



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

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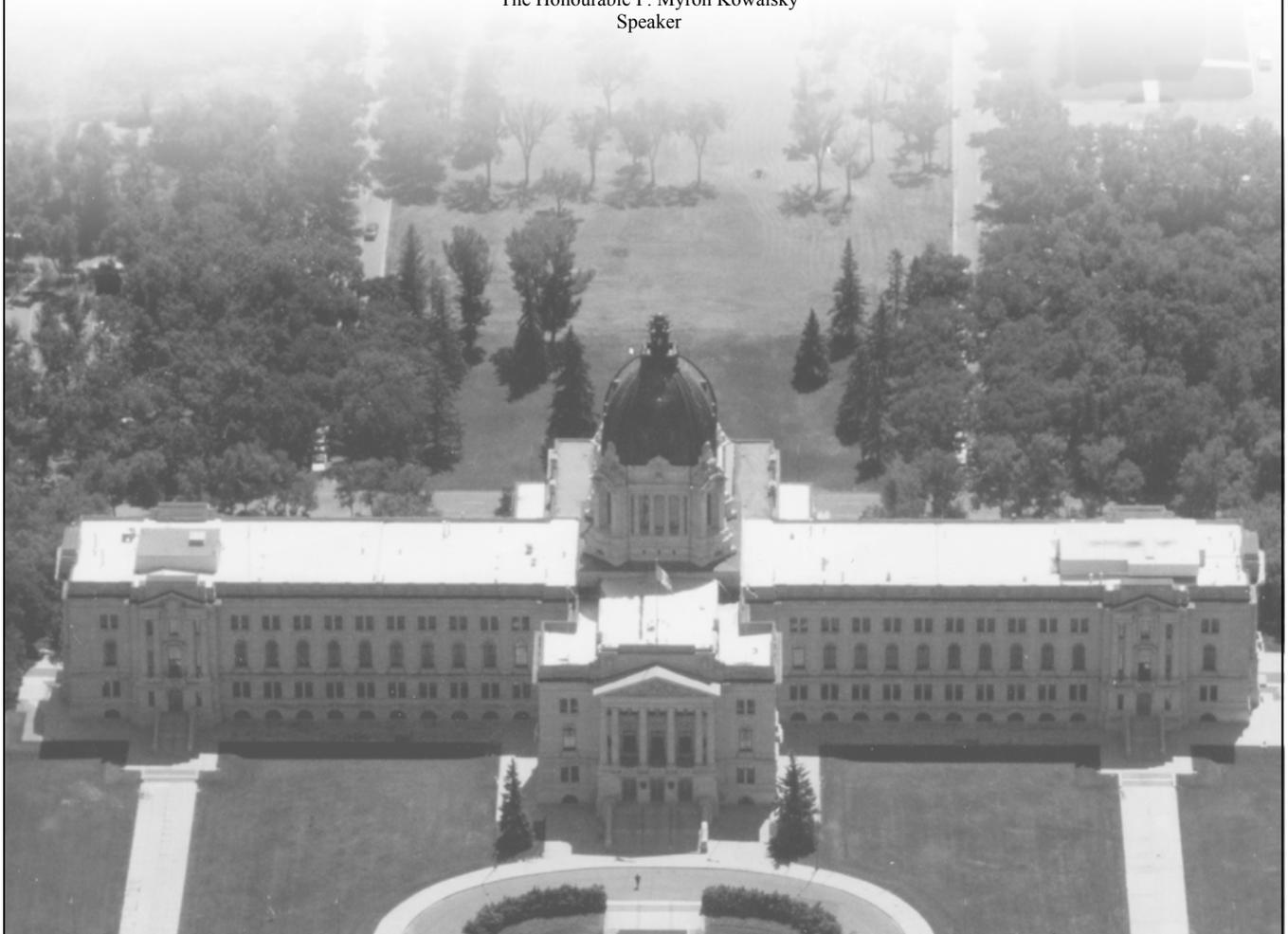
**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

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(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

<b>Name of Member</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>	<b>Constituency</b>
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 10:00.]

[Prayers]

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise again today on behalf of people who are concerned about the issue of crystal meth in their community.

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 really deal with crystal methamphetamine — the education, the prevention, the enforcement, and the treatment.

The people that have signed this petition are all from the town of Wadena.

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I rise on behalf of constituents who are concerned about the deficiency in residential support offered to people with long-term disabilities in Swift Current, southwest Saskatchewan. And 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 residents of Swift Current who have long-term disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, the petitioners today are all from the city of Swift Current. I so present.

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

**Ms. Eagles:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too have a petition to present on behalf of citizens concerned about the growing problem of crystal meth. 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 implement a strategy that'll deal with crystal methamphetamine education, prevention, enforcement, and treatment.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this is signed by residents of Wadena, Kuroki, Leslie. 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 state of disrepair of Highway 35. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to make the necessary repairs to Highway 35 North from the US border in order to prevent injury or loss of life and to prevent the loss of economic opportunity in the area.

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

And the petition is signed by residents of Colgate, Weyburn, Radville, and Gladmar. I so present.

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to present a petition on behalf of parents in my constituency of Saskatoon Silver Springs regarding a much-needed elementary school in the Arbor Creek area of Saskatoon. The prayer of the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to implement an allocation of financial resources to build an elementary school in Arbor Creek.

The petitioners today live on Kenderdine Road, Wright Crescent, Bentham Crescent, and Beckett Crescent in northeast Saskatoon. I so present, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here with citizens calling on the government to repair and resurface Highway 15 from the junction of Highway 11 east to the junction of Highway No. 2. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that this portion of 15 Highway be repaired and resurfaced immediately so as to remove the safety hazard to all motorists who rely on this vital road for transportation and economic purposes.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by citizens from Hanley and Dundurn and Regina; Saskatoon, Biggar, and Kenaston. I so present.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present a

petition for improved cellular telephone coverage in the constituency of Biggar. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause government to provide reliable cellular telephone service in the regions encompassed in the constituency of Biggar.

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

Signed by the good citizens of Biggar and district. I so present.

#### READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

**Clerk Assistant (Committees):** — According to order the following petitions have been received and pursuant to rule 14(7) they are hereby read and received:

A new petition calling for the repeal of section 13.4 of The Labour Standards Act;

And addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper 637, sessional paper 640, sessional paper 666, sessional paper 715, sessional paper 716, and sessional paper 720.

#### NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 99 move first reading of Bill No. 206, The Labour Standards (Repeal of Government Directed Hours) Amendment Act.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — Order please, members. The Chair recognizes the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy.

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 99 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Learning: is the moratorium on school closures from September 2004 to December 2006 still in effect; if not, when was the moratorium removed?

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you, I'd like to introduce to this Assembly a group of students that have joined us today from Wolseley Elementary School. Mr. Speaker, we have 15 students accompanied by their teacher, Tim Fisher, and their bus . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. I'm sorry. Members, I would ask members to allow the member from Moosomin to make his introductions. Member for Moosomin.

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Introducing this group of students from Wolseley, their bus driver Stan Magel.

And, Mr. Speaker, it was my privilege yesterday to attend the Aspen Grove Heritage Fair and I had the privilege of meeting a number of the students.

I would like to welcome the students and invite all members to join me in welcoming the students this morning and I look forward to meeting with them about 11 o'clock for pictures and something to drink. Thank you.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognize the member for Batoche.

**Mr. Kirsch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the member for Rosthern-Shellbrook, I would like to introduce 38 students from Shellbrook High School — grade 7 actually — and their teachers Diane Popovitch, Wade Reddekopp, and Lori Rosvold, and Brenda Lecompte. Sorry if I get that wrong. And on behalf of all the members here, we'd like to welcome you to your Assembly. Thank you.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognize the member for Sask Rivers.

**Mr. Borgerson:** — Mr. Speaker, I would like to add my welcome to the students from Shellbrook Elementary, some of whom live in my constituency.

And I would be remiss, Mr. Speaker, if I did not introduce a constituent of mine who is in the east gallery. She is a very good friend and an advisor. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I often call on her for political advice. She is not family, but she is as close as family to me.

I'd like to introduce Alanna Closs, who is among the students in the east gallery. She has met the Premier and other government members when my constituency office was opened but I am pleased to introduce her to all members of the Assembly here this morning. Alanna Closs.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Morgan:** — Mr. Speaker, I have just received a note from the Sergeant-at-Arms that says, "There is a suspicious looking character sitting in the top row of the east gallery. Do you know him? Patrick."

Mr. Speaker, that suspicious looking character is my brother, Ken, who resides in Saskatoon. He is an electrical contractor and he is accompanied today by his companion, Iris Garcia, who resides in McAllen, Texas. This has been a long-term romance for my brother, and the first time Iris was here was last December and they went snowmobiling in northern Saskatchewan. Iris, until she had met my brother, had never been further north than Las Vegas and I asked her after she had

been snowmobiling how it was. And she described it as being crazy cold, and I thought a very apt description of Saskatchewan weather. Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members to join me in welcoming Iris and Ken to this legislature.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Regina Walsh Acres.

**Ms. Morin:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to welcome to you, through you and all members of the Assembly someone seated in your gallery. Her name is Alyssa Peel and perhaps she can stand and wave. She is an intern with the Saskatchewan legislative internship program and she'll be working with me for the next number of months. I am very excited to be able to have the opportunity to work with her and I hope that she finds the opportunity as experiencing as I will. And with her I would also like to introduce and welcome to the Assembly today is my daughter, Morgan Morin. She is quite familiar to this Assembly and enjoys her visits here immensely. So I'd like to welcome them here today.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

#### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

#### Earth Day and Soil Conservation Week

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today is Earth Day, a day to recognize the importance of the environment and to acknowledge environmental concerns. Earth Day is a result of efforts by US [United States] Senator Gaylord Nelson to bring environmental issues onto the American political agenda. As a result of his efforts on April 22, 1970, millions of people across the US used their collective strength to bring a voice to the environment. Earth Day is now recognized, Mr. Speaker, all across the world. It's a day when we think of environmental concerns that face all the inhabitants of the globe we inhabit, Mr. Speaker.

Also, Mr. Speaker, this week is Soil Conservation Week, which coincides with Earth Day. And I think it's very fitting, particularly in a province like Saskatchewan where in our past we saw the soil blow away during windy springs and summers, and now with advances in technology we see that being minimized, Mr. Speaker. And so I would ask, Mr. Speaker, all members of this Assembly and all citizens of this great province of ours to just take a moment today to think about the environment and the world we live in. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

#### Earth Day

**Mr. Addley:** — Mr. Speaker, today is the 35th anniversary of Earth Day — a special time set aside to raise awareness about

the environment and our place in it, and to celebrate and honour the world we call home.

Mr. Speaker, when Earth Day was first established in 1970, approximately 20 million people gathered to demonstrate support for the environment. Today, more than half a billion people celebrate Earth Day each and every year.

Here in Saskatchewan there will be a tree planting ceremony at the Royal Saskatchewan Museum in recognition of Les Goforth of Regina. Mr. Goforth was instrumental in the creation of the First Nations Gallery — a gallery that displays artwork of various events and places in First Nations history.

Also, Mr. Speaker, this weekend teachers and education students from across the province will meet at the Earth Day centennial year conference to discuss ways of educating and inspiring young people to become environmental leaders.

Mr. Speaker, despite the fact that from the earth comes everything required to sustain life, we often take it for granted. Although Earth Day comes once a year, it is a reminder that each one of us is responsible for protecting and preserving the land we live on each and every day.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in acknowledging the efforts of everyone involved in the 35th anniversary of Earth Day and in creating awareness about environmental issues. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

#### Aspen Grove Heritage Fair

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege yesterday of attending the Aspen Grove Heritage Fair. Now you may wonder exactly what a heritage fair is. What it is, Mr. Speaker, is a fair where young people are invited to look at the history surrounding their community or the history of the province. And I want to thank the Aspen Grove School Division for initiating this program and promoting it in their area.

Mr. Speaker, there were schools represented in the area from Balcarres, Sedley, the Dr. Isman School — the group that's with us this morning, Kipling School, Broadview, Whitewood, Kennedy Langbank.

Mr. Speaker, what was very interesting as I toured the fair, when you think there were 200 exhibitors, all school students who took the time to research history — whether it was of their community or of their school or of the history in Saskatchewan — and just to talk to students and to find out the knowledge that they had gained and how interested they were in sharing their knowledge.

Mr. Speaker, the grade 4 class from Dr. Isman School here this morning had a class project about Lord Wolseley, a British general, after whom the town, the community of Wolseley is named. And I want to congratulate the grade 4 class on their work and efforts and everyone involved for the effort they put

into this heritage fair.

Mr. Speaker, from this heritage fair yesterday, 13 projects will be selected to go to regionals, and then to nationals, if they move on from there. So congratulations to each and every one for the hard work and dedication in promoting heritage fairs in Saskatchewan.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

[10:15]

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

#### Saskatchewan Tourism Awards of Excellence

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The 16th annual Saskatchewan Tourism Awards of Excellence last night in Regina held some considerable excitement for the province and in particular for the people of the Battlefords.

The Battlefords Wildlife Federation nature centre project won the Land of Living Skies Award sponsored by Access Communications. The Living Skies Award recognizes the tourism business that demonstrates innovative efforts to prevent and reduce the environmental impacts of their business operations through planning and practice. The nature centre instills an appreciation of wildlife to visitors and demonstrates a strong commitment to environmentally responsible tourism.

And that's not all, Mr. Speaker. The major announcement of the evening, the Chairman's Lifetime Achievement Award, was given to June Sutton, for 18 years the owner/operator of Sutton Lodge on Jackfish Lake near Metinota—a tireless worker and promoter of Saskatchewan and tourism.

The Lifetime Achievement Award is presented to an individual who has had a significant impact on the development of the tourism industry, who has provided longstanding and exceptional service, who has demonstrated leadership and integrity, who has left a strong legacy, and who has gained the respect of those in the tourism industry. Mr. Speaker, June Sutton has done all this and more and we are very proud of her.

My congratulations to these incredible people and projects, to the folks at Tourism Saskatchewan who put on an exceptional gala evening, and to the board and staff of Battlefords Tourism who work all year round to promote our small part of this great province of ours.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Kindersley.

#### Wanda Constantinoff Celebrates 100 Years

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to applaud the achievements of Mrs. Wanda Constantinoff as she celebrated her 100 years of life on October 5, 2004 at the Buena Vista Lodge in Kerrobert, Saskatchewan with family and friends.

Wanda was born in Bulgaria and immigrated to Canada. She married Chris Constantinoff and they farmed in the Cactus Lake area until retiring in Luseland. They raised two sons, Mike and John, and Wanda has 11 grandchildren, 22 great-grandchildren and 8 great-great-grandchildren. I would like to quote what one of the grandchildren said about Wanda:

Grandma — you are a treasure to us all, to celebrate 100 years of living is amazing. We will always remember how much you love your family, how you helped us out, looking after your grandchildren and great grandchildren. We remember your laughter and smiles, the special treats you made us. How you loved your flowers and garden, to go for walks, [to] stay healthy, visit, sing and pray. Thank you for all the wonderful stories you told us, now we all have our own little precious stories of you.

On March 4, 2005, I had the pleasure, along with the mayor of Kerrobert, Mr. Erhard Poggemiller, to present the 100-year medallion and plaque to Wanda, along with friends and family, and we all enjoyed cake and coffee. Please join me in congratulating Wanda for contributing 100 years to the province of Saskatchewan.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatchewan Rivers.

#### North Central Regional Recreation Association Volunteer Recognition Awards

**Mr. Borgerson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last Saturday night by far the most important event in the Prince Albert area was the Centennial Volunteer Recognition Awards banquet for the North Central Regional Recreation Association.

Mr. Speaker, someone once noted, "All that we send into the lives of others comes back into our own." This describes well the awards banquet last Saturday. There was a real sense of celebration as we honoured those who've made a positive difference in their communities.

Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of visiting with some of my own constituents and past students, as well as meeting many others from the north central region. And I had the honour of presenting 13 individuals with volunteer recognition awards for outstanding service to their communities.

Bernie and Marianne Kramchynsky of Rosthern, Ed and Darlene Lang of Wakaw, Bill and Audrey Cherneski of Cudworth, Cec Hovdebo of Candle Lake, Ted Walker of Christopher Lake, and Alvin Tait of Macdowall were all recognized for their contributions in the area of recreation and special services.

Mr. Speaker, the youth volunteers receiving awards were Jade Smith of Macdowall, who attends Wesmor in Prince Albert, Shari Borstmayer of Cudworth, and Vincent Detillieux, who lives in Domremy and attends Wakaw high school; and, Mr. Speaker, Ingrid Mateen of Prince Albert who's recognized for her volunteer activities in culture and heritage.

Mr. Speaker, I invite all members of the Assembly to join me in congratulating these recipients of the North Central Regional Recreational Association Volunteer Recognition Awards, as well as all the organizers who made this special event possible.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

#### Weyburn's Women of the Year Awards

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday of this week I had the privilege to attend the Women of the Year Awards in Weyburn. The Women of the Year Awards are sponsored by the Quota International and several other businesses in Weyburn and community.

The Quota club supports many worthwhile projects in the Weyburn area, and I'd just like to mention a few of them: the toy lending library, the Weyburn Music Festival, Southeast Regional College scholarship, Weyburn Special Care Home, speech and hearing project in Weyburn schools, Weyburn Care-a-Van, violence intervention, Mini-Go School, Family Place, and Tatagwa View.

The winners of the 2005 awards are, Mr. Speaker: for the SaskPower Workplace Excellence Award, Colleen Weimer; for the Access Communications Exceptional Entrepreneur Award, Linda Aitken; for the Quota International Women Weyburn Community Service Award, Marlene Nedelcov; and for the Investors Group Young Women of Distinction Award, Tessa Scrupps.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate all the nominees and the winners who each play a key role in making Weyburn a great community. And I'd like to congratulate the Quota club for once again recognizing these outstanding women.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

#### ORAL QUESTIONS

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Indian Head-Milestone.

#### Compensation for Saskatoon Health Authority Management

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last June the former CEO [chief executive officer] for the Saskatoon Health District, Jim Fergusson, stepped down. At that time he stepped down with a \$66,000 severance package plus benefits. But not only did he step down with a severance package; he also at the same time signed a year-long contract with the health region to give the new CEO some advice.

We finally found out today in *The StarPhoenix* what this advice cost — \$13,000 a month, Mr. Speaker — \$13,000 a month when this NDP [New Democratic Party] government resides over the longest waiting lists in Canada.

But who is Jim Fergusson? Is he just the CEO of Saskatoon

Health District? No. This is the same Jim Fergusson that was one of the Chairs for the NDP Party's policy renewal process, Mr. Speaker. As John Gomery would say, from the Gomery Commission, it's good work if you can get it, Mr. Speaker.

Does the Minister of Health condone this type of action?

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

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, the facts are in this particular case, the Saskatoon Health Authority enters into a contract with Mr. Fergusson to make sure that the long-term knowledge and of the history of that administration would continue as they move forward. The facts are, Mr. Speaker, that's an entirely appropriate way to make sure that you have continuity.

As the member opposite should know, Mr. Fergusson left his job last summer. There was an interim CEO while we did a national search, and just recently a new CEO was appointed. Mr. Fergusson provided some able assistance during that time. And I think that's a very good way to make sure that we have the biggest health region in the province operating smoothly.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Indian Head-Milestone.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, this isn't common practice. This hasn't happened in other health districts, Mr. Speaker. It seems more than a little suspicious that this happens when it's an NDP party supporter helping them with their policy conventions, Mr. Speaker.

The interim CEO says it's good value. She says, I phone him at least once a week — once a week, Mr. Speaker. If you'd add that up for four weeks in a month, a phone call once a week adds up to about \$3,000 a phone call. That's what it's costing taxpayers of this province, Mr. Speaker.

This is when people in Saskatchewan are waiting up to two years for an MRI [magnetic resonance imaging]. Mr. Speaker, why is the NDP paying Mr. Fergusson over \$3,000 a phone call? Wouldn't a fee-for-service make more sense?

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order, please, members. Order, please. Order. Order. Would the member put the question, please.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm interested to see the Minister of Health stand up and justify \$3,000 a phone call.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, I think that people of Saskatchewan are getting a little tired of the distortion that goes on across the way. And, Mr. Speaker . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, they're also sick and tired of the fact that those members opposite attack able civil servants throughout the whole province. And, Mr. Speaker, that is a pattern which we have seen for a number of years.

I think that what we need to do is affirm that when we have senior people who have provided good service to us for many years, that we continue to use that particular service. In the Saskatoon Health Region we want to make sure that they treated their former CEO with respect, that they used his knowledge in an appropriate way, and that there was an appropriate transition to the new CEO. Mr. Speaker, I think that is a good way to provide the care for Saskatchewan people, and that's the ultimate issue.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Indian Head-Milestone.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, what people are getting sick of in this province and this country is government corruption and political patronage. That's what people are getting sick of in this province, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, Glen Beck is a professor of health economics at the University of Saskatchewan. And he finds that 12-month retainer extremely surprising, very unusual, Mr. Speaker. He goes on to say that, and I quote: "The larger [the] . . . administration [costs], . . . the less the resources can be used . . . [for] surgical wards and operating theatres," Mr. Speaker.

That's the very point. The more money we put into administration, the more money we put into political patronage, the less money we have to settle with nurses and front-line care workers, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, will the minister stand up and give a rational answer of why they would be paying \$3,000 a phone call for a former NDP party policy adviser for the advice, for one phone call a week?

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

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, the distortion around the comment that the member just made about \$3,000 a phone call, those are not the facts. He knows that. The public knows that. Mr. Fergusson has served well in that position. In Saskatoon we have a health authority where their budget is over half a billion dollars, and they are . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, please, members. Order. Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — In Saskatoon they are providing very good services for all the people of Saskatchewan and for the people of the Saskatoon Health Region. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Fergusson has provided leadership for a long time. He has moved out and allowed for a transition for a new leader and . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, please. I would ask members to allow the response to be given. The Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, we're not going to apologize for the numbers of operations that are done there. We're not going to apologize for all of the very good work that is done in that health region and that it takes all of the people, especially the leadership, to make sure things go ahead.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the members opposite to support our budget as we move forward in providing health care for Saskatchewan people.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Indian Head-Milestone.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, I imagine CEOs in this province, all around this province, are kind of wringing their hands. They think, I'm going to step down and then get hired back by the same health district at \$160,000 a year, Mr. Speaker. Is that the policy this government is setting? Is that what you're going to be doing into the future?

And when you break it down, when you break it down for a month, \$13,000 a month, and when you listen to the new CEO, the interim CEO, that she is saying that I phone him maybe once a week and get some advice, \$3,000 a phone call or \$13,000 a month for advice . . . is that the precedent you're setting for the other 12 health regions?

[10:30]

**The Speaker:** — Order. I just remind the member to direct his remarks through the Chair. I recognize the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, once again the facts are clear, but the member opposite takes another track. What we need to remind ourselves is, why do we make sure we get very good people to provide leadership in our health care system? Mr. Speaker, it's because we have patients; we have our citizens who require help.

In Saskatoon we've been able to develop a very complex mix of services that provide care for our citizens. We also train many, many of our health providers in that area. Mr. Fergusson knows about how the various operations work together — the medical school, the health region, all of the various groups that are there — and he has provided valuable assistance in that as he's gone forward.

Mr. Speaker, I think we should celebrate good leadership in our government, not tear them to pieces.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

### Investment in Pangaea

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Mr. Speaker, sadly we must add yet another

name to the NDP hall of shame. There was SPUDCO, [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company], Navigata, Clickabid, Channel Lake; the list just goes on and on and on.

And now we add another name to the list of NDP money-losing business ventures. And the name of that business, Mr. Speaker, is Pangaea — \$3 million dollars gone in the dead of the night. Mr. Speaker, to the Industry minister: how did he let that happen?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order, please. The Chair . . . Order. The Chair recognizes the Ministry of Industry and . . . The Chair recognizes the Minister of Learning.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker, and with thanks to my colleague from Industry for allowing me to answer the question.

The investments that CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan] from time to time has made within the information technology sector have been undertaken with a number of objectives, those being to try and increase our capacity, to try to improve commercialization of our IT [information technology] sector, and to build a more robust industry. That has been a partnership arrangement that we've undertaken.

In this particular case, the investment was written down. It's unfortunate it did not work out, but it was undertaken with good intention and within the overall strategy for building the IT sector.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's interesting that the members opposite just with good intentions can just spend taxpayers' dollars but don't necessarily get a return.

There was a press conference. The NDP had promised 35 new jobs. There was a photo op. We had a smiling minister. We had a smiling Premier talking about how good this was going to be for Saskatchewan. And what do we have now? Well we have an empty office. We've got bare walls and, Mr. Speaker, the 35 jobs are nowhere to be found in this province, and the \$3 million is gone.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us when he's going to get the taxpayers' dollars back?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Learning.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Mr. Speaker, there are six sectors that we've identified for growth in this province. The information technology sector is part of that, and I think the members

opposite are doing a great disservice to that sector and to the business people in it.

What we have been trying to do is to expand this sector to help Saskatchewan grow beyond its . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order please, members. Please, I ask members to allow the minister to respond. The Minister of Learning.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — This is the same party opposite that has criticized us for investments in the research parks, the same party that has criticized us for investments through the Crowns. This is the same party that has criticized us for our investments in the universities. This is a party that is nothing but critical. It does not have a vision. It does not have an approach, and it will not be able to lead this province.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Mr. Speaker, let's just examine that growth record of Pangaea in Saskatchewan. As late as March 23rd, Pangaea Systems Inc. had jobs posted on the website. These jobs were for business analysts and projects managers, the kind of jobs promised for Regina by this NDP government. Here's the kicker, Mr. Speaker. At the bottom of the posting reads the following: Calgary residents need only apply.

Mr. Speaker, this government's given money to a firm that is no longer even interested in speaking to the people of Saskatchewan. This NDP government is still a shareholder in this company. Why is the minister allowing this to happen?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Learning.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — The member asks why are we allowing this to happen. Allowing what to happen? Allowing what to happen? The member is unclear in terms of what she's asking. She's saying we should be doing more to stimulate the economy. She's saying we should be doing more to make sure that there is good investments. We're doing that. We're making sure that our economy is growing beyond its traditional base. We're making sure we've got strategic investments.

We've got the universities today in the newspaper saying how happy they are with this government's investment in the budgets, in the research park. And that party opposite has voted against that budget, voted against those investments and continues to simply snipe at the Crowns as part of their not-so-secret agenda for privatization.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Mr. Speaker, this is just appalling. They

didn't create any jobs in Saskatchewan. They're only creating jobs in Calgary. They lost \$3 million, and this is another NDP thinks it's a success story.

Here's what the Industry minister had to say on . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, please members. I would ask members to allow the member to put the question. The Chair recognizes the member from Humboldt.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — He was asked, what's a solution centre? What is this, Pangaea was supposed to build? His response, and I quote:

"I imagine the solution centre would be a way in which people who have websites would contact Pangaea."

I imagine. He said, "I imagine," not I know or it's a good idea. Just I imagine. Mr. Speaker does the minister imagine that he'll be able to get our \$3 million back?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Learning.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Well there we go with the same approach that we saw that opposition launch before the last election, standing up, going from Crown to Crown cherry-picking where the investments are. When is this opposition going to stand up and support the investments that have been made . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Minister of Learning.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — The members opposite have a pattern of distortion in terms of this. There is a pattern which is very clear, and it is the same one they pursued before the 2003 election, which is to discredit every piece of public investment.

Now they're out there saying, well we shouldn't be working with companies in Alberta. They never seem too concerned about that as they make their weekly trip to Calgary to try and pick the pockets of those businesses to support their political objectives. And I think that that really is an unfortunate thing on the part of the members opposite.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Wood River.

### Land Development Project in Regina

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, here we go again. They say one thing and they do another.

This NDP government is committed to a green and prosperous economy, so they say. But it seems like they're in a big hurry to abandon heritage buildings and kick out community gardeners

here in Regina.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to whoever wishes to answer it: who is purchasing the government Crown land at the corner of College and Broad in Regina?

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

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I'm sure as everyone in the House is aware, the property at the corner of College and Broad has a number of proposals. We are looking to sell that piece of property shortly. There may be an announcement made.

The community gardens have been there for just over 10 years on a lease. And they know that there was always the option there of the property being sold, and there would have to be other options found for the community gardens.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Wood River.

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, media reports suggest the government is selling out to a land developer, a land developer that is a major US-based provider of senior citizens' care facilities. Mr. Speaker, could it be, could it be is this the same company, Denver-based Broe industries, so well-known in our province as the builder of imaginary ethanol plants?

Mr. Speaker, my question: is this the company? Can the minister tell us, if it is not, which company it is?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Minister for Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Mr. Speaker, until the detail is finalized, I'm not releasing any details. I don't have the liberty to do that to the public at large.

Mr. Speaker, I will assure the member that there isn't an ethanol plant going at the corner of Broad and College but there is a very good . . . I'll say that most definitely. Mr. Speaker, this government . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, please, members. The minister . . . Order, please. Minister for Property Management.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Mr. Speaker, this government always looks to developments that enhance the city, enhance the community, and we feel that this proposed development at the corner of College and Broad will do that. And it will add value to the community, to the neighbourhood, to the citizens that live in this city, and to the city of Regina itself.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

### Feasibility Study for the Meat Packing Industry

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Premier. At a meeting in Saltcoats on October 19, 2004, put forward by the Beef Initiative Group, they put forward a packing plant proposal. And the Deputy Premier was there, and the Deputy Premier spoke to about 150 farmers that night and made commitments on behalf of that government. And that commitment was that that government would fund a feasibility study for this project. My question to the Deputy Premier is, are you funding that feasibility study?

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Deputy Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite and this Assembly and to the people of the province that not only have we completed our work on the feasibility study, we have taken it about the province now to a variety of different groups. This project has been managed by the Minister of Agriculture and myself, Mr. Speaker.

The company is from Ontario that prepared the study for us. And they have now talked to a number of community groups. We're working at building collectively today a meat strategy, Mr. Speaker, which we should see making itself available to the people of Saskatchewan in the next little while.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, that's totally contrary to what the Beef Initiative Group is saying. What they're saying is that government has done a pre-feasibility study for the whole province into what kind of packing plants would work in the province. But I want to do a quote here, Mr. Speaker. I was at this meeting that night and a lady got up and I quote:

To Clay Serby, will your government provide the funds necessary for these people, the Beef Initiative Group, to complete their feasibility study and business plan?

I want to quote the Deputy Premier's answer. In answer to the question earlier Mr. Serby stated that the Government of Saskatchewan will not only support this group in its concept but will also fund the feasibility study and business plan needed to push this concept forward.

A commitment made, a commitment broken, Mr. Speaker — here we go again, say one thing and do another. Mr. Speaker, will the Deputy Premier honour that commitment for this group and fund their feasibility study?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Deputy Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Speaker, we can't deny the facts, and the member has a huge capacity to reconstruct the facts on a regular basis as I pointed out, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that we provided the funding

for the study. We provided the funding for the study, Mr. Speaker. That funding was provided by our departments. It will be provided to the people who are going to be out there reviewing the context of the reports. And, Mr. Speaker, that feasibility study will be used for all Saskatchewan people.

And I want to say to this House and to the member opposite — and we had this conversation before about what happens when this member asks questions, Mr. Speaker — when this member asks questions, Mr. Speaker, he reconstructs them on a regular basis as he did reconstruct the information that came from our AIDA [agricultural income disaster assistance] meeting, Mr. Speaker, a couple of years ago in Ottawa. And I want to take you back there, Mr. Speaker, because every time that this member gets on his feet he distorts the information.

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please members. Order. Order, please. The member from Yorkton, the Deputy Premier's remarks are getting rather personal and the member ought to stick . . . Order, please, members. And the members ought to stick to the issues rather than the personalities. I would ask the member from Yorkton to withdraw the personal aspect of his remark before he continues.

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the personal remarks.

**The Speaker:** — I thank the member, and now I ask the member to continue.

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Speaker, what I said in my comments is that we have put together for Saskatchewan people — Saskatchewan producers, developers across the province — a package, a feasibility package. That is exactly what I said to the people in Saltcoats. We're putting that piece out today to Saskatchewan people across the province. And that work, Mr. Speaker, will continue.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

[10:45]

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

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Mr. Speaker, I have no problem with how personal that Deputy Premier gets, but I think what this boils down to is the credibility of that Deputy Premier and the credibility of that NDP government.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Mr. Speaker, if I'm going to believe something . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, please. Once again, first of all I would ask members not to comment — order, please — not to comment on any ruling of the Speaker. And I would also ask the member from Melville-Yorkton not to make any personal remarks. I recognize the member for . . . pardon me, Saltcoats.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Mr. Speaker, in a letter from the Beef

Initiative Group in a response that I got when I asked the question, where are you with the Saskatchewan NDP government with your feasibility study money, here is their response in answer to the question. And they say:

Well where are we with the Saskatchewan government? They have not fulfilled their commitment made by Mr. Serby to fund our feasibility study. And according to Brian Rusnak, the Agriculture minister's chief of staff, they never will.

Here we go again, a commitment made by that government, that Deputy Premier, and he walked out of that room and never intended for a minute to honour that commitment. We've seen this so many times.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — Order. Members of the Assembly, I once again ask the member for Melville-Saltcoats not to make any remarks that could be considered of a nature that are personal that would imply wrongdoing on the part of a member. I would ask the member for Saltcoats-Melville to withdraw the remark.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'll even give you some quotes that the Agriculture . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — Order. I ask the member to first of all withdraw the remark.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — I withdraw the remark, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't just the Deputy Premier that made this commitment. I want to give you some quotes that the Agriculture minister at meetings in Tisdale and other places made. And the quote is:

We don't have the treasury to fund the full project, but we will back the feasibility study, confirmed Mr. Wartman.

Then also he goes on to say, the write-up says, and I quote:

Saskatchewan Agriculture minister Mark Wartman attended a Beef Initiative Group meeting in Tisdale, Saskatchewan last week, and he was convinced to pledge his support for the initiative. And here's his words, "These guys are not whistling in the dark," said Wartman during an interview on Friday, "they have done their research, they have a good idea, and we will back the feasibility study."

Not only do we have the Deputy Premier making the commitment; we have the Agriculture minister making that commitment on behalf of that NDP government. And what do they do? They run out and forget they ever made that commitment. They've left this group hanging out to dry at a time when we need slaughter plants in this province. Is that how

they intend to help agriculture in the province of Saskatchewan?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Deputy Premier. Order. The Chair recognizes the Deputy Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I have the letter of November 26 that I wrote to Mr. Ostercamp, and said to Mr. Ostercamp, that we would be doing a feasibility study in the province. That's exactly the same kind of conversation that I had with Mr. Ostercamp in the early part of the new year. And we have, Mr. Speaker, funded the feasibility study in Saskatchewan for the development of the beef industry and the packing industry in Saskatchewan. We've already done that, Mr. Speaker. And we have said to Mr. Ostercamp that that feasibility study will be used as a template for all development in Saskatchewan — of which, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Ostercamp and his group will be using.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite and to you and to this House, Mr. Speaker, that we have the distortion after distortion after distortion, Mr. Speaker, that comes from the member, that comes from my colleague from Saltcoats-Melville, Mr. Speaker . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. Once again, I would ask members to — in their remarks and in the heat of debate — to take extra care not to impugn wrongdoing on the part of another member. The member from Yorkton, would you please rise and withdraw the remark before we proceed?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the remark, and I . . .

**The Speaker:** — And I recognize the member for Yorkton.

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — I say, Mr. Speaker, that when the member for Saltcoats stands up and talks about the kinds of farm policy in Canada that is in place today . . . and I made this comment to this House a couple of weeks ago, Mr. Speaker, and I say to the member opposite. We attended meetings, Mr. Speaker. We attended meetings in Ottawa. We met, Mr. Speaker, with people in Ottawa to change the agriculture policy in Saskatchewan. And when we change that agriculture policy in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Conservative party returns back to Saskatchewan, and it changes the policy in front of us, Mr. Speaker. And that's the kinds of issues of which we take exception with on a daily basis. And we take that exception today, Mr. Speaker, with the member from Saltcoats.

**The Speaker:** — The member's time has elapsed.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

#### MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

#### New Regional Hospital to be Built in Swift Current

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to draw the attention of my fellow members to some very exciting news

for the residents of southwest Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan Health and the Cypress Health Region are moving forward with a new \$32 million regional hospital to be built in Swift Current. I am pleased to announce our government has approved the functional program for the project. This means design work and other planning necessary for construction can begin.

The new hospital supports our government's commitment in the Action Plan for Saskatchewan Health Care to build a strong network of hospitals across the province so that we can improve access to care for all residents. Today's announcement is just another example of how our government is making strategic investments today to ensure the delivery of high quality health care services in the future.

The new regional hospital, in keeping with our strategic plan, will offer a broad range of health care services, including internal medicine and other specialty care, general surgery, and intensive care. This is indeed good news for the residents of southwest Saskatchewan. Every community in the Cypress Health Region will benefit from the services in this new facility. From the rural municipalities of Swift Current, Excelsior, Coulee, Morse, and Riverside, to the residents of the towns of Herbert, Morse, Stewart Valley, Cabri, Gull Lake, Shaunavon, Leader, Maple Creek, Climax, Mankota, Val Marie, and Ponteix, not to mention the city of Swift Current itself.

The improvements in Swift Current will contribute to a more efficient and coordinated approach in delivering health care services in this province, leading to reduced waits for surgical and diagnostic care. But projects like this do not happen on their own. They take strong community leadership, commitment, partnerships, and involvement. Today's announcement embodies all of those elements.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all Saskatchewan residents, I want to congratulate the Cypress Regional Health Authority and the people of southwest Saskatchewan for their part in building a better health care system and a better future. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be able to rise and respond to the ministerial statement from the member opposite. I want to say to the members of this Assembly, they'll probably know this but maybe not have marked it as closely as I have. Obviously as a local member for Swift Current, I think this is about the fifth time that the hospital in Swift Current has been announced.

It's been announced in about three budgets, and the minister's gotten up on several statements, and we've responded each time. I've responded each time to say that it's positive for Swift Current to get a new hospital. It was positive the first time they announced it, and it's positive this fifth or sixth time as well, Mr. Speaker.

I would say this though, I would say this to be on the record very clearly on behalf of my constituents. There is a grave concern in my community amongst the people of the province,

of Swift Current, and specifically on the part of those on the front line of health care about the scope of this facility. And although the price tag for the facility has gone up and up and up, the number of beds that we're talking about in Swift Current has gone down and down and down. And there's a concern in, especially from front-line health care workers about the ability of the hospital to serve the entire region.

We're grateful that we have a brand new regional facility in Swift Current, Mr. Speaker. It's something that we are grateful for. But you know what? We're also confident in southwest Saskatchewan that one day — arguably, arguably after the government changes — one day our region will grow. And it'll grow quickly and rapidly, and we will need services like hospital health care services and infrastructure to match a growing population. So that's an ongoing concern. It's something that the people of Swift Current have asked me directly to look into and to monitor. And I know they've asked the same of the minister. I'll be doing that in concert with him, I hope, to monitor the scope of service, the level of service that there is available in this new facility which the community is grateful for.

I understand that I'll also be able to attend the ceremony later this day in Swift Current to turn sod on the new hospital. And it'll be a great day for Swift Current and southwest Saskatchewan and health care in the home of health care Region No. 1. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**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 today to stand on behalf of the government and table responses to written questions no. 998 and 999.

**The Speaker:** — Responses to questions 998 and 999 have been submitted.

Order, please. Order, please. The Chair recognizes the Government Whip.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We've reached a milestone, Mr. Speaker. We've reached our 1,000th question and, Mr. Speaker, a lot of people have worked very hard to answer these questions. And this particular question, Mr. Speaker, we are going to convert for debates returnable because of its prestigious point.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — 1,000 has been converted. The Chair recognizes the Government Whip.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Once again I am very pleased to stand on behalf of the government, and now that we have passed that milestone, table a response to written question no. 1,001.

## SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Fairview.

## Saskatchewan's Building Independence Program

**Mr. Iwanchuk:** — Mr. Speaker, the resolution before us today is to see this Assembly endorse Saskatchewan's Building Independence program, a program which supports low-income families, a program which has reduced the number of social assistance cases to the lowest level in 14 years. I am pleased to speak in favour of this motion. I am pleased to speak in favour of Building Independence.

Mr. Speaker, the Building Independence program is not a single program. It is not a single administrative structure. It is not something that can be carved out and separated. It does not have a single budget line item. There is not a line in the budget numbers that say Building Independence program, like you might have for student loans. Building Independence is what we would call in university a multidisciplinary approach. It is multi-departmental and multi-program — it is an approach. I'll describe the details of the various programs that make up Building Independence a little later.

First I want to talk about approach. I want to talk about our approach, the NDP approach, and I want to talk about the opposition's approach, the conservative approach.

Our approach is to help Saskatchewan people make the move from social assistance to jobs, Mr. Speaker. Under our approach at least 20,000 families in Saskatchewan are better off as a direct result of Building Independence. By making jobs the first option for people in need of assistance, thousands of Saskatchewan families have left welfare or have avoided it altogether. That is an approach that works, Mr. Speaker. That is the approach that we are about.

[11:00]

Mr. Speaker, since 1997 we have been investing in people through a series of unique programs that are fundamentally redesigning social assistance in this province by helping low-income people become and stay employed.

I would now like to address the approach of the members opposite. Their approach to welfare, social assistance, and social programs has been well documented over the years. The members opposite have had a number of positions on social assistance and poverty issues, but their approach remains the same.

Mr. Speaker, they try to avoid talking about their plans. They try to evoke early mayors, premiers, and governments of Saskatchewan in an effort to avoid anyone looking at their own history, Mr. Speaker, their own history on social policy and social programs and social assistance.

Mr. Speaker, I was reading the Leader of the Opposition's convention speech the other day and I saw him say that he was a disciple of Ronald Reagan . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, it's true, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite said about

two months ago, at the launch of the Sask Party's fancy new policy manual, the Leader of the Opposition said he was a disciple of Ronald Reagan. This shiny new leader of the Saskatchewan Conservative Party said he agreed with Ronald Reagan when he said:

“You know I'm not interested in right and left. I'm interested in up and down. There are policies that lift a people up and there are policies that drag a people down and that's what's driven the process.”

That's what he said, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition said there are policies that lift a people up. So I thought I would look up the policies, Mr. Speaker, that attracted this new shiny leader to the Saskatchewan political scene.

I remember that the Leader of the Opposition was attracted to the policies of Grant Devine so much that he ran for nomination as a Devine Conservative. I also remember that the Leader of the Opposition was attracted to the Saskatchewan Conservative Party's policies when he first ran for them.

**The Speaker:** — Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. I would ask the member to relate his remarks to the motion that he himself has put, and the remarks ought to be related to the motion at hand under debate. I recognize the member for Saskatoon Fairview.

**Mr. Iwanchuk:** — The motion before us, building independence, and I will be talking about the eight strategies that we employ, including the Saskatchewan employment supplement. But I also want to say that I also remember the Leader of the Opposition saying when he said that these are policies that lift a people up.

The platform of the Saskatchewan Conservative Party, unlike our platform about building independence in Saskatchewan, is coincidentally called *The Way Up*. Is that coincidental, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, our Building Independence programs include a strategy of eight programs: the Saskatchewan employment supplement; the family health benefits; the Saskatchewan Child Benefits; the provincial training allowance; the child care subsidies; employment supports for person with disabilities; Jobs First and traditional employment allowance; child care. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, that is what we are building.

The members opposite told us that they were going to cut \$50 million from the social assistance budget. They were going to cut 25 per cent of people off of welfare. They called that welfare reform, Mr. Speaker. Let's remember a little more about so-called welfare reform as proposed by the Conservatives.

Mr. Speaker, in 1987 the Devine government that the Leader of the Opposition wanted to be so much part of, was doing surveillance on single mothers. They called it welfare reform, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition wanted to be part of a government whose Social Services annual report said the following:

As part of the government's welfare reform strategy, a

Special Investigations Branch of the department was established, reporting to the Assistant Deputy Minister.

The purpose of this Branch was to investigate abuse of social assistance and to recommend charges of fraud.

Mr. Speaker, that is not what this government is about. This government is about building independence for Saskatchewan people. But, Mr. Speaker, let me read to you an article in *The Star Phoenix* from those times. The headline is:

‘Fraud squad’ skulker upsets victim.

Suspecting that the well-dressed man peering through her window from a parked car was some sort of upper-class peeping tom, Angel McKay complained to city police.

She was flabbergasted by what police later told her. The suspicious gentleman was a “fraud squad” officer for the Department of Social Services [Mr. Speaker] assigned to watch her house to make sure she wasn’t living with a man.

[She goes on to say] “I was really freaked out about it, because Social Services for one thing had the right, and for another, because there was nothing either I or police could do about it,” McKay, 34, said in the interview.

That is what they call welfare reform. If you look at the Sask Party’s approach in other areas, you see the same kinds of attitudes — not an approach that helps people, that redirects people, that lifts people up like they claim they want to do, but an approach that is about punishment and anger.

Remember boot camps, Mr. Speaker? They don’t want to admit that any more, don’t want to admit that any more, just like they don’t want to admit the rest of their history.

Let’s talk about another Saskatchewan Conservative Party policy related to poverty and social assistance. How about core services review? Everyone remembers the first leader of the Saskatchewan Conservative Party saying:

One initiative that I believe holds tremendous value for Saskatchewan is a project launched by [BC] Premier Campbell called the Core Services Review.

A Saskatchewan Party government will launch a similar Core Services Review in this province within 30 days of taking office.

Mr. Speaker, remember that. In BC [British Columbia], those policies the Saskatchewan Conservative Party said they liked resulted in a training wage that is \$2 under the minimum wage for the first \$500 worked. Mr. Speaker, that’s not good for people in poverty or near the poverty line and it’s not good for young people either.

In case the new Leader of the Opposition claims he wasn’t part of that policy, I’d like to remind this Assembly that on the new leader’s website he offered this policy:

Make government smarter, smaller and more efficient by

launching a Core Services Review of every government program . . . commission, agency and crown corporation.

Kind of sounds the same, doesn’t it, Mr. Speaker? The new leader agreed with the old leader on core services review. But the new leader never mentions the old leader or the new party’s glorious past. What a mess, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House are about building independence for people and the opposition over there is about surveillance.

A moment ago, Mr. Speaker, I talked about the BC training wage and young people. I would like to share with this House and the people of Saskatchewan, I would like to give them a taste of, a taste of what some of the other members of the opposition think about the minimum wage and the opposition’s approach to social policy. I contrast that with our approach, an approach about building independence.

The member for Indian Head-Milestone said:

. . . I really think that a fair labour policy is letting the market take care of itself . . . that takes care of a lot of . . . problems when it comes to a fair wage policy.

I don’t know about you, Mr. Speaker, but I think that sounds like no minimum wage and that’ll definitely help young people, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it doesn’t end there. The old leader of the opposition had this to say to low-income earners and young people: I’ll tell you what happens if the minimum wage is where it is fairly low, Mr. Speaker; it stimulates the employment, particularly for young people.

A low minimum wage — do you think that’s good social policy, Mr. Speaker? I’ll tell you, Mr. Speaker, it hasn’t worked in the Deep South and it hasn’t worked in the Third World and it won’t work here, Mr. Speaker. It won’t work here.

I want to return to the core services review and its effect on social policy. In BC, the core services review resulted in an average 25 per cent cut to all public programs. Will that help people? Or how about the 23 per cent cut in early childhood development programs? I imagine that’s going to help alleviate poverty.

Remember the member from Lloydminster when he was opposition economic critic, Mr. Speaker. He told reporters that a Saskatchewan Conservative Party government would likely implement the BC model. And also remember, the member from Wood River said he was in favour of general downsizing of government. And the member from Melfort said, once reviewed, government should be redefined because it cannot offer all the services it does now. The last leader articulated their policy best, Mr. Speaker: we think the solution is smaller government; I believe there’s room for much smaller government in Saskatchewan.

Slash and burn, Mr. Speaker, that’s their policy. Mr. Speaker, we’re building a future. We’re building independence for Saskatchewan people. And, Mr. Speaker, that’s what we’re about. Mr. Speaker, when I look over there, they’re about slash and burn.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the Saskatchewan employment supplement, in 2003-04 over 7,600 low-income working families per month, many of them single parent families, received a benefit from the program, the average monthly benefit being \$185. In the provincial training allowance, the provincial training allowance . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, members. Would you allow the member to make his statement, please. Order. Order. Order, please, members.

The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Fairview.

**Mr. Iwanchuk:** — Mr. Speaker, the provincial training allowance, the provincial training allowance provides financial assistance to individuals to increase their employment opportunities by upgrading their education and skills. There's a monthly allowance administered through Saskatchewan Learning.

Mr. Speaker, I want to return finally to the Ronald Reagan discipleship of the new leader and the devotion of that Saskatchewan Conservative Party to transplanting American right-wing policies into Canada. I want to quote from another press report about the Leader of the Opposition.

. . . in a press scrum on the day he was acclaimed as leader he suggested that innovative free enterprisers could solve the problems (presumably financial) of single parent mothers.

In the US, they have privatized social services. Ronald Reagan did a lot of that, Mr. Speaker. Is that the opposition of the . . . Is that the plan of the opposition, privatize Social Services? Perhaps we'll return to the days of no public welfare.

Here's a quote from the new leader:

We can still turn this thing around in our province if we try some policies economically that frankly we haven't tried in six decades.

Are they talking about economic and social policies from the '30s, Mr. Speaker? How will that work?

Is that what the member from Kindersley was saying when he said, and I quote, Mr. Speaker, about Tommy Douglas. He said this about Tommy Douglas, Mr. Speaker:

. . . whose policies have hurt this province more than any single individual in this province's history. And let's be absolutely clear about that.

That's what he said, Mr. Speaker — that's what he said.

Further on our Building Independence, Mr. Speaker, we also provide employment supports for persons with disabilities. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I wish to move that this Assembly endorse Saskatchewan Building Independence program, which supports low-income families and has reduced the number of social assistance cases to the lowest level in 14 years. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member for Saskatoon Fairview and seconded by the member for Moose Jaw North that this Assembly endorse Saskatchewan's Building Independence program, which supports low-income families and has reduced the number of social assistance cases to the lowest level in 14 years.

The Chair recognizes the member for Moose Jaw North.

**Mr. Hagel:** — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure for me to enter into this debate which I think, in many ways, Mr. Speaker, when we stop and think about it, spells a significant difference between the two sides of the House.

Mr. Speaker, what I want to do is to support the motion moved by the Hon. member for Saskatoon Fairview. I note that he has spelled out in ways that have been rather uncomfortable for the other side of the House to hear, the kinds of messages about support for people who need assistance in order to build their own personal independence and the kinds of notions that come from the right wing. And, Mr. Speaker, I think they stand starkly different from those policies which have been implemented in this province for the last eight years, have made a significant difference in the quality of life of a large number of our people.

Mr. Speaker, back in 1997, the Building Independence program was introduced. The Hon. member for Fairview outlined some of the points. I want to expand on that a bit. But since then, there has been a drastic difference in the lives of a number of folks and it's based on a basic understanding about what poverty is.

[11:15]

There was a decision made, Mr. Speaker, a very concrete and specific decision made on the side of the New Democratic Party government that we were going to tackle child poverty in this province. And we were going to do something real that would make a real difference for real people in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And that's exactly what has happened.

We understand, Mr. Speaker, that here's the reality. The reality is that kids do not grow up in poverty in some form of isolation. When kids grow up in poverty, it's because they grow up in homes in which their parents are poor. That's the reality.

And if you want to do something, Mr. Speaker, that is real, that is going to make a difference in the lives of those families and particularly those children, then you have to address in real ways the ability of those adults who are their parents to remove themselves from poverty. And, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what has been happening over the course of the last eight years in this province. And what a difference it's made.

In many ways, one of the basic concepts that differentiates the two sides of the House, Mr. Speaker, are often found in that age-old debate about work for welfare as supported by the right wing and, Mr. Speaker, work for wages and the dignity of work that is supported by the social democrats and the New Democratic Party Government of Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, we decided that it made sense to make some changes. Truth of the matter was, Mr. Speaker, prior to that time in Saskatchewan, and in fact across Canada, you could make a solid argument that there were many, many cases in which people were literally better off receiving social assistance than working. And we looked at that and we said, that doesn't make any sense. That doesn't make any sense for those families, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't make any sense for our Saskatchewan.

And what we decided, Mr. Speaker, was to implement some policies that would truly make a difference and that would understand that when a family is earning their income through the dignity of work, that makes not only a difference — and it should ought not to make only a difference in terms of the income — because the truth of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, since the beginning of Building Independence, every single family in Saskatchewan is better off working than not working. And that was not the case. And that is an essential difference that has come about as a result, Mr. Speaker.

What a terrible position to put a family into, to have to make a decision to not work in order to have better circumstances for their family. Mr. Speaker, we changed all that. Not only are people better off financially by working today, they're better off in a number of ways, and through holistic policies, Mr. Speaker, that touch a number of lives in ways . . . that touch people's lives in a number of different kinds of ways that reinforce each other.

Truth of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that today there are some 20,000 or more Saskatchewan families who are better off, better off in a whole host of ways because of Building Independence. Since Building Independence was introduced, the social assistance caseload in families has dropped by 41 per cent in our province to its lowest level since 1991. Truth of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan today there are more than 7,300 fewer families receiving assistance than there were before. But most importantly, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan today there are more than 16,000 children who are not growing up in social assistance families as a result of Building Independence.

And I've argued many times, Mr. Speaker, that not only is it better for families today and over the course of the last eight years, but the real benefits of Building Independence will be found a generation from now, as those children who grow up in a family in which they understand the dignity of income through work and set their own aspirations and make their own decisions about their own lives, that Saskatchewan will truly feel the ongoing benefits of social, of the social programs which have resulted in building independence.

Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member for Fairview said, Building Independence is not a single program, anybody with a half a sense about understanding poverty understands that there is no single solution to addressing the issues of poverty. And there is probably no single issue that faces our society, and in fact all Canadian society, than addressing realistic the issue of poverty and enabling families to move out of poverty into independence.

And so we have here in Saskatchewan the employment

supplement which enables a family, when they're a low-income family — not necessarily receiving assistance, a low-income family who is working — to receive additional income to support their cost of living and to enhance their earned income, and that makes a very big difference. In fact, Mr. Speaker, before Independence the after-tax income for a single parent with two children would have been about \$17,750. Here were are, 2005, eight years later, Mr. Speaker, that single parent with two children, earning minimum wage, will have an income of \$23,600, an increase of \$6,000 per year because of the combination of support through Building Independence. Mr. Speaker, that makes a difference.

But the fact of the matter is as well, that it is common, unfortunately, that children in families who are poor experience health problems to a higher degree than most. And one of the most valuable aspects of the Building Independence program, Mr. Speaker, is the family health benefit which gives to children the health benefits they need and that unfortunately caused, unfortunately caused parents previously to remove themselves from employment to stay on assistance to have the health protection that they needed for their children who were sick.

Add to that, Mr. Speaker, the child benefit, the child benefit, a national program instituted in this province, taken to the nation, adopted by the nation, and now contributing to the quality of life of low-income families not only in Saskatchewan but across the country.

Add to that, Mr. Speaker, the provincial training allowance which enables people to receive support, financial support, for training in a way that comes to them with a sense of dignity. The child care subsidies that enable families to have the comfort of knowledge of knowing that their children are being well taken care of as they're off earning the family income, Mr. Speaker, supports, very importantly, supports for people with disabilities to gain access to employment. Unfortunately, way too many, way too many of our people in Saskatchewan who live in poverty are people who live with disabilities, and that's the problem.

Mr. Speaker, this is a government that has made significant progress in making resources available to overcome the barriers between an individual and the workplace. Mr. Speaker, Jobs First and the transitional employment announcement, transitional employment allowance enabling people who come looking for assistance — that before needing to move into the social assistance program — enabling them to find the thing that they most want in order to bring income and dignity to their lives. And that's work.

And it's working, Mr. Speaker. And the numbers and the number of people working is going up, while the number of people requiring assistance is going down. And the incomes are going up, and the quality of life is improving for low income people in the province of Saskatchewan.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Hagel:** — In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, and this has to be a holistic program when you look at it, Child Care Saskatchewan — the commitment to expand the number of

child care spaces by some 1,200 over four years — in place, Mr. Speaker.

In addition to that, the Canada-Saskatchewan career and employment services which provides a whole range of services in a way that brings them available to Saskatchewan people in a very accessible way. And that enhances their sense of dignity and self-confidence, as they engage in improving their lots in life, their education, their entry into the workforce, gaining the experience that enables them to build their future for them and their families with a sense of confidence.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, a housing program that recognizes that for many low income families and particularly those with children, the importance of a decent place to live in a neighbourhood that they can call their own, as the children go to a school that they can call their own, and they can look forward to a future that they call their own, in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, as we enter our second century as a province, we can do that with a great deal of confidence and optimism, knowing that this is a place for all families to build their future. And to do that with confidence because there is a government in Saskatchewan today that over the course of the last eight years has implemented social programs that have made a huge difference for those who have been the most vulnerable among us in our society. A chance to look forward with a sense of confidence and optimism for themselves and for their children, as active participants in a promising future in our second century, Mr. Speaker.

And that is why, that is why, when we stop and think about it, in our Saskatchewan, and we reflect on what goes on in this province, in this province — and we think about this often hurried and very troubled world in which we live, Mr. Speaker — that Saskatchewan people conclude, you know, the world could use a little more Saskatchewan. And one of the reasons is, Mr. Speaker, is because of the Building Independence program. I support enthusiastically the motion moved by hon. member for Fairview.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to rise today to speak to the motion brought forward by the government today. And we certainly, the Saskatchewan Party certainly agrees with the premise of building independence for people and for low-income families and their children in Saskatchewan. But we believe, Mr. Speaker, that there is so much more that could be done to assist individuals to make the transition from welfare to work. And we do agree that the intent of the government's Building Independence program is positive and certainly needs to be explored further.

We need to provide individuals with financial support to assist them in moving from welfare to work, and we need to recognize the important role that access to quality child care plays in enabling parents to acquire and maintain employment. And we fully understand that education and skills training is

essential if individuals and families are to build long-term careers in Saskatchewan. And we also believe, Mr. Speaker, that reducing poverty and allowing families to build assets is essential for the long-term stability of families. And, Mr. Speaker, the Building Independence strategy has allowed the province to take steps towards achieving these goals, but there is much more that can be done and needs to be done and in many cases a different approach taken to achieving these goals.

Mr. Speaker, the facts indicate that we do need to do more. Let's look at hunger and poverty in the province of Saskatchewan. We know that hunger is a key measure of poverty in our province. And, Mr. Speaker, sadly this is very evident in, especially in some of our neighbourhoods in Regina and Saskatoon. Mr. Speaker, food bank usage is up over 37 per cent between 2003 and 2004, and amongst children food bank usage is up by 24 per cent. Consistently and persistently, Mr. Speaker, those that work directly with providing food services at the food banks have called on this government to address the concerns that they raise. The Saskatchewan Party has also continued to raise this issue, that the government needs to do more.

It was the former premier, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Romanow, who made a commitment almost 10 years ago that under his charge, that he would eliminate food banks in Saskatchewan. That certainly did not happen and as we have witnessed, that the usage of food banks has escalated. We also can remember when another member, the member from Saskatoon, indicated that we need:

... the New Democratic Party are committed to ending the need for food banks in this province. [And] We in the New Democratic Party, Mr. Speaker, [he said, I believe he quoted this in the House, said that we] will endeavour to do that in our first term of office.

Well, Mr. Speaker, sadly this is not happening. What we have witnessed today is that this government has thousands of dollars to spend on patronage and corruption — in the health district in Saskatoon, as an example — and yet they do not have the dollars needed to eliminate the use for food bank in the province. And, Mr. Speaker, this is an ongoing legacy of this government, is that they simply do not get their priorities correct.

And, Mr. Speaker, the NDP had not raised the food allowance in the province for 20 years. And in the budget they raised it by \$10 a month — that's \$120 per individual in the province of Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, sadly I do not believe that that's going to make much of a dent in the poverty that many of these families place. So again I'm sure that the families across Saskatchewan, who are hearing of yet another misdirection and another missed priority of this government, are wondering how they can afford to spend \$13,000 in this case of two CEOs for one health district, and yet they wonder every day how they're going to put food on the table for their families.

Mr. Speaker, it's not enough merely to talk about, as the government has now, they've brought in a rental program. And, Mr. Speaker, although this is a laudable program in some ways, we believe that the most important thing for families is that they have home ownership. And the whole rental supplement

program raises a number of issues, Mr. Speaker, and key among them is who really is going to benefit from this new rental housing supplement. Will it be the actual people that are requiring adequate housing at an affordable rate, or will much of the benefit go to the landlords that own the properties that these people are renting?

And so, Mr. Speaker, again we believe that home ownership should be the key. Because when people own their own home they can become stable in a community. Their children can continue to attend the same school year after year, and they become . . . They receive a sense of belonging and security and therefore they do better at school. And we believe that that should be the goal in Saskatchewan, is to helping those that need adequate housing attain ownership.

Mr. Speaker, we also look at the high taxes that low-income workers in Saskatchewan are faced with, and we believe that there is a key way to assist in that. And, Mr. Speaker, that is by increasing the personal exemption so that people in Saskatchewan actually do get a real increase in their take-home pay.

[11:30]

Mr. Speaker, there are dozens of families and children in need in Saskatchewan, and the Department of Community Resources and Employment is involved in providing these services to children. But in many cases these services can and should be provided by community-based organizations who deliver them much more efficiently, effectively, and who actually have a pulse on their communities and understand the real needs and are there to demonstrate and to actually see positive results.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we look at this government that is in power today and we realize that in many cases what they are doing is moving the control and the delivery of programs from community-based organizations under government. And we find that that is not acceptable; that these programs should be delivered by community-based organizations.

Mr. Speaker, we also look at the First Nations in Saskatchewan and the high unemployment that is faced in many of those neighbourhoods. And certainly we need . . . The government needs to speak directly through and with the grassroots of First Nations to address their concerns and to find ways to make improvements in their ability to attain employment and to stop poverty in their communities.

And another area, Mr. Speaker, is the lack of adequate support for child care. And, Mr. Speaker, in many cases we have neighbourhood care that is available and the government is moving forward on putting roadblocks in place, not allowing parents to choose where they want their children to go but actually shutting down private daycares and legislating whether parents can take their children there or not.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, there is nothing against in Saskatchewan a child going home and being a latchkey kid, quote, but there is a law against them going to a neighbourhood home and having good care and support after school. So, Mr. Speaker, I would wonder what the priority of this government is.

Mr. Speaker, this government must look at this and realize that parents should have the right to choose where their children go. And if they feel that their children are secure and they support the care that they are receiving, that should be their decision, not the government's.

Mr. Speaker, I guess the question that we have is if government is so committed to improving assistance and support in the province, then why is there a cut in many of the areas in the budget for Department of Community Resources and Employment? There's a cut in the Saskatchewan Child Benefit, and there's also a cut in housing. Last year when I questioned about the cut in housing, I was assured that that was a one-year solution only, and that it would be addressed this year. It has not been.

And, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party does believe that we need to have a reason and we need to have a strong policy to move families from welfare to work, so that at the end of the day it is the families and it is their children that actually receive the benefit of this, Mr. Speaker.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we believe that we should strengthen income support for individuals and families. We should reduce hunger. We should increase jobs and skill training so that there are real jobs at the end of the day and not just make-work projects. We believe that there should be a real desire to actually have people retain their own . . . or to be able to maintain employment.

And, Mr. Speaker, we're working with . . . we believe that the employers need to be part of the decision process so that there are real jobs for people at the end of the day. And we promote home ownership and we believe that parents should have a say in how their children are cared for if they do require daycare.

And, Mr. Speaker, the NDP programs always sound great, and in many cases they are, have great goals; but we believe that there has to be true results at the end of the day.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud today to get up in this Assembly and endorse Saskatchewan's Building Independence program which supports low-income families and has reduced the number of social assistance cases to the lowest number in 14 years.

You know, I want to start out on a fairly personal note, Mr. Speaker. When you see young children you say, what affects young children? One of the big things that affects young children is the role models in their life. And there's no greater role model that any child has than their parent.

And what makes that parent a good role model? Well you know, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that makes parents a good role model is that they are working — working in the community, working in employment; that they're making

improvements in their life, that they have pride in themselves, and that they have a level of independence where they are able to control what happens in their own life.

We used to have a social assistance system in the province, and I would say in Canada — whether it was with the First Nations or other people — that was very paternalistic. It was a system that decided that everybody else knew better what was good for people. And we've gone to a building independence system where we're really focusing on families having the adequacy to be employed, to get education.

And I want to be clear about some facts because we've heard a lot of things that were not factual from the previous speaker and I want to be clear on what the facts are here.

I'll use Regina as an example. In Regina we've gone from 9,000 families on social assistance to 6,000. Every single one of those 3,000 families that has moved off assistance is materially much better off than they were when they were on assistance. We heard the speaker from Moose Jaw mention that a single parent who would have been receiving \$17,000 while on assistance, now with the Building Independence program receives \$23,000 a year.

And it's not just the money, Mr. Speaker. These programs include health benefits. The child benefit for a family of that size, the child benefit would be around \$800 a month. There's the employment supplement for low-income working people. There's HomeFirst which not only allows home ownership but home renovation and repair. There's the child nutrition and development programs that operate through schools and daycares and the good food basket program and community kitchens.

And as well, of course, there's many excellent child care centres today that provide a professional level of early learning and care where parents can drop off their children knowing that they're in a safe environment with good developmental programs. As well, the transportation programs that are taking place are giving people a huge amount of freedom for independence and to participate in the community.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that's not enough. We know that people who are making big changes in their life need supports as well. The KidsFirst program actually goes into homes and offers those supports to families. I was in a KidsFirst home a few weeks ago with the police chief and the mayor of Regina. And they were a young couple; their home was very nice. They were involved in our housing programs as well and they were getting on with their lives, Mr. Speaker. They were building their independence and looking after the kids. And you can see first-hand the very positive effect these programs are having on supporting families to make changes.

As well, we have a pre-kindergarten program where four-year-olds in 80 community schools receive play-based preparation for moving ahead with the opportunities in their life.

And I want to contrast this, Mr. Speaker, with the ideology of the members opposite, who I think their policies can summed up in two words, boot camps and food stamps. There's no

question in my mind that they think that the way you get people to change is through punitive approaches to people's lives.

And recently I was reading some research in the newspaper by a leading expert on teen development who said that punitive measures are not what makes young people change. What makes young people change is support, guidance, mentoring, and the proper kinds of supports in their world.

I want to particularly talk about the quote from the leader of the party opposite at his convention, where behind closed doors, yes, they advocated a raise in the basic allowance. But I think the fine print is what matters, Mr. Speaker, or, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The quote from Gormley, when he was interviewed on March 3 of this year, was asked specifically about this business of helping to ensure that people on social assistance have enough to eat. And he said, you know we need to look at both accountability to ensure that the food allowance is used for its intent and purpose.

Now, Mr. Speaker, is he talking about food stamps? How do you ensure that someone uses their food money for food? Are you going to follow them to the supermarket? Are you going to drop a box of carrots off at the house? This is the kind of thinking . . . I'm not surprised to hear that Ronald Reagan is his idol because this is the kind of thinking, Mr. Speaker, that causes people, that causes people to be very concerned about what the real agenda of this government is. And it is probably no surprise to anyone that in fact that person is a great actor, because I think that that would give him a lot in common with the members opposite as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I would like to hear someone from the members opposite contradict the notion that boot camps and food stamps are their approach to these issues. I have not seen any evidence in anything I've read. And of course because their last convention was conducted in secret, nobody knows what they actually said behind closed doors. And certainly we'd be very happy today to determine whether or not the intention to make sure that people use their food allowance only for its intent and purpose, how exactly they intend to carry that out, and whether in fact food stamps are their objective.

Mr. Speaker, we've done a number of things, actually working with the community to make sure that the school programs have enough resources. And in this budget — which I'm hoping the members opposite support — we increased the programs for the schools, for the child cares. And certainly people were very happy about that.

But as well, I've asked a provincial committee of all the people involved in food security to meet and to make recommendations to myself of what they think are the best things we could do in order to improve this situation even further. And they're doing that right now, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I'm looking forward to the support we can get from the people out in the community who are on the front lines doing this work every day.

As well, Mr. Speaker, I know that in previous elections the members opposite have promised to achieve a 25 per cent reduction in the number of people on social assistance. Well,

Mr. Speaker, we've achieved a 41 per cent reduction. And again I emphasize that every single one of those families is considerably materially better off than they were before.

And to just clear up a few small factual points. There are home ownership programs. And people who go into jobs in the Building Independence program go into real jobs with real employers. These are not make-work projects. These are jobs that are posted, and people get them just like anybody else gets a job. And they are becoming real members of the work community and real members of the community we live in.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I'm very proud of the work we've been doing. I'm very supportive of the resolution we're debating today. And I challenge the members opposite to explain to me in what way they have changed off of their previous stated policies of boot camps and food stamps because I haven't seen it, Mr. Speaker.

And certainly as I go through all my quotes from debates in this legislature, from policy documents, from campaign documents, the evidence I see, Mr. Speaker, is more of the same paternalistic attitude towards people that has caused independence to be a problem in the past. And we want to support people on the path to change in their life and having a better situation for themselves and their children.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I will support this motion.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Biggar. Why is the member for Athabasca on his feet?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — To ask leave to introduce guests.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — That's carried. I recognize the member for Athabasca.

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I wanted to take this opportunity to welcome a school group that has travelled many, many miles to be here today and to also thank the Assembly for taking a few minutes to introduce them and to recognize them.

In the Speaker's gallery, accompanied by Ms. Gloria Belcourt, are a number of students from Minahik Waskahigan School, which is in Cree translated to Pinehouse School. Mr. Speaker, they travelled a long, long ways to be here today, and I want to take this opportunity to welcome them to the Assembly.

And just to quickly explain, right now we're debating an issue on family support. And this is what we're doing at this stage.

[11:45]

And to also point out, Mr. Speaker, that this group represents the community of Pinehouse. They're grade 12 students, so their future does indeed look bright. And to also point out that the community of Pinehouse with a few good, strategic partners have raised over half a million dollars towards the construction of a new arena for that community, and they're also continuing to build from there. And I want to publicly offer my support for them to get more support for the new arena. They've gone a long ways as a community. So very quickly, in Cree:

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

So I just indicated that we will be sitting together and meeting after we're done, so I'd ask all members of the Assembly to welcome these students from Pinehouse school.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Biggar.

#### SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

##### Saskatchewan's Building Independence Program [continued]

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'd also like to take this opportunity to welcome the students from Pinehouse school and I hope they enjoy the debate this afternoon.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it goes out without question that everyone in the House here believes in building a better independence strategy. That's the ultimate goal, naturally, to help people make the transition from welfare to work.

And we all know, every member in here I'm sure knows, either has family members or friends or neighbours or constituents that have problems. They may have problems with children; or they may have physical, mental, or emotional challenges that they need help with. And I believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we must do a better job in helping these people.

In most cases we don't hear about these situations because generally the extended family usually helps with members of their own family, or the community in general helps out with these individuals. But there's certainly a role to play for the government to help out in individual cases where family and the extended families just cannot cope with the situation and must need help and resources, quite frankly, to help their friends and family members through their hard times.

And so certainly the independence strategy is positive but, Mr. Speaker, just recently I had a meeting with the Wilkie Independent Living Services Inc. and, Mr. Speaker, I mean, they were quite concerned by the government cutbacks. And these community-based organizations, of course, are basically run by volunteers. I sat with a number of people, having coffee with them, and they outlined the problems that they have in their community-based organization. And just to quote from a letter that the minister received recently, and I'd just like to put it on the record, that the Wilkie Independent Living Services Inc. says:

This letter is to stress . . . [the] enhance[d] the efforts of

... [the] umbrella Association. We continue to work with the Department ... to provide an environment where individuals with disabilities can receive quality services and opportunities. These volunteer driven organizations require the government's financial support to the proposed human resource plan in order to continue their efforts.

And this is a letter asking for continued support — not reduced support, but continued support — from the government to their community-based organizations, to the community of Wilkie, like so many communities in the province that have organizations, help to the volunteers. The government has added on an amendment to our 100 ideas for the next 100 years. And their amendment to our plan was to include volunteers, the support of volunteers in the Saskatchewan Party 100 plan.

And, Mr. Speaker, but we see on the ground that that is not necessarily happening. As this example — the CBO [community-based organization] from Wilkie — they're saying they're not getting the support; they're not getting the financial resources. And at the end of the day ... First of all, the volunteers are generally older people themselves that are retired and have taken their time and energy to help various people in the community. But they do not ...

The Independent Living group in Wilkie are having troubles making ends meet. And that's going to affect their clients — the people that are trying to get off welfare, trying to get jobs. But it also includes many people, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that at the end of the day, never will be able to hold down a full-time job. They're people that maybe will be able to work part-time. They may strive to work full-time, but I mean there's people — we all know people — that are challenged and are never going to be able to reach that goal. And we as a society must, Mr. Speaker, help these people, help the organizations, and the volunteers that want to lend a hand up to these individuals.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we brought up in question period today about the community gardens in Regina. Now, Mr. Speaker, this is open to any number of people, but I'm sure it's low-income people that have found a way to grow their own produce. They may not even have a backyard, so living in apartments or low-income housing, they don't have a backyard to develop a garden. This is their opportunity to grow cheap, healthy food in the city of Regina. And it's unfortunate that this land is being taken away from them.

And I understand the challenge around an area that needs to be developed for a very good reason. I understand it's for senior housing and that's a laudable reason to develop this land. But I believe the province must make sure that people in these community gardens have another area where they can plant their gardens and help them find that area and make it accessible.

The other thing is, many of these people probably aren't able to travel great distances. It needs to be in the community. And I believe that's a priority of this government, that they should look at that and make sure that these low-income families are able to grow high quality, healthy food for their children.

We all recognize the problems with addiction. Low-income people probably have a higher rate of addictions; poor nutrition,

which causes problems for the students at school. They go to school hungry — and we all know the stories — and this is certainly an area where the government can continue to help these individuals with these community gardens.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a member from Saskatoon has told a story a number of times. And it's an example of where training, and education, and help from the community, and the provincial government's needed. There was a program, I believe in the Riversdale community, where a community-based organization at Christmastime was giving free turkeys away to families. And so, they would ask the parents to come to the school with their children; they would get a free turkey.

And they noticed that the families were leaving the school. They were throwing the free turkey, the frozen turkey, in the garbage outside the school. And this was so disheartening to the people that were donating these turkeys and obviously they didn't know why this was happening. Well why would someone throw a free turkey away, especially at Christmas?

So they done some studying. They've asked people what the problem is. Well the problem, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was these individuals, these families — there's single parents, there's all sorts of types of families that — quite frankly, didn't have the facilities, didn't have an oven, a stove, to roast a turkey. And more importantly, they didn't even have the skills to know how to do it and so it was beyond them.

So the local group decided, well they're going to make some changes. So they insisted on the families coming in. They gave them directions and help in preparing the turkey for Christmas. And so, it's things like this that need to be done to give a hand up to individuals and families so that they can get on their own and off welfare and have the dignity of work and help these families get through their problems, Mr. Speaker.

And the other obvious big area where it ... especially when it's the low- and middle-income families and either a single parent family or two parents that have to work, daycare is a serious concern.

I know in Biggar we have just recently opened a daycare centre in Biggar and it's so helpful to people that have jobs that are now able to take their children to the daycare and go on to their jobs. And it's those types of programs are so very important and this is where this provincial government needs to recognize and fill in the gaps where the community needs help through grants or some level of funding.

And quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, we hear a lot of talk about the federal government having a program for daycare. Well unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, all it has been is talk. And so I think it's imperative that the provincial government lobby the federal government to get a daycare plan in place. Because at the end of the day it's the people on the ground that it will help, and if it's not available it hurts these people.

Just think of a single mother that wants to work part time or full time that has a job available, and the children are not going to school. They're too young. And it just about makes it impossible for these families to be able to get into a job to support themselves because there's so many impediments in

their way.

And, Mr. Speaker, I only have a few seconds to go so just in my wrap-up comments I just believe that there is a better way to encourage people to get off welfare and on their own, and I think we'll look at some different alternatives. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Regina Dewdney.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'd like to start my remarks this morning quoting from the *Western Catholic Reporter*, an Edmonton, Alberta publication. And the title is, Mr. Speaker, "The Saskatchewan Advantage". In the quote, Mr. Speaker, it says:

The soul of a nation, or any other group of people can be seen in how it treats the most disadvantaged.

It goes on to say:

In Canada, in recent years, we have made one significant improvement . . . [that's] called the National Child Benefit and increased funding is helping to bring a lot of children out of poverty.

Twelve years ago, the House of Commons passed a resolution to do its best to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000 . . .

A report released earlier this month by the Canadian Council on Social Development found that Saskatchewan has done a much better job than either Alberta or Ontario in reducing child poverty, especially among single-parent families. Between 1993 and 1998, Saskatchewan cut the incidence of poverty among single-parent families from 51 to 20 per cent.

[Mr. Speaker,] . . . Saskatchewan spent \$37 million on child benefit programs compared with \$6 million in Alberta, a province with a population three times as large.

Alberta Children's . . . Minister Iris Evans downplays the CCSD report and says her department has doubled its budget since 1998. However, [and this is her speaking, Mr. Deputy Speaker, however] we likely still have a long way to go to match the record of a province with far fewer economic resources than Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I think I used that article to start my remarks to contrast the approach taken by New Democratic government in the province of Saskatchewan versus Tory governments around the country. Mr. Speaker, it says a great deal when a Tory government in Alberta, with far greater resources than the province of Saskatchewan has and three times the population, spends one-sixth the amount of money, one-sixth the amount of money that Saskatchewan taxpayers spend on the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's because the people here care and the government here cares for those who are the least advantaged in our society. And it's not just recognized by ourselves in this

province, Mr. Speaker; it's recognized by others. It's recognized by the *Western Catholic Reporter*, an Edmonton paper. And I think we should all be grateful in this province that they recognize that we do care about those people in our province.

Mr. Speaker, Building Independence is about putting people to work, getting them off social assistance. It's not work for welfare. It's work for wages, Mr. Speaker. It's about giving people the skills to be employed within our society. It's about giving them the ability to feel good about themselves and contribute as meaningful members of the workforce in our province. It's about their dignity, Mr. Speaker. It's about making them feel every bit as important as they have a right to, as equal contributing members of our society. And, Mr. Speaker, dignity goes a long way to help people, their children, their families to improve their situation beyond their first job, beyond their first home and working themselves to situations that at one time, Mr. Speaker, without a program like Building Independence, would have been outside their ability to do. Mr. Speaker, that's what it is all about.

We're not like the opposition Tories. Their only policies are boot camps and food stamps, Mr. Speaker. It's about building or presenting opportunities for people to improve their own position in life.

Mr. Speaker, we believe on this side, work is the best path out of poverty, and we are taking a leadership role nationally — nationally, Mr. Speaker — in response to the issues of child and family poverty. Mr. Deputy Speaker, today at least 20,000 families in Saskatchewan are better off because of the Building Independence program, and those families and their children have a much brighter future because of this program. And I think all Saskatchewan citizens should be proud of the program the Saskatchewan people have put forward for our citizens.

[12:00]

There's been a 41 per cent drop in the number of families receiving social assistance, a reduction of over 7,300 families, and almost 16,000 children have left social assistance, Mr. Speaker. We have the lowest social assistance caseload since 1991. Employment has reached all-time highs in the province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And the rate of poverty for all persons has dropped from 11.4 per cent in 1996 to 9.5 per cent in 2001.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we should all be proud. We should all be proud in this province of what we've accomplished. And, Mr. Speaker, we want to do even more. We want every citizen in this province to have the dignity of a job. We want every citizen of this province and every child in this province to have the opportunities of good education, meaningful employment, and a future that they can look forward to with hope. Mr. Speaker, that's what the members on this side of the House want. And I would hope that all members of this Legislative Assembly would share those views.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it's sad because I don't believe we all share that common view. I believe that we have very different approaches to how to deal with the young people in our society who need that extra help, need that extra step perhaps to have the same quality of future as all the other

citizens of the province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, we need to work collectively to help any citizen in our province that for any reason is disadvantaged. And that's what being a Saskatchewan citizen is about. That's why in this great province medicare was founded. That's why in this great province labour laws were first established. And that's why in this great province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, human rights Act was founded. The child benefit was a creation of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, the citizens of this province have contributed greatly to the social fabric of our country. And, Mr. Speaker, you will never see, never see on this side of the House policies like boot camps and food stamps. Mr. Deputy Speaker

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Yates:** — Prior to Building Independence, the province spent \$322 million on social assistance and the now discontinued Family Income Plan. Last year the province's expenditures for the Saskatchewan Assistance Plan, the Saskatchewan employment supplement, and Saskatchewan Child Benefit were only \$270 million, Mr. Speaker.

That isn't because, Mr. Speaker, we're giving less money. It's because of the program. Fewer people are needing, needing assistance from the government, Mr. Speaker. They're out there working. They're out there contributing, and they're feeling good about what they're doing in our communities. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's what it's all about. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's about individuals reaching their own potential, working to achieve the things that they've always wanted to achieve.

And, Mr. Speaker, the design of the Building Independence program has allowed them to achieve that. It's allowed them to move from social assistance to a meaningful job. It's allowed their children to have the opportunities they would not have had if they had been on assistance, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It allows their children to understand the importance of a job within the family and the importance of the dignity and self-esteem that comes with knowing that you can look after yourself each and every day.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what does that do with the impact on poverty? The after-tax income for a single parent with two children receiving social assistance prior to the introduction of Building Independence was approximately \$15,500. If he or she were working for minimum wage, the total average income was about \$17,750. In 2005, the same parent working for minimum wage will have after income tax about \$23,600, Mr. Deputy Speaker, an increase of over \$6,000 per year.

It's working, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Families are better off. Children are better off. And as result, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the province is better off as well. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The 65-minute debate portion has ended. The 10-minute question and comment period will begin. I recognize the member for Wood River.

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My question is for the member from Saskatoon Fairview. We've heard from members opposite about building the independence

program, and we've also heard about a way of dealing with people. And I'd like to quote from an article, and it says:

... it remains for us to consider remedies that at least mitigate, if not remove, the problem of the sub-normal family from midst of modern society.

By "subnormal" we mean ... a family whose mental rating is low, i.e. anywhere from high grade moron to mentally defective;

My question to the member is, does he support this doctrine that was the doctrine of their founder and leader, Tommy Douglas?

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Fairview.

**Mr. Iwanchuk:** — Mr. Speaker, we have on this side of the House nothing to learn from that opposition, whose leader said he was a disciple of Ronald Reagan.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote to that member what this party has done for poverty of children. Saskatchewan children, low-income families, Mr. Speaker, are better off. Statistics Canada data shows that since 1996, the number of children in the province under 18 living under poverty dropped to 6.5 from 8.8 in 2002.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Mr. Speaker, let me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me tell you what the budget highlights, and that's what the member should be talking about. They should be talking about the budget highlights that are in the 2005-06 budget: 10 million in rental housing supplemented for low-income families, 2 million to assist low-income families with high rent, and 3 million to assist Saskatchewan Assistance Plan's adult's basic allowance. Mr. Speaker, we have nothing to learn from those members over there.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Regina Rosemont.

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to go back to the quote of the leader of the Conservative opposition where he says, both accountability to ensure the food allowance is used for its intent purpose.

My question, Mr. Speaker, is how do they intend to assure that? To the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy: how do they intend to do that, and do they intend to reinstitute the fraud squad, where they following single parents around with TV cameras?

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy.

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I represent the Saskatchewan ...

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Order, order. Question and comment period is supposed to be one at a time. I recognize the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy.

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, there is no Conservative opposition. I represent the Saskatchewan Party

and would ask to be addressed accordingly. I was elected as a Saskatchewan Party MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly].

And, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party does believe in providing adequate food. But first of all, Mr. Speaker, the key to maintaining employment and having people move from welfare to work is a good job. And to have a good job, you need a growing economy where there are jobs that are available for people to attain.

And the Saskatchewan Party believes that that is the key to growth and to prosperity for everyone in Saskatchewan, including those that are on welfare today and are trying to move from welfare to work.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the member from Saskatoon Fairview. Earlier today in question period we'd raised the point of community gardens that are being tore up, and these people aren't being allowed to use them, plus heritage sites possibly torn down.

He talked about his motion and his motion about supporting independent living. These people that are trying to grow good, healthy food are trying to . . . A lot of these are low-income people, possibly people on welfare, that are trying to earn some extra food, have some extra food. So I take it . . . Does he support tearing up them gardens and destroying them heritage sites? Does he support that . . . in that by going against his motion on that, Mr. Speaker?

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Fairview.

**Mr. Iwanchuk:** — Mr. Speaker, we support Building Independence and, Mr. Speaker, we support green living spaces in the city. Mr. Speaker, I think the question for those members is, where do they stand on food stamps?

Mr. Speaker, they speak a lot about things, and they talk about their policies that they write about but, Mr. Speaker, what happens behind the closed doors? Mr. Speaker, what is the code? What about the nudge, nudge, wink, wink on the policies that they are talking about here? This is a very different policies, and nobody in Saskatchewan is going to believe this, Mr. Speaker. Nobody in Saskatchewan is going to believe this.

The question that we should be asking them is, what do they think about food stamps? And what do they think about what their leader said on the radio station and the accountability that the people have to show for the money that they get for the food allowances? That's the question for them, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Moose Jaw North.

**Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Speaker, I direct my question . . . If the hon. member for Wood River will take this question, I'll direct it to him. If he won't take the question, then I'll direct it to the hon. member for Weyburn.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is on record, the Leader of the Opposition is on record as saying that we need, and I quote from the John Gormley show of March 3:

. . . we need to look at . . . accountability to ensure that the food allowance is used for its intent and its purpose . . .

Now as we all know, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is no food allowance. There's a basic allowance, but I know there has been a position that has been taken by the opposition. And I would ask the hon. member for Wood River if he'll take the question. If he won't, then the hon. member for Weyburn, whether she would agree, whether she would agree with the statement made by her leader on the Gormley show on March 3?

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The question, comment period is to the issue at hand, and I think the question is directed at Weyburn-Big Muddy if she chooses to . . . [inaudible] . . . And I recognize the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy.

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will answer the question. The member from Wood River is not part of the debate. And the member should know that, and knows the rules, and has . . . knew he could not ask the question of the member from Wood River.

Mr. Speaker, the record of the NDP is that under their watch, food bank usage has grown to a higher percentage than ever in the province of Saskatchewan. And it was the Romanow, when Romanow was the premier of this province, he was the one that said under his watch that they would eradicate food bank usage in the province of Saskatchewan. Where is there more poverty than in the very riding that he represents and now the Premier of this province represents?

So for the NDP to say that somehow they have addressed the use . . . the food bank usage is incorrect and that the record shows exactly that.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the member from Regina Rosemont. And in her comments she alluded to the former president, Ronald Reagan. And the question that I have, and I'm taking this from *The Economist*, a well-known British publication. He was on the front cover. And it said: "The man that killed communism." So I guess it can be equated to him that he did dismantle a social welfare state.

And I would like her comments on this: if the ensuing freedoms that happened for the people in the Soviet bloc were in fact a good thing at the cost of the dismantling of a social welfare state.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Regina Rosemont.

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Mr. Speaker, I think we're getting to the heart of the matter here, and I go back to our question. If in fact your leader supports people being accountable for the food allowance being used . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Just to remind members to put all questions to the Chair. I recognize the member for Regina Rosemont.

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Thank you very much for that reminder, Mr. Chair. So again I ask, how do you intend, Mr. Speaker . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Put the comments to the Chair. I recognize the member for Regina Rosemont.

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — I must be getting tired, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the members opposite again how they intend, Mr. Speaker, to ensure accountability that the food allowance is being used for its intent and purpose because I think what they're talking about, Mr. Speaker, is food stamps, and I want them to come clean.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Regina Dewdney.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My question is for the member for Biggar. My question is, does he still believe in boot camps and food stamps?

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Biggar.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'll tell the member what I believe. And what I believe in is Saskatchewan Party's 100 ideas to build permanent bridges for welfare people to work. And I'd like to have this opportunity to list some of them. If the member would like to look at idea no. 1, no. 3, 35, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

[12:15]

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

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the member for Saskatoon Fairview.

I was wondering, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the member knows that in his very documents of his own government in the year of 2001-02 there were two categories, one called the Saskatchewan Assistance Plan, one called the Saskatchewan Child Benefit. Government spent \$286 million in '01-02. In the current document that we have before us those two categories, the expenditure is 217 million — a reduction of \$69 million.

Does the member from Saskatoon Fairview know that when he stands in this Legislative Assembly and criticizes the Saskatchewan Party for suggesting that if people leave Social Services they will save money?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Fairview.

**Mr. Iwanchuk:** — Mr. Deputy Speaker, the federal government . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Order. Order. Order. I recognize . . . Order. I recognize the member for Saskatoon Fairview.

**Mr. Iwanchuk:** — Mr. Deputy Speaker, the federal government has been increasing the amount of money that they have been putting in . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Cannington on a point of order.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is not the time for questions in the seventy-five minute debate 10 minutes and 10 minutes alone?

**An Hon. Member:** — Point of order.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Moose Jaw North on the point of order.

**Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Speaker, it has been long established that the . . . by the procedure of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that if time permitted for a question to be asked, that the member who was participating was enabled to answer, to respond to that question.

It strikes me as a tad odd at the same time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the hon. member would want to have a question asked without hearing the answer. And I think past practice, Mr. Deputy Speaker, clearly enables the question to be responded to.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Order. I thank the member for the point of order and the member for responding. I think there does need to be some clarification on this issue. Traditionally there have been two ways of approaching this. One has been as soon as the 10 minutes approaches, it ends. Order. Order.

Or alternatively in past practice recently that if there has been a question, similar to question period, that if a question is put then the answer is answered. So I do take the member's point of order under advisement and we can clarify the rules. But at this point I will recognize the member for Fairview to finish his answer.

**Mr. Iwanchuk:** — Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Saskatchewan government at one time funded this fully. The federal government has been funding it over the years, and as they have funded it our contributions have gone down.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The debate has now ended. Committee of the Whole. I do now leave the Chair so the House can go into Committee of the Whole.

## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**Bill No. 304 — The Concentra Trust Act, 2005**

**The Deputy Chair:** — The item before the Assembly is Bill No. 304 of 2004-05, An Act respecting Concentra Financial Services Association, Association de services financiers Concentra and Concentra Trust, La Société de Fiducie Concentra.

We'll proceed through clause-by-clause consideration. We'll start with clause 1. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

[Clause 1 agreed to.]

[Clauses 2 to 10 inclusive agreed to.]

[Preamble agreed to.]

**The Deputy Chair:** — Therefore Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows: the short title, Bill No. 304 of 2004-05, An Act respecting Concentra Financial Services Association. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Sutherland.

**Mr. Addley:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. I move that the committee report the Bill without amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** — Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** — Carried.

**Bill No. 305 — The Saskatoon Foundation Amendment Act, 2005**

**The Deputy Chair:** — Okay. Next is the Bill No. 305 of 2004-05, An Act to amend The Saskatoon Foundation Act, 1994.

[Clause 1 agreed to.]

[Clauses 2 to 14 inclusive agreed to.]

[Preamble agreed to.]

**The Deputy Chair:** — Therefore Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows: Bill No. 305 of 2004-05, An Act to amend The Saskatoon Foundation Act, 1994. I recognize the member for Saskatoon Sutherland.

**Mr. Addley:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. I move that the committee report the Bill without amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** — Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** — Carried.

**Bill No. 306 — The Soeurs de la Charite de St. Louis Repeal Act**

**The Deputy Chair:** — Next before the Assembly is Bill No. 306 of 2004-05, An Act to repeal An act to incorporate Soeurs de la Charite de St. Louis, to dissolve that entity and to transfer the Assets and Liabilities of that entity to the Sisters of Charity of St. Louis of Calgary.

Clause 1.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

[Clause 1 agreed to.]

[Clauses 2 to 7 inclusive agreed to.]

[Preamble agreed to.]

**The Deputy Chair:** — Therefore Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** — Carried. I recognize the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

**Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Deputy Chair, I move the committee report the Bill without amendment.

**The Deputy Chair:** — Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** — Carried. I recognize the member for Massey Place, Saskatoon.

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that the committee rise and report progress and ask for leave to sit again.

**The Deputy Chair:** — The member has asked that the committee move and rise progress and ask for leave to sit again. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

## THIRD READINGS

**The Speaker:** — The Deputy Chair of committees is recognized.

**Bill No. 304 — The Concentra Trust Act, 2005**

**Mr. Iwanchuk:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the committee to report item no. 1, Bill No. 304 without

amendment.

**The Speaker:** — When shall the Bill be read a third time? The Chair recognizes the Chair of committees.

**Mr. Addley:** — Mr. Speaker, as MLA for Saskatoon Sutherland, I move that Bill No. 304, The Concentra Trust Act, 2005 be now read a third time and passed under its title.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member for Saskatoon Sutherland that Bill 304 be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried.

**Clerk Assistant (Committees):** — Third reading of this Bill.

**The Speaker:** — The Deputy Chair of committees is recognized.

#### **Bill No. 305 — The Saskatoon Foundation Amendment Act, 2005**

**Mr. Iwanchuk:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the committee to report item no. 2, Bill No. 305 without amendment.

**The Speaker:** — When shall this Bill be read a third time? The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Sutherland.

**Mr. Addley:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 305, The Saskatoon Foundation Amendment Act, 2005 be now read a third time and passed under its title.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member for Saskatoon Sutherland that Bill 305, The Saskatoon Foundation Amendment Act, 2005 be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried.

**Clerk Assistant (Committees):** — Third reading of this Bill.

**The Speaker:** — The Deputy Chair of committees is recognized.

[12:30]

#### **Bill No. 306 — The Soeurs de la Charite de St. Louis Repeal Act**

**Mr. Iwanchuk:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the committee to report item no. 3, Bill No. 306 without amendment.

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

**Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Speaker, did you want to ask when it'll be read a third time?

**The Speaker:** — When shall the Bill be read a third time? The Chair recognizes the member for Moose Jaw North.

**Mr. Hagel:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I kind of thought you might be wondering that. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 306, The Soeurs de la Charite de St. Louis Repeal Act be now read a third time and passed under its title.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member from Moose Jaw North that Bill No. 306 be read a third time now and passed under its title. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried.

**Clerk Assistant (Committees):** — Third reading of this Bill.

**The Speaker:** — When shall the committee sit again?

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Next sitting, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — Next sitting.

Why is the member from Batoche on his feet?

**Mr. Kirsch:** — Leave to introduce guests.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Leave has been granted.

#### **INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS**

**Mr. Kirsch:** — Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise to introduce one of my mentors, the former MLA of Saskatoon, Humboldt. Ms. Arlene Julé is here with us today. I'd ask members to welcome her.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

#### **PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS**

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

#### **Motion No. 8 — Recognition of Distress in Agriculture Sector**

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, before I start to speak on the motion I would like to join with the member for Batoche in welcoming the former member from Humboldt, a colleague of mine. And we had gone through some very hard times together, some very good times, and they were all very enjoyable. So I want to welcome the member here today too, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the motion that we're about to debate this afternoon I think has great importance — especially in rural Saskatchewan, but for that matter all over the province of Saskatchewan. And I'll start by reading the motion, and then I have some words along with my colleague from Thunder Creek about what we're talking about today, Mr. Speaker. And the motion reads:

That this Assembly recognize that the plight of Saskatchewan farm families is worse this spring than it has been in decades, and the severity of cash flow problems this spring is causing severe stress and distress and hardship, not only in rural Saskatchewan, but other parts of the province that rely on agriculture-based businesses.

Mr. Speaker, I guess I'd like to talk today about some of the reasons I feel that that stress is out there and what that stress is doing to farm families. And I'd just like to maybe review the NDP record over the past 12 or 13 years of how they have helped assist in the buildup of stress on farm families, created the problems that we have out there right now, with very little assistance from this NDP government. I go back, Mr. Speaker, to the early '90s — I believe it was 1991-92 — when the NDP government under the former premier, Mr. Romanow, saw fit to cancel a GRIP [gross revenue insurance program] program that was not the perfect program but was certainly better than anything that we've seen since.

It was a program that farm families, including myself, relied on there as an insurance program and was bankable because when you were in the program the banking community would look at the program, see what your guarantee was, and would go accordingly — whether it was an operating loan you were looking for to purchase land, cattle, or whatever it was. But it was a bankable program that we could use, Mr. Speaker. And I don't think the farmers in Saskatchewan will ever forgive the NDP for taking that program and totally breaking that contract with farmers and taking it away. And I believe the stress level in rural Saskatchewan started to mount at that time and for the past 12 or 13 years has been going up at a fairly high level, Mr. Speaker.

We talked about the GRIP program being cancelled and replaced with what? Well we've gone on to the past few years where we had an AIDA program, a CFIP [Canadian farm income program] program. Now we have a CAIS [Canadian agricultural income stabilization] program. And it seems when they get to the point where they don't know what to do with a program, they cancel it, call it a different name, make it more complicated for farmers, cost them more money to administer, and start all over again, Mr. Speaker.

And I guess what we talked about in question period today and for a number of days is, where is this government's commitment to farmers and ranchers and families in rural Saskatchewan to help them get through bad times? Mr. Speaker, we've been through bad times before in this province and we will again. But I do believe that this year is probably the worst year that I have ever seen, and that includes the years that I was farming myself and the years now that I have been elected to this legislature.

We have the BSE [bovine spongiform encephalopathy], Mr.

Speaker. We had frost on August 20 of last year. All these things adding up to the stress and the problems in rural Saskatchewan. And before this, Mr. Speaker, to add to the problem, we had low grain prices. So what we have now in many areas of the province is we have a large quantity of grain, low-quality grain, worth next to nothing, and adding to the stress of farm families in the province of Saskatchewan.

Another thing that the province did last year, Mr. Speaker, to add to the stress out there, and I think add to something that farmers relied on out there, was that they got rid of a number of ag reps in the province, closed a number of rural service centres, and these were offices that farmers relied on for information and assistance with their farming operations. And this government has totally cut programs that assist farm families in rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk a little bit about the budget this year. And I find it very amazing. In a year when this may be one of the worst years, if not the worst year that we've ever had in rural Saskatchewan to find money to put a crop in, to find money to pay last year's bills off . . . which by the way, many farmers have not done at this point, do not have the cash. Many cannot pay their power bills. Many are even having a hard time finding dollars to put food on the table for their family.

And this government saw fit to go from \$404 million agriculture budget in the province of Saskatchewan last year, and this year's budget, I find it amazing that they would have the nerve to cut that budget by about \$140 million. And now we're looking at about \$264 million budget for agriculture in the province of Saskatchewan. At the same time we hear the Premier, we hear the Deputy Premier, we hear the Ag minister telling us how committed they are to be behind the farmers of Saskatchewan. Well the farmers I'm talking to, Mr. Deputy Speaker, feeling they have out in rural Saskatchewan that this government may be behind them, but they're a long, long way behind them. And there's certainly no assistance coming from this government when it comes to farm families.

In fact most of the farm families I talk to right now are hoping that there's a good crop this year; we have good soil moisture to start with. But even as much as that, they're hoping that this government will hurry up and call an election so we can turn this province around, get the economy of this province going. And maybe there will be with a new government, the government that'll be the Saskatchewan Party government, will actually be committed to helping farm families in the province of Saskatchewan.

And I might add, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the reasons being that right now most of rural Saskatchewan is represented by this side of the House. And I think that may be part of the problem, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there's absolutely no one on that side of the House, number one, understands the problems in rural Saskatchewan and, number two, really cares about the problems in rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, some of the costs out there for farm families and some of the things that are putting them so far in debt, I'll go through a list of them, Mr. Speaker. But taxes, taxes that farm families have to pay, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and one of those high taxes not being just municipal taxes because of the

downloading of this government onto municipalities, but the education tax.

And I might add, and I know the members opposite have been quick to say, oh look at the money. We put 55 million into the education tax system which worked out to be approximately 8 per cent of the total overall bill for education tax in rural Saskatchewan and urban Saskatchewan. But they're forgetting to mention that in the past 13 years the education tax on farmland has skyrocketed, in many cases probably three and four times what it was when the NDP came to power in 1991. So they jacked it as usual. They jacked it away up, put the responsibility on farm families to pick up a larger and larger share of that education tax.

And now when they return an 8 per cent return to the farmers of Saskatchewan, want the farmers to say, oh what good guys they are. Well you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, haven't heard that happen in rural Saskatchewan yet, and I doubt I will because what's happened in rural Saskatchewan this year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is with reassessment out there and I know especially on . . . I know in many areas of the province, but I do know on the east side of the province that our assessments have jumped once again.

Now I know municipalities, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are going to adjust their taxes that they need, the dollars that they need to run their municipalities accordingly. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not sure that that will carry through with the education tax because we have to remember, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that in this budget alone, this government saw fit to freeze the foundation grant, the money for education. And I think the fear out in rural Saskatchewan is that, who's going to be left to pick up the shortfall?

We know the teachers now have a 2, 2, and 2 increase in wages. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think the fear is out there once again as has happened in the past, it would be passed on to the local taxpayer. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that's a valid concern they have out there, and why I talk about that today is because it's just another nail in the coffin of rural Saskatchewan, and it also is adding to the stress and hurt to farm families.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, fuel prices are something that include taxes by this government and also have skyrocketed this spring. I have farmers calling me and telling me that diesel prices last spring were roughly 43 cents a litre, and it looks like this spring many of them are going to be paying 70 cents a litre for that same fuel to put this crop in. And they already are short of money, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know that fertilizer and chemical prices have skyrocketed in the last 10 years. All the input costs that farmers have out there have gone up. And yet they're being asked by this government and everyone to supply the food for people of Saskatchewan and Canada at grain prices that we could go back to the 1930s and find comparisons of very close to the same value with input costs of the new century that have skyrocketed in the past 10, 15, 20 years. On top of that as I said before, we have a government here that's there at every turn to knock you down when you try to get ahead.

An example, in question period today was a good example,

when we talked about slaughter plants out there. And we have members on that side of the House making commitments to ranchers and farmers in the province of Saskatchewan, actually playing politics, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because on one hand they get up at these meetings and they make commitments to these producers. The producers leave thinking well at least this time we've got the provincial government onside backing it.

In this case it was a feasibility study that the Deputy Premier had made the commitment and promised to about 150 farmers that night, to the Beef Initiative Group, and they thought they were off and running. They thought they had a commitment to do the feasibility study and get on with what they had proposed to be a slaughtering plant, something that we're told by that government has needed badly. And I agree; we definitely need these out there. But when we have a government that makes a commitment, we need a government that keeps that commitment, and we certainly are not seeing that for the last number of years — in fact I would say back about 13 years, since 1991.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think farmers find it amazing that last year this government found and had a windfall of probably 1.1, \$1.2 billion. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's money more than they thought was coming in, attributed to the high oil and gas prices in this province and also attributed to the equalization dollars from the federal government. That is a big bonus coming into this province.

What did they do? How did they get rid of that money, Mr. Speaker? Well we're not sure because it certainly didn't go into farm programs that this government has cut from farmers. In fact let's talk about the CAIS program for a minute, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It took that government and that Agriculture minister until December to finally, at the last hour put his money into the CAIS program, causing far more stress than there needed to be because farmers knew it was not a bankable program when all they were going to get was the federal share of the dollars.

And again this spring we're seeing exactly a replay of what we saw last year, Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . is that the Agriculture minister and the NDP government have said we can't afford the 2004 CAIS money to put in as our share. And far too often we're hearing those same words out of that government, at the same time saying they're behind the farmers. But when it comes time to put their money up, we're not seeing that happen, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

This year we know, again with the high oil prices, that probably revenues are going to be up at a minimum of 4 to \$500 million, in fact at . . . valuing in the budget that a barrel of oil will be about \$41. I think that's a low guesstimate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and probably that the real number will be closer to another billion dollars in excess of what they actually had thought was coming into the provincial revenue and the provincial coffers.

But I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reason for this is then they can cry poverty and say well this is why we can't fund farm programs out there in Saskatchewan. And it's a real myth, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it's certainly not fair to farm families out there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't think for a minute the people on that side of the House — who always like to say they're compassionate and are there to look out for people of Saskatchewan — understand for one minute what's going on with farm families out there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know there are suicides happening out in rural Saskatchewan, and we know that you can't totally point the finger and say it was directly because of what's happening in agriculture. But any of the members on this side of the House that have had occasion, the unfortunate occasion, for something like that to happen in their community, knows that families do not talk about these things. We don't advertise these things. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we all know of situations where this has happened, and we all know in our communities what caused this problem. And it's stress on farm families.

It even goes further, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where we have family breakups in rural Saskatchewan because the stress has gone on and on and on. And there's only so much farm families can actually do, Mr. Speaker, to deal with the problems that they got there. When you have a farmer that's had his costs from last year not paid at this time of year and you're worrying about how you're going to put this crop in. We have examples of farmers saying, I might have enough money to put in 50 per cent of my crop, 60 per cent of my crop. They're right up against it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it's time this government backed up what it says and got behind farm families.

[12:45]

The set-aside program is another example, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where in most provinces, there was a \$200 payout to farmers, that held feeders back on the set-aside program, and the farmers got their money upfront.

What are we doing here, in Saskatchewan? Well they paid out the federal share of that money, and then they made our farmers wait till the end of March for a \$30 part of what they were paying, and they're going to make them wait till the end of October at least for the other \$30. I had a farmer phone me and he said, do they really think that we're not old enough to handle that amount of money at one time? And it makes you wonder that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because more often than not, we're the only province that keeps lagging behind when it comes to funding for agriculture.

Agriculture is a big part of this province. It's a big part of the economy in this province. And there's many, many families out there . . . are at wit's end of how they're going to get through till this fall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it's causing hardship, day after day after day out there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we talked of the suicides that are happening. We talked of the family breakups that are happening out there. This is a time when people in rural Saskatchewan need a government — their government, the one that represents them as government — to stand behind them, stand behind the programs that were supposedly designed to help those farm families get through bad times. And we in opposition would support farm families on that notion.

Why on earth will this government, who says it's there to look

out for people — and we're beginning to really question that — why won't they get behind these programs, help farm families through the bad times such as we have now because of the BSE and the frost and low grain prices and things like that, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have to leave time for my colleague from Thunder Creek who wants to respond also to the problems out in rural Saskatchewan. So at this time, I will move the motion:

That this Assembly recognizes that the plight of Saskatchewan farm families is worse this spring than it has been in decades, and the severity of cash flow problems this spring is causing severe distress and hardship not only in rural Saskatchewan, but in other parts of the province that rely on agriculture-based businesses.

I so move, Mr. Deputy Speaker, seconded by the member for Thunder Creek.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Iwanchuk):** — It has been moved by the member for Melville-Saltcoats:

That this Assembly recognize the plight of Saskatchewan farm families is worse this spring than it has been in decades and the severity of cash flow problems this spring is causing severe distress and hardship not only in rural Saskatchewan but in other parts of the province that rely on the agriculture-based businesses.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt . . . I recognize the member from Thunder Creek.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the agriculture industry is in peril in this province. Every sector of the industry is caught in a death grip with soaring fuel, fertilizer, chemical, and equipment costs making agriculture in this province a very cash intensive business indeed.

On the income side, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the situation is even worse. With widespread frost in 2004, coupled with a late spring and cold wet conditions through the summer, producers' hopes were dashed by that killing frost in most of the province on August 20.

On that night, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the crop that had the potential to be the largest one in history was turned into an almost total disaster for many of our producers and, overall, one of the most financially devastating years for producers in the ag economy in our 100-year history.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, following on the heels . . . this is following on the heels of from two to seven years of pretty severe drought, depending on which area of the province a producer might reside. And, Mr. Speaker, low commodity prices — the result of ongoing subsidization of agricultural commodities by the US and especially by Europe — are another major challenge that now faces the grain sector in this province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in this country, the federal government made the decision — or perhaps abdicated making a decision long ago — to compete in the subsidy trade wars which have continued ever since. That, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the reason the producers in this country and especially in this province need farm programs to survive, farm programs that are more of an ad hoc nature; programs, Mr. Speaker, that in this country, right or wrong, are cost shared between provinces and the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we in Saskatchewan are the most reliant on agriculture to oil the wheels of our economy of any province in the country. And while our producers suffer from these international subsidies and domestic programs, which frankly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are inadequate, the NDP government withholds funding to the CAIS program, which is the only game in town for our producers, Mr. Deputy Speaker, while they scrap with the feds over who should pay what percentage of the program.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that our federal government has abdicated its responsibility, true enough, to agriculture producers right across this country. And it's because of that, it has chosen not to support our producers in the subsidy war, that we rely on programs like GRIP and CFIP and CAIS.

But Mr. Speaker, we must play, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we must play with the hand that we're dealt. This NDP government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, instead of doing the things that would stimulate the growth of the agricultural sector in this province, and instead of recognizing the huge contribution that agriculture makes to our provincial economy, and instead of telling the story to urban people in this province — who are now mostly now one, two or three generations away from any real connection to or understanding of agriculture — this NDP government takes every opportunity to use agriculture as their excuse for the economic failure of this province under their watch. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a cynical, divisive, and destructive political approach to a problem that has practical solutions.

The hog industry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is an industry that Saskatchewan is particularly well suited for. This industry is one that it is very cyclical in nature, with margins being slim to non-existent at times but quite substantial at others, but an industry that can be more competitive in this province than any other place on the continent because of our wide open spaces and price-competitive and abundant supply of feed. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is an industry that should be expanding in Saskatchewan even in times when no expansion can be justified in other jurisdictions, but it is not.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this industry, the hog industry, is not expanding in this province because this government doesn't have the fundamentals right either. In terms of a business-friendly environment in which to invest, taxes, red tape, environmental compliance issues, as well as labour laws, are all issues that mitigate against investment in the hog industry in Saskatchewan — an industry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that can provide a nearby market for feed grain as well as jobs that can keep people in rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, of the 10 provinces in Confederation, only

Alberta has suffered more under the scourge of the BSE-related border closure than has Saskatchewan. This BSE crisis has ended the steady businesslike growth of our cow herd in this province and for at least the time being, Mr. Speaker, killed any development of the feedlot industry in the province.

Mr. Speaker, we must expand our cattle-feeding industry in this province if we are likely to attract a well-funded, professionally operated, major packing plant or plants to this province, the kind that can survive the rigours of brutal competition that the packing industry experiences in normal times.

The cattle industry is not dead, Mr. Speaker, but it has suffered a serious blow and business will never be conducted again in that industry the way it was before May 20, 2003. Mr. Speaker, prior to the discovery of BSE in Canada, we were the largest exporter of beef cattle in the world, and as I have said before, most of those cattle originated from Alberta and Saskatchewan. In the last full year before the outbreak of BSE, our export market was worth \$4.1 billion, Mr. Speaker, and in the month leading up to the BSE crisis, we exported about \$23 million worth of cattle a month.

Prior to May 20, 2003, Mr. Speaker, about 80 per cent of our beef exports found their home in the United States. Mr. Speaker, since the closure of the border, it's clear that the solution to this problem for Canadian producers is the establishment of a packing industry in this province.

Mr. Speaker, the reasons that we can't seem to develop a packing industry in this province are the same reasons that we can't develop a hog industry, or an irrigation industry, or any other industry. This government doesn't have the fundamentals right and it doesn't look like, after 15 years or so of continual governance, that they're ever going to get them right.

Mr. Speaker, thousands of acres of cropland will lie idle this year. Thousands upon thousands of acres are either being rented for taxes this year, and more and more acres are being rented for no charge at all, with the owners covering the taxes out of their own pockets just so something other than weeds can be grown on their land.

Mr. Speaker, in my personal mail I receive what used to be called auction flyers, but what are now really auction books. These books are no longer full of farm sales of older people who have hung on to marginally viable farms maybe longer than they should have because they loved the life. Mr. Speaker, these auction books are now full of sales of large, modern farm equipment from moderate- to large-size farms on which the farm families have given up because they could no longer make a living or cope with the stress of juggling very large bills and having continually to go cap in hand to banks and suppliers to ask for more time to pay those bills.

Mr. Speaker, the real cost to our hard-working farm families is stress, stress, Mr. Speaker, that is now reflected in serious family problems for many of those families who choose to stay on the land and to continue to be productive, contributing members of society in this province.

Mr. Speaker, they feel abandoned. They feel abandoned by this government which has continually refused and delayed to fully

fund the CAIS program and other programs such as CFIP; this government that tore up signed contracts with them and the GRIP program some years ago; this government that has three years, or maybe is it four now, consecutively raised crop insurance premiums and at the same time in each instance reduced crop insurance coverage to those people.

They feel absolutely abandoned, Mr. Speaker. And that stress that I speak of shows up in the form of depression, anxiety, and nervous, disturbed children, marital breakups, and most sadly of all, Mr. Speaker, in suicides.

Many of us on this side of this Assembly have experienced that in our constituencies and our communities. And it's a time when we see this that we want to forget about the political issues that seem to have caused it. It's hard, as my colleague stated, to relate these suicides directly back to agriculture, but certainly the fingers all point in that direction.

Mr. Speaker, farming and ranching families are proud and independent people by their very nature. Mr. Speaker, they find it difficult to ask for help of any kind, but they find it especially difficult to ask for help for the personal problems caused by the stress that they experience in their day-to-day lives. But make no mistake, Mr. Speaker, farm stress is manifesting itself in rural Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, accordingly I second the motion.

**The Speaker:** — It now being . . . I'd just like the member to repeat. I was not able to hear. Did the member adjourn debate? No. Second the motion.

It now being the hour of 1 p.m., the debate is deemed adjourned. And the House will be adjourned as well till Monday, 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 13:00.]

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