



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

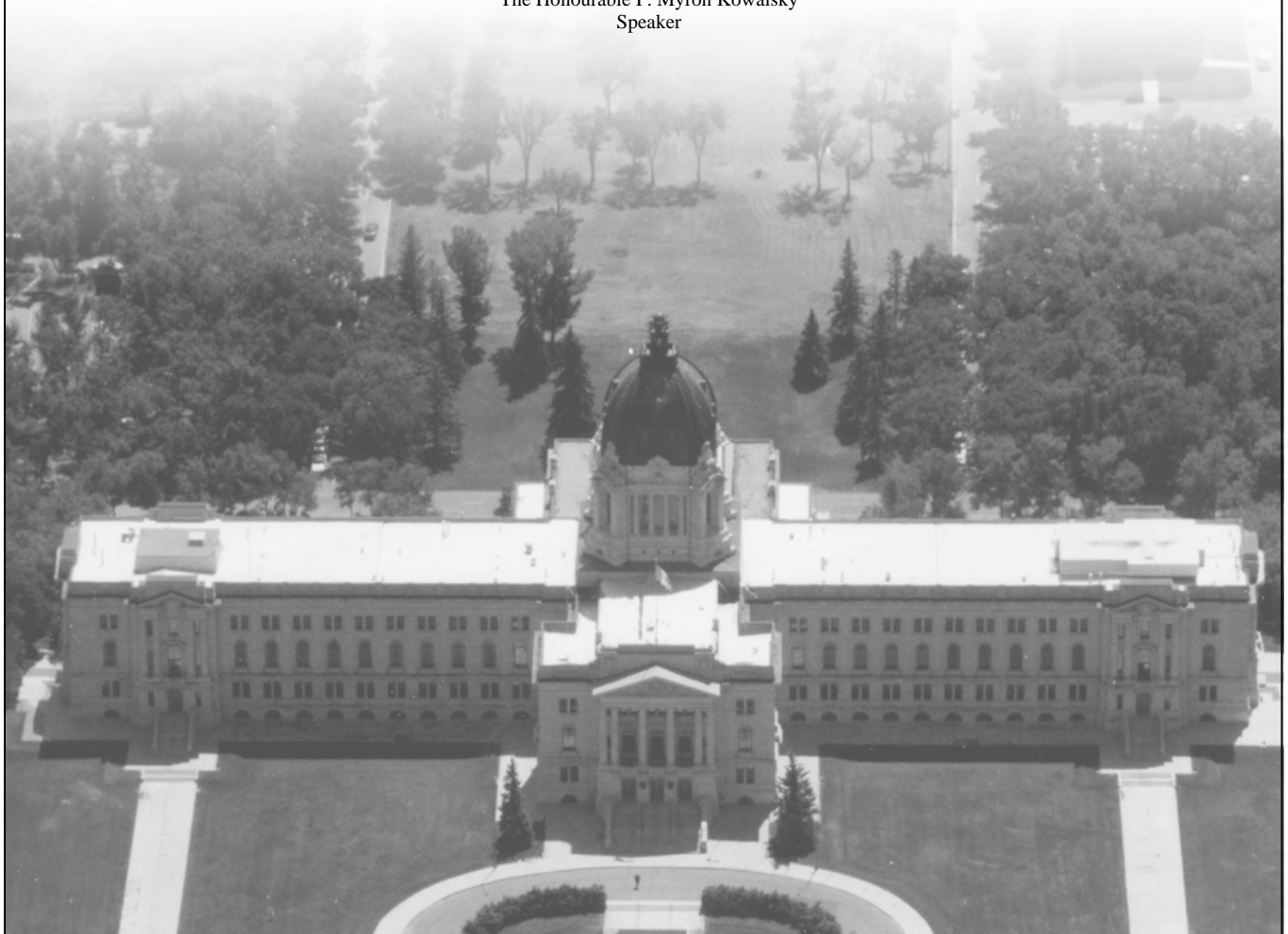
Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**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
Beatty, Hon. Joan	NDP	Cumberland
Belanger, Hon. Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornrud, Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
Borgerson, Lon	NDP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
Calvert, Hon. Lorne	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
Chisholm, Michael	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
Cline, Hon. Eric	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Crofford, Joanne	NDP	Regina Rosemont
D'Autremont, Dan	SP	Cannington
Dearborn, Jason	SP	Kindersley
Draude, June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
Duncan, Dustin	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
Forbes, Hon. David	NDP	Saskatoon Centre
Gantfoer, Rod	SP	Melfort
Hagel, Hon. 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, Nancy	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, Hon. 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, Peter	NDP	Saskatoon Greystone
Quennell, Hon. Frank	NDP	Saskatoon Meewasin
Serby, Hon. Clay	NDP	Yorkton
Sonntag, Hon. Maynard	NDP	Meadow Lake
Stewart, Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Taylor, Hon. Len	NDP	The Battlefords
Thomson, Hon. Andrew	NDP	Regina South
Toth, Don	SP	Moosomin
Trew, Kim	NDP	Regina Coronation Park
Van Mulligen, Hon. Harry	NDP	Regina Douglas Park
Wakefield, Milton	SP	Lloydminster
Wall, Brad	SP	Swift Current
Wartman, Hon. Mark	NDP	Regina Qu'Appelle Valley
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege today to present a petition in regards to a dialysis unit and its need in the Broadview area. And I'll read the prayer:

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

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

The petition is signed by the good folks of Rocanville, Whitewood, Broadview, and Cowessess. I so present.

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

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to present a petition on behalf of constituents of Cypress Hills concerned about the closure of the SaskPower office as of this last Friday. 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 keep the SaskPower office in Shaunavon open to provide full service to the community and surrounding areas.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, today's three pages of petitions are signed by individuals from the communities of Shaunavon, Climax, and Eastend. I so present.

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

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

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary actions to ensure that the Maryfield School remains open.

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

These petitions come from the good community of Maryfield and Fairlight. I so present, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for

Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to rise again today on behalf of people in my area who are very concerned about the crumbling highways we're travelling on. The petition I'm speaking about today involves Highway No. 49. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause this government to repair Highway 49 in order to address safety concerns and to facilitate economic growth and tourism in Lintlaw, Kelvington, Preeceville, and surrounding areas.

The people that have signed this petition are from Kelvington and Lintlaw. And I so present on their behalf.

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

Mr. Hermanson: — Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition concerned about the NDP's [New Democratic Party] unrelenting withdrawal of service from rural Saskatchewan, particularly withdrawal of service of the SaskPower office at Rosetown. And, Mr. Speaker, the prayer of the petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to keep the SaskPower office in Rosetown open to provide full service to the community and surrounding areas.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition come from the fine community of Rosetown. And I'm pleased to present it on their behalf.

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

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with the dangerous practice of transferring patients from one ambulance to another while on the highway. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to cease the transfer of patients from one ambulance to another while en route.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals from the communities of Chaplin, Central Butte, and Riverhurst. I so present.

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

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again today I want to present a number of pages of a petition of citizens concerned

with the safety of driving on 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 Meacham, St-Denis, Colonsay, Sunset Estates, and Saskatoon. I so present.

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

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again today I rise to present a petition on behalf of constituents of mine who are very concerned about the horrible condition of Highway 18. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to invest the needed money to repair and maintain Highway 18 so it can return to being a safe and economical route for Saskatchewan families and business.

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

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by folks from Lake Alma. I so present. Thank you.

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

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to present a petition from citizens opposed to possible reductions of health care services in Wilkie. 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 Wilkie Health Centre and special care home maintain at the very least their current level of services.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

This petition is signed by the good citizens of Unity and district. I so present.

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present another petition on behalf of the 600 children under six years old and their parents in the Saskatoon Silver Springs constituency regarding a much needed elementary school in the Arbor Creek and Willowgrove area of Saskatoon. The prayer of the petition reads as follows:

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

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

The petitioners today come from Chotem Place, Wright Crescent, and Kenderdine Drive in northeast Saskatoon. I so present.

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

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again with a petition from citizens that are very concerned that the withdrawal of lab services at the Lafleche and District Health Centre would cause undue hardship to residents, especially seniors. And the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary actions to ensure that lab services are continued at the Lafleche and District Health Centre.

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

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by the good citizens all over rural Saskatchewan and even some from Grande Prairie, Alberta. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Rosthern-Shellbrook.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Assembly today to bring forth a petition signed by citizens of Saskatchewan that are concerned with the government's handling of our rural school closures. 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 actions to ensure that the Limerick School remains open.

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

Mr. Speaker, signatures of this petition are from Limerick and Assiniboia. I so present.

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

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to bring forward a petition — citizens that are concerned with the condition of Highway 368, starting 4 miles south of Lake Lenore to 4 miles south of St. Brieux, and that this highway endangers the safety of drivers and harms economic growth in the area. And the prayer reads as follows:

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 Highway 368 in order to address safety and economic concerns.

And as duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And, Mr. Speaker, it was signed by the good people of Lake

Lenore, St. Brieux, Middle Lake, Prince Albert. I so present.

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

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, I have a petition here with citizens concerned about rural school closures:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to ensure that the Imperial, Govan, Nokomis, and Drake schools remain open.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

I have many signatures here from the town of Drake and Lockwood and Lanigan and surrounding area. I so present. Thank you.

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

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege in the House today to present a petition regarding keeping rural schools open. I will read the prayer for relief:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary actions to ensure that the Imperial, Govan, Nokomis, and Drake schools remain open.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by citizens from Drake, Saskatchewan. I am pleased to present it on their behalf. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — According to order the petitions received at the last sitting have been reviewed and pursuant to rule 15(7) are hereby read and received.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

Mr. Chisholm: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day 45 move that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing:

To the Minister Responsible for Government Relations: please provide a copy of the government's internal examination on TILMA, including the economic impact study for Saskatchewan prepared by the Conference Board of Canada and any reviews focused on the effects of TILMA on Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day 45 ask the government the following questions:

To the Minister of Community Resources: how much money was paid out as a result of firings related to department employees harassment in the fiscal year 2000-2001?

And I have the same questions, Mr. Speaker, right through the subsequent years to 2006-2007.

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day 45 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Community Resources: of the harassment complaints filed in the 2000-2001 fiscal year, how many were there verified?

I have the same in subsequent questions, Mr. Speaker, all the way through to the years 2006-2007.

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day 45 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Community Resources: how many department employees were charged with harassment for the fiscal year 2000-2001?

And subsequent questions all the way through to the year 2006-2007.

[13:45]

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day 45 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Community Resources: how many harassment-related complaints were filed in the fiscal year 2000-2001?

And through subsequent years through 2006-2007.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day 45 ask the government the following questions:

To the Minister of Community Resources: how many department employees harassment cases resulted in convictions, disciplinary actions, or firings in the fiscal year 2000-2001?

And the same question, Mr. Speaker, through subsequent years of 2006-2007. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 45 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Advanced Education and Employment: what is the expected completion date of the academic health sciences centre at the University of Saskatchewan?

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 45 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Advanced Education and Employment: what is the total amount that has been allocated to the academic health sciences centre to date at the University of Saskatchewan?

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

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 45 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: how will the 8.9 million allocated for additional surgeries in this year's budget be allocated?

I've got a number of questions that aren't similar. I'm going to read the first couple and then just table the rest. I give notice that I shall on day no. 45 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: what was the total amount of money spent on staff travel with the minister in the fiscal year 2006-2007?

I give notice that I shall on day no. 45 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: how many staff were employed in the minister's office during the fiscal year of 2006-2007?

I give notice that I shall on day no. 45 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: who determines when a patient is officially put on the surgical wait list?

And one more, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 45 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: how much money was paid out in severance and to whom during the fiscal year of 2006-2007?

I have a number of other questions covering various areas. I so present.

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

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 45 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy: does SaskEnergy outsource any of its operations to out-of-province companies? And if so, what services, what companies are providing services, and in which province and at what cost? And how long has SaskEnergy been doing this?

And in addition, Mr. Speaker, that I give notice that I shall on day no. 45 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for SaskPower: does SaskPower outsource any of its operations to out-of-province companies? And if so, what services, what companies are providing services and in which province, at what cost, and how long has SaskPower been doing this?

And finally, Mr. Speaker:

To the Minister Responsible for SaskTel: does SaskTel have any offices in Alberta? And if so, how many people are employed there, what functions does the office perform, and what is the cost to operate that office?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There's some anticipation in the opposition benches about the introduction I'm about to provide, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to welcome to the Saskatchewan legislature the federal Leader of the New Democratic Party, Mr. Jack Layton.

Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to welcome Jack Layton again to the province of Saskatchewan. He is a regular visitor to our province. It is a pleasure to welcome a parliamentary leader in Ottawa who speaks clearly to the aspirations of Saskatchewan families and, Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to welcome a parliamentary leader who speaks of accountability to promises made to Saskatchewan families. And, Mr. Speaker, if I may say, it's a pleasure to welcome a leader who comes to our province and it's not a top-secret mission when he comes, Mr. Speaker.

So I'd ask all members, all members to welcome the federal Leader of the New Democratic Party, Mr. Jack Layton.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I would want to join with the Premier on behalf of the opposition in welcoming Mr. Layton to the Legislative Assembly today.

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, if I may, in the gallery opposite it's a pleasure to introduce a couple of young people who are currently living in Calgary but both from Saskatchewan. Graham Cooper is the brother of one of our excellent researchers, Bill Cooper, has joined us. He is a plumber by trade, I believe, originally from the city of Regina and he's joined by his wife, Lisa, who is from the very great city of Swift Current, Saskatchewan. She is a teacher. And while they're only visiting from Calgary today it's obviously our hope, Mr. Speaker, that soon and very soon they'd be able to call Saskatchewan home again.

I wonder if members will join me in welcoming them to this

Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Regina Coronation Park.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour today to introduce a fellow seated in the west gallery.

This gentleman hails from Tisdale where he is a hockey player of some renown, a centre ice hockey player, as a matter of fact. He's ex of the U of R [University of Regina] Cougars, but he sure knows, just in response to members opposite — good-natured — he sure does know where left wing is.

Mr. Speaker, the centre-cum-left-winger in the west gallery that I speak to is none other than Leigh Spencer, who is the nominated candidate for the New Democratic Party in Carrot River Valley. And if I may be permitted to welcome Mr. Layton — and forgive me, sir, as I say back off, Jack, we found him first.

I ask all members to join me in welcoming Leigh Spencer to the legislature.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Members of the Assembly, it's my honour today to introduce to you a group of teachers who are here in the legislature to attend the ninth annual Saskatchewan Teachers' Institute on Parliamentary Democracy. The institute started on Saturday and will continue through to Wednesday.

Already this group has met with the Chief Electoral Officer, members of the judiciary, and observed an educational outreach mock parliament with students from Strasbourg, here in the Legislative Chamber. They are scheduled to meet with the House leaders, caucus Chairs, caucus Whips, private members from both sides of the House, and cabinet ministers as well as government caucus and legislative staff.

I would like to introduce these teachers, and they might just give a little wave as I mention their names. We have with us today Brita Baranieski from North Battleford Comprehensive High; Martin Berg, Unity Composite High School; Devin Bitschy, University of Regina; Jocelyne Cumming, Kinistino School; Betty Elliott, Henry Janzen School; Guy Farquharson, Delisle Composite School; Debra Highmoor, Grenfell Community School; Joanne Johnston, SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] campus in Prince Albert.

Jonas Kiedrowski, Public Legal Education Association of Saskatchewan; Trever Kutnikoff, École Vickers School in Prince Albert; Marilyn Lowenberger, Wynyard Elementary School; Julie Mintenko, Punnichy Community High School; Mike Nassachuk, WorldBeat project in Regina; Joanne Patron, Jack MacKenzie School in Regina; Jeff Perry, Thom Collegiate here in Regina; and Collin Walker, Bishop Lloyd Middle School in Lloydminster.

I would also like to introduce a special guest who is here to

observe our institute. She is Diana Panizzone, who is the program administrator from visitor services at the Alberta legislature. And I would like to make special mention of our steering committee composed of four officials from the Department of Learning and three teachers who attended past institutes.

From the Department of Learning we have Gerry Craswell, Gail Saunders, Anna Schmidt, and Brent Toles, and teachers Tim McFadden from Thom Collegiate, Randy Glettler, a recently retired teacher from Winston Knoll Collegiate, and Ryan Hughes, École Vickers School. This group will be observing the afternoon proceedings with great interest. I ask all members to welcome this group to the Saskatchewan legislature at this time.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Duncan: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join with the Leader of the Opposition in welcoming Graham and Lisa Cooper to the Assembly today. I've had the chance to get to know Graham through my friendship with his brother Bill, and I look forward to talking to them after today's question period. And hopefully I'll see them out at the lake this summer. It's a pretty valuable invite to get invited to the Cooper compound. So I'm looking forward to that this summer.

And, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet, I'm very pleased to introduce one of the teachers that's here today. Ryan Hughes is seated in your gallery. Mr. Speaker, Ryan and I went to school together in Weyburn. We graduated together at the Weyburn Comprehensive. We were really good friends in high school and actually I'm looking forward to seeing him. It's been a long time. And in fact I think we have some planning to do because we have a 10-year reunion to plan for this summer so I look forward to talking with Ryan later. And I would ask all members to welcome Ryan to his Assembly today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Kowalsky: — I do have one other introduction. I see in the west gallery a former colleague of mine when I was teaching school in Prince Albert, and that is Ron Johnson who is here with a guest as well. Welcome, Ron, to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

2007 Juno Awards in Saskatoon

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, people from all across this province have worked long and hard to bring four music award shows to four different Saskatchewan cities this year. And each and every person involved deserves a huge round of applause.

Mr. Speaker, the first of these events, the Juno Awards,

wrapped up in Saskatoon last night and they were a tremendous success. In addition to the gala and awards dinner, there was a Juno Cup hockey game hosted by Prince Albert, the showcase of First Nations and Métis artists and performers, and JunoFest that featured well over 100 artists playing at 15 venues over three nights.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatoon really knows how to throw a party and the benefits of this one are going to be felt for a long time to come. Mr. Speaker, over and above the economic benefits and an opportunity to showcase Saskatchewan artists, performers, and musicians, the Juno Awards also provide an opportunity to showcase Saskatchewan as the volunteer capital of Canada. With more than 1,200 volunteers, it is believed Saskatoon has had the largest volunteer contingent of any host city — 2,500 people registered for the 1,200 positions available.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this Assembly to join me in commending the organizers of the Juno Awards and in recognizing the Juno Awards volunteers. Their vision, hard work, and dedication ensured that the 2007 Juno Awards would be an overwhelming success. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to join with the member opposite. Last weekend was Juno weekend in Saskatoon. The entire weekend was jam-packed with music events.

The crown jewel of the weekend was the Sunday awards night at Credit Union Centre. There was red carpet complete with rock stars, country stars, writers, and producers. Nelly Furtado was not only a crowd favourite but was also the winner of five Junos.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to use this opportunity to congratulate Mayor Don Atchison and the entire city of Saskatoon for the spectacular job they did of hosting this event. The city turned on its warmth and charm, restaurants and hotels were packed, some nightclubs were booked by celebrities. There was plenty of star sightings throughout the weekend. Saskatonians were hired to work doing security and providing special services for the performers and their guests.

Events like this require an enormous amount of time, work, and energy to stage. Saskatoon well deserves its rightful place as a world-class city that can host world-class events. As a Saskatoon boy, I'm proud to call Saskatoon my home.

I ask all members to join in congratulating Mayor Don Atchison, the Juno committee, and all volunteers who helped stage this wonderful extravaganza. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Women of Strength and Distinction Banquet

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Friday evening I, along with a number of my legislative colleagues including the member for Saskatoon Eastview, the member for Wascana Plains, the minister for Northern Affairs, and the NDP candidate for Regina Rosemont, attended the Women of Strength and Distinction fundraising banquet.

Mr. Speaker, the event was hosted by the Women of the Dawn Counselling Centre in support of a proposed facility for homeless First Nations and Métis women called the Centre of Hope Homeless Shelter. The idea is to provide temporary housing, health care, and supportive services for homeless women, youth, and children in a setting that encourages personal responsibility and an opportunity for independence and self-sufficiency. Mr. Speaker, the evening featured First Nations dancers, a fashion show, and musical entertainment by Perry Bellegarde and Michael George.

But what I really wanted to mention were the evening's speakers — all women, and all of whom spoke passionately about the many issues that continue to face women today. Mr. Speaker, First Nation and Métis women are among the most vulnerable in our society, subject to exploitation, violence, and poverty. Some steps have been taken to address these issues but there is much more work to be done. That's why grassroots work being done by organizations in support of projects such as the Centre of Hope Homeless Shelter is of the utmost importance. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:00]

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

Retirement Roast for Rosetown-Elrose Member

Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on Saturday evening I had the pleasure of joining with 200 friends, family members, and supporters of the member for Rosetown-Elrose as we celebrated his career and wished him well on his upcoming retirement from elected life.

Mr. Speaker, the evening was emceed by *News Talk* radio's John Gormley and featured roasts by the elite of Saskatchewan politics past and present, and even the member for Saskatoon Southeast was there. Mr. Speaker, at times it was a laugh-out-loud, funny evening, but the roasts also included a serious and emotional side, indicative of the man we honoured that night.

Mr. Speaker, we learned a lot about the member from Rosetown-Elrose — many facts that we didn't know, such as the fact that he secretly has a twin sister. But, Mr. Speaker, it was really his three children who shared real insight into the man, and they even shared where the dirt really is, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Saturday evening was a good-humoured look at the member and it was also a fundraiser for the local health foundations as 50 per cent of the proceeds are being donated to

some worthwhile organizations. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to congratulate the member from Rosetown-Elrose and his lovely wife, Gail, for their selfless dedication to our province and to our country. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

North Saskatoon Business Association Business Builder Awards

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, a few days ago the Minister of Industry and Resources and I and a few other colleagues from here in the Assembly had the pleasure of attending the North Saskatoon Business Association's Business Builder Awards. Mr. Speaker, for 10 years the NSBA [North Saskatoon Business Association] has been honouring their own, recognizing business achievement and contribution to the business community through the Business Builder Awards. And I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the NSBA on achieving that milestone.

Mr. Speaker, the winner of this year's Business Builder Award for job creation is the North Ridge Development Corporation, for new direction, Shaw Cablesystems G.P., and for management quality, Centennial Group. The winner for team building is 1-800-GOT-JUNK; for small business, Advantage Collision and Paint Inc. The Export Award went to Display Systems International. The Business Builder Award, recognizing an NSBA member for contributing to the success of other members, went to Great Western Minerals. And the Member of the Year, Mr. Speaker, is photographer Milton Taylor, owner of the Imagery Studio in Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating all the finalists and winners of the 2007 Business Builders Awards. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

National Aboriginal Curling Championships

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, this past weekend I had the honour of speaking at the opening ceremonies for the National Aboriginal Curling Championships which took place in the town of Wynyard in my constituency. Twenty teams from across Saskatchewan, as well as Alberta and Manitoba, gathered at the curling rink in Wynyard for a weekend of friendly competition. This was an exciting opportunity for the community to host this event, as it's previously been held in Saskatoon for the past several years.

This annual event began in 1993 as the Western Canadian Aboriginal Curling Championships which was hosted by the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan. It's been a great success since it started in 1993. Chairman Martin Aubichon, who is a resident of Wynyard, decided to invite the rinks to his hometown for the 2007. Martin, along with the Co-Chair Curtis Brewster, has

worked hard to make this year's championship a success.

First place in the men's event went to the Gerard Bird rink from Saskatchewan. Team members included Wilfred Bird, Bill Desnomie, and David Bird. In the ladies' event, first place went to the Karen McGillivray rink from Manitoba. Team members on that rink were Marie Jebb, Charlotte Campbell, and Shirley Carriere.

I ask all members to join me congratulating the organizers and the community of Wynyard for holding a successful National Aboriginal Championship.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Budget Vote

Mr. Yates: — Well, well, well, Mr. Speaker, today is the day. Today is the day we will see if the Saskatchewan Party will do what is good for Saskatchewan or what is good for the Saskatchewan Party. In a few short hours, Mr. Speaker, we will vote on the budget — a budget that makes life better for the families of the province, a budget that will attract and retain young people, a budget that will reduce the cost of drugs for seniors and has the largest investment in highways, hospitals, and schools that this province has ever seen. This is a budget that speaks to the values of Saskatchewan families, Mr. Speaker, a budget that will help us together move forward and keep our strong economy growing while allowing all people to share in the prosperity that is being generated right here in this province.

And what will the Saskatchewan Party do, Mr. Speaker? Will they vote against the seniors' drug plan? Will they vote against the tax credit for young people to get their careers started in Saskatchewan? Will they vote against fully funding CAIS [Canadian agricultural income stabilization]? Will they vote against maintaining and improving highways in their constituencies? Will they vote against investments in daycare? Will they vote against reducing property taxes? Will they vote against continuing to reduce business taxes? Will they vote against the Saskatchewan people? We will see in a short few hours, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Swift Current, the Leader of the Opposition.

Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday a landmark agreement between the provinces of BC [British Columbia] and Alberta meant to reduce barriers to trade between those two jurisdictions came into effect. This new trade agreement will create a powerful economic force in the country. The Conference Board of Canada says it will create the second largest economic region in the nation.

It's been almost a year now since we originally asked questions of the Premier as to his government's intention to participate, to look into this agreement. What we find out from the weekend media reports though, Mr. Speaker, is that this government is only now going to initiate public consultations. Once again under this NDP government, at a time when we could least afford it in terms of the economic opportunity facing the province, this NDP government has Saskatchewan on the outside looking in.

Will the Premier answer the following question: why is he only now beginning these public consultations? Why is he so far behind on this issue, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, as I indicated to the Leader of the Opposition about a year ago, this government would take the agreement signed by the Government of British Columbia and Alberta and give it fair study, Mr. Speaker. We have been engaged in a very serious and thorough review of the TILMA [Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement] agreement. Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition should know that the governments of Alberta and British Columbia spent three years in preparation for that arrangement.

But the question that needs to be asked today, Mr. Speaker — the question that needs to be asked today, as the Leader of the Opposition suggests public consultation — why is it that on May 1, 2006, about a year ago, the Leader of the Opposition called upon this government to immediately join the trade pact, to immediately join without public consultation, without study? He stood in the House and said, join it today. Why would he say that then and then say today we should be studying, we should be doing public consultation?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the point is this. This government . . . We raised the issue in this legislature a year ago. Three years ago when those two provinces were discussing trade opportunities together — the opportunity for a trade agreement at the direction, at the request of the Council of the Federation — our NDP government had a choice: get in ahead of time, begin the process early, make sure Saskatchewan is a leader in the new West and not a follower; or move with typical NDP laser-like speed, do nothing for a year, and then announce they're going to do some public consultations.

To the Premier: why is he so far behind on this issue? Why is he only starting consultations now? And if we are stuck with this, frankly, this inadequate NDP plan on this issue, will he at least ensure that the consultations are done by an all-party standing committee of this legislature?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, a year ago the Leader of the Opposition is calling upon this government to sign on to TILMA. He does that without public consultation. He does that without study. We are about a year later in this process. Considerable work has been done in studying the TILMA agreement, not just by government but by community-based organizations, by labour groups, by business groups.

Now I ask the Leader of the Sask Party today, in the intervening 12 months, has he, has his caucus undertaken study of the TILMA agreement? And if they have, would they please share with the people of Saskatchewan, would they share their research, their study which, Mr. Speaker, I anticipate has been paid for by their very generous caucus research grants?

Mr. Speaker, you can't have it both ways. You can't stand up one day and say to the government sign on to an agreement and the next day say you need to consult and study. Which is it, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the people of this province know that if you're going to get things done in Saskatchewan, you better not wait on the NDP.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — The answer to the Premier's question is absolutely. We began to do our work with the resources we have in opposition. We met with officials in Alberta and BC — both elected and the senior civil servants — who were part of negotiating that agreement. We asked questions about how would this impact our Crowns, which is very important to the province. How would it impact the autonomy of municipalities? We were doing our homework.

And, Mr. Speaker, we also inquired as to whether or not a group like The Conference Board of Canada had maybe looked at the economic impact of this deal for Saskatchewan and heard by the grapevine that in fact the government has such a report. This NDP government commissioned a report by The Conference Board, we believe, or some third party study.

And so if he's serious about public consultation, if he's serious about ensuring that Saskatchewan can be a leader in the new West, that people have all the facts, will he now table, will he release that Conference Board report, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — I mean, Mr. Speaker, we've heard all this before from the Saskatchewan Party — this chat about a new West, this chat about having Saskatchewan enter some kind of an economic integration with Alberta.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we take a different approach. We take the approach of building a strong Saskatchewan — a strong

Saskatchewan that's proud not only in the West, Mr. Speaker, but proud all over Canada; a Saskatchewan where the jobs are here; a Saskatchewan where people are coming here, where we're not looking with envy to other provinces or envy to other parts of the West, where we're building a future for our people and our young people right here. That's the focus of this government.

Mr. Speaker, if the Leader of the Opposition has some study work that has been done, will he table it? Will he show it? Never mind telling us about his trips to Calgary. We all know about his trips to Calgary — more interested in supporting the Saskatchewan Party than the Saskatchewan public. We know about those trips, Mr. Speaker. Show us his research. Show us the documented research that he's done as a leader, as a party.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier's right. They do have a different approach when it comes to Saskatchewan's role in the country. That Premier has said that we'll always be in and out of equalization. That's what he said, that we ought not to aspire to permanent membership in the club of have provinces in this country.

You bet they have a different approach. An elected NDP MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] has said it's statistically impossible for this province to even grow at the national average.

We don't agree. The people of the province don't agree, Mr. Speaker. They understand that we should be, we could be a leader in the new West if this tired, old NDP government would just get out of the way.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the Conference Board, the Conference Board of Canada has said for BC there's been 70,000 jobs; 4 billion more in GDP [gross domestic product]. We understand that the Premier is sitting on a similar report. Why won't he release it, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if the Leader of the Opposition had too many late nights at the Junos or what. He seems to be a little grumpy today.

Mr. Speaker, now let's understand this. A year ago, a year ago the Leader of the Opposition says to this government we should sign on to TILMA — without study, without understanding, without question. He is a 100 per cent full-time supporter of TILMA. We know that, Mr. Speaker.

Now I'm not sure where his deputy leader is. He writes letters to the newspapers saying that, well maybe the Saskatchewan Party's not so supportive of TILMA. And maybe we have to

study. But we know the Leader of the Opposition is one great big supporter of TILMA. He says a year ago, sign up, Mr. Speaker, without study, without consideration. Now he volunteers today in the House that his mechanism of consideration . . . You see, Mr. Speaker, when they don't like the answer, they start shouting — do you notice that? — every time. They don't like the answer; they start shouting.

So what does he tell us his consultation has been? Well he flees the province. He talks to people in Alberta and British Columbia. Has he talked to any Saskatchewan people I wonder?

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:15]

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

Police Investigation into a Community-based Organization

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Community Resources, will he tell this Assembly today the name of the community-based organization that is now under the subject of an RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] investigation?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for Community Resources.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to point out, Mr. Speaker, that I'll not be divulging that name today because, quite frankly, this is a very preliminary investigation into an allegation. What's important on this side of the House is that when any allegation is made that we go through the proper process to clearly investigate these allegations, Mr. Speaker. And I would point out, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, that we are going to make sure that the group that is involved, that we go to the RCMP. In fact we have contacted the RCMP. We're consulting with them, and then we'll determine our course of action after that date, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again we find all roads lead to this minister. Where was this organization located, and is it involved in children in this province?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for Community Resources.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, as a result of the Provincial Auditor's recommendation that we look at the CBO [community-based organization] sector on a more consistent basis to make sure that CBO sectors are working within the time frame and certainly the accountability framework that we have instituted with this new Finance minister, we certainly

have done that work. And as was reported in the media, there is about 111 CBOs that we've investigated, and the vast majority of them, I think only three are considered moderate risk, Mr. Speaker. I would point out that that's a credit to the CBO sector, and I would point out that the CBO sector does an incredible amount of work for the people of Saskatchewan.

What I will say — and I'll reiterate to that member in case he did not hear it — we will not divulge the name of the party that we're currently investigating because quite frankly this is not a current contract. We do not have a contract with this CBO. That contract has expired but we are investigating allegations, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Merriman: — Mr. Speaker, we're not questioning the credibility of CBOs. We're questioning the credibility of this minister. I asked a question. Is this in the fall? According to media quoting the assistant deputy minister, this matter came to light last fall when a concerned board member stepped forward. Mr. Speaker, this is an RCMP investigation involving the allocation of public funds. Why did the minister fail to bring this forward last fall? Why once again did this government hide the bad news and hope that it would just go away like all other things that this minister has done?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for Community Resources.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, what I would point out before I answer the question, to that member from Saskatoon Northwest, is first of all we didn't propose to rip \$50 million out of the Social Services budget as proposed by that party opposite. And now they are attacking CBOs, Mr. Speaker.

Again I would point out, I would point out the vast majorities of the CBOs do an incredible amount of work. And I would tell the people of Saskatchewan, the CBO sector included, be very careful of the witch hunt that's happening across the way because they will not stop at nothing because they're going to work in the interest of the Saskatchewan Party not the Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker.

And I would point out further that we're not going to presume guilt unless we're absolutely sure. If this CBO is guilty of anything, Mr. Speaker — and as I pointed out, this CBO no longer exists; we don't have a contract with this CBO — but if there's guilt for some past practices, we will certainly proceed with the RCMP to investigate and to charge accordingly. And we'll certainly share that information with the public, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Merriman: — Mr. Speaker, once again this minister fails to answer any question in this House regarding the safety of children in this province. Apparently the Department of Community Resources conducted an audit into all CBOs receiving more than \$100,000. And here's what the minister said on October 5, 2006, when the Saskatchewan Party called for such an audit:

This motion is a cleverly disguised Saskatchewan Party witch hunt . . . there are good accounting systems already in place.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister now admit that his comments were wrong? Will he apologize? And will he table the results of that audit investigation?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for Community Resources.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, let me answer the question very clearly to that member who has a difficult time hearing the answer. The answer is we have advised the RCMP. We're getting advice from them to see if there's anything here to charge a CBO that does no longer exist and does not have a contract with Community Resources, Mr. Speaker. If there are some past activities that are deemed illegal, we'll certainly investigate them and co-operate fully with the RCMP to make sure that the guilty parties are handled according.

However, Mr. Speaker, before we presume guilt, we must allow the process to unfold and the investigation to occur and the RCMP to do their work. I trust the RCMP, Mr. Speaker, because they don't have a political agenda, Mr. Speaker. They have a duty to investigate some crimes, and they'll certainly do that. And that's where my confidence certainly comes from, Mr. Speaker.

Again, 111 CBOs — the reports basically say they're in very good shape. They'll continue doing good work for the people of Saskatchewan.

The Speaker: — Member's time has elapsed.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Disaster Relief Program

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, spring is usually one of the most optimistic times in rural Saskatchewan, but this spring we find out . . . and we've talked to many of the farmers in the Southwest. Their concerns are still there about the drought, probably the third year of drought that they're coming into. They hope it changes, but that hasn't happened to date. We are talking also to many farmers in the Northeast and central Saskatchewan that are actually having flooding problems already, Mr. Speaker. And I guess what I'm asking the Minister of Agriculture today, have you put anything in place to deal with both of these problems? And what kind of

a disaster relief program are you working on?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Ag and Food.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course we have been working steadily on a drought program, a disaster program for the province. And with regard to drought, members opposite should be aware that there is another \$1 million put in by our provincial government to help with water problems in the Southwest. And certainly as far as a disaster program is concerned, I've told members opposite earlier that this provincial government, along with all the provincial governments and provincial ministers, want to see a disaster program in place across the country.

One of the issues that we have yet to resolve is the amount of money that the federal government will put in relative to the provincial governments. Most provincial governments are saying it should be 100/0, Mr. Speaker. We have said that we would accept some of the responsibility for a disaster, and we've offered 90/10. The federal minister always wants to take our money and his ideas and use them in his way but, Mr. Speaker, we're going to work with the people of this province to make sure we have a workable plan. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the minister brought up funding and how these programs might work. But I think the concern that many farmers and ranchers are having out there in rural Saskatchewan is when they saw this budget that this NDP government brought in, they were amazed when there was a \$67 million cut to agriculture. I guess to their amazement they wonder how would this government be genuine, saying that they want to help these farmers out there should the drought persist, should the flooding materialize like we think it's going to, and then turn around and cut \$67 million. Last year they spent \$368 million, the province did, on agriculture, and this year they're estimating they're going to spend 301. Mr. Speaker, that doesn't look to me that they want to help farmers and ranchers in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister today commit to those people, those farmers, those ranchers that he'll help when the problem arises?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Agriculture and Food.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't matter how the member opposite tries to spin his story. The fact is that the budget over budget is an increase of \$36 million, Mr. Speaker — an increase.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — And I could tell you very clearly that, Mr. Speaker, when we're looking, when we're looking at the farm situation today, yes there are some disasters. But you know what, Mr. Speaker? For 2006 the realized net farm income numbers are way up. For 2007-08 they're projected to be above 2006, Mr. Speaker.

And we will build programs that will provide support, Mr. Speaker. And we will do so in a way that will be okay with the farmers of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, we are consulting with them regularly to make sure that we have effective program in place. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister maybe doesn't read the budget document. But last year this government, the NDP government estimated they would spend 264 million on agriculture. They ended up having to spend 368. So I think they purposely lowballed that number, Mr. Speaker, or else they just don't care about rural Saskatchewan. It's one or the other.

Now we might understand this year of course why they would lowball that number, why they would cut 67 million out because they're already running a \$701 million deficit and didn't want this money to show up on top of that.

But, Mr. Speaker, that's not helping the farmers of Saskatchewan. That's not helping our ranchers. Should the drought continue in the Southwest, those farmers need help, both federally and provincially, Mr. Speaker. The same goes for the Northeast and central Saskatchewan. If there's a number of acres that can't be seeded, many of those farmers are going to go under without federal and provincial help. Will the minister commit to that today, get off his high horse, and actually help farmers in Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Agriculture and Food.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, if I got off my horse and helped people like the member opposite, they'd be in real trouble because what does the member opposite say? What does he say, Mr. Speaker? That it should be 100 per cent federally funded — 100 per cent. What does he say, Mr. Speaker? That emergency farm aid should be fully federal government funded. Well, Mr. Speaker, we've offered 10 per cent because we care.

I'll tell you what else, Mr. Speaker. I'll tell you what else. Gerry Ritz, the Member of Parliament from northern Saskatchewan, had said to APAS [Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan] last year, what did he say? He said that emergency, agriculture emergency should be a 100 per cent, federally funded, stand-alone program. That was what a

federal Conservative promised last year. What are they saying now? Oh it's got to be 60/40. They'll take it out of everybody's pocket to try and do it. That's it.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Disclosure of Information Regarding Murdoch Carriere

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to ensure that the members opposite are listening, I'm going to indicate right now that my question is directed to the Premier of this province. Last week the official opposition outlined a mechanism for the NDP government to release the Justice department's secret legal opinions on the Murdoch Carriere scandal. The minister refused.

Will the Premier today stop hiding behind the secret legal opinions and agree to table them in the appropriate committee in this legislature?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for the Public Service Commission.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as the members will recall — it was about four years ago, about now actually — when Arlene Julé, who's now decided to seek nomination or run again, called for the firing of Murdoch Carriere who was a 32-year employee of the Government of Saskatchewan. And she called for that firing, as did the leader of the opposition of the day, the man who had the roast in Rosetown on the weekend, he also called for the firing of Murdoch Carriere.

And as you know, the member from Regina Rosemont recommended to the Premier that Mr. Carriere be fired. Now, Mr. Speaker, I know that their Justice critic, who is a lawyer, will understand this. Mr. Carriere was already demoted, punished, sent to Regina, and then, Mr. Speaker, he was, for the same series of events, fired. And that's why we paid Mr. Carriere.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well again, Mr. Speaker, we did not get an answer to that question. There are many people directly related to the Murdoch Carriere scandal who know a lot. They want to tell their story, but they want to tell it to an appropriate body, not the same NDP government who ignored them in the first place.

Will the Premier today commit to using the powers of the Public Accounts Committee to call witnesses, table the NDP's secret legal opinions, and investigate the whole Murdoch Carriere scandal?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for the Public Service Commission.

[14:30]

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, we have a freedom of information and privacy commissioner in the province of Saskatchewan. And one of the things that people do have some protection of in the province of Saskatchewan, particularly if you work in the public service or if you work for a school division or a municipal government or a health region, your personnel file is personal. It is protected information, Mr. Speaker.

I can't imagine that a legislative committee would start discussing the personnel file of a former person who worked in the public service, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Carriere was fired. We settled with him and, Mr. Speaker, that is what we wanted to do. We wanted to fire him. We did. We didn't fire him appropriately and therefore we had to settle with him.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, we're not talking about personnel files. We're talking about a legal opinion.

The minister mentions the fact that a long time ago this was raised. Mr. Speaker, I want to quote from an article of April 2 — April 2, 2003 — happens to be exactly four years ago. It says this:

Rather than place a premium on fostering a safe workplace where female employees are valued, the government is signalling that a boys' club atmosphere prevails in the department. Rather than enforce the rules, it conveys the impression that Carriere's touted political connections are covering up for him, to the detriment of [the] women who dare to complain.

Mr. Speaker, that's a quote from *The StarPhoenix* editorial on April 2, 2003. These women have waited long enough. They want to be able to tell their story to ensure that this does not happen again. Will the minister table the documents that are needed by the people of this province?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for the Public Service Commission.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, people who go to work every day in the province of Saskatchewan are protected by the occupational health and safety legislation which has a provision which this government introduced in 1993 that protects employees from harassment, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there is no question that there was a problem at the fire centre in Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker. When we became aware of it, we took action: Mr. Carriere was fired. I also wanted to say to the public that he was removed from the workplace in September '02. He was put on leave of absence. He was then put on further leave of absence, suspended without pay for three months. He never returned to that workplace, Mr. Speaker. He was fired, Mr. Speaker.

We have a harassment policy in place. And I understand, Mr. Speaker, that this would not be able to really . . . this kind of event, it would be very difficult for this to happen in the future, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order please. Order. Order please. Order.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 57 — The Assessment Management Agency Amendment Act, 2007

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 57, The Assessment Management Agency Amendment Act, 2007 be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — Order. It has been moved by the Minister of . . . Order please. Order. Order. It has been moved by the Minister . . . Order please, members. Order.

It has been moved by the Minister of Government Relations that Bill No. 57, The Assessment Management Agency Amendment Act, 2007 be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the . . . I would ask the members to come to order, members on both sides of the Assembly to come to order.

When shall this Bill be read a second time? The Chair recognizes the Minister of Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Probably at a quieter moment at the next sitting, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 58 — The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 2007

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 58, The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 2007 be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Government Relations that Bill No. 58, The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 2007 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.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — First reading of this Bill.

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

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

Bill No. 59 — The Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation Amendment Act, 2007

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister Responsible for Gaming.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill No. 59, The Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation Amendment Act, 2007 be now introduced and read for the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister Responsible for Gaming that Bill No. 59, The Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation Amendment Act, 2007 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.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — First reading of this Bill.

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

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

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Government Whip.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government I'll be tabling responses to written questions no. 886 through 921 inclusive.

The Speaker: — Responses for questions 886 to 921 have been submitted.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

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

The Speaker: — Why is the member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre on his feet?

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

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. The member may proceed.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and my thanks to the members for indulging me to be able to introduce a couple of guests.

Seated in the western gallery we have Jason and Jennifer Miller. Jason is just finishing up this month a Commerce degree at the University of Saskatchewan and is going to be doing some political science in the fall. Jennifer has an aesthetics diploma and has graduated in 2004. They're both born and raised in Eatonville but currently live and work in Saskatoon. Jennifer, I should point out, was in Alberta but moved back to Saskatchewan last year. So she's part of that great story about Saskatchewan people coming back to Alberta.

So they're here with their relative, Darcy Furber. Darcy, who I have the privilege of working with in the Minister of Corrections and Public Safety office, he does a heck of a job. And if his cousins are anything like that, I'm sure they're bright, hard-working people and they certainly look it, Mr. Speaker. Please welcome the Millers to their Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Thomson that the Assembly approves

in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Mr. Cheveldayoff.]

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

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I'm really pleased to stand today as the voice of the people from the great constituency of Kelvington-Wadena to discuss this budget.

Before I start, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to acknowledge my constituency assistant, Linda Griffith, who's been with me since I was elected in 1995. I can't possibly thank her enough for all the help she's given me. And I'd also like to acknowledge Caren O'Grady-Blatchford, who has been very capably working in my office for the last three years and is also a good friend.

I'd like to congratulate my newest colleague, the member for Martensville, for her resounding trouncing of the NDP. In fact, of all the other candidates in the by-election, she's already proven to be a great asset to our caucus and a great voice for her people. She's not only making her father proud, but those of us on this side of the House, her family, and the people who obviously made the right choice at the polls.

Mr. Speaker, it has not gone unnoticed that the combined age of the two newest members of the Sask Party could be less than the number of one of the members on both sides of this House. The lack of age bespeaks of one of the main differences between the Sask Party and the NDP. The words young, exciting, enthusiastic, energetic, vibrant, and visionary are words that haven't been used very often to describe this tired, old, worn out, stodgy government.

This leads me to discuss the budget, the desperate attempt of a visionless government to buy the next election with people's money. I've had two weekends to be out and about talking to the people from Kelvington-Wadena to get their thoughts on this budget.

Their reaction, Mr. Speaker, was not surprising and it was consistent. The people from Kelvington-Wadena believe that this government has failed them again. People saw through the thinly veiled attempt to buy votes and, if possible, they're even more cynical about the Saskatchewan NDP than ever.

Their first comment is also always about the deficit. It's an insult to people's intelligence to tell them the government is spending \$701 million more than they're taking in, and they're trying to tell them it's a balanced budget. After years of being told to tighten their belts — which people did and which the government did not do — the NDP decided that it was okay to go back into a deficit. The Finance minister said in his speech that fiscal balance is an important value of the people of Saskatchewan. That may be the only comment that he made that was bang on the money during the budget. So, I guess, saying it was good enough.

It was really unnecessary, in his opinion, to follow up with actions. It's just another example of this government talking the talk, but not walking the walk. Rather reminds me of this NDP government's stance, zero tolerance stance on sexual

harassment. It's good enough for them to say there's zero tolerance but they don't believe they actually have to do anything when they find out there is a problem.

The Finance minister also said that since the election in 2003, their government had paid down nearly \$1 billion in debt. First of all, may I remind this government that the people of Saskatchewan paid down the debt with their money. Secondly, this government has decided — just because it can — that it will plunge the people back into debt to the tune of nearly \$1 billion. That's \$1,000 for every man, woman, and child in the province.

The net debt will increase \$926 million plus an additional \$19 million in debt servicing. Every penny of debt that's been paid off since the last election will be back on the bottom line. The government is spending more than it's taking in, and in anybody's language that means there's an increase in debt. The NDP — and I clearly state — the NDP, not the legislature, has decided to increase spending by 9 per cent, while the budget increase and revenue is going to be 1.87 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, for years the Sask Party has been talking about growing the economy, and the NDP government laughed at the idea. Obviously now, the NDP polling at an all-time low means there should be something done, and they don't know what to do about it. It's a huge conundrum for the NDP government.

Part of the budget speaks about increasing the number of workers, and of course the government is doing their part by adding another 1,430 people to their payroll. But on the other hand, they admit that of the 10,000 post-secondary graduates, only 4,000 will be staying in the province.

The shortage of health professionals is the biggest nightmare in the health field, and what this government did to solve the problem was to add 18 nursing seats and four seats for doctors. I kid you not. In an oil boom in Saskatchewan, with record oil and gas revenues and nearly \$1 billion more in revenues taken in last year than expected, plus spending increases of nearly \$1 billion, these saviours of medicare are going to find money to educate 18 nurses and 4 doctors.

I guess it isn't as big a priority as the \$1.5 million for the exclamation point or the \$350,000 to promote the budget or the \$8 million for the Future is Wide Open campaign or the \$268,000 to Raise a Flag for Fairness or the \$300,000 for the Imagine campaign. To say their priorities are skewed would be an understatement.

The budget failed to address a number of the very real issues that are facing the people in my constituency. There is still no recognition that there is a huge amount of snow that is not melted in the Northeast. Depending on how quickly the snow melts, there could be flooding, or if the melt is long and drawn-out, there's going to mean a huge number of acres will not be seeded.

As I drove around my constituency this weekend, I saw there were ditches that had been cleared of snow to allow for drainage. There's work being done to protect bridges, culverts, and homes from the impending disaster, but where is our provincial government? And where are the dollars from the

plan? There are still hundreds of thousands of dollars owed to RMs [rural municipality] and individuals waiting for a payout from last year's disaster. An editor in one of the local papers likened the broken federal promises the NDP are crying about to the broken promises they're making to the RMs.

In discussions with the RMs regarding the provincial disaster assistance policy, they are quick to point out that this government hasn't dealt with the issues of deductibles within that claim. They haven't dealt with, with what is, could be considered a separate incident requiring another deductible. They haven't dealt with any new federal or provincial regulations designed that will add a ridiculous amount of money to the cost, or the very ridiculous policy of only paying municipalities for certain costs.

[14:45]

Far too much of the actual costs are considered ineligible under this program. One of them is the cost of heavy earthmoving equipment that is only paid for at a rate of the operator's overtime and fuel and oil. An actual rate for a piece of equipment should be around \$85 an hour, and the RMs are getting paid \$20 an hour.

Cottage owners at Fishing Lake are on the red alert again for flooding this year. Their 1 in 100 year flood is back the third time in 10 years. There's been administrative reports, meetings, engineering solutions, but little actions towards solving the problem. I believe a government that talks the talk about the opportunities for tourism should actually walk the walk.

There is no recognition of the plight of the many communities who are in danger of losing their schools. We know that this province is losing about 350 K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] pupils a year. It is contempt to pretend there's actually more money going into education when in actuality there are just fewer students. Mr. Speaker, I said 350 students per year loss — it's actually 3,500 fewer students per year in this province.

The needs for a classroom remains unchanged regardless of whether a classroom has three or four less students. They still need teachers, class options, and the support of the community that cares about each and every student. They do not need to spend hours a day on a bus travelling on roads that — too many days of the year — are dangerous, if not impassable. Every student in our province has the right to the same education just as they have the right to the same standard of health care. It appears that this government would prefer its services are only available in what is to be the top 58 centres, as discussed in *The Changing Role of Rural Communities in the Urbanizing World* by Jack Stabler and Rose Olfert.

The much described drug plan leaked by someone to attempt to take the heat off the government over the Murdoch Carriere scandal is a desperate attempt by a desperate government to buy votes.

My favourite quote was from a senior at the trade show in Tisdale this weekend, who said, and I quote, "Do those guys in Regina think seniors are stupid? We learned years ago you don't get something for nothing."

Mr. Speaker, the much needed changes to the building communities initiative were not discussed in the budget. The only communities that can benefit from the NDP vote-buying program are the ones that have cultural and recreational facilities that need at least \$1 million. That cuts out every community except — you guessed it — the very large ones.

There are as many concerns about the budget as there are people, but the two remaining issues that affect people in my constituency are highways and agriculture.

The 2006 Canadian Automobile Association estimated that the provincial government collected \$491.1 million in motor vehicle fees and fuel tax. The NDP spent 380 million on highways. The new-found concern about highways happened coincidentally right after the NDP beating in Martensville, and maybe on a deathbed . . . [inaudible] . . . they figured they should start talking about it again. I wish the Premier and his cabinet had to travel down Highway 310, Highway 49, Highway 38, Highway 35, Highway 368, or Highway 349 to get to work like the people in Kelvington-Wadena. Mr. Speaker, the government would then surely make that a priority.

The farmers in my area don't even ask what is in the budget for agriculture. They know the answer is nothing. The NDP government has again cut agriculture spending. They projected \$670 million less than they spent last year. This government only wants to pay 10 per cent of the share. In fact the minister today in the House said that he wants to pay 10 per cent because he cares. That's going to be a wonderful headline in the paper and the farmers in Saskatchewan are not going to believe that they even care 10 per cent worth, but that does actually signal the amount of care that this government does have for farmers.

If agriculture were a priority, they would have increased spending by the 9 per cent like they did in the other departments. This 9 per cent increase would cover the costs of the 30 per cent of their 40 per cent share that they don't want to pay under the PDAP [provincial disaster assistance program] program. The farmers have spoken on the wheat board issue much to the chagrin of this government, and they will speak on the lack of funding to agriculture whenever this government gets brave enough to call the next election.

Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting this budget. I will be supporting the amendment put forward by the member from Silver Springs. Before I take my seat I want to repeat the words spoken in this Assembly at least twice before by the member from Saskatoon Southeast. He quotes Oliver Cromwell, who said to the Rump Parliament, "Depart I say; and let us have done with you. In the name of God, go!"

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Nutana, the Minister for the Public Service Commission.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I want to start by saying what an exciting year it's been to be the Minister of Advanced Education and Employment. We've accomplished a great deal in a very short period of time. We've increased training spaces in this budget by approximately 2,118 spaces which is a 7.2 per

cent increase, bringing our training and skills development opportunities to over 31,000. What this means is that we've not only met our 2003 election promise to increase training by 5,400 a year but we've expanded capacity by 6,164 seats or 24.4 per cent since the '04-05 fiscal year.

In addition we're freezing university tuition for a third year in a row at 2004 levels, providing a benefit of over \$1,500 per student in terms of savings. We're increasing funding to student loans and the provincial training allowance and we're expanding the centennial merit scholarship.

Mr. Speaker, we decided as a government that we were tired of watching First Nations people not receive proper resources from the federal government when it came to training and post-secondary education. I'm very pleased to say that we're partnering with our Aboriginal, First Nations institutions and Aboriginal training institutions, investing \$4.2 million in our Saskatchewan's Aboriginal advantage. This money will go towards SIIT [Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies], the Dumont Technical Institute, Gabriel Dumont Institute, and the First Nations University. This money will create more training in the province and will provide on-reserve training to young Aboriginal persons.

This year we'll invest \$8.5 million in immigration as we continue to increase the number of newcomers to our province. Our immigrant nominee program issued 1,255 nominations in the last fiscal year, which exceeded our target of 800 by more than 400 nominations. These nominees and their families result in as many as 4,000 newcomers coming to the province. Compared to the 401 that we nominated in 2005, this represents a huge increase in the number of people under the nominee program. Madam Speaker, we can say that we're well on our way to bringing 5,000 newcomers to our province under the immigrant nominee program by 2008.

And in this budget we also created a new \$10,000 annual exemption, tax exemption, for new graduates. This will mean that all new grads working in our province will have their first \$20,000 in income exempt from taxation for a five-year period. As a result of this program a new graduate who comes to or remains in Saskatchewan can start their career and realize a real tax saving of \$5,500.

From just October to December of last year, our province's population grew by nearly 2,100 people and I'm confident that this growth has continued. And I'm looking forward to seeing the numbers for the first quarter in 2007 because I know for a fact that there are literally hundreds of Albertans now in Saskatoon looking to buy or rent properties, Madam Speaker.

As well we just hosted our first ever Saskatchewan Youth Summit. And it's a shame that only one Sask Party MLA came to hear all of the incredible ideas that the young people of our province have to offer.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think it's obvious that some great things are happening in our department and throughout government. But I now want to talk about the philosophical differences between the NDP and those members opposite. In this budget we introduced a new, incredible program of a \$15 seniors' drug plan. And the opposition opposes this plan and they say it's not

sustainable, and they say it should be income tested.

Well I want to say, as someone who represents a fairly affluent part of Saskatchewan, I want to say that the seniors in my constituency that have spoken to me certainly appreciate that they will have access to this program, that it's not income tested. Because their observation is that now that governments have moved away from this notion of universality that there's very little that they're eligible for, including senior low-income housing.

And so, Madam Speaker, they like the \$15 seniors' drug plan and it has been greeted very positively. And they have said that they're worried that the Sask Party, if they were to become the government, that they'd go to income testing. And they don't like that idea at all.

And in fact they remind me of when the Sask Party opposed the notion of income testing when it came to senior citizen long-term care beds. And I think you'll remember that, where people didn't want income testing — the members opposite — when it came to long-term care beds, but the members opposite want income testing when it comes to seniors' drugs. And they just don't quite understand that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to speak a little bit about the sustainability of the budget, which the opposition says the budget's not sustainable. Well I just want to make this observation. They probably know that the fiscal stabilization plan is actually funded, it's actually real money, Madam Deputy Speaker. And I want to say to the members opposite that the Bank of Montreal, which is hardly a friend of the government, has said that the province of Saskatchewan is projecting its 14th consecutive balanced budget for '07-08, and:

“On balance the province continues to earn top marks for its commitment for cutting taxes, keeping spending in check, but not to the point of ignoring important outlays and maintaining a fiscal cushion.”

Not bad.

Then the Scotiabank says Saskatchewan's midterm outlook remains upbeat, the province's revenue forecast for fiscal year '08 may prove conservative. Well and they say, “Underpinning Saskatchewan's upbeat economic growth has been a multi-year reform of provincial taxes . . .”

Now then the CIBC says, and that's the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, “Program spending will grow by a lean 1.4%.” And, Mr. Speaker, what's interesting is that these folks just kind of don't get it.

Now the final thing I want to say to the members opposite is this. We've now had 14 consecutive balanced budgets. And at the same time in terms of our government, since the last election in 2003, we'll have paid down \$1 billion worth of debt. We've never charged health care premiums and we never will. We've reduced the PST [provincial sales tax] to its lowest point in 20 years.

We have the lowest-cost bundle of utilities in the country. We've increased funding to literacy, food banks, and social

assistance. We've significantly invested in affordable housing. We've frozen tuition fees at 2004 levels through to 2008. We've created a new, five-year 10,000 annual tax exemption for new graduates which means \$5,500 in real income to our students that are graduating from programs.

We've increased training spaces by 6,100, an increase of 24 per cent, surpassing our campaign promise, and we brought in many newcomers to the province — and in fact in this past fiscal year 1,255, exceeding our expectations of 800 by well over 455 and we're well on our way.

Well it's clear, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the members opposite really don't like this. The province is on a roll. There's a buzz about the province. And in fact we now have more jobs than people in the province of Saskatchewan. And a year ago what were they saying? We're in the middle of a boom and no jobs. Well the reality is that we had jobs but people weren't advertising for them, and they now are through our SaskJobs.ca website. It's obvious that our job numbers continue to sizzle. Last month we saw the most people working and the lowest unemployment rate on record for the month of February. We had over 20,600 more people working in our province in February of this year than February of last year. And we have advertised on our SaskJobs.ca website 6,430 jobs waiting to be filled.

We know the opposition doesn't like to admit that the job market is hot and people are moving back, and we continue to see coverage all over the province about people that have come home. Well this is not by accident and I want to make this point to the public, that when things aren't good they blame the government, and when things are good they don't blame the government. And they don't give the government any kind of credit. Well I can say this, that our population is increasing. It's clear that we have a very significant future ahead of us.

We also note that on *The StarPhoenix* poll website on Tuesday, March 27 we had 7,785 people vote in that poll. And what did it say? It said that 61 per cent of them would vote NDP and only 37 per cent in Saskatoon would vote for the Sask Party. So I would say people are starting to feel the buzz inside our province.

[15:00]

The most negative people in the province now are across the way. The population of Saskatchewan is very optimistic about its future. They do give the government some credit. I know the members opposite like to spin that this is an old, tired government. But I would say from their performance in the last three weeks that we have a very old and tired opposition. And as a result of that old and tired opposition, I don't know how an old and tired opposition can be a vigorous new government.

So I would say that if they want to go to the polls, we will go in due course. And we're all looking forward to an election. I remember just before the 2003 election that they thought they were going to win. It didn't turn out quite the way they wanted. I hope that the leader of the opposition, the old leader of the opposition in Rosetown had a more enjoyable night on Saturday because I thought the real roast that he got was prior to the last provincial . . . or on election day 2003, not on Saturday night.

But we're looking forward to that election. We're up for it. And I guess we'll say, may the best party win, Mr. Speaker. I suspect that this will be the last budget before we go to the polls. And they say, call it. Well they were saying that before the last election. They thought they were going to win. They had the balloons all ready in Rosetown. It just didn't quite happen. And we'll see how it all works out.

We have some wonderful candidates that are running across the province, and we're looking forward to winning some of those seats that the Sask Party now holds. And particularly I'm looking forward to the Carrot River seat where we have a bright young Leigh Spencer running for the NDP and Humboldt where we have a wonderful woman that's running. And we think that we will win some of those seats back into the NDP fold.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I'm looking forward to the vote later where we will pass the best budget this province has ever seen.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Swift Current, the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to join in the debate on the budget this afternoon. I have tried to follow all of the interventions from members on this side of the House and, frankly, from government members on the budget. I've been unable to perhaps go through each and every one, but I know we've had a spirited debate over the last number of days in this Assembly on the budget and rightfully so, Mr. Speaker, because really the budget takes this province back to a place that provincial governments were at in the 1980s right across this country, when political parties of every stripe in office in the '80s — whether it was the Bob Rae New Democrats in Ontario or the Getty Conservatives in Alberta or the Devine Conservatives in this province or even the national government — where they routinely racked up huge deficits. It was not yet on the public consciousness the damage that this could do to future generations. It simply wasn't an issue of public discourse. The people of this country and of every single province did not want to hear from their governments about austerity measures.

Well the member for . . . What's he the member for now? Regina Victoria? He's beaking from his seat, Mr. Speaker, but you know he never weighs in in this Assembly. He never weighs in in this Assembly on the budgeting of his own party in the province of Ontario where they almost ruined the province of Ontario racking up deficit after deficit after deficit and increasing the debt, Mr. Speaker.

He gets very angry because of course the truth is this, the truth is this, that political parties of every stripe, unfortunately, tragically in the 1980s — and, Mr. Speaker, encouraged by people like that member who asked for more, more, and more, encouraged by that member opposite — racked up these huge deficits, Mr. Speaker. That's what happened. In fact that member right there was a member of the NDP in the 1980s when they tried to out bid the Devine Conservatives. You remember that, Mr. Speaker? That member right there advocated a seven, seven . . .

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

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well the member who's very agitated from his seat is saying, what's the problem? He need only look at himself and the fellow members of the NDP to find out what the problem is, Mr. Speaker, because while every other political party, nationally and federally, has learned the lessons of the 1980s, while every other political party has returned, Mr. Speaker, to fiscal probity and fiscal responsibility, what is his government doing? What is this NDP government doing?

They are taking us back into deficit — the very thing, Mr. Speaker, that that member criticized over and over again in one of his many, many trips back to the 1980s; the deficits which should be rightly criticized, Mr. Speaker. It's now his government that's doing it, Mr. Speaker. It's now his NDP Party that's racking up the deficits.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, \$701 million in deficit in this budget. That's what we have — \$900 million more in net debt, Mr. Speaker. You know why he's angry? You know why he's angry? He has become what he beheld, Mr. Speaker. He's angry because he knows his government has betrayed the people of the province of Saskatchewan who did all of that heavy lifting in the '90s, as Canadians did across this country in province after province and nationally. And now his government is taking us right back to deficit, presiding over, Mr. Speaker, a reckless budget as my colleague from Silver Springs has characterized it on budget day, Mr. Speaker. That's the fact.

Vision, Mr. Speaker, some have identified as a shining idea with which to stir the people from sometimes a numbed indifference. Vision can be defined by the act of setting yourself apart from others by defining your values with clarity, with principle and conviction. Where is any of that in this budget, Mr. Speaker? Where is it? The vision of this budget doesn't see past the next eight months or so when the Premier may or may not call a provincial election. He has enough vision to see to the next election date, to try as he did in Weyburn-Big Muddy unsuccessfully, to try to buy the favour of the people of the province of Saskatchewan with their own money, Mr. Speaker, and more alarmingly, while doing so to plunge this province back into a deficit, to increase the debt of the province of Saskatchewan. It's simply not vision.

The budget is a political document, Mr. Speaker; that's what it is. It's a political document. There's no mapping out of a long-term plan. Gone even are the projections we used to see in minister MacKinnon's budget or even when the current Minister of Industry was the minister of Finance and they tried to look down the road a number of years, look at commodity prices, try to determine where this province was going. They're not even trying. And you know, Mr. Speaker, they're not even hiding the fact that they don't seem to have any interest in any date beyond the next election.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to say this in this Assembly. The people of this province have seen that kind of cynical politics before. They saw it in Weyburn-Big Muddy and they rejected

it, Mr. Speaker. They saw the highways equipment moving in the Martensville constituency, kind of moving around like the government was doing something. Another cynical ploy — they didn't buy it, Mr. Speaker.

And I'll tell you something, Mr. Speaker. When the next election comes and the people look at the bill that they will have to pay for this government's cynical politics, they won't buy it at the next election either.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, Canada's history is littered with examples of governments that are dying, that try to throw these Hail Mary initiatives at the very end of a term, that desperately try to regain favour with their respective electorates. Mr. Speaker, what the federal Liberal cabinet minister way, way back in 1957, C.D. Howe, had to say I think is instructive for this debate. He said, and I quote:

What's a million? I dare say my Honourable friend could cut a million dollars from this amount — but a million dollars is not a very important matter.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I could hear the current Minister of Finance saying something like that, being that cavalier about the fact that we have a \$701 million deficit in this budget, the fact that we have another \$900 million in debt. And we've seen him in this House kind of shrug his shoulders and raise his hands, Mr. Speaker, because it's about the next election for them — not about the next decade, Mr. Speaker, for this province. It's not about the next century. It's about the next general election.

Mr. Speaker, the verdict is in from accountants, from former Finance ministers of an NDP persuasion, frankly, who are far more competent and capable than any cabinet minister sitting over there today. The verdict is in on the very important question as to sustainability. Is this budget sustainable? It's a pretty important question. And frankly, Mr. Speaker, that's the best way perhaps to measure whether it's a political document or not — whether it's just about politics, whether it's about trying to get them to the next election, or whether it's about a sustainable plan based on a vision for the future of the province.

The best way to answer that question is to detail exactly whether or not the budget is sustainable. Members opposite know that it is not sustainable. I believe they know that. I believe they understand that this government, in a very callous and cynical way, is just going to try to get elected by using taxpayers' money to buy favour. They know that revenues are up 1.8 per cent, but spending is up 9 per cent, Mr. Speaker, in this budget. They know that the deficit has increased a total of 701 million on a financial summary basis, the Fiscal Stabilization Fund drained of a half a billion dollars, Mr. Speaker, and the debt has increased.

The Crowns have been gutted, frankly, for this mad spending spree. And I remember . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well now the Premier wants to join in. And we look forward to his comments, Mr. Speaker. We wonder if the Premier will want to comment on the fact that the Crown Investments Corporation is being asked to pay a \$200 million dividend; that SaskEnergy

must pay a \$6.9 million dividend and then go out and borrow \$70.2 million; SaskPower dividend that this Premier wants to take, while he chirps from his seat, \$135 million. It's going to have to go borrow \$475 million.

Do you know what that is, Mr. Speaker? You know what that is? And the members opposite will know very well what it is because again it's a practice that happened in this province and should never have. It's called equity stripping, Mr. Speaker. That's what it is. It's called stripping equity from these Crowns for the purposes of trying to buy a provincial election, Mr. Speaker. And if the Premier thinks he's going to get away with it as he smiles and nods, he's dead wrong, Mr. Speaker. He won't get . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, interestingly, as I've touched on already, the budget doesn't provide any future revenue projections. It doesn't demonstrate how this government's sustainable.

On budget day, the Finance minister had this significant credibility gap to try to bridge. And here's the nature of the gap, Mr. Speaker. He said in response to questions from people like former minister Janice MacKinnon, from the chartered accountants, from the media itself, from others in the province who were worried about sustainability, he said and answered, no, no, it is sustainable; just trust me. That's what he said. So the media quite dutifully asked him — responsibly so, I would suggest — fair enough, why won't you just table then the projections that your Minister of Finance, that the Department of Finance was using to crunch the numbers? What happened, Mr. Speaker? Did the Minister of Finance do that?

The opposition then asked the same question in the legislature the next day. They said to the Finance minister, if you believe this — if you believe that this budget is sustainable — if it's not a deficit, if it's not going to bring us back to where we never want to go again, simply table the projections. That's reasonable. Other budgets used to include them as I have mentioned. Minister MacKinnon's budget used to have it right in the budget. I remember the minister currently of Industry — same thing. He would provide those long-term revenue projections.

But this government won't do it. You know why, Mr. Speaker? Because they know it is not sustainable, Mr. Speaker. That's why they won't provide that information to this Assembly and to the people of this province. Instead they say, just trust me. Just trust us. And you know what, Mr. Speaker? Maybe if this were a brand new, vibrant NDP government with new ideas, recently elected, without the track record they have, maybe then the people of the province, who are a generous people and as generous as you'll find, might say I think we maybe should trust them, Mr. Speaker. We should trust them.

But this isn't a vibrant, energetic NDP Party. This is a four-term, tired, old government that I believe, Mr. Speaker, has among the worst records in the history of Canadian politics for hiding the fact, for not telling the truth, Mr. Speaker, to the people of this province. And they will not trust this government — not now and not when that election is called, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Consider the record, remembering the Minister of Finance said, just trust us. We have the financial projections although we're not prepared to show them. We can't find the napkin that I wrote them on, and so we can't lay them on the Table of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker. But he asked the people of the province to trust him, this government, Mr. Speaker, which has a record that included SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company], Mr. Speaker . . . Do you remember that?

Again after questions after questions came from this side of the House about a \$30 million scandal, Mr. Speaker, and the government said, just trust us; everything we've told you is true so far, until we found out one day in this Assembly and in this province of Saskatchewan that that wasn't the case. And a minister was taken out of the cabinet. Some would argue for not quite long enough. But the minister responsible for SPUDCO had to be taken out of the cabinet because people may have trusted them and ought not to have trusted them.

[15:15]

What about the Oyate Safe House scandal, Mr. Speaker? When we had . . . When we should have been able to take the word of the minister responsible on Oyate when he told this Assembly and reporters that everything was fine, that they'd looked into matters and everything was fine, and we knew of course that everything was not fine. Again not a very credible history in terms of that party asking anyone to trust them.

And then, Mr. Speaker, what about most recently with the Murdoch Carriere scandal, Mr. Speaker? Imagine, imagine the people of the province hearing that same government, that same Premier say, just trust us that this budget is sustainable — when at the same time he refuses to answer basic questions as to why someone who was fired for harassment and convicted of assault should get \$275,000, over three years worth of severance, while the women who were harassed get \$15,000, Mr. Speaker.

Imagine, imagine him now asking the people of the province to trust him on sustainability when frankly, Mr. Speaker, when frankly he is unable to explain why in 2003 his then Justice minister, the current Minister of Industry, said, you know, we are going to fight Mr. Carriere in the courts; we are going to defend vigorously the government's firing and ensure that we move heaven and earth to make sure that this person doesn't receive any taxpayers' dollars.

And then we didn't hear about it for a long time until suddenly — suddenly in the wake of something that probably happened in December prior to 2003, when a lot of the information broke or even more recently this last December I should say, Mr. Speaker — something happened then that changed the government's story. And they just wanted to quietly pay this man \$275,000 and hope that nobody found out, didn't want to tell anyone.

How then can that Premier and that Minister of Finance, with that track record, now go to the people of the province and say, trust us that this budget is sustainable, even though we will not, we will not provide you with those projections. There is a huge

credibility gap, Mr. Speaker. One that this NDP government, this tired and old NDP government has been unable to bridge, Mr. Speaker.

There would be a way to at least help in this regard by the way, Mr. Speaker. We would offer this advice to the government. If they wanted to improve their credibility, they could at the very least do the right thing and begin to table the legal opinions that made them take their decisions on Murdoch Carriere and, even more importantly, to answer questions on behalf of women in the civil service and the people of this province. That might help a little bit.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, even the Minister of Finance can't get his own story straight as to whether this is a deficit or not a deficit. Don Newman has — the CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] anchor — has certainly seen a lot of budgets in his day and he's talked to a lot of politicians, Mr. Speaker. It didn't take Mr. Newman very long to wrestle a confession out of our Saskatchewan Finance minister. I know the members opposite believe that whatever is on Mr. Newman's program is akin to the revealed word, and so they'll be very interested in finding out that, from the episode of March 22 *Politics* with Don Newman, here's an exchange, Mr. Speaker, as recorded by transcript:

Newman: But you are going to spend more money in the coming fiscal year than you are going to collect.

[The minister]: Yes, that's right.

Newman: And that's not called a deficit in Saskatchewan?

[The minister]: Well, it's a surplus actually on the GRF but it is on the summary financial, a deficit.

And, you know, he kind of uses some government-speak here because nobody at home in Swift Current ever refers to the GRF [General Revenue Fund]. He tries to use a little bit of government-speak to cover up the fact.

Let's read it again. Here's what the Minister of Finance said to Don Newman, who said, "And that's not called a deficit in Saskatchewan?" And the minister said, "Well, it's a surplus actually on the GRF but it is on the summary financial, a deficit," Mr. Speaker.

You know, he's on the public record. And he should know, Mr. Speaker, that the people of the province will be reminded of his own candour. I think the Minister of Finance had an absolute moment of honesty and candour, and he did the right thing. Don Newman asked the right question, and the Minister of Finance said, it is a deficit. The Minister of Finance said, it is a deficit, Mr. Speaker. And just in case the Premier hasn't heard — because I sit beside the member for Canora, Mr. Speaker — the Minister of Finance said, it is a deficit, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — So what do we have to show, Mr. Speaker, for this deficit budget of the NDP's? Well there's a real question as

to whether there is some actual improvement coming for highways, and they most assuredly need a lot of improvement. There's costs associated obviously with ensuring that highways are passable and properly signed. Some people on Highway 32 have taken to putting up their own signs, frankly, and they're renaming highways after ministers opposite.

Mr. Speaker, for all the money spent for the deficit that's represented in this budget, what was there in terms of the real issue of school closures in our province? What was there, Mr. Speaker? Was there an allocation for schools of necessity? Schools that are going to be very, very remote, Mr. Speaker, where kids are going to simply be asked to ride a bus too long if some closures go ahead. Any money for that? No, Mr. Speaker. Was there money for schools of opportunity specifically? The answer, Mr. Speaker, was no.

Was there even the vision in this budget to change how the government funds education to take away the bias in favour of bussing? Because you know, Mr. Speaker, regardless of where you sit in this House I think we can all agree that today there is a bias in how this government funds education in favour of bussing, Mr. Speaker. And so when boards have to make tough decisions, when trustees need to make tough decisions, one of the easiest things for them to do — and it's not a criticism of the trustees; I understand exactly what they're working with — but one of the easiest things to do would be to continue to rely on bussing, to not worry as much about the bussing costs that are going to be implied from school closures, Mr. Speaker, because that's covered by the government.

We in the Saskatchewan Party offered this government a fairly common sense notion that should have been represented in this budget. We believe, Mr. Speaker, that education funding ought to be biased in favour of teachers and the classroom and school and not bussing, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, what is in this budget with respect to the very pressing issue of nurse recruitment and retention? This is unbelievable. Arguably the most pressing issue in health care today in the province of Saskatchewan is the issue of nurse retention, and not specifically just related to those positions themselves and the important role that nurses play in the system but also because of the ripple effects.

I mean when you're short nurses, hospitals have to close, Mr. Speaker, in places like Preeceville and in places like Kamsack, in places like Coronach, in Big River, Mr. Speaker. These are real communities, Mr. Speaker, home to families in this province who need a hospital, who may need emergency care. That is the impact, Mr. Speaker, of a government that simply doesn't have a plan for nurse recruitment and retention.

The Saskatchewan Union of Nurses says there are currently 525 nursing vacancies in our health system. There will be 485 nurses eligible for retirement this year. That's over 1,000 potential vacancies this year. And this budget, Mr. Speaker, brought down by this tired, old NDP government creates 18 new training seats — 18 — 18 new training seats.

Mr. Speaker, at 67.2 per cent, this NDP government, this NDP

government in the birthplace of medicare, the home of Tommy Douglas, has the worst nursing retention rate in the country, Mr. Speaker. And rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, is paying a particularly high price for this, although it's being felt all over the province of Saskatchewan.

And it's not as if the NDP can't look back to their own decisions they've made in health care over the last decade and a half when they're trying to assess why the problem is so acute in the province in Saskatchewan, more here so than many other provinces in the country because those provinces have demonstrated some leadership, Mr. Speaker. Remember back to decisions taken by this NDP government that cut those seats, that wound up reducing the number of nurses we have that literally drove doctors from this province because of facilities that were closing by this NDP government. That is the legacy of this tired, old, and incompetent NDP government, Mr. Speaker.

And again last week, Mrs. Gagnon was here to provide further evidence that the people of the province are the ones who suffer when this government, faced with 1,000 potential vacancies in nurses, has the unmitigated gall to say, here's a great budget for the province. Here's 18 new seats, Mr. Speaker. That's not good enough for Mrs. Gagnon. It's not good enough for the rural communities who need hospitals. It's not good enough for our tertiary centres in Regina and Saskatoon and Prince Albert. It's why the nurses are completely fed up with this government and increasingly why the people of the province have had enough as well.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mrs. Gagnon . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well, the member for Athabasca has just intervened. He says, do you guys actually believe that? Well you know what, Mr. Speaker? The people of the province don't have to take our word for it. They can go to SUN and ask the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, Mr. Speaker. That NDP government, if they don't believe that their incompetence has hurt health care in Saskatchewan, and in particularly that minister, who presided over the Oyate Safe House scandal and is somehow intertwined in the Murdoch Carriere case, he can ask the mayor of Kamsack and the mayor of Preeceville and the mayor of Coronach, he can ask doctors in this province, and he can ask people like Mrs. Gagnon as to who they believe. And I'll tell you what, Mr. Speaker. They believe this about that NDP government: they have lost their way and it is time for them to go, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, there is a number of other editorial comments that came in the wake of the budget in the event that the people of the province would like to find out about, well what the editors of Saskatchewan think or what certain groups think about this particular budget and its sustainability.

Randy Burton of the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix*, who for some reason now . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes and the member for Athabasca just did it again. They don't like nurses, Mr. Speaker. They don't seem to like schools in rural Saskatchewan. And they don't like Randy Burton at *The StarPhoenix* I guess. Maybe they don't like any of the media as well. But, you know, Mr. Speaker, he is a journalist that covers

politics in this province. He's seen a lot of budgets in his time, and here's what he had to say:

It doesn't take an auditor [long] to tell you [this is a quote] this can't go on very long without causing a train wreck . . . [Mr. Speaker] The seniors' drug plan is by far the most blatantly political move in the budget, given that any sense of fiscal responsibility is almost totally absent from this initiative [Mr. Speaker].

Here's the editorial from the Regina *Leader-Post* but I'm sure the member for Athabasca doesn't really care anything about what they have to say either. But they're soldiering on, even though the minister may not be reading their paper; they're continuing to publish. And here's what they had to say about the budget:

Budgets are about making hard, but responsible, choices and there's a real question mark over whether this [is a] big-spending political budget is sustainable.

Editorial from the *The StarPhoenix*, quote:

Any time a government that expects its revenues to rise by less than two per cent goes on a pre-election [spending] binge that hikes spending by nine per cent, then says its actions are sustainable, it's time to worry.

Nola Joorisity of the Chartered Accountants of Saskatchewan said this, and many members have quoted it. But boy, it bears repeating. Because again I would say that Ms. Joorisity brings to the issue of fiscal probity much more credibility than any member in this House, than absolutely any member. And here's what she said, and we wish . . . Well here's what she said, "This is a deficit budget and the amount of the deficit is . . . [serious.]" And again, so everybody can hear, "This is a deficit budget and the amount of the deficit is . . . [serious.]" Mr. Speaker.

That's not the Saskatchewan Party saying it. It's not an editorial board. It's not a political columnist. It is the chartered institute of accountants for the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. They have seen a deficit. They know if it walks like a duck and talks like a duck, it's a duck, Mr. Speaker. And quite ironically the member for Dewdney chirps up, as I referenced ducks, Mr. Speaker, and despite his quacking I can tell you this: we will take the word of the accountants over his on this budget every day of the week, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, what did the former NDP minister, what did the former minister of Finance for this NDP government, Janice MacKinnon, have to say at the prospect of this deficit budget from the NDP? Here's the quote:

"When new programs are being proposed, you have to carefully ask that question: Are these affordable in the long term?"

I think that's a key question about some of these proposals.

There's a reasoned, rational comment from a minister with a

pretty darn good record in terms of fiscal responsibility. I think the first Finance minister in the country that was able to balance the budget. I began my discussion, Mr. Speaker, by pointing out that through the '80s — unfortunately so, incorrectly so — provincial governments of every political stripe, and a federal government of first a Liberal government, and then a Conservative government nationally, went down the road in deficits. There was, there was Bob . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Members will come to order. Order. I invite the Leader of the Opposition to continue.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the member for Indian Head-Milestone suggests that I should talk a little bit about NDP Premier Bob Rae. I'm prepared to do that. But we ought not to fault Bob Rae for something that every single premier in the province did during the '80s. Unfortunately they did it. It was the practice of the time for all governments of all stripes to rack up big deficits.

[15:30]

And it was Minister MacKinnon, who was an NDP Finance minister, who was the very first to balance the budget in Canada. I mean I don't know why they're so angry at that. She's a member of their party, Mr. Speaker. Why would they be heckling the fact that that happened in this province? And then was followed suit by other governments of . . . Conservative governments and Liberal governments, nationally and in the provinces, Mr. Speaker.

The difference is, Mr. Speaker, the difference is this: that political parties of all stripes have vowed that this country, that their respective jurisdictions will never return to that kind of irresponsible, reckless budgeting again except, Mr. Speaker, in NDP Saskatchewan. Except here, where that same government opposite, who have become what they beheld, is prepared to plunge this province back into deficit, is prepared to increase the debt of this province by \$900 million.

And within this budget document, Mr. Speaker, there is no vision for the future. The projections don't go past this year. They are spending the future of this province frankly, Mr. Speaker, in this budget. They're trying to do it for political purposes and political purposes only, Mr. Speaker.

Now more than ever, with all of the economic potential we have in this province, with all of the momentum we have, now more than ever we need sound fiscal management. We need a complete growth agenda. We need a vision that sees beyond, Mr. Speaker, the next three months or so and a vision that sees beyond the borders to what this province can do within the West and within Canada. And in order to get that kind of vision and that kind of fiscal responsibility, Mr. Speaker, we're going to need a provincial election in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — But in the meantime, in the meantime we can do something else. We can stop this tired, old NDP government from plunging the province back into reckless financial planning. We can stop them actually earlier than the election if members on that side of the House would simply remember all

of their rhetoric over the last 10 years about the need for proper budget planning, if members opposite would simply have the courage to stand up and vote against this budget, Mr. Speaker.

I'll be supporting the amendment and will be voting against the budget. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier, the member for Saskatoon Riversdale.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, Mr. Speaker, as other members have done in this budget debate, I want to extend my own congratulations to the new member from Martensville on her election victory and upon taking her seat in the House. Mr. Speaker, given her margin of victory I considered calling for a recount but have decided, Mr. Speaker, that we'll just wait until the general provincial election to change that margin, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to recognize a young man who fought in that by-election campaign, who represented the New Democratic Party in that by-election campaign, and if I may say, Mr. Speaker, who earned the respect if not the votes of thousands of people in Martensville, Mr. Speaker. And I can just tell you and I can tell the House that this is not the last time you will have heard the name John Tzupa in the political affairs of this province.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to stand in this legislature in debate of a budget which the headlines described as broad and bold, Mr. Speaker. It is that, Mr. Speaker. It is a budget that is broad and it is bold. It is a budget, Mr. Speaker, that reflects the values of Saskatchewan people. It is a budget that reflects the values of the Saskatchewan New Democratic Party. It is the values reflected in this budget that come from New Democrats in government, Mr. Speaker. This is a budget that reflects the values of Saskatchewan people and the values of the political party I am privileged to lead.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — And, Mr. Speaker, this budget has been welcomed. It has been welcomed by the chartered banks of Canada. It is a budget that has been welcomed by the working families of Saskatchewan. It is a budget that has been welcomed by farming families in our province. It is a budget that has been welcomed by the business community of our province, both small and large. It is a budget, Mr. Speaker, that has been welcomed by the Aboriginal peoples of Saskatchewan. It has been welcomed by newcomers to our province. It has been welcomed by ordinary Saskatchewan families.

Why, Mr. Speaker? Because this budget reflects the values of Saskatchewan people, the values of Saskatchewan families, the values of those who built this province — our seniors and our elders. Mr. Speaker, it is a budget that is both broad and it is bold.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it's fair to say that this budget comes at a time of unprecedented economic strength in our province. This budget, Mr. Speaker, is sustained by the strength and the

prosperity of the economy that we have built in Saskatchewan in the past five years.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, this is a level of economic prosperity and strength that we have never before witnessed in the history of the province of Saskatchewan. It is that strength, Mr. Speaker, that sustains this budget — this budget and budgets well into the future. So, Mr. Speaker, we have here a budget that's been described by the headline writers as a budget which is broad and it is bold. It is a budget that has been welcomed by Saskatchewan families. It has been welcomed by chartered banks. It's welcomed by the Aboriginal peoples of Saskatchewan. It's been a welcomed budget, Mr. Speaker.

There's only one group who have not welcomed this budget. Now that would happen to be the Saskatchewan Party opposition opposite. The one group who have not welcomed this budget, Mr. Speaker, are seated across from us. And that's pretty clear from the Leader of the Opposition's remarks this afternoon.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I just want to tell you then why it is the Saskatchewan Party opposition has not welcomed a budget that speaks to our seniors, that speaks to our youth, that speaks to our families, that speaks to our economic prosperity. Why, Mr. Speaker, would this opposition party, this Saskatchewan Party, not welcome this budget?

Mr. Speaker, well first of all it's just this. You know what, Mr. Speaker? They simply can't stand the fact that the Saskatchewan economy is doing as well as it's doing. They simply cannot stand the fact that New Democrats and government build economic strength, Mr. Speaker.

They can't stand the fact — and history demonstrates it — they can't stand the fact that every time they find their way onto the government benches, they bring the economy of Saskatchewan into a shambles, and the people of Saskatchewan then have to again turn to the New Democratic Party to fix the mess they leave behind. It's happened over and over again.

And, Mr. Speaker, they simply can't stand the fact that what's good for Saskatchewan is not good for the Saskatchewan Party. They can't stand the fact that we have the economic prosperity today to provide this budget for the families of Saskatchewan. They can't stand the fact that we took the bankruptcy they left behind and turned it, Mr. Speaker, into a boom. They can't handle it.

And then, Mr. Speaker, when the economic turnaround begins to happen, as it began to happen two and three years ago now as we began to reinvigorate the economy as the foundation for social progress — soon as the economy starts to turn around — what do they say? What were they saying?

Well I remember last year's budget debate. You know what they were saying? How can you be losing jobs in the midst of a boom? That's what they were saying. How can you be losing jobs in the midst of a boom? Well, Mr. Speaker, you notice they don't say that any more. They don't say that. When they, like we, see the jobs increasing in our province month after month

after month, they don't say this any more. When they see the Aboriginal unemployment rate in our province falling dramatically, they don't say it. When we have one of the, if not the highest rate of youth employment anywhere in Canada, they don't say this any more.

When you can turn to the SaskJobs website on any day of the week and find literally thousands of career opportunities in our province, when you can pick up the daily papers and find page after page after page of want ads and career opportunities, Mr. Speaker, whatever happened to that question they were asking a year ago? How can you be losing jobs during a boom? Not one question in this session about jobs in our province.

Now, so when they, Mr. Speaker, run out of that question, then what do they start saying? Well how can you be losing people in a boom? How can you be losing population in a boom? Well now interestingly enough after last Friday, Mr. Speaker, they're strangely silent about that question; strangely silent when the population statistics from the fourth quarter comes in.

And for the first time, Mr. Speaker, for the first time, Mr. Speaker, in 10 years the in-migration to the province of Saskatchewan from Alberta exceeds out-migration. More people moving from Alberta to Saskatchewan than from Saskatchewan to Alberta, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Now, Mr. Speaker, now, Mr. Speaker, they're not talking about population because in this fourth quarter, the largest single population gain for the fourth quarter, Mr. Speaker, since — get the year — 1986, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, one year they're saying, where are the jobs during a boom? They don't say that any more. Then they start saying, where are the people during the boom? Well they don't say that any more. Now what do they say, Mr. Speaker? Now what do they complain about? Now what do they say? Well they say the economic fiscal picture that we built, the economic strength of this province they say is now not sustainable. It's not sustainable, Mr. Speaker.

Well that's not what the chartered banks are saying. No, no, no. It's not, Mr. Speaker, what realtors are saying. It's not what contractors are saying. Mr. Speaker, it's what they're saying. And you know why? Because that's the only thing left they have to say. They've got nothing else to say except that the work of the people of Saskatchewan . . . the work of a New Democratic Party government now is not sustainable. That's all they can say.

They don't welcome this budget, Mr. Speaker, because it is sustained by and built upon a green and a prosperous economy they could never build, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — But, Mr. Speaker, let me tell you and all members, their opposition to this budget is about something much deeper, Mr. Speaker. They oppose this budget because, Mr. Speaker, this budget does not reflect their values. This budget does not reflect their values. It does not reflect the

values of the Saskatchewan Party. It reflects the values of the New Democratic Party. That's why they're so opposed, Mr. Speaker, that's why they're so opposed — make no mistake about it. Because, Mr. Speaker, it is a fundamental value of the New Democratic Party that you cannot build social progress without economic progress. But, Mr. Speaker, but, Mr. Speaker, when that economic progress is achieved, it should result in progress for people. It should result in progress for people.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — It is a fundamental value of the New Democratic Party that economic progress must seek to leave no one behind. It is a fundamental value of this party and this party in government that economic progress should be shared with the many and not just the few, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Cannington chirps away from his seat. I think he had a chance to speak in this debate. I don't know if he did or not. The member from Cannington knows well the philosophy of the Saskatchewan Party and the Conservative Party and the Liberals that joined up over there and the reformers and the alliance that have all come together. And I tell you why they're opposing this budget. It is because, Mr. Speaker, it so fundamentally offends their values and so fundamentally represents the values of the New Democratic Party, Mr. Speaker.

It is a budget which says economic prosperity should be shared among the many not just the few, that economic prosperity should seek to build equality and community. These are not the values of the Saskatchewan Party.

Now I note this, Mr. Speaker. I note this. And maybe the member from Arm River would want to respond to this. Mr. Speaker. I note this with great interest. When this New Democratic Party government is cutting the taxes, when we're cutting the taxes and the royalty rates to encourage economic progress in our province, do they raise any question about the sustainability of that? Not a word, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, but, Mr. Speaker . . . And again when we cut the income taxes, when we cut the taxes on the education portion for farm land, even when we cut the PST they don't, they don't stand up and question sustainability.

[15:45]

But, Mr. Speaker, just as soon, just as soon as we invest \$100 million in our inner cities and northern communities, in families there, they start questioning sustainability. Just as soon — as this budget does — we start to pave roads to reserves or partner with SIIT in the training of young Aboriginal people, just as soon as we do that, they start to question; they start to oppose. And just as we start investing in our young people with training spaces by the thousands — 2,100 more this year, 5,000 last year — just as soon as we do that they start shouting from their seats in opposition. Just as soon, Mr. Speaker, as we unveil in this province a bold, imaginative program to encourage our young people to build their careers here and to encourage young people . . .

The Speaker: — Order please. I would just ask the member for Cannington to allow the Premier, who has got the floor, to

continue with his remarks. The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just as soon as we unveil this kind of bold approach for our young people, just as soon as we want to reward the young people of this province for their commitment to a future here, what do they do? They say it can't be done.

The Speaker: — Order please. I have asked the member for Cannington to stop the interruption, the consistent and ongoing interruptions, and consider the difference between interruptions and a brilliant heckle.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — And I'll ask all members to come to order and recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I'm aware it's not wise or good to reflect on Speakers' rulings, but I've never heard a brilliant heckle yet from that opposition. We'll wait a long time.

My point, Mr. Speaker, I go back to it. You see if a budget that takes economic progress and takes that economic progress to put it in the hands of people reflects your values, you'd vote for this budget. But just as soon as we start taking the prosperity that we've built and start lending it to families and to young people in bold, new initiatives, what happens? They say it's not sustainable. They say it can't be done. We can cut taxes and they say nothing about sustainability, but as soon as you want to start doing something for people, they say it can't be done; it's not sustainable.

And get this, Mr. Speaker, now what they say is that we should not take the dividends that belong to the motorists of Saskatchewan in their Auto Fund, that we should not take those dividends and return them to the people of Saskatchewan and return them to the drivers. They say that shouldn't be done, Mr. Speaker.

They want to, I guess, hold that money in some account that they think some day they could get their hands on like their federal friends do with the employment insurance program in Ottawa, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, they don't want their rates to go down either. They don't the rates . . . You know why? Because, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't reflect their values. They don't believe in public Crown enterprise. They don't believe in a public Auto Fund here that keeps rates going down — frozen and then going down — and returns dividends to motorists.

And here we are, Mr. Speaker, the most telltale of all perhaps. Just as soon as we start providing health benefits to vulnerable workers, just as soon as we raise the minimum wage, just as soon as we begin to provide new and improved benefits for our neighbours in need, and just as soon as we unveil a universal drug plan for the seniors and elders of this province, they start screaming sustainability.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, this budget debate, Mr. Speaker, this budget debate it's not just a question of

economics. This is a debate about fundamental values, Mr. Speaker. And maybe, Mr. Speaker, the universal seniors' drug plan unveiled in this budget is the best example of all, of where our fundamental values as Sask Party right wingers and New Democrats differ. It is maybe right here where the difference is so obvious and so stark.

Mr. Speaker, we have unveiled for the seniors and elders of our province a drug plan that will enable them to travel to the pharmacy and to take from those formulary prescriptions any prescription that has been provided by their physician at no more than \$15 per prescription.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I spoke, I spoke to a senior couple in Saskatoon who had done the numbers on their own prescriptions. This has the potential to save that senior couple \$916 in the course of a year. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, you know what they say? As soon as we unveil a universal seniors' drug plan for our seniors and elders, you know what they say? You know what the member from Cannington says? He says we should get rid of it. He says, give us government and we'll get rid of it. They say we shouldn't do it.

You know what they say? They say it should be income tested — income tested. He just said it from his seat. Well, Mr. Speaker, I have news for the member of Cannington and the member of Arm River, the member of Weyburn. I have news for them. We have, we have an income test in this province. It's called income tax, Mr. Speaker. We have an income test in this province so those of us who have much and more can contribute more greatly to the community. We have an income test. It applies to our seniors.

What they want to do, Mr. Speaker, is put an income test on health benefits. That's their value. That's not a value of the New Democratic Party.

Mr. Speaker, this party, this party fundamentally believes there should be no income test at the admission desk in our hospitals. There should be no income test at a doctor's office, Mr. Speaker. And as we have been able to do, now no income test for our seniors and elders at the pharmacy counter.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — That's the value of the New Democratic Party.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, we New Democrats believe that as far as we are able, no senior in our province should have to make the decision between a prescription medicine and a healthy diet, that no senior in this province, Mr. Speaker, should have to make a decision about which of the prescriptions they're going to fill this month. And no senior in our province, as best as we are able, should have to make the decision between a prescription or a small gift for the grandchild. Mr. Speaker, these are the values of the Saskatchewan New Democratic Party. The Sask Party says they'll throw the plan out because, Mr. Speaker, it's not in their value system.

This is a debate about values as much as it is a debate about economics. We believe that the prosperity we have built must be shared with the many and not just the few. We believe that the families of Saskatchewan, the seniors of Saskatchewan, the young people of Saskatchewan, the Aboriginal and First Nations and Métis peoples of Saskatchewan, the newest newcomer among us should share in the prosperity we have built. The Saskatchewan Party opposite obviously does not share that value, and the Leader of the Opposition made it very clear this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, the headlines had it right: this budget is bold and it is broad. Get this, Mr. Speaker, in the last four years, we have now paid down from that Devine deficit virtually \$1 billion in debt in four years.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, we have lowered the income tax and simplified it. We have lowered sales tax, the narrowest base in Canada at a rate now which provides for Saskatchewan families under sales tax much less than they would pay in health-care-premium Alberta. We have dramatically lowered the education portion of property tax on our farm lands. We've been able through this budget to announce a 10 per cent reduction in education tax on property, business, and residential for everyone in the province. We've changed our royalty structures. We changed our business taxation to encourage economic growth.

We're building a future transportation network for the families of Saskatchewan. We're investing in community facilities, in new hospitals, in new schools, and we're investing in our neighbourhoods of need, Mr. Speaker — and something they would never do, investing in our neighbourhoods of need.

We're investing in our young and we are investing in our old. We're standing with, partners with our First Nations and Métis peoples in new and innovative ways. We're investing in the safety of our neighbourhoods. We're investing in the future of our autistic children in this province. We are investing through Project Hope in lives that are being destroyed by addictions. We're investing in vulnerable workers, so many of them women, Mr. Speaker.

And we're investing in a green and a prosperous economy. And, Mr. Speaker, let me just say this. I so look forward to the days and weeks ahead during the month of April when this government will unveil our green strategy and we will unveil our climate change strategy, Mr. Speaker.

We're investing in people. We are investing the prosperity we have built into the families of the young people of Saskatchewan because that's our value, Mr. Speaker, that's our value. These are not the values reflected by the Saskatchewan Party and we'll see it in moments, because if you vote for this budget you're voting for the value that says, economic prosperity should be shared. If you vote against it, you're saying economic prosperity should be confined to the few and not the many. Let us see how the vote is conducted here later, Mr. Speaker.

Now before I take my place I want to speak to one other value,

one other value that is reflected in the budget of the New Democratic Party in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, it's not very often — in fact it may be unique, it's certainly rare — that the people of Saskatchewan are delivered on one week two budgets, a federal budget and a provincial budget. And in the comparison of those budgets, Mr. Speaker, there is a fundamental value difference, a fundamental value difference, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, let us just set aside for a moment the fairness of Saskatchewan's case in terms of equalization and a fair equalization formula. Let us just set that argument to one side. Let us just set aside for a moment the fundamental unfairness of millions and billions of dollars going to support to our nearest neighbours next year, and we're going to get zero next year. Let's set that aside. Let us just set aside for a moment the fact that we have a federal government that will be extracting from the province of Saskatchewan resources to pay for their own political future in Ontario and Quebec. Let us just set that aside.

And let us just even for a moment set aside the fact that we have an opposition over here in the Saskatchewan Party so deep in the hip pocket of this federal Conservative Party in Ottawa that they won't even stand up outside the House — never mind in the House — and call upon their own friends, the 12 Conservative MPs [Member of Parliament], to vote against the budget that punishes the people of Saskatchewan. Let's just set that aside.

Let us just ask the fundamental question, let us ask the fundamental question of the federal budget: did the Prime Minister of Canada and his 12 Conservative MPs from Saskatchewan keep their promise to the people of Saskatchewan for the full exclusion of 100 per cent of our resource revenues? The answer, Mr. Speaker, is no. Mr. Speaker, did that Prime Minister and his 12 Conservative MPs from Saskatchewan keep the promise they made to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador? The people of Nova Scotia? The people of British Columbia? The people of Alberta? The answer, Mr. Speaker, is no.

Did the Prime Minister of Canada and his 12 MPs, close friends of the folks opposite, keep their promise to the income trust holders of Saskatchewan? No. Did this Prime Minister and his 12 Conservative Party MPs keep his promise to the police forces of Canada, a promise that said he was going to put 2,500 new officers on the street and not one has appeared since they became government? And now the police services of Canada are having to raise the issue publicly. Have they kept their promise there?

And, Mr. Speaker, have they kept their promise to the Aboriginal peoples of Canada, a promise that said they would adhere to the principles of the Kelowna accord and move forward? Have they kept their promise to the First Nations and Métis people of Saskatchewan? The answer is no, Mr. Speaker.

So here is the fundamental question. Here is the fundamental question, a question of the Stephen Harper Conservatives, the Sask Party conservatives — neither of whom are Progressive Conservatives — here is the question, Mr. Speaker. Can you trust any promise that a Stephen Harper Conservative or a Sask Party conservative will make? The answer also is no, Mr.

Speaker, and here is the value difference. Here is the value difference: a budget delivered by the Saskatchewan New Democratic Party of government that keeps its promises to the people.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — A promise, Mr. Speaker, made in the last election that we would build a green and prosperous economy, Mr. Speaker. Today's economy, today's economy hardly even reflective of the economy we inherited about four or five years ago, Mr. Speaker — an economy that is booming on all fronts, Mr. Speaker, providing career opportunities for our young people, drawing people to Saskatchewan from around the country, an economy that is sustaining this budget that is a budget for people. We made a promise. We'll keep that promise. We made a promise, Mr. Speaker, to make life better for Saskatchewan families. We made that promise, Mr. Speaker.

We made a promise to encourage our young people to build their futures here, Mr. Speaker. We made a promise that we would seek a world and a province where no one is being left behind in a period of economic prosperity. Mr. Speaker, in this budget, a future for our young people; in this budget, a universal seniors' drug plan; in this budget, the tools to retain and build the economic prosperity which is sustaining this budget. This is the difference: New Democrats — promises made, promises kept.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[16:00]

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, this is a budget which seeks to build a future for the people of Saskatchewan — a future for our people whether they be young or whether they be old; whether they be First Nation or Métis or the sons and the daughters, the grandsons and granddaughters of immigrants; or whether they be the newest immigrant family coming to our province from Calgary or from Kowloon, Mr. Speaker.

It is our vision and our value that in this bright future for this great province, the prosperity that we are building will be shared not just with the few, Mr. Speaker, not just with the few, but with all, Mr. Speaker. That's the value of the New Democratic Party. It's the value of this government, and, Mr. Speaker, I submit it is the value of the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — And that's what makes Saskatchewan stand tall in this Confederation of Canada.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the test will come. The test will come in just moments. In just moments we will be called upon in this legislature to vote. And we will see, we will see if this Saskatchewan Party conservative operation across the way votes against fully funding CAIS, votes against an imaginative, bold program for our young people. We'll see.

Will they stand in this House today and vote against a universal seniors' drug plan, Mr. Speaker? Because I can tell you this: on

this side of the House, this caucus and this leader will be voting for the people of Saskatchewan. We will be voting for a budget of values, a budget for the future. A budget, Mr. Speaker, that makes life better for Saskatchewan families and builds a better future for our youth right here at home in the great province of Saskatchewan. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. It is my duty pursuant to rule 52(3) to advise the Assembly that the Hon. Minister of Finance is about to exercise his right to close the debate and afterwards all members will be precluded from speaking to this question. Therefore if any member wishes to speak, let him or her do so now. Notwithstanding anything else contained here, according to rule 28(5) the mover of the budget motion shall have, in no case, any more than 20 minutes in which to close the debate. The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my pleasure to rise today to close this budget debate in the Assembly as we proceed to the vote. I was particularly pleased on March 22 to deliver the provincial budget, a budget that, as the Premier has clearly outlined, speaks to the values not only of the New Democratic Party but the values of Saskatchewan people. This is a budget that will make life better for Saskatchewan families.

Our NDP government has outlined that in our budget plan that we will make life better by capping seniors' prescription drug costs at no more than \$15 per prescription. We have said that we will create a new program where graduating post-secondary students will pay no provincial income tax on the first 20,000 they earn in each of the first five years after graduation.

We have committed 20-some million dollars to freeze university tuition fees this year again at the 2004 levels. We have added 24 per cent increase in seats — 2,100 new seats in this budget alone — at our training institutions to help young people. We have cut business taxes so that we can help businesses expand and create more opportunities for young people. We funded our largest capital budget to improve the roads and the highways, our schools and our hospitals and our other community infrastructure. And we have provided a PST rate in this budget which is at its lowest rate in 20 years and is the lowest sales tax outside the province of Alberta.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, these initiatives are only a few of the many highlights of this budget that will indeed make life better for Saskatchewan families. I haven't mentioned the fact that there's new money for literacy, new money for licensed child care spaces, new money to increase access to health care, new money for our municipalities in this budget. Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on and on about how every one of these initiatives makes life better for Saskatchewan families. This budget does many good things.

What I find amazing, as I have listened to this debate in this Assembly during these last six days, is how it is that the opposition Saskatchewan Party can still — in the light of all these initiatives— find something to complain about. It amazes

me the depth that they will sink to in misrepresenting what this budget plan outlines.

It's interesting that the first thing that these opposition members said on standing up is that the budget was not sustainable. And even more spurious is they went out and said that we would borrow money to balance the books. This is completely, completely false, completely false, and the members opposite know that.

It's a far cry, interestingly, from where the Finance critic was just a few months ago when he went on every radio station and every TV station he could find, went into the newspapers and said what? He said we're "sitting on a mountain of money." "Sitting on a mountain of money," he said. That was the position of the Sask Party but a few months ago. So what is it that has changed from that position of just a few months ago to the position of that Sask Party today?

I think it's very interesting that they forget to mention that it was this NDP government that cash financed the stabilization fund. We took \$1 billion in cash and put it into a savings account so that we could draw it down in future years to backfill the tax cuts that we made. As such — now the members opposite will be particularly interested in this — withdrawals from this fund do not impact our debt position because we are taking cash out of a savings account. And you can tell John Gormley that.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I want to say very simply, we built up that savings account under much criticism from the members opposite because we knew, we knew that in order to backfill the tax cuts that we needed to provide for Saskatchewan people to get this economy growing, that we could not provide those without cutting social programs unless we had the money in the bank.

And so last year and the year before, we made a concerted effort to put cash in that bank account so that we can backfill those tax cuts, so that we can continue to provide the social programs that we have.

And you know what's very interesting in terms of those tax cuts, Mr. Speaker? In the last year alone, we have been able to provide more than half a billion dollars — half a billion dollars — in tax cuts for Saskatchewan families and businesses to create more jobs and more opportunities for young people. And this budget builds on that commitment for growth.

It's also interesting to note that under this Premier's leadership, since we were elected in 2003, we have paid off \$1 billion in debt — \$1 billion worth of debt.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Now the members opposite don't make much of that, but it is \$1 billion in cash that has been transferred to pay down our overall debt. Fiscal prudence is the hallmark of this NDP administration, and it's evidenced by the fact that after the last budget, which they said was unsustainable, after the last budget we received our 14th, 15th,

and 16th credit rating upgrades, giving us a credit rating that's equal to the province of Ontario.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, the banks agree with us. And I want to read into the record what some of the bankers have been saying and what Bay Street's been saying about our balanced budget. The Bank of Montreal says, and I'm quoting:

The Province of Saskatchewan is projecting its 14th consecutive balanced budget for . . . [2008]. The \$75 million surplus in the General Revenue Fund follows an estimated \$70 million balance in 2006-07.

The current year's surplus is larger than the 5 million estimated in the third quarter. And on balance, the province continues to earn — now the opposition will particularly like this, this is the Bank of Montreal:

On balance, the province continues to earn top marks for its commitment to cutting taxes, keeping spending in check, but not to the point of ignoring important outlays, and maintaining a fiscal cushion . . .

What does the Scotia Bank say? Maybe they don't bank at the Bank of Montreal, maybe they don't believe them. What does Scotia Bank say? Mr. Speaker, Scotia Bank says:

Saskatchewan's mid-term outlook remains upbeat, with buoyant demand for its key resources, including grain, given the recent upswing in U.S. and Canadian grain-based ethanol production targets. Following upward revisions to provincial revenues through FY07, the Province's revenue forecasts for FY08 may prove conservative . . .

Hardly the dire picture that the members of the opposition would paint. What is it the Laurentian Bank say, Mr. Speaker? Well if they don't like the Scotia Bank and they don't like the Bank of Montreal, what does the Laurentian Bank say? It says, quote:

The new fiscal measures [contained] in the budget are necessarily modest but nevertheless smartly crafted, particularly in light of the province's need to maintain a "competitive tax structure" . . .

These are but a sampling of what Canada's chartered banks have to say about how we are handling the province's finances on behalf of Saskatchewan people.

Now the opposition has been running around this province all over the place, telling anyone that'll listen that the budget is not sustainable. But the banks don't agree. And I will tell you this, Mr. Speaker. I will take the word of the chartered banks of this country above the graduates of the Grant Devine school of economics any day of the year.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — So, Mr. Speaker, let's for a second believe . . . Let's just accept that they actually believe their own

rhetoric. Let's accept that they believe their own rhetoric that the budget's not sustainable. I thought I'd give them the benefit of the doubt and I listened to their speeches. And what is it that they said? They went on and they said, you know what? The budget's not sustainable. The government's got a spending problem.

Now I've gone through their speeches and I thought it was very interesting what they propose. Now you would think that if they believed in all honesty that the province was running a \$700 million deficit, they would be out there trying to cut spending left and right — mostly right. You could be almost certain that this is what a party that believes in — what is it their leader calls it? — fiscal probity, that this fiscal probity party over there would be out saying here's the ways to get rid of this program. Cut this. Cut that. Do they say that? Well amazingly they don't say anything of the nature, Mr. Speaker.

Every single member that stood to speak said, what do they need to do? Cut more taxes. Obviously if you've got a spending problem, the first thing you'd want to do is cut your revenue, right? Well this is what the members of the opposition seem to think. Let's cut the revenue.

So that's not good enough. They didn't stop there. They got up and they said we need the government to spend not less money, more money. Spend more money. So the opposition says there's a spending problem. It turns out the spending problem is we're not spending enough. That's the logic of the Sask Party, fiscal probity party, the fiscal probity party over there.

What is it they called for? And I could go through the list of . . . Just on highways alone, almost \$600 million worth of new spending this year alone they want on highways. We've budgeted 433 million because that is what we can afford, Mr. Speaker. And I could go on and on about the highways number.

I want to talk a little bit about health because, when they talk about health, they also suggested that the problem was a spending problem. But what is the problem? We need to do more spending. Despite the fact that we've invested \$3.45 billion in the health budget this year, member after member over there called for more spending on health care — unbelievable that this is what we get from the quote, "fiscal probity party." That the Sask Party leader would even pretend to know anything about fiscal probity, let alone be in a position to lecture this Assembly on it, I think is a true embarrassment and a betrayal of his true roots.

The opposition has provided in this budget debate no credible alternative. In fact, in fact what we heard today from the Leader of the Opposition was an attack on the tax cuts that we've actually introduced that they used to call for — unbelievable that they are now calling and attacking the tax cuts that we've undertaken, tax cuts that the Finance critic said just a few months ago were sustainable. So why is it that, when they fall back and say we've got a spending problem, that what it is that they're now calling for is deeper tax cuts on property and more spending in health care, more spending on highways, more spending in education, more spending in agriculture. How can that be a credible position for a so-called government in waiting of a quote "fiscal probity party."

[16:15]

And what is it . . . Now they're not entirely, not entirely without having identified cuts. In fact what was the very first thing they said that they would cut? The very first thing that they said they would cut is health care. The only cuts they have been able to identify in this budget is a cut to health care which I think is amazing. They are saying that in a \$3.45 billion budget that we cannot afford \$35 million to cap the prescription drug costs for seniors. They say that in a \$3.45 billion budget there's no money that could be found to provide cheaper drugs for our seniors. That is an amazing, an amazing position from the members opposite.

But what is it they did manage to find? Because they want to cut back on the drug plan but instead they are prepared to go and hire more health care workers. Well it was a very interesting type of health care worker they wanted to hire. The first thing that they said they would hire is more auditors. It turns out the Sask Party thinks the prescription to the problems in health care is more auditors. Well I am just overjoyed that at some point they'll be going out to people and saying — you know what? — your medical decisions are between you and your doctor and a Sask Party-appointed auditor if that party ever forms a government because that is what they're going to do.

Now I have some questions about these auditors. Who are they auditing? Are they going to be auditing the patients to see whether they're overusing the system? Are they going to go through the doctors' records and see what they're prescribing? Are they going to go through and see what the nurses are doing? Are there too many nurses on the wards? What are these auditors going to do, and when on earth did auditors become health care professionals that we should be funding through the medicare budget?

I also thought it was interesting, when it came to the graduate tax credit, that they attacked it. They attacked the graduate tax credit, saying instead what they wanted was a tuition rebate program. Interestingly the program that they would provide would give lawyers a greater benefit than welders. Their solution, their solution to a labour shortage is to provide a bigger benefit to white-collar workers than to the skilled tradespeople that the province's economy actually needs.

How disconnected from the reality of what's going on in the provincial economy can the Sask Party be than to have this distorted view where they would rather give lawyers a bigger tax break than the welders and the apprentices and the skilled tradespeople that are actually driving economic growth in this province?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on outlining the hypocrisy and the lack of credibility of the Sask Party that claims to present a credible alternative. Let me simply say this. Their position is incredible. And while we have listened to the Sask Party try to speak out for fiscal probity — a notion that, frankly, is far removed from his own track record when he was last in the government — all I can conclude is this must have been one of those learnings, one of those learnings

that the Leader of the Opposition had when he said it was an attribute to have been part of a government that was described as the most corrupt administration in Canadian history. Well that's something to be proud about. And I guess if that's the only learning he came away from, that member's got a lot more learning to do.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Let me say this, Mr. Speaker. We cannot afford the Sask Party plan that calls for lower taxes and more and more and more spending. We cannot afford a plan that the Sask Party presents that calls for auditors to be hired at the expense of health care professionals. We cannot afford a plan that calls for more tax breaks for lawyers than welders. We cannot support a plan that calls for, as the Finance critic who's chirping from his seat right now, called for us to raid the Auto Fund — break the law, raid the Auto Fund — to bring the money over into the GRF.

We cannot afford an opposition that will have its leader stand up and denigrate his own constituents, denigrate his own constituents as he did this afternoon by saying they don't understand the difference between summary financials and the GRF. We cannot afford the plan that has been outlined by the members opposite.

And let me just ask you this. Is there any greater spectacle than the debacle that they have showed in the face of their constituents who came here protesting school closures? And their only solution, their only solution was to repackage, repackage an existing plan and then suggest, suggest that it would have a different outcome — a shocking, shocking position on the part of the opposition. And I think it really does speak to how shameless their pandering has become in a calculated political move to get votes.

I find it amazing that they are arguing we can't afford 35 million for a drug plan in a \$3.45 billion health budget. I find it interesting they're calling for more tax cuts for the wealthiest landowners but won't support a tax cut for recent graduates. It is clear that those members opposite will say anything to get elected, and they will promise anything to get a vote.

Well here's the rub, Mr. Speaker. They have now said that the current spending cannot be afforded. We disagree, the banks disagree, and the public disagrees. The plan that we have outlined is balanced in its long-term vision, and this plan will make life better for Saskatchewan families in the long run.

If Saskatchewan people want to pursue a different path as is outlined by the opposition and if the voters agree with that and elect them, let me make this very clear: you cannot have the NDP cake and Sask Party icing. The choice is clear.

A change in direction will require cuts to existing programs or increases in existing taxes. The programs we've outlined in this budget are balanced, and they are affordable, and they are sustainable, and they fully commit this province to making life better — through the PST cut, through the business . . . [inaudible] . . . cut, through the largest road building budget in the history of the province, the biggest health care budget in the province's history, and through new programs like the graduate

tax credit and the new \$15 cap on prescription drugs.

Mr. Speaker, let me say this: this budget makes life better for Saskatchewan families. It deserves the support of the Saskatchewan legislature as it already has the support of Saskatchewan people in our common effort to make sure this place remains the best province in Canada to live, work, and raise a family. And I would encourage the Sask Party to stand up for Saskatchewan people and vote for this budget.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order please. Order please. The debate on the budget has now come to a close.

There are two questions before the House. The first is the motion by the Minister of Finance, the member for Regina South, seconded by the member for Saskatoon Nutana:

That the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the Government,

And the amendment to the main motion, made by the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs, seconded by the member for Martensville:

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

condemn the government for plunging the province back into a deficit without creating a real growth agenda or addressing the most pressing needs of the Saskatchewan people.

We will first vote on the amendment to the main motion. The amendment once again is the motion moved by the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs and seconded by the member for Martensville:

That the words after "the Assembly" be deleted and the following added:

condemn the government for plunging the province back into a deficit without creating a real growth agenda or addressing the most pressing needs of Saskatchewan people.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the amendment?

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — Those who favour the amendment, say aye.

Some Hon. Members: — Aye.

The Speaker: — Those who oppose the amendment, say no.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — Call in the members for a recorded vote.

[The division bells rang from 16:25 until 16:27.]

The Speaker: — Order, please. The question before the Assembly is the amendment to the main motion moved by the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs, seconded by the member from Martensville:

That all the words after “That the Assembly” be deleted and the following added:

condemn the government for plunging the province into a deficit without creating a real growth agenda or addressing the most pressing needs of Saskatchewan people.

Would those in favour of the amendment please rise.

[Yeas — 27]

Wall	Toth	Elhard
McMorris	D’Autremont	Krawetz
Draude	Hermanson	Bjornerud
Stewart	Wakefield	Chisholm
Hart	Harpauer	Gantefoer
Eagles	Weekes	Cheveldayoff
Huyghebaert	Allchurch	Kerpan
Kirsch	Brkich	Morgan
Merriman	Heppner	Duncan

The Speaker: — All those opposed to the amendment please rise.

[Nays — 28]

Calvert	Hamilton	Van Mulligen
Lautermilch	Hagel	Atkinson
Cline	Sonntag	Wartman
Forbes	Prebble	Crofford
Belanger	Higgins	Thomson
Nilson	Beatty	Taylor
Junor	Harper	Iwanchuk
McCall	Quennell	Trew
Yates	Addley	Morin
Borgerson		

Clerk: — Mr. Speaker, those in favour of the amendment, 27; those opposed, 28.

The Speaker: — I declare the motion lost. The remaining question before the Assembly is the motion moved by the Minister of Finance, the member for Regina South, seconded by the member for Saskatoon Nutana:

That the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion? Those in favour of the motion say aye.

Some Hon. Members: — Aye.

The Speaker: — Those opposed to the motion say no.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — I do believe that ayes have it. Call in the

members for a recorded vote.

[The division bells rang from 16:30 until 16:31.]

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion moved by the member for Regina South, the Minister of Finance, seconded by the member for Saskatoon Nutana:

That the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Those in favour of the motion please rise.

[Yeas — 28]

Calvert	Hamilton	Van Mulligen
Lautermilch	Hagel	Atkinson
Cline	Sonntag	Wartman
Forbes	Prebble	Crofford
Belanger	Higgins	Thomson
Nilson	Beatty	Taylor
Junor	Harper	Iwanchuk
McCall	Quennell	Trew
Yates	Addley	Morin
Borgerson		

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. Those opposed to the motion please rise.

[Nays — 27]

Wall	Toth	Elhard
McMorris	D’Autremont	Krawetz
Draude	Hermanson	Bjornerud
Stewart	Wakefield	Chisholm
Hart	Harpauer	Gantefoer
Eagles	Weekes	Cheveldayoff
Huyghebaert	Allchurch	Kerpan
Kirsch	Brkich	Morgan
Merriman	Heppner	Duncan

Clerk: — Mr. Speaker, those in favour of the motion, 28, those opposed, 27.

The Speaker: — I declare the motion carried.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, in order to accommodate the good work of the Human Services Committee, I move that this House do now adjourn.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 16:32.]

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GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

CABINET MINISTERS

Hon. Lorne Calvert
Premier

Hon. Graham Addley
Minister of Healthy Living Services
Minister Responsible for Seniors

Hon. Pat Atkinson
Minister of Advanced Education and Employment
Minister Responsible for Immigration
Minister Responsible for the Public
Service Commission

Hon. Joan Beatty
Minister of Northern Affairs
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women

Hon. Buckley Belanger
Minister of Community Resources
Minister Responsible for Disability Issues

Hon. Eric Cline
Minister of Industry and Resources
Minister Responsible for Investment
Saskatchewan Inc.
Minister Responsible for Information Services
Corporation of Saskatchewan

Hon. David Forbes
Minister of Labour
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Water Corporation

Hon. Glenn Hagel
Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation
Provincial Secretary
Minister Responsible for Gaming
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Government Insurance

Hon. Deb Higgins
Minister of Learning
Minister Responsible for Literacy
Minister Responsible for Liquor and
Gaming Authority
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Telecommunications

Hon. Eldon Lautermilch
Minister of Highways and Transportation
Minister of Property Management
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Transportation Company
Minister Responsible for the
Forestry Secretariat

Hon. Warren McCall
Minister of Corrections and Public Safety

Hon. John Nilson
Minister of Environment
Minister Responsible for the Office of
Energy Conservation
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Power Corporation

Hon. Frank Quennell
Minister of Justice and
Attorney General

Hon. Clay Serby
Deputy Premier
Minister of Regional Economic and
Co-operative Development

Hon. Maynard Sonntag
Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations
Minister of Crown Investments Corporation
of Saskatchewan

Hon. Len Taylor
Minister of Health

Hon. Andrew Thomson
Minister of Finance
Minister Responsible for Information Technology
Minister Responsible for
SaskEnergy Incorporated

Hon. Harry Van Mulligen
Minister of Government Relations

Hon. Mark Wartman
Minister of Agriculture and Food