



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

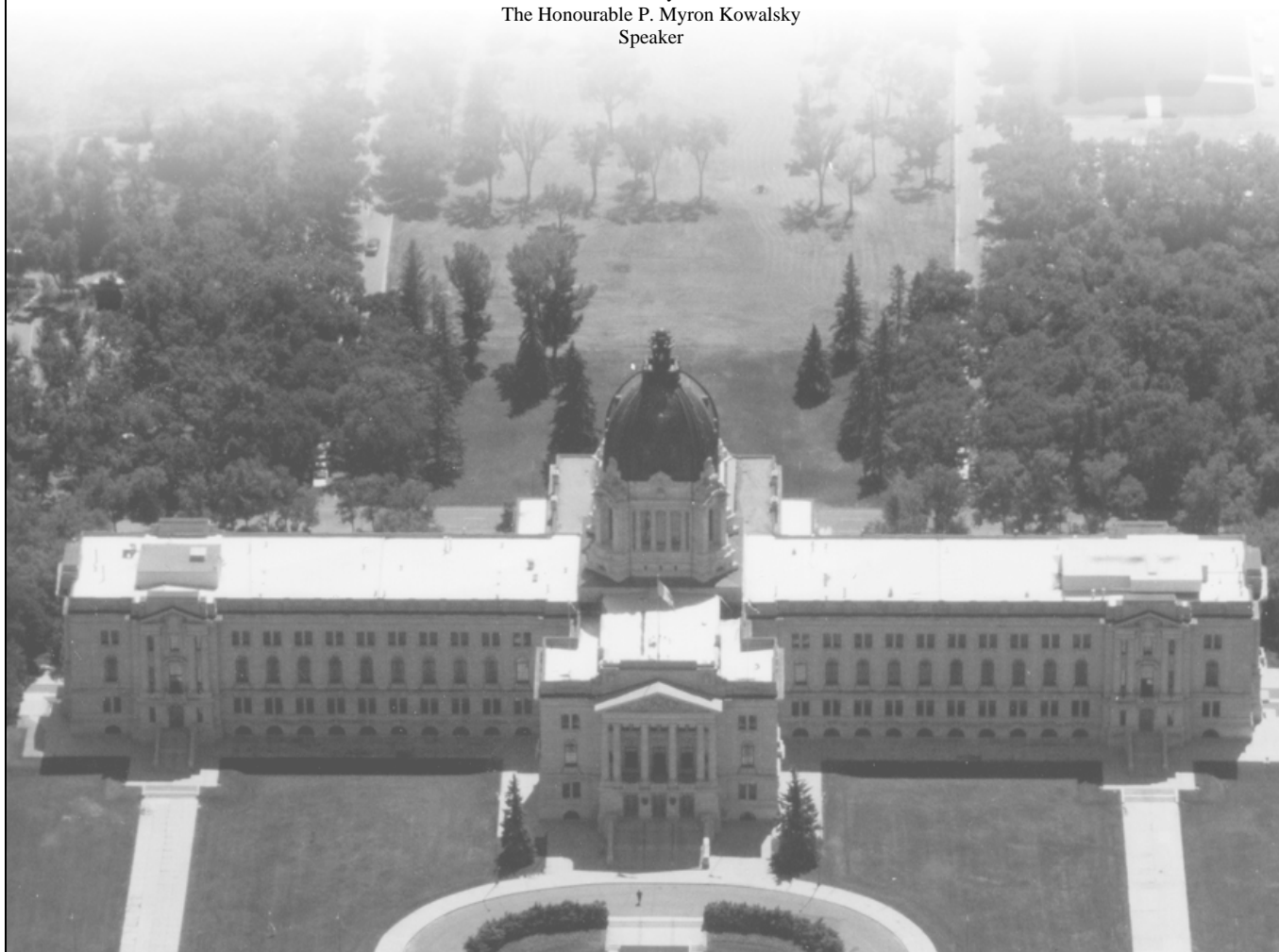
Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of

The Honourable P. Myron Kowalsky
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Addley, Hon. Graham	NDP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Atkinson, Hon. Pat	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Bakken Lackey, Brenda	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
Beatty, Hon. Joan	NDP	Cumberland
Belanger, Hon. Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
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Borgerson, Lon	NDP	Saskatchewan Rivers
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Calvert, Hon. Lorne	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
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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, Hon. Eldon	NDP	Prince Albert Northcote
McCall, Warren	NDP	Regina Elphinstone-Centre
McMorris, Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
Merriman, Ted	SP	Saskatoon Northwest
Morgan, Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
Morin, Sandra	NDP	Regina Walsh Acres
Nilson, Hon. John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
Prebble, Hon. Peter	NDP	Saskatoon Greystone
Quennell, Hon. Frank	NDP	Saskatoon Meewasin
Serby, Hon. Clay	NDP	Yorkton
Sonntag, Hon. Maynard	NDP	Meadow Lake
Stewart, Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Taylor, Hon. Len	NDP	The Battlefords
Thomson, Hon. Andrew	NDP	Regina South
Toth, Don	SP	Moosomin
Trew, Kim	NDP	Regina Coronation Park
Van Mulligen, Hon. Harry	NDP	Regina Douglas Park
Wakefield, Milton	SP	Lloydminster
Wall, Brad	SP	Swift Current
Wartman, Hon. Mark	NDP	Regina Qu'Appelle Valley
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Highway 321 is a short section of road that runs from the Alberta border into the community of Liebenthal on the west side of the province, and it's in need of repair. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take immediate action and make necessary repairs to the Highway 321 in order to address safety and economic concerns.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, these three pages of petitions are signed by individuals from the communities of Burstall, Saskatoon, Fox Valley, Richmond; Medicine Hat, Alberta; and several other communities in the immediate vicinity. I so present.

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

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased today to rise on behalf of people who are concerned about Highway No. 310. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause this government to repair Highway No. 310 in order to address safety concerns and to facilitate economic growth and tourism in Foam Lake, Fishing Lake, Kuroki, and surrounding areas.

The people who have signed this petition are from Yorkton, Wynyard, Jansen, and Foam Lake. I so present.

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

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition with citizens concerned with safety of Highway No. 5. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to upgrade and widen Highway No. 5 from Humboldt to Saskatoon.

And the signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from Humboldt and Lake Lenore. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Arm

River-Watrous.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here dealing with the oil revenues:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to ensure that a portion of the provincial windfall of oil revenue be used to reduce the provincial gas tax.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by citizens from Davidson and Kenaston. I so present.

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

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present another petition from citizens opposed to possible reduction of health care services in the town of Biggar and district. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Biggar Hospital, long-term care home, and ambulance services maintain at the very least their current level of services.

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

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and pursuant to rule 14(7) are hereby read and received as addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 4, 5, 7, and 8.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 10 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Agriculture: has the Department of Agriculture requested an extension of the deadline for the own use import program with the federal Pest Management Regulatory Agency?

I so present.

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

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice I shall on day no. 10 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Highways and Transportation: for the fiscal year 2000-2001, how much did the government spend on Highway No. 1 from the Manitoba border to

Alberta border on construction and maintenance?

And I have also similar questions right up to the present.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 10 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Highways and Transportation: how many kilometres of road were paved and/or reconstructed, and a breakdown for each, in the fiscal year 2002-2003?

And similar questions up to the present.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I would like to give notice that I shall on day no. 10 ask the government the following questions:

To the Minister of Immigration: for the fiscal year 1999-2000, what was the average processing time in days for each application category of the immigration program — skilled workers, business persons, farmers, and students — for a nominee from the point he or she applied to the program to the point he or she was considered nominated?

And similar questions up to the present.

And also, Mr. Speaker, I give notice I shall on day no. 10 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Highways and Transportation: how many projects, for what value and project location did the provincial government apply for under the Prairie Grain Roads Program in the fiscal year 2001 and 2002?

And similar questions to the present.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I give notice I shall on day no. 10 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Industry and Resources: what was the total revenue the Government of Saskatchewan received from tourism in 2000?

And also similar questions up to the present.

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

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 10 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for Sask Property Management: when was the final approval given for a new airport terminal in Regina? When was the tender posted? What is the expected completion date for the project?

Also, Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet, I have another question.

For the Minister Responsible for SPM: on what date was the last occupational health and safety inspection done on the government airport hangar and what were the findings of this inspection?

Also, Mr. Speaker, another question for the Minister Responsible for SPM [Saskatchewan Property Management]:

Are there currently occupational health and safety problems in the temporary trailers used at the government airport terminal? And if so, what are they and are corrective measures being taken?

Another question, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister for SPM:

On what date was the mould problem corrected in the government airport hangar? And was this problem corrected in the office space in the hangar as well?

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I've got numerous questions. I'll just read the first one. I give notice I shall on day no. 10 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Labour: how many airplane trips on government aircraft did the minister take during the period of April 4 to March 31?

And I have numerous questions, Mr. Speaker, that relate to trips on government aircraft by the ministers during two different time periods.

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

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 10 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for Information Services Corporation: when will the new web-based program for the personal property registry be completed and operational? Who is the software contractor? How much is the total cost of development and implementation?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 10 ask the government the following question:

To the Premier: what is the total budget for the Raise a Flag for Fairness advertising campaign on equalization, including print, radio, online, and television?

Also, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on day no. 10 I shall ask the government the following question:

To the Premier: when was the budget approved for Raise a Flag for Fairness advertising campaign?

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on day no. 10 I shall ask the government the following question:

To the Premier: from which department, Crown corporation, government agency, or other source is the funding for Raise a Flag for Fairness advertising campaign?

on equalization coming from?

Also, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on day no. 10 I will ask the government the following question:

To the Premier: what company or companies have been contracted to produce the advertising for Raise a Flag for Fairness advertising campaign on equalization?

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on day no. 10 I want to ask the government the following question:

To the Premier: how much is the contract or contracts for the Raise a Flag for Fairness advertising campaign on equalization worth?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the House 21 members of the grade 12 class from Riverview Collegiate in Moose Jaw. Now a couple of us on this side of the House attended Riverview. It was a great school then, and from all I hear, it's still a great school. These students are accompanied by their teacher, Delise Fathers, and a teaching intern, Katie Lowe.

So very pleased you could make it, especially with the highways today being a little on the icy and snow-packed side, and I look forward to meeting you at about 2:30. And I hope all members of the House will welcome these students from Riverview.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader, the member for The Battlefords.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to introduce to you and through you to all members of the legislature a visiting MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] from the province of British Columbia. Sitting in the west gallery, Mr. Speaker, is MLA Michael Sather, a British Columbia New Democratic Party MLA from Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows. Mr. Sather serves as the opposition critic for intergovernmental relations in the provincial legislature.

He is visiting Saskatchewan today on a day that's fit for skiing in any province whether it's British Columbia, Alberta, or Saskatchewan — it's fitting. He started his life and career in the province of Alberta but moved to British Columbia in 1974 where he pursued a career studying wildlife until 1984. He has attained a master's degree in psychology and has served as a mental health therapist for the Fraser Health Authority for three and a half years before he was elected to the British Columbia legislature.

Mr. Speaker, we are pleased to have Mr. Sather visiting with us

today. We wish him well throughout his time with us and encourage all members to welcome him here today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Bullying Awareness Week

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today marks the start of Bullying Awareness Week in Saskatchewan. Bullying and harassment are a growing problem for young people in our province. Whether the abuse is physical or emotional, bullying has a negative effect on young people. Twenty to 30 per cent of children report being subjected to bullying, and we know that the results of this abuse can lead to low self-esteem, depression, and even suicide.

[13:45]

In the community of Canora we know only too well the destructive impact that bullying can have on a family and a community. On December 6, 2004, Travis Sleeva, a 16-year-old from Canora, took his own life. For months Travis had suffered from harassment at both the school and community level. In his suicide letter he stated that he just could not take the fighting any more. According to Gary Sleeva, Travis's father, and I quote:

Travis's suicide was not the first link to bullying in this school. But with proper intervention and strong leadership, hopefully it'll be the last.

The Saskatchewan Party and I share the hope of Travis's parents that strong leadership and a partnership between students, parents, teachers, and our communities can reduce bullying in our schools and ensure that no other parent has to endure the pain and suffering that comes from having their child bullied. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

World Diabetes Day

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Each November, Diabetes Awareness Month — and today November 14, which is World Diabetes Day — serve as an opportunity to remind people of the seriousness of diabetes.

Mr. Speaker, diabetes, whether juvenile or type 2, is an epidemic. Almost 2 million Canadians and well over 50,000 people in Saskatchewan live with this incurable disease. One-third of those with diabetes are unaware that they even have the condition. And perhaps most alarming, the incidence of diabetes is four to six times higher among First Nations living on-reserve than among Canadians as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, those living with diabetes face a daily struggle with diet restrictions, and many need insulin injections to stay alive. It also means living with an increased risk of cardiovascular disease, kidney failure, nerve damage, amputation, and blindness.

Mr. Speaker, throughout Saskatchewan there are 19 branches of the Canadian Diabetes Association whose employees and volunteers are working diligently at the grassroots level to promote the health of people in Saskatchewan through diabetes research, education, service, and advocacy. I ask all members of the Assembly to join me in recognizing the volunteers and employees of the Canadian Diabetes Association here in the province for their valuable contributions to the health and well-being of the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. World Diabetes Day is celebrated each November 14, marking the birthday of Frederick Banting, the Canadian who discovered insulin in 1922 and was awarded the Nobel Prize.

Since that remarkable discovery, many other scientific leaps have taken place that make managing diabetes easier. The market will soon see sophisticated glucose monitoring systems that are designed to be worn like a wristwatch, pager, or hearing aid. Glucose sensors based on sound waves and infrared light technology virtually do away with the need for pricking the fingertip.

Insulin has been a godsend for many type 1 diabetics but the need for injections make it less welcome. Consequently researchers have been working on devising less invasive delivery methods. Just this September the first inhaled form of insulin, like an asthmatic puffer, was recommended by the US [United States] Food and Drug Administration. Another project still in the lab is an insulin pill, one that has just been endorsed for type 2 diabetics.

The most important aspect of medical advances in diabetes management is at the lead for better patient compliance and thereby better control of the disease. Basically the less pain and hassle involved, the better control diabetics have over their diabetes — and that is definitely something worth celebrating.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

SaskEnergy Share the Warmth Project in Moose Jaw

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, keeping our homes well sealed against the Saskatchewan cold is a challenge that each and every one of us faces. So with winter here it was a great deal of pleasure that I got to work alongside about 160 volunteers helping some low-income Moose Jaw residents get their homes ready for the cold weather. This was part of SaskEnergy's Share the Warmth energy efficiency

project, an initiative that coincided with our centennial and has the theme, 100 years, 100 homes.

Mr. Speaker, the Salvation Army selected 100 Moose Jaw homes for an energy upgrade and the volunteers went to work. Both the Minister of the Environment and I were privileged to work with representatives from a variety of organizations — the Salvation Army; SaskEnergy; the SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] architectural program students turned out in force, Mr. Speaker; the Moose Jaw Fire Department and the firefighters' union; the Office of Energy Conservation; and Moose Jaw Canadian Tire and many community volunteers to assist with the energy efficiency improvements to the homes.

Mr. Speaker, windows and doors were prepared for winter, working smoke detectors were installed, low-flow shower heads and faucets were installed, and also an Energy Star programmable thermostat was put into each home.

Mr. Speaker, this is one of those programs where everyone wins and I would like to thank all of the community organizations and volunteers from the fine city of Moose Jaw for making this possible. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

University of Saskatchewan Huskies Win Hardy Cup

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the last two years the sporting world has witnessed the end of a couple of long-running curses — the curse of the Bambino which haunted Boston Red Sox fans for 86 years before coming to an end last fall, and this year we witnessed the end of the 88-year championship drought for the Chicago White Sox, this year's major league champs.

But, Mr. Speaker, one streak continues after yesterday afternoon and that's the 46-year Saskatchewan Roughrider-NDP [New Democratic Party] curse. As most of Saskatchewan knows, our beloved Riders have never won the Grey Cup under an NDP administration. For the sake of Rider Priders across the province and across the country, the Saskatchewan Party, team green, asked the NDP to step aside from government, at least for the duration of the playoffs. They refused and now they will face the wrath of the Rider nation.

But, Mr. Speaker, there is one green team still left to cheer for in this province. They are the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] football Huskies. They are now Saskatchewan's team. This coming Saturday at Griffiths Stadium in potash corporation park, our Huskies face the Laval Rouge et Or in the Mitchell Bowl for the right to play in the Vanier Cup in Hamilton.

In true Saskatchewan fashion I am confident team green, the Huskies, will defeat the reds, in this case, the Rouge et Or. I encourage everyone to make plans to attend the game at 1 p.m. this Saturday in Saskatoon. Congratulations to the Huskies players, coaching staff, and fans, and best of luck this weekend.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Addley: — Well, Mr. Speaker, while it may be true that there is no joy in Riderville today, the Roughriders' unfortunate season-ending loss to the Alouettes in Montreal yesterday definitely does not mean that the football season is over here in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Addley: — Far from it, Mr. Speaker, because on Saturday, the University of Saskatchewan Huskies defeated the Alberta Golden Bears 30-17 to win the Hardy Cup, symbol of university football supremacy in Canada west.

Mr. Speaker, Saturday's win extends the Huskies' season record to 10 wins and no losses and means that the U of S green team advances to the national semi-final.

Mr. Speaker, the Huskies had a total offence of over 600 yards. And while the win was obviously an overall team effort, I think running back David Stevens deserves special mention for his very impressive contribution of almost 200 yards, including two touchdowns.

As a personal note, Ryan Barnstable is interning as a student teacher with my spouse, Karen, and the proud Lord Asquith grade 4 class.

Mr. Speaker, this is the second year in a row that the Huskies have won the Hardy Cup and the second year in a row that they'll face the Laval Rouge et Or.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the Assembly to join me in congratulating all of the players and coaches of the Huskies for Saturday's win, and of course wishing them all the best in next weekend's game against Laval. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Music Therapy Program in Wynyard Area

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise in the House today to talk about a new community program up and running in Wynyard. Laureen Magnusson of Wynyard has begun a very successful music therapy program through the community access — respite, rehab, education service, better known as CARRES [community access — respite, rehabilitation, education services]. Musical therapy is a skilful use of music as a therapeutic tool to improve mental, physical, and emotional health. The non-verbal creative and affective nature of music helps for contact, self-expression, communication, and personal growth.

This therapy is not restricted to the patients presently in the CARRES program. In order to expand the music therapy to many other community groups, a workshop was held last month to introduce this new therapy to health care volunteers, teachers, and activity directors, church groups, youth, parents, caregivers

at home or in a helping agency.

Magnusson loves sharing music so much with the CARRES program that she decided to cover a larger area with music. She has decided that she will also share her love of music with the folks at the Mallard Industries of Wadena. Along with other Wynyard community leaders, Laureen is giving a gift of music as a way of meeting the needs of people who need a helping hand.

I would like all members to join me in congratulating Ms. Magnusson and all the good folks at CARRES for going forward with this new musical program. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

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

Federal-Provincial Energy Accord Negotiations

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well we've already established, Mr. Speaker, that the Premier is hopping mad about the fact that the federal Liberal government is not going to give Saskatchewan the energy accord that it deserves. And to demonstrate how angry he is, Mr. Speaker, he's confirmed this morning at an announcement that part of the Premier's plan, part of the NDP government's plan to really ramp things up, to really make a much stronger case for Saskatchewan on behalf of a better energy accord, part of his strategy will be to start a website.

They're going to launch a website, Mr. Speaker, and also window stickers. People can go to the website and print out window stickers and put those stickers in their living room windows, I guess, across the province. And so therefore the federal Finance minister and the Prime Minister will come to their senses.

Mr. Speaker, that's the plan. That's it. The question to the Premier is this: is that, is that what he has to offer the people of the province in order that our province should get a better equalization deal from Ottawa?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, the intention of what we announced this morning, what we began on the weekend, is to engage the people of Saskatchewan, to engage the people of Saskatchewan in this discussion, both through information and through opportunity to voice their opinion directly to the federal government.

The website announced this morning in combination with other media efforts, in combination with activity that will follow, Mr. Speaker, gives that opportunity to the people of Saskatchewan. The Leader of the Opposition may want to make light of the power of the people of Saskatchewan when engaged. We do not. We know that the voice that will be heard loud and clear

from this province will be the voice of this province's population — its people.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, we're not making light of the power of Saskatchewan people. We are making light though of what is a pathetic and weak plan to make Saskatchewan's case to Ottawa. That's what it is.

The Premier of all people should know, Mr. Speaker, that preaching to the choir doesn't save a lot of souls, especially, Mr. Speaker, if you are spending the choir's money to do it — some \$300,000 for ads and the website. But is this the sum and total of the Premier's plan, a website and window stickers that you can download and put up in your house, Mr. Speaker? Is that the sum and total of the Premier's plan?

I can't believe the federal government haven't rushed to announce a deal even this day after such an announcement from the government.

Mr. Speaker, the question to the Premier is this: what premiers of this country has he contacted? What provincial capitals has he contacted to get their support, and has he yet now talked to the Prime Minister? This is a week old. Has he talked to the Prime Minister of the country and what premiers has he talked to, to build support for Saskatchewan's case?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the last time I checked, the premiers of Canada do not make this decision. It is made by the national government, its Prime Minister, and its ministry of Finance.

Now the Leader of the Opposition may be confused about how equalization works in this country, but the fact of the matter is, this is a federal project, Mr. Speaker. We are negotiating. We are debating the national Government of Canada and not other premiers or other provinces, Mr. Speaker.

And I tell you this, Mr. Speaker. The Prime Minister of Canada, the Minister of Finance, the Department of Finance in Ottawa, and the federal Liberal government will listen to one thing, and they will listen to the people of Saskatchewan. We are engaging the people in this campaign. And I'm sorry to hear the Leader of the Opposition sounding like he's not with the people of Saskatchewan. I wish he'd get back on the train and help us instead of hindering.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I can't believe what I'm hearing from this Premier.

Every other premier in the . . . every member of the council of the federation is a potential ally. Or, Mr. Speaker, they are a potential detriment to our getting our case if we don't get them inside. Wouldn't you build that kind of support? Don't the premiers of the province have as much influence as the Premier's window sticker campaign that he launched this morning?

And more to the point, if it rests on the desk of the Prime Minister, I'd like to know from this Premier, when has he talked to the Prime Minister? This announcement was made last Monday. He said that's when he found out about the fact the feds were not going to come through. Has he talked to the Prime Minister of Canada, or is he too busy launching websites and designing window stickers?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:00]

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, we are going to persist as a people and a province in building a fair Saskatchewan energy accord for this province and its future, Mr. Speaker. When you have a circumstance in a nation where some regions and some provinces have achieved energy accords and their people are benefiting from it, that is only right and fair that it should be extended to all Canadians. It should be extended to the people of Saskatchewan. That's the case we're making. And it will be made loud and clear by the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, in many venues, in many venues beginning now with the website, raise the flag — www.raiseaflag.ca. I invite the people of Saskatchewan to access to learn and to express their opinion directly to the national government.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Agroforestry Development

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, is it any wonder that this Premier has failed to get a better equalization deal for the province of Saskatchewan? As we have learned over the weekend, it's been confirmed in the media and by the federal Finance Minister, Ralph Goodale, that they blew the opportunity to get a 2 to \$3 billion agroforestry agreement and arrangement from the federal government. That's what was confirmed on the weekend.

Well the minister of SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company] chirped from his seat and he says that it's not true. Maybe he wants to advise the Premier with respect to the answer to this question. According to the federal Finance Minister, Ralph Goodale, the Premier and his NDP government turned its back on a multi-billion dollar project in 2002 for agroforestry and an agroforestry centre of excellence at the University of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, the question to the Premier is very, very direct: why in the world did he blow a multi-billion dollar agroforestry deal with the federal government in 2002?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to inform the House and inform the Leader of the Opposition there has never been an offer made by the federal government to this province or any other province, Mr. Speaker, to establish such a centre as the member just referred to.

And if there was, Mr. Speaker, you can rest assured, Mr. Speaker, that that opportunity would be aggressively pursued with the federal government because — to set the record straight, Mr. Speaker — this government, through the forestry centre in Prince Albert, has been aggressively pursuing with the federal government the concept of agroforestry. There has never been funds made available, Mr. Speaker, for the agroforestry project as the member refers to. If Mr. Goodale who is the federal Minister of Finance, Mr. Speaker, has funds available for agroforestry, we will be there like that, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well here's what the Minister of Finance, here's what Mr. Goodale has to say with respect to the minister's response:

"We wanted to focus on cost of research and development," [This is a quote, Mr. Speaker.] Goodale said, adding that the province's focus was more on "building a building" and whether it should be "a lab or an office building."

And then he goes on to say:

"The location of the building seemed to be more important (to the NDP government) than the content of the building and what it did."

Mr. Speaker, the question to the Premier is this: is this true? Has he yet again let down the people of the province with respect to the relations of Regina and the Government of Canada in Ottawa?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that whether on the question of equalization or agroforestry, if the people of Saskatchewan are let down by our national government, what side is it that our opposition takes? Invariably, Mr. Speaker, they take the side of Ottawa against the people of our province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that under the leadership of the Saskatchewan forestry centre, we have, as

the opposition was advised by the Minister of the Environment in June, Mr. Speaker, ceded about 1,000 acres to agroforestry. We will continue to promote that, Mr. Speaker, but we have never had approval at the federal level for funds to support agroforestry. And when we do, Mr. Speaker — the Premier wrote the federal government in 2002 offering Saskatchewan to take the lead in this — and when the money is there from the federal government, we'll be there like that, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding those very snappy answers, Mr. Speaker, let me just say that the minister was wondering, well whose side would we take. When it comes down to believing the federal Finance minister or the minister responsible for SPUDCO, we're probably going to side with the federal Finance minister, Mr. Speaker.

My question to the Premier is this: when he was responsible for this file, the minister responsible for SPUDCO, when he was responsible for this file, did he come to the cabinet and indicate there was an opportunity for a multi-billion-dollar agroforestry deal? Did he come and brief the cabinet on that? And well, Mr. Speaker, maybe he did, and you just didn't believe him. I'm not sure. That could have been it.

The question to the Premier is this: why has he let people, the people of the province down with respect to this opportunity in agroforestry? Will he explain that? And why in the world then should they trust him on the equalization file, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to inform the Leader of the Opposition and this House that the Canadian Forestry Service has never been able to gain federal Treasury Board approval for an agroforestry program, Mr. Speaker. We have offered, Mr. Speaker, to take the lead in agroforestry on behalf of Canada. That offer still stands, Mr. Speaker. And when the federal government wishes to step up to the plate and actually come up with funds and not just words in support of agroforestry, we will be there, Mr. Speaker, because we have been there.

We have been there through the forestry centre, Mr. Speaker, putting hundreds of acres into agroforestry. And I want to advise the opposition, Mr. Speaker, that over half of the wood used in the oriented strand board plant at Meadow Lake, Mr. Speaker, comes from agroforestry in Saskatchewan, Alberta, lead by this government. And we'll continue to lead that kind of development, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Wait Time for Surgery

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Health. According to the Saskatchewan Surgical Care Network website, urgent cases — that are cases that have been rated as urgent — have an approximate wait time of three to six weeks. The average wait time for orthopedic surgeries is listed on the website as about seven and a half weeks, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister tell me today whether those estimates on his Surgical Care Network website are accurate?

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan, we are getting better and better information about how the surgical cases are being handled in this province. And what we have is a surgical registry which the managers use and the doctors and the GPs [general practitioner] and others who have access to that to make, to do their planning.

What we also have is the website that the member opposite has referred to which looks, retrospectively, looks at information that's provided over what's happened over the last year. And information is put up there as quickly as possible, but it's retrospective information. The information that is there reflects what has happened over the last year and, Mr. Speaker, that information is as accurate as we can prepare it.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So the minister has said over the last year, the time frames of three to six weeks, or seven and a half weeks for orthopaedic surgery are accurate.

So then could he explain to me the case of Jean Reynolds of Foam Lake? Her daughters and her husband are here in the gallery today. Jean is 73 years old. She can't be here today because of excruciating pain. She's left at home at Foam Lake.

Jean needs a hip replacement. On September 19 her case was graded as urgent. According to the website, that means that should be done within three to six weeks. Jean Reynolds was told by the surgeon or the Surgical Care Network she could be waiting up to six months for this surgery, Mr. Speaker. As of today no date for that surgery has been set. She was diagnosed and designated as urgent two months ago. How could this happen under his watch?

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, as I indicated before, the surgeons and the general practitioners who have access to the surgical registry look and see the information that's available. They work together with the senior administration in the health regions to make sure that people get access to surgery as quickly as possible. If there are questions or concerns Saskatchewan residents now have the opportunity to talk with their surgeon. But they also have the ability to contact people at the surgical registry for information or work together with the

quality assurance people who are in each health region.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate when the members opposite provide questions like this around particular individuals because they are of a concern. And I would be happy to look at this information should the member opposite provide it to me at this point.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many times we've stood in the House and we've heard this minister talk about the challenges he has. Well let me tell you about some of the challenges the people of Saskatchewan have. Like Jean Reynolds, who's had her pain medication tripled since August — that's a challenge the people of Saskatchewan are facing, Mr. Speaker. What type of quality of life does that give Mrs. Reynolds?

This is what her daughters have had to say when they wrote a letter regarding the case:

Mom is the human face behind the headlines about government bragging about how they've reduced hospital wait times. In her time of greatest need, her home province is letting her down big time.

Mr. Speaker, the Reynolds family have been in that Foam Lake area for over 100 years contributing to that community as well as the betterment of this province. In the time of need, she's having to wait six months or longer for hip surgery.

My question to the minister is, is this case an anomaly, or is the minister and the Surgical Care Network misleading the people of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, people who work within the health care system — whether it's the surgeons, the general practitioners, the nurses, the other people who are involved there — are all concerned about providing care for individuals. And I think that it's very important that patients know that they can work with their doctors and with the staff within the system and that they also now have some other mechanisms to get information about how the surgical wait-lists operate.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes patients are not able to get all of the information to their doctor as quickly as possible. I encourage people to do that. I also know that situations change and that there's an ongoing monitoring of what happens. Mr. Speaker, I encourage the member to make sure that that kind of information is brought forward so that this individual matter can be resolved.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Indian

Head-Milestone.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The treatment of the Reynolds family in this case is absolutely unacceptable — a family that has contributed so much to the area around Foam Lake as well as this province.

The family has called the quality care coordinator. And what the family describes after that conversation . . . that conversation as being futile. No one seems to be able to move ahead the date of surgery. The family has made repeated calls to the surgeon's office, and again and again they're told six months or longer for the surgery.

Mr. Speaker, the family has followed the protocol that the minister just has outlined. Whether it's the quality care coordinator or whoever else in the system, they followed that procedure. But nothing has been done. It has not been moved ahead at all. It seems only when families come public — which is not an easy thing to do, Mr. Speaker — it's only when families come public and come in front of this Assembly and tell their story, do they get any results, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, can that family expect some timely results from your government?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, one of the things that we have done when we've designed our system around dealing with the surgical wait-lists is to make sure that we include the professional advice from the orthopedic surgeons and from the family physicians and others who are involved in the system. And, Mr. Speaker, it's very important that we rely on that kind of professional advice to make sure people get into the appropriate procedures that are needed.

Mr. Speaker, this particular case is one that needs to be raised with the professionals involved, the doctors. And, Mr. Speaker, I will look at the circumstances surrounding this particular case, But, Mr. Speaker, we do have some very clear procedures to follow, and we encourage people to do that.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:15]

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

New Facility at Regina Airport

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, once again we have an NDP minister not telling the truth. Last Thursday we questioned, we questioned . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I would just ask the member to measure his words and not to get personal in any remarks. The member for Wood River.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Speaker, last Thursday we

questioned the minister responsible for NDP airports about the government's new, million-dollar airport for NDP cabinet ministers. The minister tried to blame the Saskatchewan Party for this decision. In fact she said we were party to this decision.

Mr. Speaker, that is incorrect. The decision to build a new, million-dollar airport for NDP cabinet ministers was a decision made by that minister and that cabinet. Mr. Speaker, if the NDP want to build themselves a million-dollar airport, that's their decision, but don't blame it on somebody else. Mr. Speaker, why did the minister say the Saskatchewan Party was involved in this decision when that clearly was not the case?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, just to point out to the member opposite, it's not an airport we're building. It's a terminal building. It is offices for staff. It is also a waiting area for people using that terminal.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Saskatchewan has a responsibility to its employees, the same as any other employer across the province of Saskatchewan, to provide accommodation that is good working conditions that meet occupational health and safety.

Mr. Speaker, I never once said that the members made the decision on the new building. What I said was, the members opposite through their representation on the Board of Internal Economy have input into who can fly, who can't fly, and what our expenses are used for.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Huyghebaert: — I look forward to the minister briefing me about airports, Mr. Speaker. But here's something else. Here's something else that was not correct. She said they have to build a new airport because the old one has mould. But in the September 7 *Leader-Post* a spokesman for SPM said the mould problems had been fixed. So here we go again, Mr. Speaker; the NDP is caught building themselves a million-dollar facility at the airport, and they try and blame it on mould.

Mr. Speaker, the only mould we need to get rid of is that mouldy, old NDP government. Mr. Speaker, why is the NDP blaming their new million-dollar airport on mould when their own officials say the mould problem has been fixed?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Property Management.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, the terminal building at the Regina airport was built in 1920. Now the member opposite is pretending like he's never been in the facility; he's never seen it. And maybe he's accurate; maybe he never has. But, Mr. Speaker, it is a hip-roof building. The offices are along the angle at the side. It is an old facility. There has been problems

with mould. There's also problems with water in that area.

Mr. Speaker, the staff have been working out of portable trailers, and that's inappropriate, Mr. Speaker. So the decision was made, when the money was available in SPM's budget we would proceed with this project, and that's what we've done, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, this NDP government has a culture of entitlement, but also, also, Mr. Speaker, we're finding out they have a culture of mendaciousness. The member from P.A. [Prince Albert] for an example, talked about SPUDCO. He didn't tell the correctness to the public of Saskatchewan for how many years, and he had to apologize to the people of Saskatchewan and to this legislature for not being forthright.

The Premier in the last election, it was the same thing. He talked about not raising taxes. He said he'd cut taxes. And did he? So I'm not too sure what you can call that, Mr. Speaker, other than limited information estimation, I suppose. But he said that they'd cut property taxes, and they actually did nothing.

So there is a problem with not telling the correctness about SPUDCO, not telling the correctness about taxes, and now we can't . . . we find out they can't even be upfront and forthright on mould. Mr. Speaker, why does this NDP government have such a culture of mendaciousness?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, throughout estimates, throughout question period over the past number of years, the member has stood on his feet, and other members have asked questions about air services and a terminal here in Regina. They have complained about the building. They have complained about the service. They have complained about the cost. And, Mr. Speaker, if it is so abrasive to those members over there — they dislike the service — my only question is: why do they use it so often then?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order please.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 7 — The Farm Financial Stability Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2)

The Speaker: — The House will come to order. The Chair recognizes the Minister of Agriculture and Food.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker,

I move that Bill No. 7, The Farm Financial Stability Amendment Act, 2005 be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Agriculture and Food that Bill No. 7, The Farm Financial Stability Amendment Act, 2005 (No. 2) be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a second time? The Chair recognizes the minister.

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

Bill No. 8 — The Western Development Museum Amendment Act, 2005

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Culture, Youth, and Recreation.

Hon. Ms. Beatty: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 8, The Western Development Museum Amendment Act, 2005 be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — I would ask all members to come to order so that we can proceed with the business of House.

It has been moved by the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation that Bill No. 8, The Western Development Museum Amendment Act, 2005 be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a second time? The Chair recognizes the minister.

Hon. Ms. Beatty: — Next sitting of the House.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 9 — The University of Regina Amendment Act, 2005

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

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 9, The University of Regina Amendment Act, 2005 be now introduced and read for the first time.

The Speaker: — Order please, members. Order. Order. Would the members who insist on carrying on a dialogue perhaps do it on that . . . behind the bar somewhere or someplace else so we can conduct the business of the House. Please members. Please.

It has been moved by the Minister of Learning that Bill No. 9, The University of Regina Amendment Act, 2005 be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a second time? The Chair recognizes the minister.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Next sitting, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 10 — The University of Saskatchewan Amendment Act, 2005

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

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 10, The University of Saskatchewan Amendment Act, 2005 be now introduced and read for the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Learning that Bill No. 10, The University of Saskatchewan Amendment Act, 2005 be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

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

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Next sitting, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Introduction of Page

The Speaker: — Members of the Assembly, I wish to inform the Assembly that Brock Egeto will be returning for the Page at the fall session, and Brock is here today. Welcome, Brock.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

The Speaker: — At this time I wish to table the audited

financial statements for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005 for the New Democratic caucus and the Saskatchewan Party caucus; and also at this time I wish to table the members' accountability and disclosure statements for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Ms. Junor, seconded by Mr. Harper, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Mr. Wall.]

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Greystone, the Minister of Corrections and Public Safety.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — I'm very pleased to enter into what is a historic Throne Speech debate, Mr. Speaker. But just before I do, I would like to express my gratitude to the constituents of Saskatoon Greystone who have re-elected me to this legislature on four occasions. And I'm very honoured to serve them, Mr. Speaker, and honoured to sit in this Assembly on their behalf.

And I also, Mr. Speaker, want to express appreciation to my family who have supported me throughout my years in politics. To my mother, Trudy, who has been a constant supporter throughout my years in political life, I want to express my deep appreciation. And to my wife, Louise, and my sons, Mark and James and Michael, and my stepdaughter, Monté, I want to express my gratitude for the very strong support that they have given me, Mr. Speaker. Without the support of family, it's impossible to do this work effectively. So I am very grateful for their support.

I said, Mr. Speaker, that this is a historic Throne Speech debate. And I say that because this is the first Throne Speech in our second century as a province, Mr. Speaker. And it's a Throne Speech that will help set direction for the next 20 years — at least — ahead, Mr. Speaker. And I'm very excited about many of the announcements that are contained in the Throne Speech.

We've had a wonderful centennial year in this province, Mr. Speaker. We've had more than 3,800 local celebrations around the province. And I think that people have really expressed their love for this province, their love for this land, their respect for this land, their enthusiasm for the diversity of our people, Mr. Speaker, who come from every walk of life and every part of the globe, as well as our First Nations and Métis people. So we are a rich diversity of people, Mr. Speaker — in fact the only province in Canada where the majority of the population is neither of English or French origin.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have celebrated our innovations in this province, our social contribution to Canada, whether it be the

first minimum wage in Canada, the first 40-hour week in Canada, the first universal medicare program in Canada, and many, many other social firsts, Mr. Speaker. And we've celebrated our contribution to the scientific community in this province of which we can be very proud. And of course one of our latest and most important contributions is having the first synchrotron in the country, Mr. Speaker, and I'll have more to say about that later.

[14:30]

Mr. Speaker, we've celebrated our artists. We've celebrated the contribution of our volunteers in Saskatchewan. And I and many other members of this Assembly have had the privilege of awarding Centennial Medals to outstanding volunteers in our own constituencies and in many, many sectors of our province, Mr. Speaker.

But in addition to our centennial celebrations, this year our government has also been pursuing a very ambitious set of new public policies, Mr. Speaker, and I want to reflect on those for a moment. And in many ways, Mr. Speaker, these can be summed up with a single reference in the Throne Speech which is that this is a have province with heart, Mr. Speaker — a have province with heart.

And, Mr. Speaker, I say that because first of all Saskatchewan, starting in 2004, became one of three have provinces in Canada. And I know that people across this province are very proud of that status, Mr. Speaker. But we are also proud of the social legacy that allows us to claim that we are a have province with heart.

But I want to talk about the economic prosperity for a moment, Mr. Speaker, because if you look at the amendment that the members opposite have put forward, the claim is being made that we are not growing economically. In fact that's what the amendment says, Mr. Speaker. And yet, Mr. Speaker, members opposite ignore the fact that from the spring of 2004 to September 2005 we had 17 consecutive months of job increases, Mr. Speaker, in the province of Saskatchewan. In fact, Mr. Speaker, this summer we set a record high in terms of the number of people working in the province of Saskatchewan. And that's something, Mr. Speaker, that we can be very proud of.

Mr. Speaker, we also saw the highest per capita increase in income in Saskatchewan anywhere in Canada. And members opposite of course ignore this fact as well. But the reality is, and Statistics Canada bears this out again and again, that Saskatchewan leads the way in Canada — not just in terms of GDP growth, gross domestic product growth, but also in terms of improvement in per capita income for residents of our province, Mr. Speaker. We have been able to, Mr. Speaker, stimulate the small-business community in its growth through reducing small-business tax down from 8 per cent a few years ago down to 5 per cent now, Mr. Speaker — another measure that I'm proud of.

In my home city of Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker, the economy is booming and there is growth in all sectors of the Saskatoon economy.

So the claim, Mr. Speaker, that's being made by members opposite in their amendment, that somehow the economy is stagnating, couldn't be further from the truth, Mr. Speaker. And members opposite know it, Mr. Speaker. And they should come clean, Mr. Speaker, about the fact that they're not giving the people of Saskatchewan accurate information about the state of our economy in this province, Mr. Speaker.

And this kind of prosperity that I'm referring to now hasn't been seen, Mr. Speaker, for at least 22 or 23 years. The last time we saw this kind of economic growth in Saskatchewan was during the Allan Blakeney era, Mr. Speaker, when an NDP government again, Mr. Speaker, was in office. And, Mr. Speaker, after Allan Blakeney was defeated in 1982, Mr. Speaker, we watched the economy steadily go down through nine years of Progressive Conservative government led by Grant Devine, Mr. Speaker. And it's now taken 14 years of hard work to rebuild this economy, Mr. Speaker. But it's being done, Mr. Speaker, and those of us on this side of the House are proud of that accomplishment, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I said that this is a have province with a heart, which is the way our government has described our initiatives over the last few years and into the future, Mr. Speaker. And I think that one of the things that Saskatchewan people are proud about is that they value strong social programs and they value the improvement in these social programs that we have delivered in the last year.

And one of the things that I'm very pleased about, Mr. Speaker, is that in this past year we've provided help to our university students. And many of those students are in my constituency, Mr. Speaker. We froze tuition rates, Mr. Speaker, at the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina, and that was a measure that was appreciated by my constituents, Mr. Speaker.

We are accelerating the expansion of all of our daycare spaces in the province of Saskatchewan and that's something else that my constituents appreciate, Mr. Speaker.

One of the very important measures that we took in the last few months was that we provided assistance to approximately 10,000 families — families on social assistance; low-income, working families — in terms of a housing supplement, Mr. Speaker, which was worth up to \$131 a month depending on family size. And this has improved the living circumstances of many families in my constituency and right across the province, Mr. Speaker — up to an extra \$131 a month for a family through the housing supplement.

And for families, Mr. Speaker, who are renting and have a member of the family with a disability, up to another \$151 a month.

Mr. Speaker, we increased the minimum wage. That's another measure that I'm very proud of. And we have now increased it to just over \$7 an hour, \$7.05 an hour, Mr. Speaker, consistently higher than the minimum wage in neighbouring Alberta where the Conservative Party is the government, Mr. Speaker. Once again here in Saskatchewan we're demonstrating that we're not prepared to see people work, Mr. Speaker, without a wage that is adequate for sustaining their livelihood.

And I'm proud of that, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there is much that needs to be done in terms of building on this economic and social legacy that I've talked about now, and that's what this Throne Speech speaks to. Building a province with a heart, that's a have province with a heart, will be a centrepiece of our planning in the first years of this new century. And the other centrepiece, Mr. Speaker, will be building an economy that is a green economy, Mr. Speaker. Those are going to be the two highest priorities of our government as laid out in this Throne Speech.

And I want to touch on some of the key areas of economic and social development that will be pursued. And I want to touch on several areas here, Mr. Speaker, starting with our plans for the manufacturing sector and the research and development sector, Mr. Speaker, which are both very important to residents of my constituency.

Let me say first, Mr. Speaker, that one of the things I'm very pleased to see is the commitment that we've made in the Throne Speech around continuing to strengthen our manufacturing sector. Last year Saskatchewan manufacturing shipments grew by twice the national average. And over the next decade it is your government's plan to double manufacturing exports from our province, Mr. Speaker.

And we've seen the manufacturing sector now grow to some 7 per cent of the economy, and it's a much bigger percentage than that in the city of Saskatoon. And I'm very pleased to see this kind of growth in this very important sector.

Also a priority for us, Mr. Speaker, is our innovation agenda and research and development, and what has been accomplished by this government in terms of working with the city of Saskatoon and the federal government to bring the synchrotron to our city and, Mr. Speaker, what has been accomplished in terms of growing the research park at the University of Saskatchewan at Innovation Place with the hundreds of new jobs that have emerged from that over the last decade, Mr. Speaker, and many, many new products, many, many new spinoff industries. Those jobs have been key to people in my constituency, Mr. Speaker. And it's this innovation agenda and the use of our research parks in terms of growing the economy that's going to be an important part of our economic development strategy in the second century of this province, Mr. Speaker. And I'm pleased that our government is prioritizing that.

And, Mr. Speaker, another key element of our economic development strategy will be strengthening our transportation sector, which is key to all other elements of our economy. And I'm pleased to see a commitment in this Throne Speech that the highway from Saskatoon to Prince Albert will be twinned. And I'm particularly pleased to see a commitment in this Throne Speech that there will be a major investment in road development in northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, which will integrate northern people into our economy more fully and ensure that they have full access to services in the North, Mr. Speaker. So that's a very important commitment.

And, Mr. Speaker, one of the commitments that I am the most pleased about is the promise in the Throne Speech that we will

move towards green, renewable energy in the province of Saskatchewan. The Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, talks about one-third of all our energy needs being met through safe, renewable energy sources within 20 years, Mr. Speaker. And what that means, Mr. Speaker, is a much bigger role for wind power and solar energy development and geothermal energy and hydrogen, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, those are going to be key parts of the foundation of Saskatchewan's economy in the future, is small-scale green renewables, Mr. Speaker. And I'm very, very pleased to see the Throne Speech address this, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, this builds on our record that has been established since our Premier took over his position in the year 2001, Mr. Speaker, that we have since that time established enough wind power in this province that by Christmas, Mr. Speaker, we'll be able to provide enough wind power for more than 70,000 homes in the province of Saskatchewan. And we're just getting started, Mr. Speaker. We're just getting started.

I am pleased to see a commitment in this Throne Speech in terms of economic development, a commitment that Saskatchewan will be the leader in energy conservation in all of Canada within 20 years, Mr. Speaker. And I am very pleased to see that promise being made, because energy conservation, in terms of all the investments that might be made in energy, energy conservation is the best way of creating employment in this province. And it's the best way of creating energy in this province, Mr. Speaker, because for every million dollars invested, you can save, Mr. Speaker, more units of energy through a conservation program than you can through any source of energy supply, Mr. Speaker. So this just makes good economic sense and I'm pleased to see it being prioritized in the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker.

One of the things, Mr. Speaker, that I'm also pleased about in terms of our economic development strategy is the emphasis that our government is giving towards establishing a new energy accord with Ottawa. And one of the things that I want to see come out of that energy accord, Mr. Speaker, is that some of those funds be set aside to help develop a renewable energy economy, Mr. Speaker. And that should be one of the priorities in terms of how monies from a new energy accord are utilized.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also pleased to see an emphasis on ecotourism in this Throne Speech, and excited, Mr. Speaker, by the commitment in the Throne Speech that through a consultative process with northerners, the Churchill River will be recognized as one of our natural historic legacies, Mr. Speaker.

The Churchill needs special protection, Mr. Speaker. The process for establishing that protection needs to be a partnership between the people of the North and the Government of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And we are embarking on that journey, Mr. Speaker, and I'm very excited about it, because I think it holds significant potential both for the development of the North and the protection of a historic legacy, Mr. Speaker.

So when we talk about a green economy, those are some of the elements of that economy that are part of the vision of this Throne Speech and I think this will be welcomed by many, many people across our province.

[14:45]

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech also talks about social innovation. And earlier in my comments I talked about some of the social policy accomplishments of the last year. Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about some of the social vision that is contained in this Throne Speech because I think this is going to be an important part of development in this province over the next decade.

The Throne Speech talks about this government's commitment to develop a centre of excellence for pediatric care, Mr. Speaker — a children's hospital, Mr. Speaker, in the city of Saskatoon — and that is something that I think all people of Saskatchewan will be excited to see.

This Throne Speech talks about support for the College of Medicine and expanding that support to train future doctors in our province and future health professionals in our province. And that's exactly the kind of social investment that is required, Mr. Speaker.

This Throne Speech talks about a major investment in an academic health sciences centre which will be announced in the next budget, Mr. Speaker, and that's a very important commitment to citizens in my constituency and right across our province.

This Throne Speech talks about the Project Hope initiative in health care that has been launched by our government, Mr. Speaker, which has now received national awards for its innovation, Mr. Speaker. Never recognized or acknowledged by members opposite, Mr. Speaker, but recognized right across this country for the work that the member for Sutherland and the Premier are engaged in, Mr. Speaker. And I think that this is also going to be an important part of our social investment in the decade ahead. We are committed, Mr. Speaker, as a government, to dramatically reduce the addictions problem among our youth, Mr. Speaker, and Project Hope will be our vehicle for accomplishing that goal.

The Throne Speech talks about increasing MRI [magnetic resonance imaging] capacity, and I'm very pleased, Mr. Speaker, that with the investments that have been made, that will be in place by March of next year, we will have doubled our MRI capacity in this province over a period of five years and sharply reduced our waiting lists for MRI services, Mr. Speaker.

And the Throne Speech talks about our deep commitment to a publicly funded, universal health care system in this province which has been the foundation of the work of the New Democratic Party in social policy over the last 40 years, Mr. Speaker. Our commitment in this area is unwavering, Mr. Speaker, and the New Democratic Party is the only party in this province that can be trusted with confidence to manage and preserve our universal public health care system, Mr. Speaker — a publicly funded system, Mr. Speaker — and to fight for that, Mr. Speaker, at the national level, Mr. Speaker.

Our Premier has played a major role at the national level, together with the Premier of Manitoba, in fighting to protect this system, Mr. Speaker, which is under constant attack from

our neighbours in Manitoba and their Premier, Mr. Speaker. And I think constant attack from Conservative governments, Mr. Speaker, across the provinces where Conservative governments hold office, Mr. Speaker. We see a constant attack on the medicare system from those governments. And our Premier has stood firm, Mr. Speaker, in resisting those attacks.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm told that I referred to the Premier of Manitoba as being one of those who attack medicare and of course, Mr. Speaker, that's not the case. The Premier of Manitoba and the Premier of Saskatchewan have worked closely together, Mr. Speaker, to protect medicare in Canada, Mr. Speaker, and I'm proud of that working relationship between those two NDP governments, Mr. Speaker. And we have resisted, Mr. Speaker, attempts by Conservative governments in Alberta and in many other parts of Canada in terms of eroding our medicare system.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about some of the other proposals on social innovation in this Throne Speech. And one of the ones that is the most important to me is the principle that no one in Saskatchewan will work for wages that leave them in poverty, Mr. Speaker. And that, Mr. Speaker, is a very, very important principle. And it means, Mr. Speaker, a minimum wage that will not only be at the poverty line but above the poverty line, Mr. Speaker, and I'm proud to be part of a government that is committed to that, Mr. Speaker.

The Throne Speech also talks about a very important investment in the community-based sector of our province, our community-based organizations. And we will be making an investment, Mr. Speaker, of \$30 million over a three-year period to address wages and retention and recruitment in the community-based organization sector. And I'm very proud of that investment, Mr. Speaker.

And this Throne Speech talks about a pre-kindergarten program for four-year-olds. And that, Mr. Speaker, is one of the most exciting things in this Throne Speech because the principle that all four-year-olds in this province should have access to a universal pre-kindergarten program is a very exciting notion, Mr. Speaker, and one that will be welcomed by families right across this province. I can't wait for that investment to be made, Mr. Speaker. It'll be one of the most important things that our government does.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to close by talking for a moment about affordability in our province and about the prudent use of fiscal resources in our province. And this of course, Mr. Speaker, is one of the areas where the contrast between the opposition and our government couldn't be greater.

I just want to remind all members of the Assembly the situation that our government inherited in November 1991 when the New Democratic Party was elected again in this province, Mr. Speaker, after nine and a half years of Conservative government — with a province that was virtually bankrupted; with a province, Mr. Speaker, that had more than \$14 billion of debt. A province, Mr. Speaker, where the relationship between debt and the total size of the economy, the debt was 63 per cent of the total economy, Mr. Speaker, after nine years of Conservative government, Mr. Speaker.

And now, Mr. Speaker, I want to refer to what has been accomplished in the last 14 years where our debt-to-GDP ratio, Mr. Speaker, is now approximately 30 per cent, Mr. Speaker, instead of 63 per cent. So our economy has grown and our debt has declined substantially. Here we have had, since the NDP has been elected, Mr. Speaker, 13 consecutive credit rating upgrades where, Mr. Speaker, we have reduced our total provincial debt by more than \$3 billion and where we have rebuilt our Crowns, Mr. Speaker, our Crown corporations, so that their debt load has been dramatically reduced.

This is a massive turnaround from the state that the Saskatchewan Conservative Party left our province, Mr. Speaker. And it's one that all citizens of Saskatchewan appreciate.

And our plan, Mr. Speaker, is to go on balancing the budget, Mr. Speaker, and to go on paying down debt. And this year we reduced debt by a further \$179 million. And I'm very proud of that, Mr. Speaker.

And nothing, Mr. Speaker, could be a sharper contrast to the record of members opposite than our rebuilding of our finances that benefit all the people of this province in terms of reducing debt, Mr. Speaker, and with it being able to reduce taxes.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to make a reference to affordability because one of the important elements of the New Democratic Party's commitment to the people of Saskatchewan in the last election was that we would continue to promote Saskatchewan being an affordable place to live, Mr. Speaker, and ensure in terms of the services that we delivered to people's homes, that they could count on the lowest bundle of utilities anywhere in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

That was a very important commitment, Mr. Speaker, that was made in 2003. And I'm proud to say, Mr. Speaker, that that is a commitment that has been honoured, both last year, Mr. Speaker, when a \$137 rebate was paid to all families in the province — every home received that rebate, Mr. Speaker — and this year, Mr. Speaker, when we've made a commitment that we will once again be delivering the lowest natural gas prices in the country basically, Mr. Speaker, through a significant subsidization of our natural gas rates. And this is only possible, Mr. Speaker, because we have SaskEnergy as a provincial Crown utility.

And what we have done, Mr. Speaker, is that instead of the average customer paying for natural gas at \$10.88 a gigajoule, which has been the North American price in the last two or three months, Mr. Speaker, we are able to deliver that natural gas for \$7.95 a gigajoule, Mr. Speaker. And this will be a major benefit, a major cushioning for every homeowner and every business in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And I'm very proud that that commitment that we made to the people of Saskatchewan — that we would keep their utility rates affordable — is a commitment that has been kept and that will be kept, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be part of a government that keeps its promises, that has an innovative social agenda, that has an innovative environmental agenda, Mr. Speaker, and that

has advanced a prosperous economy for the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

I reject the claims of members opposite, Mr. Speaker, that this government is without vision. I think I've clearly demonstrated, Mr. Speaker, that this government has a bold vision, Mr. Speaker, for the future of Saskatchewan. And this government, Mr. Speaker, with this vision is very prepared to go into an election campaign two years from now, Mr. Speaker, which will see the members opposite defeated at the polls once again, Mr. Speaker. I'm confident of that. This vision, Mr. Speaker, is a vision that's good for the people of the province, Mr. Speaker, and that we are proud to take into an election campaign, Mr. Speaker.

I'll be supporting the main motion. I'll be opposing the amendment, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to be able to rise in my place and add my comments and my thoughts with regards to the Throne Speech that was delivered. And I'll certainly be speaking in favour of the amendment to the Throne Speech, as you will likely gather, in a few minutes.

I would like to first of all, Mr. Speaker, give thanks to and appreciation to the constituents in the newly constructed Lloydminster constituency. It's a very awkward constituency that is about 35 miles wide and roughly about 150 miles long, running parallel to the Alberta border. It's not an easy constituency to serve as an MLA, but I've very much enjoyed the honour of being able to represent that constituency and the diversity within that constituency. You must remember that constituency is the centre of a very economically vibrant area, corridor. And the rest of the country, both Saskatchewan and Alberta, are looking to that area for a continuation of the economic prosperity that we are presently experiencing there.

I would also like to thank my immediate family. In fact this afternoon I understand that I have three granddaughters in Saskatoon that aren't in school today and may be watching this telecast. And I want to thank them for taking the time to watch their grandfather in the legislature, and I'm wondering if that's going to be much more exciting than what they had normally planned for that period of time in a normal day.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk a little bit about the Throne Speech and the vision that I was looking for, the people of the province are always looking for when it comes to the Throne Speech. People look at this as an opportunity to see what the direction is, what the opportunities lie forwards from the vision of this particular government. And I was pretty disappointed with the opportunity lost.

But before that, Mr. Speaker, I do want to say that I'm very disappointed with many of the speeches in this debate from the government side. What I've heard from those speeches is that we have been criticized on this side of the House for offering opinion. We've been criticized for offering our observations

and for questioning what is going on in . . . that the government is proposing.

Some of the comments that have come to us is that we should be ashamed of ourselves for actually questioning what this government is doing, what they're proposing, and of trying to put us in a position where we are in fact almost an enemy so that whenever they bring something forward and we don't agree, we become almost the enemy of that state.

[15:00]

Mr. Speaker, I lived in a state at one time where there was a single government, a single entity, a single party. And that party was supposed to be representing the people in that country. And it didn't take long before that party representing the people became the party of government and then that party of government became the party that wanted to control everything, and nothing was allowed to be questioned. And it got to the point where if you were questioning the government in any way, you were certainly an enemy of the state. You had no right or privilege to do that, and in fact in those countries, people disappeared for that reason.

We have the right to question this government. Our right is to challenge the government and hold them accountable for what they're proposing and what they're doing. And I'm really offended when they refer to me as part of this opposition, as part of the problem of this province and not part of being able to fulfill the mandate given to me.

In this province which is governed and operates under the British Westminster parliamentary system, it is in fact an adversarial system. And the check and balance, as you know, goes from those in government and given the mandate by the people with the majority of the vote. And it's true; this present government has that mandate to govern by one vote, but that's their mandate.

But it's also true that we have the mandate and the mandate was given to me by the constituents to be able to challenge and to question and to hold the government accountable. And that's what we're going to be doing, and we'll continue to do that whether it makes the government feel uncomfortable or not. That is the role as designed under the British Westminster parliament.

The visioning part of the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, leaves in my view . . . it comes up real short in a lot of areas. If you asked — and which I did, the people in my constituency on the weekend — did you know there was a Throne Speech in Saskatchewan? No was the answer. And I said if you had of heard the Throne Speech, what would you have anticipated would have been in the Throne Speech? Well they talked about, well I guess some kind of vision for what the government is planning to do.

I guess the problem that we have, I have, with this Throne Speech is the things that are included have already been announced in large part. The things have already been given to us in terms of timing that hasn't occurred at this point. A lot of the information and visioning is scheduled over 2008, 2010, some of it over 20, some over 25 years. It seems to me that if

you want to give the confidence of your government and the confidence that you're going in the right direction, you'd better have something a little more specific than just the generalities particularly that have been announced before.

I have here for instance, Mr. Speaker, the highlights of the Throne Speech from the Government of Manitoba. This is a press release that was dated October 27 of this particular year. And in this Throne Speech they actually show some very positive and definite areas of where they plan to move forward in this particular year. And I'm just going to summarize one or two of them for you so that you get an idea that this is the kind of thing that is done in other provinces, and it's not in generalities.

For instance they talk about being prepared for emergencies. We are in an era now that people are fearful of the safety of the system, fearful of the emergencies that might come upon us, the news everyday talking about the avian flu, the hurricanes, earthquakes, and so on. So in Manitoba they're actually talking about what they plan on doing for a pandemic that might be coming and people are talking about. They're talking about plans for dealing with emergencies and the relationship and agreements that they've put together between regional health authorities and municipalities. That's the kind of vision that gives the people some confidence that their government is looking after them and not looking after themselves as a government.

They talk about the clean energy advantage. They talk about for instance negotiating with potential customers. What a novel idea. Find out what the customer wants and see how you can address that. And they talk about a power grid.

In the health care system there is reference to definite priorities when it comes to the kinds of things that are putting on the waiting list. Four more additional priorities were put on the waiting list. They talk about . . . they have 235 more doctors registered and plan to register, more in Manitoba. And they also talk about developing an effective nutrition, exercise, and a healthy kids program. Those are specifics that people can understand, people can identify with and look forward to.

They talk about combating crime and strengthening the prosecution against crime and gang crimes. They refer to specifics in rural Manitoba for instance. Something we didn't see in our — hardly a reference — in our Throne Speech.

For instance, for rural Manitoba, the Manitoba government is going to be implementing an additional 10 per cent reduction in farmland property tax in 2006, and that's building on a 50 per cent reduction that's already in place. That's what farmers want to hear. They want to hear that there is something in the plans that gives them a bit of a light at the end of the tunnel. They talk about putting considerable effort and research toward agri-food and those kind of value-added that are going to make Manitoba prosper.

They make references for northern Manitoba — what they're going to do there in terms of health, schooling, and housing. They talk about specifics of children and youth in the future, child care spaces, the funding per student. They talk about curriculums being updated and working for the middle years

type of student.

All of those things are positive. That's an indication that Throne Speeches can in fact put vision statements in place with specifics enough to give people a good feeling that they are going to try and accomplish something.

In this particular situation, why would we not be jumping up and down and doing cartwheels about the Throne Speech in this province? Well a lot of the things that have been announced that they've referred to in the Throne Speech have been announced before. And referring back to some of my earlier comments about government and the governing class, in fact it doesn't take long before entitlement creeps into that equation. And I can see signs of that in this Throne Speech and in the actions that this government is putting in place.

For instance they talk about reducing the property tax on the education portion of property tax. How many years have they been talking about that? So that's been delayed, but in the meantime they have for themselves an immediate million dollars for an air terminal expansion. What they plan for the people and what they plan for themselves or their interests are two different things.

There's a health care mentioned for the last couple of years. Nothing is happening that I can see. In fact instead of adding money and resources in that direction, we see two new cabinet ministers put in place. That I think is called entitlement. Instead of addiction beds that's so desperately needed in this province, what we see is some of the negotiated and settled contracts opened up to be quote "topped up" from some of this new-found money.

The health care waiting lists and times, all getting longer and longer in this province, but in the meantime the Executive Council has expanded their communications and staff.

When we talk about some of the things that need to be done in this province and what is actually done in this province, no wonder people become a little skeptical about the vision that they thought they were going to see in this budget but didn't.

And at this time, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to congratulate you on your election to the Chair and we hope that you will enjoy your session as the Deputy Chair and look forward to working with you.

The fundamental question that I would have, Madam Deputy Speaker, is: what has changed in this province? We were a have-not province; we are now a have province. What fundamentally has changed to allow us to get into this new framework? And in fact are the fundamentals any different than they were before or is it in fact oil at \$60 a barrel? That has nothing to do with the economic fundamentals of this particular province and this government. It is the fact that the world price has put it up to that level and this province is benefiting mightily from that kind of an economic stimulus. That has put us into the have province from the have-not. We still need all those barriers to growth removed from this province so that we can in fact attract new investment and grow on the kind of investment that is needed.

I have an interesting quote, Madam Deputy Speaker, in an article. The author is Pierre Lemieux. He is a well-known author of economics and finance and even moral issues and social issues. And here's what his comment is about the oil-based economy of our neighbouring province. He refers to Alberta.

The province already ranks 8th in GDP per capita among the 60 U.S. states and Canadian provinces . . .

But the important statement is this:

Oil is not the main cause of wealth in Alberta.

I want to repeat that:

Oil is not the main cause of wealth in Alberta. There is no oil in Switzerland . . . [and there's no oil] in Hong Kong, and oil does not prevent poverty in Nigeria. The main cause of Albertan wealth is less government intervention and [less government] expenditure.

I think that's the kind of vision that we have to recognize here in this particular province.

We really want to look into the future and that's what the Throne Speech is supposed to be representing. And we have a surplus this year in this province because of the fact of the economic royalties that have been coming into the province.

But I wanted to comment on the fact, one of the comments by the previous debater in this Throne Speech who talked about the debt and the load that the current government is under. Well there's no doubt that there is a great debt load in this province and it's not entirely the fault of any one particular administration.

I have, from the records back in 1992, Madam Deputy Speaker, from the then minister of Finance, that talked about the debt that was in place, 3.5 billion of it, was of course already put in place by the previous Blakeney administration. In fact I think that number was actually 5.95 billion and the Finance minister at that time called . . . a very modest debt. On top of that there was a \$3 billion pension liability that was increasing the debt load on this province.

[15:15]

Now have we improved significantly? Well from the fall report 2005 volume 2, *Report of the Provincial Auditor*, I'm looking at numbers here that shows in 2005 our total debt number from all sources in this province are now 21 billion — 21 billion — and that has grown significantly, particularly over the last two years of this administration under the Premier of this province. Twenty-one billion now is a higher debt load for this province to carry than it has ever experienced before. In fact in 1991 it was only 17.6 when you add in the unfunded pension plan.

Madam Deputy Speaker, \$21 billion. When you think about that, you and I and all of us here have a \$21,000 debt load on each of our shoulders, that we're carrying and increasing. That is certainly not sustainable. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, my poor grandchildren that . . . I don't know if they're still

watching or not. Each of those poor girls have a \$21,000 debt load on their shoulders at this point too. That is not sustainable, and that's a very important part of what this future of Saskatchewan is going to have to address.

The Lloydminster area, Madam Deputy Speaker, is a very vital part, as I mentioned earlier, a very vital part of the growing economy in that area. And Lloydminster, as I've mentioned before, is a very interesting anomaly within that particular region. The city, as you know, is operating as a single unit but under two administrative philosophies and under two administrations — Saskatchewan and Alberta.

In the year 2000, the national census had indicated that Lloydminster was a growing entity. The Saskatchewan side in fact was growing at about 3.4 per cent which was a very positive number for Saskatchewan. But the Alberta side was growing at about 18.5 per cent. It's the same, same everything in place in the Lloydminster region. It's the same sunshine, the same air, the same everything except for taxation, regulation, and attitude, resulting in a much more aggressive investment climate.

In 2005 the city of Lloydminster did their own census to confirm that and virtually the same numbers — 3.5 per cent Saskatchewan side which is good for Saskatchewan side, but again eighteen and a half per cent or more on the Alberta side. So why in fact is that happening? If everything is rosy on the Saskatchewan side and there is no difference, why is the investment and the growth happening on one side of the border?

Those are the questions that have to be asked and that is the questions that the government has to ultimately be accountable for. Because that is a pure economic model that needs further study and further explanation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the time that I have is running out and I just wanted to add one or two more perspectives from what I had hoped to see in this Throne Speech. The people in our area of the province, the constituents that I talked about, of course is very much driven by the oil and gas industry. And the infrastructure needed for the oil and gas industry is a very important part of that industry in the Lloydminster constituency. Specifically there is virtually no provincial highway running through it. There's Highway 3 that runs through part of it, but the whole oil and gas generating area in fact is based on the movement of oil and the heavy oil particularly on the municipal roads of the RM [rural municipality] of Britannia, RM of Wilton, and the RM of Eldon. Consideration must be given to those municipalities for maintaining the infrastructure to keep the oil moving so the royalties can be generated by this government. And consideration has to be forthcoming for assistance in maintaining the role of the infrastructure. Those are important things.

One of the other comments that I must make is the area of seniors and seniors' care. That is in my critic area, and I guess in my age group, a very important part of what is needed in this province.

It would appear that the people in my area are moved around from facility to facility. There's no guarantee that they can become part of the health care or the long-term care of their

own community. It's almost like we're treating these people as commodities instead of people that have built our province. And I think that's a shame. I get lots of phone calls from families saying that their parent needs the care and why can't they be put in care in their particular home.

There's several things that the elderly and the seniors need. They need to know that they have health care and their ability to receive health care in a timely fashion. They are concerned about accommodation because they don't want to be left out in the cold. They've struggled their whole lives to be able to be independent, and they want to make sure there is some kind of accommodation. And they need some kind of financial security.

Those are three areas, Madam Deputy Speaker, that are a real concern to seniors everywhere. And the only thing I saw in the budget speech at all was that seniors are going to be given a gold card.

And maybe I'm the only one, Madam Deputy Speaker, that'll be eligible for a gold card. So I'm looking forward to that. I hope there's going to be several hundred thousand dollars credit limit on this card that I can use. I hope there's all kinds of benefits that will follow from this gold card.

But let me tell you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the situation in the health care, especially in the seniors, needs to have some attention. And we have to address it seriously very quickly.

Madam Speaker, I want to again reiterate that I am going to support the amendment to the original motion, and I'm pleased to do that. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina South, the Minister of Learning.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you. Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise today in the Assembly as the member for Regina South and take this chance to reflect upon the Speech from the Throne and the vision that has been outlined by the NDP government for the future of this province.

Let me begin however by congratulating you, ma'am, on your election as Deputy Speaker. This is a well-deserved honour, and there is no doubt you will serve us well in this leadership role.

Today I do want to talk about the Speech from the Throne. I want to talk about the vision that was outlined within this document and to talk about what it means for Saskatchewan people as we move forward. The Throne Speech is also an opportunity for us, I think, to build on the vision that we outlined to Saskatchewan people in the fall of 2003, a vision that would articulate how an NDP government would build on the century of success that we've seen on our common history of co-operation in this province, and on our promise to ensure that Saskatchewan is and remains the best place in Canada to live, to work, and to raise a family.

Madam Speaker, members on this side know full well that this can only happen by working together, by finding common ground, and by sharing common values — values like understanding that we are shaped by this place, by this land that we call home, and that it is from the people of this province that we gain our ability to make change. These are the core values that are behind our vision for Saskatchewan as we enter our second century. These are the core values that ensure that we can build a green and prosperous economy for all, values that commit to our tradition of ensuring that Saskatchewan people have access to the best quality health care in Canada and that they do so without consideration of their ability to pay.

The strength of this province is built on making sure that we have the most affordable utility rates in the country and that the future of those utilities are controlled by the people of this province, not by the multinational interests of Bay Street brokers or American industrialists.

We know that by building on these strengths of a green and prosperous economy, accessible public health care and education, the most affordable public services, we know that then we can build a better future for young people here at home in Saskatchewan. That, Madam Deputy Speaker, is the vision we went to the public with in the last election, and that's the vision we've been building on.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — It is a vision however that is sharply contrasted by that of the Saskatchewan Party. As you may remember we went into that last election facing off against a mean, extreme, right-wing agenda — an agenda that was personified by the member for Rosetown who was then the leader of the opposition. But, Madam Deputy Speaker, no one is fooled by who the true author of that plan was. It was the member for Swift Current. It is the current Leader of the Opposition. That was the plan he designed. That was the vision he set out — one of unfettered competition and one vision that would tear this province apart. That agenda was in fact a direct attack on the common values that we share as Saskatchewan people and indeed is perhaps better summed up by the member's most recent comments in this debate where he talks about the mistakes of the last 60 years of socialism.

It's interesting that the Sask Party leader would choose to frame his response to the Throne Speech about what has happened in the last 60 years and to do so through the ideological blinkers that the Conservatives wear. They truly see only a Saskatchewan shaped by forces that have been hindered by a government that tries to protect ordinary people and keeps at bay the free enterprise forces that they believe blow in the winds that come from Alberta. It is a Conservative vision of defeatism. It is a defeatist attitude that does not reflect the core values of Saskatchewan people.

The opposition has said many times in this legislature that the only thing that we could do to make the province better is turn back the clock 60 years — an interesting comment coming from the Leader of the Opposition. I think that particularly in this debate, as we begin our second century, as we've reflected in this our centennial year, this is a good time for us to think about what it is we've accomplished in those last 60 years. I'm not so

sure that it's a bad time to really think about how communities pulled together, farmers and business people pulled together, workers and neighbours came together to build this province over the last 60 years.

They pulled together to create a province that uses its vast resources to create new things like hospitalization and medicare. They pulled together their resources to expand a school system to include some of the best technology and teaching methods available in the world. They have pulled together in order to create a system where we celebrate our differences, and we ensure each has the right to live free from want and fear in our communities through the benefit of solid social programs. From Douglas to Lloyd, Blakeney to Romanow, we have built on the common values of Saskatchewan people to ensure Saskatchewan's successes in the last century.

Indeed I find it odd that the Sask Party leader wants to turn back the clock to before 1944. I find it odd that the leader wants to go back to a time of crushing debt and poverty and disparity. I find it odd that he refuses to recognize the success of Saskatchewan people pulling together in the last 60 years to build what is truly the best province in this country to live in.

[15:30]

I find it of interest that the members opposite alternate in their message to this Assembly between calling for us to eradicate any sense of understanding of the CCF [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation] tradition from this province while at the same time standing in this House and calling on us to implement Douglas's programs in things like agriculture. How is it that the members opposite can take such different views in the same debate in this Assembly?

I think it's fair to say that the members opposite are indeed unbalanced in their approach, that they are opportunistic in their attitude, and that they undoubtedly are working from a position where they have a history of shame that they cannot be proud of. And they cannot ever — I think we all know this — cannot ever erase the stench of the Devine government that permeates their caucus, their policies, and their party. They ask us instead to turn our backs on the work of the pioneers and the people who built this province into the last world war.

I think it's interesting that we are into this debate this time in November, just after Remembrance Day. And I want to at this point just say to all the colleagues who spoke in the ceremony of remembrance, the special motion, that it was I think an opportunity for us to portray what is the best of this Assembly. And I particularly want to congratulate my colleague from Regina Elphinstone for very, very moving words as he summed up I think what so many of us felt on that day.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — If I might just say I think that many of us . . . Well I'll tell you many of us were moved to tears by his comments in being able to reflect not only on the impact of the history of his family in those great conflicts, but also to speak about others in our province in very specific ways who contributed. It helped in so many ways I think to move us away

from an abstraction of understanding what war truly means to understanding what the true consequences and commitments are that are needed to build a province.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I say this because I think it is also an opportunity for us to reflect upon and remember the values and the courage of those who fought for our freedom. It's also important for us to remember that when these same men and women came back to our homes after the war, they joined together in their communities. They built families and farms and businesses. They took up jobs. They became active in the life of their province. They made investments in our community. They elected governments, and yes they made choices to move Saskatchewan forward.

Today as we enter our second century as a province, this Premier, today's NDP are continuing to build on the foundations we laid 60 years ago. Our commitment to common sense and the common man and woman are as strong today as ever.

And today more than ever we are in a position to take advantage of the strength of Saskatchewan's economy that has returned from the abyss of debt and deficits left back when the opposition leader was working for Grant Devine. It has been a long road back for this province, back from the days when Grant Devine and the Conservatives of the day were spending \$1.25 for every dollar they took in, from a time when we were losing 25,000 people a year from this province to out-migration, when our economy was in ruin and government spending was out of control.

It's interesting that it's under NDP governments that we've been able to take Saskatchewan back from being the basket case of Canada under Devine to what is now an exclusive club of three, known as the have provinces.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Madam Deputy Speaker, the Sask Party disparages the growth in our economy, an economy that has led all provinces, all jurisdictions in Canada in annualized GDP growth. The Sask Party leader conveniently forgets that while he was advising the Devine government in the '80s to spend more, that it has been an NDP government that has worked with Saskatchewan people to turn the province's finances around and that we have as a result been able to pay off \$3 billion worth of public debt.

As a result of that, today our debt is at its lowest point in 14 years. We have reduced the interest payments from a staggering \$800 million a year that was being paid when we took office.

Now I hear the member for Moosomin defending the Conservative government that he was a part of. And I appreciate the fact that he feels vehemently and passionately that the choices that he was making as a member of the government caucus with Grant Devine were the choices that were good for Saskatchewan people.

History however has proven him wrong. It has proven that there is nothing that we have been able to do to be able to erase, to erase that stench of the Conservative government that has

permeated this province. It is important I think however to note that because of the work that we have been able to do in the last 14 years, that today Saskatchewan's people trust the finances of this government.

We are now the recipients of some 13 or 14 credit rating upgrades. It's interesting to note that this is now so commonplace that it is rarely reported in the media. And we have turned around an economy that used to be held ransom to the whims of bankers, federal bureaucrats, and depressed markets into an economy of growth in which Saskatoon and Regina in two consecutive years have led this nation in economic growth.

It is from this position of economic strength that we've built. It's our challenge now to figure out how it is we move the province forward, to take the prosperity we've gained and build upon that and create a province with energy.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we have a tremendous set of assets on which to build a province of energy — from our pioneering and innovative spirit, to our well-educated population of young people, to our vast natural resources. Indeed Saskatchewan is perhaps better positioned than any province in this country to sustain real energy in our economic growth. Contrary to the Saskatchewan Party's defeatist attitude, today Saskatchewan people are seeing that our economy and our communities are in an enviable position to gain prosperity through a more competitive and more productive economy.

Sharpening our competitive edge does include the provision of well-trained, well-educated workforce made up of young men and women to take the positions that are being created in our ever-growing economy. And the investments we are making today in education and skills training, in technical training, in the training that happens in our regional colleges, at SIAST, on the job site, these are the investments in the future prosperity of our province. It is an investment in the people that is key to maintaining our competitive edge.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to tell you what you already know and that is that young people are on our side in this. Perhaps nowhere is that more easily demonstrated than in our party today. Young people on our campuses, in our trade schools, in our business community, in our workforce are taking up leadership positions in our party and joining our campaigns like never before. They are doing this because they too understand that the future of Saskatchewan, an affordable Saskatchewan that is truly the best place to live, to learn, to work, and to raise a family is based on the common-sense approaches and the commonplace values that built the CCF and the NDP.

Like these young people we too know that there is no thriving or prosperous economy without a thriving and prosperous people. We also benefit in a province where we have per capita the youngest population in the country today. We have a young population. It is a population that is full of our friends and our neighbours, First Nations people, Métis people, the sons and daughters of immigrants, and those who are immigrating today. And I want to assure members of this Assembly, that as the minister of Education and the Minister of Learning, I am working hard to ensure this new generation of Saskatchewan

people has the education and skills training that'll help them share in Saskatchewan's success.

This Throne Speech reflects the work that we have embarked on as a caucus to renew our school system, to embark on new programs that are strengthening our communities — like the pre-kindergarten program for four-year-olds, like KidsFirst, like SaskSmart and the Literacy Commission. And these are strengthening our post-secondary systems through a renewed focus on research and innovation, on skills training and trades education, and on ensuring our population of young people — many of whom come from families that have not known the pride of having a steady job — that we will work with these people, this new generation to make sure that they enter into the economy job ready.

These, Madam Deputy Speaker, are our greatest strength. The greatest strength is our people. And when we combine that strength with the opportunities of a growing economy, we know that Saskatchewan's future is truly one with energy.

Consider for a second our natural strength and energy. Saskatchewan provides to Canada fully one-third of all the energy resources in this country. It is because of the work that is happening in our energy sector today in terms of enhanced oil recovery, in terms of initiatives in new technology, in terms of greenhouse gas sequestration; it is because of the work in horizontal drilling that we have seen the oilfields come back to life. It is because of the investments that we have made jointly with business and our federal government partners that we have been able to make sure that our energy resources have been able to renew this province's economy.

We know as well that we have been blessed by the fact that we sit upon the world's richest resource in uranium and that we are now supplying about fully one-third of the uranium in the world. We're seeing growth in that industry. We're seeing worldwide demand for that growth coming. This morning for those of us who had the opportunity to attend the Regina and District Chamber of Commerce, listen to the Premier talk about the potential for growth as we can see that opportunity expand in Asia where they are looking for ways to create a more nuclear-fired electrical generation in order to deal with the environmental difficulties that they are having, we have an export opportunity for our uranium that will continue to enhance our economy.

We also believe there's a tremendous opportunity for us to meet that new demand through processing, refining. And we need to see that that processing is happening here in Saskatchewan soil as opposed to just in Ontario.

We have also a tremendous opportunity in energy as it pertains to the natural growing environment around us. In terms of ethanol facilities at Lloydminster, the Husky facility there; in terms of the ethanol facility that we will see open in Weyburn; in terms of the opportunity for biomass expansion that we're looking in the Northeast in Nipawin, we have a tremendous opportunity to take advantage in a new way of the energy resources that we are growing on our land. When Saskatchewan is the steward of 45 per cent of all the arable land in Canada, this in itself presents a tremendous opportunity for us.

It's interesting to note also that the Premier just recently cut a ribbon on a project that'll bring us over 170 megawatts of wind-generated electricity — that we have gone from being the seventh largest producer of wind-based energy to being the third. Madam Deputy Speaker, we have a tremendous opportunity to harness the wind to be able to supply our energy needs.

We have a tremendous opportunity to build on the strength of coal of which we have approximately 400 years worth of coal resource in this province. If we can match that resource with the opportunity that coal-fed methane, the clean cool technologies, the cogeneration, polygeneration opportunities bring, we can truly secure for Saskatchewan's future and a future with energy, energy that is green, energy that is renewable, energy that is sustainable, energy that reflects the opportunity we have in this province, an opportunity that is built on natural strength in energy.

Regina too will contribute to us growing this energy sector. Regina is indeed the energy centre of our province and is on the leading edge of energy research in the world. This is something we do not speak enough about in terms of the work that is being done at our universities in co-operation with the government research centres, in terms of our work with our federal partners, to make sure that we are expanding our ability to use our energy resource in a way that is sustainable and is in fact less destructive to our environment. Our universities, companies, governments, and our people are investing in making our energy resources more productive and more sustainable.

At the same time in Regina we're also seeing growth and opportunities in our IT [information technology] sector. We see the growth in information processing centres of excellence here in our Prairies through large and small companies alike. And we see an opportunity to leverage the strength of the resource that we have built here in the provincially owned telephone company, SaskTel, that is a leader in ICT [information and communications technology] technology around the world.

We also see a city that is benefiting from our government investments in agriculture and food. Regina will grow on the basis of its partnership with rural communities around us as we work to expand on food processing in areas of meat production and value-added grain and oilseed processing.

In the next few weeks my colleagues from Regina and I will begin work on a new strategy to make sure Regina's position is well secured within our growing economy. It will be a strategy that is focused on our strengths in energy, in IT, and in food production. It will be a plan that is good for Regina and is also good for Saskatchewan because we know that when Saskatchewan's regions are strong, Saskatchewan as a province is strong. We know that there's a great potential by working together with our rural communities, our smaller communities, for diversification.

It has been interesting listening over the last several days to the debate in this House, and listening to the Sask Party and the special interests that surround them continue to trash-talk our rural economy and portray our rural economies as victims of a world economy that depends on ever-increasing cash transfers to succeed.

I do not think that we can give in to the defeatist mentality of an opposition leader and his free enterprise party that believes that all we need to do is eliminate taxes without cutting services, reduce government without increasing handouts, and relieving itself of the burdensome chore of regulating the environment so that business can simply grow unfettered. That is not who Saskatchewan people are. That is not what we value. That is not the vision that has built this province in the last 60 years.

As I listen to the contempt for Saskatchewan people and our common history that spews forward from the Sask Party on a daily basis, it makes me wonder how someone who so hates the history and heritage of this province should ever seek to lead it. It makes me wonder how someone who disparages the choices and contributions of Saskatchewan pioneers, veterans, and common people during the past 60 years, how so often they have disparaged this history, how is it that they should ever seek to lead us?

[15:45]

It is understanding the common values of our common man, our common history, and the uncommon strength of Saskatchewan citizens and families that is central to understanding the strength that'll secure Saskatchewan's future. We know this to be true because this is who we are. This is where we come from. It is central to our understanding of the common values we share in this province of Saskatchewan.

Our vision is to build on our natural strengths. It is a vision to invest in innovation and research and development. It is to sharpen our competitive edge and it is to do that through an investment in Saskatchewan people.

This is our vision to take our province forward into the next century. It's a vision that recognizes that the social progress we desire is based on economic progress, but that you cannot have economic progress without social security and stability in our communities.

The Leader of the Opposition speaks about the fact that he would rather have entrepreneurs than teachers, that he would rather have entrepreneurs than social workers, that he would rather have entrepreneurs than health care workers. This is how he opened his response to this Throne Speech — to disparage the teachers, the health care workers; to disparage the social workers and those who contribute to the public good in this province by saying that in his hierarchy there is no equality. He favours the entrepreneur above all others. I think that says a lot. I think it says a lot about the Leader of the Opposition.

It was interesting to note over the weekend that the Sask Party looks like it will have a new candidate; that they have given a golden anvil to the current member for Kindersley and are going to boot him out of his seat so that he can be replaced by the former leader of the Conservative Party, Bill Boyd.

In response, undoubtedly the member for Swift Current is concerned about his position as a leader, obviously concerned about what this means for his sense of entitlement as the Sask Party leader. And so he's put up an interesting defence on his website, extolling his virtues on his website. It says — and I quote now — it says:

[And the] Bloggers are . . . weighing in [quote]: “Brad Wall is the real thing [says this blogger]. A gifted speaker . . . communicates with vision, optimism, conviction, humour . . . and apparently, without notes,” wrote Catherine McMillan of smalldeadanimals.com . . .

Well we may have to let the Leader of the Opposition have the small dead animal vote, but I will tell you that the Saskatchewan people that are going to go to the polls in the next election are not going to be swayed by the small dead animals approach to portraying the Sask Party leader as a visionary.

It is clear that the vision that the Sask Party lays out is the same vision that the Conservative Party laid out and has always laid out in this province. It is one that always seeks to tear this province apart, that is not built on the strength of this province, that disparages the history and the heritage of this province.

And I think it is interesting, it is interesting to listen to how the members opposite respond to even a simple comment in the Throne Speech that says that we should seek that no one in this province is left behind. It might interest the members to know why it is that that is so important to us.

And the member for Moose Jaw North, I am sure, will address this many times as he speaks in this and other debates, but it was of great interest to all of us who listened to him tell the story this summer of travelling through the North, of going to meet the Canoe Quest that was travelling across the Churchill River. And it was a centennial event that all of us, I think, were quite interested in. It certainly received a lot of media attention, and we were quite proud — an exciting idea that people would canoe across the Churchill River to celebrate the breadth of the northern part of this province.

The member from Moose Jaw North tells us the story about how he was waiting for the Canoe Quest to come to an end, how they were waiting for the various entries to come across the finish line, and how it was that, as they gathered to wait for these canoes to come in, people were clearly aware of who was going to finish first.

It was a race. People understood that. And they understood the benefit of finishing first, but they had waited for everyone to come in. They had waited for all the canoes to finish because it was an important venture, and it said a lot about the initiative and the effort these people put in.

There was quite a gap, as the member from Moose Jaw North tells us, as they waited for the final four canoes to come in. And as he indicated, it turned out that two of the canoes had capsized, turned over. The two canoes that were in front of them had waited, helped them gather their gear, helped them pull their craft back into course, and helped them canoe down the river. It was as those four canoes came around the bend that it was obvious what was happening in that the four sets of canoes had waited to pull together to join hands to come across the finish line at the same time so that no one would be left behind.

And you listen to what the members opposite say. Listen to what the members opposite say, Madam Speaker. And this

which says probably more about Saskatchewan spirit, about our ability to pull together as neighbours, as members of a community, as people who care about each other — what is it they say? They're losers because they finished last. That's how the Sask Party views this province. That is how the Sask Party sees this opportunity. That is what they believe is most important, is simply finishing ahead of your neighbour, of your friend, of the others in your community.

That is a party that does not understand Saskatchewan. That is a party that so hates the heritage, so hates the tradition of this province, that they will not ever be given the opportunity to govern. That is why they lost in '99. That is why they lost in '03. That is why they'll lose in '07. Because they do not understand what it is that makes this province of ours true.

Madam Speaker, the vision that we have outlined in our Throne Speech is a vision of hope, is a vision of action. It is based upon shared values and shared opportunities. It is based on our tradition and our values as Saskatchewan people. And that is why I, on behalf of the people of Regina South, will be supporting the Throne Speech.

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

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Ask for leave to introduce a guest.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member has asked for leave to introduce a guest. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Northern Affairs, the member from Saskatchewan Athabasca.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Just to thank the opposition for a few moments to introduce my guest and in particular the member for Rosetown.

Just in your gallery, Madam Speaker, is a friend of mine, originally from Beauval. He now lives and works here in the city. He works with the Ranch Ehrlo Society. And he's been out here for a number of months and really enjoys the city. And I asked him if he was homesick for Beauval, which is roughly 700 kilometres north of here and he says he likes both locations.

Just a short story, Madam Speaker, is that for his birthday he bought himself his own cowboy hat. It cost him 60 bucks and I want him to show off his cowboy hat. He can't wear it in the Assembly, but he bought himself a cowboy hat for his birthday present and he likes it.

So I just want to point out that I'd like all members of the Assembly to join me in welcoming Mr. Rene Lafleur from Beauval that's here visiting today. Thank you.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Ms. Junor, seconded by Mr. Harper, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Mr. Wall.]

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I too would like to welcome our friend from Beauval to the Assembly, Mr. Lafleur. When I was leader of the opposition, I believe that I was in Beauval more often than the member was and certainly enjoyed my time up there. And we recognize that a lot of work has to be done in the North, and we're sure it's going to happen.

I also want to say to all of my colleagues that I very much appreciate the fact that we're having a fall session. I want to congratulate members on both sides of the House, members on both sides of the House for agreeing to a fall session. I think it's a step in the right direction. And my hope is that the fall session might even become a little bit longer, perhaps six weeks in length, because I think it's important to deal with legislation and the Speech from the Throne in the fall and then deal with the budget and subsequent legislation in the spring.

Madam Speaker, I also want to congratulate you on your acclamation to the Chair as the Deputy Speaker, and we wish you well as you serve this Assembly in that role. We know that you will give this a good effort, and we appreciate that effort.

I also would like to take this time — it's my first speech in this new session of the legislature — to again thank my family and my constituents for their support. I am very appreciative of my wife who has sacrificed a lot so that I can be involved in the politics of this province and this country. I owe her a great deal of thanks . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . and a date the member from Indian Head-Milestone suggested. Actually we were just on a date a couple of nights ago, and it was a fine time. We had a great dinner together. She's getting better with every year of marriage we've been able to enjoy.

Now I want to talk a little bit about the centennial celebrations of the past few months. Certainly the people of Rosetown-Elrose were equal to the task of celebrating the past 100 years that Saskatchewan has enjoyed as a province, a great work by community committees and organizations, each one trying to outdo the other.

And it was quite funny as I'd go from community to community through the summer, and they would want to know, how many entries did the town of Dinsmore have in their parade? Well we've got to have two more entries in our parade so that we have a longer parade. The next town would try to outdo the previous town.

Thousands of people came back to these home communities to celebrate Saskatchewan's centennial. The unfortunate thing is that these thousands mostly came from outside of the province of Saskatchewan. Had those people still been residents of these

community, they would be a community of thousands, not communities of hundreds. And that it was a stark reminder of what the last 60 years of primarily CCF and NDP government have done to the province of Saskatchewan, driving so many people out of our province.

Madam Speaker, we also know that the Legislative Secretary in charge of centennials has been touting our centennial. But I have to confess, Madam Speaker, that he really didn't do as much as he should have for rural Saskatchewan. He was pretty careful to make sure that there were some celebrations sponsored by the government in the larger cities of the province, but for constituencies like Rosetown-Elrose, he just wrote them off. There was no money. There was very little resources put into our celebrations. And I felt quite badly about that.

In fact even when the Centennial Medals were presented, of which I had the pleasure of nominating several outstanding citizens in the Rosetown-Elrose constituency, the word from the government side was don't let the media know. We want to keep this a quiet affair. We don't really want to celebrate in the opposition members' ridings. And I thought that was unfortunate, about the only blemish that I can really point out in what was otherwise a great celebration.

Now, Madam Speaker, before I get on to the main thrust of my speech, I do want to talk a little bit about some of the comments of the member from Regina South. I listened very quietly and attentively. I didn't heckle during the member from Regina South's speech, unlike what members of the NDP are doing right now. But, Madam Speaker, he was plagued with a real problem, I think a similar problem to what the member from P.A. Northcote has. What he said just did not have a resonance with the facts.

And, Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest as he thrashed former Premier Grant Devine and his government. Now I've never been a defender of the Devine government, but I do remember it quite clearly. Madam Speaker, I remember that during the approximately nine or ten years that the Devine government was in office in Saskatchewan, those members, the NDP members criticized that government for not spending more money. I remember that.

They said that Mr. Devine and his government was not spending enough taxpayers' money in the province of Saskatchewan. So now the member from Regina South said that because Mr. Devine spent too much money, it created a stench. Well that really means that the NDP were trying to out-stink the Devine people, and, Madam Speaker, we did not hear that from the member from Regina South. He was not levelling with the people of the province.

And the other thing that he forgot to say in his comments was the fact that Mr. Devine inherited half of the deficit of the province or the debt of the province from Mr. Blakeney. So if Mr. Devine was wrong, then Mr. Blakeney was equally wrong. In fact Mr. Blakeney was more wrong because he governed in good times when interest rates weren't so high.

So, Madam Speaker, the member from Regina South had it wrong. And I think he owed better to the people of the province

of Saskatchewan.

Now, Madam Speaker, the Speech from the Throne should have concluded with . . . It's interesting. You know, Madam Speaker, I very quietly listened to the member from the other side, and they're not giving me the same opportunity to respond to the Speech from the Throne.

[16:00]

Nevertheless, Madam Speaker, that speech should have concluded with the words, and they all lived happily ever afterwards because, Madam Speaker, that Speech from the Throne was a fairy tale if I ever heard one. The glowing words, the nice phrases — nothing is wrong in the province of Saskatchewan; we all live happily. We're just sitting around in a circle singing *Kumbaya* according to the Speech from the Throne that we heard when nothing under the NDP government could be farther from the truth.

Let's talk a little bit about the equalization fiasco. Madam Speaker, I was at the SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] conference and listened to the address by the Minister for Municipal Affairs. And you'd think, Madam Speaker, that the entire problem in agriculture was because of equalization. You'd think that all of Saskatchewan's problems were because of the federal Liberal government. The minister wasn't willing to assume any responsibility for things that had gone wrong in the province.

Now that reminds me of some words that I heard that I want to share with members in the legislature. And these words are . . . And I know that the Deputy Premier will listen very closely because I think he's quite closely associated with these words. The Deputy Premier comes from the riding of Yorkton, and I wonder if he agrees with this statement. It says and I quote:

But they do expect, and they have the right to expect, honesty. They have the right to expect to be able to trust this government, to be able to trust the men and women they elect. They have the right to expect that commitments made ought to be binding.

People, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will forgive mistakes; they may even forgive incompetence; but they will never forgive betrayal.

Now, Madam Speaker, those words are by the man who is the current Premier when he was sitting in opposition. And he went on to say in another speech in a couple of years later:

And, Mr. Speaker, it means we need a government in this province that views the treasury as a trust and not as a trough, Mr. Speaker.

Now this is the same Premier that has just recently put the member from P.A. Northcote back into his cabinet. Now, Madam Speaker, the Premier said when he was in opposition that he could forgive mistakes. That's laudable. Might even be able to forgive incompetence. Well you can forgive incompetence, but that's about as far as it should go. And finally said that the people would not forgive betrayal.

Well, Madam Speaker, the member from P.A. Northcote, a member who negatively impacted my riding beyond anything I think the members on the opposition could imagine was not only prone to mistakes; that member was totally incompetent. And that member betrayed this legislature, and he betrayed the people of Saskatchewan. Now, Madam Speaker, according to the Premier's judgment, that person . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Sure it was great that he apologized, but that person should not be given a position of trust.

Let me tell you what happened in the Lucky Lake area as a result of this betrayal and as a result of this incompetence. Farmers who took the NDP government at their word invested thousands of their own dollars in machinery and potato production operations, saw the government change the contracts, change the deal, change the people that made the deal. And they lost. They lost in some cases everything that they worked for, for decades. Business people that supported the industry lost. There was foreclosures happening. There was a recall of equipment. And, Madam Speaker, this was all because the government betrayed the people of the Lucky Lake area, and the SPUDCO fiasco must not be forgotten.

And, Madam Speaker, I hope that the members opposite will apologize and not only apologize but fix the injustices that they have heaped upon not only the people of the Lucky Lake area but also all of the taxpayers of Saskatchewan. For recently there was yet another lawsuit that they had to settle out of court and pay thousands and thousands of taxpayers' dollars to settle.

Now, Madam Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about the Rosetown-Elrose constituency. It's a great constituency. People work very hard. People are honest. They are hard-working taxpayers. They don't complain a lot, Madam Speaker. But there are some things that need to be done in the Rosetown-Elrose constituency that I have raised with this government and they continually turn a deaf ear.

For one thing, Madam Speaker, they have never fixed a very simple but important component of transportation in our constituency. The Riverhurst ferry was a relatively reliable form of transportation across Lake Diefenbaker, but some bright light over there decided that they had to change the ferry, and it's not worked properly since — in fact was not running most of the month of July, the highest month of tourism travel. It affected negatively a golf course, a regional park. It affected businesses that operated on both sides of Lake Diefenbaker. And time after time people from that area have appealed to this government to get it right, and they cannot get it right. They refuse to fix the service.

Madam Speaker, there have been people who have lost their lives on Highway 4 in the South Saskatchewan River Valley. That road is in desperate need of widening and a passing lane being put in place to go up both the south side and the north side of that highway. There's a provincial park at the bottom of the valley. There's an 18-hole, first-rate golf course down there. There is more truck traffic on that highway in the past few years than we've ever seen. And because of the steepness of the grade and the narrowness of the highway, cars back up behind trucks that are travelling about five or six or ten miles an hour, Madam Speaker, and this government refuses to accelerate their plan to . . . They don't have any plans, but accelerate even the process

to get in place a plan to correct that. And there will be lives lost, I'm sure of it. I've driven that road many times and perhaps there'll be a horrific accident — I pray that it doesn't happen — but before this government's eyes will be opened, and they'll correct the problem.

Now, Madam Speaker, I have to talk just a little bit about agriculture. The people who are making their living from agriculture have come to the conclusion that the NDP not only doesn't care about them, but they're trying to put them out of business. Madam Speaker, they were told that their education portion of property taxes would be reduced — be reduced by 8 per cent — but most agriculture producers have seen their property tax bill go up in the last year or two. They are paying more property taxes instead of less, and this at a time when commodity prices are lower and input costs have skyrocketed.

Madam Speaker, the NDP don't even recognize the agriculture crisis that they are creating. And I know we've talked a lot about agriculture crises, and I don't try to exaggerate the severity of these situations. But when some would suggest there's a crisis, I make sure I do a little investigating before I jump on the bandwagon. But, Madam, Speaker, the situation today is the most desperate I've seen in my political career, and I'm not exaggerating one iota.

And, Madam Speaker, the member for Regina South may say that this is not so. I call that rubbish. And the member for Regina South, a cabinet minister, should do a little investigation before he gets up in this House and says that everything is fine in rural Saskatchewan and agriculture is getting along fine, thank you very kindly. It's not. And as Deputy Premier should know that . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . yes, the member from Regina South said everything is fine in rural Saskatchewan. Agriculture is doing well. He was chastising the opposition for being negative. He said you guys are putting rural Saskatchewan down. No we're not. We're telling the truth about rural Saskatchewan and the needs that are there, and the NDP are turning a deaf ear to those needs.

Madam Speaker, it has become so bad . . . And I'm a fan of the show *Corner Gas*. I love to watch *Corner Gas*. And I get a real hoot out of it. It's got that Saskatchewan flavour that brings a smile to all of our faces. But, you know, when in Dog River they get talking about the neighbouring town of Wullerton, you know, how they all kind of spit off to the side? You know, that rivalry between towns causes them to sort of put down Wullerton, the neighbouring town. Well when rural people now hear the word NDP or NDP government or the name of the Premier and his government, that's the response. They think that the NDP government has become as despicable as Wullerton appears to be in the *Corner Gas* series.

Now, Madam Speaker, I've got a lot of issues I want to touch on and I'll touch on just a very few of them briefly. Madam Speaker, the NDP government decided to set up these mega school boards, these large, huge school divisions across the province. And the official opposition told them, you're pushing this too fast. You haven't got it exactly right. You're going to create a lot of problems out there. We suggested if they were going to go ahead with the larger school divisions that they should not fully implement them until the beginning of the next school year which would be in the fall of 2006.

But no, the minister from Regina South was headstrong, decided that come whatever, he was going to put these new boards in place over the course of the year 2005, and they would take control in the year 2006. And, Madam Speaker, it has caused nothing but problems, divisions, arguments about whether decisions have been good or bad.

There's confusion in some of these divisions. There's certainly some very, very bad feelings about what has occurred. I've heard complaints about the fact the department hasn't kept up with the process and their bulletins haven't been distributed soon enough or widely enough to help the new boards to make right decisions on right criteria and protocol.

And so, you know, you hate to tell the NDP, I told you so. But we did tell them so, and they refused to listen. And as a result, there are probably . . . I'm sure there's some additional costs and there are some problems that could have been avoided.

I also want to talk just briefly about health care. We heard again a health care horror story in question period today. And I've certainly had to deal with them in the Rosetown-Elrose constituency.

But I noticed in the Speech from the Throne that the announcement of the Outlook Hospital occurred again. You know the Minister of Health was out in Outlook, and I was there the same day. And the announcement was made, oh, more than a year ago, probably closer to two years ago, perhaps even before that. And, you know, the program is under way. But you'd think, listening to the Speech from the Throne, that the decision was just made.

You know they keep announcing things over and over and over and over again. I feel sorry for the people of Humboldt who have had their hospital promised to them five times, and they still don't know whether they're going to get a hospital, Madam Speaker. That's cruel and unusual treatment for a community — to play politics in a riding even though it's held by the opposition, to go year after year and tell them they're going to get a new hospital and then do nothing about it.

They did the same thing in Moosomin. It took years. I'm sure my colleague from the Moosomin constituency would agree. You know the NDP would come in and promise the hospital and then do nothing. And the community would try to raise the funds, and they would raise the matching funds that were required. And then the NDP wouldn't get around to actually going forward with the project, and the cost of the project of course would go up. And then the community would have to go back and raise some more funds. And they would do that. And then the government would announce the project again, and then they would do nothing again.

Madam Speaker, this is barbaric. You don't do things like that in Canada. You shouldn't do things like that to the people of Saskatchewan. But the NDP are smug. I see the Deputy Premier smiling. He thinks it's a joke. He thinks it's funny to tell communities they're going to get a hospital to care for their people and then to be negligent, to negate on that promise, to negate that commitment to the people of that community who have worked hard and raised money and planned for the construction of a health care facility. And the member opposite

knows that that's absolutely true.

It reminds me of SARC [Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres]. SARC had to come cap in hand to this government time and time again for more funds so they could pay their employees an adequate wage. And they were turned aside and turned aside. They finally, Madam Speaker, had to demonstrate out in front of the legislature to get the government's attention. And then now we hear in the Speech from the Throne that they're going to do something about it. Well we'll watch to see whether they fulfill that promise or not. I know the people of Rosetown-Elrose that provide care to needy people who depend on the services provided by SARC will be watching very closely.

Madam Speaker, I also noticed in the Speech from the Throne irrigation was mentioned. Irrigation is a good thing; it said something along that line. Well, Madam Speaker, if this government is really serious about promoting irrigation and making irrigation of our farm land a priority, let's see them get beside the west side irrigation project in the Conquest area and Macrorie area north up to Perdue and Asquith. Let's see them put their money where their mouth is. Very nice for them to talk about promoting irrigation in the Speech from the Throne, but let's actually see something in the budget. Let's see the money allocated to get the, not just the feasibility studies, but the project under way.

Well, Madam Speaker, I want to make one more quote before I conclude my remarks. This quote is also from just a few years past. This quote is from December 10, 1986. And I quote:

Mr. Speaker, we're here for one purpose, and it's one purpose alone, and that's to serve — to serve the constituents . . . [who] elected us; to serve the people of this province; and in so doing to serve our nation and to serve the hurting world of which we are a part.

And, Mr. Speaker, when our days are done in this place, whether we've been a back-bencher, a member of the front bench, a member of the government, or a member of the opposition — when our days in this place are done we'll be judged, not on the accolades or the honours that we've taken for ourselves; we'll be judged not on the slickness of the image we're presented to the press; we will be judged not on how eloquent or uneloquent we were in this House, we will be judged on how we have served, and judged on not how well we have served the privileged, but on how well we have served the very least among us.

[16:15]

Now, Madam Speaker, that also is a quote from the current Premier when he sat in opposition. It's pretty sad to see that quote and realize that two premiers have served an inner-city riding in Saskatoon, and living conditions have not improved in that part of Saskatoon. In fact they've deteriorated. To see the violence, the bloodshed, the poverty, the poor housing, the food banks, the youth gangs, the vandalism, and, Madam Speaker, the Premier himself said this is what I should be judged on. If I can't fix this kind of problem, then I shouldn't be serving the public.

Well, Madam Speaker, the Premier has not served his own constituents well, nor did his predecessor serve his constituents well in the riding of Saskatoon Riversdale. And it's the same in the city of Regina and similar in the city of Prince Albert. The poor are becoming poorer. The food banks are becoming larger. The violence is expanding. Youth are involved in criminal activities. There is physical and sexual abuse of young people in the inner-city ridings. It's becoming so serious that our police forces who are understaffed because of broken NDP promises are not able to deal with that.

This government is not concerned about the most needy people in our province. They claim they are, Madam Speaker. They say they are in the Speech from the Throne. But their actions betray them as they have been betrayed time and time again. And by extension they have betrayed the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

Now in closing, Madam Speaker, I want to assure this Assembly that I intend to table another private member's Bill calling for set election dates. I would just note to my colleagues that there is progress in other provinces. I expect as long as we have an NDP government that they will turn their nose up at this idea, and Saskatchewan will likely be the last province to accept set election dates if the NDP stay in power. If there's a change in government, Madam Speaker, I expect that that will change. And we will be trendsetters as British Columbia is, as Ontario is, and some of the Atlantic provinces are.

The other thing, Madam Speaker, that I want to say in closing is that I was really disappointed that the Saskatchewan Roughriders lost in Montreal the other day. And my colleague, the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs in his member's statement talked about the fact that there's a NDP curse on the Saskatchewan Roughriders.

Now I don't believe in superstition and I don't even believe in jinxes, but it's true. Whenever we have an NDP government in office in Saskatchewan, the Riders have never won a Grey Cup. I can't explain why that should be except — except, Mr. Speaker — perhaps it's because the NDP portray a losing attitude. You know, they lose people. They lose jobs. They lose farmers. They lose economic confidence. They lose businesses. The NDP are a bunch of losers and I'm afraid that that is rubbing off on the Saskatchewan Roughriders. It shouldn't be, Mr. Speaker. It shouldn't be, but it seems to be.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if there was a Saskatchewan Party government I'm sure that, I'm sure that the Saskatchewan Roughriders from time to time would win the Grey Cup as they did under Conservative and Liberal governments.

The member from Dewdney, the member from Dewdney is asking me to make a commitment. Will the Roughriders win if we form government? They will win, Mr. Speaker, if the Saskatchewan Party forms the government because we believe that Saskatchewan can win. We believe that Saskatchewan can grow. We believe that Saskatchewan can be the best province in Canada. We believe that we can keep our young people in Saskatchewan. And we believe we can have the best darn football team in the entire country, Mr. Speaker, even though the NDP don't believe it.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want you to know that I will be supporting the amendment to the budget but I cannot support the window dressing that the . . . or not the budget, the Speech from the Throne. I'll be supporting the amendment to the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker. But I just can't support the window dressing and the empty words that came from the NDP government in the form of the Speech from the Throne the other day. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Centre, the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great honour and privilege to rise in the House today and speak on this government's Throne Speech, "Toward Our New Century," the first Throne Speech of our province's second century.

Mr. Speaker, "Toward Our New Century" delivers a powerful, clear vision of this government. It builds on our province's foundation of an unbreakable social fabric. It's all about hope, promise, and opportunity. And as I was sitting here listening to the former speaker over here — the doom and gloom and despair — and I saw a smile across his face. They seem to enjoy the negativity whenever they get going on negative stuff.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this speech embodies our government's commitment to continue moving forward together on a path towards a prosperous, green economy for present and future generations. Mr. Speaker, truly we are a have province with heart.

Now before I start, I want to say that I'm delighted to have you back as Mr. Speaker and it's a delight to see you there. I wanted to make some comments to my colleague from Regina Wascana Plains and congratulate her on her election — I think this is a wonderful thing — as a Deputy Speaker. It's especially fitting that her election represents the first as a woman that's been chosen as Deputy Speaker. And I think it's doubly wonderful that she's been given this opportunity and that we start out our next century this way.

I also want to take a moment to acknowledge and thank those who support me in my work in politics. This of course includes my family, my staff here in Regina and Saskatoon, and my executive. As you no doubt know, it's really important to have a strong community that supports you. It's critical to have that to be a good representative and they do deserve a big thank you. Thank you very much.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted to represent the constituency of Saskatoon Centre. It's a diverse riding that represents the arts, the business, the environment, and so many other groups in a significant way. The people of Saskatoon Centre come from all backgrounds, both economic and cultural, young and old, and a whole host of different things. It has its challenges but really, in many ways, it represents Saskatchewan. It's really, truly a community of communities.

These people are like all of us. We have our challenges but we rise to them and meet them head-on. What we do is we have a core set of values and this core set of values really is embodied in this speech — innovation, compassion, moving forward together.

But what really matters to the people of Saskatoon Centre are some very important issues and they include the economy, the education, safe communities, health, and the environment. And this Throne Speech meets the test, passing with flying colours.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as the people of Saskatoon Centre know, the result of this vision of our actions is to improve the quality of life for the people and communities of Saskatchewan and to leave no person behind. It is the goal, Mr. Speaker, of myself and my colleagues on this side of the House to turn our vision into reality. The achievement of our aims is what motivates and inspires this government, Mr. Speaker, to work tirelessly in reaching our goals within a rapidly changing and evolving world.

Mr. Speaker, we will not rest until we ensure that all the people of this province, including Aboriginal peoples, youth, workers, families and those marginalized from society, have access to opportunities they require to meet their needs. It is the resilience, fortitude, creativity, and determination of the First Nations and our immigrants that has made Saskatchewan what it is today — a place where people value community, co-operation, and friendship. Mr. Speaker, these are the threads of our unbreakable social fabric.

We could see the strength of the social fabric during our province's extremely successful centennial celebrations. And I'd like to take a moment and acknowledge the good work of the member for Moose Jaw North, our Legislative Secretary, for the outstanding work he did coordinating and leading our celebrations.

I'd also like to take a moment to acknowledge and thank my department for the role they played in the centennial celebrations. Our parks were abuzz with activities and I want to tell you some of the great results. We had over 370,000 entries into the Hunt of a Lifetime contest, nearly 1,000 entries in our parks passport contest, and more than 10,000 people voted for our provincial fish emblem contest. Now I'm proud to say that the walleye is nominated as our provincial official fish and we'll see where that goes.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this government has a bold vision to continue to build a greener and more prosperous economy. To this end I'd like to take a few moments and talk about our green initiative. Our government clearly recognizes that our environment and economy are not two solitudes. Rather they are woven together in a sustainable manner.

We will ensure that our environment remains clean and healthy because on this side of the House we recognize that a healthy environment supports a strong economy and a strong economy respects the health of the environment. Now in the last election we made a campaign commitment to build a greener, prosperous economy and we are keeping that promise. We are moving forward together.

This government will lead the country in energy conservation practices. This was made clear the day after the Throne Speech when we announced the Saskatchewan Energy Share program. It's a major step in our effort to promote home energy conservation measures.

One of the highlights of this program is it provides people with low incomes — generally those with older homes in need of more renovation upgrades — the opportunity to lower the costs of heating and powering their homes. Mr. Speaker, middle- and higher-income Canadians spend approximately 5 to 10 per cent of their income on energy while low-income earners, one-fifth of the Canadian population, spend more than 20 per cent of their income on energy.

So, Mr. Speaker, I was absolutely delighted when we announced our Saskatchewan Energy Share program. One of the initiatives is to improve 2,500 homes in the next five years; that's 500 homes a year in eight different communities in Saskatchewan.

Now another area that's very important, Mr. Speaker, is our water conservation strategy. And this will be announced before the end of the year. People have been talking about that. They value water as an important commodity here in Saskatchewan. As well, Mr. Speaker, we've made great strides in protecting one of the province's natural legacies, the Great Sand Hills. We have legislated the highest protection possible for acres and acres of the Great Sand Hills.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to turn now to the great vision that we have for the future. I'm excited about being part of a government that has a vision about energy and expanded use of clean, renewable energy sources which will power our province in the future. In 20 years, one-third of Saskatchewan's energy needs will be met by clean, renewable energy sources. This is powerful stuff, Mr. Speaker.

As well, Mr. Speaker, we are committed to forestry and to being a leader in forestry as our vast forests . . . central Saskatchewan's green and prosperous economy. Over the next 20 years we've committed to transform 10 per cent of arable land to agroforestry. And we will utilize the expertise of the Saskatchewan forestry centre to make the most of our vast forest resources.

Mr. Speaker, we are listening to the people of Saskatchewan. And they have placed an emphasis on the importance of our clean air, clean water, and the responsible management of our natural resources here in Saskatchewan.

It's been my pleasure over the last couple of months to participate in province-wide consultations with forums of diverse groups of stakeholders and members of the public. Now we've discussed many things, Mr. Speaker, including sustainable waste management, water stewardship, parks, stewardship of renewable natural resources, and the green economy. These forums have engaged both national and international experts as well as local groups and individuals representing a wide range of interests and backgrounds.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we committed to build on the results of a green strategy by expanding conservation activities, recycling programs, better integrated approach to managing our water resources. And, Mr. Speaker, our government will lead by example.

Now despite what you may hear from the opposition, Mr. Speaker, ensuring a healthy environment does not mean that we

must sacrifice our economy. In fact, Mr. Speaker, you don't hear very much from them at all in terms of environmental issues.

[16:30]

As well, Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne highlighted that 2006 will be our 75th anniversary of the Saskatchewan parks system. Our parks will showcase clean and green practices and our stewardship of protected land will be a lasting inheritance.

In this Throne Speech we clearly state that we will work with northerners and First Nations towards recognition of the Churchill River as one of Saskatchewan's natural legacies. We recognize that many northern people have a close connection to the Churchill River and the surrounding land, and we will be working with them to ensure that the beauty and significance of this river is maintained not only for us to appreciate and enjoy but more importantly, Mr. Speaker, that we will protect the Churchill River for generations to come.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it's also very important that our vision recognizes that our community's youth and families remain safe and healthy. The safer communities and neighbourhood initiatives have gone a long way to do that, and I'm delighted to see the missing person strategy as part of our Throne Speech. And as well, we are tackling issues head-on such as the crystal meth problem through the Premier's Project Hope initiative — a project we're proud to say has drawn national recognition under the leadership of our Premier — and that this project will be advanced in the very capable hands of our member from Saskatoon Sutherland, the new Minister of Healthy Living Services.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to just take a few minutes and talk about the social programs that mean so much to the people here in Saskatchewan and to the people of Saskatoon Centre. I'm delighted to hear the words about the services of the midwives being recognized. I'm also delighted to hear about the children's hospital in Saskatoon. I'm also happy to see that we will be creating a pre-kindergarten program for four-year-olds to give them the best start to their education as possible. As well, Mr. Speaker, as a teacher I'm delighted to see that we have made it a commitment to have our young people lead this country in educational achievements in literacy rates. As well, Mr. Speaker, the seniors gold card, a great initiative, very innovative, to help our seniors access programs and resources that will help them out.

Mr. Speaker, I am also very, very happy to see that we will be leading the nation with the most progressive labour legislation that helps enable fairness in the workplace. And we will continue that tradition by awaiting the Commission on Improving Work Opportunities for Saskatchewan Residents, a report with recommendations that we will act upon.

Mr. Speaker, we also recognize the valuable contributions of community-based organizations as identified in the Throne Speech. We have committed to providing increased funding of over \$30 million over three years to address staff wages, recruitment, and retention.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a moment before I end my remarks and give a quote by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in a famous letter that he wrote from Birmingham jail to his fellow clergy in 1963. The context was here to keep working, to encourage people to overcome issues while others told them, don't worry; things will be okay. And I think very much that that's similar here — here where we have a Throne Speech that's promoting innovation, rising to the challenges that are here before the people of Saskatchewan. He writes:

I cannot sit idly [by] in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.

Mr. Speaker, this really is what our Throne Speech toward a new century is all about when we talk about leaving no one behind. We all move forward together to capture the next century of our proud history here in Saskatchewan.

This Throne Speech reminds us of our collective responsibility to each other. It's our vision to advance the collective well-being of all people in this province so that no one is left behind. We have work ahead of us in order to achieve that goal. But it is a conviction that we share as a government and, more importantly, as a people that will ensure prosperity in this province.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will be voting against the amendment but I will be voting for the original motion put forward from this side of the House because it recognizes not only our limitless potential as a province and as a people, but it recognizes the government's plan to help them realize that. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Cut Knife-Turtleford.

Mr. Chisholm: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a privilege to address this Assembly for my constituents from the Cut Knife-Turtleford constituency. My constituents have told me this past weekend that this Throne Speech is lacking. It's lacking of direction, and it's lacking of understanding of what's really going on in this province. However in this centennial year, I look forward to putting my thoughts and words on the record.

Mr. Speaker, I farm. I still farm in the Maidstone area. I don't apologize for being a farmer, although I certainly don't acclaim great success in this venture as of late. We're not a large farm. We farm approximately 1,300 acres of productive land. We grow mainly wheat and canola.

My great-grandfather, Gothart Gilley homesteaded what is part of our family farm in 1904. He had dreams. His dreams were that this place, soon to become Saskatchewan, would be the place where he would provide for his family, his children, his grandchildren, and his great-grandchildren. It was a wonderful dream, Mr. Speaker, and he accomplished this dream in part.

His children prospered in this province and expanded their operations. They were educated and offered opportunities that must have been part of that dream. Together they built schools and places of worship and a successful family farm. Mr. Speaker, his children, including my grandmother, kept it up.

My grandmother married a Scottish immigrant and, with the help of my great-grandfather, started Chisholm Farms, an enterprise that I am pleased, along with my wife Heather, to presently operate. My mom and dad had dreams and they wanted to contribute to this place called Saskatchewan. They wanted to surround themselves with their children and their grandchildren. But in some respects they failed, Mr. Speaker, or the province of Saskatchewan failed their dreams.

I am from a family of three — one sister, one brother, and myself. My parents failed not on their own part but on the failure of this province and this government to reach the potential that it might have been. My sister works and contributes to the economic engine of the province of British Columbia. My brother, Mr. Speaker, works and contributes to the economic engine of the state of Texas in the United States. Heather and I are still here, so I guess at least we are contributing to the economic engine of Saskatchewan in part.

But, Mr. Speaker, we also have failed. We have three boys. Our oldest, Ian, and his wife, Anne-Marie, operate a consulting business. They have received national and international acclaim for their work. Unfortunately there was no job opportunities in Saskatchewan when they returned from Europe, and they are now in Victoria, British Columbia.

Ian was the recipient of the Saskatchewan Junior Citizen of the Year and a Saskatchewan representative in the United World College baccalaureate program. Ian and Anne-Marie are now working in Victoria where they contribute to the British Columbia economy. We regret that our grandchildren are thousands of kilometres away, Mr. Speaker.

Our second son, Bradley, is presently completing his degree of law from the University of Calgary. Bradley was also selected Saskatchewan Junior Citizen of the Year and subsequently also represented Saskatchewan as a student in the United World College program. It appears that we also have lost Bradley from Saskatchewan as he has accepted a position in Calgary.

Our third son, Stephan, is presently working in Alberta as a radio announcer. Stephan was a participant in the Canada World Youth program and had an opportunity to spend a number of months in Poland on this program.

So you can see, Mr. Speaker, that somehow my parents failed, one out of three, in their retention of their families. And Heather and I have failed even worse. We're zero for three. We as a family have not done well to preserve our Saskatchewan heritage. I ask how long will we allow this to continue. This is unfortunately not a unique family situation. This Speech from the Throne does not address this loss and/or how we can turn this around.

Mr. Speaker, my background is that of my . . . the background of my constituency is a background based on agriculture and oil and gas industry and supplemental businesses that support these

industries. That's the economics. That's the economics of the engine of our area. Maidstone is home for me. Maidstone has a population of approximately 1,200 people which has been relatively stable over the past 15 to 20 years.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to focus on two areas that I have identified as the drivers of our constituency's economy. Firstly, agriculture. Our Agriculture minister has assured the agriculture industry that the programs that are presently available, that is the CAIS [Canadian agricultural income stabilization] program and the crop insurance program, provide the protection and safety net for this industry.

Mr. Speaker, I've run some numbers of my own from my own farm which will indicate the realities of these programs, and I would ask all members of this House to make their own conclusions. Firstly with the CAIS program. As you may or may not be aware, in the CAIS program, the maximum coverage that one can insure for is 92 per cent of your average production. In the past three years, the gross margin on my farm has dropped from \$60,476 in 2003 to \$49,274 in 2004 to \$40,401 in 2005. So the protection that I receive from this touted program this year is 33 per cent less than it was two years ago when it came into place.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, the crop insurance program is even worse. As I had mentioned before, we grow mostly wheat and canola, so I'll just look at these numbers. And in my farm operation I have chosen the 70 per cent coverage level. In the three-year period ending 2005, the per cent of coverage that I am able to purchase through crop insurance has dropped by 61 per cent . . . by 41 per cent rather, Mr. Speaker, and the premium has increased by 61 per cent.

In my canola, my coverage has declined by 31 per cent, and my premium has gone up by 69 per cent. So I guess my question, Mr. Speaker, is for the members opposite: how would you like a 70 per cent increase in your insurance premiums with a 40 per cent decrease in your protection level?

Some one month ago, Mr. Speaker, I had to attend a conference of leaders of today, leaders of tomorrow in Edmonton. I noted in the Premier of Saskatchewan's address to the leaders of tomorrow — young leaders from across this country — in his vision for Saskatchewan, agriculture was not even mentioned.

Mr. Speaker, to show the disconnect that I sense in this government when it comes to business, is in the throne Speech they talk about agroforestry, a 20-year project that will eventually take over 10 per cent of the arable land of Saskatchewan for agroforestry. That's interesting. The same day I received in the mail the Canada-Saskatchewan environmental farm plan program which outlines all the programs that the federal and Saskatchewan government are participating on in the next number of years. This program doesn't show up here. So if this is really some kind of a serious change in the agriculture policy, I certainly would have thought it would have been covered there.

Mr. Speaker, in Western Canada we've become the third priority area for oil and gas development, not because the reserves are not here but because of the tax regime, the royalty situation, and the layers of bureaucratic structure that exist. I'm

told that when drilling decisions are made in Calgary on similar potential sites in Western Canada, the number one choice is Alberta. The number two choice is British Columbia. And the number three choice would be Saskatchewan. So here too we are last.

[16:45]

Mr. Speaker, this past Sunday I discovered a parallel in looking at the development of this province's resources and that of our neighbour's to the west. We as a province may indeed not have the same resources as do have our neighbours. However, Mr. Speaker, we've been blessed with resources, with talents if you will. In the Gospel of Matthew, Mr. Speaker, he talks about the use of talents that are made available to us.

The master gave five talents to one of his slaves, two talents to another, and one talent to the third.

The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, [and] saying, 'Master you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy . . . [servant]; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things . . .

Likewise, Mr. Speaker, the slave who had been given the two talents was able to return to his master with a matching two talents. However the one that had only received one talent came forward and said:

. . . 'Master I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent into the ground. Here you have what is yours.' But his master replied, 'You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers . . . what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who nothing, even . . . [when] they have . . . [all been] taken away. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

The parallel, Mr. Speaker, is concerning. I question that the people of Saskatchewan do not want to be the worthless slave thrown out to darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Mr. Speaker, the time for this province to come out of the darkness is nigh. It is time for this province to develop its talents. If today were the day of reckoning I don't think we would score very well.

Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the Speech from the Throne but will be supporting the amendment put forth by the Leader of the Opposition. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Health, the member for Regina Lakeview.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to enter into this Throne Speech debate and talk about the future of Saskatchewan and about the goals and the dreams that I have as the member from Regina Lakeview — goals that are based on my grandparents and great-grandparents who settled in this province — and about my children and the goals and dreams that I have for them and their children and my children's children in the years to come, because this is about the future of the province of Saskatchewan. It's about hope. It's about how you instill the wherewithal for all of the people of this province to participate in building a society where no one is left behind.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what we want for ourselves, we desire for all of our neighbours, our friends, our families, and the people who live with us. And I would venture to say that that statement also applies as we look at our country and as we look at our world.

There are many things that we do in this province that are in some ways experiments, some ways positive attempts to sort out how a society can work together co-operatively. We do that in how we organize our economy. We do that in how we organize our education system. We do that in how we organize the social supports that we provide for everybody.

So what we need to always remind ourselves is that people across Canada, in the United States, and around the world look at what we do in Saskatchewan and say are they working at goals that will build a new world, a new place for everybody in the world. And I guess what I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, is that we have a long record of doing that, and we need to not forget that when we're working . . . we have to work for the long, long term.

Now, Mr. Speaker, our vision set out in the Throne Speech is that there will be no one left behind on the path to opportunity. We'll have a province with unbreakable social fabric built on a foundation of diverse and growing communities in a green and prosperous economy.

Mr. Speaker, I represent Regina Lakeview. Regina Lakeview has a long tradition of providing leaders in our community and in our province. And I was very pleased to hear last week that when Statistics Canada did its review of the artistic community and people who are involved professionally in the arts, that the postal code which encompasses Regina Lakeview was the second in the country, after an area of Montreal, with the percentage of artists and people have their careers and their lives enveloped in the arts.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge that group. But I also want to acknowledge the support of the whole province of Saskatchewan because what we have in our artistic community is people who put the words around, the images around, the

stories around what we dream about as being the appropriate community for our province and for our country. And I want to thank those people for doing that.

I also make a brief comment about the support that I have from my family, my wife Linda, my daughters, Ingrid and Solveig, who have for over 10 years now been part of this life and this community which we call the legislature. And that's not always an easy task, but I have to thank them for living up to that role and being part of that role and giving me support in these years.

I also need to thank my parents, Tom and Randi Nilson, who have provided an active interest in my political life. And also I want to thank the people in my local community who support me in all the work that I do through three campaigns. And specifically I want to thank Elaine Wood, who was my constituency assistant for 10 years, who is now retired; Karen Pattison who worked with her and succeeded her; and now Bernie Yakimchuk who have provided that role for me.

I'm also in a very interesting situation, and a couple more people that I want to thank are Elaine Maksymiw and Wendy Hollinger. When I was appointed a minister this month, 10 years ago, I had two people come and work with me. They've worked with me for the full 10 years that I've been in the role as a minister. And I want to thank them specifically for the support and guidance that they have provided over that time, along with many other people who have worked in my office. But they have provided the real source of stability which has allowed me to tackle some fairly tough jobs.

Now in the time that I have allotted, I wanted to spend some time looking at the health highlights that we have in this particular Throne Speech which build on the work that we did and we've done around the Action Plan for Saskatchewan Health which the Premier and I introduced in December 2001. At that point if you recall, we had a great deal of discussion in the community, across the province, and right here in this legislature in response to a report that was commissioned by my predecessors from Mr. Ken Fyke.

Mr. Ken Fyke set out some fairly hard statements about what the health system should be in Saskatchewan and that engendered a lot of discussion. Out of that discussion came our action plan which has given us a guide over the last four years to do many things. And, Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech that we have now that we presented last week identifies a number of further steps that we're able to take to fulfill the commitments we made in our action plan.

The first one that I want to talk briefly about relates to the renewal of our health infrastructure. We know that we have lots of work to do around the physical structures in our province. I think we have about 269 facilities across the province. And we're continuing to work with communities to rejuvenate, create new opportunities, create new facilities. And I specifically want to thank the communities, the leadership in the regional health authorities, and the staff in Saskatchewan Health who have been able to take the dreams and ideas of local communities and bring them forward to fruition.

In this particular year we have a number of facilities. In Moosomin we're on the way to developing a new health care

facility there which will clearly serve that community for the next 40 or 50 years. And the local people and their creativity around raising funds there working, together with the regional health authority, were able to have that project move ahead.

I was up in Preeceville not that long ago to affirm the work that they're doing there in their community around building a health care facility that allows them to build a new long-term care facility attached to the health care building that's there. They have been able to work with their consultants and with the local community and all of the neighbouring communities to come up with some very, very good and positive ideas, and I'm pleased to say that that project is moving right along.

I also had the pleasure last month — or just over a month ago — to go to Maidstone and do a groundbreaking for their new health care facility which will allow them to build a new long-term care facility which is attached to the health care centre.

Anybody who travels west from this legislature going towards Swift Current knows that when you hit Swift Current there's a big construction project taking place on just the northeast corner of Swift Current which is the new regional hospital for the Cypress Health Region. That particular facility is the result of good, hard work by the local Action Swift Current working together with all of the communities in the Cypress Health Region. The leadership from the civic officials and local officials, from the Reeves of the RMs and the mayors of towns in that community allowed them to come together with a common vision of what they needed in that particular area. And, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that I think they now have two storeys up on this facility and are starting to close in parts of it, and we will have a brand new facility in that region providing a great deal of service to the people of southwest Saskatchewan.

In Outlook, Mr. Speaker, they're working on an integrated health centre which will allow for rejuvenated health care unit attached to the long-term care facility and once again the leadership in the town of Outlook, together the leadership in the RMs and other towns in that whole vicinity, have come together with a vision about the kind of care that needs to be provided there. And, Mr. Speaker, that project is moving along, and I look forward to next summer and seeing the construction starting at that place as well.

[17:00]

Mr. Speaker, in Herbert, also in the Cypress Health Region, they have now come to an agreement as to how to do the renovations at the long-term care facility to incorporate the various clinic aspects that they need. And that project is proceeding as well.

Humboldt, St. Elizabeth's Hospital, this has been a project that we've been working at for quite a while. The Saskatoon Health Region, working together with the local people, are close to getting the final functional plan done for the whole new hospital that's being built there. Mr. Speaker, it takes a lot of work, many different people to get everything organized. But I'm very pleased to report that St. Elizabeth's Hospital is moving along as well.

In Ile-a-la-Crosse, together with my colleague the Minister of Learning, we're building what will be a unique facility in Canada where we have the high school and community college building attached via a central, sort of, cafeteria area and meeting area with the long-term care and the acute care part of the facility. And, Mr. Speaker, it's possible to look on a website and see this particular project as they are monitoring it from all locations.

But, Mr. Speaker we'll continue a little bit later.

The Speaker: — Order please. Members, it now being past the hour of 5 o'clock, this House stands recessed until 7 p.m. this evening.

[The Assembly recessed until 19:00.]

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