



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

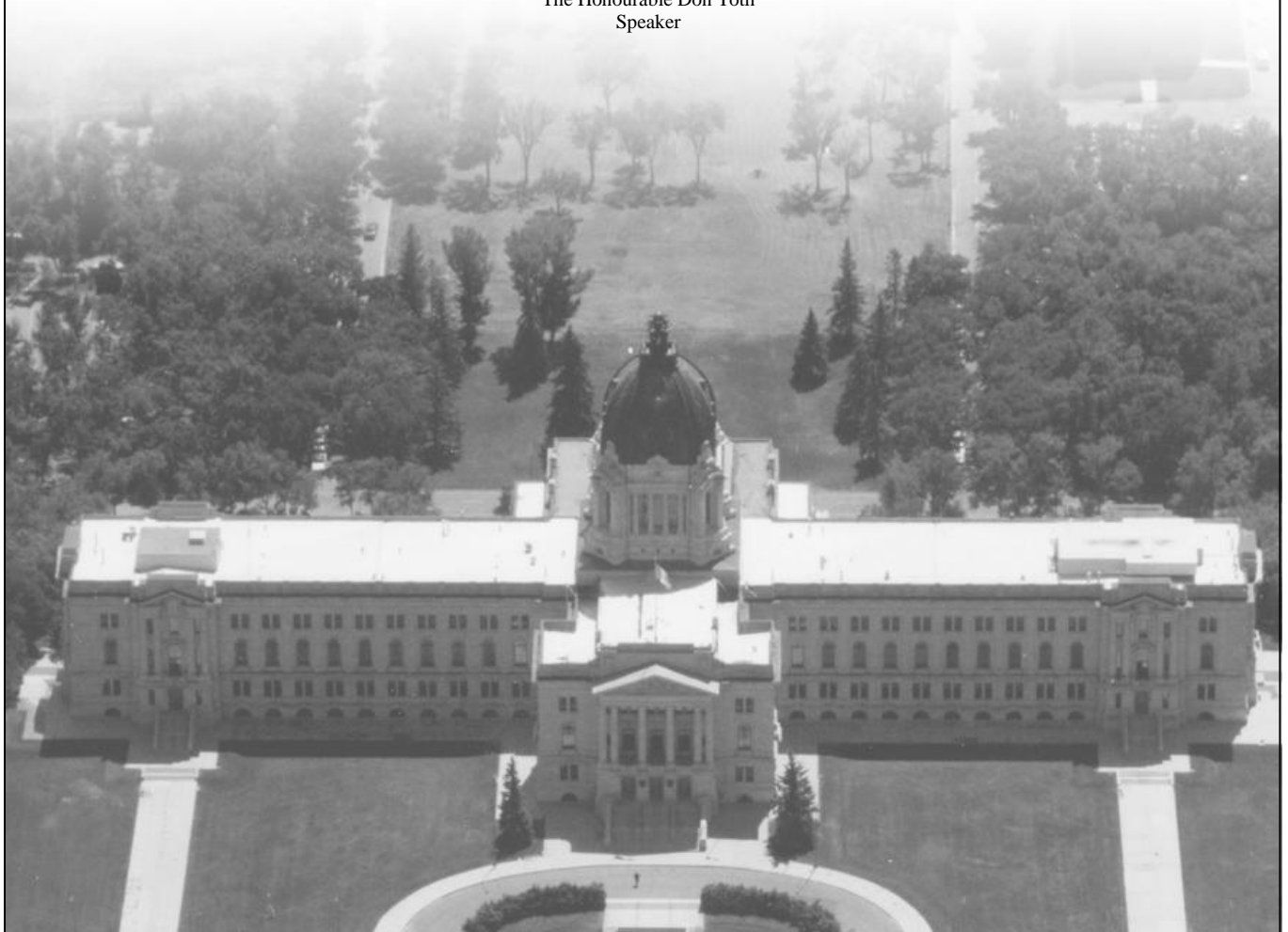
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Speaker — Hon. Don Toth
 Premier — Hon. Brad Wall
 Leader of the Opposition — Lorne Calvert

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Atkinson, Pat	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Belanger, Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornerud, Hon. Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
Boyd, Hon. Bill	SP	Kindersley
Bradshaw, Fred	SP	Carrot River Valley
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
Brotten, Cam	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Calvert, Lorne	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Hon. Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
Chisholm, Michael	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
D'Autremont, Hon. Dan	SP	Cannington
Draude, Hon. June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
Duncan, Dustin	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, Hon. Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
Forbes, David	NDP	Saskatoon Centre
Furber, Darcy	NDP	Prince Albert Northcote
Gantfoer, Hon. Rod	SP	Melfort
Harpauer, Hon. Donna	SP	Humboldt
Harper, Ron	NDP	Regina Northeast
Harrison, Jeremy	SP	Meadow Lake
Hart, Glen	SP	Last Mountain-Touchwood
Heppner, Hon. Nancy	SP	Martensville
Hickie, Hon. Darryl	SP	Prince Albert Carlton
Higgins, Deb	NDP	Moose Jaw Wakamow
Hutchinson, Hon. Bill	SP	Regina South
Huyghebaert, Yogi	SP	Wood River
Iwanchuk, Andy	NDP	Saskatoon Fairview
Junor, Judy	NDP	Saskatoon Eastview
Kirsch, Delbert	SP	Batoche
Krawetz, Hon. Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
LeClerc, Serge	SP	Saskatoon Northwest
McCall, Warren	NDP	Regina Elphinstone-Centre
McMillan, Tim	SP	Lloydminster
McMorris, Hon. Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
Michelson, Warren	SP	Moose Jaw North
Morgan, Hon. Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
Morin, Sandra	NDP	Regina Walsh Acres
Nilson, John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
Norris, Hon. Rob	SP	Saskatoon Greystone
Ottenbreit, Greg	SP	Yorkton
Quennell, Frank	NDP	Saskatoon Meewasin
Reiter, Jim	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Ross, Laura	SP	Regina Qu'Appelle Valley
Schriemer, Joceline	SP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Stewart, Hon. Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Taylor, Len	NDP	The Battlefords
Tell, Hon. Christine	SP	Regina Wascana Plains
Toth, Hon. Don	SP	Moosomin
Trew, Kim	NDP	Regina Coronation Park
Van Mulligen, Harry	NDP	Regina Douglas Park
Vermette, Doyle	NDP	Cumberland
Wall, Hon. Brad	SP	Swift Current
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Wilson, Nadine	SP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Wotherspoon, Trent	NDP	Regina Rosemont
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

Clerk: — I wish to inform the Assembly that Mr. Speaker is not here today to open today's sitting.

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Environment.

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is my honour to introduce to you and through you a group of guests visiting us today. They're in your gallery. They are from the People's Republic of China, and they are members of the Chinese National People's Congress and the State Council of China.

Saskatchewan and China have a long-standing relationship as trading partners. We have supplied large volumes of grain, potash, uranium, and manufactured goods to China. And Saskatchewan and China share some similar concerns on the environmental front and the challenges facing us with coal-generated power. The guests with us today are going to be visiting with the University of Regina to look at our carbon capture and storage systems, and also discuss, with SaskPower, clean coal technology.

So I will introduce them and ask them to rise as I say their names, and I apologize to them in advance for any mispronunciations.

Xu Xiaodong is the team leader and the director-general of the research department of the environmental protection and resources conservation committee of the National People's Congress. Shang Jucheng is the deputy team leader and director-general of the administrative office of the environmental protection and resources conservation committee.

Liu Shuguang is the director of the administrative office; Li Hailin, senior analyst in the research department; Yin Shukun, senior analyst in the research department; Xu Shufan, deputy director-general in the science and technology department of the Ministry of Environmental Protection; Hu Xiaojun, director of the department of agriculture, resources and environmental protection of the Ministry of Executive Supervision and Inspection; Wang Ying, director in the department of agriculture, resources and environmental protection of the National Audit Agency; Li Yingcai, director of the environmental protection and resource conservation committee in the Xi'an municipal congress of Shaanxi province. Wang Qian, researcher in the consulting department, China institute for environmental planning in the Ministry of Environmental Protection. Jiang Hengwei, staff member with the foreign affairs bureau in the general office of the National People's Congress.

And joining our Chinese guests today from AMEC Canada are Wit Siemieniuk, vice-president; Su Liu, environmental scientist

from AMEC, Beijing office; and from the Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment, Liz Quarshie, deputy minister, and Zewei Yu of the corporate planning and policy branch.

The visit from our distinguished guests to Saskatchewan reflects the shared commitment of the Chinese people and Saskatchewan people to protect our environment while sustaining economic growth. And I would ask all members of the Assembly to join me in welcoming our visitors today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. To you and through you to the rest of the members of the Assembly today, I'd like to introduce a number of guests that have travelled great distance to be here. They're here in Saskatchewan to attend the International Health Co-operative Organisation symposium on the role of co-operatives in health care. This Thursday it'll be in Saskatoon.

Around the world, health organizations, co-operative health organizations, own hospitals. They manufacture pharmaceuticals and operate long-term care facilities that benefit millions of people, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Representatives from Brazil, Japan, Spain, Sweden, the United States, and Canada will be making presentations on their respective co-operative health movements. I am pleased to say that Saskatchewan will be discussing our province's co-operative clinics and their role in our primary health care model.

Joining us this afternoon are representatives from Japan, Quebec, Manitoba, and delegates from Saskatchewan as well. I understand that they'll be in attendance at a number of our facilities, including the co-operative clinics, the community clinics, in Regina and Saskatoon.

So I'd like all members of the Assembly to welcome them to our province and, for the people from Saskatchewan, their Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you three individuals seated in the Speaker's gallery. They are Chief Roger Bird of Montreal Lake Cree Nation, the past chief of the FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations], Alphonse Bird, and the vice-chief of the Prince Albert Grand Council, Ed Henderson. Please join me, Mr. Speaker, in welcoming them to their Assembly and wishing them luck in the meetings that they had here today and in their endeavours. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to join the Minister of Health in welcoming the group of people who are going to be looking at our co-operative health facilities across Saskatchewan. As members may know, there are several people on this side of the House that presently receive our medical services from a co-operative health clinic. The co-operative health clinic in our province has a very proud history coming out of 1962 when our province became the first province in Canada to introduce universal medicare.

So I want to welcome our guests from Canada and welcome our international guests to the Legislative Assembly and hope that you have very fruitful discussions with co-operators in our province.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'd like to join with the member opposite to introduce to everyone in the gallery three individuals: Chief Roger Bird, chief of the Montreal Lake Cree Nation, Vice-chief Ed Henderson from Prince Albert Grand Council, and former vice-chief, FSIN, Alphonse Bird.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to publicly state that I appreciate all the discussions we've had with these individuals and that we have a shared vision and commitment for our province. So I ask everyone to join with me in welcoming these individuals to their Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Provincial Secretary and Highways minister.

Hon. Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. To you and through you to all members of the House, I'd like to introduce two constituents that are sitting in the west gallery today. I was pleased to glance up there and notice Bryon and Judy Harkness from the community of Shaunavon.

I want to make note of their attendance here today by indicating that I think it's about 20 years ago now, they answered an ad in the newspaper for somebody to come to Shaunavon and establish a new car dealership. They were sequestered in north central Manitoba, I think. And I won't say that they were looking for an escape, but they got to Shaunavon and they knew at last their opportunity had come. Not only was the economic opportunity real, the weather was much improved. And Bryon Harkness, along with his partner Rod Crockett, came and established an automotive dealership there, have been in business consistently and effectively for a number of years.

And I want to welcome Bryon and his wife Judy here today. I understand Bryon has been facing some health challenges. I hope he is doing well, and we wish him the best on behalf of the members of this legislature.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Prince Albert Northcote.

Mr. Furber: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have a petition in support of public safety and security in Saskatchewan:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government, in the interest of the safety and security of Saskatchewan families, residents, and communities, to immediately cause the Minister of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing to undertake a thorough consultation with a broad group of stakeholders, including the policing community, the corrections community, and community agencies, organizations, and educators that interface with gangs and understand the risks and challenges that gangs offer to our communities.

Mr. Speaker, I so present.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to present petitions in support of reduction in the education portion of property taxes. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to stop withholding and to provide significant, sustainable, long-term property tax relief to property owners by 2009 through significantly increasing the provincial portion of education funding.

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

And these are signed by petitioners from Regina.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, I rise today to present a petition in regards to new child care spaces:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately add at least 1,000 new child care spaces in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this petition has been signed by the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from

Saskatoon Centre.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise to present a petition against means testing the seniors' drug plan. I'd like to read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reverse its decision to means test seniors and to ensure that all seniors continue to have access to affordable prescription drugs.

I do so present. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatchewan Rivers.

National Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise to speak about an issue that is near and dear to my heart — National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. It was 15 years ago, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that my mother, Ella, died of breast cancer after a courageous two-year battle with the disease. Since then my two sisters and I have been very diligent in preventive screening for the breast cancer, knowing how crucial early diagnosis and effective treatment are in combatting the disease.

I recently read a statistic that stated one in nine Canadian women will develop breast cancer during her lifetime. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that means one or possibly two of the 11 female MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] that sit before you today in the Legislative Assembly will one day develop this disease. In Saskatchewan an estimated 620 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year and 160 will perish. Mr. Deputy Speaker, a lesser-known fact is that 50 men will also die of breast cancer in 2008 here in Canada.

With this fear, however, there is still hope. Two-thirds of women diagnosed with breast cancer will live through this disease and only one in every 28 Canadian women will die.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to encourage everyone to stop and remind the women in their lives to set up an appointment with their doctor to screen for this disease. With early detection, effective treatment, and innovative research, may we all look forward to the end of this terrible disease called breast cancer. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association Awards Banquet

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising to recognize the hard work and dedication of the members of the

Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association, who on October 18 held their 62nd annual general meeting in The Battlefords, and to congratulate three local individuals who were honoured at the association's awards banquet.

The banquet pays tribute to exceptional individuals and communities who through their efforts and skills have made outstanding and extraordinary contributions towards the betterment of the parks and recreation movement in Saskatchewan. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I would like to add my name to those congratulating this year's volunteer award recipients who come from The Battlefords.

The Facility Operator Award was presented to Kelly Oliphant, who for the past 13 years has been employed by the town of Battleford. The Fitness Leadership Award was presented to Nicola "Nikki" Holtzhausen, a 12-year fitness leader and now a fitness instructor with the city of North Battleford. And the Citation for Outstanding Achievement was presented to Bernie Albers, a professional for more than 25 years, who is the parks and recreation director in the city of North Battleford.

Each of these recipients are well known throughout The Battlefords and I call upon all members of the Legislative Assembly to join me today in recognizing and applauding their achievements. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[13:45]

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Prince Albert.

Prince Albert Physician Named Saskatchewan Family Physician of the Year

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On September 26, Dr. Brenda Hookenson was awarded the 2008 Saskatchewan College of Family Physicians of the Year Award by the Saskatchewan College of Family Physicians during a banquet. I'm proud to say this fine individual is a constituent of mine. Dr. Hookenson is well deserving of this honour, and I was pleased to hear that she was recognized for her dedication and significant contribution to the health of the citizens of Prince Albert and the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Dr. Hookenson has been practising medicine for over 30 years, and we recognize that she plays a critical role in the province's health care system. Several of her co-workers thought so much of her that they nominated her for this prestigious award. In the nomination package, Dr. Thomas Smith-Windsor wrote, and I quote:

Dr. Hookenson is a full-service family physician, who over the course of her career has provided emergency coverage, obstetrical care, anaesthetic work, operating room assists, and is a preceptor for rural family medical residents. As well, the care that she provides to her patients is exemplary.

Dr. Hookenson also holds many appointments, including clinical preceptor for the College of Family Physicians of

Canada and clinical assistant professor in the College of Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan. She's been involved with continuing medical education programs and sits on the board for the Saskatchewan College of Family Physicians and the Saskatchewan Medical Association.

So today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as MLA for Prince Albert Carlton, I ask all members to join me in personally recognizing and congratulating Dr. Brenda Hookenson on receiving the 2008 Saskatchewan Family Physician of the Year Award.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Extended Transition Program Supports Former Students

Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Prairie South School Division has created a pilot project to help make a difference for students transitioning from high school into post-secondary education, training, or meaningful employment.

The extended transition program has been operating since 2007 and is the first school-based program in Saskatchewan that offers support for former students. The program was created by career development consultant Jacky Lothian and the former superintendent of student services for the Prairie South School Division, the late George Falk.

The goal of the program is to have participants employed, enrolled in an employment program, attending a career-related training course, or furthering and/or upgrading their education within a few months of accessing the program. Heather Gobbett, facilitator of the program, works individually with the students to help identify sources of support that fit with the students' needs. Often it's a matter of just directing students to community-based programs that already exist.

This is an approach that is working. The one-of-a-kind program is now gaining recognition, given that all school divisions have students in need of extra support. It's a relatively low-cost way of meeting the needs of youth involved and helping them to make the appropriate career choices.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join me in congratulating all those involved in this innovative program and extend their best wishes to all participants. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Weyburn Veterans Honoured

Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This past weekend I had the great pleasure of attending Weyburn's first military homecoming parade since the end of the Second World War in honour of returning veterans. Hundreds of Weyburn and area residents gathered along the streets of Weyburn on Saturday afternoon to welcome home Sergeant Jon Barth, Sergeant James Richards, Private Evan Kimber, and

Bombardier Roy Matheson, all who have returned in recent weeks from a tour of duty in Afghanistan.

The afternoon began with a military parade through the streets of downtown Weyburn with a large crowd gathered to greet the soldiers in front of the Legion. As the parade was making its way up 3rd Street back towards the Legion, the crowd was treated to a flypast by a B-52 bomber out of the Minot Air Force Base, and three local pilots.

Mr. Speaker, the festivities continued inside the Legion where the sold-out crowd heard from numerous dignitaries and community members, and finally the veterans themselves who spoke of the mission and of its importance and also the overwhelming level of support that they and their families received by neighbours, co-workers, friends, and even strangers in the community.

Mr. Speaker, this incredible day in the history of Weyburn was the work of many people, but it was really the hard work and dedication of Mr. Larry Pearson of the Legion, Weyburn branch, who worked so hard to arrange this special day for our returning veterans.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the residents of Weyburn-Big Muddy, I offer my thanks and congratulations to Larry for this incredible day. And to our returning veterans, thank you for your service to our country, and welcome home.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Northeast.

Sheet Metal Workers Local 296 Celebrate Anniversary

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On Saturday, September 27 I, along with several of my colleagues, joined with the sheet metal workers to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Local 296. Fifty years ago Local 296 was born when three small local unions merged as one and would be guided by business manager Archie Dorn. Though small at first, Local 296 has grown to represent sheet metal workers across the entire province.

Local 296 has come a long way in the past 50 years with respect to wages, benefits, and working conditions — the very cornerstones for which it stands. At the same time the members of Local 296 have earned a reputation in the construction industry for being reliable, dedicated, and enthusiastic workers. The members of Local 296 have earned the respect of contractors in the industry through sticking to the principles of providing good workmanship and giving a solid day's labour for a day's pay.

Local 296 has enjoyed success beyond the borders of Saskatchewan with the promotion of past business manager Bert Ottenson as international representative, and more recently the endorsement of present business manager Garry Kot to the fifth international vice-president. Once again I want to congratulate Sheet Metal Workers Local 296 on their milestone of 50 years of service. I wish them all the best in the next 50 years.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Meadow Lake.

Member's Comments About Party Leadership

Mr. Harrison: — Mr. Speaker, he might not be able to play the piano but he can sure sing like a canary. Last week the member for Regina Dewdney, the same member who wouldn't tell the public about prisoner escapes, had no problem telling the world about the shady world of NDP [New Democratic Party] backroom shenanigans. First we learned that the member was the mastermind behind the abortive 2006 attempt to force out the former premier. Then we learned that the only reason that the attempt did not succeed was that his caucus colleagues were sufficiently lacking in moral fibre. As he said, quote "I was the only one . . . [to] stand my ground."

So having insulted every one of his colleagues, the member then moved on to pontificating on his party's leadership race and his friend Dwain Lingenfelter. We learned that Link has demanded and received overwhelming caucus support — that this was indeed a prerequisite for him to again grace our province with his presence. We learned that over half of the four women in caucus have pledged their support. Assuming that the member for Moose Jaw Wakamow is a candidate, that means that even the member for Saskatoon Nutana is supporting Link. Who would have thunk it?

Perhaps the member for Regina Dewdney is the canary in the mine shaft — or perhaps Lingenfelter is thinking that with friends like this, who needs enemies?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Public Notification Policy

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Minister of Public Safety assures us that his new policy will ensure that the public is kept informed when a person who poses a threat to their safety is unlawfully at large. But, Mr. Speaker, new policy is only good if it works. We have seen this minister's new policy fail twice in the last week. To the minister: why did his new policy fail, was the policy put in writing, and will he table it for us today?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Corrections and Public Safety and Policing.

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, after the escape in August I did ask my officials to develop a policy involving new public notification. It is in place. It was in place for this last incident, Mr. Speaker. It wasn't followed, Mr. Speaker. Sorry to say that, Mr. Speaker, the previous government over there did nothing to ensure public

safety because it did nothing to ensure public notification. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It might be easier for members of this legislature and the general public to understand why the minister's new policy failed if we could see that policy for ourselves. I don't understand his lack of willingness to table his new policy so that we can see what was communicated to his staff.

Mr. Speaker, this goes to the minister's credibility. Why won't he table the policy? Again to the minister: will he table his new policy or will he admit he didn't bother to write it down?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Corrections, Public Safety and Policing.

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The policy's clear. It's in the central office: notify the public after notifying the police. Mr. Speaker, enough said.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, people have real concerns about why this minister's policy has failed to do what he said it would do. The minister is placing blame solely on the shoulders of his deputy minister, but we still don't know how he arrived at that conclusion. Instead of announcing a study, the logical thing would've been to pick up the phone and ask his DM — his deputy minister — what happened.

To the minister: did he ask his deputy minister what went wrong? Why do Saskatchewan people only have another government review instead of answers to their questions?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Corrections, Public Safety and Policing.

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Well thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. One only has to look to *Hansard* yesterday, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to see that the Minister of Justice and his deputy minister are going to do a thorough review of not my . . . but what happened in my situation with the Ministry of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing, and his. The minister, Mr. Speaker, agrees with that policy and that direction, Mr. Speaker, for full public safety measures.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Justice says he has put a new interim protocol in place to prevent any further incidents of inappropriate releases. To the minister: will he today outline for us his new protocol and will he table his new interim protocol for us?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I thank the member opposite for the question and welcome the opportunity to be able to give some information and some background on this. The protocol is an interim protocol, and it's a first step, and it's a significant first step. What it does is it requires the officials in Corrections or the officials in Justice to make a verification of the identity of the individual and to verify whether there is any other matters that the individual is being held on, or should be held on, before the individual is going to be released. That's the first step.

The second step, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that it deals with what would happen if there was a mistake or an escape or something untoward happen. And it would require the individuals involved to immediately contact their superiors and to advise their superiors as to what happened so that appropriate steps could be taken to ensure that the person is rearrested or captured as soon as possible.

The third step, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is to deal with public awareness and public notification.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Meewasin.

Utility Rates

Mr. Quennell: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. On September 10 we found out there was going to be a 20 per cent increase in SaskEnergy rates. This is at the same time the wholesale price of natural gas is dropping.

To the Minister Responsible for CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan]: why is the price going up for Saskatchewan residents at the same time the price of natural gas is falling?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Crown Corporations.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. member should know, SaskEnergy when it does its pricing does not make a profit on the sale of natural gas. The natural gas price is calculated as the market at that period of time. Then a submission is made to the Public Utilities Review Commission, and that has been done. And they have come back and said indeed that that was the right pricing at the time.

Since that time the price of natural gas has gone down. That will have a positive effect on the gas cost variance account and will be positively reflected the next time it's reviewed, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Meewasin.

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I quote from the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* from October 2. Quote, "... Crown's Minister Ken Cheveldayoff hinted Wednesday a SaskPower rate hike may be higher than expected when a five per cent hike this fall appeared likely."

Clearly the minister knows the rate increase is coming and that it's going to be very large. Why won't he share what he knows with the Saskatchewan people?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for CIC.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, SaskPower is reviewing their operations at this time and looking forward to ensuring that Saskatchewan residents get the lowest possible costs for their electricity. What we have here is a . . . The last increase was on January 1, 2007. There was no increase, Mr. Speaker, over the last year because of the election.

We will be looking at the return on equity that SaskPower needs, and we will ensure again that Saskatchewan people pay the lowest possible cost for their electricity, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:00]

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Meewasin.

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to quote from a news release issued by the current Premier when he was in opposition. Quote:

Wall said that the energy rate increase approved by the provincial rate review panel will hit Saskatchewan taxpayers hard. The provincial government has a surplus of several hundred million dollars.

The news release also said, quote:

This will be especially difficult for people on fixed incomes like our senior citizens and is another blow to farm families. It dries up whatever tax relief people have received from both levels of government.

To the minister: when he was in opposition his leader said that high utility rates would dry up any tax relief and that people would be hit hard. Was he wrong then or is he wrong now?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Crown Corporations.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, the hon. member opposite should know that SaskEnergy or SaskPower or any other of the Crown corporations does not have the information on the financial wherewithal of its customers. Therefore the best way to ensure that that money gets into the hands of those that need it most are through a historic tax cut. And that's indeed what this government has done.

I hope the member opposite hasn't forgotten what happened last week in the legislature — the largest tax cut ever in Saskatchewan history, some 80,000 Saskatchewan residents dropped from the tax rolls. And, Mr. Speaker, there's more to come from this government.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Meewasin.

Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, on October 28, 2005, the Saskatchewan Party issued another press release calling for rebates. I will table this press release. I have no problem with tabling; the ministers across the way do apparently, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of CIC: why were rebates a good idea when he was in opposition but a bad idea now?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Crown Corporations.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — I'll reiterate the answer to the last question. The best way to ensure that money gets into the hands of those that need it the most, the best way to ensure that all Saskatchewan residents benefit in the prosperity that we're having in our province, is through the tax system. And that's why we've instituted the largest tax cut in Saskatchewan history, some 80,000 people off the tax rolls. That's why the senior supplement has been increased. That's why people are feeling the way they do in Saskatchewan; they're happy about this Saskatchewan Party government.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Out-of-Province Crown Investments

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister Responsible for the Crowns, Mr. Speaker, how much did the KPMG report on out-of-province Crown investments cost the people of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Crown Corporations.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

It's always a pleasure to rise in this House and talk about a stronger future for Saskatchewan's Crown corporations. One way we're able to do that is through an analysis through an audit. We have engaged KPMG. We've asked the people of Saskatchewan not to listen to the opposition, not to listen to this government, but to listen to KPMG, to take a look at the 26 investments that have happened in Saskatchewan over the last 19 years. The cost of the study, Mr. Deputy Speaker — \$250,000. In light of a \$9 billion operation within the Crown corporations, money well spent.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, so at \$25,000 a page, you'd expect to follow the advice of that report fairly closely. I want to quote from the report, quote:

KPMG believes that its analyses must be considered as a whole and that selecting portions of the analyses or the factors considered by it, without considering all facts and analyses together, could create a misleading view of the process underlying our findings.

That's clear, Mr. Speaker. Why then did the Sask Party minister cherry-pick the results for his news release today? Is the report that difficult to understand, or did the Sask Party government's ideological blinders get in the way?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Crown Corporations.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, that's exactly why we engaged KPMG — to take it out of the political realm and to have the numbers speak for themselves. Mr. Speaker, that's indeed what this report does. The numbers speak for themselves, Mr. Speaker.

The target by the NDP opposite when they were in government, the target was 22 per cent, Mr. Speaker. The results, the return — minus 15 per cent. Not missed it by that much, Mr. Speaker. They missed it by 37 per cent. The people of Saskatchewan deserve better, and they will get better from this government, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, according to the KPMG report, the return on the concluded investments was 42 per cent for the people of Saskatchewan — 42 per cent.

Now according to the minister's news release, this government is looking at divesting some of the following: Igasamex, Heritage Gas, DirectWest, Gas Sur, MRM [Muskeg River mine] cogen, and Cooke Group. All six of these investments, Mr. Speaker, all six of these investments are profitable and

projected to be profitable over the next 20 years. To the minister: why is he looking at selling these six profitable investments?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Crown Corporations.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, our commitment to the people of Saskatchewan during the election campaign — and it remains our commitment today — is to ensure that these central Crown corporations are strengthened. And that's what we are doing here, Mr. Speaker. We've made that commitment. That's why we've engaged KPMG to ensure that they've taken an overall analysis of every one of the 26 investments.

And that's what they've found, Mr. Speaker — \$2.1 million was put into these investments that are about to be divested over the coming years; \$9.6 million was the overall return. Some of them were profitable. Many, many such as Navigata, DirectWest, Ag Dealer, were not profitable, Mr. Speaker.

In order to strengthen the Crown corporations, we have to get away from doing what was done in the 1990s and look forward at a Saskatchewan-first approach. And that's what this government is embarking on.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Coronation Park.

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister to look at page 10 of the KPMG report. I mean, this is a \$25,000 page. One of the key conclusions of this report, one of the key conclusions is, and I quote, to date overall performance of three of the four subsidiaries has been largely in line with initial financial targets. Three out of four. Seventy-five per cent absolutely on line.

Mr. Speaker, why does the minister persist in portraying these subsidiaries as all losers when clearly, according to his own report, that's simply not accurate?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Crown Corporations.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, they can't get their stories straight. When the Leader of the Opposition was asked, he didn't have much credence in the KPMG report. Now the critic says that there is something to the KPMG report. Well there is, Mr. Speaker.

The KPMG report on an overall basis says that for every dollar that was invested in these out-of-province operations, only 60 cents came back to the people of Saskatchewan. Much better can be done, Mr. Speaker.

And as far as commenting on investment in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, I will take an investment in Davidson or in Herbert or

in Shellbrook over an investment in Atlanta or Chile or Mexico every day of the week.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Investment Strategy for the Crown Corporations

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's clear to virtually all in Saskatchewan, with perhaps the exception of members opposite, that our Crown utilities have been very good for the people of Saskatchewan. And this taxpayer-funded report that's been delivered today is nothing but a thinly disguised, politically motivated attack on those Crown utilities, Mr. Speaker.

Now everybody understands that these utilities need to function in a business-like fashion. Part of a business-like fashion is accepting risk, there's no doubt about that. But, Mr. Speaker, what should matter ultimately to the people of Saskatchewan is the bottom line — the bottom line of their Crown utilities.

And so my question today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is to the Minister Responsible for CIC. Is he prepared to stand in the House today and guarantee, guarantee the people of Saskatchewan that his new policy decision — which says no outside investment and no competition within the borders of Saskatchewan — is he prepared to guarantee that that decision will not affect negatively the bottom line of our Crown utilities?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Crown Corporations.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, I am happy to debate the Leader of the Opposition on the bottom line of the Crown corporations because it's only he that can talk about a negative 15 per cent return, missing the target by 37 per cent, and call that positive, Mr. Speaker.

Saskatchewan's Crown corporations can do better. They can do better. They can do better by redeploying capital here in Saskatchewan to ensure that SaskPower has the infrastructure needed to move forward. That's something that that government didn't do; that's something that this government will do, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I note that the minister was at pains not to guarantee that this decision of his will not negatively affect the bottom line of the Crown utilities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when this government first started musing about this last week, here is what the editorial board of the Regina *Leader-Post* had to say. And I quote, "Forcing the Crowns to put all their eggs in the tiny Saskatchewan basket

could threaten their economic viability.” Mr. Speaker, that’s a quote from the Regina *Leader-Post*.

So if the minister has his way, all of the eggs of investment will be placed in the one basket. Crowns will not be able to invest outside of the borders of Saskatchewan. But then he says, Mr. Speaker, but then he says these same Crown utilities are not going to be able to compete with utilities or service providers in the private sector. So what he’s saying is that SaskTel is not going to be able to compete against Verizon for instance of New York City. That’s what he’s saying.

And so to the minister: if you can’t invest, if our Crown utilities cannot invest outside of the province, and within the province they cannot compete with the private sector, how — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I ask the minister — how are these Crowns to remain profitable?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Crown Corporations.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are no longer the wee province of Saskatchewan. I would submit that we were never the wee province. We are not the tiny province of Saskatchewan or the tiny market of Saskatchewan. And here’s why, Mr. Speaker. SaskPower alone will need some \$5 billion in infrastructure investments over the coming years because we will need up to 1,200 megawatts of new power generation in our province.

That’s the priority of this government. That’s the priority of the people of Saskatchewan. And that’s the reason why the people are sitting on that side of the House, and that’s why there’s a new government with a forward vision here in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, this minister and this government today will not guarantee that their policy decisions are not going to hurt the bottom line of our Crown utilities. Now he refuses to answer the question how, how does he expect those utilities to remain profitable. And then he stands in his place and volunteers that SaskPower is going to need something like, I think he said, \$5 billion in capital investment. But he’s also saying in the same breath, but not a penny of that could come from outside investment or in competition with the private sector.

Where is it going to come from, Mr. Speaker? I tell you where it’s going to come from. It’s going to come from the ratepayers, the power consumers, the telephone consumers, the natural gas consumers in the province of Saskatchewan.

Why, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will this minister not stand in the House, or better yet have the Premier stand in the House, and guarantee to this legislature and to the people of Saskatchewan who own these Crown utilities that his decision will not negatively impact the bottom line?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Crown Corporations.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Here it is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, NDP economics for all to see — a negative 15 per cent return when there was a 22 per cent target. How did that strengthen the Crown corporations? Well I would submit to you that it did anything but, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Leader of the Opposition as well if he’s canvassed his caucus, if he’s canvassed his caucus members to see if they’ve agreed with it. Because I understand that his very seatmate, the member for Saskatoon Nutana, never agreed with these out-of-province investments in the first place. If the NDP had only listened to her, Mr. Speaker, they could have saved the Saskatchewan taxpayers millions of dollars.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, why is it that the minister responsible for our Crown utilities will not stand in the legislature today . . .

[14:15]

The Deputy Speaker: — I’m starting to have increasingly hard time to hearing the member that has the floor. I would ask that the other members respect the member that has the floor. Thank you.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I understand why they do not want to hear this question because they refuse to answer. I’ll put it again to the Minister of the Crown Corporations. I’ll put it to the Premier, perhaps he would like to stand in his place and answer this question. Why is it that this policy which has been announced today that there will be no further external investments . . . They’ve already posted the bill of sale on some very profitable enterprise that’s happening outside of Saskatchewan, the for sale sheet has now been printed, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

They are going to end out-of-province investment and activity of our Crown utilities, and then they’re saying to these same Crown utilities, you can’t compete. SaskTel, you can’t compete with Verizon Telecom out of New York City. You can’t do that any more.

Why will he not stand in defence of this new policy? Why will he not stand or the Premier stand in this House and guarantee to the people of Saskatchewan this is not going to hurt the bottom line of their utilities?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Crown Corporations.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, the facts speak for

themselves and they're here for all to see. What has hurt our Crown corporations over the last two decades are negative 15 per cent returns — returns that are 37 per cent off target.

Mr. Speaker, the Crown corporations will do well in this province. They will compete. They will be able to do their work inside the province because they are now working under a Saskatchewan-first policy.

And I'll give the opposition some credit. When the premier came in and he recognized in 2002 that they were going in the wrong direction, that the red ink was spilling everywhere, even he decided to make a change, Mr. Speaker. That change didn't go far enough. We've made the change now, Mr. Speaker. It will be Saskatchewan first. It'll be strong Crown corporations. The work will be done here in Saskatchewan, and every person in Saskatchewan will benefit because of it.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are simply not getting an answer from that minister or the Premier to a very simple question. Will he guarantee that this policy of his will not negatively impact the bottom line of the people's Crown utilities?

Now what does that then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, tell you or members of this legislature, members of the public? It certainly tells me that this is nothing short of the same old Sask Party, Conservative Party, right wing attack on Crown corporations, on public ownership, on public utilities. They intend, Mr. Speaker, to weaken our public utilities to a point where they will have to be sold, Mr. Speaker. That's what's going on here. That is what's going on here.

I'll give the minister one more chance. If he can stand in his place and guarantee that his policy will ensure no negative impact on our Crown utilities, then I will say it is not an ideological attack. If he refuses to do that, then we all know it is an ideological attack.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Crown Corporations.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I can guarantee the member opposite is, stopping the NDP money-losing investments outside the province will help the Crown corporations. It will help the Government of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — And it will help every individual in this province, Mr. Speaker.

There's been enough red ink shed as far as the Crown corporations today. And today, Mr. Speaker, the Crown corporations are turning their . . . They're turning the page.

They're embarking on a new Saskatchewan-first policy, and that will benefit each and every of the Crown corporations, and that will benefit the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, people can only speculate what would have happened if the NDP took \$250,000 and used that money towards due diligence in the Crown corporations instead of wasting it on behalf of Saskatchewan taxpayers.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the deputy leader and also the Minister of Education.

Renewal of Memorandum of Intent with Chernivtsi Oblast

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with those few remarks in Ukrainian, I want to inform the legislature and the province of Saskatchewan of the tremendous opportunity I had last week. I had the great honour to be invited to Ukraine by the Chernivtsi Oblast government administration to continue the historic collaboration in education between Saskatchewan and Chernivtsi Oblast, a region in Western Ukraine.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the four-year renewal of the memorandum of intent ensures education, skills development, and research activities will continue among our partners. Nearly 14 per cent of people living in Saskatchewan are of Ukrainian descent. This is reason enough to foster cultural understanding and continue building strong education, research, and economic ties with each other.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan's education partnership with Chernivtsi Oblast is built on a strong foundation of goodwill and expertise. Since 1977 the partnerships between Ukraine and Saskatchewan have opened doors to opportunities of mutual benefit. We know from past experience the importance of continuing our work together.

For example, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Ukrainian bilingual education, distance learning, and university language programs contribute an international perspective and understanding to high school and post-secondary programs.

The promotion of exchanges expands student and faculty knowledge of research and technology and improves their employment and economic potential. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, economic and business activities support Ukraine as the country moves toward a market-based economy through agricultural and rural development projects funded by the Canadian International Development Agency.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, information and experiences gained through educational partnerships with Ukraine enables Saskatchewan educators, students, parents, and community members to better understand the needs of new immigrant

families.

I am pleased to tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that our hosts in Ukraine expressed their gratitude for the Ukrainian famine and genocide, the Holodomor Memorial Day Act that was passed by the Saskatchewan government. It is important to note that Saskatchewan was the first Canadian province to pass such an Act. The Act adds Saskatchewan's voice to the international recognition of the Holodomor. This is important for Saskatchewan's citizens of Ukrainian descent who are impacted by this tragic period.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I had the privilege of placing a wreath on the Holodomor monument in Kyiv. I was accompanied by Canada's ambassador to Ukraine, His Excellency, Daniel Caron. I would like to recognize the support and assistance we received from the Canadian embassy in Ukraine. I would also like to share the embassy's sentiment that they are very pleased with Saskatchewan's history of success with Ukraine. As such they expressed interest for supporting future collaborations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are just a few examples that signify the potential in future collaborations to foster communities of understanding and boost potential for personal and economic growth. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I look forward to building on the historic relationship our province has with Ukraine for the benefit of all citizens.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'd like to thank the minister for providing his ministerial statement in advance to his statement. Thank you.

Certainly the official opposition are pleased with the four-year renewal of this meaningful memorandum which ensures education, skill development, and research activities between all partners. This partnership offers many benefits to our province. It represents the deep respect that our government, our province has for the proud Ukrainian descendants of our province that make up a significant portion of our province and make up a significant portion of our history and certainly our future.

This is a historic relationship between our two countries. It's a cultural affirmation, and certainly it's important to us. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Crown Corporations.

Investment Policy for Crown Corporations

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to announce a new Saskatchewan-first policy. Saskatchewan voters elected us with very specific expectations, Mr. Deputy Speaker. One of their key expectations is that we

will spend their hard-earned tax dollars very, very carefully.

When in opposition, we were tremendously concerned with the government of the day using the people's Crown corporations to buy and invest in high-risk ventures around the world. Therefore we recently engaged KPMG, the national accounting firm, a highly respected company, to conduct a review of the previous government's investments made outside the province of Saskatchewan through our Crown corporations. As a result of this report, Saskatchewan's Crown corporations will now focus their growth in Saskatchewan.

Their new investment policy is simple. It's Saskatchewan first — the way it should be, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are going to put Crown dollars to work right here in our province by adding more value through job creation and capital spending. This is a policy that we believe is fiscally prudent and the most beneficial to Saskatchewan people.

SaskTel has a large number of opportunities right here at home: expanded cell coverage, high-speed Internet, and larger capacity lines to carry more data to people's homes and businesses. And with ours being one of the hottest economies in Canada, why not invest right here at home in Saskatchewan?

SaskPower also has considerable work to do right here at home with rebuilding our aging infrastructure and ensuring safe, reliable power supply for the future.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the report that I publicly released earlier today didn't contain a lot of good news for Saskatchewan taxpayers. KPMG's report clearly demonstrates the previous government took large risks using the money of this province's taxpayers. And in most of the cases the risks didn't pay off, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The report clearly shows these investments were expected to show a return of 22 per cent and actually they had a negative return of 15 per cent — a 37 per cent shortfall, Mr. Speaker.

The days of losing millions of dollars on out-of-province investments are over, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Our new Saskatchewan-first policy will keep taxpayers' dollars right here in our province, at work where they should be. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I want to start by thanking the minister for providing the advance copy of his ministerial statement. So thank you, Minister.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, today's reannouncement of a new five-year-old policy, the Sask-first policy, is just that — it's five years old. KPMG, in their report referred to by the minister, KPMG cautions its analysis must be considered as a whole and that cherry picking could create a misleading view.

We just witnessed just such a misleading view where the minister talked about a 15 per cent loss on the investments because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the report says very clearly, of

the concluded investments, the return on investment to Saskatchewan people — to the Crowns, through the Crowns — was 42 per cent on the concluded investments.

And, Mr. Speaker, what that really says is there's a difference between the now government and the then government, if I can describe it that way. We believe Crowns have capabilities. They've shown it in the past, and they can show it in the future, but there's some difficulty.

The first key conclusion on page 10 of the KPMG report — and I just want to refer to this one — is that to date overall performance at three of the four Saskatchewan subsidiaries, three of the four subsidiaries, has been largely in line with initial financial targets. That's in the very report that we're dealing with today.

Mr. Speaker, the government's doom and gloom about Saskatchewan Crowns' abilities is the biggest impediment to Saskatchewan Crowns and indeed our province's future. This is a report that I know the government is going to use to justify its starving the Crowns and setting them up for a sale, and that's a shame. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:30]

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 42 — *The Securities Amendment Act, 2008*

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move that Bill No. 42, *The Securities Amendment Act, 2008* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Deputy Speaker: — It has been moved by the Justice minister that Bill No. 42, *The Securities Amendment Act* be introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

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

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

The Deputy Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 43 — *The Trespass to Property Act*

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Justice minister.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move that Bill No. 43, *The Trespass to Property Act* be now introduced and

read a first time.

The Deputy Speaker: — It's been moved by the Justice minister that Bill No. 43, *The Trespass to Property Act* be introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

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

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

The Deputy Speaker: — Next sitting of the House.

Bill No. 44 — *The Agreements of Sale Cancellation Amendment Act, 2008*

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Justice minister.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move that Bill No. 44, *The Agreements of Sale Cancellation Amendment Act* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Deputy Speaker: — It has been moved by the Justice minister that Bill No. 44, *The Agreements of Sale Cancellation Amendment Act* be introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

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

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

The Deputy Speaker: — Next sitting of the House.

Bill No. 45 — *The Credit Union Amendment Act, 2008*

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Justice minister.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move that Bill No. 45, *The Credit Union Amendment Act, 2008* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Deputy Speaker: — It has been moved by the Justice minister that Bill No. 45, *The Credit Union Amendment Act* be introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

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

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

The Deputy Speaker: — Next sitting of the House.

Bill No. 46 — *The Labour Market Commission Amendment Act, 2008*

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Finance minister.

Hon. Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I move first reading of Bill No. 46, *The Labour Market Commission Amendment Act, 2008* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Deputy Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 46, *The Labour Market Commission Amendment Act* be introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

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

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

The Deputy Speaker: — Next sitting of the House.

Bill No. 47 — *The Pipelines Amendment Act, 2008*

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

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I move that Bill No. 47, *The Pipelines Amendment Act, 2008* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Deputy Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Energy and Resources that Bill No. 47, *The Pipelines Amendment Act* be introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

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

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Deputy

Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — Next sitting of the House.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

REINSTATEMENT OF BILLS

Bill No. 9 — *The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Amendment Act, 2008*

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I move that pursuant to rule no. 90, Bill No. 9, *The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Amendment Act, 2008* be reinstated to the order paper.

The Deputy Speaker: — It has been moved by the Finance minister that Bill No. 9, *The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Amendment Act, 2008* be reinstated to the order paper at the same stage it had reached at the time of prorogation of the previous session. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

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

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

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can say it truly is an honour to rise and to take part in this debate on the Throne Speech. It's a privilege to do so on behalf of the fine folks of Regina Northeast who have asked me to continue to represent their thoughts and their needs and their wants and their wishes in this great Assembly.

I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you would agree with me that whenever and wherever we travel in Saskatchewan, no matter where we go, who we talk to, we meet nothing but good, honest, hard-working people who make you proud to be a part of this great province. And I can say, Mr. Speaker, that in Regina Northeast there are no finer people in this province than the good folks there. And I've had the pleasure of representing them now for a number of years, and I've had the pleasure of meeting with them at their doorstep not only during the election campaigns but in between election campaigns, and I've grown to know many of them. And I'm very proud, very proud to have the privilege of representing those good folks in this fine Assembly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to start out by congratulating the newest member of this Assembly, the member from Cumberland, upon his election and his taking his place in this great Assembly. I have the pleasure of not only sitting in this Assembly in close proximity to him and sharing comments throughout the day, but also in our office structure within this Assembly, my office is just across the hallway from his, so I get the pleasure of having comments from him and hearing statements from him and hearing some of the stories he has to tell, and they're very enlightening. And I know from that brief experience and getting to know the individual that he will do himself fine in this great Assembly. He will do the New Democratic Party representation here fine, and he will represent his constituency with a great amount of dignity and honour. And to him I congratulate him.

This Throne Speech, like any other Throne Speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is designed to give a very broad outline of the government's intent for the future. Throne Speeches are designed to be short on specifics and large, I guess you would say, on rhetoric, and this Throne Speech is no different.

It certainly gives us a broad outline of what the government intends to do over the next year, and when you look at this Throne Speech you can't help but think it's probably like any other Throne Speech that's been given in this Assembly or elsewhere. It's a mile wide and about a quarter inch thick.

And generally Throne Speeches, because they're written by the government, they are full of good news and they have a government spin on it that the government wants to portray, and of course they give nothing but the positive view. And when you look at this Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, at first glance you would say, yes, it's a fairly positive Throne Speech considering the time in which this province is enjoying some of the greatest prosperity in our economy. It's a Throne Speech that you would expect when a government is in power in this province with revenues far beyond their wildest imagination — certainly far beyond the imagination of those people who served in this great Assembly in government in the past when we were dealing with debts and dealing with the deficits and attempting to get the fiscal house of this province in order. So it's certainly been quite a turnaround in the last, say, 15 years or so.

But when you take a little closer look at this Throne Speech, you recognize that there are some who win. There are some who win. But there are many who lose. There are many that this Throne Speech has missed.

It's interesting. There was an article just not too long ago in one of our daily papers. The headline was, "A majority of Canadians want government action." And it's to deal with poverty — something that this Throne Speech has missed. If you look closely at this Throne Speech, you'll see no real meaningful reference to the poverty in this province. And yet the article in the Canwest News, Monday, October 27, clearly indicates that the vast majority of Canadians want federal and provincial governments to lead the war on poverty — including raising the minimum wages and creating low-income child care spaces — according to the survey that was carried out on behalf of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

And the threat, according to the folks that were contacted and

asked their opinions, according to the threat of a recession should not deter government from acting to eradicate poverty. But it should almost be the very reason for trying to do so, according to the findings of the survey.

The majority of Canadians believe that Canada should try to distinguish itself in the world as a country where no one lives in poverty. Ninety-eight per cent said that they would be proud if their Premier took the lead in reducing poverty in their province. It's noted that an additional 88 per cent also said that they would like to see Canada as a leader in the world in the eradication of poverty.

Ninety per cent said it is time for strong leadership to reduce the number of poor people in our province and in our country. Ninety-two per cent said that if the countries of Great Britain and Sweden can do it, then so can Canada. Eighty-six per cent believe that if governments took concrete actions, poverty could be greatly reduced. Mr. Speaker, the people polled did not just look at the federal government and suggest that the federal government should be the one leading the way on fighting poverty. No sir, they thought that their Premier should take a leadership role on the war against poverty.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at this Throne Speech, we see that that's not the case by the government opposite. Mr. Speaker, when we look at this Throne Speech, we see also missed has been our seniors; the seniors who live on fixed income — the seniors who are today facing increased food costs, increased SaskEnergy rates, and soon increased SaskPower rates. And I'm sure, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there isn't a member in this House who unlike me gets letters on a weekly basis from seniors in their constituency who outline the struggle they're in.

I have letters from seniors in my constituency who are living on fixed income and who have retired 8, 10, 12 years ago, and at the time of retirement their income was satisfactory, certainly large enough so that they could enjoy a reasonable standard of living. But costs, increased costs of living, has eroded that, and today these folks are living on the verge of poverty. They have cut back. They have cut back on every aspect of their living in order to continue to be able to live in their own homes and continue to survive, but they're finding that struggle harder and harder.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, out door knocking in my constituency this summer, I had the opportunity to talk to a senior citizen, a gentleman in Rothwell Place in my constituency. And a nice conversation, I had a nice conversation, we had a lengthy conversation. And he wasn't bitter, Mr. Speaker. He wasn't bitter, but he just took the opportunity to share with me the concerns and the situation that he finds himself in.

He and his wife retired eight years ago, going on nine years ago now, and they retired on a fixed income. And at that time they thought they would have the opportunity to and the financial resources to visit with their children and their grandchildren on a monthly to six weeks basis.

Now their son, who is a federal government employee, his job has taken him to Calgary, and of course that's where their grandchildren is. And as much as they'd like to visit with their children, they also want to see their grandchildren, and they

were hoping that in retirement they would be able to do that on a regular basis, even once every month or every six weeks.

But now with the increased costs and the eroding away of their ability to enjoy a quality life, they're seeing their inability to visit with their children and their grandchildren. At best, at best, he tells me, it's once every six months.

[14:45]

Mr. Speaker, the same gentleman I had the conversation with and he shared with me, very honestly he shared with me the fact he did not vote for the Sask Party in the last election. But he said when the Sask Party formed government in this province, he did look forward to the fulfillment of one of their election platform planks, and that was the reduction, the elimination in fact, of the education portion of the property tax. He looked forward to that. He expressed a great deal of disappointment to me that that had not happened. He shrugged his shoulders and said, well it's just one more Tory trick; they say one thing at election time and do something totally different when they become government.

Mr. Speaker, just oh probably two weeks ago now, maybe going on three, I had a senior come and visit me in my office and we had a nice little chat. She had retired, her and her husband retired just about 15 years ago, and since then her husband has passed away. And at that time, she sold her home because it was too much for her to look after, and she moved into an apartment where it would be easier for her to look after and maintain, and she'd be able to enjoy the quality of life in her golden years without having to worry about the stress of looking after a house.

Well she was in my office and she was close to tears because she lived in an apartment now for a number of years. And it's an area in what used to be in my riding; it's now in my colleague's riding, in Kleisinger Crescent. But she was just about in tears because the increased rent rates that she's experienced in her apartment now over the last couple of years had brought her to a point where she can no longer afford to live there and she's going to have to move.

She's being forced out of her home. She's being forced out of her home and she's going to have to look at other accommodations. And not based on the quality of accommodation, not based on the area in which it might be in — she's going to have to look at what she can afford to live in regardless of the condition of the facility or the location of the facility.

Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech lets her down; let's the seniors of our great province down.

An Hon. Member: — Shameful. Shameful.

Mr. Harper: — And it's shameful. As my colleague says, it's shameful. Because who are our seniors? Our seniors are the people who have lived in this province, who have worked in this province to build this great province. They struggled. They sacrificed. They handed us a province of prosperity. And how did this government treat them? With the back of their hand, that's how they're being treated. And that's shameful, Mr.

Speaker, shameful.

This Throne Speech has missed our students. Post-secondary training in our universities or skilled training in our schools is absolutely essential if we intend to maintain a strong and competitive economy. Our young people today must be given the tools to be able to meet the challenges of the future. Our future is in the hands of the young people who we are educating and training today. And they must be, they must be trained to meet the challenges of our society and the challenges of our economy — ever changing, rapidly changing. And we must ensure that they have those tools, Mr. Speaker, and this Throne Speech does not outline any of that ability.

In fact we're not giving them the opportunity to have the tools and the resources and the education to be able to maintain that strong economy. After all we're no longer in competition with people across the street or around the corner or down the road a few miles. We're in competition with people around the world.

And if we intend to enjoy a strong economy like we have enjoyed in the past, in order to do that we have to be fully equipped. We have to have a workforce that's trained, a workforce that's educated, a workforce that's capable of competing with those sources around the world. And in order to do that, we have to ensure that we have every opportunity to our young people to receive that quality of education, the quality of training that they need to meet those challenges of the future. After all we live in an economy, we live in a society that is rapidly changing with our technology and other new innovations coming on stream.

Experts tell us, Mr. Deputy Speaker, experts tell us that the top 10 in-demand jobs in 2010 — that's only two years from now — the top 10 in-demand jobs in 2010 did not exist in 2004. That's the changes we are experiencing in our economy. That's the changes we are experiencing in our society. And that's the challenges that we need to ensure that our young people have the tools to meet those changes.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, what we are doing today, we are currently preparing students — particularly in our high school system, students in about that range — we are preparing these students for jobs that don't yet exist, that don't yet exist. That's the changes we're seeing, the rapid change that we're seeing within our economy.

It is estimated that today's learners will have 10 to 14 jobs by the age of 38 years. The changes, we speak of the changes, and we must be ready to meet the challenge of those changes if we want to continue to enjoy a strong and prosperous economy. We must ensure, we must ensure that our students have those tools, have those tools and are equipped to meet those challenges, otherwise we will not enjoy a strong and prosperous economy as we have in the past.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Throne Speech has missed on health care. Waiting lists continue to grow. Many are waiting years now for surgery. Many are waiting years for medical treatment. The people in this very building who have loved ones who have been on a waiting list for surgery in excess of a year and still have no clear date as to when that surgery can take place. Mr. Speaker, this government has not done enough in that direction

to ensure that the people of Saskatchewan receive the quality health care that they need and deserve at the time they need it. They haven't done that, Mr. Speaker, and that is shameful.

Mr. Speaker, there's a flaw . . . There's a gap — I wouldn't say a flaw — but there's a gap in our home care system that I would like to see this government move on. And I know that governments of the past have certainly had it on the agenda and was moving in that direction. And there's a gap that needs to be filled, and that is a desperate need by our seniors.

We have seniors, Mr. Speaker, who have enjoyed the ability to live in their homes, but as time goes on, as time goes on, their ability starts to diminish. Their ability to live alone in their homes starts to diminish. Home care provides a level of support to a point, but not far enough. They soon find themselves in a situation where they can no longer safely live in their homes on their own, and yet when they're assessed they're not in a situation where institutionalized care will kick in. So there's a gap there that puts an awkward pressure on families who, in many cases, are unable to look after their loved ones because both members of the household are working. And it's really a stressful thing. I know that we've gone through it in my own family. And when you have a loved one who needs that care, and yet there is no vehicle there to provide it, I believe that home care needs to step up and be stepped up to provide that service.

And I believe that the ability is there, Mr. Speaker, by this government, because I think that if you look at the \$3 billion that this government is sitting on, it certainly, certainly has a financial ability to address those concerns.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that I need to look at concluding my remarks here now, and it's well before I had originally planned on. But if you look at, Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech, it outlines the government's willingness to help some while they're willing to forget others. This Throne Speech has failed our seniors, the very people who have worked and sacrificed to give us this great province. It has failed to provide the services needed by our seniors in their golden years. Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech has failed the people who have used our health care system by doing nothing about the ever increasing surgical lists. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people deserve better than this.

This Throne Speech has failed our students by not ensuring that all students will have access to affordable secondary education or skills training. Mr. Speaker, our future and the future of our province lies in the hands of a well-educated, well-trained workforce for the future. This Throne Speech has failed to meet those challenges.

Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech has betrayed the livestock and hog producers of Saskatchewan by leaving them to be knocked around by world economic forces without any meaningful support from this government.

Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech is noticeably void of any reference to our forest industry. The forest industry has been and continues to be very important to our province, and yet this government saw fit to break its own promise and not do anything about securing the future of the industry or reopening

the P.A. [Prince Albert] pulp mill.

Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech slowly reveals this government's hidden agenda to privatize our Crown corporations.

Mr. Speaker, in the light of the failures of this Throne Speech, I cannot in clear conscience support it. Therefore I will be voting against the motion and for the amendment. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatchewan Rivers.

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you. Thank you, Deputy Speaker. Good afternoon, my fellow members, and members opposite. Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to address you today. I'll be happy to update you with what's been happening in the riding of Saskatchewan Rivers in 2008 and what we hope to accomplish in this riding for the future.

First of all I'd like to congratulate all the MLAs for their efforts during the summer. Our positions require long hours and busy schedules, and I know that our constituents appreciate what we do for them. As an MLA, I find there's no greater reward than to make a lasting impression on someone in my community. This is one of the most important aspects of the job for me. And I'm sure that we all pledge to do everything we can to honour our obligations to our constituents, and I would like to acknowledge them.

I'd also like to acknowledge and congratulate the member from Cumberland and wish him well. There he goes.

Secondly, I would like to welcome the many newcomers to our province this year, and I trust that our government's recruitment drive out east helped to get the message out about Saskatchewan. As our province produces more and more jobs, Saskatchewan people and newcomers alike are discovering how much our province has to offer. For the years our government has advocated and promoted the strengths of this province — and I commend our government for continuing to project Saskatchewan as a national leader — this tree is now bearing fruit as hope, not fear, has propelled our province into the limelight.

The RBC [Royal Bank of Canada] financial services group recently announced that they expect our province to lead Canada in economic growth for years to come. This work for the people of Saskatchewan has not been without substantial effort and hard work. And I'd like to congratulate all my colleagues for their continued dedication to achieving this vision with the largest investment in infrastructure in Saskatchewan history.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan Rivers experienced a fair share of up and downs in 2008. Our collective strength as people pulled us through some of the tougher times. On August 26 a tornado tore through our riding causing extensive damage, some repairable and some not. The Paddockwood, Christopher Lake, and Buckland areas were hit especially hard, and I witnessed the devastation firsthand, having toured throughout

the riding that day immediately after the tornado. My thoughts and prayers continue to pour out for them. Some residents lost more than others, part of their farms, their investments, and their years of hard work. Thankfully no one was seriously injured.

I have pledged to do all that I can for these people, and I want to thank all branches of the government for lending their support during this rough period. The Ministry of Public Safety came to our aid swiftly, and for their efforts I'd like to commend them. I, along with the people of Saskatchewan Rivers, are indebted to you.

[15:00]

The rural municipalities in this riding also deserve recognition as they showed great proficiency through organization and charity. I would like to commend the administration and councils of the RMs [rural municipality] of Paddockwood, Buckland, Lakeland, and Garden River for their efforts during and after the disaster.

Our government is working with municipalities. Seventy-five million dollars in interest-free loans were distributed to communities to improve and expand residential lots and infrastructure.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm very proud of the citizens of Saskatchewan Rivers. We exhibit a strength and spirit which few communities rival. One of our chief industries that attract outsiders to our riding is our excellent tourism industry. We offer almost every outdoor activity imaginable — fishing, camping, hunting, sports, nature, golf, and community events.

I especially took great joy with taking part in several parades throughout the towns and villages in Saskatchewan Rivers. Parades are still a large part of the rural structure throughout our province. They give any local community an opportunity to get involved and meet new people, and to introduce themselves to local businesses and services.

I was greeted warmly upon attending the Canada Day parade at Candle Lake, one of my favourite spots for outdoor fun. Candle Lake offers exceptional tourist sites and the town's population quadruples during the summer. Tourism is a growth sector in Saskatchewan and we will keep our commitment to increase tourism funding.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, my riding draws people from around the world to experience our lakes, nature, and our wildlife. Saskatchewan is home to some of the world's most unique wildfowl, bear, deer, and moose, making outfitting another very popular industry in my riding. Hunting and trapping has been a traditional way of life for many Canadians for centuries and I will continue to speak on behalf of this industry.

Sustenance hunting as well as outfitting is a tourist industry of huge importance, and I want to thank the Ministry of Environment for working with me on several issues. I have been attending wildlife meetings where I most recently volunteered to work at the Prince Albert Wildlife Federation fundraiser and wild game banquet.

I had a chance to meet many outfitters from across the province where they shared their concerns and projections for the future. Outfitting and outdoor sports are important industries for Saskatchewan, and I pledge to work with all levels of government to guide the direction our province will go in relation to the outfitting industry and tourism. Our government will continue to upgrade our provincial parks.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, another milestone this summer was the long-awaited remodelling of Sturgeon Lake central facility schools. I recently attended their event to celebrate these renovations, and I would like to again congratulate everyone who helped make this renovation a success. This school has been transformed into a striking modern facility and will benefit the students of Sturgeon Lake for years to come.

Our young people are another one of these communities' most valuable assets with a growing student population and throughout the entire province.

I would like to applaud the funding increase for education contained in our most recent budget for school capital projects. Maintained schools and infrastructure are important to accommodate an increasing population, and making sure our children are safe and secure will help them be successful in both the classroom and in life.

Sturgeon Lake Central School has a long, proud history and is this year celebrating its 27th anniversary. I wish to congratulate everyone who was involved with the remodelling project. Our government will work towards giving a better life for First Nations and Métis.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was also lucky enough to attend the 75th anniversary for the Emma Lake school in Tweedsmuir. A plaque commemorating this momentous occasion was unveiled at the celebration, and we also shared a parent pancake breakfast, a barbeque, and a PowerPoint presentation of the school's history, staff, and past students. It was interesting to see how education in our province has evolved from one-room school of many years ago.

So many former students attended this celebration of this historical landmark, including Mrs. Greening, founder of Land of the Loon Resort at Anglin Lake. If you haven't had a chance to vacation in my constituency or partake in some of the outdoor activities I previously mentioned, Land of the Loon Resort at Anglin Lake would be a most unforgettable experience.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also attended the Christopher Lake Walk to Breakfast with the Saskatchewan Nutrition Advisory Council for Kids, or SNACK for short. This program encourages schools to make healthy lifestyle options available for students through nutrition and physical activity. I congratulated the staff of the project and the community on their success of this event.

I also commend the organizers of the SNACK program for raising awareness for health and nutrition initiatives in our province and promoting nutrition and physical activity for young people in our communities. I think we can agree that nutrition is extremely important in order to raise healthy, capable children and that it's never too soon to promote healthy

lifestyles for our children. The children of our province will benefit from the child tax credit, which increased by 2,000 a year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this summer I also met and spoke with many people throughout my riding and listened to what they had to say. I met many new Saskatchewan Rivers constituents at community meetings and events. Almost everyone that I've spoken with is happy with what they're seeing in this province. People are moving back, new homes are being built, businesses are thriving, highways are being fixed and maintained, and new programs are being implemented.

I noticed another trend emerging among the people of Saskatchewan Rivers and most, probably all, Saskatchewan citizens — optimism. I feel that the people of Saskatchewan view their province as a land of opportunity and they're trying to make the best of it. It's also up to us to do the best we can for future generations. This mentality of dedication, hope, and hard work reflects well the sentiments of the people of Saskatchewan Rivers. We are kind, able, smart, hard-working, and ready for growth. The Growth and Financial Security Fund has an additional 1 billion to pay down the debt.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd also like to make a few honourable mentions today. Jim Chad and Tyler Pellegrini, owners and operators of Exclusive Auto Marine of Prince Albert, were recently awarded the title of operating number one Tahoe sports boat dealer worldwide. They were also recently ranked as Canada's number one Tracker marine dealer. I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge their hard work, vision, and dedication. These gentlemen are great examples of how entrepreneurs can achieve great success through innovation and perseverance. Their team has been a great asset to the people of Saskatchewan Rivers and are actively involved in lake communities throughout the riding. Congratulations to them.

To help businesses thrive, our government has made a commitment to infrastructure. We're now increasing by 50 per cent to 1.5 billion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would also like to make an announcement concerning my family. My father will soon be celebrating his 80th birthday and I promised to mention his name today, so I'd like to wish Walter Helbig of Candle Lake a very happy birthday in February.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Ms. Wilson: — He was an original pioneer of this country, and his service and dedication to our province makes me very proud. My father stressed the importance of family, hard work, honesty, and perseverance. I strive to raise my children with the same dedication and ideals he instilled upon me — to take pride in our home country and to give 110 per cent effort to achieving one's full potential. I constantly remind myself that I should not take for granted what my forefathers did for my family and what they did for the constituency I now call home.

Our government will provide an increase to the Saskatchewan income assistance program to help seniors maintain their quality of life.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the farmers in my riding look forward to our report on the education property tax system and making changes to address the high education property taxes that Saskatchewan people face. Our government has begun to look at long-term strategies for stability in the livestock sector.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have attended many economic committee meetings and am constantly gathering information from locals. We talk about ways to attract employment to our constituency and also ways to make small businesses more viable. We've seen more work on highways completed in Saskatchewan Rivers than in many years combined. Our ready-for-growth initiative is being universally praised. And although this project will be many years in the making, we're already seeing great results.

Infrastructure is important, but our government also recognizes another priceless and very important investment — people. Our government will be introducing a new program soon to encourage homeowners to install geothermal heating systems.

We've seen the largest population increase in 50 years — 50 years. I think that Saskatchewan is due to have some time in the spotlight, and I think we should all be proud of our dedication to this province over the years.

With a larger population, Saskatchewan will see an improved quality of life. For this reason it's very important to keep up our infrastructure to accommodate an increasing population. We will have more jobs and opportunities for our workers of all ages. We will have a sense of diversity and advantage like we've never seen before in this province. And most importantly, we are forming a great place to raise a family and care for the weak and our vulnerable. This government believes that we must protect the vulnerable in our society.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to conclude with a summary of this government's achievements in the past year. I believe that slow and steady growth is important for Saskatchewan's development, and through this model we can achieve lasting prosperity in our province for future generations.

The ready-for-growth initiative is exactly what this province needs to set us on course for a successful future. And I would also like to thank the many constituents of Saskatchewan Rivers who came forward with their ideas and suggestions from our province. I'm here today and every day as their spokesperson, and I thank them for their direction and all their concerns that they bring to us.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in conclusion, I support the Throne Speech and I do not support the amendment. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing.

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you. Good afternoon, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Well there's the gallery over there, okay. I am both pleased and honoured to take part in this debate today and to express my support for the Speech from the Throne, Mr.

Deputy Speaker. I would like to specifically thank the Premier for allowing me this honour.

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

Ms. Schriemer: — Request leave to introduce guests.

The Deputy Speaker: — Is leave granted to introduce guests?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Agreed. I recognize the member from Saskatoon Sutherland.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Schriemer: — Thank you, Deputy Speaker. I apologize, Mr. Minister, for interrupting. I thought before you got too far into it, I would like to introduce a very good friend of mine to you and through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the Assembly here, Ms. Patti Sebestyn sitting in your gallery. Patti has been teaching at-risk youth for more than 35 years, even though she doesn't look like it. And she is, still in her retirement, working with at-risk youth. I met her in Saskatoon and I learned a great deal from her when dealing with youth issues and drug issues, and I'd like to just thank her for all of her help over the years, and friendship, and welcome her to her legislature. Thank you.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[15:15]

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Prince Albert Carlton.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

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

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — And now I'll get back up again. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Should I start over again from the beginning?

After five months of being away from the House, it feels really great to be back in session, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's been almost a year now since the Saskatchewan Party formed government and what a year for Saskatchewan it's been. These are exciting times for the people of Saskatchewan. This year for the Saskatchewan Party has been a year defined by keeping our promises, and this is something I'm incredibly proud to be part of.

First off though, I want to thank my wife Charlene and my two daughters, Alyssa and Mackenzie, for their support this past year and for giving me a sense of normalcy at times when I needed it. I wasn't completely sure what to expect when I was first elected, but I can tell you the surprises have been mostly

good ones, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I need to thank the constituents of Prince Albert Carlton for the vast amount of support I have received over the past year. I was humbled and honoured to be the first Saskatchewan Party candidate to ever be elected in the city of Prince Albert.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — I held my first annual barbecue in the park this past September and it gave me a great opportunity to talk to my constituents, one-on-one and find out what is really important to them. My constituency is incredibly diverse, Mr. Deputy Speaker. First Nations and Métis people account for 36 per cent of the population in the city of Prince Albert. I understand that in order to make a better life for Saskatchewan, no one individual could be left behind. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can stand here with confidence and say that this Throne Speech has something for everyone in it. Every single one of my constituents has something to benefit and be proud of from this Throne Speech, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I also need to quickly thank my constituency assistant, Lora Parenteau, and my ministerial staff here at the legislature for all the hard work and all the extra hours they put in throughout the year. I really could not do my job without them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, after hearing the Throne Speech being read in the House last Wednesday, I was excited for the future of our province. This past year really has been a time of profound change for Saskatchewan. This province is seeing things that have never been seen before. We are hearing things that have never been heard before. And most importantly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government is doing everything that has never been done before, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Just one week ago, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our Premier made one of the biggest and most significant announcements in Saskatchewan's history. Due to our strong economy and our new-found prosperity, this government is now able to share its wealth with the people of this province. And from talking to my constituents this summer, the one thing they wanted to see the most was a direct benefit from a strong economy.

Basically the constituents of Prince Albert Carlton were asking for the government to put money back into the pockets of the hard-working women and men in Saskatchewan, and I'm more than pleased to say that this is exactly what the government did. We implemented the largest single-year income tax reduction in the province's history.

We put \$1 billion against debt reduction. That means since taking over in 2007, the Saskatchewan Party government has reduced the provincial debt by almost 40 per cent — 40 per cent, 40 per cent, 40 per cent — big four zero. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is more money into debt reduction in one single year than the NDP put into debt reduction over the course of their 16 years.

Furthermore, we have expanded our rate for growth of the infrastructure program by 50 per cent. That is again the largest capital commitment in Saskatchewan's history and three times the capital spending of just four years ago. This money will go

into education, health care, and highways. Over the past 16 years under the NDP, our hospitals, schools, highways, and infrastructure of other ministries was ignored. This government has been left to pick up the pieces of our crumbling infrastructure system. This \$500 million is a huge step forward in the right direction to rebuild this province.

We understand it is going to take years to rebuild what the tired old NDP has torn down. Let me quote John F. Kennedy who once said, and I quote:

All this will not be finished in the first 100 days. Nor will it be finished in the first 1,000 days, nor in the life of this Administration, nor even perhaps in our lifetime on this planet. But let us begin.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government has put those words into action. We have begun. This government stands for keeping our promises, sustaining the current economic momentum, and working to ensure all Saskatchewan people benefit from the current growth. These announcements, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will affect every single individual in Saskatchewan. We believe the people of this province have a right to share in our current prosperity in order to build a better life and a better future for their families.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, even the Leader of the Opposition is supporting our Premier's economic plan, saying it is good news, and I quote: "The member from Saskatoon Riversdale admitted last week that it is tough to find fault with the plan." That is because he is starting to see what the rest of the province knew before last year's election. The NDP have been holding Saskatchewan back for too many years now. It was time for a change, and what a change this province has seen under the Saskatchewan Party.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, business groups across Saskatchewan applauded this government's Throne Speech for emphasizing tax and debt reduction and investments, innovation, and infrastructure. And in last Thursday's *Leader-Post* Steve McLellan, CEO [chief executive officer] of the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, said, and I quote, he "... liked the throne speech's positive tone."

Marilyn Braun-Pollon, Saskatchewan vice-president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses, said the Saskatchewan Party's plan outlined in the Throne Speech quote "should be good for business." She also said, quote:

Tax relief, debt reduction, infrastructure spending, all of these are priorities of our members. So they're listening to small business.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you bet we are. We understand that for too many years these businesses and individuals were ignored by the previous administration. It's time that changed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan's population has grown by over 16,000 people in the past year. Our current population is at 1,015,985 and growing every day I might add. And in the near future, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this province will have at least one more new person when the member from Saskatchewan Rivers becomes a grandma, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — This is creating quite the phenomenon. We no longer have a job shortage, but we actually have too many jobs and not enough people to fill them. Was that ever the case under the previous administration? The need for skilled workers is good for all Saskatchewan people, including First Nations and Métis people. We are enjoying unprecedented opportunities. New employees from across Canada and throughout the world are being recruited by this government, and a new focus has been given to our immigration strategy. These efforts have been successful so far and will continue on into the future and many coming years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is no question that education is a key component to ensuring a stronger Saskatchewan and a better life. As a father of two teenage girls and the husband of a teacher, I know first-hand the need for enhanced facilities and top-of-the-line technology for the schools. That's why our government has committed over \$177 million in the past year to new construction and refurbishing of existing schools.

One of the schools being affected is right in my constituency of Prince Albert Carlton. After years of being overlooked, St. Anne School is being completely rebuilt. St. Anne School has a rich history in Prince Albert. It was first built in 1958 in the West Hill to meet the needs of the much expansion in the area. The school delivers education to the children kindergarten to grade 8 in English or French immersion. I was so pleased to be part of that plan to build these folks a new school, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But the key is that when these children grow up and attend post-secondary institutes, they see their future here in Saskatchewan. That's why this government will also be introducing improvements to the graduate retention program so that every post-secondary graduate chooses to stay in Saskatchewan.

Like much of the infrastructure in Saskatchewan, our health care facilities have been neglected for years. This has become a major concern to both patients and employees alike. And now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government is taking action; action that has already seen \$100 million of improvements into health care facilities. I can assure you that this is just the beginning. It is anticipated that 400 recently recruited Filipino nurses will be working in Saskatchewan by the end of March 2009. Some of these nurses recently made their home in Prince Albert. I'm so pleased to have these hard-working individuals and their families in my constituency. I'd like to say to these nurses, welcome to Prince Albert but more importantly welcome to your new home.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, last Thursday Minister Harpauer announced almost \$80 million investment in a four-year program to eliminate the wait-list for services currently faced by people with disabilities.

Let me take you back to a time where there was no wait-list, where people with disabilities were able to access the services they desperately need in a timely manner. That time was 18 years ago, in 1990. Since that time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a wait-list has emerged.

Minister Harpauer read out some shocking numbers last week

in the House, but the one that hit me the hardest was that 440 individuals with disabilities are currently on the wait-list. That is unacceptable. Our government has a plan, a three-part plan, that Minister Harpauer outlined last week, to address this issue and reduce the long wait-list.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, so many of our families' roots are here in Saskatchewan and they're tied to farming. It is our past and this government is committed to ensuring it is our future.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am certain the members opposite do not feel the same way about farmers in the province. The NDP increased crop insurance premiums and they decreased the coverage. The member from Wood River said it best last week, quote: "... if your premiums are going up and coverage are going down ..." who would want to stay in it?

And just last week the member from Prince Albert Northcote made a remark about the member from Kindersley that is offensive to farmers and people of rural Saskatchewan. The member from Prince Albert Northcote said, and I quote:

Bill Boyd is from Kindersley. He can fall asleep on his tractor for four hours and not hit a tree.

This is his proof of his government's commitment to the P.A. pulp mill. I ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what does the fact that Minister Boyd is a hard-working farmer have anything to do with the mill? Those comments were mean-spirited and completely irrelevant to the issue.

Throughout my life, I have known many farmers. They are some of the hardest working women and men I know, and I could assure you that they do not fall asleep at the wheel, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The change, that is the purview of the tired, old NDP government that got voted out nearly one year ago.

While I'm on the topic of the member from Prince Albert Northcote, I want to also make mention of some statements he made last week in regards to uranium development partnership. It appears the member from Prince Albert Northcote does not approve of the people this government has chosen to move forward this initiative. He said the Saskatchewan Party quote "is playing with a stacked deck."

I will agree with the member that the representatives on that panel are some of the most successful individuals in the business community. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as you are well aware, this initiative is really a means to advise the government on how best to develop the province's uranium resources. So why would we not choose the best and the brightest in the industry to give us advice? When looking for advice, doesn't one normally ask an expert?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you bet we are playing with a stacked deck and we would not have it any other way. We are keeping one thing in mind here and it is to use this province's resources as wisely as possible to ensure the people of Saskatchewan benefit from our choices.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our commitments in the Throne Speech are guided by the following values: growth and opportunity, security and compassion, and most importantly, keeping our

word.

Saskatchewan citizens have a right to feel safe in their homes and communities with their families. This means ensuring there are programs in place to protect the public and to reduce criminal activity. The Throne Speech outlined some important measures our government will undertake this year, but I believe that is just the beginning of the work to be done.

After the election, I was deeply honoured when the Premier gave me the responsibility of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing. For obvious reasons in my past, this is a portfolio I feel incredibly passionate about. Unfortunately the past government did not feel as strongly as I do about corrections and policing in this province. I am sad to have to stand in the House today and acknowledge the impact that 16 years of neglect has had on this ministry.

In December 1991, the Leader of the Opposition said he dreamt of a Saskatchewan where a person could walk the streets safely. But the state his party left the province in is more of a nightmare than a good dream. Our correctional facilities are out of date and crumbling. Our police are overworked and understaffed. And worst of all, Saskatchewan has led the country in violent crime for 10 consecutive years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the crime stats speak for themselves. Over the past decade ... [inaudible] ... in 2006, crime in Saskatchewan increased by 17 per cent while on a national basis crime dropped by 11 per cent. In 2006 and 2007, Saskatchewan had the highest sexual assault and assault rates in the country, the highest youth crime rate in the country, and the highest impaired driving rates, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is not a record to be proud of but it is the NDP's record.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's why I'm pleased to support this year's Speech from the Throne. It is full of initiatives that will reduce crime and make people feel safe in their own homes once again. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is obvious that problems of this magnitude that existed for so long under the NDP cannot and will not be fixed overnight. However every one of the commitments in my mandate letter from our Premier will be kept prior to the next election. I can assure the people of Saskatchewan that this government takes their safety seriously. It is our children's futures at stake and that is too much to risk.

Our government is committed to cracking down on gang activity. As a former police officer and as minister, I am well aware of the impact of gangs in our communities. We see the headlines everywhere. Organized crime and gangs are more of a threat now than ever before. This government will not stand for crime against our families, friends, and neighbours.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have said it before and I will say it again: we are a government who has proven we are keeping our promises. Those promises include a promise to add 120 new police officers over the next four years. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to say we are one-quarter of the way there.

In the current budget year, provision has been made for 30 new police officers, nine of which are designated to combat organized crime and gangs in our combined forces and special enforcement units. We made a commitment to double existing

funding for police resources aimed at protecting children from sexual exploitation over the Internet.

[15:30]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am happy to say in this current year's budget we added 11 brand new positions to our integrated child exploitation units across Saskatchewan — just one more promise kept.

This coming year we will add at least 30 more police officers to our police services, helping to reach our goal. In recent weeks a joint effort to combat the drug trafficking issue in Saskatchewan has resulted in the arrest of 55 people in 17 communities with more than 172 charges being laid. This large-scale provincial drug sweep involved municipal police departments and several RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] detachments working together to make Saskatchewan a safer place to live.

This drug sweep involved the combined forces and special enforcement unit that I mentioned earlier — nine new positions that this government funded this budget year. You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are already seeing results.

Also in recent weeks, the Saskatoon Police Service released their crime stats for the first nine months of 2008. The results are a dramatic drop in crime — armed robberies in the city are down more than 23 per cent, robberies are 32 per cent, break and enters in the homes are down 19 per cent, break and enters in the businesses are down 27 per cent, and theft under \$5,000 is down more than 44 per cent. Saskatoon police chief, Clive Weighill, attributes the drop in crime to having a more visible police presence in the city, something this government is helping to achieve by giving cities more boots in the street.

I would like to take this time to commend Chief Weighill and his entire police service and force for their great dedication and achievement. I look forward to seeing those numbers continue to decline over the next three years and on into the future.

This fall I will be introducing new legislation that will protect potential witnesses from the threats of violence and intimidation. You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, government's increased focus on suppressing gangs and organized crime through targeted enforcement activity has resulted in an increase in the level of dangerous and violent gang members and organized crime figures facing charges before the courts.

Police and prosecutors advise they frequently learn of witnesses who are threatened or intimidated, thus placing successful prosecutions in jeopardy. In a number of instances, cases have been lost because crucial evidence to secure conviction is not being tendered in court due to these tactics. Presently the RCMP administers the national witness protection Act. This Act is designed to protect very high-level witnesses by relocating them and, when necessary, changing their names. Although this Act is successful, many of the witnesses who are required before Saskatchewan's courts do not fit the national criteria.

In most cases, the only action required is to provide some form of security and assistance to the witness until the trial is completed and the threat is no longer present. At the present

time, the police and prosecutors do their best to manage witnesses throughout the duration of the threat. The lack of an established program as to provide protective services to witnesses compromises successful management of the threat.

Police and prosecutions do not have resources or the capacity to competently manage at-risk witnesses at this time nor is it their responsibility.

This is where we come in. In short the witness protection Act will offer a safe place to stay and possible police protection to ensure the potential witness and their family are not harmed at all. This will ensure valuable and crucial evidence will not be lost due to witnesses either choosing not to testify or changing their testimony due to fear of reprisal at the hands of society's most violent and active criminals. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan is the fourth province to introduce this type of legislation with other provinces sure to follow in our footsteps over the coming years.

Now unfortunately for the member from Regina Dewdney, although this government acts quickly and decisively, we cannot enact this legislation quickly enough to protect him from the wrath of the party's current leader after the member confessed to organizing a leadership coup against the member from Saskatoon Riversdale in a recent media interview.

Provided no further details of the coup are leaked in the near future, we may be able to use this legislation to offer some measure of protection to the fourteen members of the coup that the member from Regina Dewdney chose to implicate in his interview. In addition to the obvious need for this legislation, I'm hopeful that self-interest will spur some members from the NDP caucus to vote in favour of this Bill.

I am pleased to be able to talk about a brand new initiative announced by the Premier in Prince Albert during the election campaign. As a Saskatchewan Party candidate for Prince Albert Carlton at the time, I was so proud to stand next to the Premier while I introduced the senior citizens home security initiative. It is a program designed to help low-income seniors and seniors affected by a previous home invasion make their home safer through a complimentary home security audit, followed by the installation of basic home security devices such as deadbolts and outdoor lighting. We are hoping to roll this initiative out in the spring and make good on yet another election promise.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will turn my attention once again to the disgraceful record of the NDP. While crime statistics were rising in the province, the previous government just ignored their friends. They ignored request after request from ministry officials for additional bed space and new facilities year after year. The list is long, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so please bear with me.

In 2001-2002, the NDP denied funding of 1.125 million for the design of the 1913 Regina Provincial Correctional Centre replacement project. In 2003-2004, the NDP denied security enhancements at the Saskatoon Correctional Centre for a second perimeter fence, upgraded control room and video surveillance equipment. In 2004-2005, the NDP denied the same security enhancements at the Saskatoon Correctional Centre. In 2005-2006, the NDP denied the same security

enhancements at the Saskatoon Correctional Centre once again — three times in a row.

In 2006-2007, the NDP denied construction of 40 new cells for Pine Grove Correctional Centre and 216 new cells for Saskatoon Correctional Centre. In 2007-2008, the NDP denied a new admission/discharge unit for the Saskatoon Correctional Centre. In 2007-2008, the NDP denied construction of a permanent facility at the Saskatoon Urban Camp. In 2007-2008, the NDP denied construction, denied construction of 40 secure cells for the Prince Albert correctional centre and the addition of 216 cells for Saskatoon Correctional Centre once again. Mr. Speaker, that is not a record to be proud of. With a record like that, I would be ashamed to show my face again in this House.

But here is the good news. Here's the good news, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This government is once again committed to taking action, committed to cleaning up the mess that the NDP left us. My ministry is currently in the process of making a five-year capital plan and has already completed an assessment of the correctional facilities in the province.

Last week in the House, the member from Regina Rosemont read some quotes from the August 29 *Leader-Post*. I will take a moment now to address those false accusations.

One, I should have alerted the public as soon as possible. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the policy of the previous administration was to let the RCMP release information on escape. In fact the NDP never once released information on any escape in their tenure. They counted on the RCMP to release the information with that once happening more than two days after an escape, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I too was concerned with the fact it took 15 hours to notify the media and the public. However I immediately took action and made a new policy, so that this government will take the initiative and alert the public to any escapes from secure adult facilities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, just last week this new policy was used when one of our inmates was mistakenly released from a courthouse. I made sure this government immediately notified the public as we said we would. I should have provided the public with as much information as possible.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what the members across from here may or may not know or respect is that after the escape, an RCMP investigation immediately came into effect. As a former police officer, I understand that to comment on anything regarding this escape and the investigation, until the investigation's complete, would not only be making assumptions, but also could jeopardize the investigation.

Number three, I should acknowledge here as . . . Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should have acknowledged that there is a problem related to gangs. If the member opposite would have read or listened to any of the media on August 29, he would know that after the news conference, I immediately called the media to acknowledge the fact that I misspoke, apologized for my statement, and acknowledged the fact that there is a problem related to gangs. I did so again yesterday. And I did so when I had my press scrum, the day of my press scrum.

So clearly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the member from Regina Rosemont should get his facts straight before making baseless accusations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, back to the reason I'm speaking to the House today — the Throne Speech. The number one reason I can stand here today and support this year's Speech from the Throne is that our Premier's vision and new economic policies will afford my daughters and their friends a brighter and stronger future. Our children's future is truly in our hands.

So I challenge the members opposite, before you support the amendment, think long and hard about your children and grandchildren's futures. I urge you to join the majority of the Saskatchewan electorate by voting in favour of the Saskatchewan Party's policies and initiatives and against the amendment. Members opposite should join me in supporting the Throne Speech as I am today.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — I recognize the member for Regina Coronation Park.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's my pleasure today to enjoy this opportunity to engage in the Speech from the Throne and to share my views on what the state of the nation is, so to speak, in Saskatchewan today.

I want to start, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by thanking my constituents for their continued support. Regina Coronation Park is very much a family oriented, working-class . . . Many are blue-collar workers, but we have our share of professionals — doctors, lawyers, that sort of thing — as well in my constituency, but very family oriented.

Schools are important. Community is important. Housing is important. And I just have always respected my constituents and always appreciated their continued overall support of me as their MLA.

I want to thank also my constituency assistant, Fred Kress, for the work he has done and continues to do. It's very important for all MLAs to have constituency assistants that we appreciate and trust and who will look after many of the day-to-day requests that our constituents have, be it for pins for travelling, or maybe some advocacy respecting some issue that . . . perhaps dealing with the Crowns, that sort of thing. Anyway thanks very much, Fred, for the work you continue to do on our behalf.

And of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to thank my wife, Lorna, who's the rock of my life and my life partner, and just keeps me relatively anchored. I love her dearly and really, really have enjoyed our life and look forward to many more years of that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a great time to be in Saskatchewan. It's a great time to be an MLA in Saskatchewan. It's a great, great time. Here we are, we have a Speech from the Throne that brags about paying debt. We have a Speech from the Throne that brags about the surplus, that we had a \$3 billion-plus surplus this year alone.

Mr. Speaker, it's a great time to be in Saskatchewan. The government has more money at their command than any government in the history of Saskatchewan has ever had. More money, more ability to deal with issues now than any government has ever had in the history of Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan Party government MLAs have riches beyond their wildest dreams.

And New Democrat MLAs in opposition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have pride — pride in knowing that we helped, along with the people of Saskatchewan, we helped set the table. The \$3 billion surplus didn't simply materialize overnight. It took years of getting things in place, and we caught the wave. And I'm really, really, really pleased for Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, I seem to have hit a bit of a sore spot across the way. So I think I have to talk a little bit about our 16-year run in government. Mr. Speaker, when we formed government from the previous Conservative government, there was a \$13 billion total debt and an annual deficit of \$1.3 billion. Saskatchewan, the province of Saskatchewan had a credit rating that was so bad, so low, it was a junk bond credit rating.

The province of Saskatchewan couldn't invest money in the pension plan for its own civil servants and Crown corporation employees because the national government, the federal government sets the rules, as they appropriately should, for pension funds. But that meant that people who worked at SaskTel or SaskPower or the Department of Agriculture or Department of Social Services, educators — all of these people were investing pension money through the professional pension investors, and not a dime of it was able to be invested in Saskatchewan. That was the situation we inherited. That's what we lived through 16, now 17 years ago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, unemployment was a huge issue in those days. I remember running for the nomination for the New Democratic Party in my constituency that I have spoken proudly of earlier in this speech. I remember vividly going to one house. The first time I'm there, the gentleman — about 55 years old, he'd worked all his life — he needed a few more years before he could retire, but he was looking forward to retirement. But he was looking for work, and he'd been unemployed for over a year — a blue-collar worker, been unemployed.

[15:45]

The second time I visited this gentleman's house, I noted that there was less furniture, significantly less furniture. The third time I visited this house, all he had left was the kitchen table and a couple of chairs. He was virtually reduced to tears, Mr. Deputy Speaker. He couldn't find work, and he'd watched his life savings erode. And I know from first-hand experience he lost his house because he couldn't find a job.

And I hear the heckle, that was under our administration. Let me say unequivocally. I served my first term in opposition. Grant Devine, the Conservative, was the premier. Grant Devine was the Conservative that the now premier served with at that time as a senior ministerial assistant. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that was under Tory times, and Tory times are tough times. My constituents know it. Tory times are tough times.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, we left government some 16 years later with a much reduced debt. Actually the first two years we deficit financed as we tried to turn it around. We raised taxes. We cut services. And times were tough for Saskatchewan people — you bet they were — but we kept meeting payroll. And we got improvements in our credit rating. And we could again invest pension monies into our own Saskatchewan people's pensions through the Government of Saskatchewan, through the Crowns, that sort of thing. And things started to turn around, but we were still stuck with this total debt that was causing our biggest single expenditure after health.

Our second biggest expenditure was interest on the debt. Interest on the debt. That was the situation that we inherited. And we fought and we scraped and we did everything we possibly could to get that turned around. And I know that members opposite are amused because all they know is the good times. I'm pleased. Members on this side are so pleased that the government only enjoys the good times, only enjoys the riches. And I hope that continues. I really want that for the people of Saskatchewan.

But I want to tell you it was a huge sacrifice by the people of Saskatchewan. No big sacrifice for me to pay a few more dollars in taxes; I have a good paying job. But I'll tell you my constituents sacrificed. My constituents, Mr. Deputy Speaker, worked hard. They're constituents who understand you had to cut the frills and pay the bills and that's what they did, Mr. Speaker. And I'm so proud of the people of Regina Coronation Park and I'm proud of the people of Saskatchewan collectively for understanding that that is what we needed to do.

We got to the situation where we were able to deliver tax cuts. Taxes, we had reduced the PST [provincial sales tax]. We had done the biggest single reduction in income tax and in corporate income taxes in Saskatchewan's history. We had done all of that while maintaining balanced, surplus budgets and every single year paying down the debt. We had done all of that over the 16 years, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And at the end of the day, what we had left was an economy that I've described it as hotter than a \$2 pistol. And many young people may not know \$2 pistol or a Saturday night special — just illegal, they're so hot. You shouldn't own them. You shouldn't buy them. They shouldn't be available. But our economy was so hot, virtually full employment, we've got taxes clearly trending lower.

We've got an announcement this year of a tax cut that's very significant and my constituents are going to be grateful for that tax cut. But, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that the tax cut that was introduced this year amounts to 10 per cent of the 3 billion-plus surplus. Ten per cent of the surplus went into income tax cuts that we're going to see in April and May when we get our income tax refunds.

I want to come back, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Never before has a government had more resources and more ability to deal with issues of the day than the Government of Saskatchewan today enjoys. No government's ever had more resources. They know

it, we know it, and the people of Saskatchewan know it.

But that begs the question then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, why so tight-fisted when it comes to home heating? Why so tight-fisted when it comes to the SaskEnergy and natural gas? Why is it that there is no immediate relief for people who are starting to heat their houses in a very, very real way today and for the last few weeks? I mean it's winter, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's winter.

I do unequivocally say, because I checked with my constituency assistant Mr. Kress, the thing that I get the most calls on in my constituency office is the high cost of home heating. I've never experienced that in 21 years as an MLA. I've never had that before.

We've had questions around minimum wage. We've had questions around, oh, my power's cut off, can you help? Oh, my phone's cut off, can you help? I've had all of that. Or, I've got workers' compensation problems. Those things have happened for 21 years. Never ever before have I had where the clear majority of calls is dealing with the high cost of heating homes, and that's right in north Regina. Every single constituent I have lives in north Regina. Every single one of them has natural gas as an option. SaskEnergy provides well over 99 per cent of the home heating requirements in my constituency.

And that, I tell you, is what the biggest question is. And the government sits on this huge surplus and day after day refuses to deal with the high cost of home heating.

Mr. Speaker, we have that going on. Earlier today we have the Minister Responsible for CIC releasing a KPMG, which is a national firm, report, the KPMG report dealing with the Crowns. And I know the hon. member for Wood River takes great glee because he is of the philosophical belief that government shouldn't be in business, that government should not be in Crowns. And I see the hon. member nodding, and I'm trying to be gentle. This is a genuine difference between the member from Wood River and the member from Regina Coronation Park.

We have got, of all of the investments that the Crowns had done through CIC, of all of the investments we'd done, of the ones that are finished — they invested and then sold, took the money out, all of the out-of-province investments — the rate of return is 41.6 per cent, nearly 42 per cent. The return into Saskatchewan people's pockets, 51 million extra dollars. That's \$51 million that had the Sask Party been government, they wouldn't have got.

That's \$51 million, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that has been used to help increase SaskTel's cellular coverage to the point where Saskatchewan has the largest percentage of population covered by cell coverage than any other province. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have taken that \$50 million and used it, of course, for the benefit of Saskatchewan people. And I'm awfully proud, as I know my colleagues are, awfully proud of our ability to do that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the member for Wood River says, now explain all of the others. He says, explain all of the others, the ones that we're still in. I want to tell the hon. member, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you're in government now. And I want to say this: we got a 42 per cent return on investment on the things

we divested, and that's according to the KPMG report. That's according to the minister's own report that was tabled earlier today. That's not my numbers; that's out of the KPMG report.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we got 42 per cent return on investment. This new Sask Party government . . . And here's why I predict you're not going to get that. Here's why I predict you're not going to get it, Mr. Speaker. I don't want to personalize it too much, so it's like if two people inherit at the same time a corner confectionery store, you know, in the same city, same basic neighbourhood — even across the street from each other if you like — and they're both going concerns. The difference is I inherit one of them from my grandparents and I've never liked, never liked the confectionery. The other person inherited from . . . It doesn't matter. They've got their confectionery at exactly the same moment, and they've had a dream that they could run a confectionery and they've wanted to run that confectionery all of their lives. Well guess who's going to have the confectionery a year from now. Not me. It'll be that person whose dream it was.

And that's the way it is with Crown corporations. Your vision, the government's vision collectively, is a non-vision respecting Crown corporations. It's a vision of sell them, lose them, lose them. It's not even use them or lose them. It's lose them. That's their philosophical bent, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Our view is the Crowns are there to provide service for the people of Saskatchewan, for my constituents, my family, my friends. It's to provide services. We've got electrical services at a very reasonable rate. We've got gas services, all of this very secure and very reasonably priced, recognizing some differences in geography. We don't enjoy British Columbia's hydro. We have hydro and it's important, but we also have more of a reliance on coal, which is a little more money.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we believe in Crowns. Simply put, the government members believe in Crown sell-off. And that's why they're going to take the KPMG report, they're going to use it as an excuse to starve the Crown corporations — SaskPower, SaskEnergy, SaskTel, and SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance], the four major utility Crowns. They're going to starve them and they're going to try and find ways to . . . Mark my words, these Crowns will not be like they are. They're going to be hugely, hugely different. Mr. Speaker, change is good, but not change that this government sees.

Mr. Speaker, I want to close where I began. I want to thank my constituents. I want to thank my constituency assistant. I want to thank my family and friends and, particularly, my wife. But I want to thank all members of this legislature. It's not my swan song. All members are diligently trying to do our collective jobs. I have a bias, I have to confess. I think that members on this side of the House do the jobs better, but I do know that all members are trying to do their jobs. I'm proud to stand up and speak on behalf of my constituents. I hope I've made some cogent argument. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be voting with the amendment, but against the main motion. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — I recognize the Attorney General and the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's my privilege to rise to comment upon and speak in support of the Speech from the Throne. It's a practice, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that members use this time to offer thanks and make comments about their constituency and people in their constituency. And I would like to certainly do that.

My constituency, as you're aware, is Saskatoon Southeast, which I regard as one of the most wonderful places in our province. We have some very significant and rapid growth. We now have new neighbourhoods of Rosewood and Stonebridge, and our very rapid increase in the number of acreages south of Saskatoon. I'm pleased to add these new constituents and I met a number of them over the summer. We had a series of barbecues and events through the summer months, and was able to have a lot of contact with the people that live in these new areas.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was pleased to report to the House that the type of things that they had to mention and their concerns, one was the significant issue of the provincial debt and what we were using excess revenue for. And the most common theme was, what are you doing for debt repayment, and are you able to reduce the debt? And I'm very pleased, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that over this fiscal year we will be reducing the provincial debt by approximately 40 per cent. This was very, very warmly received by the citizens of Saskatoon Southeast, and I'm pleased to be able to deliver that to them.

[16:00]

We also heard the concerns about high taxes, and I'm extremely pleased that we were able to deliver tax relief earlier this week. We are now the province that has the lowest personal income tax of any jurisdiction in our country. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is going to start to pay some significant dividends.

We had people paying personal tax that chose to leave the province, to go and live in Calgary, chose to go and live where there was a more favourable personal tax regime. Those people still have businesses and still have interests in this province, and there's a good chance that those people may very well be coming back to Saskatoon. Or the ones that have not yet left are very much more inclined to stay here.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, another significant point that we heard about was the aging and infrastructure deficit in our province. I'm also pleased to say that we've made one of the largest commitments in the province's history towards updating the province's infrastructure. We've made a major commitment, a billion dollar commitment to roads, schools, hospitals, and a variety of other things.

And the amount of money that we've committed continues to increase as the province's history goes on. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm pleased that that is going on and am delighted that we as a government are able to deliver that to the citizens of our province.

One of the remaining things that we'll be working on, by the member from Rosetown, is the issue of property tax. The people in my constituency regularly report that they've been burdened with high property tax for far too long. And the

member from Rosetown is doing some very good work. He's met with school boards. He's met with municipalities, with homeowners' group, and I understand we'll have a report in the next few months. And hopefully that's going to provide some significant benefit. And I look forward to going back to my constituents and being able to say, this is another commitment and another promise that we are able to fulfill and live up to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I live in, of course, in Saskatoon and we have, as a city, a new police chief — who's actually not that new anymore, slightly in excess of a year. We have former deputy chief Weighill from Regina who's now chief of police in Saskatoon.

We're extremely pleased and want to thank the citizens of the city of Regina for having given Clive Weighill to us because our city's police force is working hard, competently, and I have yet to hear a negative comment about Chief Weighill. I felt somewhat guilty about having effectively stolen this individual from the city of Regina, but I've had the privilege of meeting the new police chief in Regina, Troy Hagen, and find him to be an excellent person. And I've talked to some of the Regina police members and they have strong support for him. And I'm sure that Regina will be equally well served as Saskatoon with their new police chief as well. So I'd like to commend both police chiefs and look forward to working with them as we continue our efforts to reduce crime and to bring our province forward.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, something new and significant in my constituency is the announcement I'm going to speak to more later, but one of the significant things is the new south bridge that will go along the south edge of Saskatoon. For the people that know Saskatoon, this will go along immediately north of the new auto mall past the old Yanke Transfer building and through a portion of the Saskatoon Golf and Country Club, and have another bridge across to the west side of Saskatoon.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is something that is more than just another conduit for traffic to cross. This will bring the Saskatoon east side and west side together, promote the two communities from working together and go a long ways to reduce the divide between the inner city and the rest of the city. So we look forward to having that come about.

Usually, Mr. Deputy Speaker, something that's done at this time as well is recognizing some of the individuals that have been significant in the MLA's life and I'm going to mention a few of them. One is of course my wife, Sandy, who has been incredibly supportive. Before I was elected we used to carpool to work. My office was downtown, hers was downtown so we would travel in the vehicle together and save some travel expenses, some gas expenses.

Now I can advise you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that one of the things that we did when we were travelling to prevent us from wallowing in self-misery about the usual problems in our lives was we made a rule; we made a pact between ourselves that from the time we left downtown to the time we got home, that was our venting time. We could say whatever gossip or misery that we wanted to share about our day, the people we worked with.

As you're aware, my wife used to work with the member from Meewasin, and I'm pleased to report to him that he was not one of the ones that she usually vented about. She was usually venting about me and about other things. Occasionally by the time we would get home one or the other of us would say, I'm not done venting yet; drive around the block. And we would do that.

She has asked me recently, now that you have to travel from Regina to Saskatoon, do you vent by yourself all the way home? And yes, Sandy, I do.

I also appreciate the continuing support of my mother who lives in a senior's facility in Saskatoon. She's very keenly interested in politics, and when she had decided a year or two to sell her home and to move into a senior's facility, she was on several waiting lists. And the one that she got into first happened to be in the constituency of Saskatoon Nutana. I was somewhat disappointed because I felt this was one of the votes that I would be able to count on had she been able to move into my constituency. Well the member for Saskatoon Nutana, to give her credit, campaigns in there regularly and vigorously. My mother has indicated to me that if it keeps up, she will be moving herself into the undecided category. I will be troubled if that actually happens.

I also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would like to comment and thank my constituency assistant, Rita Flaman Jarrett, for her continuing hard work and the excellent relationship that she's developed with my constituents. She is going through a personal crisis with the health of her son, Brennan — B-r-e-n-n-a-n, for the benefit of *Hansard* — who last year during the election was diagnosed with testicular cancer. Since that time he has had surgery on his heart and lungs to remove tumours, and the family is wrestling with that and dealing with that. And I want to ask members to provide their thoughts and prayers to that family. Things are going relatively well. The surgery was somewhat successful although he looks at some ongoing treatment. So I would like to mention him and indicate to them that my thoughts and my prayers are certainly with them.

I'd like to thank all of the volunteers that come out to our events and continue to work and continue to provide input and ongoing support.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to comment very briefly about how our province has been somewhat insulated and somewhat removed from some of the global financial issues that were there.

Immediately prior to the legislature going into session, my wife and I spent some time in Fort Lauderdale. And I was reading the newspaper there, and there was advertisements from home builders and developers that were discounting new homes that had never been occupied, and the discounts were anywhere from 30 to 70 per cent from the original list price. And when you would drive around you would find entire condominium complexes that had never been occupied. People were not paying the condominium fees. Security, utilities, taxes were not being paid on those properties.

I also heard a radio ad from a Chrysler dealership, full-sized

Chrysler SUVs [sport-utility vehicle] and trucks, two-for-one sale. I contacted the dealership by phone when I heard the radio ad and saw the newspaper in front of me, and they indicated that if you purchased one vehicle at full price, you could have another one up to the same price because of their financing arrangements with Chrysler. You couldn't buy one, but you had to buy two if you wanted that special price. So that's a sign of how drastic things are in other parts of North America.

We should be extremely pleased that we have a strong resource sector and more pleased that we've got a government that's willing to manage things carefully. I've listened to some of the members' speeches from across the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and some of them are talking about wanting to spend money on this, spend money on that, do things quicker. We would rather be sitting on a significant amount of money to help our province weather any of the vagaries that come about in the continuing marketplace.

This is a government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that takes the financial situation of the world and our province very seriously. The 40 per cent debt reduction is something that we should take a lot of pride in and want to deal with. That is something, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I would regard as not just significant but as actually historic, and this government should be commended for doing that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a Throne Speech that sets out our government's agenda with much optimism for coming days, weeks, and months. It has been said around the world that Canada is the best country on the planet when it comes to quality of life.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've been all over this country of ours and I'm convinced that Saskatchewan is the province that offers the best quality of life in Canada. So since Canada is the best country and Saskatchewan is the best province in Canada, Mr. Speaker, we are right here, right now living in the best place in the world.

It was during the election campaign a year ago that Saskatchewan Party MLAs and candidates were telling the people of our great province about our new ideas for Saskatchewan and stating what we needed to secure the province. Well, Mr. Speaker, since forming the new government almost a year ago, we have shared those new ideas and have a big head start on securing what is a very bright future for the people of Saskatchewan.

As Justice minister and Attorney General, I'm most pleased to be moving forward with a number of justice-related initiatives. We will be moving forward with important steps towards a stronger democracy.

First of all, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government is keeping the promise of establishing fixed election dates. In fact we know that the next provincial election will occur on November 7, 2011. As the Throne Speech indicated, set election dates will remove some of the political gamesmanship and voter cynicism that we have seen in the past. We have fulfilled that election promise during the first session.

This session we will keep another promise relating to elections.

A new law will restrict the amount of government advertising in the periods leading up to an election. This is going to prevent abuse that happened under the previous government. The NDP spent almost a million dollars on unbudgeted health care advertising leading up to the last election. Our legislative action would be good news for Saskatchewan. People told us they don't like to see their hard-earned tax dollars being spent on political advertising. It's interesting to note that, just less than one year under a Saskatchewan Party government leading this province, the entire country is now learning about our robust provincial economy and our growing population. Yes, we've delivered the message to people outside Saskatchewan and to the rest of the country that our future is wide open.

Mr. Speaker, during the session our provincial government will introduce legislation that will make it possible for people in Saskatchewan to elect the next nominee for the Senate, an important step towards a democratic, elected Canadian Senate. Mr. Speaker, another important piece I'd like to mention from the Ministry of Justice is part of our promise to make our communities safer. We will strengthen laws and step up enforcement so that provincial government police services can seize property. We are going to deal in a better manner with the collection of fines and collection of monies that are owing to the province. The provincial government will also move ahead to make other adjustments to ensure that renters are protected as recommended by the Merriman and Pringle report.

Mr. Speaker, last week's Throne Speech not only highlighted these important issues from the Ministry of Justice, it also highlighted several initiatives that will make life better for my constituents in Saskatoon Southeast and for the people across Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, the residents of Saskatoon Southeast and everyone in Saskatchewan will benefit from the fact that Saskatchewan is number one in wholesale trade growth, export sales growth, and retail sales growth. More people in Saskatchewan are working more than ever before. It wasn't that long ago our young people were graduating from high schools, trade schools, and universities to find that they had no place to go. That is, no place to go to get a job in Saskatchewan.

Times have changed, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Our young people can now find suitable employment for compensation that is fair and competitive with other jobs in other provinces. Now our young people can go to school and focus on their studies without a constant concern about where they might have to go to find a job when they graduate. Now our young people can feel secure about their future because our government is securing the future for the entire province.

Mr. Speaker, our Saskatchewan Party government took the time this past summer to consult with the people of Saskatchewan. We asked the people what we should do with our substantial revenues. A \$3.1 billion surplus amount is a lot of money. We thought it only right to ask Saskatchewan people what they want to do with their money. They told us they wanted lower taxes. They told us they wanted us to improve infrastructure — specifically hospitals, schools, and highways. They told us they wanted us to be responsible with their money. Mr. Speaker, we are stewards and guardians and trustees of that money. We will look after it carefully.

[16:15]

Mr. Speaker, our Premier and the Government of Saskatchewan delivered on those demands last week, making some truly historic announcements. The Premier announced the largest single-year income tax reduction in Saskatchewan history, the largest amount of debt reduction in Saskatchewan history, and the largest investment in infrastructure in Saskatchewan history. Mr. Speaker, the tax relief we have announced will make a big impact on every child, woman, and man in Saskatchewan. Our government's plan is solid, and we believe it will ensure future growth while at the same time address the priorities of Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, the residents of Saskatoon Southeast, and in fact all residents of Saskatoon, are looking forward to the completion of their new bridge. In June our provincial government, in partnership with the federal government, announced a new \$234 million south bridge in Saskatoon. Prime Minister Stephen Harper attended the announcement and confirmed that the federal government would contribute \$86.5 million to the construction of the new bridge, matching our provincial government's funding. The city of Saskatoon is also a partner having committed some \$70 million. Mr. Speaker, on that day, the Prime Minister of Canada acknowledged the fact that the Saskatchewan economy is on a roll, pointing out that our rapid and spectacular success was the reason that we need an additional bridge in Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, the Circle Drive south river crossing will be a new six-lane bridge and will complete the final section of the centre city's ring road. It will ease traffic congestion in Saskatoon by giving commercial traffic a better option than moving through the downtown area. It will also tie the east side and west side of Saskatoon together from the south point as well to give greater access from citizens on both sides of the street to stores, markets on the other side of the river, things such as the farmers' market and giving access to the big box malls that are on the east side of the river.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to finish by saying our government's Throne Speech not only outlined our plan for continuing economic growth, it also states how our province's prosperity will be shared among all Saskatchewan people. Looking forward, Saskatchewan's future is certainly bright, Mr. Speaker. I am proud to serve the residents of Saskatoon Southeast as their MLA and proud to serve the people of Saskatchewan as their Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will certainly be supporting the vote on the Speech from the Throne and would like to urge the members opposite to read it carefully, review it, and would like to solicit their support. Too often when we were in opposition and when they were in government, they called out to us and said, will you support this, will you support that? And we reached out to them and we said, we would like to support this; we would like to support that. There was never a willingness on their part to work with us, and today I would like to reach across once again and give them the opportunity to vote for this Speech from the Throne and show that they support the people of Saskatchewan, and they want to make Saskatchewan a better place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be voting for the Speech from the Throne and want to invite them to do so as well. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — I recognize the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, standing here, looking across the aisle as I am at the moment, reminds me of a recent conversation I had with one of my colleagues. It went something like this. You know, I said, we ought to have a ugly tie day here at the legislature. And her advice was, don't need it because here at the legislature, every day is ugly tie day . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . You know, you wear a tie like that, Mr. Speaker, maybe you should be considerate enough to bring sunglasses for your colleagues.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a great pleasure and an honour to rise in the House today to speak in support of the 2008 Speech from the Throne, subtitled "A Stronger Saskatchewan. A Better Life." The contents of this document, along with other recent announcements, form a group of commitments from Saskatchewan's new government that are truly historic for our province. Our colleagues across the way obviously agree with this.

Let's take a moment, shall we, to outline them. As mentioned by other members, highlights include the largest income tax cut in Saskatchewan's history, the largest payment on the provincial debt in Saskatchewan's history, and the largest investment in infrastructure again in Saskatchewan's history, Mr. Speaker. Impressive indeed. In addition nearly \$2 billion has been set aside in the province's Growth and Fiscal Stabilization Fund. This is our rainy day fund designed to protect us from economic troubles currently being experienced in other jurisdictions around the world which may affect us in ways that we can't entirely perceive. It is in fact an insurance policy for the people of Saskatchewan, paid for in advance. They will ensure the viability of important programs serving our needs. It's a rock that will form a strong foundation on which we can build our future together.

Further, Mr. Speaker, the Throne Speech makes reference to increases in financial and program support for society's most vulnerable that are absolutely unprecedented. With the above in mind, I'd like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank our province's residents for sharing their hopes and dreams with their new government, along with their ideas on how best to invest the approximately \$3 billion in extra revenues this province has seen this year. In doing so, they've played a key role in shaping the direction outlined in the Throne Speech itself.

It was these community-minded people who took time to indicate that their top priorities included paying down the debt and aggressively attacking the infrastructure gap. It was they who confirmed that the right thing to do would be to introduce broad-based tax cuts for Saskatchewan families and individuals. And it was they who underlined their strong belief in providing increased support for those in need so everyone can benefit from Saskatchewan's new prosperity. As the Premier has said,

everyone should share in this new prosperity.

Here's how the ground-breaking public consultation was summed up in this speech delivered here by the Lieutenant Governor himself. The quote says:

This money rightfully belongs to everyone in Saskatchewan.

This is why . . . government asked the people of Saskatchewan for advice on the . . . steps it should take.

Many people from all across our province have responded.

Their wise and steady counsel has built on my government's vision for reduction of debt, lower taxes, better infrastructure and sound financial management.

That's the end of the quote, Mr. Speaker. Again, our sincere thanks to all those who participated.

Mr. Speaker, we have taken this excellent advice to heart and have responded with a range of initiatives that address the people's priorities in ways that are innovative, effective, and actually transformational for our province. The response has been very positive indeed. Here is one comment that is typical of many, taken from an editorial in the October 23 edition of the Regina *Leader-Post*:

Saskatchewan's government seems intent on transforming and re-energizing the province.

Transforming and re-energizing the province, Mr. Speaker. Yes indeed, that's exactly what we're working hard to do.

Just as much as these goals apply to other policy areas clearly mentioned before, they apply equally to the province's relationship with its nearly 800 municipalities and its firm commitment to working with them in partnership towards achieving their top priorities. These intentions are made clear in the Throne Speech section titled, Stronger Communities By Working With Municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, the province's new government is fully aware that an enormous amount of the new growth that we are experiencing today is taking place in our municipalities. A lot of it is occurring in our cities and towns, to be sure. But tremendous growth is also happening in our rural areas, our villages, and in our northern communities as well.

And while the individual circumstances may vary considerably from place to place, many of the needs all come down to the same thing and that is infrastructure — infrastructure for new residential neighbourhoods, commercial areas, and industrial parks. Infrastructure to provide for a new capacity in water treatment plants, waste water treatment facilities, and landfills to accommodate the required incremental growth. Because we are planning for success, we foresaw the need to assist our municipalities in meeting this exciting new challenge.

That's why, together with our municipal sector partners, we created the Saskatchewan infrastructure growth initiative, a new \$300 million loan program rolled out over four years, with the

province financing the interest costs for five years to make access to much-needed capital more affordable for all.

Many of the program's important features, including the eligibility of extra capacity in water, waste water, and landfill systems, were added at the request of our colleagues at the table.

In addition, review and adjudication of the applications for funding is done by a close-working group of municipal and provincial officials. It's a real team effort, Mr. Speaker, and an excellent example of the success that is being achieved through the province's commitment to building and maintaining a true government-to-government relationship with municipalities.

So how's it going so far, you might ask. The program's . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . How is it going? I'll tell you; I'm happy to. The program's very first year has been an enormous success. All \$75 million for the first year have been allocated and essential projects in 38 communities have been approved for funding all over the province.

A typical example is the city of Yorkton, Mr. Speaker, which is accessing over \$10 million under the program to build new water treatment facilities and install infrastructure for a new residential subdivision. Yorkton's growing. With an annual budget of about \$13 million, the interest savings of about a half a million dollars per year for each of the next five years will, in the mayor's opinion, be huge. Very clearly this is the right program at the right time.

Last fall I started touring communities — large and small, urban and rural, in the North and in the South — and in fact we're still doing it today. Everywhere I saw an unprecedented level of confidence and optimism about the new Saskatchewan and the opportunities for economic development, job creation, and growth. And the municipal sector partners I met with all expressed great interest in and support for the new infrastructure growth initiative. With a very successful first year under our belt, we can now move forward with confidence to successive years, knowing that we are meeting key priorities in Saskatchewan's municipalities.

Now as mentioned in the Throne Speech, we are keenly aware that, just like the province, municipalities are facing an enormous infrastructure debt. Many years of drastic cuts to the provincial revenue-sharing program carried out by the previous government actually cut the program funding in half — an indisputable fact. The inescapable consequence of this very regrettable and regressive policy was that large numbers of critically important local infrastructure projects were cut back, were delayed, or were abandoned altogether.

The cost to Saskatchewan's municipalities goes far beyond the \$300 million taken away from urban communities alone, and even well beyond the more than two-thirds of a billion dollars when considering cutbacks to all 800 urban, rural, and northern communities. Due to the spiralling costs of construction, the years of waiting and standing by have likely doubled the impact in a large number of these cases.

Mr. Speaker, as somebody who served in municipal government for 12 years during this troubled period, I can

confirm that the outright abandonment of Saskatchewan's communities by the former government and the enormous damage done to the relationship between our two orders of government represents one of the darkest eras of Saskatchewan's political history. Shame indeed, Mr. Speaker. Shame indeed.

And to cap it all off — and this is a point worth noting — when the former government finally got around to restoring some of the lost revenue, they withheld all new funding in 2006 so they could double the amount in 2007. Why? Well it just happened to be the year of the provincial election. Mr. Speaker, such actions define arrogance. They define disrespect for municipal partners.

The new provincial government has decided to turn this sordid state of affairs around. We are determined to clean up the mess left behind by the previous government. We are committed to rebuilding the damaged relationship and establishing a long-term revenue-sharing solution tailored quite specifically to the needs of municipalities, in consultation with them. After all, we respect municipal partners as full participants at the table. We recognize the essential role that they play in economic development, job creation, and providing services that ensure an attractive quality of life for everyone.

We also know that when municipalities succeed, everyone in the province succeeds. And we understand that the infrastructure gap in municipalities is an enormous barrier to growth that must be resolved. And so we promise to revive the discussions about revenue sharing. We promise to identify a provisional revenue source for sharing with our municipal colleagues that, as they had requested, grows with the provincial economy, Mr. Speaker. We promised to get it all done in two years with successive 7 per cent increases on an interim basis to the current formula.

[16:30]

Well, Mr. Speaker, we've done all that and we've done more. We began by meeting with not only the cities, as the former government had, but also with representatives of towns and villages, rural municipalities, and northern communities as well — all simultaneously — in order to dramatically accelerate the pace of this process. We introduced a 7 per cent increase to revenue sharing in our very first budget, as promised. Further, when unprecedented resource revenues became available and made it possible, we quickly added another 8 per cent for a total increase of 15 per cent — more than double the commitment in one year.

And now, Mr. Speaker, with the project well in hand, I am truly confident that a new revenue-sharing formula that provides more funding and more predictability in funding to municipalities will be part of the 2009-2010 provincial budget as promised.

The bottom line is that what the old government couldn't do in 16 years, Mr. Speaker, the new government will accomplish in a mere 16 months.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Now, Mr. Speaker, what direct benefits from the Throne Speech and its related announcements will the good people of Regina South constituency see? Mr. Speaker, to list them all would take more time than we have here today, so I'd like just to focus on a few of the more interesting highlights.

Certainly residents of the constituency that I have had the honour of representing welcome the extraordinary retirement of nearly 40 per cent of the provincial debt in just one fiscal year. They clearly understand that the savings in interest costs in the coming years will be in the hundreds of millions of dollars, which can be used for other worthy initiatives. And they look forward, as does their new government, to the day in the not-too-distant future when Saskatchewan may be debt free, knowing that we'll be an even stronger province at that point.

They are pleased with the largest ever reduction in income taxes, which allows families and individuals to share in the prosperity of the new Saskatchewan. And they warmly approve of raising personal income tax exemptions and adding new low-income tax credits to specifically assist low-income earners, including students, seniors, and others, to meet today's higher costs of living.

They strongly support the largest ever investment in infrastructure — a whopping \$1.5 billion, Mr. Speaker — recognizing that it means better highways, better health care facilities, better schools, and better post-secondary institutions.

They are pleased that there will be increased funding for the University of Regina and SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology], along with Regina public and Regina Catholic school systems as well.

They like Canada's most aggressive post-secondary student recruitment and retention program and look forward to their government's planned improvements to it.

They welcomed the new emphasis on innovation in research, the continued emphasis on recruiting nurses and doctors to reduce surgical wait-lists, and a new direction in environmental stewardship based on reducing greenhouse gases through clean coal technology and investigating a variety of alternative power sources.

They support any and all efforts to solve the shortage of skilled tradespeople and professionals by providing more training opportunities for our young people, more actively engaging First Nations and Métis youth in education and job skills programming. And once again as before, reaching out to nations around the world to help build the new Saskatchewan — something which hasn't occurred in decades.

They're also very pleased that the city of Regina will finally be receiving an appropriate level of funding from the province to support the wide range of services they depend on the city to provide for their quality of life.

There is also broad support for an increased funding for the arts and culture, investment in the tourism industry, plus a commitment to putting more police officers on the street and in specialized teams to protect our children and combat the

activities of organized crime and gangs.

Mr. Speaker, that's an impressive list of highlights to be sure. But there's one other item that the people of Regina South will be particularly proud of. That's the attention being paid to assist society's most vulnerable members: initiatives that will eliminate 80,000 of the province's lowest income earners from the tax rolls altogether; increases for child care and pre-kindergarten programs; over \$76 million to address the critical wait-list of people with disabilities in need of support and desiring an independent income of their own for their own dignity's sake; a four-year commitment to \$20 million in additional funding for community-based organizations who provide essential front-line services in this city and all over the province along with an unprecedented \$18.6 million top-up, the largest ever in Saskatchewan's history.

There are increases in shelter rates for low-income renters along with per diem rates offered to organizations operating emergency shelters, along with more funding for school lunches and other child hunger programs as well.

And in order to help low-income seniors, Mr. Speaker, stay in their homes and maintain their quality of life, the first increase in the Saskatchewan income assistance program in 16 years — something which our colleagues across the way clearly didn't think was important enough to address. Here we've addressed an incredible oversight. As with so many other things, I suppose the other folks will be saying, we were going to get around to it. But, Mr. Speaker, they didn't get around to it; they just never did. So we will.

Mr. Speaker, I predict the residents of Regina South will be pleased with what has been laid out both in the Throne Speech and other recent announcements by their new government. It is of course based directly on their wise advice. I think they'll agree with the *Leader-Post* editorial that "... Saskatchewan's government seems intent on transforming and re-energizing the province."

Sadly it seems the only people that don't share this view are likely the members of the opposition. As an article in the October 24th edition of the Regina *Leader-Post* states:

This is the bitter reality for the . . . Opposition: It's hard to be unhappy in these happy days . . . or at least it's hard to without looking exceedingly petulant or bitter.

While the language used by the scribe may be overly exuberant, Mr. Speaker, the message is abundantly clear.

Mr. Speaker, here on the government side of the Legislative Assembly, we're a helpful bunch. And we're pleased to offer our colleagues on the other side the following good advice which we hope you will take. Vote in favour of the Throne Speech. Vote in favour of huge tax cuts for Saskatchewan families and individuals. Vote for an historic reduction of the provincial debt. Vote for the largest ever investment in infrastructure. Vote for the security of a solid growth and fiscal stabilization fund. Vote in favour of increased support for those most in need so everyone can share in a new prosperity. Vote for all of these good things, colleagues. You know it's the right thing to do. And deep down in your unhappy, little hearts, you

know that if you do it will make you feel better.

I'd like to conclude, Mr. Speaker, by thanking my wife, my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly, the folks in our constituency executive, and all the good people in Regina South constituency for their continuing, solid advice and great support. Thank you very much. I will be proud to support the Throne Speech.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Massey Place.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As always it's a pleasure to stand in this Assembly to represent the good people of Saskatoon Massey Place. Before I enter into my comments on the Throne Speech, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the constituents of Saskatoon Massey Place for their continued support. It has been great getting to know many of you over the past year, and I look forward to serving you in the years to come.

Also before I comment on the Throne Speech, I want to join with my colleagues in welcoming the new member for Cumberland to this Assembly. I certainly look forward to working with him in the months ahead to hold this government to account. I know the member brings a great deal of experience and enthusiasm to the legislature, so I wish him all the best as he begins his time representing the vast and beautiful constituency of Cumberland.

Mr. Speaker, it was rather entertaining to watch as those Sask Party members practically tripped over one another following the Throne Speech to congratulate themselves for putting a string of words together and calling it a vision. So for the sake of those Sask Party members who may not have an understanding of recent history in this province and who may think they've come up with something fresh and new, I would like to take a few moments to provide some facts.

Let's look at the one main aspect of the Throne Speech trumpeted by the Sask Party — debt reduction. Paying down debt is not a Sask Party innovation. It's something that those Sask Party members learned as they sat and watched New Democrats consistently pay down debt over the last decade. In fact over 1 billion of debt was eliminated in just the last term of NDP government. This commitment to debt reduction occurred when commodity prices were much lower than they have recently been. Make no mistake, reducing debt is part of the NDP legacy. So it is good to see that the Sask Party learned some lessons on that front.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, several constituents of mine have quite rightly pointed out that it is entirely appropriate for that group of former Tories in the Sask Party to keep paying down the debt because it was their horrible creation in the first place. It was a Conservative government that took Saskatchewan to the brink of bankruptcy and left us with a mountain of debt. And Saskatchewan people believe that it is only right that those same people continue to pay down the crushing burden of debt they created.

Another central element of the Throne Speech is a focus on lowering taxes. Well, Mr. Speaker, New Democrats lowered taxes significantly in the last seven years of government. New Democrats cut the PST, income taxes, and property taxes. New Democrats lowered the education portion of property tax on farm land. New Democrats instituted the most significant business tax review and reduction in the history of Saskatchewan. Again, Mr. Speaker, it's good to see the Sask Party learned some lessons from the NDP on the importance of lowering taxes because make no mistake, lower taxes are part of the NDP legacy.

A third component of the Throne Speech identified by the Sask Party is an investment in infrastructure and innovation. Mr. Speaker, this is most definitely not new either. New Democrats have been investing in infrastructure and innovation for years. The Sask Party government mentioned the synchrotron, the Petroleum Technology Research Centre, VIDO [Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization] and InterVac [international vaccine centre] at the University of Saskatchewan in their Throne Speech.

Those institutions are part of the great NDP legacy of investing in innovation. And New Democrats invested significantly in highways, hospitals, schools, universities, and other important infrastructure projects across Saskatchewan. Make no mistake, Mr. Speaker, significant investment in infrastructure and innovation is part of the NDP legacy. So, Mr. Speaker, not only did the Sask Party inherit the largest fiscal surplus in the history of the province, they also inherited the know-how and experience of sound New Democratic management.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'd understand if some people glanced through the Throne Speech and thought to themselves, you know, there the Sask Party goes again following in the footsteps of New Democrats. That would be somewhat understandable, Mr. Speaker. After all the Sask Party is in many ways following in our footsteps by continuing the NDP policies of significant debt reduction, lower taxes, and investment in infrastructure and innovation. But imitation is never quite as good as the real thing, Mr. Speaker. Imitation always falls short. Like any knock-off, upon closer examination, it's clear that the fake goods are not as bright and not as durable as the real deal.

Perhaps the Sask Party ministers, as they travelled the world on junkets this past summer, had a chance to visit some of the foreign markets where knock-off goods are sold. I think they too will agree that you can buy a fake Rolex or look-alike Versace glasses, but don't expect for a second to get the same quality product. Expect a product that is disposable. Expect a product that was made for expediency. Expect a product that could cause harm to your family. In sum, Mr. Speaker, expect to be let down.

In the same way, the Sask Party's attempted imitation of NDP policies only goes so far. In this Throne Speech, we are starting to see how the Sask Party's approach may seem fine at first glance, but upon closer examination we can see that it's not the real deal. It's like the bride-to-be that took her engagement ring to be appraised for insurance purposes. You can imagine her shock and disappointment when she learned that her 2-carat princess cut diamond was nothing more than a cheap cubic zirconia.

You see, here's the difference, Mr. Speaker. New Democrats certainly value fiscal prudence. We value debt reduction. We value lower taxes. And we value infrastructure and innovation. But we also value social progress. We value increasing prosperity and broadening opportunity. We value looking out for one another and helping each other in times of need. And you know, Mr. Speaker, quite frankly we value the responsibility of government to address the immediate needs of Saskatchewan people.

It's a pity that the Sask Party members haven't tried to imitate all of those values, Mr. Speaker, because for far too many Saskatchewan people the benefits of the boom are passing right on by, and instead they are facing only the negative aspects of rising costs for everything.

Mr. Speaker, in my response to the Throne Speech last year, I shared with this Assembly some of the struggles and challenges faced by constituents in Saskatoon Massey Place. I, like most members in this Assembly, value the interaction and feedback I receive from my constituents. Again this year, I judged the Throne Speech by the needs and concerns of my constituents.

[16:45]

Mr. Speaker, last year I spoke about a family in Dundonald with two children attending the University of Saskatchewan. They were concerned about accessibility for their children and all Saskatchewan students. Recent talk from the Minister of Advanced Education has suggested that the tuition freeze enjoyed for a number of years will come to an end. To this family, it is clear that the new paradigm will mean that they are paying more. Last year my constituents were worried about tuition costs. This year they have even more reason to worry. Affordable post-secondary education is an immediate need and the Sask Party is doing nothing to address it.

Mr. Speaker, many of my constituents continue to struggle in finding affordable housing, or continue to face huge rent increases. This is a major challenge for people in Saskatoon Massey Place and for people across the province. In the past year we've seen a report to buy some time, and we've seen the Sask Party's willingness to cut ribbons on NDP projects, but we have yet to see a real commitment to address the supply of affordable housing. Mr. Speaker, last year my constituents were worried about affordable housing and in this year, due to the Sask Party's lack of action, they have more reason to worry. Affordable housing in Saskatchewan is an immediate need and the Sask Party is failing to address it.

Mr. Speaker, many of my neighbours are very concerned about the environment and issues of sustainability. But what have they seen from the Sask Party government this past year? They've seen the Premier slash the Green Future Fund which would have helped to address the climate crisis, and now the Premier hints that they will abandon the current emission targets — targets that were adopted by the Sask Party. Mr. Speaker, last year my constituents were concerned about the future of the planet, and in this year the Sask Party has failed to address their concerns by not having their actions match their Throne Speech words. Real action on climate change is an immediate need, but the Sask Party has completely failed to act.

Mr. Speaker, some of my constituents do not always feel safe in their community. My constituents want to know that the Sask Party takes these concerns seriously and they want to know that they are working to make their lives more secure. Unfortunately what we've seen from this government has been alarming. Admittedly, Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech does talk about gang activity. This however is completely incongruous with what we've heard from the Minister of Corrections and Public Safety. This minister went so far as to suggest there isn't a gang problem in Saskatchewan jails.

We've also seen how this Minister of Corrections and Public Safety is completely unable to manage his ministry. Inmates are escaping, and some are even being let out by accident. These breaches are worrisome, but it's all the worse when the public isn't notified for hours or even days. While the Throne Speech talks a lot about gang activity and fighting crime, my constituents are not able to take these pledges seriously so long as the current minister is still in charge.

Mr. Speaker, last year my constituents wanted safer streets. This year they still want safer streets, but because of the minister's failure of leadership, they're feeling less secure. Safer communities are an immediate need for Saskatchewan, but the Sask Party is jeopardizing the safety of our communities.

Mr. Speaker, my constituents also want Saskatchewan to be treated fairly by Ottawa. They want to know that they have a Premier who will always represent their best interests. The Throne Speech provides no indication that the Sask Party is willing to take fairness for Saskatchewan seriously.

Last year my constituents wanted Saskatchewan to be treated fairly, as other provinces already are. But this year they know they have a sycophantic Premier who will bend over backwards to do Stephen Harper's bidding. Having federal Tories keep their word to the province is an immediate need for Saskatchewan people, but the Premier has failed to stand up for Saskatchewan and has instead chosen to stand up for Stephen Harper.

Mr. Speaker, many of my constituents have expressed to me how they have benefited over the past years through the NDP's low-cost utility bundle promise. At a time when the cost of living is going up across the board, higher utility expenses simply are not an option for many of my constituents. I know this is the case in many parts of the province as well. Sadly we've heard the Sask Party call this promise a gimmick. My constituents have been disappointed to see the Sask Party's complete disregard for a program that has been such a help to them. The Throne Speech has done nothing to alleviate their concerns.

Last year my constituents were hoping the Sask Party wouldn't scrap an important pledge that helped many. This year they're worried about heating their homes as our cold winter approaches. Addressing skyrocketing utility rates is an immediate need, but what's the Sask Party doing to help? Nothing.

So, Mr. Speaker, as you can see, in some areas where the Sask Party has been following the NDP footsteps, they've gotten

some things right. But in many other areas they've simply failed to recognize the immediate needs of people in Saskatoon Massey Place and across the province.

And these are just some of the shortcomings of this Throne Speech. I'll have to leave it to my colleagues to address holes in the Throne Speech in the areas of First Nations and Métis people, continued property tax relief, and support for our agricultural producers.

Now members opposite chirp endlessly about the tax cut and how this will address all the affordability issues that Saskatchewan people face. How completely out of touch for those members to believe that a simple tax cut will address the multitude of affordability issues that Saskatchewan people face. The reality for many Saskatchewan people is that any realized gain from the tax cut will pale in comparison to the financial strain and burden they experience.

With increasing economic uncertainty around the world, Saskatchewan people expect their government to address the critical issues of sustainability and affordability. But that's not what the Sask Party government is delivering.

Saskatchewan people know that New Democrats are on their side. New Democrats are working for them because, unlike the Sask Party government, we believe that a booming provincial economy should benefit everyone. And we are on their side because we cannot allow the Premier to squander our future prosperity.

Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the Throne Speech because my constituents in Saskatoon Massey Place deserve better from a government that is boasting more than a \$3 billion surplus. For this reason I will be supporting the amendment, Mr. Speaker.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I would move to adjourn debate. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — It has been moved that we adjourn debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — It carries. I recognize the Minister of Social Services.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that this Assembly do now adjourn.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — It has been moved that this Assembly do now adjourn. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt this motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — Carried. This Assembly now stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 16:53.]

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Premier

Hon. Bob Bjornerud
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Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Crop Insurance Corporation

Hon. Bill Boyd
Minister of Energy and Resources
Minister Responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs

Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff
Minister of Crown Corporations

Hon. Dan D'Autremont
Minister of Government Services
Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan Liquor and
Gaming Authority
Minister Responsible for the Information
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Minister Responsible for Northern Affairs

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