are tired of working under different rates of pay with different benefits. Will this government listen to these workers? Will the Minister of Health honour The Trade Union Act and pull Bill 88 from the order paper before us today?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would say to the member he really should do some history on this because it was a request by the unions to have a commission that would come in and lay out regulations and a process for the health reorganization to be followed and to accomplish what we have over the past number of years.

Mr. Speaker, the unions that were involved were all party to the agreements, they were party to the regulations, and have felt that it has assisted the process — which has been very difficult,

Mr. Speaker, not only for the health system but for those that work within the system. There's been major reorganization and changes and, Mr. Speaker, it has ran very smoothly.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Investments In Navigata

Mr. Kerpan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, for four years now the NDP has been pouring more than \$1 million a month into a BC [British Columbia] telecommunications company called Navigata. The NDP sunk 20 million taxpayers' dollars in 2001; 14 million in 2002; 11 million in 2003; 15 million in 2004; and now another 12 million in 2005. That's 72 million Saskatchewan taxpayers' dollars on a money-losing communications company in BC.

Mr. Speaker, every day the NDP government stands up and say they don't have money for tax breaks; they don't have money for farm programs; they don't have money for children's hospitals. But they've got \$72 million to pour into a communications company in BC?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Highways and Transportation.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure what the question was there but let me make this observation. Mr. Speaker, first of all we had the member from Swift Current running around telling us, Mr. Speaker, that people in Saskatchewan had voted wrong for 60 years; they should not have supported a progressive, socialist democratic government, Mr. Speaker. Then the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, as the Leader of the Opposition he said the same thing, Mr. Speaker. He said for 60 years people were wrong.

And now, Mr. Speaker, he's trying to convince the people of Saskatchewan that he's a New Democrat, Mr. Speaker; that he supports Crowns, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I don't believe it, the people of Saskatchewan don't believe it. And, Mr. Speaker, if you look in the eyes of the people behind the Leader of the Opposition, they don't believe it, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — You can see them squirming in their seats, Mr. Speaker. They are uncomfortable. And, Mr. Speaker, that's why, that's why their true colours show again when they get up and they attack the Crowns as they did, Mr. Speaker, when they said they were Conservatives. They were Conservatives yesterday, today, and tomorrow, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Kerpan: — Mr. Speaker, I believe that the people who are going to lose their level of comfort is going to be the Minister for SaskTel when the Navigata report comes out. Mr. Speaker,

this government has been saying that this is a good business, a good company. Compared to what, SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company]?

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party has acquired a copy of an independent report that was done for SaskTel on Navigata by RBC Capital Markets. And this report concludes, and I quote:

Navigata has met neither the strategic expectations outlined at the time of acquisition nor the financial objectives stated in numerous business plans.

It goes on to say, and I quote:

The company will be challenged in maintaining its current revenue base.

In other words, Navigata has been a complete failure so far and it's probably going to get worse. Mr. Speaker, why did the NDP just pour 12 million new dollars, taxpayers' dollars, into a BC company that has met none of its expectations?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for SaskTel.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, when SaskTel made the investment in Navigata, Mr. Speaker, it was a new venture in terms of voice over Internet protocol, Mr. Speaker, and I do want to make this point. It is interesting that virtually every telecommunications company in North America is investing on a percentage basis a much, much larger amount than SaskTel has in this particular venture, Mr. Speaker — hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars. Because they realize, they realize as does SaskTel, and I think as do the public generally — unlike the opposition — that this is where technology of the future is going.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to say in response to the question though, that RBC Dominion Securities who did the third party analysis, Mr. Speaker, indicated, indicated that with a refocus of the business plan — which is taking place and making significant difference — that with the refocus this was a solid investment, Mr. Speaker, and that additional dollars should be invested in this company.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Kerpan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Okay, Mr. Speaker, let's talk about refocusing Navigata and its business plans. In fact, let's talk about 13 refocuses of Navigata. Thirteen business plans in the last five-month period of 2004, and that's according to the RBC report. No wonder they're not . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please, members. Order, please. Order, please, members. The Chair recognizes the member for Carrot River Valley.

Mr. Kerpan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's no wonder

Navigata is not making any money. They're too busy writing business reports, business plans. Mr. Speaker, according to the RBC report, and I quote that:

This is a very high risk plan due to the relatively significant upfront capital investment, and risk is compounded by combining large capital investment and uncertain outcome of a new fixed wireless strategy.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: what kind of a company has 13 different business plans over a five-month period and manage to miss the objectives of every one of them?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for SaskTel.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, in response to the member from — I'm not sure what constituency, Mr. Speaker, any more — in response to the member, Mr. Speaker, I would say it is interesting, again . . . You know, I note that every telecommunications company, as I've indicated, in the country, Mr. Speaker, in North America, is investing hundreds of millions of dollars in this technology.

Not a peep from over there; not a peep about a private sector company making these investments, Mr. Speaker. And yet when SaskTel makes this investment, when SaskTel makes this investment, gets, Mr. Speaker, the acknowledgement from a third party, an independent third party analysis that this is a solid investment, it needs refocusing — we acknowledge that, refocusing has taken place — there have been . . . there has been, I should say, a significant turnaround in that company.

Mr. Speaker, we need to ensure that our company, that our company — SaskTel, the people's company — has an opportunity as well to invest in this technology.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Kerpan: — Mr. Speaker, let's just go over some of those 13 refocuses that the minister is talking about.

There is one called the "SaskTel Growth Committee Option Review." There was one called "A Modified Navigata." There was the "Navigata Stand Alone Plan." There was the "Third Party SaskTel Navigata Strategic Overview." There was one called "A Strategic Option for SaskTel and Navigata." There was the "Navigata Strategy Update." And one was called — get this — "The Rapid Turnaround Strategy." Mr. Speaker, there was even one with a Latin name, "*Quo Vadis*," which means, "where are you going." Mr. Speaker, that is the question.

But here is an even better question. How much longer will Saskatchewan taxpayers be *raptus regaliter* by this NDP government?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for Saskatchewan Tel.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I will speculate that after two nominations those words, “where do you go,” will come back to bite that member, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say this. I want to say this, Mr. Speaker. I want to say about SaskTel, Mr. Speaker, SaskTel through its many investments . . . SaskTel International has overall made much, much more — many more dollars for the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, than it has lost.

Unlike the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, they are not bankrupt of ideas. They will continue to invest, they will continue to diversify, they will continue to make money for the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, if those members opposite don't understand, Mr. Speaker, that VOIP [voice over Internet protocol] voice over Internet, is the way of the future and if they're going to suggest that SaskTel should not be getting into this industry, into this business, Mr. Speaker, I suggest they really, really are bankrupt of ideas.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Problem Gambling

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The wave of the future needs to be money-making proposals, not money-losing ones.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. I know the Premier in the past has shown a great deal of interest in the subject of gaming. I understand the Premier was a vocal opponent to gambling in Moose Jaw. In fact, he even led the parade down Main Street in the 1980s fighting gambling. Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is this: is he aware of the study on gambling published this month in *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*?

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are aware of the study in the *Journal of Psychiatry*. I would point out that this study is based on StatsCan's information from about three or four years ago. The numbers of people interviewed in their study were about 600. The study that we've relied on and the studies that are used by all the provinces across the country have three times as many people interviewed and we've been using that information to further develop the programs and things that we do around problem gambling.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The study was written by a team of respected scientists and it says that Saskatchewan and Manitoba each have about 290 problem gamblers for every 100,000 people. That's far higher than the national average. Our province and Manitoba also have more VLTs [video lottery terminal] per capita than the national average. Mr. Speaker, is the NDP government finally ready to commit itself to a study on the social costs of promoting gambling?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the provinces in Canada have been using a Canadian problem gambling index which was introduced for the first time or used for the first time in Saskatchewan. That's being continually used across the government. It is more specific, it provides more information than the study that the member opposite is talking about. We're continuing to use that information.

We spend about \$4 million a year on problem gambling addiction treatment. This is the second highest in Canada only to Manitoba which spends more than that. But what we know is that we're continuing to work in this particular area. There are, unfortunately, a small number of people who have problems with addictions around gambling and we're going to continue to try to make sure we can help them.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:30]

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, the government is pulling in more and more revenues for gaming, yet continues to ignore the problem of gambling addiction. Mr. Speaker, idea no. 16 in the Saskatchewan Party's 100 ideas commits a percentage of liquor and gaming revenues be dedicated to addiction programs and facilities.

Mr. Speaker, this Premier and every last one of his NDP members voted against this idea and the 99 others. Mr. Speaker, given this latest study and the Premier's own recognition of the dangers of gambling from the 1980s, Mr. Speaker, will the Premier now endorse dedicating a part of the gaming revenues to addiction programs?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, we have a \$4 million annual budget for the problem gambling addiction treatment. It's second only to Manitoba on a per capita basis how we do this.

Now, Mr. Speaker, once again the member opposite is stating one position as it relates to this particular issue but when we in government, we have a difficult job to make sure we provide balance across the board. There are members from that

member's constituency who run hotels, who are pressuring us continually for more VLTs, right across the whole system.

I ask that member opposite: what's his position as it relates to the Hotels Association of Saskatchewan and their request for more VLTs? Because that all relates to this. We've set a cap here in the province and we're sticking with it.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Government Whip.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased again to stand on behalf of the government and table responses to written questions 914 through 916 inclusive, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Responses to 914, 915, 916 have been submitted.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen that the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the proposed amendment thereto moved by Mr. Cheveldayoff.]

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's certainly a pleasure to resume the debate on this centennial budget, Mr. Speaker. I made a number of comments yesterday dealing with the lack of vision on the part of this government and the missed opportunities and their failure to . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. I would just like to remind members of the rules, that members can only speak to the particular special order once. And the member yesterday gave up his seating position. So I cannot allow the member to speak at this time.

So government orders, special order. I recognize the member for Regina Rosemont.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, please. What is the member's . . . Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, the debate was not adjourned . . . Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Point of order.

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, the member did not give up his place in speaking. The House adjourned. It was the end of the day. The Speaker chose to adjourn and, Mr. Speaker, it would be our position that the . . . and our submission that the member has not finished his time speaking yet. It was not his choice to . . . end of the day. And may I read from the last portion of . . . Mr. Speaker, I think the words from the Chair were:

It now being . . . close to the hour of 5 . . . this House will stand adjourned . . .

The Speaker: — I thank the member for raising the point of order. It is my clear understanding and recollection of the circumstance prior to adjournment yesterday, that was approaching . . . the clock was approaching close to 5 o'clock, was not yet quite 5 o'clock. The member brought his sentence to an end, he sat down. I looked to the right. I looked to the left. There was nobody rising. I got up, and I at that stage used the Speaker's prerogative to call the clock.

Point of order is not well taken. However if the member should wish to request leave of the Assembly to continue his speech, the member might do so. I recognize the member for Regina Rosemont.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Ask leave of the House if you want to.

The Speaker: — Why is the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood on his feet?

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Speaker, with leave to continue my budget speech.

The Speaker: — The member for Last Mountain-Touchwood has requested leave of the Assembly to be allowed back into the debate. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. I recognize the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank all members of the House for granting me leave. I did have a few more comments that I'd like to make with regards to the budget. I will attempt to be brief because as I said when I started yesterday, I feel it's important that all members should be given an opportunity . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. The member is on his feet. The member has been given the floor. I would like to be able to hear what the member has to say. I recognize the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Hart: — As I said I will attempt to be fairly brief so that all members who wish to speak to this . . . enter into this debate will have an opportunity.

Overnight I was able to gain some information that I think is important to be put onto the record, and it has to do with the recent announcement of federal funding to the agricultural

industry. Often times when you look at the headlines as the headlines were in yesterday's paper, there were of couple of headlines that I think were somewhat misleading to the public. And one of them had to do with the amount of taxpayers' dollars that were being injected into the agricultural industry across this country, and in particularly into Saskatchewan.

The information that came into my hands last evening is by a market analyst who does a particularly good job of analyzing agricultural issues and so on, and I would just like to provide some of the information that this individual put on the Internet last night. And as I said it has to deal with the cash payment to agricultural producers all across Canada.

The money that will be going particularly to the grain and oilseed producers will be coming under a transition program that the federal government has in place, and it will be based on producer's eligible net sales which is a figure that is calculated by the old NISA [Net Income Stabilization Account] program, and it had to do with the value of production on an individual farm.

The money that will be flowing, according to this report, will be flowing by the end of April, will be 4.4 per cent of those eligible net sales.

And as yesterday I gave, recounted for the House, some facts and figures dealing with an average farm in Saskatchewan, well using that same example, that average farm under this program will receive about \$4,400 by the end of April and a further \$1,100 further on during the year. And what that . . . We need to put that figure into context, Mr. Speaker. What that figure would do on that farm operation would pay the education portion of the property taxes, and that's all it would really do.

Although it certainly is welcomed by farm producers, it is not some large amount of money that is going to make producers wealthy and allow them to go on extravagant holidays or things like that. It's a small amount of money in comparison to the total expenditures that the average farm incurs in a production year, but it certainly is welcome. And I'm sure I can speak on behalf of all the producers that they are certainly grateful that the federal government is recognizing the hurt out there and is providing some small assistance, Mr. Speaker.

One other area that I didn't get a chance to cover yesterday was this budget's . . . and what it does in the area of the Department of Environment and environmental issues. And if you look at the expenditures in the budget estimates, we do see an increase in this year's budget, but most of that is taken up by capital purchases of two land-based air tankers for forest fire protection.

Now I plan to discuss with the Minister of Environment during budget estimates as to the appropriateness of this type of fire protection, and I'm sure there are very good reasons for them. But certainly I would wonder if the Minister of Environment and this government looked at other options that are out there.

There are a group of entrepreneurs in this province who have looked across the border in Manitoba and have seen what that province is using for, at least for a portion of their forest fire protection, and that is using single aircraft, single-engine

aircraft tankers that people in private industry own, particularly those people involved in aerial application of pesticides. They also have the ability to aid in the forest fire protection.

And I guess . . . We need to look at those programs. We need to see if that has a fit. Obviously it has a fit in Manitoba. Why hasn't it got a fit here in Saskatchewan? Is it necessary to spend over \$19 million for these aircraft? Would it not been possible to perhaps use the private aircrafts to provide that same sort of forest fire protection? I look forward to discussing those matters with the Minister of Environment during the estimate process that we go through in this House.

Certainly we heard in the budget, we've heard the Premier speak and a number of other members of that caucus and government about the green and prosperous economy. Well when you look at the budget we don't see a whole lot that would substantiate a green economy.

We have regional waste management areas who are living from hand to mouth, barely being able to operate. I would hope that this government would step forward and assist them to continue their operations and expand on their operations. We have small communities and large communities — small communities such as Duff, Saskatchewan — and the city of Regina who are struggling with the large volumes of paper that are entering into our landfill sites. I don't see a strategy in this budget. Hopefully there is something there that I haven't been able to pick up in looking at the initial estimates. And those would be issues that we need to discuss, Mr. Speaker.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to look at and perhaps get on record what some of the other interest groups had to say about this budget and one that particularly caught my eye, particularly seeing that this government claims to be the champions of the working men and women in this province. And what did the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour have to say about this budget? Well I'm looking at their news release on budget day, and the headline reads, "Labour calls budget 'underwhelming'." And the first sentence of the news release, and I'm quoting now, Mr. Speaker:

The organization that speaks for the province's working people says while today's budget contains some worthwhile announcements; overall it will be regarded by wage earners as underwhelming.

And I think that speaks volumes, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about missed opportunities, Mr. Speaker.

Having said that, I did yesterday mention that there was a lost opportunity in the innovation agenda. And I would simply like to re-stress that. We have this great opportunity in this province. I've raised this issue in this House before and in committees with the number of ministers with the tremendous opportunity that the Canadian Light Source presents this province with. And I see very little if any initiative in that whole area on innovation. And I certainly don't see anything in this budget, Mr. Speaker.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I will certainly conclude my remarks. And I will state that I will certainly not be supporting the motion, but I will be supporting the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[14:45]

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

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to take to my feet today to support a most excellent budget presented by the Minister of Finance and the government.

And first of all, I just want to overview the fiscal direction of the government. You know, ever since I was elected — and it's been quite a while now, Mr. Speaker, since 1991 — it's been the direction of this government to provide balance between debt reduction, tax reduction and program enhancement. And I think again, Mr. Speaker, with the introduction of this budget we've achieved this balance and stayed on the path of fiscal accountability. I've seen certainly the Finance minister's budget described as prudent, cautious, risk-averse, and I interpret that to mean responsible, Mr. Speaker. And certainly that's recognized with our increased credit ratings.

The one thing that surprises me about the opposition, Mr. Speaker, is their view that you can spend the same money more than once. The Premier relates a story to us of driving down the street in his car listening to the member from Silver Springs on an open-line talk show, where in the space of four blocks he'd managed to spend over \$1 billion — and not to mention \$1 billion that was primarily already allocated. And the Premier actually had to turn his radio off because he was afraid if he drove any further listening to him he would have bankrupted the province.

So I just wanted to mention that the mid-year report where it was indicated that there was additional resources, those resources were allocated, Mr. Speaker, and they were allocated in the following way: for the utility rebate, there was a total of 54 million; for the property tax relief, a total of 110 million; for health care, 66 million; for the BSE [bovine spongiform encephalopathy] program, 40 million; for third party capital, 80 million; for government-owned capital, 110 million. And there was some additional spending from '04-05 in pressure areas of 13.6 million; retained in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, 171 million; and permanent debt reduction, Mr. Speaker, of 179 million.

So I'm not sure how the member from Silver Springs intended to re-spend the money that has already been allocated and spent, but maybe he's got a different kind of math that he's operating under.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I represent the constituency of Regina Rosemont which is by and large a group of hard-working families; hard-working men and women with children, teenagers. They're growing families. And when people ask me, well what does this budget mean to us in Rosemont — and I think that's a good way to think of a budget — what does it mean to me where I live, in my household? And I want to just spend a little bit of time talking about that.

One of the largest initiatives in this budget is the money that's allocated to early learning and child care. Now there's hardly anybody in that area which doesn't require some additional

assistance with child care and with early learning because we have children who have developmental needs, as well as parents who certainly need support so they can go to education and school.

I remember knocking on the doors of young, single parents for whom child care was a very pressing issue for them in order for them to attend their education programs. When I went to the Rosemont Community School for a pancake breakfast, certainly they talked to me about the need for funding for child nutrition programs. And in this budget, Mr. Speaker, we added 500,000 for the child nutrition programs that operate out of the schools.

Now you may remember before Christmas and the amount that was . . . I mentioned just a few moments ago in the mid-year financial report. There was \$137 per household for a utility rebate. And certainly everybody received that just before Christmas, and I think that was appreciated. I've mentioned the property tax rebate that people will see on their taxes this year. And I'm sure in that area in Regina Rosemont, as well as other areas of the province, that will be appreciated.

Some of the things that parents are interested in is the funded tuition freeze that will make it more possible for young people to go to post-secondary education. The other thing of course is the increase in the graduate tax credit, where a young person who graduates from post-secondary education can now make an additional \$6,000 in a year without having to pay tax on that money. So this is a very good initiative for young people in the province.

The other things where we've seen investments that are very close to my constituency are in increased funding to the cancer clinic in the Pasqua Hospital. There's new diagnostic equipment, money for staffing. In terms of infrastructure, right on the edge of our constituency we have the funding for the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] museum, Government House, the new multi-purpose facility at the Regina Exhibition grounds connected to the Jeux du Canada Games, and certainly there's been upgrades allocated for Luther College.

And I would have to say that overall this is a very good budget for the people in my constituency. As well, there's the \$1 million Centennial Merit Scholarships, the student jobs increase, as well as the Green Team.

So, Mr. Speaker, for young families there's a lot in this budget to be happy about and a lot of things that are going to take the pressure off family pocketbooks in the city.

I spoke to a reporter from Fort Qu'Appelle shortly after the budget and she said, well how do I explain this to the people in Fort Qu'Appelle; what does this really mean to us out here? So I went through some of these same things with her and she said, well you know, that sounds pretty good; I think that's the kind of things that Fort Qu'Appelle can be pleased with.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that I think again this is a good budget for the working people, of which certainly Regina Rosemont is reflective. In partnership with our city MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] and with the federal government, there's a substantial number of projects we've

been involved in Regina. We've invested over 80 million in various kinds of infrastructure related to science and research, related to tourism and community services, and related to better neighbourhoods. Things like the health science and kinesiology building, the Allan Blair Cancer Centre, the Innovation and Science Fund, the Indigenous Peoples Health Research Centre, the Petroleum Technology Research Centre, the Population Health Evaluation and Research Unit. I could on and on, Mr. Speaker, but you get my drift. We're investing a lot in research and development and we're doing it in partnership with our Regina City Council and certainly with the federal government.

To our municipal government more than 49 million was provided from various sources to support municipal programs and budgets. And as well, of course, we had the deepening of Wascana Lake that really preserves a jewel in the centre of our community. And I commend our pioneers who had the foresight not only to build that lake in the first place — if you can imagine, they did that with picks and shovels — but also to build this wonderful building that we're in today, which really is a legacy for the people of this province and will continue to add to the province's attractiveness and history in the centennial year.

A couple of other good news items I want to mention for Regina. And I wouldn't want people to think that only Regina got money in this budget because that wouldn't be true. Certainly there's resources across the province for health and education and services.

But I want to mention particularly some of the housing projects in Regina. Transcona Park, phase 2, a 35-unit rental housing project for low-, moderate-income families, is under way. Highland Manor, a 50-unit three-storey seniors' life lease apartment complex, will be completed in the spring and adds to our downtown. Wessex Place will be up to 36 affordable family condominiums. I met one of the young women and her child that will be moving in there, and she was sure very pleased about having a nice place like that to live and raise her son.

So all together, 121 new affordable housing opportunities under our HomeFirst strategy. But as well, in the YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association] there is now 19 new spaces and 35 existing spaces. The only wheelchair accessible domestic crisis shelter for women and children in Regina, again made possible by the HomeFirst strategy.

And one of the things I'm particularly proud of, Mr. Speaker, is the low income bus pass program, because everywhere you go the people who have access to this program talk about how it's changed their life, given them the freedom to take advantage of education, recreation, to go shopping where they can get good prices, to visit friends and family who may live in other parts of the city. And we're very proud to be a partner with the city of Regina in providing a \$15 monthly bus pass, instead of the \$52 bus pass that was out of the reach of most of the low-income families who now get this. So that's certainly something we're hoping to see extended to Saskatoon in helping support people who have transit needs in the city.

So just to recap overall on the budget, Mr. Speaker, no tax increases in this budget. Transfers to third parties are up 7.3 per cent. There's a 3 per cent real GDP [gross domestic product]

growth in 2005 and a 28 per cent debt to GDP forecast compared to a high of 69 per cent in 1993.

Now 28 is pretty good in contrast to 69 and, of course, 69 was the debt level ratio we were left with when the members opposite formed the government of Saskatchewan and spent totally out of control because, of course, they didn't understand that you can only spend a dollar once. And as we've seen, the member from Silver Springs has not grasped this concept either.

So again, I want to say that we've removed 179 million in permanent debt reduction this year, saving people another 300 million in interest payments on the debt. And I must have hit a sore point, Mr. Speaker, because they're chirping from the other side. But the fact is that Saskatchewan government debt is at its lowest point in 14 years — the lowest point in 14 years, Mr. Speaker. And that's because the budget under this Finance minister was prudent and cautious and responsible and certainly contained for our economy both tax incentives and expanded skill training.

And you know, sometimes we hear this comment about where's the vision. Well, Mr. Speaker, since 1997, in the Department of Community Resources and Employment, we adopted — and I'm going to read the vision so that people understand that this has been here and in writing for quite a long time and then I'm going to talk a little bit about what we've done in some of these areas. And the vision reads:

Saskatchewan people, regardless of differences in needs or circumstances, have opportunities to contribute and be included in the economic and social life of the province.

And certainly in our department we work to make sure that that full range of community supports and opportunities are there whether you're a disabled person, whether you perhaps did not have the advantages that some of your neighbours had when you were growing up, whether you might be a new immigrant or refugee to Saskatchewan, whether you might be someone who needs their neighbour's help for a time being until you can get on your feet, or find some of those other opportunities.

And certainly one of the areas I'm proudest there is our supported employment programs so that people of disability can really have the pride of contributing their skills and their knowledge to the workplace and we're having many successful experiences there.

We've been very consistent in our goals in the Building Independence program. In the first phase we starting the employment supplement for people who are working on low income, the Saskatchewan Child Benefit which helps people with children who want to go into the workplace, family health benefits so there can be coverage for children to have their health needs met when their parent were moving into employment, and the provincial training allowance to assist people in getting the training they require.

In phase 2 we built further on that. And I have the enthusiastic support from the member from Saskatoon who certainly shares, along with my other colleagues, a passion for these kind of improvements in our community. We have a contact centre now located in Regina which has a very customer service focus in

terms of people getting services from our department. The Jobs First program that helps people link up with employment and as well transition planning services to assist people in life change activities.

Because of this program, Mr. Speaker, unlike the Conservative Sask Party promise in the last election of a 25 per cent reduction in the number of people on assistance, we have achieved in fact, Mr. Speaker, a 41 per cent drop in the number of Saskatchewan families on social assistance. And every one of those families is materially better off today, Mr. Speaker, than they were when they were living on assistance because of our Building Independence program and the extra supplements that we provide outside the social assistance system.

In fact I'm going to give you an example, Mr. Speaker, for a single parent with two children under the Building Independence program — they would be \$6,000 a year better off than they were when they on social assistance. And I think that's a very great achievement of the department. And I commend all of the staff of the department and the people in the community who provided advice to the department so that we were able to turn around the experience of people living on social assistance and have them have access to the same opportunities as everybody else.

[15:00]

In child and family services we've been making big improvements in child protection. And one of the most important changes, Mr. Speaker, is the ability for extended family to be more involved in the care of children. We try to keep children as close to the family as possible because we still believe that a family is the best place for a child to be raised and to have the supports that they need.

And we're certainly discussing with our First Nations partners the possibility of kinship care legislation. And we just recently signed an agreement with our 18th child and family service agency on First Nations land and are working very closely with them to make sure that families are kept intact as far as possible and that children are supported by family and community. And it's a very, a very rewarding relationship that we have with the First Nations communities in our province.

The other thing I just want to mention is housing because of course in this budget we saw a huge increase to the shelter allowance. Now in Regina and in Saskatoon there's certainly a lot of people working on the quality of housing in some of the neighbourhoods in the city.

In Regina there's a very strong partnership between the city of Regina police, the mayor of Regina and the city council, all the people who do the regulatory work for the city — building inspectors, etc. — the Regina Qu'Appelle Health District, and as well the Government of Saskatchewan, to make sure that houses are up to the required standards. Every week houses are targeted for inspection and if those houses do not meet basic health and safety standards they are placarded. If people who have a relationship with our department are in those houses, we help them to relocate to better housing.

But this year, Mr. Speaker, we've taken that one step further

and we have introduced a shelter supplement. Under the shelter supplement, in order to get it you have to call the call centre and go through a checklist. And the checklist would include basic things — does the house have all its windows, do the toilets work, is there a fire alarm — all of the kind of things that we would expect to find in the most basic of standards in a house.

In order for the person to get the supplement those things have to exist. If it exists they qualify for the supplement. If not, we have the tools for them to work with the landlord to have those changes made. And if the landlord is not prepared to make those changes, Mr. Speaker, the person can use their supplement to move to better housing.

And we very specifically tied this to housing quality instead of just handing the money out because we want people to actually understand better what a quality house is and also on the landlord side of things, to understand the expectations of the department for houses that we're involved in paying the rent for. So we'll have to see what kind of progress we make but we're very optimistic, as are people that we've discussed this with in the community that this is going to make a big difference.

And for a family, Mr. Speaker, up to \$131 is available under the shelter supplement. And for a family with a disabled person in it, \$151 is available. And for a single individual who is disabled, an additional \$93 a month is available. So we're very pleased to be able to add this extra support for folks that are benefiting from the programs that our department delivers.

One of the most exciting things, Mr. Speaker, is the child care, the early learning and child care enhancements. We will have a new \$21 million this year in early learning and child care. And we're going to start out by doubling the number of child care spaces that the Premier announced under Child Care Saskatchewan.

But as well we will be providing an increase to the wages of people working in the child care sector. We will be adding training spaces. We will be working to ensure that all children in Saskatchewan have access to an early learning program. And we be will as well improving the operating grants.

And one of the things that I know is very important to the member from Yorkton, is we are going to ensure that every single special needs child is accepted and funded and does not have to be on a waiting list to receive services. And this is a very important achievement, Mr. Speaker, for the children and their families.

I just want to now turn to what the members opposite provide as a vision for Saskatchewan. Certainly they've got a new-found religion when it comes to support for the public sector. But you know, Mr. Speaker, that's not where they are on the record regarding these matters.

The fact of the matter is at the Sask Party's convention one year, the quote from one of the members, I think the member from Wood River, was the mandate for the civil service should be to go out and find a real job. Now I think that speaks volumes as to the attitude towards the people who provide public services in the province. Virtually every one of the, well

of the fairly visible members over there, has indicated their support for a core services review, including both the past and the present leader. Let's see what the leader, the current leader has to say here:

Make government smarter, smaller and more efficient by launching a core services review of every government program, commission, agency and Crown corporation.

In addition to that, in terms of the service provided by departments to the public, here's another quote from the new leader's website here:

Red tape and regulations have been foisted on to the business community by this government be it through the workers' comp or occupational health & safety or various pieces of labour legislation.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I could see there being some disagreement with some services that are provided. But to be against workers' compensation and occupational health and safety when 30, up to 30 people a year lose their life through dangerous work sites, I just can't understand what this opposition is thinking about, Mr. Speaker. This is such a fundamental right to be able to be safe in your workplace . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Right off the leader's website, exactly. And I just think that it doesn't matter how they dress themselves up in soft woolly clothes; we still have the same wolf at the door here, Mr. Speaker.

As they cast about for a vision, we see that as well the member for Lloydminster was thinking, well, maybe the BC review wasn't so good but how about the one Nova Scotia did? But he did ignore a few important facts.

After that review the gas tax went up 2 cents. There was a \$250 million annual increase in fees. There was a 4 per cent tax on auto insurance premiums. A 50 per cent . . . 15 per cent tax on home heating fuel. And as well, a province with the largest per capita debt in Canada, rural unemployment at 20 per cent. And the Nova Scotia seniors not only pay their normal nursing home fees but for all of their medical expenses and their assets can be attached if they are unable to pay.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think we're seeing from the member from Rosetown-Elrose, from the leader, from the member from Lloydminster, from the member from Wood River, a certain consistency in their view of the world and certainly supporting a process that did cut health care spending in those provinces, delisted drugs and eye exams, put affordable housing on hold, eliminated pay equity, affordable child care is now gone, tax cuts for corporations and the wealthy and without any for ordinary families. And I might remind you of our tax cuts which were the largest in the history of the province in which 55,000 low-income people were removed from the tax rolls.

So again they can cast about for a vision with their 100 ideas. But I just want to say that one of their ideas I found the most tragically amusing, Mr. Speaker, was their idea no. 7, to recognize the treaties. Well, my gosh, that was the official policy and operational work of this government in 1985. We have done work with the Treaty Commissioner to make sure that this understanding is in the curriculum in the schools. The province is 100 years old this year and the Sask Party has

finally made a decision to recognize the treaties. Well, I guess you could call that progress, Mr. Speaker, but it's darn slow, and I wouldn't exactly call it breaking news.

Idea no. 55, now here's a unique one. Why didn't we think of this? Mandate Saskatchewan's major Crown corporations to provide high quality utility and insurance service at the lowest possible cost. Where have I heard that before? I think they stole one of our pamphlets from the last election, Mr. Speaker, and maybe by 2099, they'll recognize that the Saskatchewan Crowns already do provide this and that we do have the most affordable services. Only 94 years to go to reach that understanding, Mr. Speaker.

Well I just wanted to say in closing that we've seen in this budget increased support for students, increased jobs. We've seen targeted tax cuts to stimulate the economy. We've seen 1,000 additional training spaces. And I think that the people of this province in this centennial year with the growing economy, growing investment, more jobs, a better taxation system, we know we're going to keep growing, Mr. Speaker, because we're optimistic. And you know the thing that I just have to say this before I finish, Mr. Speaker, because what particularly irks me about the members opposite, when they ask why people . . . why their children leave the province.

Well what child wouldn't leave the province whose parents sat at the supper table every night and had a constant stream of negativity for their home, and their communities, and their province.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know where my children are and I know that, along with the members in my caucus, I'm a staunch supporter of the province and in this centennial year, I want to commend the Finance minister for a prudent budget and to say that I will be supporting the budget and will be voting against the amendment. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House to comment on the budget on behalf of the citizens of Saskatoon Southeast and the citizens of the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, a budget tells us a lot about a government and a lot about its cabinet ministers.

A budget sends a message as to what the government feels its priorities are. Conversely, things that are not included in a budget send a very real message that those things that the government does not see as a priority. What a government says means one thing, but what a government funds tells the real story of what the government priorities are and are not.

Initially, Mr. Speaker, I thought that this budget was going to be a difficult budget to comment on. The NDP has received unprecedented amounts of money from oil revenue and from federal transfer payments. I thought that as an opposition MLA, it was going to be difficult to criticize the government that finally had enough money to actually do something and to actually have a focus and a direction and a plan.

Mr. Speaker, I was very wrong. The budget is clearly the product of infighting in the NDP cabinet. It is a collection of bizarre compromises. It has the uncanny ability to please and satisfy absolutely no one.

Mr. Speaker, I like to play golf and I'm not a particularly good golfer, but I enjoy going out. I thank the people who play with me for their patience and their tolerance. Mr. Speaker, early in most games, I usually make one or more terrible mis-hits where the ball either dribbles off the club face or slices viciously into the bushes. My golf mates will usually say, go ahead Morgan, we know you're a terrible golfer, we know you're not going to beat us anyway, take another shot, call it a mulligan. Well, Mr. Speaker, I know my abilities and I'm quite willing to take a mulligan when one is offered to me.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to urge the Premier and his cabinet to do the same with this budget. Call the budget a mulligan. Go back to the drawing board and redraft it again. If I'm entitled to a mulligan when I play golf, the government should be entitled to a mulligan with their budget. If they want to redo it, they won't hear any criticism from this member.

Mr. Speaker, I've looked at the various things that this budget does and does not include, so that we can get a sense of what the message for the citizens of Saskatoon . . . Saskatchewan is. I've looked at the pathetic and embarrassing increase in monthly food allowance for social service recipients. The \$10 a month increase is the first increase in many, many years. It does not include any indexing to allow for inflation. The increase buys about a half a cup of Tim Hortons coffee a day and a rather small cup at that.

The NDP would've been better off doing nothing than to send a signal to those people that they genuinely are not cared about. I'm sure that if those people weren't so broke, they would rather not have received anything and feel that they were accidentally forgotten than to receive the \$10 that they received in this budget.

It is roughly the same kind of cruel mentality where you go out for a large restaurant meal and instead of forgetting to tip, you leave a 5 or 10 cent tip instead of no tip at all. What they're saying is, this is what we think you're worth. Mr. Speaker, it is a cruel message to those people.

[15:15]

Mr. Speaker, I looked further into the budget and I saw a huge increase in funding for what I refer to as the Premier's propaganda politburo. Media services has increased its staff and its dollar funding by massive amounts.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I suspect the Premier and cabinet looked at which members of the media were offering criticism to them. They probably were shuddering at the criticism because the criticism was probably fair and it was probably right. They thought they might diffuse the criticism by saying, well let's hire them; let's get them on our payroll, knowing of course that once they're on the government payroll they can't criticize them anymore.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to see that the media services

has not yet absorbed Murray Mandryk, Stefani, or John Gormley. We at least have some voices in the media that have some experience. Mr. Speaker, the year is still young and maybe those three will get off and will eventually be hired by this NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, my message to the Premier is simply this: you can spend money and you can jazz up media services all you want by hiring all the media people you want, but the message is still the same — this government has ran out of steam. You can dress up all you want, but the government is still the same pathetic lot.

Mr. Speaker, I also looked at what was set aside in this budget to renew the contracts of teachers and nurses. It appears that the government mandate of 0, 1, and 1 is still the message of the day. I think we should stop for a minute and look at what the 0, 1, and 1 really means to teachers and to nurses. We have inflation running at 2 to 3 per cent. In reality, 0, 1, and 1 to these people is actually a net reduction in take-home pay.

Mr. Speaker, in Manitoba teachers settled for 3, 3, and 3. I'm not advocating any particular percentage. But, Mr. Speaker, if we want to be competitive and retain people in this province, we have to pay them competitively with other jurisdictions in which they might be seeking employment. We have made a very substantial investment in educating teachers and nurses. We can ill afford to have those people take employment out of province when we have shortages here and are having growing problems with recruitment.

Mr. Speaker, teachers are some of the most important people in this province. They are educating our next generation of citizens. They must be appropriately recognized and they must be fairly compensated.

Mr. Speaker, nurses are leaving this province at an alarming rate. Negotiations are at an early stage. I would like to invite the province and the NDP government to look carefully at what is happening in other provinces and develop a competitive pay scale that recognizes the fact that nursing is hard work and requires a great deal of expertise, compassion, and other skills. These people are our front line health providers and must be paid fairly and treated appropriately.

Mr. Speaker, I also looked at what is going to happen with tuition fees. Once again we have a one-year, band-aid solution. We set aside only enough money to freeze tuitions for one year. There is no comprehensive plan for long-term education funding and no plan for long-term student assistance. To say that this is an ad hoc method of dealing with students' tuition problems is an overstatement. At best, Mr. Speaker, this is a tiny Band-Aid on a very serious problem.

Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to see that some money was set aside for the Regina Correctional Centre. I have toured the existing facility and frankly, Mr. Speaker, it is amazing that it is still operating. I understand that the last escape from the Regina Correctional Centre was by an inmate who was able to dig his way out through the crumbling bricks with a kitchen spoon. Rebuilding this facility is overdue. When I saw the amount of money that was set aside for this project, I questioned whether it would be anywhere close to what this facility is actually

going to cost to rebuild. I will be watching closely to see how the construction and planning are proceeding. And I most sincerely hope that this is not one of those situations where we have four years and five years of announcements before anything actually goes ahead.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned earlier that this budget is an indication of how the members of cabinet see themselves and want to be perceived. I note with more than some concern, Mr. Speaker, that significant amounts of windfall money have arrived in this province and that money has come to this province in spite of the NDP government and not because of the NDP. This NDP government deserves no credit for the windfall revenues that have come in. The reality of it is that all of the funding is from things that are outside the province and beyond the control of this government.

This year, Mr. Speaker, they have an extra \$500 million — a half a billion dollars — to work with and nothing whatsoever to show for it that's in . . . [inaudible] . . . Mr. Speaker, what have they done with this money? Well, Mr. Speaker, they've taken some \$50 million and they've set it aside for out-of-province investments. This is a government, Mr. Speaker, that has not learned from SPUDCO, Navigata, Broe, and the other myriad of other failed NDP investments.

We clearly have some cabinet ministers, Mr. Speaker, that like to play in somebody else's bank account and pretend that they are high rollers. Well, Mr. Speaker, the reality is that these people are not big-business people. They should look back at what they've done in their past and say that's the limit of what my expertise is, and not try and exceed that expectation or that level of competence. What they should do, Mr. Speaker, is try and focus on providing competent government services instead of mucking about in the business sector where they have no experience and no ability.

My advice to them, Mr. Speaker, is this: if you want to play high roller, big business, take your own RRSPs [Registered Retirement Savings Plan], take your own money and your own equity of your house, and then play with it. Do it with your money, but don't be doing it with my money, and don't be doing it with the money of the citizens of this province.

Mr. Speaker, that \$50 million would be more than enough to provide a 3 per cent increase to teachers, build two new collegiates, and still provide enough money to twin many miles of highway.

Mr. Speaker, it is not acceptable to the citizens of this province to have this government mucking in out-of-province investments. I want to put this government on notice right now that we will be watching each and every one of those investments, and we will be reporting to the citizens of Saskatchewan as each and every one of those investments fails, as they inevitably will with the lack of expertise that's over there.

Mr. Speaker, as part of this budget initiative, they have announced a business tax review. We are pleased that they have done that. It is an indication that the NDP government is finally becoming aware of the importance of business and the importance of creating jobs and employment and wealth in this

province.

It is surprising though, Mr. Speaker, that a government that has been in power since 1992 actually now has to sit down and do a business tax review. It is embarrassing that it has taken this long, Mr. Speaker. This was something that should have been done years and years ago. I look forward to the results of that study with the hope and expectation that those recommendations will be implemented so that there is some opportunity to reconfigure and lower taxes. I fear however, Mr. Speaker, that what we're really seeing is some political window dressing on the part of the NDP, and little or nothing will come as a productive result of that study.

Mr. Speaker, I think that another aspect that we should look at in this budget are things that were not included, things that could have been included but were rather deliberately left out by this NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, there was an opportunity to increase the income level before a low- or moderate-income person would start paying income tax. This would give people an incentive to get off of welfare and to look for work. The government chose to leave this segment of the workforce without any help or any benefit. This budget does not help these people, Mr. Speaker. These people are forgotten about.

Mr. Speaker, this government has twice raised provincial sales tax. There were sufficient funds in this budget that provincial sales tax could be lowered. Or we could have seen part of a phased-in, gradual lowering of provincial sales tax. Mr. Speaker, the real reason that this did not happen is that this government is far too political. When we see a drop in provincial sales tax, we will know that an election is imminent. A drop in PST [provincial sales tax] will be saved and will be used in an election goody by the NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, one of the largest problems in this province is the massive amount that our citizens pay in property tax. The Boughen Commission made recommendations to the NDP government. The NDP government said that they would work with the recommendations of the Boughen Commission. The recommendations were that provincial sales tax should be increased and property tax should be lowered.

Well the NDP only did half. They raised the PST, but they've done nothing for property tax. Property tax is one of the most counterproductive and disruptive taxes in this province. It is a huge disincentive to develop property, buy property, or continue to own property.

Mr. Speaker, in this province education must be properly and appropriately and fairly funded. We are on the verge of seeing tax revolts in a number of municipalities because of the high cost of education tax. We are pitting property tax paying citizens against our young people and against our students. It is wrong. It is the wrong message. It should not and cannot continue.

Mr. Speaker, I looked specifically for some things in this budget. I am also the critic responsible for the Information Services Corporation. I am pleased to see that the personal property registry will be moving from the antiquated data pack

system to a web-based system. But I didn't see anything in this budget that was being allocated for the conversion.

Frankly, Mr. Speaker, I'm quite apprehensive after the considerable and incredible disaster with the land titles system. I'm hoping that the NDP will look at how the personal property registry was computerized in other provinces. We can purchase existing software. Mr. Speaker, in the past the NDP had delusions of grandeur when they thought they could develop their own land titles software.

Mr. Speaker, most members will be aware that The Personal Property Security Act is the descendant of the Uniform Commercial Code in the United States. That type of legislation is now used throughout the United States and Canada. Saskatchewan should be able to purchase existing technology which would cost a fraction of what it would cost to develop our own technology.

Mr. Speaker, right now I would like to put the NDP government on notice that if we learn that they are going to go out and try to invent their own software, or if they start contracting with some of the same parties that were responsible for the land titles disaster, I will be standing up in this House and I will be shouting long and hard for resignations and firings and trying to do my best to bring this government down for its utter, total, and absolute incompetence. Mr. Speaker, the taxpayers of this province deserve better than this. And I hope that they get it this time around with this computerizing process.

Mr. Speaker, in 1999 the NDP made a promise of 200 new police officers. Since that time only 81 officers have been hired, leaving 119 positions yet to be filled. The NDP like to use a figure of 151 new officers. Mr. Speaker, 70 of those officers that were hired were RCMP officers that were being hired to backfill existing positions. Those positions were existing at the time when the NDP made that promise. These are not new positions. While we welcome the 18 new positions that are in this budget, it is a long way from the 200 that was promised, and that 200 is not yet filled no matter whose numbers you look at it.

Mr. Speaker, we know that we have not addressed crime issues in our two major cities and elsewhere in the province. We continue to see horrific crime statistics. Police officers are the front line in keeping us safe and secure in our communities. If we want to turn the tide against rising crime, we have to be aggressive. And the only way to be aggressive is to put more police officers on the street. Let's just do it. This government has a reputation for making announcements and pronouncements with precious little action and precious little follow-up. This was a commitment that was made. This is a commitment that needs to be filled, and we want to call on this government now to fulfill it. Mr. Speaker, we passed legislation for safer communities in the last sitting of this House. If we want that legislation to be something more than an irritating dust collector, we have to put some money and resources behind it.

Mr. Speaker, while I'm talking about police officers, I would like to point out that the Saskatchewan Party's policy platform included a recommendation for legislation that would require blood testing for people who have bit or spat upon a police

officer or health care worker. We have prepared a private member's Bill which we intended to introduce in this sitting that would implement that recommendation. Mr. Speaker, I've recently heard the Justice minister make a commitment to introduce similar legislation.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I will be holding back on my private member's Bill and look forward to see what the government puts forward. If it is anything close to what we were intending to forward, I would like to work with the government so that we can ensure that the Bill receives speedy passage and can be brought into force immediately. If not, Mr. Speaker, we will be introducing our own Bill and will have debate on the floor. But Mr. Speaker, that is an issue that should be addressed, and I would like to urge both sides to work towards a speedy conclusion on that.

[15:30]

Mr. Speaker, another aspect in our judicial system is our Crown prosecutors. We have problems in this province with underfunding and with lack of resources for our Crown prosecutors. I have the greatest respect for the people who work in the Crown prosecutor's office. I would very much like to have seen more money put aside for professional development and additional Crown prosecutors being hired. There are people in our Crown prosecutor's office who should be attending seminars and conferences. We are badly understaffed, Mr. Speaker. If we want to deal aggressively with the ... [inaudible] ... we have to deal with the resources that are there.

Additional staff and professional development may not provide all of the answers to the issues that face our courts and face our police system but, Mr. Speaker, there are certainly some steps that can be taken and should be taken. I would like to urge the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Finance to review priorities in that department.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned that we have significant crime problems in the major cities and elsewhere through the province. The Saskatchewan Party has pushed this government to do something about the growing crystal meth problem in Saskatchewan. During the last session we heard the minister of Education deny that there was anything unique or anything different about crystal meth. We have made recommendations for programming and strategies. We know now that this is a real problem, and we think the government at least is admitting that. The things that we are recommending will cost money.

I am disappointed, and frankly very disappointed, that the best this government can do so far is to appoint somebody to study the problem. And with the greatest respect for the member from Saskatoon Sutherland, a study is not what we need. Action and appropriate expenditure is what is necessary. We need training programs for parents, education for children, and long-term recovery facilities for addicts. These things are not cheap, but what we need is action and what we need now is commitment.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to comment briefly on our centennial. I have lived in Saskatchewan all of my life and have been a resident in this province for over half the time that the province has existed. I'm probably one of the few MLAs that can actually remember Tommy Douglas or Woodrow Lloyd

when they were premier. Our centennial is an opportunity to do something different and to make our mark. What I saw was a lot of money that was being spent on crepe paper and fireworks. Very little was being spent on anything that was going to create any kind of lasting legacy.

While I don't want to discount the need for the celebrations, I would like to have seen things that would have recognized our heritage.

Mr. Speaker, the Western Development Museum is woefully underfunded. The vast majority of their collection cannot be restored and cannot be shown because of lack of resources. It is kept in storage facilities that are closed to the public. A long-term, multi-year financial commitment to the museum would show the pride that we have in our heritage and would show respect for our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents. Most of us are only two or three generations away from when this province came into being. Within our own families many of us have historical roots that go back to when Saskatchewan came into existence in 1905 or very soon thereafter. This is a time to respect, cherish, and reflect upon that past. The Western Development Museum is a good place to do exactly that.

Mr. Speaker, the diamond jubilee of our province — something that I'm also old enough to remember — the province made grants that were available to family members and communities to develop books. They gave local histories of various parts of the province. I am pleased now to see at least one Saskatchewan encyclopedia is being written. I would very much like to see more money being spent to provide more written records of our valuable heritage before we lose it.

Mr. Speaker, in Saskatoon we have the Persephone Theatre and the Mendel Art Gallery. Both are seeking major capital expansions. These would make excellent centennial projects that would provide a lasting legacy for the province. Around the province many communities need renovations to halls, rinks, and community centres. I can't imagine many better things to do than to support rural Saskatchewan and create a lasting centennial legacy.

Mr. Speaker, one of the ideas that is in our *100 Ideas* booklet . . . And I would like to encourage the members opposite to read it a little bit more, I know that they're presenting some of the things out of it, and I commend them for that. The more they read it, the more they'll likely introduce things.

Mr. Speaker, in that booklet one of the things that they're . . . is why not have every child in the province plant a tree? We have an emerging problem with Dutch elm disease. Why not do something that would create a lasting legacy of new tree-lined streets and something that would support the environment? The members opposite talk about a green and prosperous economy. This would be something that would be a good step in the right direction.

Mr. Speaker, we have a shared heritage with our First Nations people. Why not make it a centennial initiative to pass legislation that would create the obligation to teach treaties and treaty rights to all students in the province? I note that a number of school divisions are doing this, but why should we not make

this a province-wide initiative?

Mr. Speaker, we have a number of communities in the Far North that need all-weather roads. Developing all-weather roads through the North would not just be a centennial project, but also would provide a huge economic injection into the North and would provide a roadway out for lumber and for mining products. It would also give access for people to go north and to enjoy tourism.

Mr. Speaker, other things that I did not see in this budget were funding for agriculture and funding for the CAIS program. Agriculture has been the backbone of this province since 1905. Most of us have strong farm ties. I learned to drive on my uncle's farm and spent many happy summers working on the family farm. My wife owns farm land in this province and is proud of her agriculture and her farm heritage. Last year many farmers had net negative incomes. Mr. Speaker, we need to do something to make sure the CAIS program is fully and immediately and adequately funded. We need to do something to protect our diminishing agricultural sector.

Mr. Speaker, another glaring omission of any kind of funding in this budget was any kind of funding to target the waiting lists in our hospitals. We have people that are dying and are in chronic pain and discomfort because of the unwillingness of the NDP to adequately fund health care and adequately manage health care. Every one of the NDP MLAs should be truly embarrassed. I get the calls at my MLA office and I'm sure that they do as well. Mr. Speaker, they should do something about it.

Mr. Speaker, I have spoken at some length about things that I would like to have seen in the budget, and things that I thought were unnecessary in the budget, and how I thought that this budget was utterly devoid of any vision or any direction. I appreciate the in-fight that probably took place in the NDP cabinet room. NDP cabinet work leads to bizarre compromises and strange results. There is a saying that if the NDP cabinet sat down and tried to invent a horse they would likely come up with a camel. Mr. Speaker, this budget is a three-humped camel.

What the Finance minister should have done when he realized he wasn't going to be able to satisfy his cabinet colleagues — and the one thing he could have done that would have given him a lasting legacy if they couldn't agree on anything else — was just take the money and apply it to the provincial debt. That would have produced a lasting legacy for generations to come. Generations to come would not be saddled with interest payments; they would have money for other initiatives later on. Instead we will now owe more money at the end of the year than at the beginning of the year.

We will continue to hear the inane statements from members opposite that we have a Fiscal Stabilization Fund. Mr. Speaker, what we have is a credit card that is not quite at its maximum so we can borrow on it again. The reality of it is that in spite of the enormous half a billion dollar windfall, we will be deeper in debt at the end of the year than we were at the beginning of the year.

The NDP government should be ashamed; it should be embarrassed. Fortunately our gross domestic product has grown

and we will be able to maintain and possibly increase our credit rating. Mr. Speaker, I regularly hear the members opposite talking about their credit rating. I'm sure those members probably get the same unsolicited offers for pre-approved credit cards in the mail that I do. That doesn't mean you should go out and borrow. It just means that people are willing to give you money and get you deeper in debt. Our goal as a province should be retiring debt or reducing debt, not talking about how well and how successful you can be about borrowing and getting us further in debt. That is not the indication of a successful economy.

Mr. Speaker, on this budget the NDP took a mulligan. They should admit it. Go back to the tee box and, Mr. Speaker, they should swing again. I will not be supporting this budget, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Moose Jaw Wakamow, Minister of Labour.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's with great pleasure that I stand and join in the debate on the budget that was brought down by the Minister of Finance. And especially after hearing some of the opposition's comments today, Mr. Speaker, I'm even more doubly pleased to have the opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, this budget comes at a very pivotal time in the province's history. While we're celebrating our centennial, it gives us an opportunity to build for our future a solid base that has been developed over the last decade of this government being in power, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again with this budget we are funding the people of Saskatchewan's priorities.

Mr. Speaker, health and education are again the highest recipients of funding in this year's budget. Health will be up 7.1 per cent and, Mr. Speaker, education will rise, education funding 6.8 per cent. We're building our future here for young people. It's been a priority for this government, Mr. Speaker, and we continue on with this budget. And I think the centrepiece of that is the \$6.7 million that went into the centennial university tuition grant, allowing universities to hold the line on tuition fees in '04-05 at those levels, Mr. Speaker.

And also the 1,000 additional training opportunities in this province for young people, adults that are seeking better opportunities in career development. These are extremely important, not only for those people and those families, but also for the future of the province and the future of those citizens.

Mr. Speaker, our economy here in Saskatchewan is performing quite well and there's measures in this budget such as the independent business tax review that will encourage the economy and encourage the growth that has begun.

And there's also significant capital budget to build for future generations. Mr. Speaker, we talked the other day . . . I had a question in question period about why would we be investing money into capital projects and re-living buildings that are owned by the taxpayers of Saskatchewan. But, Mr. Speaker, that is important and it's important to maintain those assets and

to improve the assets that provide services to the taxpayers here in Saskatchewan, services that our citizens rely on. And that is important.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think one of the biggest things out of this budget is that the government debt . . . And the member opposite just ended his comments talking about debt and credit. And, Mr. Speaker, this budget and the debt reduction that occurs in this budget puts this government debt at its lowest point in 14 years, Mr. Speaker, and that's pretty pivotal.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, we can look at a number of the initiatives that are in the budget. We talked about health and education. We talked about . . . Or there is the social programs, including the social assistance increases, as well as child care, immigration, and affordable housing initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, we can talk about the measures that build on the economy, including the establishment of the business tax review committee and we can also talk about that capital budget.

But I think a big part of when we talk about budgets and we talk about the huge amounts of dollars that go into the budget of Saskatchewan and the services that we provide, you always wonder — and I think it leaves our constituents wondering at home — how does that affect me? And what I did as the MLA for Moose Jaw Wakamow, Mr. Speaker, you take a step back and you have a look at the budget and what does that mean to the people that I represent.

Mr. Speaker, the 6.8 per cent education funding means a huge . . . has a huge impact on Moose Jaw. Not only is Moose Jaw a city that's close to the university here in Regina, the tuition funding gives students the opportunity from Moose Jaw. Many commute. If you travel on the highway between Moose Jaw and Regina every morning and every evening, there's a huge amount of young people that drive into Regina that attend university. That tuition funding will mean a great deal for them, give them some stability next year in their planning to go into university, and have some predictability for their costs. So it's important for them.

And it's also important for SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology]. Mr. Speaker, SIAST has a huge presence in the city of Moose Jaw. When students are there, the activity that's there, the money that comes into our community, businesses appreciate the students when they're in our community. They have a huge presence.

But also the educational value and the access to education for those people in the trades and the business area is extremely important. And those training positions, the expansion of training positions will be felt in our community, at home.

And also the funding that goes to the reduction on the portion of education property tax, the 8 per cent reduction, \$110 million that's been committed over the next two years, the businesses, the residences in Moose Jaw will feel that. The agricultural community that is the southern part of my constituency, they will feel that, and that's important especially in this time when

there is some real difficulty in agriculture, Mr. Speaker.

[15:45]

The funding for health, which is increased again. The 7.1 per cent increase — you talk about 7.1 per cent increase on a budget the size of Health's and, Mr. Speaker, the numbers are hard to comprehend. It's hard to understand how exactly that will affect each and every one of us. But when we start breaking it down and looking at the individual issues, some of the smaller expenses that will have a real impact on families in our communities: \$3.9 million to up the childhood vaccines — Mr. Speaker, for our littlest of citizens there's never enough that we can do, and if there's things that are preventable with vaccinations, then we need to do all we can in that area; \$4.7 million increase for MRI [magnetic resonance imaging], CT [computerized tomography] and bone density testing volumes.

We can say these numbers; we can talk about the numbers but, Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you I had a constituent the other day had a very serious health problem, was rushed to the hospital in Moose Jaw. And the doctor told him, do you know if we didn't have a CT scan in Moose Jaw you wouldn't have made the trip to Regina. Mr. Speaker, this gentleman has been a friend for many years, is a huge volunteer in our constituency, and I can't imagine anything like that happening. That CT scan is so important in our community.

We've had the mobile CT scan going back and forth between Swift Current and Moose Jaw, and to have that fixed CT scan that is a higher resolution, better machine, the staff at the hospital are so proud of that piece of equipment that they now have access to. The medical staff appreciate it and, Mr. Speaker, the citizens of Moose Jaw appreciate it.

So we can talk about these investments as million of dollars in percentages, but when we look around our constituency and see how they actually affect people, that's when we realize the importance of these investments and the money that's been designated in specific areas.

And, Mr. Speaker, there's been \$9 million that's been put aside to establish new primary health sites. Mr. Speaker, I just read an article in *Maclean's* magazine that talked about the importance of primary health sites, and that that was the way of the future for health care right across this country. And, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan had led the way in designating primary health sites, establishing those health sites, doing analysis on them, and providing the care and access to those services for our communities that may be farther away from the regional or the major hospitals. Mr. Speaker, we need those things; they are important to people and they are important right across this province.

Also youth. Youth was a focus, not only in the education piece but when we talk about new child care spaces. As more and more women enter the workforce, as our workforce requires more and more women in that workforce, Mr. Speaker — and those numbers are expected to grow — who cares for the littlest of those in our society? And we know from research, we know — we've heard it so many times — that young people and children need that very good start in life to be contributing citizens in our communities, to have healthy, fulfilling lives,

and to have those opportunities that so many people take for granted. We need to make sure that those opportunities, that good start, is there for all of those children in our communities. And, Mr. Speaker, another 250 child care spaces is important.

And one of my colleagues spoke previously about the affordable housing projects. And I know in Moose Jaw we look at housing, we look at the waiting list for affordable housing, and it's something that I know is going to have a huge impact on our community. To have a good home, to have a quality housing, affordable housing is also a huge part of children and the good start that they get in life, the stability they have, and their health outcomes. Mr. Speaker, we talk about health and health care but we need to look at the basics that give us those good starts in life, that build a good life — quality housing, affordable housing, that's a huge part of that.

And I know, and we talked other education investments, the francophone school that's going to built in Moose Jaw on the old Alexandra site. I know the francophone community was extremely pleased when the announcement was made and they have picked a site, they have worked with the city of Moose Jaw and their constituents to find the most appropriate site, to actually utilize an old facility that was there — the old Alexandra School site. They have tore down the old school but they have maintained the gymnasium that was there to add on with the new francophone school. And I know they're really looking forward to having that facility up and running, and to be able to provide the care and the education for their constituency that they've been working towards for a long time.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about the budget and we hand out all kinds of documents, one thing I would say to everyone, to look at the inter-city comparisons of taxes and household charges that's within the budget book. Here again when we talk about big numbers, we talk about percentages, we talk about millions of dollars, quite often it just is overwhelming. We don't grasp what it means to us as individuals and to families in our constituencies.

And I would recommend to people that they have a look at these charts in the budget. It gives a comparison to comparable size cities right across Canada. It talks about the costs that we have as citizens. And do you know what, Mr. Speaker? Saskatchewan is consistently with the lowest taxes and household charges in Canada.

Our quality of life here in Saskatchewan . . . I mean, it's in black and white numbers. It gives comparisons and it lets each of us know that yes, we do, we do have a good quality of life. We do have comparable standards right across, but Saskatchewan is one of the most cost-effective places to live. So we have our quality of life and our low-cost expenses here in the province. Mr. Speaker, we have to look at that and realize that it is, it is actual. It's a fact, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we can always look at some of the other investments that have been made in the province. We can look at the budget, but I would recommend to people, stop by your local constituency office and pick up a copy of it. It takes a little bit of time. There's a number of initiatives that are very good. And there's a number of areas that they may have questions about, but please stop by and pick up a book or look at it on the

Internet if you have time.

I'd like to actually spend a few minutes talking about some of the comments that the opposition has made. And, Mr. Speaker, consistently since we have begun this session, the opposition has talked about their little milder side, their softer side. As one of my colleagues commented, you know, they dressed up fuzzy and figure we're all going to fall for it.

They've talked consistently about this government hasn't done anything for the lowest income earners in this province. And, Mr. Speaker, that's wrong, that's absolutely wrong, not only for the social programs and the increases and improvements that we've consistently made — that my colleague spoke to a couple speakers ago — but, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the budget book, we talk about provincial tax credits, that they're generally parallel to federal credits, except that Saskatchewan implemented basic and spousal amounts that are higher than their federal counterparts, Mr. Speaker. And as a result of indexation, the basic and spousal amounts are \$8,404 for the 2005 taxation year.

Now, Mr. Speaker, they failed to comment on that, that they are indexed and that they are improving as the years go on. So those with the lowest incomes continue to receive higher personal exemptions than what they have. Mr. Speaker, that's something that we purposely established in the income tax review that was done a number of years ago. And, Mr. Speaker, we're still seeing the results of that as the indexation takes place.

And we can look at a chart . . . I mean, there's a number of charts that have been put out. And it talks about a one-income family with an income of 10,000. The pre-reform of the system in 1999, that one-income family would have paid \$257 in combined tax, and that would have been 2.6 per cent of their total income in tax. And, Mr. Speaker, after reform in 2005 they have had a reduction of 100 per cent in the tax that they pay. A one-income family earning \$20,000 has had a 69.7 per cent reduction in the tax that they pay. And a \$30,000 single-income family has had a 49 per cent reduction in tax that they pay.

So, Mr. Speaker, we could go on and on with those numbers, but there has been improvements. It is areas that we continue to focus on. And, Mr. Speaker, families across Saskatchewan have seen results and they will continue to see results and improvements.

And, Mr. Speaker, the opposition stands up and they talk about . . . well, they're very critical of the things we do. And I guess that's what opposition does, is they oppose and they bring forward. But, Mr. Speaker, I wish they could be accurate and maybe stop and look in the mirror just once in a while. And, Mr. Speaker, and then they would have maybe a little better perspective on some of the things that they say.

Mr. Speaker, you know one of my colleagues on the government side of the House said, well gee, I think they're trying to be New Democrats over there. We almost brought in . . . We looked at their 100 ideas and here they are all soft and fuzzy, and we almost thought well gee, they're all going to take out memberships and they're going to come over and join us.

But, Mr. Speaker, all you have to do is look back, and not that long, Mr. Speaker. You just have to check back a couple of months — even check back some of their speeches over this first couple of weeks of this House — and you see, Mr. Speaker, they may have changed their song but they just slide back into old habits so quickly it isn't even funny. And we don't believe them. You know, I heard someone the other day say gee, they're sounding so good you know I could almost vote for them; I could almost vote for them, if I believed them. And that's the big thing, Mr. Speaker, we don't believe them.

Mr. Speaker, they talked about — not that long ago, Mr. Speaker — that the other 80-some Crowns would be sold. The member from Weyburn-Big Muddy said that. And the Leader of the Opposition says that he's open to anything with the major Crowns. And that was just a couple of years ago, Mr. Speaker. Well now they're saying the Crowns won't be sold. They're a believer, Mr. Speaker; they have finally realized the value that the Crown corporations return to the people of this province, not only in good services, cost-effective services, but also in their commitment to their communities, the things that they support.

Now a couple of years ago, Mr. Speaker, they talked about . . . also on the chopping block is the 25 to 50 million to trim the welfare system. Now all of a sudden, now all of a sudden, Mr. Speaker, they have turned into the softer side, Mr. Speaker. But we don't believe them. We don't believe them.

They talk about supporting increases in the food allowance. Now, Mr. Speaker, that's fine. But the member opposite just finished speaking and what he said was if the basic living increase that we just put in this budget of \$10, he said if that's the best you could do, if you're only giving them 10 bucks you might as well not do it. Well, Mr. Speaker, I would say that member is so out of touch that he does not have a clue what \$10 means to some of the families and some of the individuals that are living on social services in this province. Mr. Speaker, he is totally out of touch.

Mr. Speaker, they're talking about determining best practices for dealing with young offenders. Well I think it was just last session they were talking about boot camps, for crying out loud. Now all of a sudden this conversion, the softer, warmer Saskatchewan Party. Well, Mr. Speaker, we don't believe it. We don't believe it one bit and the people of this province don't believe it either.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about this new, softer Saskatchewan Party they're talking about a central control for health care. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's the Department of Health; that's what we've always had. But, Mr. Speaker, this government believes that there needs to be regional authorities, there needs to be the health authorities that have input so they can accommodate the special and specific needs that are within those regions.

[16:00]

Mr. Speaker, now all of a sudden the Saskatchewan Party says oh no, we need to get rid of those, and we're just going with a central agency.

So what happens to your community input? What happens to the regional hospitals? What happens to those community health care centres? Everything's done that way, Mr. Speaker.

Now here they are, they're all hooting and hollering. Well now he says, why are you amalgamating school boards, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, amalgamation of school boards, the regional health authorities, does not mean everything run from a central agency, and that's what's in their platform.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we can talk about the warmer, fuzzier, softer Sask Party. And one of their ideas in their new *100 Ideas* little pamphlet says that they are going to:

Investigate the establishment of a Research Chair in Occupational Health and Safety at one of Saskatchewan's universities to improve the health and safety of all workers in Saskatchewan.

Well that's nice, Mr. Speaker, but I hate to tell them we already have the chief occupational medical officer at the university of Saskatoon, who does research, who runs a clinic, who works on these issues already. Now it would be nice if, when they talk about putting forward their ideas, that they looked around. I mean, these things are already in play. The chief occupational medical officer has been at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon for almost five years doing the research, doing papers, doing the clinics, doing a variety of work in this area. So, Mr. Speaker, they really need to look at these things.

And then here we go again, Mr. Speaker; we talk about the flip-flop. They put on this fuzzy coat and say, well we're a softer, warmer party and we're moving to the centre.

And, Mr. Speaker, then we look at the leader's website, the leader's website and a speech from June 2000, and the quote is:

... red tape and regulations that have been foisted onto [the] business community by this government, be it through Workers' Comp or occupational health and safety or various pieces of labour legislation, too often ... [have] driven businesses and the jobs they create and the taxes they pay out of the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, workers' compensation? An insurance program that compensates workers who have been injured on the job — or worse yet, a fatality on the job — that compensates and provides benefits for that worker's family.

Occupational health and safety? When every person, every person across this country knows that occupational health and safety and safety in the workplace means improvements on the bottom line for that company — that's red tape according to the opposition. Red tape and an inconvenience for Saskatchewan businesses.

Well, Mr. Speaker, they need to open up their eyes and start to look at today's workplaces. Occupational health and safety is a benefit. You have a more productive workplace. You have more loyal employees, and it means improvements on the bottom line for that business. It isn't an inconvenience, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, they can talk about all they like, the newer,

softer version that they are. But, Mr. Speaker, they are the same party that was in power in the '80s, the Conservatives — same thing.

Now the member opposite, he talked about if \$10 increase to basic living allowance was the best we could do, we might as well not bother. And he is out of touch; he is totally out of touch. And I would invite him, he can come to my constituency office and see what that means to some of the people in my constituency, Mr. Speaker.

And then he goes on to talk about, well no credit for the federal funding. He's going to give no credit to anybody on this side of the House for the federal funding that's come to the province of Saskatchewan. Well who does that member think went to Ottawa and put up the fight and put up the case for equalization improvements? Who does that member think is still going to Ottawa, speaking to Ottawa, and putting forward the case for equalization? It's this Premier and this government that has done it.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — And you know when that member stands there and criticizes the work that's been done by this government for the taxpayers and the people of Saskatchewan, well you know what I'd say to him — you phone your Conservative cousins in Ottawa who sat on their hands during the budget. They sat on their hands during the budget; they never voted. Well look at us. We're ready for an election, they say. We want to be the government. But you know what? They didn't even have the backbone to stand up for the people of Saskatchewan and Western Canada.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — So instead of criticizing this Premier and this government, that member should phone his cousins in Ottawa opposition and say, lookit, you guys, we voted for you for a reason. Get off your hands and do some work for the province that you're supposed to representing.

And then, Mr. Speaker, the opposition member, he gets up and he says, well we haven't done anything for property tax in the province of Saskatchewan. Well you know what, I guess only a Conservative could say \$110 million is nothing. You know what, and it's no wonder that these guys have this ... talk about the same spending habits that the Devine Conservatives had during the '80s that left this province so close to bankruptcy it wasn't even funny — 110 million is nothing.

Well that's nice, I guess that's the way he thinks of it — 110 million means nothing. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's the kind of attitude that got us into trouble in the '80s and, Mr. Speaker, this government will stay away from this, will continue to pay down the debt, and will continue to provide stable services for the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this budget really does look forward to the next 100 years. It provides a base for this province. It provides stability to the services of this province that our communities will continue to build on. And, Mr. Speaker, it's only appropriate that during our centennial year, we would have a

budget that looks forward and gives this government the opportunity to provide the services that the people of this province are asking for, and our priority is for the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, it is our 100th anniversary; it's our centennial. It's a year when we can look back and celebrate the contributions of those that have come before, from the pioneers to some of our grandparents that came over in those early years here in Saskatchewan and helped build the communities, build the lives that we have now. But, Mr. Speaker, along with this budget we can look forward to the future of this province.

Our economic indicators are pointing to very good things for Saskatchewan. We have many things on the go. We have a knowledgeable workforce and we have futures for the young people in this province and we'll continue to build for education opportunities and for careers that they can build here in Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, I will gladly support this budget that the Minister of Finance put forward and I will not be supporting the amendments that have been put forward by the opposition. But I will support the budget.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Humboldt.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I am quite privileged to be able to enter this debate.

It was disappointing, quite frankly, to listen to the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow just moments ago. She will never know who I support federally; I don't share that even with my own caucus members.

But before she sits there and uses a sanctimonious mannerism on the MPs [members of parliament] that are working for us in Ottawa, she better think about how many NDP MPs the voters in this province supported in the last federal election. And I think it's a little thin. So in making a mockery of our MP, she is making a mockery of the voters of our province. She is making a mockery of the choices that they've made. So I hope she's proud of that. I hope she's indeed proud of that behaviour.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I need to begin by complimenting the government. I'm not, like I said, I'm not very impressed with the last speech but I do have to compliment the government on one thing, and that is allowing the funding to flow for the advancement of the Humboldt hospital. They've been waiting for 10 years now, so let's not pat ourselves on the back to such an extent that the arm gets tired — I sort of want that to go to the Learning minister. It's been 10 years that they have waited, that they have asked for this funding. It is not going to be for construction quite yet at this stage; it is only going to the blueprint stage. There is still more money that's going to be needed so we'll see what will happen. But it's important to Humboldt and it's important to the surrounding community.

We have a hospital here in Saskatchewan that doesn't have wheelchair access unless you go to the emergency entrance in

order to bring any patient on a wheelchair into . . . and this has been in this state for years. It's outdated. And so I do believe that was a motion made by the government that I will support. And it's been a long time overdue.

But you know, let's just see what the *Humboldt Journal* wrote about what was in the budget. And it's an editorial in the *Humboldt Journal* and it basically says, finally. Because finally they're getting the funding that they've been hoping for, for a number of years that has been promised . . . I think it's been announced now four times. There have been three previous announcements where they had a, you know, big press conference in Humboldt, great photo op for either the Health minister, the Premier, or both, where they could make this announcement and absolutely not put a thin dime into backing up the announcement.

So this is the first indication that perhaps they're going to follow through on what they promised year after year after year. It says that Humboldt has been waiting a long time for this new hospital, and the fact that funds will be there for blueprints and as many other stages as they finish this year is a very good sign.

Why? Well the government won't move on to the blueprint stage unless they're sure that the actual construction will take place in a timely manner. After all, after a few years those blueprints and the estimated costs of the project would be out of date and they would have wasted all that money. So this is all very good news.

But I found myself asking the question, why is this happening now after over a decade of waiting? Is it because they simply waited long enough now — because we were patient and waited our turn? Or was it because enough people pushed and pushed and pushed the issue with the government of the day? I'm leaning towards the latter reason myself.

People in Humboldt and the surrounding area have proven themselves to be doers over the years. That's why there are so many entrepreneurs here; so much industry. If there's something to be done people here tend to say, okay let's get it done instead of asking who's going to do it.

Last fall they decided they had enough of the airy-fairy government promises regarding the new hospital. They wanted some concrete assurance from the government that a new hospital would be built here in the near future and they convinced the Health Minister Nilson that it was a priority. How? Well, when Nilson visited last fall, representatives from both rural and urban municipalities in the area were there to tell him, we need a new hospital, here's why.

The people in Humboldt made this happen. They saw something in this community that was lacking as well as a way to make it better and they worked together to change it from worse to better. They didn't sit back and whine; and that's not the Humboldt way. They went out and did something about the problem; and that is the Humboldt way. And everyone who was involved in getting the government to finally listen should have, while they're sitting back in their chairs sighing, giving themselves a pat on the back. So it's the people, the community working together.

They have their capital funding in place. It's very, very difficult, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to fundraise in relatively small communities, in a community that's rural, that has been impacted year after year with different negative impacts to the economy, to be able to come up with \$8 million; and they have their money in place. So I admire this community and I'm very, very proud to be able to represent it.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, next year I'll be looking for the funding in the next year's budget for the capital that they will need to actually begin construction.

But let's look at the budget overall. It's a deficit budget. The income minus the expenditures leaves a number in brackets. And I know a number of their members have denied that it's a deficit budget, but I've done books for a number of years and I know when I get to the end of a column and I put the number in brackets, I know it's a deficit. That's why I put it in brackets. And if they question it, I suggest that they look at their own documents. The revenue was 7,006,800,000. The expenditures was 7,151,731,000. The expenditures exceeded the revenue and that equates to a deficit budget.

[16:15]

So how does the NDP government keep on telling the public that it's balanced? Well here comes the miracle, the miracle being the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. The member from Coronation Park was so excited when he talked about the Fiscal Stabilization Fund yesterday. He was ecstatic. He was absolutely excited because they had created this absolutely amazing Fiscal Stabilization Fund and he felt that it was unique, and it was great, and it was the best thing since sliced bread, and this government invented it.

Well the Provincial Auditor states that the use of a fiscal stabilization as a savings account is not proper accounting practices and therefore, when you draw down from a Fiscal Stabilization Fund, you are incurring a debt. It's just that simple. If he doesn't believe it . . . And the member from Coronation Park's woke up now and he's arguing that this isn't the truth.

But let's just take a look, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at their own document, page 51. Let's read page 51 in the government's own budget document. And it states:

Some of the initiatives announced in 2004-05 were multi-year in nature and will be funded through the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. As these initiatives are funded over the next three years via withdrawals from the . . . [Fiscal Stabilization Fund], government debt will rise.

Government debt will rise. How can he sit there and deny that the use of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund is incurring debt when it's in his government's own document. It's on page 51 if he needs to check it out.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the other . . . You know, in fairness to the government, using a line of credit whether you call it a Fiscal Stabilization Fund or whatever you want to call it, quite frankly, is used all the time. It's not unique or invented by the NDP government. It's used in the farming community. I use it in my

own farming operation. It's used in the business community, and it's a very, very beneficial tool for running a business to have a line of credit. We may not in the farm . . . On the farm that my husband and I operate we don't give it a fancy name or anything. We call it a line of credit. I enter it into the ledger, appropriately, and it goes in the liabilities column because I know if I have to draw money on my line of credit, I have incurred a debt. It's a debt, and that is just plain that simple.

So the question becomes — and I've had a few constituents ask me this — why another deficit budget if we have all this money? Last year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they raised the PST one point, which brings in an additional 140 million into the General Revenue Fund last year. And we didn't reduce it, so therefore we can project another \$140 million to come into the fund this year. There was \$1.1 billion in revenue from oil and gas and equalization last year that was unexpected for this government. And the budget document projects that there will be an additional 400 million in new government revenue this year. So where did it all go? Like why are we looking at yet another deficit budget? We've had deficit budgets, quite frankly, ever since this Premier took over from Mr. Romanow.

So we'll take a look at the Estimates book, and, you know, try and find out exactly where did this money go. And we'll start with something that's extremely important to the Humboldt constituency, because that's the area that I'm concerned about. So my initial concern of course was to see if the Humboldt hospital could move forward. But beyond that, there's many other areas in this document that's going to affect the people in Humboldt.

So starting with Agriculture and Food, it had an increase of \$1 million to the budget and it added one full-time equivalent employee. So, how's that going to affect my farm, my neighbour's farm, and how is it going to affect the constituency in general? And so, did they commit to fully funding the CAIS program which, quite frankly, is the only management tool, finance management tool that the farmers have right now. And you find if you look at the budget that it's just not there. There's no commitment there to fully fund 2004 CAIS. Did they add money to Crop Insurance to help the crop insurance situation? And . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Members, we have some important guests in the gallery. Is leave granted for the Chair to introduce guests?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Deputy Speaker: — Thank you very much. We're very honoured to welcome a member of the legislature from British Columbia, Brenda Locke, but she's not here as an MLA . . . Oh, I guess she just stepped out. She's here as a coach of a 26 Junior A ringette team, who've travelled all the way from British Columbia to participate in a tournament here in Regina and I hope they do quite well, but not too well. And I would ask all hon. members to welcome the ringette team here, and Brenda Locke, MLA.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member for Humboldt.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen that the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the proposed amendment thereto moved by Mr. Cheveldayoff.]

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So again we're going back and we're looking at the budget for Agriculture and Food, that section of the budget which of course is very important to my constituency.

So we . . . [inaudible] . . . they didn't fully fund CAIS. They have not committed to doing that. Did they add money to crop insurance? Well, no, they didn't add any money to that either. Did they reinstate, with all this extra money that they have and all the money that they spent, did they spend some of it reinstating or replacing any of the programs that they cut last year when they said that times were tough and they had to make some major cuts? Well there was the farm families opportunity program that they cut. There was the conservation cover program that they cut. They fired how many agrologists in the province. They closed how many rural farm centres.

Let's just see if they, you know, did they replace any of that with their added spending? And when you go through the budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you'll find out that they didn't replace any of it. They absolutely replaced none of it. They slashed everything in rural Saskatchewan they possibly could last year, pleading poverty, but now that they can't plead poverty, now that the province is doing relatively well, did they replace any of it? Not one bit.

So let's just take a look at another section. How about the increase, you know, how about an increase to research and technology? We keep talking about how we need to look more and more at value-added processing. I think there has to be some research done into that area. I think it's extremely critical for the viability of agriculture into the future. And if you look in the budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker, not only did they not add to the research and technology section of the Agriculture and Food, they decreased it. So they've given lip service to supporting all of this, but in fact when it came time to doing the budget, those areas of such importance to rural Saskatchewan were decreased.

You know the minister time and time again has said, you know, I stand behind our farmers. Well heaven help us if he didn't because we're being crucified while he's behind us.

So there is nothing new in this budget for agriculture. APAS [Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan] had a press release after they seen the budget; they're the representative quite often called upon to speak on agriculture

issues. Their press release said, "Agriculture Not A Priority To Government."

March 23, 2005 . . . The Agriculture Producers Association of Saskatchewan . . . is extremely concerned over the lack of commitment to agriculture in today's provincial budget.

So it isn't just my word, Mr. Speaker, it's also the committee of agriculture that's saying exactly the same thing.

So another department that you know greatly affects my constituency would be Government Relations. It's also important to Humboldt, property taxes affect both the urban and rural areas within the Humboldt constituency. And when it comes to property taxes they re-announced the two year reduction of property taxes, so again another photo op, another re-announcement. But there's no thoughts or no vision to fixing the problem.

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

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, request leave to introduce guests.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member has requested leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member for Canora-Pelly.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I understand that you've already acknowledged some of the guests in your gallery and I'd like to add to that introduction.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, and members in the Legislative Assembly, we are honoured this afternoon to have representatives from the province of British Columbia, specifically the Junior A Ringette Champions of British Columbia; and they are here in Regina, where of course the Western Canadians Tournament is underway.

And I understand the girls have played two ringette games today but we won't indicate what the results were of those two games. We just wish them well in their other games. But, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce the coach, Kathy Matuziak, who I understand has done a great job with these girls for years. These are age 13 to 15 year old girls. And I want to thank Kathy.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — I also want to make mention of a member of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia currently serving as the Minister of State for Mental Health and Addictions, Brenda Locke, who has accompanied that group as well.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — So on behalf of the official opposition and all members in the Legislative Assembly, welcome to Saskatchewan, welcome to the Legislative Chamber here in the province of Saskatchewan, and I hope that your stay in Saskatchewan is a pleasant one. Thank you.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member for Humboldt.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen that the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the proposed amendment thereto moved by Mr. Cheveldayoff.]

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Okay, returning to the reviewing the budget on Government Relations, and yes the government re-announced the two-year property tax reduction, but they have not given any plan, any vision, any way that they're going to address the problem long-term.

They've done a two-year rebate on farm land before and they ran it for two years, dropped it, and the problem was still there. And I think the problem is going to get much worse because we are looking at reassessment. In a lot of cases the reassessment increase is going to eat up any reduction that they've offered, so therefore no one in the province is going to be any better off after two years.

Was there any increase to the revenue sharing, which also affects property taxes, quite frankly? And no, it was frozen. I find that kind of ironic, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When I was first elected, it was back in 1999. And in that budget, there was a few areas where the Saskatchewan Party had run on a platform that said that they would hold spending in some of the departments at the cost of inflation.

And they went through . . . you know, they were just giddy whenever they could say, zap, you're frozen. Like it just made them; they were just happier than heck. And they did it time and time again. But this is even worse than what we had proposed because there isn't even any provisions to handle inflation or increased costs whatsoever.

Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you don't have to take my word for it. We have two groups that represent municipal or government relations, and that is SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] and SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association]. They both have press releases following this budget.

And SARM's press release read as follows:

"Status Quo" Still on for Rural Saskatchewan

They highlighted three areas in their press release. Under agriculture, it says:

The Province's . . . [agriculture] producers are facing one of the worst financial . . . [crisis] in the last century . . . [where] record losses due to extremely low commodity prices, the devastating frost over most of the province, several years of drought and the ongoing border dispute over BSE. "Despite record setting resource sector royalties, there was no new money for the . . . [agriculture] sector. They aren't even going to . . . [find] their share of the CAIS program," said President [Neal] Hardy.

Under education tax on property, the press release states:

At the 2003 SARM Annual Convention the Premier stated, "the status quo . . . [was] not on" regarding education tax on property. At the 2004 SARM Annual Convention the Premier stated, "without doubt there is an inequity in the level of education tax on farmland." "Despite the premier's acknowledgement of the inequity, and despite record setting resource sector royalties the education tax inequity was not addressed," said President Neal Hardy.

Under rural revenue sharing:

The Province continues to reap the benefits of record setting resource royalties. The resource sector, specifically oil and gas, are located in rural Saskatchewan and rural . . . [communities] provide the roads to service these wells. "Despite record setting royalties . . . [there's] no increase in revenue sharing for rural municipalities" . . .

SUMA. Let's just see what SUMA had to say about this budget that the NDP are so proud of. On their press release it states:

Status Quo Budget Short-changes Future Prosperity

"When you short-change municipalities you are short-changing the future prosperity of this province," said Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities President Don Schlosser in response to the 2005 Provincial Budget.

[16:30]

And it goes on to be quite damning of the budget and how it will affect the municipal level of government across this province. So there is no added money there. That's not where the money was spent, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So let's go on to K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] education that affects a lot of families in the Humboldt constituency. It also affects . . . Quite frankly, the funding for K to 12 education directly affects property taxes.

There's going to be a cost to amalgamation. And there's increased operating costs and each of the school boards have to find funding to address those costs. They have to meet the needs of the teachers' contract once that is negotiated. The funds have to be found. And again when you look at the budget, it was frozen. There's no extra funding for K to 12 education in this province.

If you look at the press releases for the affected stakeholders in K to 12 education, you look at the press release from the Saskatchewan School Boards Association and it states: "Status quo budget does not recognize education cost increases." "[The] STF Calls Provincial Budget a Non-event for K-12 Education."

So you don't just have to take my word for it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. These are the groups that represent the different sectors within our province and they all stated that this budget was not meeting the needs of the citizens of this province.

So the fourth department, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I wanted to see if that's where the money was being spent, because it's important to the Humboldt constituency, was Community Resources and Employment. That's extremely important to Humboldt and there is an increase to that department of \$35 million and 36 full-time equivalent employees.

Now there's two issues that fall within the Community Resources and Employment department that affect Humboldt, the Humboldt constituency in a large way. There seems to be an increase in low-income earners. And although Lanigan was a community that has had a food bank for a number of years, Humboldt has just recently opened a food bank there as well. So there's an increased need for a food bank in the Humboldt constituency. So that is absolutely nothing that this government should be proud of.

There's no tax relief for those low-income earners in this budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And the PST that was, you know, tagged on last year because supposedly the province was in dire straits, was not rolled back. So therefore the low-income earners in the Humboldt constituency still have to pay the high tax rate.

There was a \$10 increase to the basic food allowance, but it's been 22 years, Mr. Deputy Speaker, since this allowance has seen an increase. And quite frankly I don't believe it would've happened if the Saskatchewan Party hadn't been proposing that it needed to happen and needed to happen quickly. There is no indication from that government in the last 22 years that they were even remotely going to look at that issue.

And yes, that's one area where I do agree with the member from Moose Jaw-Wakamow — \$10 when you have none is a lot of money. But we need to do more; we need to do more. We simply need to do more because it's not a lot of money. It needs to be indexed. It needs to increase with inflation.

And what about, the other thing is what about the front-line workers. And this is actually a critical situation that's happening in Humboldt right now. Humboldt is a city and they've been cut back in their social services workers to such a state right now that one worker comes out of Saskatoon one day a week for four hours. Well there is no way that poor worker can handle the number of clients that are in Humboldt and the large surrounding community around Humboldt. And so what's ending up happening is the increased number of people that have come into my office, that are frustrated with social services, and it's not the worker's fault.

We've had three different workers come to Humboldt since November, so there's no flow-through of the case files. There's no, you know, continuing with a client till they can get on their

feet. That just stops. Every time they change a social worker, they're looking at re-looking at the issues. They have to go over their situation yet again, and that's only if they can get the appointment in the first place. And four hours a week in Humboldt is not adequate.

The government has received letters from the city of Humboldt on this issue. They have received letters from the RCMP in Humboldt on this issue. They have received letters from other community leaders on this issue and they absolutely refuse to look at it. But surely they have . . . they've got to know that in a city the size of Humboldt and the surrounding community, four hours a week is hardly adequate. So I hope those 36 full-time equivalent employees, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are front-line employees; I really do. I hope they're not just employees in the department because those social workers are working hard and they are not able to meet the need.

The other area that falls into Community Resources and Employment is the area of addictions. And Lanigan actually had some public meetings some time ago, before the issue was raised at all in this House, on addictions difficulties in the Lanigan area. It's a huge concern to myself personally — that is where my children went to school. They took their K to 12 in the Lanigan school. They saw that there was difficulties.

Humboldt now has seen the problems and the challenges that are happening with addictions, in particular crystal meth, and they now have a community drug action committee. And that committee is trying to address some of the issues facing the drug addiction in the area. There's even going to be a meeting, Mr. Speaker, on Saturday — this Saturday coming up — dealing specifically with crystal meth.

Now this government I don't even think gave it any thought until the member from Kelvington-Wadena brought it up. And even then they made a mockery of her, that she was just being foolish and silly for bringing it up. And now finally they're starting to wake up, but is there anything in this budget that's going to address the issues? Is there anything in this budget that's going to address the challenges that communities are facing, that parents are facing, when they have young people addicted to crystal meth? And I don't think there is. There's nothing that's going to help those parents. There's nothing that's going to help the communities deal with this. We need treatment centres, we need better education on the specific drugs that are there right now. And we need law enforcement, quite frankly, that's going to deal with these difficulties.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the other area I wanted to look at very quickly was youth in general. And it doesn't . . . we do have, you know, Youth and Recreation. But I wanted to look at it overall. We all give a lot of lip service to doing things for youth in our province. The government is famous for giving lip service to it. And quite frankly, their lips have to be getting sore because they're not doing a whole lot to keep our youth in our province, and the demographics are proving it, the statistics are proving it.

So we could keep talking about it, and yes, this budget offers a one-year tuition freeze — something that the Minister of Learning said wasn't going to work, but they did it anyways. It looked good. They can run out and champion this. But I found

it rather amusing because the day of the budget, when I returned to where I stay when I'm in Regina, a young lady who is a U of R [University of Regina] student had come over to visit that evening.

Now knowing her parents, I would say that her parents would be probably NDP supporters. I've never asked. We've never talked politics but that's sort of the feeling that I've had. So she would be coming at it from that type of perspective. And she said to me, she said, did the budget give us a one-year freeze on tuition? And I said, yes it did. Well is that ever stupid because I'm going to pay for it next year, aren't I? And that's exactly what the minister has said in the past. It catches up to you. It catches up to you.

Did they, you know, they care about youth? Did they reinstate the funding for the legislative intern program? No. Did they reinstate the summer student program, something that was very, very helpful to our regional parks? How about the regional parks that have hired students summer after summer, the summer student program? It was a program slashed last budget. Did they reinstate it? No.

But bottom line — even if we have none of these programs, what young people need in our province is simple, is opportunity. They need an opportunity, and I don't feel in all circumstances they're given that opportunity in this province because we are not attracting business and investment. There isn't an expansion of jobs in this province to meet the needs to give these young people the opportunities that they are looking for.

There's a group in Humboldt called Action Humboldt, and it is an inspiring group that came together of entrepreneurs and community leaders. And they're looking in every aspect of growing Humboldt and area. They want to make it a healthy, desirable place to live. They want to attract businesses. They want to be able to have businesses that can offer jobs. They're looking at the whole perspective of the area and growing the area.

But you know there's nothing new that I can go to Action Humboldt in this budget and say that, this is what you can take out, this is new, this is brand new so that you can market a Saskatchewan advantage to attract what you need to your area.

Business and investors need to feel confident. They need to feel confident that there won't be competed . . . or have to compete against the government. They need to feel confident that they have fair and stable tax structures. They need to feel confident that they have a business accommodating legislation and they need to feel confident that there will be enough consumers, quite frankly, to use their product. And then they will come to the province and then they will create jobs which will in turn create the opportunity for our young people to stay. And there's nothing in this budget that addresses any of those issues.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I heard one of the members . . . yes, it was yesterday. He was talking about how he went out and he asked the different sectors what's in this budget for them. And then we had the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow also speak of what's it going to do for everybody within our constituencies.

And I didn't have that opportunity this weekend, but I do believe my own family — and I know the Minister from Learning always loves when I talk about my family — so my own family is pretty broad representative of an average rural family. My husband and I farm. We have one daughter at the U of S [University of Saskatchewan]. We have one daughter in the workforce, and I have a daughter in the K to 12 system. And I look at each of those, and I look at our parents. And I'm thinking, what's in this budget for them?

Yes, the U of S student, the gal that's in the U of S, she will get one year of a tuition freeze. But she's had — she's a fourth year student — and she has only in the four years of her education been able to access \$1,100 in student loans. That's it. She's had to work the whole way through, which is fine. I'm not saying that's totally wrong. But I think there's times where she would appreciate having easier accessibility to get a student loan.

The daughter that's in the workforce — and the Minister of Labour will love this — is a part-time worker. She's had a tough time finding a full-time job, but it will come. It's very, very difficult for her. And what's going to help her in this budget? What's going to create the environment that businesses will come and create jobs? And I'm looking at the budget, and there's nothing. There's absolutely nothing that's going to help her out there.

I look at my father and my husband's mother, and we're looking at them on a fixed income. Their property taxes have always increased, and they feel the brunt first hand on a PST increase. The 1 per cent is significant to them, and there's nothing in this budget to address this.

This is the centennial budget, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This was the time where they could lay out a vision. This was the time where they could have some great initiatives for how we're going to move forward into the future. And there is nothing in there that does that. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be supporting the amendment, and I will not support the motion.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Athabasca.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to join into the debate and support the budget that has been presented here on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan in the year 2005.

I think it's very important that we take into context a lot of the challenges that we face as a province and look at the history of Saskatchewan in general as to where the challenges are in the past, where the challenges are certainly in the present, and where we need to go in terms of the future when it comes to economic development, when it comes to social planning — and certainly all trying to do that under the notion of managing our resources well and certainly managing our money well.

Mr. Speaker, I stand in full and proud support of the budget today and make a few comments I think is very important that people make when we stand up to defend what we think is the right direction to go. And what I want to tell the viewers back

home is a couple of things. First of all I would say to them, in a few minutes I'll give you an explanation as to where the money went, the approximately \$890 million that this province received last year — certainly in one-time money — so people back home have an idea where the government put the money. And they can get their pens and papers out, and we'll certainly explain as we have on many occasions, on many occasions to many groups how and where the money was spent.

[16:45]

I think that's very important, Mr. Speaker, because one of the challenges I tell people back home is . . . the Sask Party goes out and tells people, well what have they done for you. What have they done for you? That has been their biggest argument when they go out and talk to people. They have done this. They have done things bad. What have they done good for you, Mr. Speaker?

And that's why I think it's important, why it's important for people back home to know some of things that we have to point out on occasion of what those Sask Party are saying to folks and what they're about and certainly what we're trying to do on this side, Mr. Speaker. I think as I mentioned before, as I mentioned before we'll been going through detail as to where the dollars went, and I would urge people back home to certainly get a pen and paper, and then we can tally it up.

But what I would point out, what I would point out then, Mr. Speaker, is that don't take their word for it as to what the total tally was. Take the Minister of Finance's word where he's actually documented the revenues that we received last year so that they're justified. They're justified. And so therefore when they say it's \$1 billion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would point out, use the Minister of Finance's figures which the auditor uses, which all the independent bond rating agencies use as well, and those are the figures.

But what happens, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that that Sask Party opposition does two things. They inflate the number because they want to create greater expectations and greater pressure on the government. That's what they do. So 100 million, 150 million there that they inflate, well that doesn't matter, rounding off 890 million to well over 1 billion. That's what they kind of do. And that kind of Tory math, Mr. Speaker, is present in 2005, and that's what got us in trouble in the first place.

So I'll point out to all the viewers back home because — as I mentioned, get your pens and papers out — and we will go through where the money was spent, where the \$1 billion was spent, so people back home know exactly where it went and how much exactly in terms of dollars that we actually received last year.

Now before I go to that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to talk about the opposition a bit here if I may. And I want to point out the history of us coming to the stage as Saskatchewan in the centennial year of 2005, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are now at the lowest level of debt that we've been in 14 years, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Lowest level in 14 years. And I think that sends the right signal, Mr. Speaker, in terms of telling the people of Saskatchewan that on this side of the Assembly we don't inflate the numbers like the opposition does. We don't spend the so-called \$1.4 billion or \$1.8 billion. We don't spend that extra money every year as they would do. And we don't spend it ten times over promising everybody what they want, they'll deliver, Mr. Speaker. And there's two things I'll say to that, Mr. Speaker, is that what Saskatchewan people have to be very, very careful of is that kind of Tory math. That got us in trouble in the past.

So the three points I'll make is . . . I'll explain where the additional dollars went. I will give the true figure as to what we received, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in terms of extra revenues last year. And what I'll also do as time goes on during this session, is we will keep track of what the Tories opposite have promised us on a continual basis as to where they'd spend this money, Mr. Speaker.

And as I mentioned before it is very, very important that people not compare us as a perfect government, Mr. Speaker, because we know we have a lot of challenges. We know we have a lot of issues that we have to deal with, and it will take us some time. But the most important thing again is that the money that we receive is well managed. The money that we receive is balanced. The money that we receive go out to meeting priorities over a long term to make sure that some of these priorities are being met and some of the challenges that we have are being addressed.

So I think being careful, being frugal, and being visionary is something that's so very important when you're managing the finances of the Saskatchewan government.

And I would point out, Mr. Speaker, is that if you look across the way, you look across the way and the manner in which they address the budget challenges . . . I note that the opposition Finance critic, when he was on the radio and there was a mention that he, this individual from within this caucus, was driving and in four blocks, in four blocks, Mr. Speaker, that Finance critic spent over \$1 billion — over \$1 billion in four blocks. And the unfortunate part is we were hoping to listen to some more of what they were trying to spend, but of course obviously, we have to go to work and we have to govern.

But in the meantime there's 26 opposition Sask Tory MLAs across the way, and they are, and they are going out and they're promising each \$1 billion. They want to do everything, Mr. Speaker. They want to provide every dollar to every need, to every group, to every cause. And everywhere they go — the 28 of them, I stand corrected, the 28 of them — they stand there and they promise everything to everybody. And every day, they get up here and they say, we want to give these people this much money. We want to put this much money over there and this much money over there.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's not how you govern. The last time that happened was in the 1980s. And what I want to say, what I want to say, Mr. Speaker, to the entire audience that may be listening today is that we went down that road before, in the 1980s. And many of whose members sit across the way, so-called the Saskatchewan Party, they were involved with that

particular government, Mr. Speaker. Many of them worked with that government and that, Mr. Speaker, is so very important to point out — that they try and hide their past. But, Mr. Speaker, we've seen the 1980s.

And the last thing the people of Saskatchewan should be doing — and this is my message to them when he talks about budget and about being careful how we spend our money — is that this government and the people of Saskatchewan together struggled, Mr. Speaker. We struggled in the early '90s trying to arrest that deficit. And we still have that debt.

So what I say today as a part of this government, that I tell people all across Saskatchewan is, don't ask, what these guys say, what has the government done for you. You ask, who cleaned up that Tory mess? Who cleaned up that Tory mess?

It was you, the people of Saskatchewan, in concert with the Government of Saskatchewan and happens to be on this side, Mr. Speaker. And I tell people, don't be fooled by that. Don't be fooled by that because you're paying over \$600 million in interest, Mr. Speaker — over \$600 million. And at one time, at one time things were so tough, Mr. Speaker, that to my recollection, we were paying more in interest than what we're paying to education, Mr. Speaker.

Today now, after good management and good budgets of which I stand today in support, we are finding now that our interest payments are half of the commitment in this budget towards education, Mr. Speaker. And I think that is something that we should celebrate in our centennial year.

So when these Sask Tory Party people come to your door and say, what has the government done for you lately? You can tell them, well they cleaned up one mess you guys created. We don't want you guys in there for them to clean up another mess.

So we say, no. We reject your notion of your math. We reject your notion of promising everything to everybody because it doesn't add up. And we reject your notion of going back to the 1980s because Saskatchewan people are still paying for that debt.

And, Mr. Speaker, as we've said before, as we've said before, we are not . . . we are tired, we are tired of hearing of the debt. On this side of the Assembly we are tired of hearing that debt. But I know right throughout Saskatchewan that Saskatchewan people are tired of paying it as well.

But we have to do the responsible thing, and we have to make sure that that debt is coming down. And the people of Saskatchewan are beneficiaries of that because less debt means less interest, and, Mr. Speaker, that means that this Minister of Finance is on the right track, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — I would point out as well, yes okay, every day during question period they doom and gloom and spread fear. And all in all, they have to do what they have to do, Mr. Speaker. I would point out, I would point out that what I tell people back home, and I tell the people of Saskatchewan this today, is that we're at our lowest debt in 14 years thanks to

this government and this administration. And we can learn more; I'm not saying that we're perfect. But watch what those guys across the way promise you because what they promise you they cannot deliver.

And now let's look at why they can't deliver, Mr. Speaker, why they can't deliver because they have a confusing message. They have a confusing message. They're liberal with the dollars, and yet they're conservative with the real challenge of managing all that money. And I look across the way, Mr. Speaker, and what I see is I see Reform ideology. Then I see Conservatives. Then I see disaffected Liberals. Then I see Sask Party. And I say, well who are you guys and what do you guys, what do you guys represent? Are you the austerity party? Like what are you guys?

And, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan are saying, well they're promising us everything and they're telling us all the bad things you guys do. But the people of Saskatchewan are saying, well who are you guys? You know, they're actually stomping their feet and saying, who are you guys?

But, but, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the budget they say, we're going to spend on all these things. We're going to be everything to everybody. We're going to be Liberals. We're going to be Tories. We're going to be Reformers. And I think there's a few heads from the Bloc over there. And I look at some of the other challenges that they face, the western Canadian concept. People are saying, who are you guys and what are you about?

And you know what that means, Mr. Speaker? That if it comes to budgets, it comes to spending, it's coming to a consistent message. People of Saskatchewan are saying, we don't trust you guys. We don't trust the Sask Party because we don't know what you stand for. You don't know how to manage. And we don't know what you are.

So when it comes to this budget, Mr. Speaker, people got to know. People aren't silly in Saskatchewan. People are very intelligent. And they know when a snake oil salesman comes along and says I'll give you this and I'll be that for you. I'll do this. I'll do this, and I'll do that, and we'll make everybody happy. We'll make everybody happy.

Well, Mr. Speaker, you have to make sure you're able to manage your resources, and you're able to control expectations and do it in a very consistent, methodical manner. That's what people in Saskatchewan want. So what I tell people back home is this. If they come along, they spread doom and gloom. They said we're going to do all of these wonderful things for you. You ask them, Mr. Speaker, you ask these people. We've seen your style. We don't want you to come along and create another mess for another government to come along and clean up that may take us another 30 or 40 years to clean up.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think I want go on a little further, but I want to adjourn debate at this time.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Athabasca that debate be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move the House do now adjourn.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 16:59.]

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