



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

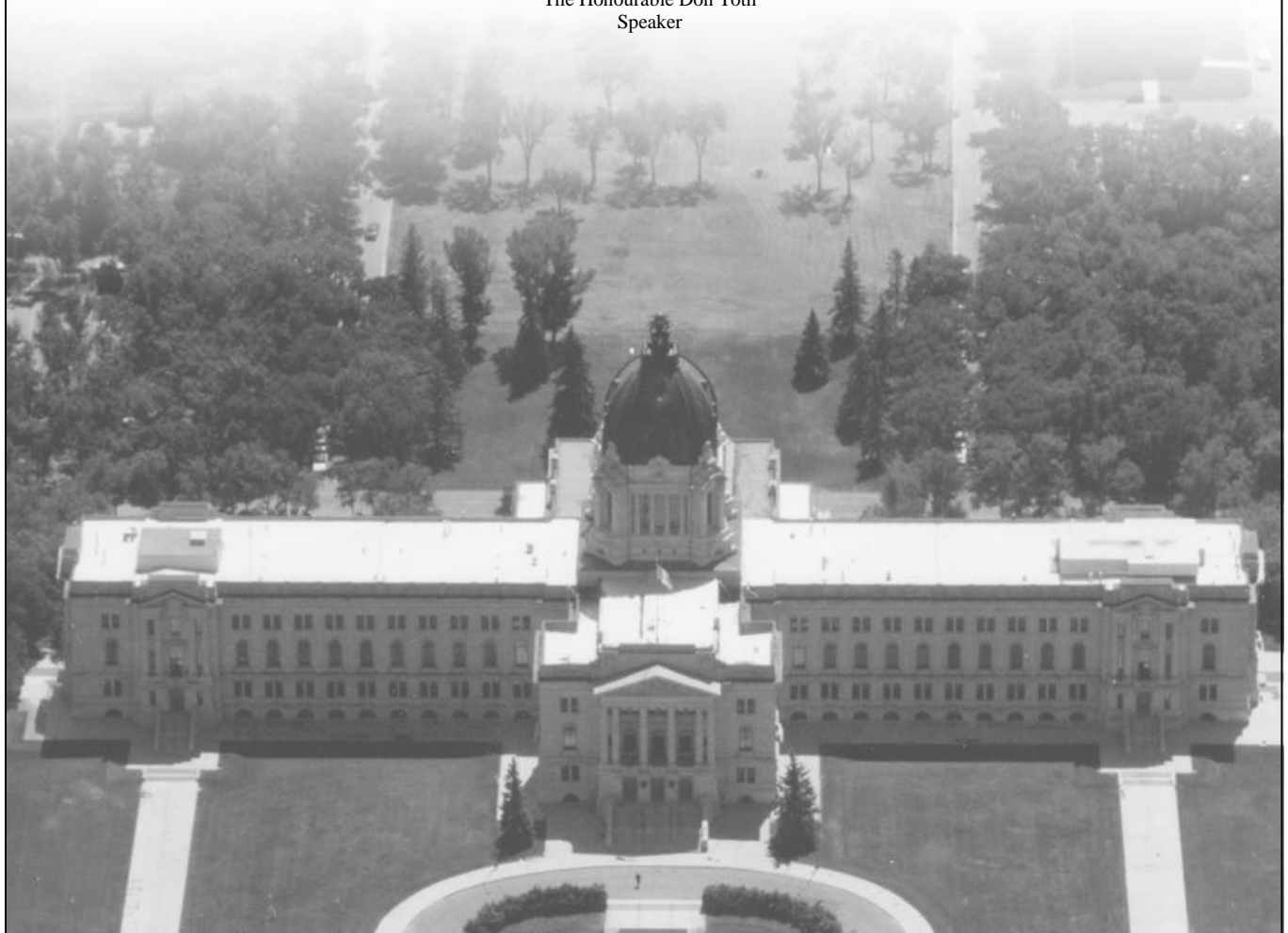
of the

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 — Dwain Lingenfelter

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Belanger, Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
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Junor, Judy	NDP	Saskatoon Eastview
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Krawetz, Hon. Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
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Morgan, Hon. Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
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Nilson, John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
Norris, Hon. Rob	SP	Saskatoon Greystone
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Quennell, Frank	NDP	Saskatoon Meewasin
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Stewart, Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Taylor, Len	NDP	The Battlefords
Tell, Hon. Christine	SP	Regina Wascana Plains
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Trew, Kim	NDP	Regina Coronation 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 10:00.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Massey Place.

Mr. Broten: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a class of 22 grade 8 students, along with their two teachers, who go to St. Edward School in the heart of Saskatoon Massey Place constituency, Mr. Speaker. These students, Mr. Speaker . . . Well their teachers are Dustin Kasun and Mel Sysing, along with the 22 students.

The teachers are involved with a unique program for these students. It's called the eco-justice education program and it's education through an environmental and social justice lens, Mr. Speaker. I don't know too much about this program, but from my first reading of it, it sounds quite like a promising and important thing that students will be learning here in the province.

St. Edward School is a great school. I was there a few months ago for the Walk to Breakfast event. St. Edward School is one of the winners of the province-wide competition for nutrition, so we had a great event there with the Lieutenant Governor. So I welcome these students to their legislature and look forward to meeting with them later.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Wood River, the Minister Responsible for Corrections and Public Safety.

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to the members of the Assembly I'd like to introduce a group of very special guests sitting in your gallery today. It's a pleasure to introduce Captain Greg Evans. Captain Evans is currently the area cadet officer for the army cadets. He has been an active leader in the cadet community since 1968. He is joined by Master Warrant Officer Brenden LaHaye representing the army cadet corps, Warrant Officer Second Class Todd Johnson representing the air cadet squadrons, and Nelly Zepeda representing the sea cadet corps.

Mr. Speaker, there are currently seven royal Canadian sea cadet corps in Saskatchewan. There are also 16 army cadet corps and 40 air cadet squadrons. As part of their training they learn about civic responsibility, leadership, and living a healthy, active life. They often show leadership qualities that exceed their peers, and are active and engaged in communities across our province.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the members and the people of our province, I'd like to express our appreciation for the contributions made by cadets in Saskatchewan. And I would invite all members to join me in welcoming these very special guests to their Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moose Jaw

Wakamow.

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Through you and to you to members of the House, I would love to join with the minister to welcome Captain Evans and the group here this morning.

I have the opportunity in Moose Jaw to attend a number of cadet activities and they're always enjoyable. And it's great to see young people in Saskatchewan have the opportunities that are provided to them through cadets. And also pass along an appreciation and a thank you for the many people that volunteer, support the organization, and have contributed a great deal of time to it. So again, thank you and welcome to the Assembly.

The Speaker: — I note as well seated in the Speaker's gallery is Acting Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. David Wilkie. And I invite members to extend him a welcome to his chambers.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of the citizens of Mamawetan Churchill Health Region, where there is a great growing wait-list for long-term care beds and an increase in the aging population. And the petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately invest in the planning and construction of new long-term care beds in La Ronge.

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

And the petition is signed by citizens of La Ronge and Air Ronge. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Centre.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling for wage equity for CBO [community-based organization] workers. And we know that these workers in community-based organizations have traditionally been underpaid and many continue to earn poverty level wages. And research has shown that on average they earn 8 to \$10 per hour less than employees performing work of equal value in government departments. I'd like to read the prayer now:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Assembly may be pleased to cause the development and implementation of a multi-year funding plan to ensure that CBO workers achieve wage equity with employees who perform work of equal value in government departments. And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And Mr. Speaker, these petitioners come from the city of Regina. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition to repair Highway No. 123 that goes to the community of Cumberland House, Saskatchewan. This petition is signed by the leadership and community members of the village of Cumberland House and the Cumberland House First Nation. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to commit to maintaining and repairing this highway.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

It is signed by the good people of Cumberland House and area. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Massey Place.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to present a petition in support of fairness for students here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, through the necessary expansion of the graduate retention program. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately expand the graduate retention program to include master's and Ph.D. graduates.

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

Mr. Speaker, the individuals that signed this petition are from the city of Regina. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present yet another petition on behalf of rural residents of Saskatchewan who question why the Sask Party government is leaving them behind with respect to providing safe and affordable water, who yet have no commitment of assistance. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to financially assist the town of Duck Lake residents for the good of their health and safety due to the exorbitant water rates being forced on them by a government agency and that this government fulfills its commitment to rural Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, these petitions are signed by the good residents of Duck Lake. I so present. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, I stand and present a petition in support of maintaining quality health care services. Mr. Speaker, residents of Saskatchewan are concerned and hope that the government realizes the value and range of professional skills offered by health care providers and hope that they promote this by addressing retention and recruitment issues and by ensuring safe workplaces. Mr. Speaker, the petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to commit to maintaining quality health care services and job security for all public health care providers.

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

The petitions are signed by residents of Dalmeny, Wakaw, Maple Creek, and Piapot. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from The Battlefords.

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise and present a petition in support of affordable rents and housing for The Battlefords residents who have faced notices of rent increases of 40 per cent and who face an accommodation rate that's very low. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to call upon the Government of Saskatchewan to develop an affordable housing program that will result in a greater number of quality and affordable rental units to be made available to a greater number of people throughout The Battlefords and that will implement a process of rent review or rent control to better protect tenants in a non-competitive housing environment.

Mr. Speaker, the petitioners are all residents of Killdeer Apartments in the city of North Battleford.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise and present petitions on behalf of Saskatchewan residents that are concerned with the unprecedented mismanagement of their finances by the Sask Party. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the Sask Party government to start managing our provincial finances responsibly and prudently to ensure that it does not continue its trend of massive budgetary shortfalls, runaway and unsustainable spending, equity stripping from our Crowns, and irresponsible revenue setting.

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

These petitions are signed by concerned citizens and good folks from Maple Creek, Estevan, Carievale, and Saskatoon. I so present.

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

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to make a personal statement.

The Speaker: — The member has asked for leave to make a personal statement. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

STATEMENT BY A MEMBER

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the Assembly, I made an inappropriate remark to the member for Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to apologize for it and withdraw that remark. My remark may create the incorrect impression that I have influence over police investigations, which I do not. Therefore I apologize for that remark.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cannington.

Honouring Canadian Cadet Corps

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to stand and recognize the thousands of cadets across our province. It was last year at this time when this Assembly passed the cadet recognition day Bill, which declared the first Saturday of November as Cadet Day in Saskatchewan.

The cadet corps plays an important role in the lives of thousands of young people in Saskatchewan and Canada for close to 150 years. Mr. Speaker, graduates of the army and navy cadets served in both World War I and World War II. And in 1940, the air cadets were formed. Graduates also served proudly in World War II.

Mr. Speaker, I was a proud air cadet from the 675 Bow Valley Squadron at Oxbow. However to dispel any rumours, I did not serve in World War II but I would have, had I been born and old enough.

Cadets learn leadership, technical skills, discipline, teamwork, and citizenship as well as some of the fun things like sailing, mountaineering, abseiling, flying, gliding, and attending cadet camp. These are valuable traits which will help any young person meet the challenges of life.

Mr. Speaker, Cadet Recognition Day recognizes the young men and women who belong to the air, army, and navy sea cadets. As well it also recognizes the work and dedication of cadet officers and leaders as well as the commitment made by parents of cadets. Through the cadets, our society is investing in today's youth as well as Canada and Saskatchewan's future. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Massey Place.

Saskatchewan Association for Community Living Family Gathering

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday evening I had the pleasure along with many other MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] to attend the Family Gathering event organized by the Saskatchewan Association for Community Living here in Regina.

Mr. Speaker, the Family Gathering event is an opportunity for MLAs to meet with community members involved with the association. It's an opportunity to get to know one another on an informal basis, a basis of friendship. Mr. Speaker, probably the best way to get to know someone better is to share a meal together. I know I thoroughly enjoyed the conversation at my table as we filled up on pizza and chatted about life.

Over the course of the evening, I heard about the issues that matter to families — whether that was about transportation needs, community supports, or recommendations on how things could be improved.

I also heard about important initiatives like the self advocacy action group. I was pleased to hear about the goals and mission of this group, as well as the many accomplishments they have achieved. I was excited to hear about a trip they have planned to attend a world conference on self advocacy in Berlin, Germany. I wish them well in their fundraising efforts, and I'm sure this will be a most worthwhile trip.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all members, I want to sincerely thank the staff, families, and association members for their hospitality in hosting the Family Gathering. I know I speak for all MLAs when I say we are appreciative for the opportunity to meet and we wish the Saskatchewan Association for Community Living all the best as they carry on their important work for the people of Saskatchewan. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook.

Saskatchewan Manufacturing Week

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, from November 2nd to November 6th, our province is recognizing our manufacturing industry. Mr. Speaker, the focus of this week is to celebrate our province's manufacturing expertise, the successes our businesses and communities are achieving, and to highlight the training and career opportunities that are available in Saskatchewan's vibrant and innovative manufacturing sector.

Saskatchewan produces a number of products which include machinery, transportation and industrial equipment, food, crop and beverage processing, wood products, and chemical manufacturing plants.

Mr. Speaker, as a province we export about 75 per cent of what we manufacture, which is worth over \$4 billion and employs over 31,000 people around the province. Some upcoming businesses that are putting Saskatchewan on the map include aerospace and defence, automotive accessories, and electronics and instrumentation.

[10:15]

To recognize our province's industry, there are several events planned around the province. Events include workshops that focus on alternate energy, green jobs, and challenges facing manufacturing and building partnerships with other industries to grow our economy. Mr. Speaker, for dates and times please visit the Enterprise Saskatchewan website. And I call on every member of the Assembly to join with me in recognizing our manufacturing industry. Thank you.

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

Pain Awareness Week

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. November 1st to 7th, 2009 marks Pain Awareness Week across Canada. This offers an opportunity to not only shed light on pain and pain awareness, but also to highlight the gaps between what is known and what is practised in the treatment of all kinds of pain in Canada.

National Pain Awareness Week offers us all an opportunity to reflect on the debilitating disorders that affect millions of people across our country. Approximately 3.5 million individuals across the country experience musculoskeletal pain affecting their overall health and well-being. While sometimes the cause of this pain is minor and easily remedied, others such as rheumatoid arthritis or fibromyalgia are much more serious.

Fibromyalgia is a medically unexplained phenomenon characterized by chronic and widespread pain. This disorder affects 390,000 Canadians, over 80 per cent of which are women mostly in the 45- to 64-year-old age group.

Events such as public forums, meetings, and information sessions are being held across the country this week to draw attention to pain and pain awareness. Representatives from the Canadian Pain Coalition are taking the time to provide professional and public education about the treatment and management of pain.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join with me in recognizing Pain Awareness Week and in congratulating the Canadian Pain Foundation on the great work they're doing to bring awareness to this very important issue. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Northwest.

Community-Based Organization Workers Appreciation Day

Mr. LeClerc: — Mr. Speaker, the province has proclaimed November 6, 2009 as CBO Workers Appreciation Day in Saskatchewan. This proclamation is in recognition of the tremendous work being done by the staff of hundreds of community-based organizations, CBOs, across this great province.

Mr. Speaker, CBOs are an important part of the province's human service delivery service. These non-profit organizations

and agencies are created by their communities to help address many of their local needs, including delivering services to about 150,000 children, youth, families, and people with disabilities across the province. Some CBOs are supported by volunteers solely. Many will receive funding from a variety of sources including grants, donations, fees, and fundraising. The ongoing efforts of CBOs and their staff to help marginalized and at-risk Saskatchewan people deserve our utmost respect and recognition.

Our government hopes that the proclamation of this special day will help raise awareness about the important roles of CBOs and their staff in our province. Hundreds of emergency shelters, group homes, daycares, crisis units, and many other much needed programs and services across Saskatchewan are staffed by CBO workers. They provide hope, dignity, and compassion to most of our most vulnerable citizens in our province.

I ask all members of this Assembly to join us in applauding this proclamation of November 6th as CBO Workers Appreciation Day in Saskatchewan.

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

Moose Jaw Multicultural Council Anniversary

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Moose Jaw Multicultural Council, located in Moose Jaw Wakamow, is a non-profit organization which acts as an umbrella for other cultural groups in our community. It's operated by a volunteer board of directors and was formed in May 1974, making this their 35th anniversary.

In 1989 the council began receiving funding to coordinate the programs that would ensure that newcomers had services available to them for successful integration. This is provided through programs and activities that respect the positive aspects of cultural diversity.

The council promotes and encourages the retention of language and culture as essential components of multiculturalism. Many other services are provided including a quality and culturally sensitive daycare for newcomer children, a summer program for school-age children, volunteer interpreters and translators, as well as a quarterly production of a newsletter.

Volunteers of the council also work to maintain the city-owned Happy Valley Park. This is a beautiful park that's home also to an annual three-day outdoor multicultural festival called Motif.

I'm pleased to join with the council and their supporters this evening as we celebrate, from many cultures, one community. Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join me in congratulating the staff and volunteers of the Moose Jaw Multicultural Council on their 35th anniversary. Thank you.

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

Moose Jaw's Strong Start Family Centre

Mr. Michelson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday I had

the exciting experience of bringing greetings at the grand opening celebrations of the Strong Start Family Centre in Moose Jaw.

The Strong Start Family Centre had been a concept of family support and child care for over a decade as a group called the child action committee identified the need back in 1998.

In 2007 the YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] became involved as an initiative programming partner, which led to finding a suitable location that has now become the Strong Start Family Centre. The centre is a multi-service or one-stop shop for parenting support. There are programs for children aging from newborns to five years of age. It's a bright, clean environment for the staff and the parents and the children alike. The centre has a library, an indoor play space, parenting resources, a spacious boardroom, and a kitchen. It hosts an array of family service agencies including KidsFirst, parent mentoring, the Moose Jaw Transition House, the Literacy Network, and the Five Hills Health Region.

The hard work, dedication, and community support from businesses as well as the public and separate school boards, plus the leadership of the YMCA . . . The Strong Start Family Centre is a valuable resource centre for the children and parents in Moose Jaw and the area. I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate them on their grand opening. Thank you.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Public Safety Procedures

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing. Last week the member from Dewdney asked the minister a number of times about a dangerous sexual offender who was released and at large illegally. And the minister, at that time, hid behind what he said was the police telling him not to release the information to the public. And on a number of occasions the member from Dewdney asked the minister which police force? The minister replied that the police had told him not to release the information.

My question is this and it's a very serious question, and the public wants to know: which police force told him not to release the fact that a dangerous sexual offender was at large?

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

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Speaker, that question was posed yesterday, and I will give my answer from yesterday. Plus I said I'd take notice, and I have information that I will add to it.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to quote from paragraph 1 on page 1 again, of CPSP's [Corrections, Public Safety and Policing] incident reporting policy:

Determination of whether or not an exception will be made regarding the issuance of a media advisory is at the

discretion of the Deputy Minister, informed by advice from police and senior corrections officials.

After my deputy received advice from senior Corrections officials who had several conversations with police, his recommendation to me was a news release would do nothing to enhance public safety because the individual was not aware he was unlawfully at large, was in full compliance with his probation conditions, was employed, and had a known address. In short the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] knew where he lived and worked and were in the process of picking him up.

Now the addition I'll add today, Mr. Speaker, is I stated in my response yesterday that the RCMP were the police service that senior Corrections officials had several conversations with. I wanted to be sure that there were no other police services also involved before I answered the member's question yesterday. After discussion with my officials yesterday afternoon, I can confirm, all discussions with police occurred with the RCMP.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — My question to the Minister of Policing is this. I understand that there were conversations and that there was consultation. But the minister told the House that a police force had told him not to release the information of a dangerous sexual offender at large. Nowhere in his answer has he indicated which police force told him not to release the information. That's the question. And the public deserves and we demand an answer for the public.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Corrections.

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Speaker, if the member knows something more, I wish he would release it to me because I have stated — and I have stated again today — that senior Corrections officials talk to the RCMP. They talk to the RCMP. That's the way it is done. They talk to the RCMP. Then they make a recommendation to the deputy minister, and the deputy minister then makes the recommendation to me. That is exactly the process, and that's exactly what was followed.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, my question again, my question again to the minister is simple. Did the RCMP tell the minister not to release the information that a dangerous sexual offender was at large illegally? Did the RCMP tell him to do that?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Corrections.

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Speaker, I don't know how much clearer I can be to the member opposite because I have stated already; it was senior Corrections people that talked to the RCMP not myself.

The senior Corrections people made the recommendation because of their conversation with the RCMP to the deputy minister. The deputy minister did not speak to the RCMP. It's

the process that's established. It's the process that I read out. I'm not sure what part of this that the member opposite does not understand. I can read the whole process again for him if he wishes, but I'm sure he can read it in *Hansard* tomorrow to find out exactly what the process is.

I did not speak to the RCMP. I acted on the advice from the senior Corrections people who did talk to the RCMP. I don't know what more I can tell the member opposite, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — My question to the minister, because he still hasn't answered the question: which police force told him? Because his explanation to this Assembly and to the public was that the information was not released about the dangerous sexual offender because the police had told him not to release it. My question is, did the city police tell you not to release that information?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Corrections.

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Speaker, I don't know if I have to write a note over to the member or not.

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I recognize the Minister Responsible for Corrections.

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Speaker, I can once again explain exactly what happened. I, I did not speak to the RCMP myself. I did not speak to the RCMP . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. I recognize the Minister Responsible for Corrections.

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — I don't know how much clearer I can be. I did not speak to the RCMP. The process is Corrections officials spoke to the RCMP, and they advised the deputy minister who then advised me. I, again, did not speak to the RCMP. I, again, did not speak to any other police force.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, to be clear, the minister has told this Assembly on a number of occasions that he and his department were told by the police not to release the information about a dangerous sexual offender.

My question to the minister is this. My question to the minister is this: did the RCMP tell the officials of the department of policing not to release the information? Did they say that to your department officials?

[10:30]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Corrections.

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Speaker, from the conversations that the senior Corrections people had with the RCMP, the recommendation came forward not to release the document.

I don't know what more I can say to the person. I do not have transcripts of what transpired in a telephone conversation or a face-to-face conversation. The member opposite should know that.

I mean, I think the question here is more leading as to why some of the documents have not been returned. Here we have, here we have an injustice that's being faced by members in the Corrections, and documents have not been returned yet to the Corrections department. I think that's more of the question that we need to answer right now. Has the member from Dewdney apologized to the correction workers for his actions, and has he returned the documents he has to the deputy minister of Corrections?

The Speaker: — Before we move on to the next question, I just want to remind members of the long-standing rule of placing the question through the Speaker. I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, new question to the minister. Just a few moments ago the minister rose in this House, with agreement from all the members of the Assembly, to apologize for the bullying that has gone on in this Assembly to the member from Dewdney, accusations about the RCMP would be coming to the home of the member from Dewdney, to his house, to arrest him. And he held his hands out like this, showing how it would happen.

He rose and apologized. And now he's saying we're going to continue the witch hunt for the people who released the documents. In today's editorial in *The StarPhoenix*, and I quote, "In government, the Saskatchewan Party not only has shown zero interest in resurrecting the bill or living up to the principles, but we now have Mr. Hughebaert threatening a witchhunt for the whistleblower."

And he continues that today. I ask the minister: is the witch hunt over, Mr. Speaker, or does it continue?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member wants to yell from his seat. In the preamble to a lot of questions today of the minister, the Leader of the Opposition has characterized, mischaracterized the comments in the original answers to this question from the Minister of Corrections.

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Here's the *Hansard*, Mr. Speaker. In this House when asked the question when the details of the incident finally came out, the minister said: ". . . I would suggest, where in consultation with the police services whether it's at the best advice of the public whether it's notified or [it] is not. In consultation . . .

An Hon. Member: — Pick and choose. Pick and choose.

[Interjections]

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well here's another quote. He says pick and choose. He said . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I recognize the Premier.

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. The member's asked the question, had the opportunity to present the question without interference. I'd ask the member now to allow the Premier to respond without interference. I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — With respect to the particular question that the hon. member has asked, Mr. Speaker, contained in this file that has not yet been returned by the hon. member for Regina Dewdney is inmate information. That is confidential, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — He also said the decision was made:

. . . not to make a public announcement of this [This is in *Hansard*.] is because we were under the impression, with the police services [after consultation with the police services] that it might drive Mr. Wiebe underground.

I want to be very clear, and I know the minister has directed his deputy to be very clear with officials in his ministry. And I made it clear to all the ministers of this government that they should do the same thing to officials of their ministry. That if they are concerned about any particular issue affecting the public as a result of the ongoing function of government, that they need to take those concerns to the appropriate official, Mr. Speaker. And if, Mr. Speaker, if there's no action taken as a result of that, then there can be certainly other actions taken by those civil servants to . . .

That's what the minister said. Now the minister has highlighted that the exact, right policies of the government have been followed, that officials at Corrections and Public Safety, after consulting with the RCMP, made a recommendation to the minister, actually to the deputy minister then the deputy to the minister, which he followed. He followed the recommendation of officials who gave him that considered opinion after consultation with the police service.

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. The Premier may finalize his response.

Mr. Speaker, it is consistent with the remarks that he made when he originally answered the question, and it's consistent because it is the truth of the matter, Mr. Speaker. And I invite members opposite to consider these comments in *Hansard*, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, there is a right way and a wrong way to bring this information forward. The wrong way is to potentially take confidential inmate information in violation of privacy, Mr. Speaker, and then provide it immediately, without going to any of these other steps, go immediately to a member of the opposition or even a member of the government for that matter.

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

Mr. Speaker, we want to welcome officials to be fully engaged in public safety and in the matters of public interest. But there is a right way, and there is a wrong way to do it. And right now, Mr. Speaker, the question remains, why have these files that do not belong to the member from Dewdney, these inmate confidential . . . why have they not yet been returned to the deputy minister of Corrections and Public Safety?

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, a question to the Premier, and I'm glad he's entered in the debate because there's a very serious question I want to ask him about the role of ministers.

In *The StarPhoenix* editorial today, and I want to quote:

So what happened to the principles of the Saskatchewan Party that, when it sat in Opposition, felt safeguarding the public was so important that it introduced its own whistleblower protection bill in 2004 to protect employees being fired, demoted, or otherwise punished for raising concerns about a provincial government agency or department, Crown corporation, health authority, municipality, university or school division?

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

My question to the Premier, Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is this. In light of his statement a few moments ago, can he ensure and guarantee employees in our government that they are safe to speak out when public safety is at risk?

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, it's not only the opposition who's accusing this government, the Sask Party government of a witch hunt. *The StarPhoenix*, which isn't a well-known supporter of the New Democratic Party, also says in today's editorial: "In government, the Saskatchewan Party not only has shown zero interest in resurrecting the bill or living up to its principles, but we now have Mr. Hughebaert threatening a witchhunt for the whistleblower." That's in the editorial of one of our major newspapers.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

My question to the Premier: will he please stand in the House and apologize for the minister who started the witch hunt and fire that minister today?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, what you noted or what you perhaps didn't note in the hon. member's follow-up question, he had the opportunity just now to stand up and apologize for mischaracterizing the words of the Minister of Corrections. He didn't do it, Mr. Speaker. He didn't do it.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I'm going to say this. In this incident the Minister of Corrections has followed the advice of senior officials of the government. Mr. Speaker, it is senior

officials of this government who are . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, senior officials of this government have highlighted how this information, this confidential inmate information is not to be taken from the workplace under any circumstances. And we know now that it is because the hon. member for Dewdney still has the file. We would ask the hon. member, through the Leader of the Opposition, to again to return that to officials.

And with respect to the conduct of the Minister of Corrections, Mr. Speaker, and frankly the previous minister of Corrections, we have sought out . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. There are a number of members on the opposition side who continue to interject when government ministers are trying to respond. It's totally inappropriate. I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — For many years, Mr. Speaker, the practice of the previous government was no disclosure when there was a situation like this. Mr. Speaker, this government has . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. The member from Regina Walsh Acres will come to order. I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, this government has taken steps through the previous minister and of the current minister to address this situation. It's going to be a work-in-progress, but I'll tell you what. Erring on the side of disclosure, erring on the side of disclosure and providing that kind of service is a choice this government will make every single time.

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

Proposed Stadium Development

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Crown Investments Corporation is funding a feasibility study into the government's proposal to build a new domed stadium in downtown Regina. All the media reports to date have placed the cost of this stadium at approximately \$350 million. To the Minister of CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan]: can she confirm that the cost of the Regina domed stadium is only \$350 million?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Enterprise Saskatchewan.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the question. It is indeed a pleasure to answer questions on the feasibility study that has been undertaken. It's a partnership undertaken by the federal government, by the provincial government, by the city of Regina, and the

Saskatchewan Roughriders. The approximate cost of the study is \$1 million to be shared by the province, 40 per cent; the federal government, 40 per cent; the Saskatchewan Roughriders, 10; and the city of Regina, 10 per cent. The study is under way. It began in the midsummer. We hope to have the information back in January-February of 2010.

Very recently all members of the Legislative Assembly from Regina and area were invited to an open house to receive more information, and none of the members opposite confirmed that they wanted that information. But I'm happy to share it here in the House or at any time. It's something that we're looking at very seriously, and I look forward to further questioning.

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

Mr. McCall: — Again, Mr. Speaker, this often occurs with the Sask Party. The meeting was supposed to be tomorrow, and they pushed it back to December, so interesting that that's not brought forward in the minister's remarks.

The minister should be aware that the team of consultants studying this project have briefed community groups. The consultants have said publicly that there are two options only on the table. One is a domed stadium with a retractable roof. One is a domed stadium with a permanent roof. And the costs range from \$480 million to \$600 million not counting the cost of the land, parking, and other extras.

To the minister: can he confirm that the costs of the stadium are as much as \$600 million, and does the government support a stadium at that price?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Enterprise.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, what we have done indeed is hire the very best consultants that we know of in North America — or certainly they've had experience around the world — to provide us with cost estimates. What we will know at the end of this, we'll have the very best information in front of us and be able to make decisions accordingly. Not only will they involve the government, but they will involve the private sector. We'll be going out to the private sector for that type of information.

Regarding the proposed meeting, we asked all members from the opposition, from the Regina area if they wanted to attend. We had three maybes. So the meeting . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well three maybes is not enough to have a meeting. But I would say, the meeting's on tomorrow. Let's hope that everyone is there. Okay? The meeting's on. Let's go there. I'm happy to make sure that . . . If you can tell me that at least one of your members will be there, the meeting will be on because when you were asked, nobody confirmed. Three maybes, the rest, no.

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

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, we'll certainly be there. We'll certainly be there. So if the minister from . . . maybe wants to

have the meeting, we'll have the meeting. Absolutely.

The government talks about private sector contributions to this project but has yet to produce a single one. Now it's all well and good to get the people's hopes up about a new stadium, Mr. Speaker, but this government needs to start providing some hard details. To the minister: which private sector companies have said they will support this project? And exactly how much of the \$600 million price tag have they committed to provide?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Enterprise.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Well I certainly don't want to pre-empt tomorrow's meeting because it sounds like we're going to have 100 per cent attendance which is something that we certainly want.

But no, more seriously, Mr. Speaker, what we indeed have done is consulted with some 100 groups within Regina and area, groups that have an interest in this facility. It is indeed something that is of interest to all the province.

[10:45]

And in various conversations, I know that various members have had, they've expressed their support. And certainly when we've gone to the city of Regina, for example, there was unanimous support for this study from each and every one of the councillors there. So it's something that we should take serious. I think that the members are trying to have some fun with this here.

But seriously, Mr. Speaker, each of the members are invited. We want all information to be put forward. And yes, we do want to go out to the private sector to ensure that those that are interested have an opportunity to tell us their ideas to make this province a better place.

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

Mr. McCall: — Again, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to numbers and details from this side, you know, as was plainly observable in the last budget, we're very suspect to the numbers come forward. And you'll note that the minister can't come forward to this House with either confirmation or denial of the 480 to \$600 million price range.

So we'll ask him one more time, Mr. Speaker. In terms of the private sector contribution that is supposed to be backstopping this, which private sector partner is coming forward with that contribution?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Enterprise.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what we've hired the consultants to do, is to determine the cost of this facility. In previous announcements and in the information forward, consultants have identified similar type of stadiums elsewhere in the world that cost approximately \$270 million American. What needs to be determined is the cost of the roof,

the options available.

That's why we've hired the very best consultants to be able to tell us that information. Not only to tell us, but we've opened it up to opposition members, to all members of the legislature that want to attend to ensure that they have that information and that we can make those decisions going forward. If the members are against the stadium, I guess we would like to hear that on the record today. But I don't think that we'll be hearing that, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, can the minister confirm that one of the so-called private sector contributions to the domed stadium project will actually be coming from Saskatchewan's publicly owned Casino Regina?

The information that the opposition has is that the government has offered up the annual profits of Casino Regina to backstop potential operating shortfalls at the domed stadium. Is that the case? And can the minister explain how that qualifies as a private sector contribution to this project?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Enterprise.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, we've had discussions with about six private sector corporations and individuals representing corporations. But what we are going to do, going out on Saturday, is advertise for request for proposals from those private sector groups. We're not talking about Crown corporations. We're not talking about government departments. We're talking about private sector.

And yes, to answer that question, I indeed have had face-to-face conversations with those individuals. We'll be asking them to make formal proposals. If members opposite know anybody in the private sector that would be interested in making those proposals, we would ask them to have those meetings, to forward that information because we want the very best facility for the people of Saskatchewan. They deserve no less, Mr. Speaker.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Crown Investments.

Cadet Recognition Day

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, as Provincial Secretary, it is my privilege to oversee the provincial honours and awards . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I ask members to come to order, giving the minister the opportunity to make her statement. I recognize the minister.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — As Provincial Secretary, it's my

privilege to oversee our provincial honours and awards programs. Last November my colleague, the member from Wood River and the military liaison for Saskatchewan, introduced the air, army, sea and navy league recognition day Act, designating the first Saturday of every November provincial cadet day.

Today I am proud to announce that a new recognition program will be established in order to further recognize the contribution of cadets in Saskatchewan. Starting next year, the top air cadet squadron and the top army, sea, and navy cadet corps will be formally recognized for their contributions they made to our community at an event that will be held on a provincial cadet day every year.

Recognition programs in Saskatchewan have been successful in offering new roles and thanking people for their contributions to the quality of life we enjoy. It is a way we build our society one good effort at a time. As you know, Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to recognizing the contributions and achievements of these citizens that make Saskatchewan the best province in Canada. This is especially true of the young people in our province.

Mr. Speaker, cadets is one of Canada's oldest youth programs. With approximately 30,000 cadets participating across the country, it is also one of the largest. The mission of the cadet program is to contribute to the development and the preparation of youth for the transition to adulthood, enabling them to meet the challenges of modern society through a dynamic, community-based program.

The program accepts young people from the ages of 12 to 19 and teaches citizenship, personal discipline, as well as general military knowledge. National Defence Canada co-sponsors the cadet movement, along with the civilian sponsoring bodies, the Navy League, the Army Cadet and the Air Cadet League.

In Saskatchewan the cadet movement began with the creation of the Prince Albert Army Cadet Corps under the authority of a militia order in 1903. Today it is thriving. We currently have seven royal Canadian sea cadets corps, 16 army cadet corps, and 40 air cadet squadrons and over 2,000 cadets in Saskatchewan.

Cadets learn about the individual traditions of their corps or their squadrons as some learn about sailing and seamanship, basic orientation, and field camping, which can lead to the Canadian Forces parachute course. Some learn about air navigation and training, which can lead to civilian pilot qualification in their respective fields.

However the cadet programs provide more than military training. In fact, even though it is partnered with the military, the core values the program teaches are loyalty, professionalism, mutual respect, and integrity. And there's no obligation on the part of the cadet to join the Armed Forces. The cadet program provides training and knowledge of civic responsibility and leadership. It teaches and promotes physical fitness and encourages youth to make healthy lifestyle choices. It encourages cadets to be actively involved in their communities.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for introducing the Act and for his work as a senior staff officer for cadets at Air Command headquarters in Winnipeg overseeing the Prairie region cadets from 1992 to 1994. I also want to thank all the other officers and leaders who contribute to the success of the cadet programs.

Mr. Speaker, this is a group of young people most worthy of formal recognition. I want to take this opportunity to once again express our appreciation for the contributions of the cadets in Saskatchewan.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Lakeview.

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We would also like to congratulate the cadets and also the minister for introducing this program which recognizes the cadets here in Saskatchewan.

I think all of us in our families have various people who have been involved with cadets in their own local communities. And to hear the stories over the years, and it doesn't matter what age of cadet you talk about — once a cadet, always a cadet — but it's always fun to hear about the experiences that they've had in their training, both in the local community but also when they go either east or west with cadet camps in the summer.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we also are pleased to have this recognition for this group and for the good work that they do in Saskatchewan.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 606 — *The Protection of the Wild Ponies of the Bronson Forest Act*

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Lloydminster.

Mr. McMillan: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 606, *The Protection of the Wild Ponies of the Bronson Forest Act* now be introduced and read for a first time.

The Speaker: — The member from Lloydminster has moved first reading of Bill No. 606, *The Protection of the Wild Ponies of the Bronson Forest Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

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

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

Mr. McMillan: — Next sitting of the House.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 107 — *The Weed Control Act*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 107, *The Weed Control Act* be introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Agriculture has moved first reading of Bill 107, *The Weed Control Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a second time? I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

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

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

TABLE OF REPORTS

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day, I have received from the Chief Electoral office the reports, detailed expenditures for the fiscal year of Elections Saskatchewan for 2007-2008 and the report of the Cumberland by-election for June 25th, 2008. And I table this report under section 286 of *The Election Act, 1996*.

Order. Order. I believe the member was rising to his feet. I didn't recognize him. Why is the member on his . . . Pardon me?

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of privilege.

The Speaker: — The member has asked leave to rise on a point of privilege.

Mr. Yates: — Pardon me. Yes, I'd ask leave to rise on a point of privilege.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

PRIVILEGE

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, as required by the standing orders of this Assembly, this morning I delivered to you, Mr. Speaker, notice that I would be rising on this motion of privilege.

At issue are the statements made by the Minister of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing to the media on October 4th, 2009. The statements on the record to the media confirmed that the minister made other comments inside the Legislative Assembly . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Pardon me, November 4th.

The relevant section of the media interview is as follows:

What have you been yelling at him [referring to Mr. Yates]?

Minister: Well, I've been getting a lot of push from the other side in relation to this story and I'm getting stuff said to me on a continuing basis and I think my push back to him was, "Have the police . . . have you got a visit from the police yet?" I think that was my exact comment and that was it.

That's a direct quote.

Reporter: Is that appropriate? Is that appropriate for the Minister of Corrections and . . .

Minister: In the heat of the House when the push back . . . it was just something that come up, I just said to him, "have the police visited you?"

The interview continues:

Reporter: And is it appropriate for the minister in charge of policing to ask another member if the police have come to visit him yet?

Minister: Probably not appropriate but in the house, in the heat of the discussions that go on in the house, it's something that come out and it's just my push back for what's coming my way.

Reporter: Sir, you're a Minister of Corrections and you do have some authority in relation to police departments. Do you understand how many people in the community might interpret this?

Minister: This was not publicly said . . .

Reporter: It was in the House.

Minister: It was just a banter back and forth in the House. I wasn't standing up speaking.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of these statements being made outside the Assembly is irrelevant. The minister was simply confirming statements he made inside the Assembly, by his own admission. Statements made in the Assembly, even though they do not appear in *Hansard*, are clearly inside the purview of the Speaker to rule on.

My assertion is that the comments of the minister made inside the House, and confirmed outside the House, do in fact act as an assault by word on the fundamental rights and privileges of a member of the Assembly. My assertion is that these statements were intended to be perceived as threats, and therefore to have discouraged me from the performance of my duties and the exercise of free speech.

I would quote from Beauchesne's *Parliamentary Rules & Forms*, 5th Edition, page 26, section 99: "Direct threats which attempt to influence Members' actions in the House are undoubtedly breaches of privilege."

So the crux of this matter is thus: if the minister's comments

can be assumed by a reasonable person to invoking the possibility of a trial at some future time, then it is a threat. If it is a threat, then it is an issue of privilege.

Can the statement, have you got a visit from the police yet, be construed as intimidation? This minister is the minister responsible for police in the province. He, via his ministry, has already invoked the legal and moral obligation to protect information in a letter to myself. Furthermore, the minister himself recognizes these comments were inappropriate. This would clearly indicate that there is at least a prima facie case of privilege. Therefore I would move the following motion:

Be it resolved that the Standing Committee on Privileges be instructed to examine the issue of the statements made to this Assembly by the Minister of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing on November 4th, 2009, and report back to the Assembly; and that, until such time that the committee reports, the Minister of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing shall be removed from his position as a minister.

I so move.

[11:00]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With leave to respond to the point of privilege.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has asked for leave to respond. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the member of Regina Dewdney argues that he was threatened and intimidated by the minister's remarks, and that those remarks are discouraging to his exercise of free speech.

The remarks made by the minister were never intended as a threat or an attempt to discourage free speech. However, even if the member of Regina Dewdney took the comments as a threat and felt that his right to free speech was discouraged, the minister apologized. Therefore there is no threat; there is no intimidation. No member should feel that their rights to free speech is being discouraged. The minister has explained that his comments were made and never intended to be a threat. He apologized, and he withdrew his remarks. This having been done, I believe the question of privilege is not in order. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — This morning the Opposition House Leader raised a question of privilege under the provisions of rule 12, the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*. And upon receipt of the notice in accordance with the rules, both House leaders were informed of the details of the case and the proposed question of privilege.

It is the responsibility of the Speaker to determine if a prima facie case of privilege has been established. Given the serious nature of the charge, it requires careful examination, and I'm not at this time prepared to make a quick ruling. I will review all of the comments that have been made, including the comment made by the minister this morning, and will come back with the ruling at the next sitting of the Chamber.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Yorkton.

Surgical Wait Times

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At the end of my comments today, I will make a motion:

That this Assembly recognizes the Government of Saskatchewan's bold new goal to reduce surgical wait times to three months or less as an effective part of our strategy to truly put patients first.

Mr. Speaker, to begin, I want to open by saying how much I respect — I know my colleagues on this side of the House respect and I'm sure that our colleagues on the other side of the House respect — and admire the contributions that our health care workers make to our health care system in this province. It is widely recognized as one of the best health care systems around the world, although it does fall short in some ways.

For many years, I've said quality in this province I don't feel was the problem. The quantity is what the problem is. Mr. Speaker, I came to that kind of a realization many years ago, on sort of a personal note, when my son was diagnosed with cancer. I got to share some of the story with the enjoyable new member from Saskatoon Riversdale yesterday, and that's where I kind of came to that conclusion.

The issues that we faced and the treatment that we needed, I never found quality an issue. We had great doctors. We had great nursing staff, all the way down through the cleaning staff of the hospital were all very supportive and unbelievable in that respect, Mr. Speaker.

But my statement is that the quantity is the problem. And that's where we find the issue in our province today with the terribly long wait times for specifically surgeries within our province. Getting some of these surgeries done in a timely manner has been quite an issue. And I think, you know, what we talk about — putting patients first — the wording in that motion may be the key to what I want to touch on today, Mr. Speaker.

We get so wrapped up in the process that at times we forget about the people. Sometimes we get so wrapped up in the health care system, we forget about the true important part of that whole equation, and that's the patients. That's the customers, Mr. Speaker. In my past history in business, I always focused on my customers' needs, and that's without my customers, Mr. Speaker, I didn't really have a need to be in business.

But with that, we're not about to discuss a whole bunch of

philosophy. We can discuss philosophy. We can discuss the process. But like I said, the most important thing is the people. The people of this province in Saskatchewan in need of surgery, from the conversations I had, they're not too wrapped up in the process or how this is going to happen. They're not too hung up on the delivery as long as it's publicly funded, publicly administered, and we don't have a whole lot of queue-jumping and the like, Mr. Speaker. And that's the intent of our government's bold new goal to reduce these surgeries to three months or less in the next four years.

In my home constituency of Yorkton, we get a lot of calls in the office and specifically on surgeries and wait times and people waiting to get back to work. Because of our older demographic, we have a lot of seniors in Yorkton. We get a lot of calls about specifically joint replacements, cataract surgeries, and things that do affect our seniors. I've seen it in my own family with my father waiting for cataract surgery, other family members waiting for different surgeries, and how long they wait.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'll be the first to admit that at times, you know, maybe we don't get on those cases for family members as quick as we would for constituents solely because of the fact that as representatives, we don't want to be perceived as using our influence to forward surgeries or using our influence in improper methods. So you know, I guess apologies to some of my family members and people very close to me that at times we let those cases wait a little bit longer than we would otherwise for constituents, but eventually we do, you know, we do advocate on them as strongly as we can.

There are so many surgical waiting needs that we do find in our constituency and not only for seniors. But quite often we see young people needing, you know, maybe a knee surgery or something. They're wanting to get engaged, in their senior year, of sports or sports in high school, and they're held back because of the need for surgery. And specifically for somebody so young, waiting for surgery and the effects it'd have on them can be quite devastating.

As I touched on, some of the effects of some of these long-term waits can be quite difficult for not only seniors but our young people. Some of these effects that we see, coming into our office anyway, Mr. Speaker, so many difficulties in just engaging in everyday life, the day-to-day activities. They may have limited ability or no ability at all. And what we see happening is a decline overall, health, maybe some cases of depression. Sometimes there's a need for excessive use of prescription drugs for painkilling and inflammation, Mr. Speaker. And that, as we all know, can lead to other difficulties as well.

For those that are still employed, we see a difficulty engaging back into work which can take real life impacts, work life impacts, income impacts, physical effects. And as I stated, emotional and physical impacts as well, Mr. Speaker, where we see people wanting to get back to work, wanting to contribute but for weeks, months — well more than weeks — months and sometimes years, waiting to get on to that surgical wait-list to get their surgeries done to return to work to engage in everyday life so they can be effective and contributing members of society.

I'll touch on some — without getting into specific names, Mr. Speaker — I'll touch on some local cases that we've dealt with that have been quite alarming. A local senior gentleman, whose wife was awaiting surgeries with some of the treatment she needed, Mr. Speaker, not only awaiting some medical diagnostic imaging but the treatment surgeries, Mr. Speaker — waiting months and months and years — and seeing personally the effect that it is taking on her husband and her as well, Mr. Speaker. How you know, time and time again, the conversation may end up in tears being shed that the wife is in such dire need of services and yet can't access the services and is waiting, and in her senior years having depression set in and other health issues that creep up because of that wait.

We see other, Mr. Speaker, other constituents, 12 months waiting on a waiting list. And time and time again, we do access the quality of care coordinators, which again, health care professionals, I can't say enough about the services that they provide, Mr. Speaker — time and time again showing the compassion, just the work ethic, and the want to do better. And time and time again, they are able to help us, but still with some of the wait times, there's only so much they can do.

We've had constituents that have had to go on their own to different provinces and get surgeries in Winnipeg and Calgary and Edmonton, Mr. Speaker. I agree we need to build capacity here, whether it's partly with our own system, partly through outside providers, maybe bringing other health care professionals in to utilize the facilities that we do have operating in this province to start addressing that wait time.

We have numerous cases of people with shoulder injuries, back injuries, knee injuries, Mr. Speaker, awaiting surgeries or replacements. Again quite young — one individual here in his 20s, another female here in her 40s, another fellow I went to school with, Mr. Speaker, that is awaiting back surgery in his mid-40s. And really, Mr. Speaker, just wanting to get better, get back to work, but waiting in that queue for that surgery.

Mr. Speaker, I'll emphasize that the system that we're looking at, the way we're going to address this, there will be no queue-jumping. It is still a totally publicly funded, publicly administered health care system with providers that may be able to help us to diminish this wait-list and address these needs.

Some of the cases that really touch me, Mr. Speaker, get close to my heart. And I understand that the pain with joint surgeries and the pain that is associated with those and how we want to get those dealt with.

But, Mr. Speaker, what really affects me, really gets to me is when we see some of these cancer care cases — people waiting for cancer care, cancer surgeries, and waiting for quite a long time for diagnosis and then quite a long time for treatment and surgeries.

An Hon. Member: — Life and death situations.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — And we realize the need, the quick need to respond to some of those cases where a matter of a few weeks could mean the difference between life and death, as my friend, the member from Saskatoon Northwest, just pointed out.

You know, we just have so many needs in this province that we have to start addressing them, and I'm really excited about this goal that our government has embarked upon.

Let me just touch on a few other quotes. I'm going to have a lot of trouble getting through all of my notes here, Mr. Speaker, but I'm fine with that. I'm wanting to allow my colleagues to speak to this as well. We have an individual in Regina that wrote:

Having been struck down with arthritis, which will require [both hips being replaced], the waiting time has been on mind — a lot. I *might* get the first hip done in 18 months.

We have enough specialists, but we don't have enough space in operating rooms and immediate recovery to deal with the building number of patients needing hip surgery . . . any surgery.

And this individual states, Mr. Speaker:

It doesn't matter to me if a private clinic performs the surgery so long as my provincial health care covers the cost and I can get the surgery done much sooner.

An Hon. Member: — It's about people, not process.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — That's what people are saying, Mr. Speaker. And as my friend from Saskatoon Northwest has pointed out, again it's about the people. It's not about the process. It's about getting our people of this province treated in a timely and effective manner.

What's really encouraging to me, Mr. Speaker, as well, when we first announced this initiative in the Throne Speech, my own thought was, you know, this is a very lofty goal but then let's look at this as a big picture. We do have to set those goals to measure ourselves. If we can't measure up to that goal, we have a more measurable benchmark to look at, to see where we fell short and how we can address it in the future.

Is it possible? I know it's possible, Mr. Speaker, as many members across the floor and people in communities pointed out to us with the nursing goal, thought to be way too lofty a goal to recruit 800 nurses in this province. Just over one year, largely due to the work of the member from Regina Qu'Appelle, Mr. Speaker, the Legislative Secretary to the Minister of Health, I think the numbers are well over 575, 580 nurses. We're less than 30 per cent to go to that goal, Mr. Speaker.

So when we look at that goal, seeing that we have come so far in that goal — I think it's only right that we recognize that goal — we set a new goal to deliver proper health care and expedite health care in this province for the people.

[11:15]

Now when we talk about that short of a time, we wonder, what is the reaction going to be from the industry, from the health care professionals? Time and time again, we're seeing many quotes from health care professionals. They're excited. They're encouraged. They've been waiting for this for so long, Mr. Speaker. They want to do this. They want to deliver health care.

And again I can't say how much, I can't really verbalize how much respect and admiration I have for our health care professionals, the treatment we've gotten through different family issues over the years and the respect and gratitude that I have to those that we have dealt with and their professionalism. They're excited about this goal, Mr. Speaker, and so am I. It's just such an exciting goal and many people are really excited about that as well, Mr. Speaker.

How are we going to deliver these initiatives, Mr. Speaker? We are going to explore all avenues to deliver this commitment. It's not privatization as I've said. Outside resources, private sources used by other political parties over the years, in and out-of-province, it's been standard practice.

We're just going to follow on what has been done for years before, follow best practices, fund that through our provincial government, and deliver those services to the people of the province. Ways we can improve, Mr. Speaker, areas we can improve, human resources, infrastructure investments which has been time and time again talked about and invested in. Creating different pathways and looking at different methods to deliver those services and increased efficiency, Mr. Speaker.

I want to close my comments there. My notes are much longer than that. I want to allow time for my other colleagues here to speak to this motion. But at this time, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move:

That this Assembly recognizes the Government of Saskatchewan's bold new goal to reduce surgical wait times to three months or less as an effective part of our strategy to truly put patients first.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The motion before the Assembly is the motion presented by the member from Yorkton:

That this Assembly recognizes the Government of Saskatchewan's bold new goal to reduce surgical wait times to three months or less as an effective part of our strategy to truly put patients first.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member from Yorkton prefaced his remarks by talking about respect and I think I will also. I think the first thing that we have to do is respect the people by giving them the correct information and not the pumped-up rhetoric that we're getting that promotes the Sask Party agenda, which I think is leading people to say, sure, okay; let's go public. I don't care about if it's a public facility or private provider, but that's where this kind of rhetoric leads people. It's almost like leading them there.

So I think we have seen a disrespect for the public by giving out information that isn't correct, when I spoke to orthopedic surgeons who are calling and saying this is just simply not correct; there is not the urgency, the pathos of people waiting and languishing on wait-lists. That is basically presented or implied by this motion and certainly by this press release on the

wait times.

The orthopods are saying that the wait times are being significantly reduced and that there is significant capacity within the system, in particular in Saskatoon. But the same message is coming from Regina, that there is capacity within the system to actually do our own surgeries here in a timely fashion. And I think that the rhetoric that we're hearing is leading the public to say, sure, then we should not be thinking that this is respectful or this is a respectful treatment of the public.

And also when we talk about respect, we should be respecting our health providers. We are not respecting our health providers when we have them sitting without a contract for a year — more than a year. And we are not respecting them when we bring in something like Bill 5 which has certainly undermined collective bargaining. That is not going to help put the patient first.

And when we talk about the patient first, Tony Dagnone actually talked about putting the surgical centres in. Well this government has cut the funding to the Regina surgical centre. It's actually contradictory. It's contradictory to everything that they've been saying about what is needed and it's certainly contradictory to what their own commissioner said. He suggested in his report, on page 26 and page 27 under recommendation 4, that we actually do this. And he was encouraged by the fact that there was money and was a commitment to a surgicentre in Regina. Now that funding has been removed.

If there is capacity in the system — and there is certainly that indication from Saskatoon — then the money that's needed, that's needed, or that's taken away from the Regina surgicentre should be moved to Saskatoon to start one there, not be moved off to BC [British Columbia]. And it's interesting when the minister denies that there is any conversation going on with BC. Then we find out that yes, there is. And the Health minister in BC is quite convinced that we will be having, we will be having an agreement — an MOU in fact, a memorandum of understanding — that will be signed with Saskatchewan to actually do 400 surgeries at a premium.

The Premier's flippant remark about, do people care where their surgery is, here, there, or in Surrey? Yes people do care, because people will have to travel which is not paid for. They will have to eat which is not paid for. They will have to stay some place which is not paid for. They will not be able to take anybody with them and they need support and people who have surgeries — hips and knees in particular, which is what we're talking about — they need recovery. You can't get on an airplane when your knee's been replaced. So you're going to have to stay someplace and you're going to have to have some rehab. Is that going to be on the plane or is there going to be a premium for that as well? Having had both of my knees done, I understand clearly what's involved in knee surgery.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm thinking that this motion is disingenuous at best and I know disingenuous is a favourite word of some of the Sask Party people.

I think that when we're talking about all . . . We're talking

about all surgeries when numbers are thrown out and then we talk about particular surgeries, hip and knees. But when all surgeries are added to the mix, it certainly takes away some of the reality of the hips and knee wait-list. And we certainly have heard from the orthopods themselves — I should say orthopaedic surgeons — that they do not agree with what's being put forward and that these wait-lists are not what they have been purported to be by the Sask Party.

And it's interesting in the press release that the government put out when they announced this, they talked about initiatives to be considered in health promotion. So that would also decrease the wait-list for some procedures by getting ahead of some of the things that happen to people that require surgery. And one of the first things they talked about — under health promotion and primary health services, working with patients before they require surgery — was pediatric dental programs.

Well it's extremely interesting that one of the very first things the Sask Party did after being elected in November of '07 was cancel the dental sealant program in schools. This was something particularly geared to children to prevent exactly what this is saying that they should do, to reduce the need for dental surgery among children and youth. That was what the program was there for. So without any real information, any consultation, any conversation with providers, they axed the program.

It was just simply mean-spirited. It followed along with the axing of Station 20. And it just got caught up in that mean-spirited, sort of retribution sort of thing that the Sask Party was into after the November 7th election. And I think now we're seeing an admission that that's a program that should have been kept. And it's interesting that now, all of a sudden, it's their good idea.

So, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that has been said about these programs that will be, or these surgeries that will be sent to BC is that we have done some of that. We've sent people out of the province. Well of course we have, Mr. Speaker. There are procedures that we cannot do here. There are specialists that we do not have. There's technology and equipment that we do not have here. There are certain instances where there always will be surgeries that have to go out of the province.

The difference, Mr. Speaker, is that there is no pre-purchasing. There is no pre-paying and there are no premiums. There's an interesting three P. I'll repeat that — no pre-purchasing, no pre-paying, and no premiums. I think that this is something we should consider when we talk about whether we have to rush to get ourselves over to BC or some other place for this, like I said, this rhetoric that is pumping up people's concern about whether they are waiting too long. And according to the orthopaedic surgeons in the biggest centre in Saskatchewan, this is not true.

So when we talk about what information we're giving to the public . . . Because we do want the public to make a good decision and have information, and this is sort of that shared decision-making process. And it will be putting the patient first. If you want the patient first, then the patient has to have the correct information. And we are not giving it to them now with this sort of rhetoric.

It's certainly something that people do want to have — timely surgery. But they don't want to be pushed and goaded into making a decision that leads them along a path to say, okay I'll travel to BC if I have to. Okay I'll go into a private clinic if I have to. You don't have to. That information simply isn't there. The minister can't provide it. No one else has provided it. But it's simply out there in the public for them to, I don't know, accept on its face value, which I don't think is respectful at all to the public. They will not actually accept that. I don't think people will accept that at all.

And I know Tony Dagnone — and I've mentioned this before — Tony Dagnone's report was certainly something that was really looked forward to by a lot of people, because people were expecting lots of things to change for them in their particular circumstance. And basically the recommendations were pretty vague. And if the demonstration so soon after the announcement of the commissioner's report has already taken one of his recommendations and thrown it out the window, I have really no hope for any of the other 15. And the recommendation I'm talking about is to access wait times which is under convenient, timely care.

And he says in his report and the aside that only 16 per cent of people had waited longer than 12 months. This is a different kind of comment than what we're hearing about how all these people are languishing on the waiting list for 3 years and more.

And he says, "The current situation provides an opportunity to innovate, and planning is underway for a freestanding ambulatory surgery/diagnostic centre in Regina . . ." He supports this. He mentions it in his report and then boom — the funding is gone, reduced. It certainly doesn't give a lot of public confidence to the facts that we might . . . or the government has promised that they will act quickly and take seriously all his 16 recommendations. One of them already has hit the chopping block.

So I don't think it leaves us with much confidence in the government's handling of the patient first or actually that the government does put the patient first. I think what the government puts first is the government and the Sask Party, and I think that's going to be demonstrated more and more often. And I don't think people will be fooled by rhetoric. I think they want good information. If they don't get it, they'll ask for it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — [Inaudible] . . . Saskatoon Northwest.

Mr. LeClerc: — Mr. Speaker, when the Sask Party came to power in 2007, we inherited a huge infrastructure deficit from the previous government. That included a health care system that was on life-support. Under the NDP [New Democratic Party] they promised a 30 per cent drop in the wait-list, and unfortunately it increased by 67 per cent. That was a 90 per cent miscalculation. We inherited a health care system with 27,000 people on the waiting list.

Our government has and will continue to take steps to improving our health care system. We have strengthened cancer care. We added more training seats for doctors and nurses. We launched the Patient First Review. Now in the Throne Speech we have set a new goal for the health care system that no one

waits more than three months for surgery. To achieve this goal we are exploring innovative approaches to delivery services.

What is the situation like here in Saskatchewan? Well according to an article in the *Edmonton Journal*, November 3, 2009, surgical wait times in Saskatchewan has gone from 28.8 weeks in 2008 to 25.2 weeks in 2009. So we've had a drop under our government.

There is a significant wait time for back surgery. Patients are waiting from 12 to 18 months currently. For one patient, that has meant they had to sell their business as they were physically not able to work and had been on disability. Their surgery was scheduled. Well they were waiting to go in and found out it was cancelled due to the surgery ahead of theirs being more complicated. While the patient understood that these kind of delays are unavoidable, it still means a longer wait time for surgery when they had been waiting for 14 months.

[11:30]

Some patients have been waiting for more than one procedure, and concerns arise when it comes to scheduling as each surgeon does not coordinate with the other and it is left to the quality of care coordinators to ensure that there is adequate time to heal between procedures.

Orthopedic surgery is a large area of concern. When a patient's hip is bone on bone, simply everyday tasks become impossible. But the wait-list is 18 months. Any wait time, even a short one, bring about some formula of pain and suffering, mental anguish, lost productivity at work and leisure, and stress on personal relationships.

I would like to discuss a couple of examples of how wait times have affected the lives of individuals. A first-year university student on an athletic scholarship tore their ACL [anterior cruciate ligament] and had to wait nine months for surgery. Unfortunately, due to her deteriorating health condition, she lost her scholarship and was unable to attend university in the fall. What a heart-wrenching experience, Mr. Speaker, and it should've never happened.

I would like to mention a story that was published as part of the Patient First Review. It's Emma's story. I quote from the Patient First report:

Emma is a 68-year old woman who recently had a hip replacement. She lives in a town outside of a large urban centre in Saskatchewan. She is a single mother of three grown children and still cares for one of her children who has a disability, at home. She is self-employed so that she can maintain her job and care for her child.

After complaining about some pain, she was prescribed some Tylenol and that helped. After some time, the pain continued, and was later given medication for arthritis. I would like to quote from her story in the Patient First report.

After two years of suffering, Emma urged her family physician to refer her to a specialist about her hip pain. Her physician agreed to refer her to an orthopedic surgeon. Emma waited six months for a consultation to visit the orthopedic surgeon. On

the day of her visit, the specialist took her medical history, asked her to explain the problem, and examined her. He then told her that she would have to go for several tests to determine if she was a good candidate for surgery.

Emma received a CAT [computerized axial tomography] scan, a CT [computerized tomography] scan six months later and, because of a cancellation in her orthopedic surgeon's schedule, was able to see him within two weeks after the scan was completed. After waiting for a test, she was once again put on a wait list for surgery and was told it would be 24 months for surgery. After cancellation and postponement, Emma finally got her surgery.

I would like to quote again this time, and this time Emma reveals something important:

In the end, Emma looked back and wished she had pushed her family physician sooner for a specialist appointment. She had lived with the pain for so long she hadn't realized what a difference surgery would make in her life. Now her other hip is starting to feel the same pain and she fears having to live through the process a second time.

People should never fear our health care system, Mr. Speaker. They need to know that our health care system is there for them and will do whatever it can to make life better. It is because of stories like Emma that we need to reduce wait times. And our government will look at any opportunity to . . . [inaudible] . . . pain and suffering for our people. It is not about politics or process. Reducing waiting times is all around people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, how can we get ourselves out of the mess of long wait times? I don't know if we can find the answer to that, but I think we need to explore it. As legislators and residents of Saskatchewan, we must move beyond politics and the rhetoric that plague the health care debate and let health care policy reform be guided by serious examination that delivers universal health care insurance without waiting times. We should be ashamed that people have to be put into wait-lists for medical necessary care.

People in Saskatchewan are generally proud of our health care system which provides access to care regardless of ability to pay. But as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Beverley McLachlin, and Justice of the Supreme Court, John Major, stated, "Access to a waiting list is not access to health care."

I don't know a single person who wants to wait 10 hours or 16 hours or even longer in pain and mental anguish to be admitted, let alone diagnosed and treated. I believe the best wait time is not the one that minimizes medical harm but the one that minimizes waiting altogether. A patient-focus health care system is one that truly delivers care without systematic delay. The patient must always come first because of their health.

When the Minister of Health launched the patient-first review, we wanted to know how we could make the health care system better. Mr. Speaker, who knows how to make the system better? The patients. And our review looked at the health care system through the eyes of the patient. To quote the report:

Patient- and family-centred health care considers the

patient's needs and interests first and foremost. Patients who shared their stories and perspectives wanted their needs, values, culture and spirituality respected. They want support during times of illness and trauma, and effective, compassionate communication that can help to relieve fear and anxiety. They want complete information about care and treatment options.

The people of Saskatchewan spoke clearly. They want their health care system to be safe, readily accessible and timely and well coordinated.

We here in the Assembly are working for the people of Saskatchewan who want a better health care system, and our government is working to make their health care system better. For years government thought long wait times was acceptable as long as it didn't have serious consequences. That mentality unfortunately is embedded into our thinking.

But, Mr. Speaker, our government doesn't believe wait times needs to be part of our health care system. The first step to overcome a problem, an individual must notice is that there is a problem. In the case of wait times, we are noticing a problem and that patients are waiting too long. And our government is going to work along with health care workers, health care experts, to find options that will bring down our wait times.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our health care system has the capacity and more than adequate resources to serve patients and meet the demand for health care, but realizing that potential will require change. Until that change happens, patients across Saskatchewan will continue to suffer on wait-lists, and their surgeries will continue to be pushed off.

When former Premier Roy Romanow conducted his examination of the health care system, he noticed that wait times were a concern for many people. I would like to quote from his report:

One approach for addressing the problem of wait lists is establishing "care guarantees." This option was recommended in Senate Committee's (2002) recent examination of the Canadian health care system and the Premier's Advisory Council on health in Alberta . . . Care guarantees provide patients with a guarantee that they will have access to the treatment they need within a certain period of time. They have been implemented in several European countries including the United Kingdom, Sweden, and Denmark.

We can do it here.

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

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you sit in the legislature here, it truly is a political arena where we see a great deal of activities. Sometimes maybe a little more exuberant than what we would like, but as politicians that's what we do.

But, Mr. Speaker, I also believe firmly that, as politicians first and foremost, our commitment should be to Saskatchewan

residents, those residents that we represent but also to residents right across the province. And I think part of that commitment to residents is a commitment that we strive to implement with all of our initiatives good public policy, good outcomes, and good benefits for Saskatchewan people.

And, Mr. Speaker, we can go back over the history of this legislature, and we can clearly see that there's a considerable difference in decisions that are made purely for political reasons and those decisions that do have a foundation of good public policy. I mean it's obvious in their final outcomes, and it's obvious in the lasting benefits for our residents.

And this issue today and this motion today is clearly one of those examples. This wait time motion . . . which we find this government, I think, rather prematurely patting itself on the back over their wait times resolution. They've announced it. They haven't actually done anything yet.

And, Mr. Speaker, we can go back. There is mountains and mountains of information and facts and data, and this has been an issue for many years here in the province. And I know the previous government was able to reduce long waiters and wait lists for surgery by over 1,600 persons in the '05-06 budget year. And that year was also a year when we took a significant step, not having the resources that this current government has, but we did some careful work. And after consideration, we undertook a study that focused on ambulatory surgery and surgical processes.

And out of that report — which I could go on for much longer than 10 minutes — there was a recommendation that further work be done on an ambulatory surgical centre option. And that was under way with the Saskatoon Health Region and also the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region to look at the feasibility and develop a business case for surgical centres in the province of Saskatchewan. There was feasibility studies that were done. And in the end result, it was proposed that these centres would contain probably three operating rooms, two procedure rooms, and that they could achieve an additional capacity of approximately 4,500 ambulatory surgical cases and 5,000 cataract cases annually.

And these centres, one of their big advantages would be that they would do day surgeries. And you would see operating rooms and the regions' capacity to really perform ambulatory surgery and free up existing in-patient hospital capacity to be able to improve the system and move things along. Mr. Speaker, this concept was also discussed and supported by Saskatchewan Surgical Care Network and its surgical services subcommittee.

So this process moved along, and all agreed that this would be very good for wait times here in Saskatchewan. All of the professionals had been involved. And budgeting and capital funding was projected in the budget, in the provincial budget for . . . I believe it would have been this year in the budget.

So, Mr. Speaker, in April 19th of 2007, this actual plan was announced for the day surgery centre here in Regina. And this was done in conjunction with the federal government who had put in place a wait time guarantee. So there was money designated to the provinces, and this was what the province of

Saskatchewan felt and the health care system felt was most appropriate to address one of the concerns of Saskatchewan residents.

So, Mr. Speaker, what happened after the November 1907 election, the Sask Party government was elected. And here we get into how political decisions override common sense and good sense and good public policies. And what we saw after the November election was that the surgical centre in Regina that was to address wait-lists in this province and give services to citizens close to home, here at home, and build capacity and build infrastructure in the province of Saskatchewan quietly disappeared. It was gone. The team that was working on the planning were dispersed back to their jobs that they had been in formerly. Everything just went silent for a number of months.

So, Mr. Speaker, here you see a decision. It was not based on good public policy. It was not based on any informed discussion. It was not based on a concern for patient care. And it was not based on any desire to shorten the wait-list. It was purely a Sask Party political decision to get rid of anything they perceived as an NDP project that was moving forward. And, Mr. Speaker, that's all it was.

So then, shortly after that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we again saw this project begin to come to life. I am sure that the Department of Health and people in the health care sector made a pitch to the minister to say this is a good plan. This is what we need to make a dint. The work's been done. Let's just continue, start up again, and move it ahead.

So what we saw in the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region, this was their service and financial plan summary for the fiscal year of '08-09. And besides a number of issues that were listed, we find on the second page under "Construction projects [that] will improve health care delivery," there is a point, "Planning for development and construction of a free-standing Ambulatory Surgery Centre with a scheduled opening in 2010." That's next year, Mr. Speaker. So that actually sounds pretty good.

So again now we have the political decision. We can start this good idea back up again because now we can put the Sask Party logo on it. We can have the pompoms out. We can make the announcement, and it will be under our name and our direction. Purely political. A good project that would have benefited Saskatchewan residents, reduced wait times in this province delayed for more than a year and a half just purely on the basis of politics.

[11:45]

So, Mr. Speaker, then we see the Saskatchewan Party government run into trouble with their financial projections with a release of the first quarter financial report. There has been a number of projects that have been reduced. And in October of this year, not even a month ago, the Finance minister announced \$102 million in government savings. Well government savings, but purely a detriment to Saskatchewan residents because what gets pulled? Well \$3 million was deferred from Health for the ambulatory surgical care centre in Regina. So there we again. The Finance department has trouble with their budget, and what did they pull — the funding for the surgical care centre here in Regina. So again a political

decision. It's purely a choice of that government, Mr. Speaker. They felt they could just push aside the wait-list again for purely political reasons, to cover their own butt.

So now what have we got? We have the Regina Health Region has their service and financial plan summary for the fiscal year '09-10. And what's the point there, Mr. Speaker? Well we turn to the same place, same station, and it says, planning for development and construction of a free-standing ambulatory surgical centre with a scheduled opening in the next few years.

Mr. Speaker, this project has been pushed back and pushed back by that government. They have absolutely no one to blame but themselves for making political decisions that were not based on good public policy, that were not based on informed discussion. They were not based on concern for patients across this province. They were not based on a concern for the wait-lists and reducing those wait times. They were decisions made purely to appease the Sask Party politicians, and they could care less what patients felt.

Now the minister is coming out, the minister comes out and says, we're going to reduce all these times in four years. Well do you know what, Mr. Speaker? If that minister had kept up with the plan that was in place, that surgical care centre would be open today in the city of Regina serving the people of this province, reducing the surgical wait-lists, and people would be receiving timely care in a number of areas. It's that minister's own fault for wait-lists in this province, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud and privileged to enter into this debate on wait time. Our Saskatchewan government, Sask Party government set a goal by stating that no patient should wait more than three months for surgery in this province.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very, very bold initiative put forth by the Minister of Health, very bold. The reason he did it is because the people of Saskatchewan want it. And what amazes me, Mr. Deputy Speaker . . .

[Interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: — Members will come to order. Members will come to order. I recognize the member for Rosthern-Shellbrook.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is a very, very bold initiative by our government and especially by the Minister of Health. This is what the people want.

And what amazes me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Throne Speech which was just delivered, this was the main focus of our Throne Speech. And every one of the members on that side voted against wait time — every one of them.

This will be the centrepiece policy of the Saskatchewan Party government, squarely focused on health care, for the upcoming session. The target for the government is that in four years no surgical wait times will be longer than three months. Doctors

say patients have been complaining about wait times and call the three-month goal a very good target. This goal came out of the Patient First Review.

In the Patient First Review, Mr. Dagnone made a profound statement. He said, I quote, “. . . are proud of this province's health care heritage but they want to see the ‘care’ restored to ‘Medicare’.”

Three themes emerged as guiding principles for the report. Number one, patient first must be embedded as a core value in health care. Number two, health care in Saskatchewan needs to function as a cohesive system. And number three, Mr. Deputy Speaker, front-line providers must be empowered to deliver patient- and family-centred care.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let's take a closer look at these three themes for Patient First Review and the progress our Saskatchewan Party has already made to already implement them.

A patient-first value should be embedded into the health care system. Well what does this mean to our Saskatchewan Party government? To our government, patient first means that we must do everything within our power to deliver the best care to the people of Saskatchewan. To our government, patient first means every patient should leave a health care facility happy with the care they received from admittance to discharge.

To our Saskatchewan Party government, patient first, that means that when we set a goal to cut wait times, we will work tirelessly to reach that goal. This is unlike the NDP that made a promise in 1999 election to cut wait times by 30 per cent. The NDP followed up this promise by doing nothing for four years. In reality the wait-list increased by 60 per cent under the former NDP.

Mr. Speaker, increased wait times is an example of what could occur when a government is too concerned with . . . [inaudible] . . . and ideological appearances. The former government refused to look at initiatives, new options to deal with wait times based on politics. The NDP were placing politics ahead of concerns of patients within the health care system. Their approach was not to put patients first.

Our Saskatchewan government believes Saskatchewan people just want to get on the road to recovery after the surgery.

Now I'd like to give some illustrations of what we mean when we say the wait times are too long. And I'd like to talk about myself, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Up until I became an MLA 10 years ago, I spent very little time in hospitals. In 1999 after I was elected and 2000, I came down with sugar diabetes and I'm on insulin right now. But through the time I've spent in the hospitals, I've learned a lot. I've learned a lot from inside the hospital which gives me, I believe, the power to speak to this motion.

Not only did I have sugar diabetes. Then I had an accident with my knee and I had to use the services in Prince Albert to put my knee back together again, which I spent a long time in a hospital. I've suffered from an aneurysm and I've lived through

it. I've gotten cancer. I've still lived through that. In fact two years ago, I ended up in ICU [intensive care unit] in Prince Albert in a coma and I've lived through that.

The only thing I haven't had is a heart attack and I'm just waiting for that to come and I'll get that out of the road and I'll be good. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, during the time that I spent in the hospital, I learned a lot from the RNs [registered nurse], the LPNs [licensed practical nurse], and all the people that work in the hospitals, even the doctors. I spent a lot of time in a hospital and I don't think any member on the other side has gone through what I've gone through, which gives me the right to speak because I know it from inside, not just from an outside perspective.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the things that a lot of the people within the health system said, we have to reduce the wait times for surgery. We have to. We also have to recruit more physicians in our system, especially physicians that will work in rural Saskatchewan.

When it comes to rural Saskatchewan, my home community of Spiritwood only has two doctors; therefore we don't have a doctoring system that is open 24 hours a day. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, hopefully with the initiatives our Health minister has initiated, that will cause some of the problems.

Now I know the member from North Battleford who was the Health minister before hollers from his . . . [inaudible] . . . we did, we did. It's an old saying with the NDP. We were going to get to it; just never did do it. This government under this Premier and this Health minister has set goals and initiatives that will solve some of the problems.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, another incident, and this is evident from a letter that was written in the *Leader-Post* on November 4th, 2009, and it goes on to say, and I quote:

Having been struck down with arthritis, which will require replacement of both hips, the waiting time has been on my mind — a lot. I might get the first hip done in 18 months.

We have enough specialists, but we do not have enough space in operating rooms and immediate recovery to deal with the building number of patients needing hip surgery . . . any surgery.

It doesn't matter to me if a private clinic performs the surgery so long as my provincial health care covers the cost and I can get the surgery done much sooner.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is written by Michael Hegan from Regina and it was in the *Leader-Post*.

I just want to make comment to the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow, said that it just happened here just in November past. Well this issue of wait times didn't happen November 7, 2007. This issue has been going on for a long, long time. And who was in power up until November 7, 2007? I believe it was the NDP.

It's funny. From the members opposite they think that everything that they're hollering about now just started in 2007.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I went through this health system and I know different. I've talked to many of those people and they will also agree with me.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our Saskatchewan government has begun to implement one of the most aggressive physician recruitment strategies in the country. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say that today there are 78 more physicians in the province of Saskatchewan than in December . . .

[Interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. I recognize the member for Rosthern-Shellbrook.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, of those 78 positions, nine of them are practising in rural Saskatchewan — nine of them. We need more practising in rural Saskatchewan, but we are going to build on this, build on the initiative that we put forth, and deal with the wait times. And also deal with the recruitments because the recruitment of doctors will bring down the wait times.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are increasing our training capacity for physicians and nurses in hopes of retaining more physicians and more nurses. It's already been mentioned about the nurses that we brought into the province, and also we are also implementing the increase of medical school enrolments by adding 40 new training seats and 60 additional residency training positions by 2011. This government has done more in the last two years and will do more going forward than that NDP has done for 16 years.

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

Mr. Broten: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand today and enter the debate on this motion, Mr. Speaker. And a motion, Mr. Speaker, as I read it I almost choked on my coffee, Mr. Speaker, because nothing could be further from the reality here in the province. Nothing could be further, Mr. Speaker, from speaking to the true issues that are affecting Saskatchewan people. And nothing could be further, Mr. Speaker, from a genuine attempt by members opposite to do something about these issues, Mr. Speaker.

My remarks today, Mr. Speaker, will be divided into three sections. The first section, Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about, is what I see as the Sask Party's motivation, their motivation for introducing this motion, and their motivation to stand up — backbenchers opposite — Mr. Speaker, and wave some pompoms about this motion. And I think their motivation in bringing this motion forward, Mr. Speaker, while indeed wait times, while indeed health care is important, it's important to all people in Saskatchewan — all of us are touched individually by the health care system and it's important to all people in Saskatchewan. There's not a member in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, that would argue with that point.

But I say that, Mr. Speaker, I don't think that's their true motivation. Because there's another factor, Mr. Speaker, that affects every person here in the province. There's another

factor, Mr. Speaker, that determines how well Saskatchewan people are able to be served, how well the government is able to provide services to the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And that is the fiscal management of this province, Mr. Speaker. And in my opinion, this motion that they put forward is nothing more than a channel changer — a channel changer from their brutal record, Mr. Speaker, of managing the books of this province.

[12:00]

When the budget came out last spring, boy, Mr. Speaker, there were a lot of pompoms here. There were some cakes. There were some balloons. The celebration, the approach of members opposite, Mr. Speaker, was over the top. In fact some of the members opposite said this was the best budget in Canada. They said this was the best budget in North America. And, Mr. Speaker, they said perhaps the best budget in the world.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think now when we have learned about the Premier's Saturday afternoon phone calls, his attempts to meddle in the budget, his attempts to call the shots on his own — his fingerprints, Mr. Speaker, are all over this budget. And that's why, Mr. Speaker, his fingerprints are all over this motion and this Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, that we've recently debated. Because he needed to change the channel. He needed to change the channel away from his brutal, Mr. Speaker, his brutal management of the budget and the fiscal situation of the province.

Mr. Speaker, this is not bold. This is directly coming out of the Throne Speech. Mr. Speaker, a Throne Speech that members and individuals across this province have said is the weakest Throne Speech that has come out of this Assembly in decades. It was nothing but looking back. Out of the points that were raised in the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, 50 or so were about the past, were about looking back, trying to relive those pompom and balloon moments. And about 10 of them were looking to the future.

And so now we find ourselves having passed the Throne Speech — and, Mr. Speaker, I did not agree with the Throne Speech, and I voted against it — now we find ourselves once again engaged in this attempt by the members opposite to change the channel away from their bad track record. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm not buying it. So that's the first area what I think is their true motivation — the channel changing.

The next part, Mr. Speaker, this is about wait times. This is about health care. The evidence does not support this motion that this is bold, that this is new, that this is well thought out, that this is anything more than the Premier on a Saturday afternoon jotting down some ideas and writing the Throne Speech, nothing more.

Let's look at the evidence. The health care system, Mr. Speaker, depends on many individuals, many different institutions, many buildings. One of those buildings, Mr. Speaker, the academic health sciences building, a building that will train health care workers, provide services, certainly an important part of the health care system and certainly important to our ability as a province to deliver health care services to people.

They have a sod-turning ceremony, again balloons, ribbons, cake, the works. Photo op, great, I think the minister wore his favourite tie. It was a good day for him. Three days later, they cut the funding. They cut the funding from the project. They pull it back, Mr. Speaker.

And now we're supposed to believe these same individuals that deliver a \$1.3 billion blunder that somehow, somehow magically they're just going to be able to make ends meet as they go along. They're going to be able to pay-as-you-go. Well, Mr. Speaker, pay-as-you-go might work. It might work for cell phone plans. It might work for small-scale projects. But with a track record of this government who have delivered a blunder that we have not seen since '86 with the Devine government . . . And I know many of them love this comparison to the Devine government. It brings back the glory days, Mr. Speaker. But in my opinion, I just don't trust them on the ability to deliver the health sciences building when they're clawing money back.

Children's hospital, similar situation, Mr. Speaker, pulling money back from the project, slow walking this project like you wouldn't believe . . . Some philanthropist, Mr. Speaker, donates 6.5 million to the children's hospital. I wasn't there because members opposite aren't great at notifying opposition members about news releases and such. But, Mr. Speaker, \$6.5 million and, as far as I could tell, not a minister in sight — \$6.5 million donated to a project being built in the province and not a minister. The person that does the speaking on the news, Mr. Speaker . . . backbencher from Sutherland. And when the donor said, well what's the holdup; why don't you get going on this? The excuse, oh we got to make sure the parking lot's in the right spot.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not saying we don't need to plan this project properly. I'm not saying we don't need to think it through. But, Mr. Speaker, I see some slow walking going on. I see some avoiding of the issue. I see some ministers not wanting to tie their face to the slow progress and the pulling back of funding that's occurring through the children's hospital.

Surgical care centre, my colleague from Saskatoon Eastview has commented on this, Mr. Speaker. Clearly, you know, in the patient-first plan here that was put forward, talks about the need for surgical centres. What do they do? They pull back the funding from the centres. Instead, Mr. Speaker, it's not a Saskatchewan-first policy; it's a BC-first policy. Let's not address the issues here in the province they say. Let's ship it away because it's convenient right now as opposed to fixing the root causes, Mr. Speaker. So I think when you look at the actions in health care, the evidence shows, Mr. Speaker, that this motion is nothing more than channel change and is not addressing the issues.

The last area, Mr. Speaker, of my remaining two and a half minutes that I want to address is how this government, Mr. Speaker, does not focus on health promotion but focuses on self-promotion. Mr. Speaker, if there's a ribbon to cut, if there's a balloon to lift in the air with helium, if there is a cake to eat, these ministers, these members are all over it, Mr. Speaker. But when it comes to addressing the real issues through a surgical care centre, through properly funding institutions, it's not there, Mr. Speaker. And the troubling aspect, Mr. Speaker, not only do we see self-promotion most of the time, but we see an

approach of self-preservation. When the going gets hot, Mr. Speaker, when they have the option to do the right thing, what do they do? They don't do the right thing, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, in a scrum outside . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — I would ask the members not to drown out their own member who's speaking. I recognize the member from Saskatoon Massey Place.

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, in a scrum outside of the Assembly on a very serious issue, on an issue about due process, in an issue about this cabinet treating the people of Saskatchewan responsibly, on an issue about letting the official opposition do its work, Mr. Speaker, the member outside, the Minister of Corrections and Policing and Public Safety made some comments on tape, Mr. Speaker, shocking comments. When giving his rationale he said, oh well I was giving push back. They were saying things, you know. And you know, I'm the minister; I'm just not used to that because they should really respect me because I'm the minister. And what do they say? And then when pushed further, he said well you know what? The reporter said, well you've said some things about them. He said, I have not said those things about them; I said Tommy the comic, Tommy the comic.

Mr. Speaker, this is the member opposite, in his Throne Speech, I mean his maiden speech, his first opportunity to speak in this Assembly and he says quote, from 2001:

. . . as a fighter pilot was I was part of a defensive structure in the free world to defend against the spread of communism. Now isn't that ironic, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Here we spend millions of dollars — billions worldwide, — [we] put lives on the line to stop and arrest the spread of communism, and lo and behold, here in Saskatchewan we vote in a party that has the same ideologies.

Here's a member on every opportunity — there's not one member over there who could deny this — on every opportunity has hurled insults like that across the floor, denies it by saying Tommy the comic. Not believable. Members opposite, instead of self-promotion, instead of self-preservation, they need to look at the issues, address the issues, and come up with a real plan that's bold.

The Deputy Speaker: — Sixty-five minute debate having ended, we go into a 10-minute question period. I have recognized the member from Moose Jaw . . .

Mr. Michelson: — Mr. Speaker, it's been established that the former government — that former government, the NDP — during their watch closed hospitals especially in rural Saskatchewan but more particularly one of the newer hospitals, and that was the Plains hospital here in the Queen City. They got rid of medical staff, lowered the seats in universities, and severely hampered the health care of this province. In their 1999 election campaign, they promised to reduce waiting lists by 30 per cent. And that promise was never kept. After breaking their promise, they reduced the medical system in this province. They turned around and sent 366 patients out of the province for hip and knee surgery.

To the member of Saskatoon eastward who indicated she had such surgery: was she one of the chosen friends of the NDP who was chosen to go out of the province for this surgery? And what has changed now that they wouldn't send the people who are suffering for months, perhaps years, for surgical . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Question has elapsed. Recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

Ms. Junor: — Eastview, yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, thank you. The member was asking a question about the 52 hospitals. I'm asking back: what have they done in two years to open any of them? I mean the criticism is not anymore on what we did. The criticism now is what have you done? We've had two years. Nobody buys the hiding behind what we did or didn't do. Nobody cares. They want to know what this government has done, what this government plans to do. And frankly this motion says this government really has nowhere to go, nowhere to go.

All they're interested in is putting forward information that clearly the public isn't going to accept when orthopedic surgeons have said it's wrong. The public will not buy that. And the red herring throwing out by the ministry yesterday about sending surgeries out of the province has always been done. When we don't have the service, we don't have the technology, we don't have the specialists — we do send them out. We don't have a certain type of surgery, always have. The difference is, we don't pre-book. We don't pre-pay, and we don't have premiums.

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

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My question is to the member from Saskatoon Northwest. As he bellows from his seat speaking about their health care system, I want to see if he spoke up, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if he got up and he spoke up loud and clear about the problems the Sask Party's having in relation to sending patients to BC, of being fair to all the health care workers. Did he speak up when they cancelled the surgical care centres? Did he speak up and be loud, ripping apart Station 20 West? Did he speak up about not dealing with the increasing youth suicide?

Mr. Speaker, as he stands up and pontificates from where he sits, he has not spoken up for all these issues that we are raising, and yet he has the audacity to say that they got a better health care system. Why didn't they speak up then, and why is he all of a sudden being very quiet now, Mr. Speaker?

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

Mr. LeClerc: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, while the previous government ignored the call for a guarantee, our government has set the bold goal to reduce surgical waiting times to no longer than three months within four years. That's what I'm standing up for. I am standing up to help ensure patients that they can be able to have hip replacements within four months instead of ten months or two years so that they can see an orthopedic surgeon.

So I would like to quote the *Edmonton Journal* which came out Tuesday, November 3, 2009, in support of our government's action to reduce wait times. That's what I'm standing up for. I'm standing up for the people of this province to alleviate the pain of years of waiting for surgery.

The Deputy Speaker: — There's been quite a bit of talk going back and forth. I'm having trouble. If we have to, we'll either cancel it or have some members ejected. Government's turn to ask the question.

Mr. LeClerc: — Mr. Speaker, we should never have to debate the idea that the patient must come first. We must ensure that if a person is in pain, they get the relief they need in a timely manner even if that means sending them to Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: — Time for the next question from the government side. You're asking? Okay. Okay. Okay.

Mr. LeClerc: — I am asking to the member of Saskatoon Massey Place, why do they prefer to have someone wait in pain for surgery when it could be performed in another province sooner?

The Deputy Speaker: — Who was the question to? I recognize the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's surprising that the member opposite doesn't seem to realize that a great deal of work was done by the former government. There is mountains of information that the Minister of Health has access to. There was a number of initiatives that were put in place and a number of initiatives that were based on good public policy and extremely well thought out planning that we're seeing significant improvements, and more on the way. And this government and these members cancelled them purely because of politics. They wanted the Sask Party to look better.

The Deputy Speaker: — It's their turn. I recognize the government, or the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Ms. Higgins: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook gave a number of examples that he felt needed to be addressed, the doctor shortage in his community, also in Shellbrook, where I know Shellbrook has been campaigning and lobbying for a number of years for capital funding for a hospital. How exactly does this Sask Party plan, that they're all patting themselves on the back over, help his community?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well to the member opposite from Moose Jaw, how does it help the residents of Shellbrook, which is in my constituency? This Health minister approved 13 long-term care facilities in the province of Saskatchewan — 13, one of which of those 13 was Shellbrook, was Shellbrook.

Also part of the long-term plan that Shellbrook got was also in addition to a new hospital. That's what this minister did under

our government . . . who chose that because they have the doctors in place in Shellbrook. It adds to their facility and their community to go ahead and build a long-term care facility to help that community. That's what we have done.

[12:15]

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook.

Mr. Allchurch: — Well thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My question is for the member from Saskatoon Massey. Mr. Speaker, when the members opposite were in power, they routinely sent patients out of the province to have their surgeries performed. Many times in session the member from Saskatoon Eastview had argued that this practice creates a two-tier health care system — one tier for those who can afford it and one tier for those who can't.

My question is to the member from Saskatoon Massey. In this position, does their party that's sending patients out of the province for treatments without covering the medical cost, create a two-tier health care system?

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

Mr. Broten: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question from the member opposite. It's sad, Mr. Speaker, that the member opposite is displaying his lack of knowledge in terms of how the referral system works here in Saskatchewan with physicians, here in the province and out of province. It's been for a long-standing reality here in the province, Mr. Speaker. There are subspecialties that are so specialized that indeed these specialists are out of province. And it's been the practice of governments past, as it is now, to send those individuals out of province.

The question here, Mr. Speaker, is the deviation from that policy the members opposite are pursuing and how now exporting out-of-province is the first option as opposed to one aspect of the entire health care system. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Furber: — Mr. Speaker, a long-standing tradition of the New Democratic Party is to have balanced budgets. What we've got with this band of men and women opposite us is a \$1.3 billion oversight on their budget — a huge budget blunder on one item.

So how is it that anybody should trust them on health care when all they're concerned about is people moving past their \$1.3 billion blunder on potash and turning the page to something else. And how is it they set a date two years after the next election for this health care plan?

So to the member from Saskatoon Northwest: how is it that anybody should trust them with health care when they mess up the budget as badly as they did?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member for

Saskatoon Northwest.

Mr. LeClerc: — Because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because we've reduced the debt by 40 per cent. We gave the largest tax reduction in the history of this province. Because we care about the people first.

The Deputy Speaker: — Seventy-five minute debate has ended . . . [inaudible] . . . the motion. I recognize . . . Why is the member from Regina on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Regina South. There we go. Mr. Speaker, leave to introduce guests please?

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Regina South has asked leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to direct the members' attention to the west gallery. There are two individuals seated near the front row there. Mr. Hans Moor who is a special envoy representing the ambassador to Canada from the Netherlands. His particular portfolio is economic development. And my lovely wife Jocelyn, who was recently elected to her second term in Regina City Council. They're here. Certainly welcome them. Thank you so much for coming.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

The Deputy Speaker: — Recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

Motion No. 1 — Loss of Support for the Government

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Boy, Mr. Speaker, with that kind of welcoming it feels good to stand up as a New Democrat on this side of the House. And it feels even better, Mr. Speaker, to be standing up as a New Democrat for the real issues day in, day out. And I look at the week in review. My goodness, what a good week to be raising the real issues that are affecting people and the many failures of the Saskatchewan Party.

I'm pleased today to address the motion that we're going to be discussing here today. The motion that I'll be moving here today is:

That due to this government's financial mismanagement resulting in a reduction of government services, most notably in primary health services, this government no longer enjoys the support of the Assembly and the people of Saskatchewan.

So that's the motion that we're going to be discussing here today, Mr. Speaker. And I have to say I don't know if I'm going to have enough time here to cover thoroughly what I do want to get to here, Mr. Speaker. As I look to the clock here today I think I'm only going to have about 40 minutes. I was hoping for

certainly hours, Mr. Speaker, to address the kind of mismanagement that we're recognizing here in this Assembly and across this province.

A Hippocratic government that's been elected, one that not long ago the Saskatchewan Party that promised fiscal mismanagement to the people of this province, spoke about this for many years, and their years toiling in opposition, Mr. Speaker. And you know what, Mr. Speaker, a few people in this province thought that they could trust them with the finances, Mr. Speaker.

On other promises as it relates to health care and wait times, Mr. Speaker, the rhetoric was thick and rich as well, Mr. Speaker, from the Saskatchewan Party. But what we're hearing, Mr. Speaker, in two short years, two short years, Mr. Speaker, that it was all bluster, no delivery, all talk, no gain, Mr. Speaker. And I know our member from Massey Place highlights so well today, Mr. Speaker, and on a regular basis, that the Sask Party government is so focused on spin and communication of their message and cheerleading as opposed to the real issues and the real challenges Saskatchewan people are facing.

They're not willing to recognize the flaw in their erred economic policy. They are not willing to address the mismanagement of their finances. And it's worthy, Mr. Speaker, to just make sure that Saskatchewan people are aware at this point in time . . . And the member from Moose Jaw North, I know, has no worries about the mismanagement of his government. Because I'm confident, Mr. Speaker, that the member from Moose Jaw North doesn't understand what's going on because I know he doesn't sit in many of those meetings.

But I know he does sit in the back benches of this legislature and I would implore, I would implore the deputy minister or the minister sitting in the back here to sit down with the member for Moose Jaw North and to brief that member, to brief that member on what's going on, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to our finances. Because other than some backbench MLAs that might not understand what's going on, I can assure that our Finance minister is starting to realize what's occurring, Mr. Speaker.

And I know our member from Prince Albert Northcote just highlighted, Mr. Speaker, that we had the biggest blunder in this province's history on one resource, Mr. Speaker. And I know that our current Premier and the Sask Party, they like to talk about making history, Mr. Speaker, and they do it lots of times with really small achievements and really low bars, Mr. Speaker, and they talk about the history that they're making.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this government is making history — no doubt. It's making history from a financial mismanagement perspective, Mr. Speaker, because never in the history of this government, of this province, has a government ever misjudged a revenue assumption the way this government has. Never, never has a government missed a revenue source from one resource such as potash this year by over \$1 billion, Mr. Speaker.

I put forward a written question to the Finance minister, Mr. Speaker, to ask when such a blunder had occurred in our

province's history, Mr. Speaker. Most people would say, well this likely happened during the Devine era in the '80s, Mr. Speaker, because it's so renowned with financial mismanagement, Mr. Speaker. But I think it's important that Saskatchewan people know that this is a record blunder and far surpasses anything that Devine mismanaged with respect to one revenue source and missing that revenue assumption, Mr. Speaker.

So right now we don't know the exact extent of where the dust is going to settle on this revenue source, Mr. Speaker. We know right now that it certainly was . . . Well you know they're claiming it was \$1.3 billion at first quarter. We were saying this number seems to be really soft, Mr. Speaker. We were saying we think that the blunder is larger than this, Mr. Speaker, and we're starting to hear that maybe this government's finally starting to recognize that.

We hope that the information we're receiving from this government is accurate and factual, Mr. Speaker. We're looking forward to mid-year, Mr. Speaker, but it seems that we're 1.5 and beyond, Mr. Speaker, out on that one revenue source, Mr. Speaker.

And the result of this, Mr. Speaker, is that at a time where we have no excuse for this but for Sask Party's own mismanagement, we see a shortfall that's growing, Mr. Speaker, and right now a shortfall that can accurately be described as a billion dollar shortfall, Mr. Speaker. And that's growing and it can only be attributed to the Sask Party's own mismanagement, because in fact we don't have a revenue shortage in this province, Mr. Speaker. Things have softened off a little bit but there's certainly . . . The revenues are strong. Well over \$9 billion in revenues, Mr. Speaker. For a Finance minister and a Premier not to be able to balance the budget and manage its priorities within that context, Mr. Speaker, is reckless and it's deplorable.

And I guess what we're starting to recognize, Mr. Speaker, is that what we're seeing is actually we're building a structural deficit into the finances of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Because at a time where, as I say, revenues are still strong, they're certainly less than the wild ambitions of the Premier, who thought his gut feeling told him that potash would be \$2 billion, Mr. Speaker, and then of course the reality it was going to be far less than that in a world recession.

But what we see is a structural deficit being built in, Mr. Speaker, because we have a time where revenues are in fact strong, Mr. Speaker, and we have a government who's running a massive shortfall at this point in time. And the member from Lakeview highlights this well. And what we've created is a burn rate on government resources, burn rate on revenues. And certainly if you're in business, Mr. Speaker, from a corporate perspective, Mr. Speaker, a burn rate is not a good thing. You're utilizing your resources that you might have, and you're not sustaining your own budget, Mr. Speaker.

And right now we see this government, I guess, going and tearing out equity in our Crown corporations at a time where that should not be going on, at a time where those Crowns in fact need those resources, Mr. Speaker. And it's causing all sorts of precipitous problems for the Crown corporations from a

debt to equity perspective, Mr. Speaker.

But we know these guys don't believe in Crown corporations anyways. So it kind of plays into their best interests to strip that equity from the Crowns, weaken the Crowns, put them in a position that they're no longer financially viable, and then they can sell them off for pennies on the dollar, Mr. Speaker.

But really what's fundamental to the structural deficit that's being created by this government, Mr. Speaker, is runaway spending, spending that this province simply can't afford. And at one point the jokers on the other side, the Sask Party, pretended that they were going to restrain spending to I believe 5, 4, 3, and 2 per cent in consecutive years, kind of an average of 3 per cent, Mr. Speaker. We've seen the exact opposite. And I think if you can look from the budget tabled in 2007 to the budget tabled in 2009, we've recognized that we've had a 32 per cent increase in spending, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: — Wow.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — And the member from Saskatoon Eastview says wow. You know, this is a number that you share with individuals in the community, individuals across this province, whether in Weyburn, whether in Kelvington or whether you're in Batoche or whether in North Battleford or Lloydminster. And people are astounded with that kind of spending, Mr. Speaker. Because whether in balance of their own family's finances or in balance of their business or in balance of their farm operation, Mr. Speaker, they recognize that you can't crank up spending to that kind of an extent, Mr. Speaker, particularly when you're doing it with faulty revenue assumptions, Mr. Speaker.

And when we talk about a structural deficit, the problem with that, Mr. Speaker, is that we see something where we see a summary deficit on a given year, Mr. Speaker, that's not going to be remedied in the out-years. It's not going to be a better circumstance next year or the year after that, Mr. Speaker, without the government addressing the actual fundamental problems within their budget.

So very different, Mr. Speaker, wherein odd years have passed where New Democrats always brought forward prudence and responsibility and balance to budgets and in the odd circumstance, Mr. Speaker, where we had oil of \$20 a barrel and we had crop insurance payments as respect to drought, Mr. Speaker, where we ended up having a shortfall from a summary perspective, Mr. Speaker, we had the resources to backfill, Mr. Speaker, to backfill when revenues had dropped off in an anomalous circumstance, Mr. Speaker.

But what we have here, Mr. Speaker, is distinctly different. We have revenues that skyrocketed from a red-hot economy that the New Democrats handed over to the Saskatchewan Party in 2008. And with that, we handed over one-time revenues in the form of rainy-day funds and surpluses like a government had never experienced before. They came into unprecedented wealth, Mr. Speaker.

And now while the numbers from 2008 have cooled, Mr. Speaker, when we look at where the dust is settling on 2009, Mr. Speaker, we have a very, very healthy revenue stream, Mr.

Speaker. Sometimes we hear from the Premier, and he goes around this province and they say to him, I think, why have you mismanaged the finances so significantly? And he blames it on potash, Mr. Speaker.

What he doesn't point to is the fact that we have a very strong, solid revenue base in this province in 2009. We have over \$9 billion flowing into government coffers, Mr. Speaker. Our budget just, you know, a few years back was 7 and \$8 million, Mr. Speaker. So really what a gifted position, even in 2009, this Finance minister should be in here. But as a result of the mismanagement of the minister himself and the Premier and the incompetence, here we have a major problem.

[12:30]

How do you rein in spending at this point in time when you're moving forward with a structural deficit, Mr. Speaker? Well these are the kind of tough questions, tough challenges that that government has in front of them, Mr. Speaker. What I understand is that this government still isn't showing the kind of restraint and caution on these fronts that it should, and in fact, Mr. Speaker, it has further expenditure pressures, Mr. Speaker.

So I don't know when they're actually going to get real with a plan that reconciles their errors and addresses it for the future. It seems that they're truly, with a hope and a prayer, crossing their fingers, their toes, and thinking good thoughts and hoping that they can somehow eke out the next two years with some sort of assembly of balance, Mr. Speaker. But that's not going to be the case.

And I chat with so many individuals in my team of financial advisors in my role as Finance critic, Mr. Speaker, who . . . And I'll say this, Mr. Speaker, certainly not all of them are New Democrat party members. They're from the broader business community and corporate community across this province. And what they're looking at is, they are really perplexed with how so quickly, Mr. Speaker, not only did they make huge financial errors but in the end, political errors, Mr. Speaker.

And, you know, I think that the member from Athabasca says that the crows are coming home to roost and others say that the chickens are coming home to roost. Whatever birds are coming home to roost, Mr. Speaker, they certainly are, you know, Mr. Speaker.

So we talk about a structural deficit and we see a weakening in the economy, Mr. Speaker, and certainly reflective of the poor economic policy, the flawed economic policy believed in and espoused by and deployed by the government opposite. And when we see the kind of job loss that's occurring in this province at this point in time in 2009, Mr. Speaker, we do have concerns about what this means from a perspective of economic weakening — what that means for corporate income tax, what that means for personal income tax, and what that means for availability of dollars within this province for consumption. And of course then affecting the consumption taxes that are very important to our province's treasury.

So we see it on many fronts. We see the direct mismanagement of the finances and we see the mismanagement of the economy,

Mr. Speaker, that's going to have a profound and negative impact on resources available to government and is all part of this structural deficit that Saskatchewan New Democrats are so opposed to, Mr. Speaker.

And when you talk about a structural deficit, Mr. Speaker, and shortfalls, this goes against every grain of Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker, who I believe and know, Mr. Speaker, believe so much in responsible management, planning for the future. And they realize, Mr. Speaker, that taking on debt at times when that shouldn't be going on, running deficits at times of revenue strength, really hamper the kind of opportunities that Saskatchewan people should rightfully achieve in a resource-rich province as we move forward.

And they see the Saskatchewan Party who's mismanaging priorities, mismanaging their finances, and they recognize that this is squashing many of the hopes and dreams that individual communities or families have for themselves, business within this province, Mr. Speaker.

It doesn't bode well for Saskatchewan people. That's where Saskatchewan New Democrats are so proud, Mr. Speaker, to stand up to make sure that that kind of balance is re-established. We shouldn't be in the circumstance we're in here right now. We shouldn't be anticipating the kind of further disarray that we're going to hear about in two weeks or a week from now in the mid-year report, Mr. Speaker. But that being said, that's the point that we're in and the Saskatchewan New Democrats are going to continue to call for this circumstance to be righted, to be fixed, and we're going to be putting forward constructive solutions, as we have all the way along, to make sure that this never happens again, Mr. Speaker.

What we recognize in this province . . . And we've travelled. We're regularly meeting in all constituencies in this province, a fairly intensive tour throughout the summer but more significantly on a regular basis. And I know it's something that I think the members opposite might not be recognizing but if you're in the coffee shop at Indian Head or if you're talking with businesses down the strip in Carlyle or whether you're up in Lloydminster, the story is that of financial mismanagement.

And when people have a few of the facts shared with them as well, in fact they're almost in disbelief at first, Mr. Speaker. And you have to of course bring forward the information because they don't believe that this could be the circumstance. And we hear regularly from — whether we're in the coffee shop in Indian Head and they're talking about the disarray of the finances or if we're up in Lloydminster and talking with people in around Lloydminster — we hear about the recklessness that they just don't appreciate, Mr. Speaker.

I know I was having good conversations with individuals through Carlyle and Stoughton who were speaking more directly to incompetence and a lack of ability to fulfill the kind of responsible management that Saskatchewan people expect.

And Saskatchewan people are a very pragmatic people, Mr. Speaker. And they certainly, when the Saskatchewan Party wants to bluster about things that they pat themselves on the back over — many times pretty nominal achievements, Mr. Speaker — Saskatchewan people question that. And they

question why the Saskatchewan Party spends so much time patting itself on its back when it should be addressing the reality of the circumstances that it's created.

Further to this, Mr. Speaker, we see a government that's never been less transparent, at least in the last 18 years, Mr. Speaker. We see a government that's put itself into hardship and put Saskatchewan people into hardship as it relates to our finances, and this government doesn't make that information available.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, we saw this government delay a very important function of reporting and accountability for Saskatchewan people here this summer as it related to our first quarter update. And it's important every year, Mr. Speaker, that these accountability measures are adhered to, Mr. Speaker, but particularly important, particularly important when you have the kind of mismanagement that's going on this summer, Mr. Speaker.

And my colleague from Regina Elphinstone says, did the dog eat their homework? Why were they late, Mr. Speaker? It actually had nothing to do with that, Mr. Speaker. It had a lot more to do with spin again, Mr. Speaker. Because what we had going on was we had a Premier actually that had the premiers from across Canada here for meetings, Mr. Speaker. What we know, Mr. Speaker, is that the Premier doesn't like bad news. In fact when he has bad news, he lets other people carry it, Mr. Speaker.

We also know that the Premier is really liking to hear that some people think that he should maybe be the leader of the Conservative Party federally one day. And the last thing he wanted to do was sort of let the cat out of the bag in advance of the premiers' meeting here in Regina, Mr. Speaker.

But I think it's a real shame, Mr. Speaker, that a premier and a government would put forward one person's career ambitions above that of fiscal transparency and accountability back to Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker. And the fact being that most people in this province had recognized that the revenue circumstance, from what this government was purporting, had changed significantly and that the reality was that the Saskatchewan New Democrats were bang on with their projections, Mr. Speaker.

So as we near mid-year, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important, Mr. Speaker, that this government get the message loud and clear that that won't be acceptable. And I think they know that because I know they likely had a desire to push this reporting outside of session, Mr. Speaker, into December, right, maybe on Christmas Eve or something like that, Mr. Speaker — the night before Christmas. But I think this government recognizes from their own constituents, from their own supporters, that you can't play those kinds of games with Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker. People don't appreciate that one bit, Mr. Speaker.

And why have we gotten here? We talked about the runaway spending, but as I understand, Mr. Speaker, we've got broken down processes within government. We have processes that are so important, long espoused. We even see it from legislation. But certainly we see that through Treasury Board at this point in time. We see a process that's not functioning properly, Mr. Speaker.

Now part of this, Mr. Speaker, gets to the direction given by this government. Another part of it gets to the fact that they've really hurt our civil service. They've threatened our civil service, and they've in fact gutted our civil service. And they've done so at a significant cost to Saskatchewan people.

And when we spend \$13 million to fire lifelong civil servants in this province, it doesn't serve long-standing processes that are very good for responsible and accountable government well, Mr. Speaker. So we see that lost capacity within our civil service. And now we have, you know, revenue assumptions that are being put forward from the Premier's gut feeling, Mr. Speaker, with the same sort of thought process that you might put into about who's going to win a football game from a prognosticator's kind of perspective, Mr. Speaker.

And as much as we'd love to see every single revenue source in this province fly through the ceiling of expectations and provide plenty for the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, we need to plan for the real circumstances, Mr. Speaker. That's not what this government has done in any way, shape, or form.

I'd like to highlight specifically back to spending, Mr. Speaker. And the government, the Sask Party when it was in opposition, put forward a . . . "Securing the Future." Now we might call that document mortgaging the future, Mr. Speaker. But what we saw in this document here is we saw increases, Mr. Speaker, of 5 per cent, 4 per cent, 3 per cent, 2 per cent, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to expenditures. And they put this forward to Saskatchewan people.

The member from Wood River probably took this down around and said, we're going to be responsible. This is how we're going to spend your dollars. Because we're conservatives, we're going to be careful with your dollars. Now nothing, Mr. Speaker, could be further from the truth.

The people of Wood River, the people of Prince Albert, the people of Canora realize now that securing the future really should've been spelled mortgaging the future, Mr. Speaker. And the Deputy Premier says, is this a prop? I guess I'm just reading from . . . It's actually your document. Oh sorry that I held it up here. I'll just reference it.

But what I think is important is this is the Sask Party's plan and promises, Mr. Speaker. So what's really important is that the deputy minister acquaint himself with these promises. So the Deputy Premier should be aware that what these promises were, were 5 per cent increase, 4 per cent increase, 3 per cent increase, 2 per cent increases. That was your promise to your constituents and the people of the province, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — I remind the member to address all his remarks through the Chair. I recognize the member for Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. But what's important is that when we see 5, 4, 3, 2, as what the constraint was supposed to be on spending, what we realize is that this government, in two years, increased the spending 32 per cent, Mr. Speaker — 32 per cent, you know. And a couple of members smile. I think a couple out of embarrassment, others out of, I tried to stop that, and others because they were behind

it, Mr. Speaker.

And the Deputy Premier needs to recognize he needs to balance his priorities. He talks about a few of the things that he's done, but they have to be done in a measured context and they need to be balanced, Mr. Speaker. So that's pretty important, Mr. Speaker.

When I look even to that document specifically, Mr. Speaker, I see that expenses in 2009-10 as promised by this document were supposed to be, in 2009-10, 8.9 billion; 8.9 billion. That was the promise. That was the Sask Party promise. Well what's the reality, Mr. Speaker? The reality is we're well over \$10 billion. The initial budget came out with a ten billion to six hundred million dollar expenditure, this year at this point in time. Well that's a concern, Mr. Speaker.

I go to open up the '08-09 budget, Mr. Speaker, which . . . something about readying for growth. I guess it could've been named readying for deficit. What we see in this document, Mr. Speaker, was that we then had operating expenses of \$8.8 billion planned for this calendar year right now, Mr. Speaker, 8 billion. So they were sticking to a measured kind of a focus a year ago, just a year ago. So committed to \$8 billion.

But was the reality, Mr. Speaker? Well here we are in 2009-2010. This government comes out with a massive spending increase, runaway, unsustainable spending, and its expenses are \$10.2 billion. Well what happened? What happened? The Deputy Premier is asking questions about what would we not do and what not.

It's a matter of balancing priorities. What I wouldn't do, what we wouldn't do, to the Deputy Premier, is put the people of Saskatchewan in the kind of structural deficit that we see at this point in time when revenues are strong for this province, and we see a \$1 billion shortfall.

The Deputy Premier goes on about different programs that they've administered. I think the question that needs to be put forward, the question that needs to be put forward is, does that government, does the Sask Party not measure what sort of programs it's putting forward? And where are its processes to put forward a balanced budget, Mr. Speaker? Where are their processes to make sure that their budgets balance, Mr. Speaker? Because at this point in time there's no excuse, Mr. Speaker, no excuse to be running the kind of structural deficit that we're experiencing.

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

Mr. Forbes: — With leave to introduce guests, please.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Centre has asked leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

[12:45]

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a real honour to stand and introduce a very special guest here today. Behind the bar on this side is Brian Masse. He's the MP [Member of Parliament] for Windsor West. He represents the NDP in the federal House of Commons. And we're really excited to have him out west here. He's here as part of the PNWER [Pacific NorthWest Economic Region] meetings that are going on. But he wanted to come visit and talk. And I wanted to really highlight his involvement, particularly around Bill C-273.

Bill 273 was the right to repair Bill that has made great progress championing the rights of individuals to choose where they want to have their vehicles repaired. And there's been great progress. And I should report to this House . . . I made a member's statement last spring. In fact I asked all the members to write their MPs, and they did. And as a result this Bill has . . . now actually the Bill's been withdrawn but there's been parallel agreements to see that the intention of the Bill will take place. And so Mr. Masse withdrew his Bill last week but there's been great progress.

And I want to thank everybody who did participate in that letter-writing campaign in contacting their MPs. So I do ask all members here to give a warm welcome to Brian Masse. Thank you.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 1 — Loss of Support for the Government (continued)

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I've highlighted, I believe, specifically the concerns around spending of this government, runaway spending, Mr. Speaker.

I think what we will highlight now is our concerns as it relates to revenue projections and the foundation of the budget that's been put forward by this government. And you know, we hear lots about potash and, you know, we hear the Premier kind of try to excuse himself of responsibility because he points to potash, Mr. Speaker. But he needs to be pointing to himself. The responsibility is directly on his shoulders, Mr. Speaker.

I think it's important to look at this in the context of what kind of revenues has potash provided Saskatchewan treasury for the past so many years. And when we look at 2008, Mr. Speaker . . . And Saskatchewan people know full well that the Saskatchewan New Democrats handed to this government an economy that was firing on all cylinders. As a result, there was lots of revenues moving in and many resources were really sought after at that point in time. So if we exclude that anomalous year of 2008, Mr. Speaker, and we go back to potash revenues for this province, five-year average has provided this province \$260 million, Mr. Speaker.

And I say \$260 million in that five-year average disregarding the anomalous year of 2008 because it's important that we

recognize then that, last year when this budget was being put together, we knew the world was in full recession — worldwide recession like we hadn't seen in a generation or more, Mr. Speaker. And this government forged ahead with numbers that were completely unrealistic. In fact, they came from some sort of a fantasyland, Mr. Speaker, and they put forward a budget of \$2 billion for revenues to come in from potash.

Well think about that. Five-year average, \$260 million. The world is in recession. Our biggest buyers, India, China, and Brazil, are in recession and they're signalling that they're not going to be buying near as much potash if they'll be buying any at all, Mr. Speaker.

In our own backyard, Mr. Speaker, we have producers scaling back production in historic ways. Now the reason they're scaling back production, Mr. Speaker, was to ensure that they were managing the supply to reflect the reduced demand, Mr. Speaker. But this government misses all of those signs, Mr. Speaker, and forges ahead with a budget of \$2 billion. Historically 260, worldwide recession, signs in our own backyard, and they put forward a reckless, irresponsible budget assuming \$2 billion of its revenues on potash, Mr. Speaker.

And beyond that point, Mr. Speaker, it's one thing to book the revenues as a assumption on the budget, but they spent every single last dollar, as we talked about in the spending, Mr. Speaker. So we do see historic — historic — mismanagement on that front.

We highlighted during budget time our concerns as it related to gross domestic product and the different assumptions that this government had. The Sask Party disregarded the private sector averages, the banks, the analysts, Mr. Speaker. And they went on again the Premier's gut feeling, Mr. Speaker, that we realize doesn't provide good business sense, Mr. Speaker. And they put forward, you know, a budget that had three times what the private sector averages were suggesting.

What we've realized has come true, Mr. Speaker, is that the private sector was a lot closer to what was going on, Mr. Speaker. And in fact we see contractions in this economy under the Saskatchewan Party and their flawed economic policies, Mr. Speaker.

In 2009, right now, the projections stand that the Conference Board of Canada says that we'll shrink or decline, contract by negative 2.7 per cent, Mr. Speaker. From Royal Bank, RBC, Mr. Speaker, we're seeing a contraction of 1.3 per cent, Mr. Speaker — a shrinking economy. When we look at TD [Toronto Dominion] Bank, what are they saying? Well they're saying the economy's shrinking under the Saskatchewan Party to the tune of 1 per cent. And IHS Global Insight are also calling for a shrinking economy. You average these together, Mr. Speaker, the private sector averages . . .

[Interjections]

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And you know, I think that when we recognize right now private sector

forecasters are challenging this government on its policies and on their projections daily — we read it in the financial papers across this country in fact, Mr. Speaker — and what we realize is that while they're still sort of, they've got the pompoms in the air and pretending that things are happening which aren't, what we realize, the reality is that private sector forecasters are saying that we're shrinking our economy in 2009 under the flawed policies of the Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Speaker. And that's too bad.

But I think it's worthwhile, Mr. Speaker, that we've said so many times that this is a problem of the Sask Party's own making. And it is, Mr. Speaker. And some say that no one could have predicted this, Mr. Speaker.

They set themselves up on this one, Mr. Speaker. What were they handed? Well they were handed more revenues than a government had ever been handed in the history of this province. They were handed an economy hotter — hotter, Mr. Speaker — than this economy had ever been. And that came from Saskatchewan New Democrats, the business people of this province, the workers in this province, and the resource base that we have, Mr. Speaker. And we're proud of that, Mr. Speaker, very proud of that, Mr. Speaker.

But I go back to budget time, Mr. Speaker, and there are some different things that were said at that point in time on budget day, Mr. Speaker. And I guess I'll quote from *Hansard* a little bit, Mr. Speaker, just to show how out to lunch and how the Premier and his cabinet had not a sniff, Mr. Speaker, not a sniff, not a clue, not a clue as it related to their economy and their finances.

I heard from one individual, one individual who said that if clues were shoes, this government would be shoeless, Mr. Speaker. That's right. That's how bad it is. Anyways the poor humour shouldn't really occur because what we have is a massive error that's costing Saskatchewan people.

But some of the quotes, Mr. Speaker, some of the quotes. Okay just to prove that this government knew full well that the world was in economic recession . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Didn't have a sniff. Didn't have a sniff. But they certainly knew, Mr. Speaker, that the world was in global recession. And I quote from March 18, 2009, the Finance minister. I quote, "This Provincial Budget comes at a time of global recession . . . a complete 180 degree shift from one year ago."

An Hon. Member: — Who said it?

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Who said that? The Finance minister. When? At budget time, Mr. Speaker.

So the Finance minister knew that the world was within global recession. I don't know how you couldn't know that. It was every single headline at the point in time. But the point of making the point, Mr. Speaker, is that it's the global economy that buys the resources from this province, Mr. Speaker. It's China. It's India. It's Brazil who we rely on, Mr. Speaker, to purchase our potash.

An Hon. Member: — Are we going to vote today, Trent?

Mr. Wotherspoon: — The Deputy Premier asked me the question about voting, and certainly we're going to vote in a little while.

But I remember very clearly, very clearly, Mr. Speaker, just before, just before last session in the spring, Mr. Speaker. I think it would have been about May. And the Deputy Premier sat in his chair as we were challenging his government about potash revenues, and he sat there kind of excited and confident.

We recognize now, unfortunately clueless at that point in time, saying, just wait guys, just wait. The big potash contracts are going to be here in June. And we looked at him and said, well boy, you sure have a lot of confidence. But unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, he had not a sniff what was going on in the world economy and how it related back to our economy, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to go back to a couple other comments, Mr. Speaker. This is the Finance minister on budget day. The Finance minister says . . .

[Interjections]

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, I'm going to quote again the Finance minister on budget day. And I quote:

This "new balance" is built on strong, but cautious, revenue estimates.

Cautious revenue estimates.

We don't expect to see the massive jump in provincial revenues that we enjoyed last year . . .

However, this year, we're expecting revenues to be up by \$1.3 billion dollars from the 2008-09 . . .

Mr. Speaker, what an embarrassment. You know, members opposite, you know, I know they kind of . . . sometimes they still have to have bravado on this front, but what an embarrassment, Mr. Speaker.

And now the problem, Mr. Speaker, is it's this kind of mismanagement, it's this kind of cluelessness that actually hurts and dashes the hopes and opportunities for Saskatchewan people. It hurts business people in Canora. It hurts business people in Swift Current. It hurts business people and opportunities in Prince Albert. It's indiscriminate of where we live, Mr. Speaker, or where we represent, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to go on, Mr. Speaker, just to talk about a little bit what the opposition was offering because, you know, someone can say, you know, hindsight's 20/20 or, you know, it's pretty easy to rear-end quarterback, Mr. Speaker. So I think I'm going to highlight at this point in time — just so that the public is crystal clear, Mr. Speaker — that there were individuals, Mr. Speaker, pointing to the very specific problems of that budget last budget day, Mr. Speaker. So this isn't rear-end quarterbacking. We've been bang on and direct with our criticisms from the moment it was tabled.

And, Mr. Speaker, so what I hear at that point in time, our Finance critic put forward, Mr. Speaker, a house is only as solid as its foundation. And so it is with budgets. A key component of the foundation for a solid budget is its economic outlook. It goes on to question the assumptions, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to GDP [gross domestic product], that were wildly optimistic and completely out of line and out of line with private sector forecasters, Mr. Speaker, completely out of line.

And it went on to challenge specifically the revenues that this government was assuming they would reap from potash revenues that were completely out of line with the signals that were going on in our own backyard with historic scaling down of production, Mr. Speaker, and completely out of line of what was going on from the major buyers in the world, Mr. Speaker.

So we put those criticisms to this government. We offered ourselves constructively to work with that government. And what we've seen is ignorance, Mr. Speaker, and a forging ahead that is causing huge damage for Saskatchewan people.

We've seen runaway spending of 32 per cent in two years. It simply has to stop. That government needs to figure out the priorities that it values and needs to bring this back in line.

We see the creation of a structural deficit that's going to damage the future prosperity of Saskatchewan for our children, for our business people, for our communities, Mr. Speaker. And it's unfair. We need the Saskatchewan Party to address the circumstance that's been there.

And I hear it from members. We've seen this with Devine before. We sure have, Mr. Speaker. We've paid that price for it, Mr. Speaker. But never, not even Devine, Mr. Speaker, never did Devine's government — as terrible of financial managers as they were — never did they miss one revenue source. Never did Devine's government miss one revenue source by over \$1 billion. The record goes to this government, Mr. Speaker, of financial mismanagement. It's unprecedented and it's their record. And man, they must be embarrassed to have it.

We're going to continue to challenge this government to clean up its financial act. We're going to put forward constructive solutions. We're going to stand up for the people and the businesses of this province, Mr. Speaker, because that's what our job is to do, and that's what the legacy of this party, the Saskatchewan New Democrats, is all about.

At this point in time, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move something that's very important to Saskatchewan people. With concern for the compromising mismanagement of this government, the Saskatchewan Party, that compromises the programs and future of Saskatchewan people, I move:

That due to this government's financial mismanagement resulting in a reduction of government services, most notably in primary health services, this government no longer enjoys the support of the Assembly and the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, and a couple people on the other side want to make sure they hear that again. And I know a few of them are feeling and know this full well, Mr. Speaker, "That due to this

government's financial mismanagement resulting in a reduction of government services . . ." And at this time I'd like to move the motion as read. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Regina Rosemont has moved a motion:

That due to this government's financial mismanagement resulting in a reduction of government services, most notably in primary health services, this government no longer enjoys the support of the Assembly and the people of Saskatchewan.

Being past the time of adjournment, this House now stands adjourned until 1:30 Monday afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 13:00.]

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President of the Executive Council

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Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Crop Insurance Corporation

Hon. Bill BOYD
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