



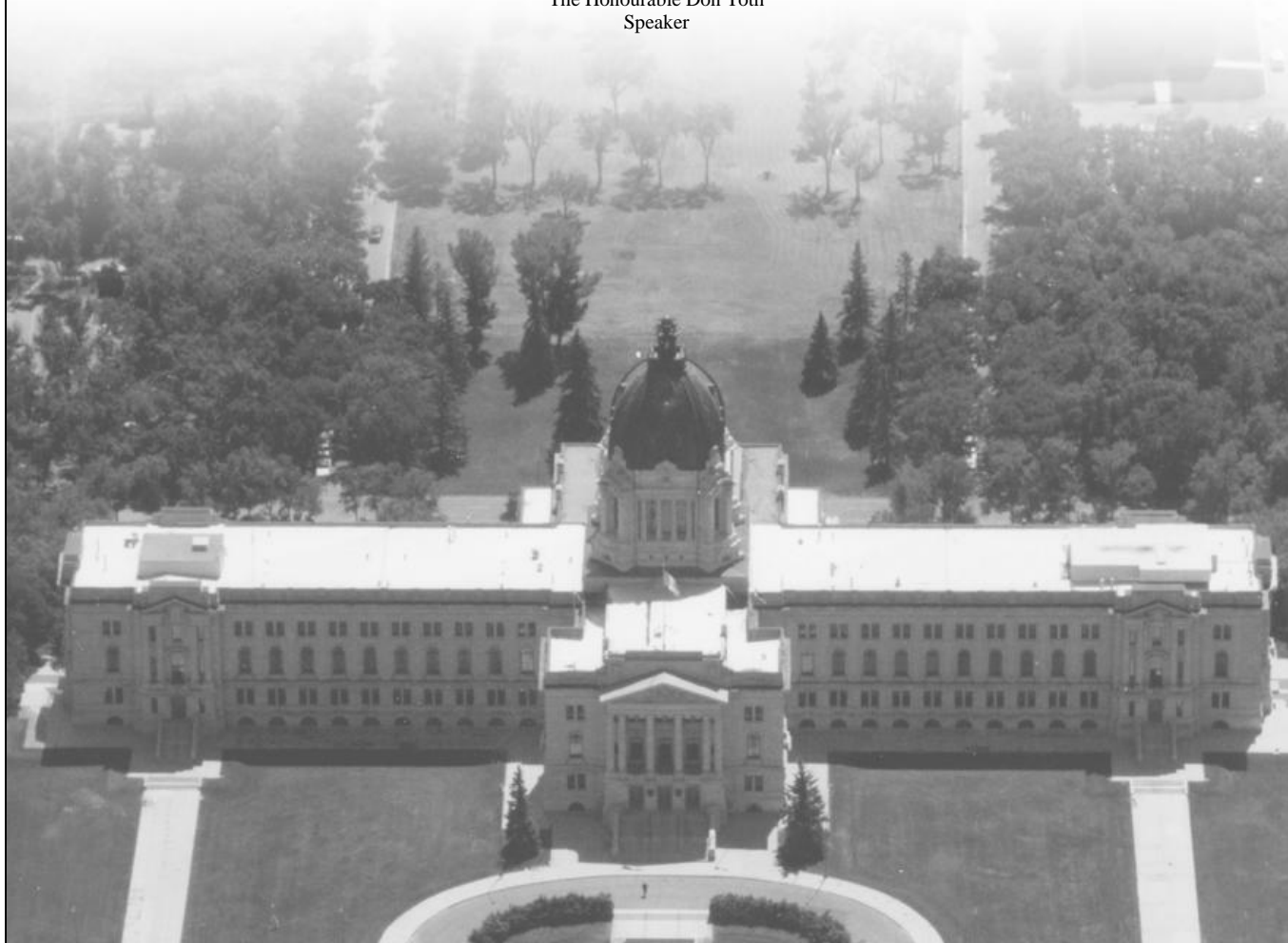
THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

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

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

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly 16 special guests that we have with us all the way from Canada's hot spot, Yellow Grass, Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, we have 16 students in grade 5 and grade 6 from Yellow Grass. They're accompanied by their teacher, Jane Peters, who has brought a number of school groups to the Legislative Assembly over the last couple of years, and also with their bus driver, Wayne Obst. And I will be spending a little bit of time with them after routine proceedings are finished. And I would ask all members to help me welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Estevan.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all members of this honoured Assembly, I'd like to introduce some constituents of mine. Seated in your gallery are Brent and Allison Dinsmore from Estevan and they are accompanied by their daughter, Erica. And the Dinsmores are also friends of the member from Yorkton, Mr. Speaker. So I ask all members to join me in welcoming them to their Assembly.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I present a petition for the Saskatchewan Student Coalition:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to implement the promised Saskatchewan scholarship fund.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, these people have primarily signed the resolution from Saskatoon. Thank you.

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

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of concerned citizens of Saskatchewan who are concerned about the condition of Highway 22. As we know, Mr. Speaker, the highway deteriorated to the point where it's a safety hazard for the residents who have to try and drive on that particular road. And, Mr. Speaker, I will read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the Sask Party government to commit to providing the repairs to Highway 22 that the people of Saskatchewan need.

And in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this particular petition is signed by the good folks from Earl Grey, Saskatchewan. I so submit.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, leave to introduce guests.

The Speaker: — The Leader of the Opposition has asked for leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly a group of people from Warman who have come this morning to join us for question period. And we had a interesting discussion about issues in that area before we came to the Assembly.

But included in the group we have Mayor Sheryl Spence, Deputy Mayor Gary Philipchuk, as well as Councillor Kevin Martens. There's a number of other people here. I don't have all your names, but I know we'll be meeting with you after question period. I just wanted to welcome you here and I know that all members will want to join with me in recognizing the people here from Warman. Thank you.

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

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — With leave to introduce guests.

The Speaker: — The minister has asked for leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. I recognize the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join the Leader of the Opposition in welcoming the folks from Warman. It is one of the fastest growing towns, not just in Saskatchewan, but in the country. And we understand they're facing some challenges, and I've appreciated the working relationship that I have with their mayor and town council and working towards some solutions to those. And so I'd hope that everybody would welcome them to their Legislative Assembly today.

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

**PRESENTING PETITIONS
(continued)**

Mr. Forbes: — Continuing with petitions. I'd like to present a petition in support of wage equity for CBO [community-based organization] workers. And we know that workers in community-based organizations in our province have traditionally been underpaid and many continue to earn poverty level wages. And in fact the low wages of CBO workers result in high staff turnover, and the subsequent lack of caregiver continuity has a negative impact on the quality of care clients receive. I'd like to read the prayer, Mr. Speaker:

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 folks who have signed this petition come from the city of Saskatoon. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition in support of a new long-term care facility in La Ronge. The prayer reads as follows:

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.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

It is signed by the good people of La Ronge 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 that has been circulated by the Saskatchewan Student Coalition in support of affordable undergraduate tuition costs and request that the Sask Party government's actions match its rhetoric. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to implement a long-term tuition management strategy in which tuition is increased by an average of 2 per cent or the most recent increase to the consumer price index.

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

I so present.

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

Mr. Furber: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today to present a petition in support of reducing the interest on fixed rate student loans to prime. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately reduce the interest on fixed rate student loans to the prime rate of borrowing so that students can accumulate less debt and focus their finances on building their lives here in Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition has been circulated by the Saskatchewan Student Coalition, and the signatures are from folks who reside in Regina, Saskatchewan. Thank you.

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 and who have yet not had any sign of commitment from the government. 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 these petitions, Mr. Speaker, are signed by the good residents of Duck Lake. I so present.

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition in support of withdrawal of Bill 80. Mr. Speaker, there's a proud history of craft union certification in Saskatchewan, and the building trades in our province support an apprenticeship system of training which results in a highly skilled workforce. And the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to withdraw its ill-conceived Bill 80, *The Construction Industry Labour Relations Amendment Act, 2009* which dismantles the proud history of the building trades in this province, creates instability in the labour market, and impacts the quality of training required of workers before entering the workforce.

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by residents of Regina, and I

so present.

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

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise to present a petition by residents of Saskatchewan who wish to bring to the attention of the Legislative Assembly the fact that many seniors, Saskatchewan seniors, live on fixed income and are victims of physical, emotional, or financial abuse. Mr. Speaker, the petitioners respectfully request:

... that the Legislative Assembly take the following action: enact a seniors' bill of rights which would provide Saskatchewan seniors with social and economic security and protection from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

The petition, Mr. Speaker, is signed by my neighbours in the constituency of Cut Knife-Turtleford. I so present.

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

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition signed by residents of Saskatchewan concerned about the disregard for legal and constitutional rights by this government. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to direct marriage commissioners to uphold the law and the equality rights of all Saskatchewan couples, and to withdraw the reference of the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal that would allow marriage commissioners to opt out of their legal obligations to provide all couples with civil marriage services.

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

This petition is signed by residents of Saskatoon and Rosthern. And I so present.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and present petitions on behalf of concerned residents from across Saskatchewan as it relates to the unprecedented mismanagement of their finances by the Sask Party. They allude to the \$1 billion deficit created by the Sask Party and they recognize that this a problem that's getting worse, not better. And the circumstance that we're now paying \$200 million to the potash . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. All of the members have been very conscious of the decision a number of years ago of limiting the opening comments and getting to the prayer. And I would ask the member from Regina Rosemont to follow the example of other members.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — 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 petitioners are signed by concerned citizens of Regina and Estevan. I so present.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition in support of the expansion of the graduate retention program. This petition is about fairness and about recognizing the value of keeping our most educated citizens here. The prayer reads as follows:

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.

The petition is signed by the residents of Moose Jaw, Mossbank, and Caronport. I so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Saskatchewan Party Convention

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, I wanted to reflect on the people that showed up at this recent Sask Party convention. When you take all the MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly], the former candidates and their spouses, that's about 110 people. The party executive and the constituency presidents and their spouses will add another 120 people. All the political staff in this building and their spouses would add another 300 people. The constituency assistants and their spouses would add 75 more people. The party staff must have around 20 people, Mr. Speaker.

So add that all up. You get 625 people required to go to the Sask Party convention, but they only had 492 people show up. One of these was an NDP [New Democratic Party] observer and at least 30 other people were media or other visitors, so that leaves 461 people. And of these 461 people, roughly 80 per cent showed confidence in this Premier, Mr. Speaker.

They only passed four resolutions, one of which was to establish a forestry centre in Prince Albert. The member from P.A. [Prince Albert] Carlton brought forth that resolution. I have news for him. There is already a forestry centre in P.A. Address is 1410 Central Avenue.

Of the 461 people that showed up when 625 were told to show up, it is not great. This wasn't a political convention, Mr.

Speaker, it was a staff barbecue.

[10:15]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cannington.

2010 Winter Paralympics

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Tomorrow is the opening ceremony for the Vancouver 2010 Paralympic Winter Games. These Olympic-style games for athletes with a disability were first organized in Rome in 1960.

In March 2003 the international Paralympic committee executive committee approved the new vision for the IPC, and I quote, "To enable Paralympic athletes to achieve sporting excellence and inspire and excite the world."

Each word in this vision has a clear meaning in defining the ultimate aim of the IPC [international Paralympic committee]:

To enable: this is the primary role of the IPC as an organization: to create the conditions for athlete empowerment through self-determination

Paralympic athletes: the primary focus of IPC's activities, in the context of Paralympic athletes, is the development of all athletes from initiation to elite level

To achieve sporting excellence: the goal of a sports-centred organization

To inspire and excite the world: the external result is our contribution to a better world for all people with a disability. To achieve this, relations with external organizations and the promotion of the Paralympic Movement as a whole are of prime importance.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to give well wishes to all the competitors attending the Paralympics, especially the Canadian athletes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Financial Projections

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the federal Conservatives introduced their budget intended to get them out of their \$56 billion deficit. And what was the response from the Sask Party? The Sask Party Finance minister, I quote, "... expressed deep skepticism about the financial projections ..." Yes, Mr. Speaker, that Finance minister expressed deep skepticism about the financial projections of his federal cousins, saying that their revenue projections are far too optimistic.

Well, well, well, Mr. Speaker, this sounds a tad familiar. The Sask Party Finance minister may just remember the NDP telling him that very same thing. The Sask Party put all their eggs in one basket last year, predicting potash revenues to be \$1.9 billion, and then proceeded to spend like kids in a candy store.

Now we find out that actual potash revenues will be at least a

negative \$204 million. This is a miscalculation of over 110 per cent. From unprecedented revenue to unprecedented payments, this government, that government is writing cheques to the potash companies and actually paying them to mine our potash. And our Finance minister actually has the audacity to criticize his federal cousins. Mr. Speaker, this is a classic example of the incompetent pot calling the mismanaged kettle black — hypocrisy at its finest.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities Convention

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities is concluding their annual spring convention. Mr. Speaker, SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] delegates came to Regina and started meeting on Tuesday, and they discussed a number of resolutions dealing with a wide variety of topics including agriculture, environment, health, and also resolutions pertaining to their own organizations, Mr. Speaker. The issues that they discussed in the resolutions concern people living in rural municipalities but also concerns of citizens across this province.

But last night, Mr. Speaker, they took time to have a little fun at their banquet. And the theme of their banquet was Green and White Commemorative Night, celebrating Saskatchewan Roughriders' 100th anniversary. And in attendance, Mr. Speaker, were a number of current and past Roughrider players and executive along with a large number of government MLAs. And it turned out to be quite a fun evening, Mr. Speaker.

The highlight of the evening was when Scott Schultz took the podium to talk about his teammates. And to be frank, Mr. Speaker, we think as MLAs that we're sometimes tough on our colleagues. We haven't seen anything until you saw Scott talk about his colleagues, Mr. Speaker.

So I would like to congratulate SARM and its delegates for hosting another successful convention and wish them good luck in the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Minister's Comments

Mr. Furber: — Mr. Speaker, last fall the Minister Responsible for Energy and mines was on TV during supplementary estimates to admit that he couldn't say if Crown corporation borrowing was going up or down.

Many thought they were watching reruns of that program with the minister's recent appearances on TV and on BNN [Business News Network]. First he said, during one appearance, that Saskatchewan would realize about \$100 million in potash royalties this year, even though he should have known for weeks that his government actually has to write a cheque to companies for over \$200 million.

Was the minister confused again, Mr. Speaker? Was he trying to hide his government's rerun of Devine-style mismanagement from the national media?

Next, Mr. Speaker, he relied on out-of-date Conference Board numbers to say that Saskatchewan would lead the nation in economic growth next year. Wrong again, Mr. Speaker. The Conference Board does predict growth for Saskatchewan, though not at the levels the minister boasted. And he should have known that.

When it came to talking about the source of that growth, he did finally tell the truth. He gave credit to the fair and stable royalty and regulatory system in the oil and gas sector. And where did this regime come from, Mr. Speaker? The minister's answer speaks for itself. We haven't made any changes.

Mr. Speaker, the people will take a rerun of classic NDP policy over a rerun of Grant Devine's mismanagement every single time.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cut Knife-Lloydminster.

Good Economic News

Mr. Chisholm: — Mr. Speaker, I have some good news for the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, RBC [Royal Bank of Canada] has released its latest provincial economic update. The report says 2010 will be a good year for Saskatchewan and 2011 will be even better.

Mr. Speaker, RBC predicts the Saskatchewan economy will grow by 3.6 per cent this year, second highest of all provinces; and then grow by 4.6 per cent next year, first in the country. And according to a Canadian job market . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. It would be appropriate to allow the member from Cut Knife-Lloyd to be able to share his statement without a lot of interference. I recognize the member from Cut Knife-Lloyd.

Mr. Chisholm: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to a Canadian job market report, the number of job postings in Saskatchewan is up 17 per cent over last year to over 7,000.

I humbly share this news with members of the House this morning, Mr. Speaker, to show the contrast between reality and the fantasyland of the members opposite. While the NDP cling to their negative, backward-looking attitude about Saskatchewan and her people, our province is doing quite well, very well. In the coming weeks, our government will share with the people of Saskatchewan a forward-looking and responsible plan that will ensure this growth continues.

This kind of news, Mr. Speaker, puts a smile on my face, but not so much obviously for the members opposite which is why I invite them to turn those frowns upside down.

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

Comments at Convention

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday at the SARM convention in Regina, the Premier took the opportunity to stress his caucus members' ties to the farm. Some had strong connections to the farm, family connections to the farm, while others, he joked, had only ever driven by a farm.

Then, Mr. Speaker, the Premier turned to the member for Saskatoon northeast, and he joked that that member had been arrested on a farm in Quebec. Mr. Speaker, that member was running a multi-million dollar lab for producing crystal methamphetamine in Quebec. His arrest as a brutal drug kingpin whose violent acts and illegal drugs ruined countless lives is a matter of public record. It is also, apparently, a joking matter for the Premier.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier's latest episode in his long record of inappropriate comments caught on tape continues to disappoint and leads many to wonder if he knows what subjects deserve to be taken seriously or not. Cancelled children's hospital and growing waiting lists resulting from historic fiscal mismanagement are not matters for standing ovations and jokes about potato chips. They are the serious consequences for Saskatchewan families of nearly unprecedented incompetence and mismanagement.

Similarly, while the Premier may think an arrest for drug dealing and violence is a matter for levity, families affected by illegal drugs and gang violence aren't in on the Premier's joke.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Support for School Divisions

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, the opposition received a heartbreaking letter from two concerned parents from Warman who have a deaf son in kindergarten. Their son has to take his one-on-one lessons with his educational assistant in a paint storage closet because the school is overcrowded. Here's part of what the parents say in their letter:

This is totally unacceptable to have to learn in a setting such as this. To be stuffed into a small storage room is par with being shunned and degraded, making the child feel uncomfortable and embarrassed to be segregated and subjected to this kind of treatment.

To the minister: does he agree with these parents that using a paint storage closet as a classroom is completely unacceptable?

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

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, boards of education rely on plans. They rely on making sure that they put in place services. There is a system in place where the school division, along with the school, develop personal program plans. They're referred to as PPPs.

In the planning of a program for a child with intensive supports, a lot of people are involved in that. A lot of people deliver the services, right from the classroom teacher through to an educational assistant through probably even in some instances a speech pathologist or other professionals that are brought in by the school division.

Mr. Speaker, there has been a pressure put on school divisions to ensure that those services are provided. But the decision is made at the local level, the decision is made by the school division, and it is made by the school involved.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, the minister is ducking the question. The question was not about the role of EAs. The question was about the fact that students are being forced into paint closets to learn in the school. The reason why that kindergarten boy has his lessons in the storage closet is because Warman is in desperate need of a middle school. The elementary school was built for 350 to 400 students, but almost 700 are enrolled and over 130 more are expected to enrol next fall. The school division calls the overcrowding at the elementary school a crisis.

To the Minister of Education: when can the people of Warman expect an announcement regarding the desperately needed middle school?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, it was very evident when I became Minister of Education that the position that we inherited from the NDP was a very serious infrastructure deficit. Mr. Speaker, in the first week, in the first week of becoming Minister of Education, we actually allocated \$13 million to fund the projects that had been previously announced in 2003. Mr. Speaker — 2003. We finished those projects in Saskatoon and we were going to move forward, Mr. Speaker. We have . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. I think it would be appropriate for the opposition in asking the question to allow the minister to respond. And I understand there are some guests who would be interested in hearing the answer. I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, over the last two years and a couple of months, we have allocated over \$300 million to capital. Mr. Speaker, there is a further need. There is a further need in Warman and in Lloydminster and in Martensville and in White City and in Balgonie. Mr. Speaker, these are projects that we want to move forward. Mr. Speaker, the opposition in the course of eight years never did as much as this government has done in two years.

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

Mr. Broten: — The director of education in the school division has said in the media that she doesn't think the Sask Party

government understands the urgency of the situation in Warman. The Leader of the Opposition and several NDP MLAs have been to Warman and we understand the urgency.

Representatives from Warman have driven all the way down to Regina this morning to demonstrate to the Premier, the minister, and their MLA that this is a crisis and the government needs to take action. Since they're getting no answers from the Minister of Education, I'll ask their MLA.

To the Minister of Environment: how can she go around talking about mega projects like carbon sequestration, like a domed stadium, when she can't even ensure proper education through the facilities provided in their school?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, many MLAs on this side of the House and on that side of the House have lobbied for what they see as an infrastructure deficit in their communities. Mr. Speaker, the member for Martensville has done exactly that. She has been telling me over and over again about the pressures faced.

[10:30]

Mr. Speaker, the project list, Mr. Speaker, the major project capital list which is printed in the summer indicates the position of 104 projects, Mr. Speaker, that have been put forward by all 29 boards of education. This is an infrastructure deficit that the NDP did nothing about, Mr. Speaker.

We're going to move forward. We're moving forward with \$300 million worth of projects. Twenty-two major capital projects are under way, Mr. Speaker. Will we want to do more capital projects? You bet.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, the deficit is in their budgeting. That is the concern, Mr. Speaker. They had billions in surplus, Mr. Speaker, and now they have over a \$1 billion deficit.

The middle school is supposed to be attached to the half-completed Warman Sport and Cultural Village. The NDP provided funding for that facility through the building communities fund, but then the project's bank account dried up as construction costs skyrocketed and funding requests were denied by the Sask Party and the federal Tories.

If the Sask Party government announced the construction of a middle school, it would inject \$3 million into the sport and cultural village, and construction would begin again. A middle school for Warman would solve the school overcrowding and the stalled construction of the sport and cultural village. To the Minister of the Environment: why should the people of Warman have to pay for the Sask Party's budgetary incompetence?

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

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, I made mention of 22

major capital projects, but I also want the member opposite to understand, along with all the people in the province of Saskatchewan, that there are many projects that occur. These are referred to as block projects. They're smaller in nature. They're usually under \$1 million, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have moved forward 90 projects.

One of the projects, Mr. Speaker, that's on the list is in fact the very new school in Warman — the high school — that in fact has a growing enrolment. And, Mr. Speaker, they've made application through the Prairie Spirit School Division to actually add relocatables to that school. Mr. Speaker, this is a project that is under consideration as well because we understand the pressures that Prairie Spirit is facing, along with other schools, Mr. Speaker.

We want to address those things, Mr. Speaker, but I can tell you that we've done far more in our two years than the NDP ever did.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, if everything is so wonderful as the minister says, why would the mayor, why would councillors, why would concerned parents wake up before dawn, drive to Regina, and bring their concerns to this legislature? The minister's answer does not hold water.

Recent press reports indicate that Warman has now around 6,300 people. Tim Hortons is even setting up shop in Warman. But the Sask Party government's mismanagement of our finances means that the children of Warman are crammed into a school that's far too small, that a kindergarten boy has to take lessons in a paint closet, and that the shell of the Warman Sport & Cultural Village stands empty.

To anybody over there who is willing to provide a credible answer: why is it that Tim Hortons believes in Warman, but the Sask Party doesn't?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, the difference between the former government and this government is that people believe, they believe in Saskatchewan now. They believe in Saskatchewan. And that's why we have the problems that we have in Warman.

Mr. Speaker, there are a far greater number of people coming to this province. Saskatchewan now receives 16,000 more people last year than this year. Mr. Speaker, those are pressures that we're feeling in the school system. No question, Mr. Speaker, no question.

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, I've indicated to the Prairie Spirit School Division that it would be . . . that their project which is number, I believe it's number 6 on the list, is within the top 10. It is, Mr. Speaker. And that we're going to

look at the possibilities of moving some projects forward.

Mr. Speaker, the budget is very near. And we're going to be able to look at a number of things to do, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we address the pressures that school boards are facing. Mr. Speaker, that is a commitment that we made two years ago. We've done that with over \$300 million.

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, last spring the Sask Party government took away school divisions' ability to tax. And they indicated at the time that they were going to provide stable and predictable funding, and that they were going to reduce education property tax for families across the province. Can the minister explain to people today why his Sask Party government has broken that promise?

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

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, our government made a commitment to the taxpayers of this province. We made a commitment that said the taxpayers in the province of Saskatchewan face the highest amount of education-related funding. That's fact, Mr. Speaker. The member actually asking the question would know that. She was a former minister of Education.

Saskatchewan taxpayers provided the most money to fund education. We made that commitment, Mr. Speaker. And last year, our first opportunity to address this, we in fact adopted a report that was done by the member for Rosetown, which said that we need to ensure that the property tax commitment is lowered. And we did that, Mr. Speaker. We did that. We're working with the boards of education right now to develop the new funding formula that replaces a formula that was in place since 1972.

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that this government has done a lot. This government is quick. Oh yes, there's no doubt about that. This government is quick to claim credit for a growing population and increasing enrolments — oh yes, yes, yes — but then they refuse to take responsibility for helping communities manage that growth, Mr. Speaker.

Now they say to school divisions with increasing enrolments, like Prairie Spirit, that you're basically on your own when it comes to skyrocketing enrolments and for students with special needs. So a very simple question to the minister: why is it that your government is leaving communities like Warman to fend for themselves?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, I think the people of Saskatchewan realize full well when that opposition was in government, they transferred to school divisions negative 4 per cent in growth — minus 4, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize, we recognize that the funding formula that needs to be put in place is going to be developed, Mr. Speaker — no question about that. We also recognize, Mr. Speaker, in the interim we took the amount of budgets that the boards of education had from the previous year. We added to those budgets, Mr. Speaker, the amount of money needed for salary increases, for ensuring that there wasn't inflationary pressure. And that's the budget that boards of education are working with, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, boards of education today are spending \$1.6 billion that is provided for in two ways, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, when the Government of Saskatchewan took away school divisions' ability to tax, they also said to school divisions, and I quote, divisions will no longer be funded on a per-student basis.

So school divisions need to know exactly what future funding will be based on if it's not enrolment. Parents need to know what services their local schools are going to be able to offer to their children. If the Sask Party has already decided that funding will no longer be based on a per student enrolment, then people need to know exactly what this government has in mind.

So to the minister: no more delays, no more broken promises, no more policy on the fly which is obviously obvious. What is your new formula for funding school divisions in our province?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the advisory committee that is working right now along with a number of subcommittees, they are working towards developing a funding formula that will replace the old FOG [foundation operating grant] grant. In the interim, Mr. Speaker, in the interim, really the current model is still being used. Because, Mr. Speaker, as I indicated in my last answer, we have adjusted for salary increases and inflation. Mr. Speaker, we need to develop a formula where we're going to be assured that there is a base level of funding for all school divisions.

But, Mr. Speaker, in each school division there are different circumstances. In rural school divisions, we have something called schools of necessity; they require additional funding. In urban Saskatchewan we don't have those situations. Mr. Speaker, in Regina for instance, there are programs that don't exist in some of the rural school divisions. In northern Saskatchewan, where we have three northern school boards, they require a different kind of funding. So, Mr. Speaker, we're working on that.

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Well they're working on it. But at the same time, the government changes education financing, making it impossible for school divisions to raise additional revenues on their own. Then they tell school divisions faced with rising costs and rising enrolments that you're on your own.

And everyone sees what's going on here — cuts in programs for students, and the Sask Party hopes that parents are going to blame school divisions and not the provincial government. So to the minister: why is the minister setting the stage for program cuts in schools? And why should Saskatchewan students and Saskatchewan parents have to pay the price for your mismanagement?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, a couple of points because the member seems to imply that last year there was a reduction in funding. Absolutely not true. Mr. Speaker, every board of education, the former budget that the board of education had was added to. It was added to for the cost of salaries, and it was added to for inflation.

So, Mr. Speaker, those numbers have risen to, as I'd indicated in my last answer, \$1.6 billion, Mr. Speaker. So for that member to suggest that a board of education has made a decision to cancel the program because of a reduction in funding, that's simply not true. That's simply not true.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to move forward with a number of initiatives. There are going to be capital initiatives that we're going to move forward with. There are going to be initiatives that we're going to move forward as a result of the immigration program and the fact that we have a number of new students in our school. Mr. Speaker, we're going to move forward when the Minister of Finance stands in a few days and indicates to the people . . .

The Speaker: — Next question. Order. Before I recognize the next question, just to remind members of placing their questions through the Chair and not directly to individuals. I recognize the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Municipal Revenue Sharing

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I'm struck by what a difference a year can make. And last year in this Assembly, the Premier was on his feet often, waving his pompoms, and all of the government MLAs were the backup choir talking about promises made, promises kept. That's all we heard. But, Mr. Speaker, this year, this year, Mr. Speaker, we are seeing a growing list — and I'm afraid on March 24th it will grow even larger — of broken promise after broken promise.

And my question, Mr. Speaker: why is the minister picking the pockets of Saskatchewan's taxpayers to pay for this government's mismanagement and broken promise on municipal revenue sharing?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I am happy to talk about municipal revenue sharing and what this government has done. In two years, Mr. Speaker, we have raised revenue sharing by 43 per cent to the highest level it has ever been at — \$167.4 million. Mr. Speaker, next year we're going to be going to the full point of PST [provincial sales tax], which will be an unprecedented

investment in municipal governments across this province.

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

Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, last year it was back-patting and congratulations all around wherever you went, but we didn't realize they were developing a formula and then weren't going to implement it. And, Mr. Speaker, this year in my home community of Moose Jaw, the financial services director, a Mr. Acker, is predicting that in Moose Jaw we're going to a 7 per cent increase in our mill rate. And he said, and I quote:

. . . the city would not have to consider raising taxes if the provincial government had increased its revenue sharing to the full one point of the provincial sales tax in 2010, as was promised last year . . . [Mr. Speaker].

Mr. Speaker, why is the minister forcing Moose Jaw families to pay 7 per cent more for their property tax to cover up their own incompetence and mismanagement?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Municipal Affairs.

[10:45]

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And as I'd indicated, revenue sharing has increased by 43 per cent in the last two years to the unprecedented level it's at today, Mr. Speaker.

And you know what, Mr. Speaker? I think it's worth, I think the NDP should acknowledge as well the unprecedented investment we've made into municipal governments, whether it be through the municipal economic enhancement program, \$100 million directly to municipalities, Mr. Speaker; whether it be through the Building Canada fund-communities component, \$227 million of provincial investment into the massive infrastructure deficit we know the NDP have left behind as one of their legacies. Recreational infrastructure project, Mr. Speaker, \$15 million, one of which is projects \$528,000 went for Warman and their Linear Park, which was something that they had asked us to come forward with, and we did, Mr. Speaker.

So you know, Mr. Speaker, I think the NDP record on revenue sharing, which is to claw back \$600 million . . .

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

Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, after last year's big celebration about creating a revenue formula that they had no intention of honouring, Mr. Speaker, the reality is that in Prince Albert, this broken promise will mean a shortfall of nearly \$1 million. And according to an article and information from Prince Albert on February 2nd, the initial numbers that have been put forward by the city, that they will see a tax increase at about 9 per cent.

So, Mr. Speaker, will the minister admit that the taxpayers in Prince Albert will pay 9 per cent more for their property taxes because of this government's latest broken promise?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I find it interesting, as I had noted at the conclusion of my last answer, the NDP clawed back \$600 million in revenue sharing over the course of their 16 years in office. We've increased revenue sharing by 43 per cent.

The commitment we made, Mr. Speaker, in our campaign was that we would apply a point of PST [provincial sales tax] over the course of our four-year mandate. We're going to get to that, Mr. Speaker.

And you know what? I find it . . .

The Speaker: — Order. The member from Athabasca will allow the minister to respond to the question. I recognize the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — And, Mr. Speaker, I think the member for Moose Jaw Wakamow should remember that when she was in cabinet, she voted to claw back \$20 million from her own community.

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

Ms. Higgins: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the minister go back and read the Throne Speech last year because the Premier proudly declared that this is this year country. No more next year country for Saskatchewan. But over and over this year, they keep saying next year, next year, next year. Mr. Speaker, how can we possibly trust the Premier to fulfill this promise on revenue sharing next year when he's clearly broken his commitment to municipalities this year?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well, Mr. Speaker, as I've said, the municipalities are going to be getting the same level of funding they got last year, which is the absolute record that they have ever gotten in the past, Mr. Speaker. And you know what? I find it really disappointing listening to the members opposite, yelling from their seats across the way, running down the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, running down the people of Saskatchewan.

You know what, Mr. Speaker? We have a record we can be very proud of. We are forecast to lead the country in economic growth next year, Mr. Speaker. We have the lowest unemployment rate of any province in Canada, and all we hear from across the way is negativity and it's very unfortunate.

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

Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, I have a bit of a confession to make. And last year . . . Yes, I do. Last year I was a lot like the Sask Party. I thought I was going to win the lottery, Mr. Speaker. But the big difference was, I didn't run out and spend it before it was in my pocket — \$7.9 billion in projections in

this budget. False. It was phony. It was questioned right from the very beginning, but they went out and they spent it before it was even in the bank. Now Saskatchewan taxpayers will be the ones that have to pay. When is this Premier going to own up to his mistakes and actually address some of the issues of Saskatchewan taxpayers?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — You know, Mr. Speaker, all we hear from the other side is doom and gloom. We hear them running down the province. We hear them, we see them . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. The Minister Responsible for Municipal . . . Order. The Minister Responsible for Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well, you know, as what I'd said, Mr. Speaker, all we hear from the members across the way is the running down of the province, the running down of the people of the province, running down of the economy of the province.

Mr. Speaker, the fact is Saskatchewan is forecast to lead the country in economic growth next year, in the year following, Mr. Speaker. We have the lowest unemployment rate in the country. We have the highest population we have ever had living in this province and working in this province, and all we have from the members opposite is negativity.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

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

Health Care Services in Rural Saskatchewan

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the end of my remarks I will be moving a motion that the Assembly condemn the Saskatchewan Party government for abandoning rural Saskatchewan, their health services.

There's nowhere are they more evident than in rural Saskatchewan, the failure that the Sask Party has had in managing — well we're going to talk health services — but in managing anything, as question period has highlighted. But health services is what I'm going to focus on today because it's becoming extremely apparent and was very much a topic of concern and debate at the SARM convention this week. And rural residents are certainly feeling the lack of attention that the Sask Party is paying to them and their issues.

Things like doctor recruitment are of course top of the mind. And there are many communities who we have seen over the last few years actually putting green garbage bags or black garbage bags over their hospital sign, indicating to the public who are travelling on the highways or are looking for them in the communities that there are no longer any services there. And this has happened . . .

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

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Ask leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The member from Yorkton has asked for leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the west gallery is a friend of mine, a community leader, a very well-known businessman from Yorkton, Mr. Jason Farrell. And he's in the city today with his daughter. And I'd ask all members to welcome them to their Assembly and to say hi.

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

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

Health Care Services in Rural Saskatchewan (continued)

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I was starting to say was that at the SARM convention was extremely . . . delegates were extremely concerned about the issues of rural health in their communities and health services. And it's quite apparent with the doctors, the recruitment issue around rural doctors, that this is something that is not being addressed by this government. And there are, like I was saying, several communities are putting black garbage bags or green garbage bags over their hospital signs indicating to people there are no services here. You have to go somewhere else.

And over Christmas, the Christmas period, there was a whole stretch of a highway, miles and miles between Alberta and Saskatchewan, that had no emergency services available. This is unprecedented.

There have been occasions where there had been some emergency services shut down in some communities because of a gap in services with doctors, but never has it been so prevalent and so chronic. And I think that rural Saskatchewan residents are starting to see that none of their issues are being addressed.

The doctor issue is not going to be . . . The minister's going to make an announcement today about doctor recruitment and a strategy, a Crown corporation. That's not going to do anything. They actually need some solutions and they need them fairly quickly.

Increasing seats in the medical college doesn't turn out a doctor for at least seven years. There needs to be some more immediate solutions. And there are some things that could be done. I'm just astounded that we need a Treasury Board Crown to do it.

When I was reading the OC [order in council] about the treasury Crown which is appointing the members of the Crown and establishing the Crown itself to do its work, it has the authority to make agreements, to enter into agreements. Well given the fact the chiropractors have seen what that commitment means, having their agreement torn up before the

minister had promised them certain things and tore up the agreement, there is no honour in the agreements that the Sask Party will sign. So I think I would take cold comfort from the ability of a Crown corporation to make an agreement. I would certainly be hesitant to enter into it and think it would solve anything in my community.

The SMA, the Saskatchewan Medical Association, is at the bargaining table right now. This also must send a chilling message to them about what it means to bargain in good faith, and we certainly need to see a contract with the SMA for doctors to have their issues addressed. That's very important. We haven't heard a word about that. We're hearing about a Treasury Board Crown, and interestingly enough the minister when he was in opposition made it quite clear that there were too many Crowns, and we shouldn't be seeing all these extra Crowns. Well now he himself is making one.

So there are so many issues in rural Saskatchewan that have come up. And again through the SARM convention and all through the year and longer, through me as Health critic, through my colleagues bringing forth issues, people sending them directly to me from all communities around the province, they are not happy with what's happening.

Emergency services: when there is no doctor, there are no emergency services. People will have to drive and that is a hardship. They can't get there in time. They're worried about their health, especially in emergency situations. This can't be fixed with adding more seats to the medical colleges. That's just a pipe dream, wishful thinking.

There has to be more on-the-ground solutions. And giving it over to a Crown corporation when there's no money in the province, the Saskatchewan Party has blown the boom . . . There's no money. We have a huge deficit. We have got chilling messages from the minister and the Premier that everything has to be cut — zero spending, minus 10, all sorts of things, and dire predictions about what departments will have to give up. Well when departments have to cut their budget, services are cut. People's jobs are cut and the people's jobs that are cut are the people who are delivering the services.

So if you're going to see cuts in health care, it's going to affect home care in rural Saskatchewan. Right now, home care workers are saying they're being asked to go back in time — a draconian measure to talk about working split shifts. So you are working, you can work eight, but have to be on call for 12. Come back, work part of your shift, come back.

And interestingly enough — this is probably not the worst part but is one of the worst parts — you have to pay if you have to travel. You're in the Saskatoon Health District and you live in Saskatoon, work in Saskatoon. You have to go to Humboldt. You have to pay for that. As a worker, you have to pay to go to your job because you're having a split shift now. How on earth is that going to affect balancing work and family, which we all talk about? We talk about encouraging women in the workforce and supporting women in the workforce. How will that work?

Home care workers are for the most part women. This is a significant issue for working families and rural women and women — well women everywhere — because this affects

home care workers everywhere. And a lot of the women in the different occupations in rural Saskatchewan — teachers, nurses, home care workers, all the things the women's occupations that we're talking about in health and education, teachers — a lot of them are married to farmers.

This affects everyone in rural Saskatchewan because it affects everybody's life. And if the quality of life is impacted by how you're going to be running around for 12 hours between communities, I don't know how people are going to deal with their family issues. It's going to be a lot harder and certainly going to cause more stress in the families.

We do know from the department's actual website — the Department of Health's website — with the doctor recruitment issue, that there are fewer doctors in the province than there were last year. And so this is a significant issue. We can't cover this over by saying we've got seven more somewhere. Overall, there are fewer. And this is the government's own statistics.

And at the SMA convention, Dr. David Ledding said, "This is our last kick at the cat, we're going to have practices falling apart out there." The doctors themselves are saying, help, we need help. Doctors are leaving rural Saskatchewan in droves. And I mean in groups they're leaving. And we need to know why they're leaving. What is causing . . . I mean we talk about what will bring them here. Why are they all leaving? What's going on in the community that they're leaving?

And the minister said that the days of a doctor in every community are over. Well that's cold comfort. What are you going to do instead? And he said:

Can I ensure that there will be a doctor in every community like there used to be. We just can't do that. The system is changing. The environment is changing.

So communities like Shaunavon and Redvers and . . . [inaudible] . . . and Arcola and Spiritwood and Lestock and Climax and Frontier, who are struggling to find a doctor, he's pretty much telling them, don't bother; you're not going to have one. Things are changing. Put a garbage bag over your sign and move on down the road.

[11:00]

Communities like Coronach and Shaunavon are hiring professional recruitment agencies to help them find doctors. And people are being forced to travel even as far as one to two hours for emergency services. And doctors are working long, long shifts to try and fill the gaps. They're trying, but they can't. I mean you can't work 72 hours. And how's that going to be safe for anybody?

And when a rural community has to suspend hospital emergency services because of a lack of a doctor, their hospital gets a little closer to closing for good. And there's been a lot of hype about what happened in the early '90s with hospital closures. Well hospitals didn't close; they actually converted. And they converted to health centres and to . . . They added on, amalgamated with the long-term care facilities. So we're looking at now actually more hospitals closing because there are no doctors. And this will occur under a Sask Party

government.

There is no money. There is no money to make promises even though they're making promises all over the place and have made promises for the last two years. In fact right after the election, people were coming to my office saying that the members from the Sask Party were going around saying, we have gobs of money. I mean it's like euphoric.

So you are not surprised; I don't think anybody should be too surprised that they couldn't manage it. They couldn't even talk about it properly or professionally — gobs of money, telling people there was gobs of money. So expectations have been raised everywhere that there were going to be good services, adequate services.

There's a lot of conversation about how wonderful the infrastructure is. Well there's an infrastructure deficit because we had to pay back the Grant Devine debt, and that happened in the early '90s. When the Romanow government came in, there was a huge debt. The province was almost bankrupt. You couldn't build anything. You couldn't fix anything. We had to get the province out of debt first, a decade of getting out of debt.

So there has been a lot of work done to try and do something on the infrastructure, but now we're focusing totally, this government is focusing totally on big announcements — buildings, bricks and mortar.

Meanwhile parents come to the legislature and say their child is being taught in a paint closet in a school. People are putting black garbage bags over their hospital signs because there's no services. They're having to drive two hours to find emergency services. We're talking about taking home care workers back into the Dark Ages with split shifts and making them pay to drive to their work if it's out of their own home community. I mean that's ridiculous.

And communities are being pitted against each other. I know one of the members from the Sask Party went out into a community a couple of years ago — I think it was two years ago — and told them to get on with getting their own recruitment of a doctor. Get busy and basically start going into the kind of competition with your next door community. And I know doctors have been sort of lured away from one community to another because people are desperate to get the services. They want to see some services.

We've recently heard chiropractic services are going to be cut. I mean the minister has been almost categorically clear that that's on the chopping block. Yes, I'm saying almost because that's about as clear as he can ever get. You can't take anything to the bank there because you just never know. Anything can be ripped up or changed.

But the chiropractic, the doctors who are talking about this, their patients, a lot of them are in rural Saskatchewan. They don't have a lot of options where to go for alternative services. And they're going to be left with living in pain, living in chronic pain, going to emergency services, trying to get a specialist to see them.

This is not going to save money. It's very short-sighted to think that saving \$11 million taking chiropractors out of the budget is going to, in the long run, save anything in Health. We're not going to even talk about the pain and suffering and what it does to people's quality of life and whether they can actually go to work and stay at work. We're talking about what it's actually going to cost the health system. Because you're going to have to pay for them, these people, to see a specialist, pay for them to go to emergency, pay for them to see their general practitioner to have these services delivered in a different way by a different provider. We're going to still pay.

And now if people do want to go to a chiropractor, they're going to have to pay on their own. A lot of low-income people won't be able to do that so they're going to shift over and come into the public system where they don't have to pay. So we are going to see people using the system more, and we don't have the capacity to take up. I mean if there's 15,000 people already signing petitions, there's 15,000 people that are going to be looking for alternatives. Where are they going to go? Our system already doesn't have enough money.

I was just reading today that the Saskatoon Health District has a \$14 million deficit. If districts like Saskatoon has 14 million, you know rural districts have deficits as well and they're going to have to cut services. Well they're already telling us they don't have very good services and they're going to have to cut more. And this is how the Sask Party manages the budget. There was a lot of money left when the government changed in '07 and that has disappeared. Revenue has increased. Spending has increased, and it certainly hasn't been balanced. This government doesn't know how to manage money.

And we're talking, the minister's talking, the Minister of Health talks about fearmongering, telling people that this or that service will be discontinued. What people fear most is that they won't have services, of course, but they do fear that there is a government who can't manage their money. Because they already have been there; they know that. That happened with Grant Devine. And what happened to the province for 10 years after that? We all suffered. We all had to suffer.

So we need to look at managing the money that we have in a responsible way and making sure people are attended to — people's issues. We don't need buildings. People will understand if you can't build a stadium, if you can't build something that is not . . . Health and education — people want their money spent there, and highways too. They want something that they use and they see. Other things we can certainly wish for if we had the money, but if we don't have the money, then the decisions we make have to reflect the people's priorities. And the people's priorities are health and the people's priorities are their children's education.

We have to make sure we don't lose sight of that when we start looking at megaprojects. And when we start committing the province to megaprojects that simply cannot be met — or if we do commit ourselves, we're on the hook for more money than we will ever have — then the people are going to suffer, and people are going to suffer in health and education. Those programs are going to be cut.

When health districts come with their deficits, they're going to

have to cut programs. When they get a 3 per cent increase, they're going to cut their programs. And so people are going to suffer even more, and it's really going to hit rural Saskatchewan very hard. So I, Mr. Speaker, will move — if I can find the actual motion — I will move:

That this Assembly condemn the Saskatchewan Party government for abandoning rural Saskatchewan and health services that directly affect the health and well-being of rural Saskatchewan residents, including doctor recruitment, emergency services, long-term care, home care and chiropractic care.

I so move.

The Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Eastview has moved a motion:

That this Assembly condemn the Saskatchewan Party government for abandoning rural Saskatchewan and health care services that directly affect the health and well-being of rural Saskatchewan residents, including doctor recruitment, emergency services, long-term care, home care and chiropractic care.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from P.A. Carlton.

Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well it's a pleasure today to get up in the House and add my voice to this debate. What's important, Mr. Speaker, is that it's been a great two years and change that I've been able to represent the people of Prince Albert Carlton.

Now in that time in this House, I've heard some very interesting stories from the opposition members while we sat in session. I've heard them insult our government, run down the people of Saskatchewan as well, Mr. Speaker. Now while I've had to endure many odd things from the opposition, I think today's motion for debate strikes me by far as the oddest to date.

And I have to admit that I was very confused when I read the motion, Mr. Speaker, and not because it's completely detached from our government's positive and well-known record of addressing the monumental gap in health care left by the NDP government. No, Mr. Speaker, what struck me today was the motion for debate appears to describe the NDP's well-documented mismanagement of rural Saskatchewan over a span of 16 years. The NDP's willingness to decimate rural Saskatchewan's health care is precisely why they sit on that side of the House today, Mr. Speaker. The people of rural Saskatchewan saw the gross incompetence of the former NDP government and threw them out of office, leaving the current NDP opposition with an embarrassingly low amount of rural seats.

But, Mr. Speaker, why would the people of rural Saskatchewan have a complete loss of confidence in the NDP's ability to govern? Well, Mr. Speaker, among other things, the words and actions of the former NDP government regarding health care would make even Tommy Douglas roll over in his grave.

Let's unpack the NDP's record — shall we? — on health care

under their term. The opposition's former leader was quoted as saying in 1988 that, and I quote, "The first priority of Saskatchewan families and the priority they wish [for] their government [is] to uphold . . . the priority of health care." Okay, I think everyone in this House can agree with that.

But what else did they say, Mr. Speaker? Well fast-forward a decade, a decade that saw the further decimation of our rural health care system at the hands of the party of Tommy Douglas. Mr. Speaker, the NDP's unofficial policy of decimating rural health care led to the largest nurses' strike in this province. Now the health minister responsible for the strike, who now sits in opposition, wrote at the time, and I quote:

I want to assure you, both personally and on behalf of the government, that we will listen and act on the concerns of nurses and other health care providers. [We] never again will . . . allow ourselves to get too busy with other vital issues to fail to listen and respond . . . If there are other workplace issues that also need to be addressed, I promise you that they will be addressed quickly and effectively.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I have absolutely no objection to what I just read. Most of our members on this side think the same thing. But apparently the NDP objects to its own words as seen in their actions over 16 years. Let's just look at what the NDP was responsible for, which put quite a strain on the rural health care system.

The NDP created some of the longest wait lists in Canada. The NDP closed 52 rural hospitals in 1993 when their former leader was associate Health minister. The NDP closed 421 hospital beds since 1999. In 2003 the average surgical wait time in Saskatchewan was 32.6 weeks, the worst in Canada, Mr. Speaker. In 2004, 93 doctors left Saskatchewan while every other province saw increases.

They also eliminated 136 long-term care beds since 2002 and tried to increase long-term care fees to 90 per cent of seniors' net income, while at the same time failing to increase the seniors' income plan. They forced rural hospitals to reduce services and temporarily close due to ongoing staff shortages. They also delisted many drugs, including insulin and other diabetic supplies in their 1992 budget, their first budget after coming back to government.

Their insufficient funding to the College of Medicine over the last decade, as their government, caused it to become the first College of Medicine in Canada to be put on probation and risk losing accreditation. The NDP spent \$2 million on a study that identified 1.2 billion in infrastructure repairs needed within the province, and they did nothing with that report, Mr. Speaker. One-fifth of the facilities in Saskatchewan were built prior to 1960, and over one-half had no substantial upgrades in the 25 years leading up to the 2007 election.

What's also distressing, Mr. Speaker, are the many callous comments and embarrassing admissions made by their members while serving as government for the good people of Saskatchewan. For example the member from Regina Lakeview and former Health minister is quoted by CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] as saying, "There is no advantage to training more nurses if other provinces can hire them when they

graduate.” Knowing this was the truth, the NDP did nothing until the possibility of a defeat in the 2007 election became inevitable, but by that point they had lost the confidence of the people of Saskatchewan and rightfully so.

Their record on rural health care is embarrassing, Mr. Speaker, as are some of the statements made by their members. One of the worse policies to come from the NDP was the suggestion that seniors “die quicker.” Yes, Mr. Speaker, a nurse who represents the people of Saskatoon Eastview suggested that the solution to the shortage of long-term care beds was to have seniors “die quicker” in April of 2004. So the former NDP creates problems like a shortage of long-term care beds and increasing wait-lists. And the best policy the NDP can muster is to suggest to the province’s seniors that they “die quicker.” That’s disgusting, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that was the old Saskatchewan, and now I want to talk about the new Saskatchewan. In this Saskatchewan, promises are made and promises are kept. We campaigned on the promise of hiring 800 nurses, and after two years we are more than 70 per cent of the way there, Mr. Speaker.

In this new Saskatchewan, our government developed many initiatives to help recruit, retain, and train health care providers in Saskatchewan. In this new Saskatchewan, our government is committed to the delivery of health care services to help Saskatchewan people get the everyday care they need to protect and maintain their health. In this new Saskatchewan, we’re breaking a cycle of developing Saskatchewan-trained doctors for other provinces and other countries.

[11:15]

In this new Saskatchewan, our government has launched a provincial agency aimed at recruiting and retaining more physicians to Saskatchewan as well as rural communities. This physician recruitment agency will act as a one-stop point of contact for physicians seeking to set up practice in Saskatchewan as well as highlighting the benefit of working in rural Saskatchewan. This same agency will also enhance and coordinate recruitment efforts across the province, working closely with health regions and communities to address the need for physicians. In the new Saskatchewan, the physician recruitment agency will focus first on retaining our own medical graduates, so the people of Saskatchewan benefit from the dollars spent training doctors in the province.

Unlike the former NDP government’s practice of setting low targets and still failing to achieve them, the new Saskatchewan is also working to achieve ambitious but reachable goals. These include reducing the annual turnover of physicians in Saskatchewan to less than 10 per cent; increasing the number of University of Saskatchewan medical students and residents who train outside Saskatoon by 25 per cent; increasing the number of U of S [University of Saskatchewan] medical students, graduates establishing practice in Saskatchewan by 10 per cent; increasing the percentage of Canadian-trained doctors working in Saskatchewan by 10 per cent.

And more importantly, Mr. Speaker, our strategies are working. We are beginning to achieve our goals, Mr. Speaker. The overall supply of physicians has been steadily increasing since

we became government. The head count of all licensed physicians in Saskatchewan, including temporary licensed locums, was 1,742 at the end of March, 2007. Well, Mr. Speaker, since our government has come to power, we have increased . . . I think we have an increase of 164 doctors in this province. That is the difference between our record and their record. More importantly, Mr. Speaker, our government’s recruitment and retention strategies have resulted in an increase of seven family practitioners in rural Saskatchewan since March of ’07.

Mr. Speaker, our government has reversed the former government’s trend of decimating our rural health care services. Right now Saskatchewan has more doctors, more specialists, and more nurses to ensure that this province’s rural residents are getting the health care services they need. This overall improvement makes today’s particular motion for debate embarrassing, I believe, for members opposite. They have a very sad track record and have made fairly irresponsible, albeit candid, remarks about their record on delivering health care to the good people of this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to end this portion of today’s debate with a fairly simple statement and one that should bring comfort to the people living in rural communities throughout this province. I want to reiterate our Premier’s commitment comments, as he addressed the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, by saying rural health care is the number one issue in this province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is with mixed feelings I enter this debate today. And I say mixed feelings because it’s with huge disappointment that rural Saskatchewan and that health care in rural Saskatchewan, and throughout all of the province, has been so disastrously mismanaged and mishandled and even bungled by the Sask Party government.

Mr. Speaker, just let me put some numbers to this, and it’s an easy number. At the time of election, the last general election in the spring . . . pardon me, in 2007, there were 84 doctor vacancies throughout Saskatchewan, 84 doctor vacancies at the time of the last election. Today there’s 123 vacancies of doctors, mostly in rural Saskatchewan. We have seen a situation where there’s an increase of 50 per cent of vacancies of doctors; that’s doctors who are no longer there providing services, primarily in rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, what a difference a day makes, especially when it’s an election day, for the Sask Party government because the day before the election, they had all the answers. They were going to fix health care. They were going to manage the provincial economy. They were going to see that we had absolutely unprecedented growth and prosperity. And the good times were here. Let the good times roll. Just get the NDP out of the way, they said. That’s what they said the day before the election. Now they’re saying, well maybe next year. We’re working on our plans. We’re working on our plans.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I gave you some numbers on doctor

vacancies, but I want to point one thing out. This year alone — never mind, never mind since the last general election — this year alone, 2010, January, February, and now into March, Saskatchewan has lost just over one doctor a week. The vacancies are happening at a rate of more than one doctor a week under this Sask Party government.

The situation, let's assume the situation needed to be addressed at the time of the last general election, Mr. Speaker. I am telling you that it has hit worse than crisis now under their bungling and their mismanagement, their ineptitude. They have had a plan to recruit doctors. They had a plan that is costing rural municipalities and municipalities throughout Saskatchewan tens of thousands and more dollars as they compete one with the other to try and get a good doctor, any doctor for that matter, but a doctor to their community. They pit community against community against community, Mr. Speaker, and who's losing? All the people of Saskatchewan but particularly the people of rural Saskatchewan. It's a shame.

How could you claim . . . The Sask Party claim to have had a policy, to claim to have had the answers, to claim to know what they were doing. And they had all the answers the day before the last general election. None of them now.

I ask the people of Saskatchewan to consider this. In 2010 this year alone, we're losing doctors at a rate just over a doctor a week, one doctor a week by your own ministry's numbers, one doctor a week. What will happen by the time the next general election rolls around if it happens when it's scheduled in 2011? And even more importantly, what would happen four years later at a doctor a week at the current rate?

The question is clearly . . . Let me state it this way. Doctors are clearly voting with their feet on their confidence in the Sask Party government. Doctors are voting with their feet. They are leaving their practices throughout Saskatchewan. The proof is in the Ministry of Health's own numbers — not my numbers — the Ministry of Health's numbers provided by that Sask Party minister.

Mr. Speaker, we have clearly a crisis in health care. We clearly have mishandling in health care. And all of this, I want to point out, has happened when the Sask Party had inherited \$2 billion in the bank account, over \$2 billion in the bank account.

What have we got today? We're facing what looks like a \$1 billion deficit. How quick things change. How quick things change when you get a right wing government that spends, as the deputy leader of our New Democrats said today in question period, they thought they had won a lottery. And the difference is, they went out and spent the lottery before they ever won it.

But it's Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker, that are left holding the bag. It's Saskatchewan people that are left without doctors. It's Saskatchewan people that are left in a crisis in health care. It's Saskatchewan people that are left with a forestry industry that . . . despite the fact that, well, that the member for Prince Albert Carlton in his election campaign said a vote for Darryl is a vote for the mill.

Well that mill is long gone now. And you hear nothing about the pulp mill in P.A. from the Sask Party. You hear nothing

about it, nothing. The silence is deafening. The silence is deafening.

Mr. Speaker, then the Sask Party holds — this is just showing the ineptitude — the Sask Party holds a staff barbecue, called it a convention, an annual convention, this past weekend. And one of the resolutions was that the government should build a, set up a forestry centre in P.A. Notwithstanding that New Democrats promised, and you know what? We promised it. We built it. We opened it, and it's been operating for quite a few years now, and it's on Central Avenue in Prince Albert, Central Avenue. We tucked it away right out of sight on main street. Tucked it away so the member for Carlton . . . I guess we could forgive him and his delegates for not knowing that there's a forestry centre in P.A.

I mean, I wish this government would focus on some real problems like, I mean . . . We need a forestry centre or we wouldn't have built it. We wouldn't have set it up. We wouldn't have operated it. I'm not trying to denigrate the forestry centre, but the fact is we've got it. Mr. Speaker, we've got it.

What we've also got is a \$1 billion deficit. How is it that the Sask Party is going to fix this inherent problem in health care when they ruined it when they had \$2 billion in the bank. Two billion dollars cash sitting in the bank, and now there's a \$1 billion deficit. And we're waiting for the next plan from the Sask Party government. They say they've got a plan. They're going to fix this hemorrhaging of doctors throughout Saskatchewan, doctors leaving at a rate of more than one a week.

Now I've talked about doctors, Mr. Speaker. Let me talk about chiropractors. Let me talk about trust. Let me talk about how would you feel if your employer, whoever's making your paycheque, would set up a contract negotiation with you. You enter in good faith. You negotiate. You reach an agreement. Ultimately it may not be a perfect agreement, it may not be the agreement that you wanted. It may not be enough money for you, but at the end of the day you said, that's the best I can do — willing to sign it. So you sign it. And then the government says, well gee, you know, we're going to put that on hold. We negotiated a contract with you chiropractors in good faith. We negotiated in good faith, but we're not prepared to implement it.

Why on earth would anybody negotiate anything with a Sask Party government? What on earth would possess you to do that when you sign a negotiated settlement in good faith and the government says, no we're not going to implement it. You're on hold. And that's been the situation for nearly three months now, Mr. Speaker. Nearly three months chiropractors have been in that limbo, and it is looking really grim.

My question would be, how is it that other health care workers, the more than half the health care workers that are being shunned by the Sask Party government — being made inadequate offers, being told that you're going to have to be on call for 12 hours a day, you're going to have to drive your own vehicle to other communities to serve split shifts at your own expense, and this is somehow an improvement — how can these people feel valued? And why on earth would they even try to negotiate a collective agreement with the Sask Party government while they're in? Why would you even try? It's

kind of futile. They might reach a collective agreement, and then the government says, no we were just kidding. We're not going to implement it. Just kidding. That's what their history is.

How can you trust a government that is so deceitful, so fundamentally wrong to working people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker? It is wrong on every account. And I say to the Sask Party government members, shame on you all.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Batoche.

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To begin with, I will not support the motion by the NDP. My colleague from P.A. Carlton had the daunting challenge of listing all the NDP failures in the field of health care over the past 16 years and to shrink that list into 10 minutes. He did an admirable job, considering the vast amount of material he had to fit into just 10 minutes.

My challenge is to list all the accomplishments that the Sask Party government has achieved in health care in just 28 short months and to compress all these accomplishments into just 10 minutes.

Provided 54.9 million for medical equipment, including diagnostic imaging equipment — big. 37.7 million provided to several regions to continue their projects and major upgrades. Again another big, huge item. And then we come to 100 million in 2008-2009 to regions to address urgent health care facility maintenance and repair requirements. That was a record amount of funding for one fiscal year — a record amount.

[11:30]

Implementation of the provincial clinical pathways for hip replacements saw 307 more hip and knee replacement surgeries in 2008-09 compared to 2007-08. More than 18,000 Saskatchewan seniors are receiving enhanced benefits through the seniors' income plan: 190 million per month for single seniors, \$190 per month for single seniors, and up to a maximum of 155 per person for seniors couples. An increase in the overall budget in 2008-2009 for autism spectrum disorder to \$3 million. Rates for northern medical taxi operations were increased.

The Saskatchewan Party government is dedicated to fix the infrastructure deficits left behind by the previous government. Our government has given the health authority a green light to start planning this redevelopment project.

Reduce the annual turnover of physicians in Saskatchewan to less than 10 per cent; increase the number of University of Saskatchewan, U of S, medical students and residents who train outside Saskatoon by 25 per cent; increase the number of US medical graduates establishing practice in Saskatchewan by 10 per cent; increase the percentage of Canadian-trained doctors working in Saskatchewan by 10 per cent.

Retaining and attracting physicians as a means of ensuring timely access to quality health care is a top priority for this government. We are working hard to solve our physician shortages and putting patients first by fulfilling our commitment to establish a physician recruitment agency. The overall supply

of physicians has been steadily increasing since we became government. Our government has many initiatives to help recruit, retain, and train health providers in Saskatchewan. Our government is committed to the delivery of health care service to help Saskatchewan people get the everyday care they need to protect and maintain their health.

Changing the health care system is a challenging, challenging task that takes time and unwavering effort. It requires strong and collaborative partnerships among municipal shareholders, multiple shareholders, including all levels of government. Seventy-one primary health care teams established and one in development. Of these, 45 are in rural Saskatchewan, 17 are in metropolitan areas, and 8 are in northern Saskatchewan.

We developed a provincial diabetes program, got a health line, a 24-hour health care advice and information line, vendors selected for the provincial primary health care electronic health record.

The big one of course is surgical wait times. There's been a backlog carried forward that's been huge. It's become an unacceptable wait time. Our government has taken the challenge over the next four years to lower surgical wait times to three months. This is our goal. We are up for the challenge. We're not just going to take the status quo. We are going to work hard to fix the surgical backlog.

Doctors today is another huge issue. The actual facts are today, we have 164 more doctors than we did in March of '07. That's the numbers. That's not twisting and turning and percentages and trying to make it the other way. The fact is 164 more doctors today than in March of '07.

We're opening up the 60 seat enrolment to medicine; we're moving it up to 100. We are going to educate our own doctors. We are building for the future. The key to medicine is education, and we will have the doctors and nurses. Resident seats, which is very important if we don't want our medical students to leave, we will create 16 more. We are already at 108, and we're going up to 120. This is huge. This is important. This is key to building our future. We have a physician recruitment strategy in place, programs for rural doctors. And training will start in medical school on building rural doctor relationships.

Nurses, we've got an agreement and work with SUN [Saskatchewan Union of Nurses] to recruit 800 nurses was our goal. We already in just 28 months, we've reached 560. We are the worst . . . We were the worst, the worst retention rate for nurses in all of Canada — the absolute worst. And today we, Saskatchewan were the worst, and it was under the previous government's leadership. And now Saskatchewan, under this government's leadership, is the best retention rate in all of Canada — a huge step, a huge step forward. That's what happens when you work with our nurses and our training.

The rural applications are key and important. We are working and building these relationships, and to quote one nurse's term, we are leaving no bedpan unturned.

Another project that is under way or we have consigned to is the midwifery program. The first four years that I sat here in

opposition, every year the midwifery society would come and they would sit and ask to have it implemented. And every year the NDP would say, yes, yes, yes. But every year it didn't happen.

And it's a great program. In fact I know of a family whose youngest child is actually my age, and there were 13 kids. And the father of that family was the midwife, so never took any of them to the hospital except the 13th one was at the hospital. So it is a program that we have got back now.

Another one that is very important to me is our Humboldt hospital. It is at last in progress. We are seeing things happen. The building will soon be completed. It's a \$40 million structure, and it's at last being built. The NDP promised it for three elections, Mr. Speaker. Three elections, they said, yes, we're going to build you a hospital. Yes, we're going to build you a hospital. But nothing happened. Nothing happened till we started. Thank you.

The Speaker: — The member's time has elapsed. I recognize the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to be able to speak to this motion today. And I just want to capture the essence of what this debate is about for anyone who is just tuning in. So I want to just repeat the motion quickly. And this a motion, of course, that was made by my hon. colleague from Saskatoon Eastview. Quote:

That this Assembly condemn the Saskatchewan Party government for abandoning rural Saskatchewan and health care services that directly affect the health and well-being of rural Saskatchewan residents, including doctor recruitment, emergency services, long-term care, home care and chiropractic care.

End of motion.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this an incredibly important debate to be having in Saskatchewan at this point in time, given that health care is the number one concern on the minds of the Saskatchewan people. There's no question about it. Whether you're attending the SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] convention, the SARM convention, or local conferences around the province or even just travelling about in rural Saskatchewan, one hears that this is the number one concern for people in the province of Saskatchewan.

And nowhere are Sask Party failures more evident than in health care, especially in rural health care, Mr. Speaker. The Sask Party government promised to solve the rural health care problem, and to date there has been nothing but broken promises. They said they had a plan in the last election, Mr. Speaker, and we have yet to see any fruition of that plan or plan in general. And every single mini-plan that they come up with seems to make the problem worse. When they had \$2.3 billion in the bank, they did nothing. Because of the Premier's financial bungling and mismanagement, they are now sitting in a \$1 billion debt possession and still haven't done anything to improve rural health care — nothing, Mr. Speaker.

Now that the Sask Party government has blown all the money,

has drained down the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, the rainy day fund, whatever moniker they decide to use, people in Saskatchewan are wondering, especially people in rural Saskatchewan are wondering how are they supposed to have faith that this Sask Party government is going to do anything to solve this problem.

Mr. Speaker, during the SARM convention, which ends today, delegates at the SARM convention voted in favour of resolutions calling on the Sask Party government to do more to fund long-term care facilities, to do more to recruit and retain doctors in rural Saskatchewan, and to negotiate a 21st century alternative for physician-on-call care.

Health care, as it did at the SUMA convention, health care dominated the SARM bear-pit sessions. When one listens to the quotes that came out of the SARM convention, it is readily apparent how serious this concern is. SARM president, David Marit, told reporters for instance, "The resolutions speak for themselves." Another quote from the convention is, "It's becoming a huge issue in a lot of (rural) communities. We definitely need some help."

These are voices of people who are desperate for their Sask Party government to listen to them, listen to their pleas, listen to their concerns, and find some viable solutions, not hollow and empty promises that they continually make and then backtrack on and say, oh we don't have the money now or we can't do this now. We can't build a children's hospital. We can't build surgical care centre that we promised. We can't do long-term care facilities. We can't do this. We can't do that. That's the only thing that the people of the province have a guarantee on, is that the Sask Party government can't do anything, Mr. Speaker.

So when we talk about doctor recruitment and retention for instance in the last two years, the doctor vacancy rates have increased by 50 per cent, Mr. Speaker. Let's just repeat that. The doctor vacancy rates in the province of Saskatchewan under the Sask Party government have increased by 50 per cent. And this is from their own statistical data off their government website, Mr. Speaker.

This isn't something that the opposition is cooking up. This isn't something that the naysayers in rural Saskatchewan are cooking up or anything. This is off of their statistical data from the Sask Party government website. Shame on them. Doctor shortages in Saskatchewan have reached crisis levels.

And what was being said at the 2009 annual SMA convention, Mr. Speaker? At the SMA convention, Dr. David Ledding said, "This is our last kick at the cat, we're going to have practices falling apart out there."

This is on November 9th of 2009. What did the Health minister respond, Mr. Speaker? Mr. Speaker, the Health minister said, the days of a doctor in every community are over.

Can I ensure that there will be a doctor in every community like there used to be? We just can't do that. The system is changing. The environment is changing.

Mr. Speaker, this is shameful. This is not what the Sask Party

government and that Health minister promised the people of Saskatchewan in their election platform, in the pre-election time when they were out there campaigning and telling people all sorts of promises, making all sorts of promises. And nothing, Mr. Speaker, nothing has come to fruition except for things getting worse. Communities like Shaunavon, Redvers, Broadview, Arcola, Spiritwood, Lestock, Climax, and Frontier are all struggling to find a doctor, Mr. Speaker, all of them.

And as my colleague from Saskatoon Eastview already mentioned, black garbage bags are being put over hospital highway signs because they have no doctor and have to suspend services. Shameful, Mr. Speaker. People are being forced to travel one or even two hours to get emergency services. Doctors have worked for 72-hour shifts. How can that be safe for anyone, Mr. Speaker?

And every time a rural hospital has to suspend hospital emergency services because of a lack of a doctor, their hospital gets a little closer to be closing for good. And yet the Sask Party government will not take any responsibility that it's grown by 50 per cent under their watch, Mr. Speaker, 50 per cent.

[11:45]

Long-term care, Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party promised seniors a care strategy and they've broken that promise as well. Due to the Sask Party's financial mismanagement and incompetence, \$122 million worth of funding for 13 long-term care homes across rural Saskatchewan was cut last November. Cut, Mr. Speaker. This has worsened the situation for hundreds of seniors waiting for a long-term care bed in rural Saskatchewan.

And it's causing husbands and wives that have been married for 30, 40, 50 or even 60 years to be separated by many kilometres, when one of them has to be placed in long-term care facility because there's no bed available in their community or facility close by, Mr. Speaker. It's shameful. It's absolutely shameful. It causes unnecessary stress and strain on the family and patient. And it causes depression and mental anguish, Mr. Speaker.

So when we talk about home care, home care workers perform an amazingly valuable service in our province. These are the men and women who come in the homes of our aging parents and grandparents and provide them with the support they need to remain in their precious homes, Mr. Speaker. Home care workers are overworked and understaffed. The Sask Party government, what's their solution? They want to cut. They want home care workers to be on stand-by for twelve hours, but only pay them for eight. They want them to work in multiple locations and which is particularly troublesome in rural Saskatchewan as locations can be up to an hour or two apart.

Most home care workers are women, and women often bear the main responsibility in the family for care of children. The split shifts in the family will . . . I mean the split shifts will force them to make child care arrangements for 12 hours or more a day. And, Mr. Speaker, this is particularly difficult in rural Saskatchewan where child care is so very difficult to find. Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on but, unfortunately, the clock is ticking.

I want to touch on one more quick subject, and that's

chiropractors. The chiropractors have been left without a contract, have been without a contract for over a year. An agreement was negotiated and signed by the president of the Chiropractors' Association at the Department of Health. Unfortunately the minister is now refusing to honour the negotiated agreement and that sells . . . it sends a chilling message through the entire health system where there's no honour in bargaining. As a result, chiropractic care will be inaccessible for many people, especially those on low income, Mr. Speaker.

And on a final note, Mr. Speaker, before I run out of time, I want to talk about what some smaller communities are doing. They are going and they are taking the initiative of either providing hundreds of thousands of dollars to recruit and retain doctors, holding conferences like the Primary Health Care Conference in Southey that was organized by the communities surrounding Southey and Regina Beach to lobby the government for a primary care facility so that they can have some meaningful health care in their communities where they have an aging demographic and a growing population. And we wonder, Mr. Speaker, if this government is going to sit up and listen.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cypress Hills.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to enter the debate today on this very important topic. Mr. Speaker, in the ten and a half years that I've been in this legislature, I don't think I've ever encountered a more egregious example of the pot calling the kettle black than this particular resolution today. Mr. Speaker, this is the most bizarre effort on behalf of an opposition that has no credibility in rural Saskatchewan and on this topic have zero credibility ever.

Mr. Speaker, this situation is just over the top. It just pales. It would make everything else look significant by comparison. But this situation, this resolution is completely hopeless in its attack on the government of the day. And let me tell you why, Mr. Speaker.

This is the party, ostensibly, of Tommy Douglas. Tommy Douglas borrowed the idea of community-based health care insurance from southwest Saskatchewan, called it his own, and ran with it. But under this opposition, when they were government, what they did to rural Saskatchewan and health care delivery was absolutely shameful.

Mr. Speaker, this is the group of men and women who created the longest waiting list in the nation for health care. And most of the people who had to wait came from rural Saskatchewan. What was their first response when they looked at rural health care initiatives? It wasn't a positive initiative. It was to close 52 rural hospitals. Mr. Speaker, that was the very first thing they did when they assumed power in 1991.

Today we have the consequences of that decision replicated throughout small communities, impacting small communities today. And if they're talking about driving time for patients to achieve health care services, it's because many of those hospitals that were closed would have provided the services to the people in the small communities they claim to feel sympathy for today.

They closed 421 hospital beds from 1999 onward in their tenure. In 2003 the average surgical wait time in Saskatchewan was 32.6 weeks — again the worst in Canada. In 2004, 93 doctors left Saskatchewan while every other province saw an increase. They eliminated 136 long-term care beds after 2002. Mr. Speaker, the NDP delisted many drugs, including insulin and other diabetic supplies, in their 1992 budget. That was their first budget as a new government.

The other thing that I really find disheartening, given this particular motion that's before the House today, is the fact that that group of men and women will not take responsibility for what they did to the College of Medicine in this province. They cut back training programs, cut it back to 60 seats — barely enough to meet the needs of this province, if every graduate had stayed in the province. Unfortunately given the environment that they had created for health care province-wide and especially in rural Saskatchewan, many of those graduates at that time left the province for greener pastures — some in Canada, some in the United States.

And as the College of Medicine struggled to maintain its viability, its funding was held in check. And it was held in check to such a point that the College of Medicine almost had its accreditation lifted by the overseeing body for colleges of medicine across the nation. That government at the time put the College of Medicine in the province of Saskatchewan in complete and total jeopardy.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we're living with the consequences of decisions taken by that group of men and women. The NDP spent \$2 million on a study that identified a \$1.2 billion infrastructure deficit, repairs that needed to be made on facilities all across the province. What did they do? They didn't fix the damage; they didn't make the repairs. They shelved the study. Mr. Speaker, that's part of the record of the previous government. One-fifth of the facilities in Saskatchewan were built prior to 1960 and over one-half have had no substantial upgrades in the last 25 years. That's the record of those men and women.

And according to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, their latest report, Saskatchewan still has the oldest equipment, the oldest health equipment in the nation. Our average equipment now is thirteen and a half years old. Mr. Speaker, that's the record of the opposition. That's the record they have to live with. That's the record of health care delivery in rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we asked, when we were the opposition and we asked the government of the day for what they had planned to do to help deliver health care in rural Saskatchewan, they couldn't come up with enough nurses. In fact the previous minister of Health wouldn't even address that issue because he said it was impossible. They would be fraught with failure. Any program to identify a strategy and a target would be unachievable. They weren't even willing to put a number out for the public to identify with, that we could judge their success or failure by. And, Mr. Speaker, that was true of the education of doctors. It was true of just about every form of health care professional that we desire to see in this province.

You know, since the Sask Party government has come to

power, we have actually created targets and met those targets, or we're well on our way to achieving those targets. The importance is, if you don't have a target, you'll never reach it. There's no motive to achieve success if you don't identify a target. And the target that we have succeeded in meeting is in the nurses and the LPNs [licensed practical nurse] and the nurse practitioners. We now have more professionals working in support services, laboratory services, and those types of things.

Mr. Speaker, the time is going by way too quickly, but I do want to say that the Leader of the Opposition has made an issue of health care in southwest Saskatchewan. I want to say for his benefit that one of the members of the doctor recruitment committee in the town of Shaunavon told me that they aren't going to put up with this whining and complaining about what the government ought to do. They're going to put their heads and their hearts and their money into recruiting their own doctors. And they've been very successful at this point.

The community of Leader is moving forward in a very substantive way to see a new facility built in the community of Leader. They have dealt with doctor recruitment issues frequently and have done it on their own and have been very successful. Now they, just recently the Cypress Health Region has announced the funding and the development of a brand new health facility in the community of Maple Creek. Mr. Speaker, that's a project that came together in under 18 months.

The NDP's record on the last facility that was built under their watch was in Moosomin. That community fundraised for 20 years. And that group of men and women promised them a new facility for 13 years, and it didn't get built until just before they were thrown out of office. Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party government is happy to put this record, the record of this organization, this government, up against their record any time, Mr. Speaker. This particular motion is just absolutely inflammatory and has nothing to do with reality.

Mr. Speaker, it's been a real pleasure for me to participate in this debate because I have so much more good news I could share. I haven't even got to most of the notes. But, Mr. Speaker, if there's questions on this topic, I'm prepared to address them. Thank you.

The Speaker: — The time has elapsed for the debate period of the 75-minute debate. We will now enter the 10-minute question period. I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the member from Batoche as a result of this debate. Mr. Speaker, the motion raises lots of concerns. The one I want to talk about, I have served a petition for long-term care, a new facility, a plan in this House. There's hundreds of signatures. It has the support of the leadership of the Cumberland constituency. There's a lot of concerns that the waiting list of almost one full year for residents to get into long-term care is appalling to the people in my constituency in the community of La Ronge — a year.

There is no other community that faces this. A year — it's actually appalling. It needs to happen. So my question to the member from Batoche: what is your government's plan for long-term care in the Cumberland constituency and the La Ronge area?

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Batoche.

Mr. Kirsch: — The challenges are great but if you want to know what the problem is, start with a mirror of your party. We're in this mess because of what your party did to health care. That's why there's a shortage of beds. You're the ones that closed all the hospitals. It's your mess and we're trying to fix it, so try to co-operate.

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

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There was a great chance for the NDP to finally get reconnected with rural Saskatchewan this week. The annual SARM convention was held in Regina. There were delegates from all across rural Saskatchewan. Most importantly this was an opportunity for NDP MLAs to finally interact with rural residents and find out what was on their minds. The NDP care so much about rural Saskatchewan that not one of their MLAs could find the time to attend SARM's banquet last night — not one.

Mr. Speaker, to the member from Regina Coronation Park: do you even know where rural Saskatchewan is?

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

Mr. Trew: — I thank the hon. member for that question. Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is in rural Saskatchewan we're hemorrhaging doctors at a rate of more than one doctor a week.

I care for rural Saskatchewan. I care for my daughter and grandchildren who are farming in rural Saskatchewan. I care for aunts and uncles around the province, cousins. I care for family members that live in rural Saskatchewan. I was raised on a farm.

Mr. Speaker, this government, the Sask Party government last November cut \$122 million that had been committed to 13 long-term care projects in rural Saskatchewan. They cut it. They're the ones that are turning their back on rural Saskatchewan. And what a shame that is.

[12:00]

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

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I had alluded to in my speech debate, debate speech I should say, I was talking about a conference that was held not too long ago in Southey by a group of concerned citizens and municipalities surrounding Southey and Regina Beach about building a primary health care centre there. And that's just one of many, Mr. Speaker. There are other municipalities across the province who have the same concerns or are trying to at least maintain what they have, Mr. Speaker.

Now given that there was no money in last year's budget to address primary health care, can the member from Batoche please tell us what zero dollars buys?

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Batoche.

Mr. Kirsch: — Mr. Speaker, we are spending vast amounts of money to fill the hole that they dug. It's their mess. We're the one fixing it. Instead of helping, they keep on trying to pull some little figure out of who knows where and attack.

Work with us. We're building Saskatchewan. Join the ride. It's going to be quite a trip.

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

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the NDP were in government, they closed hospital services in the communities of Spiritwood, Big River, Shellbrook, Preeceville, Canora, Kamsack, Arcola, Bengough, Coronach, Broadview, Central Butte, Vanguard, and Maidstone, and a list of more.

I would like to address my question to the member from Regina Walsh Acres. It's ironic that for 16 years, the NDP didn't even know where rural Saskatchewan existed. And now they seem to know everything about rural Saskatchewan. My question is to the member from Regina Walsh Acres: what was the end goal of the NDP's rural health care policy?

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

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, there's absolutely no question that those were very, very difficult times for not just the NDP government at the time, but for the citizens of the province having to deal with the massive, absolutely massive and unequalled debt of \$15 billion that was left by those Conservatives when they left office in 1991. There's no question.

Mr. Speaker, let's talk about what's happening right now, two years after they've been elected. It's over two years since they've been elected and communities like Shaunavon, Redvers, Broadview, Arcola, Spiritwood, Lestock, Climax, and Frontier are all struggling to find a doctor.

Communities like Coronach and Shaunavon are hiring professional recruitment agencies to find doctors. Hundreds of thousands of dollars are being spent to be able to retain and recruit doctors. And those communities are not seeing the municipal funding that they're supposed to get . . .

The Speaker: — Next question. I recognize the member from Saskatoon Riversdale.

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, this government has failed in providing for the health and well-being of residents in rural Saskatchewan. We've seen how they've mismanaged and underfunded existing services and have lacked a plan for addressing rural residents' very real concerns.

If they can't manage existing programs, I don't suppose rural Saskatchewan has any hope of ever seeing any new programming. To the member from Prince Albert Carlton: what is the Sask Party government's commitment to ensuring funded midwifery services are available for rural women?

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

Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I want to thank the member opposite for that question. To begin with, we look at the past where the NDP government never engaged alternative kind of ways of doing business, Mr. Speaker. Our party in the last two years has had consultation with midwives in Saskatchewan. The minister has talked with them, his staff have as well, Mr. Speaker.

I want to talk about what happened under their government. Prince Albert and Prince Albert Carlton saw a huge increase in services because they closed hospitals, they closed services under their tenure. So now Prince Albert had to take all that as a funnel for the North, Mr. Speaker.

Our government's engaged. We're consulting with the people in the communities. We're consulting with groups about the services like this. And I'll tell you what. The member from Prince Albert Northcote wants to talk about how things have gotten so bad. Under his government's watch, they gave no money for infrastructure. They fell to a deficit position every year, Mr. Speaker. We gave money last year to give operational funds. We're very proud of that.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Yorkton.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government set a goal to recruit 800 more nurses. We have recruited 603 more nurses. These are full-time equivalents as of December 30th, 2009. We set that target of 800. We're 75 per cent there.

On March 28th, 2004, the former minister of Health, the member from Regina Lakeview, told the CBC there's no advantage in training more nurses if other provinces can hire them away when they graduate. To the member from Regina Walsh Acres: why did the NDP see no advantage in increasing the number of nurses in Saskatchewan?

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

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the member for the question. I'm finding it very interesting in listening to the questions that are being posed across the way and responses that are being given. And I find it very interesting that the amazingly valuable question that was just posed by the member from Saskatoon was unfortunately not answered by the Sask Party government, regarding midwifery.

So I don't know if it's something they forgot about or if it's something they don't have a plan for again, or again if it's one of those things that is going to be cut in the next budget, Mr. Speaker, from seeing any progress whatsoever. I guess that's what we can garner from the no answer that we got to that very valuable question on midwifery.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, the doctor shortages in the province right now are reaching crisis levels. In the last two years the doctor vacancy rate has increased by 50 per cent. And contrary to what the member from Batoche says about us creating numbers, these numbers come off the Sask Party

government's website, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, government members talk about all the things that they've accomplished or they tried to accomplish as a government. But, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan aren't seeing any results.

The people of Saskatchewan are seeing longer waiting lists for health care services, longer waiting lists for surgical opportunities. They're seeing more hospitals on bypass. The people of Saskatchewan, and in particular in rural Saskatchewan, simply want quality health services and, Mr. Speaker, why is this government not giving that opportunity to the people of Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — That ends the 75-minute debate. We will move forward to the private members' motions.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Lloydminster.

Motion No. 2 — Saskatchewan's Entrepreneurial Spirit

Mr. McMillan: — Over one-third of our province's productive capacity is driven by the entrepreneurial sector. No enterprise, government or otherwise, can disregard this sector. To do so would lead to a stagnant economy, a hole in the fabric of our society, and a disregard for our common history.

Today I will move a motion that recognizes this contribution. At the end of my statement I will read this motion and it will be:

That this Assembly recognize the renewed entrepreneurial spirit in Saskatchewan, which is encouraging the establishment of new enterprises, while at the same time inspiring confidence in existing ones.

This motion is to convey my heartfelt belief, and with the support of the members if this should come to a vote, an endorsement and recognition of those who struggled to make a better life for themselves and their families and in doing so strengthen the province as a whole for all of us.

Mr. Speaker, today I speak specifically about those who start a business, but I also want to speak about the feeling of entrepreneurial growth, optimism that I think everyone feels. Whether they're starting a business today or tomorrow or at some point in their future, I think that that feeling has really grown up within all of us.

Why, one may ask, has this spirit of opportunity been awakened? Why now is so many taking this entrepreneurial step? This I will endeavour to answer with the help of Booker T. Washington and several case studies that I will assess today. From a promising start our province was populated with homesteaders, Saskatchewan's original entrepreneurs. A family on every quarter section, a small business on every quarter

section. There were missteps and failures but there were far more great successes, and this is our heritage.

A ship lost at sea for [several] days suddenly sighted a friendly vessel. From the mast of the unfortunate vessel was seen a signal, "Water, water; we die of thirst!" The answer from the friendly vessel at once came back, "Cast down your bucket where you are." A second time the signal, "Water, water; send us water!" ran up from the distressed vessel, and was answered, "Cast down your bucket where you are." A third and fourth signal for water was answered, "Cast down your bucket where you are." The captain of the distressed vessel, at last heeding the injunction, cast down his bucket, and it came up full of fresh, sparkling water from the mouth of the Amazon River.

To those who hope of bettering their condition or understand the importance of cultivating their own ingenuity I would say, cast down your bucket where you are. Cast down your bucket here in Saskatchewan, "... in agriculture, mechanics, in commerce, in domestic service, and in the professions." Cast down your bucket where you are. Start a tea house or a barber shop, a clothing company, a gift store. Start a law firm. Well, Mr. Speaker, maybe we do have enough law firms but everything else, please cast down your bucket.

Mr. Speaker, before I entered the profession of politics I was an entrepreneur. I started a small business in the oil field . . . One of my colleagues says, you still are. And that's funny you should stay that. I don't think of myself as a politician; I think of myself as an entrepreneur on sabbatical. And it may be two years before I can go back to that honourable profession, or potentially the good people of Lloydminster will extend that a little longer, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to speak a little bit about the entrepreneurial spirit and what it takes, you know, why so many people are coming forward now with this step in their lives. I think that the biggest thing is an entrepreneur has to be driven by hope. You have to think, I can do this, for one. I want to do this, and it's going to mean that my life will be better, my family's life will be better, and my community will be better.

If you are motivated by fear, Mr. Speaker, you are not likely to start a business. You do not start a business fearful. You start a business hopeful. Mr. Speaker, I hear calling from the other side about immature entrepreneurs. I will address that later on in my speech, Mr. Speaker. But I would like to talk about opportunity and optimism, Mr. Speaker, optimism which that member on the far side could obviously take a little bit of advice on, Mr. Speaker.

If you think Saskatchewan is going to have a positive future and you think your family is going to have an optimistic future, you will likely start a small business, Mr. Speaker. There are risks. There are risks. Of course there is. There are trials; there's long nights, long days, Mr. Speaker. You have to know if you're an entrepreneur that you get paid last. You have to make payroll. You have to pay your suppliers. At the end of the month, it is you who decides whether there's a paycheque coming to you or not, Mr. Speaker. And that is something that I think more people are willing take on that responsibility because they're

confident that if they put in the work they will have a successful business, Mr. Speaker. Things have changed.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to speak of a friend of mine, Maureen Currie. She cast down her bucket about a year ago, Mr. Speaker. Maureen is a lady from Pierceland, Saskatchewan. She was a stay-at-home mom. She volunteered her time in the community. She was on town council for 13 years. She was on the fire department, the library board, and the Catholic Women's League. Mr. Speaker, her children are grown, her husband works away often, and Maureen thought that she had something to contribute to her community.

One year ago, Mr. Speaker, Maureen opened Up Town Treasures on Main Street in Pierceland. It is a country gift store filled with candles, cupboards, mirrors, wagons, stars, and many other things, Mr. Speaker. Maureen tells me that she saw high need for this type of gift store in rural Saskatchewan and in our province. The building came available. Maureen totally renovated it. She invested her money to renovate an old building to look like new in Pierceland, Saskatchewan. That is confidence, Mr. Speaker. It opened exactly one year ago yesterday.

She tells me that the economy hasn't slowed her down a bit. Up Town Treasures has had a fabulous year, in her words. Maureen opened in March 2009, and she wondered how long it would be before someone came to her store from each of the provinces and territories. And she kept track. She said it took five short months. By July she had had a visitor from every province and every territory and so far five US [United States] states.

She tells me that she buys her supplies across Canada, many of her suppliers in Saskatchewan, and even brings some in from the United States, Mr. Speaker. Maureen hires two part-time employees. And I guess I would like to say, thank you for casting down your bucket in Saskatchewan. Thank you for contributing the way you do. And I hope that next year is better than this year, Mr. Speaker.

[12:15]

There's another business in my hometown — not Pierceland but Lloydminster. It started in Lashburn, Mr. Speaker. It was two schoolteachers — worked with my wife — a nice couple we hang out with. About three, four years ago they bought a silkscreener and they were doing some T-shirts for community people, for sports teams. They did it in their basement after work and it was a little sideline and they really enjoyed it. But, like entrepreneurs, the spirit got them and we'd be over there for dinner or something and Chris would have to go downstairs. And for hours he would be making T-shirts. And slowly this grew, their product line grew, their suppliers grew.

Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to report that they are doing terrific. They call themselves Ironjet. They cast down their bucket about three years ago and they did well. In the last year, Mr. Speaker, their business has gone through the roof. If anybody watched the World Juniors Hockey Tournament, the Zamboni had a silkscreen over the top of it, a beautiful Zamboni. They did that, Mr. Speaker.

They, as entrepreneurs do, they bought another business in

Lloydminster. They now have two shops in Lloydminster, 14 staff. And one night Chris was looking on the Internet for some work. This opportunity came up. It was kind of a short notice. I don't know what had happened to the original Zamboni silkscreener, but Chris found it and in short order was able to produce the product quickly and to an excellent standard, and they had their product on a world stage, Mr. Speaker. I think that entrepreneurial spirit . . . I'd just like to tell a little story.

At Chris and Lara's house, in their basement where they had their original silkscreener set up, the roof is only about 5 feet high. And I'd go down there and Chris would get me working and show me the process. And it was quite neat. You'd put on the paint and put the shirt in and make sure it's straight. Not being a particularly careful kind of guy, I think I ruined two or three shirts and he got tired of my employment and kicked me out.

But the roof was only about 5 foot high so you had stand there with your head cricked over doing this work. The funny thing is I'm about six two, Chris is about six foot six and I know he spent hours down there, hunkered down, neck cricked to the side. And I think it's a testament to his work ethic that their business — and Lara's, I have to give them both credit — their work ethic, they are where they are at today.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk about another business, this one in the oil industry, this one actually down in southern Saskatchewan. These folks asked me not to put their name on the record, Mr. Speaker, because of concerns that if the political situation in the province changes, they do not want to be run out, Mr. Speaker.

They are a group of people. One is retired. He'd worked in the oil industry his entire life, and he went to work, and he was very successful. But never in his entire life did he ever start a business. Another one is actually in the States. He's an investor. We've got another one that works in the oil industry today, and he's working as well. But what they've done is they've put their common knowledge together. They've gone after and purchased property to drill an oil well.

Currently today, Mr. Speaker, the rig is sitting on that piece of land. They're drilling their very first oil well. I asked them this morning, you know, when will it come into production? Or when will it be fact? And his response was, you know, he didn't know. When you're such a small company and the oil industry is doing so well, it's sometimes tough to muscle out the bigger players and get that equipment in here. But he thinks within the next week the rig will be off and the fracking will be done, and they'll be going to completion and producing oil.

And I just cannot imagine how exciting it must be for those people that have invested to watch a project that they've put so much time into to come to fruition. And you know, I'm pretty excited. And I, you know, I really hope that that it is a big producer for them, and it's the first of many. Because when they're successful, we're all successful, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I think I'd like to just talk a little bit about why they were hesitant to have their names put forward, Mr. Speaker, and it goes back to something long ago. In 1973 a different government than this one enacted a law. I believe it

was Bill 43. And many oil producers, small-business men, the people that had laid it on the line in the early '70s to build an industry for our province, were left holding the bag and the government was left holding all their property. And many of them left and have not come back. I would say the majority of them have.

And it has taken 35, 36 years for that sour taste to leave their mouth, where they feel comfortable . . . Actually they probably don't. Any of those individuals that I know have said, you know, we will never invest in Saskatchewan again. You know, we trust your government. We think that you guys have the right idea and you're doing a great job. But we aren't, we just aren't going to invest there. We've learned a lesson of what can happen.

And I guess I assure everyone that that isn't going to happen again. I think the province has changed. I think that we now have a government that recognizes that entrepreneurial spirit — people that are willing to lay it on the line and drill a well — it benefits everyone. And that is what we need, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, another case study again in my hometown of Lloydminster. It's a clothing store; it's called Socko. It opened up here just in the last month. And it's two young women.

I spoke of Maureen Currie who's in probably the second half of her career and has the competence and the wherewithal and the experience to have a successful business and is going for it.

This one, Socko, is a clothing store started by two young women, Holly and Chelsea. They've come together as partners. They're best friends. Both of them are under the age of 25. Chelsea has two children — a girl who is two years old and a boy who is three — so trying to raise a young family at home, she's got two very energetic pre-school kids, and is still so optimistic and confident and wanting to contribute that she has put a partnership together with her best friend and opened a store. And, Mr. Speaker, I wish them well.

I know that Lloydminster is a great city to do business in, and I'm very confident that they will do very well. And I applaud them for their effort. Thank you for casting your bucket in Saskatchewan and in Lloydminster, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to speak about three gentlemen that I met earlier this summer. We were doing some renovations on our house. We hired a contractor to do it, and he had some health problems and couldn't finish it and we were in a bit of a bind. We had our siding ripped off, we had some insulation half on, and we didn't know what to do. I didn't have time to start building decks and fixing our house.

Through their building supply store, they said, well we know these three gentlemen that have done excellent work for other people. They're a small business. They're new to our area. Would you be willing to give them a try? And we said, absolutely. And they came out. And all three — a father and two sons — all born in Pakistan, they have moved to the Lloydminster area recently and they do great work, Mr. Speaker. They were punctual. They were everything you would want in a contractor. And they became friends of ours.

And I think that this example speaks to several things. I think it speaks to an excellent immigration policy — and that's something that the member opposite was questioning in my earlier comments — that we have people from around the world that when their ship is adrift, it blows into Saskatchewan where they can cast their bucket for fresh water. And I can tell you that these three people are casting it and are doing a heck of a good job to contribute here.

They think that this is the best opportunity in Canada. They have started off in Surrey. They finished high school in British Columbia, the two young men, and they moved to Kelowna and built a house and did some work there. Then from Kelowna they took a good look at Saskatchewan. The boys, the young men are in their mid-20s and it was time to put down roots. They both married recently. And where would they move? Would it be Ontario? Would it be out East? Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

They made a conscious choice to move to Saskatchewan. They started in Saskatoon and then Lloydminster. They built themselves a beautiful house. They've laid down roots. They've got a little girl. Nisar and his wife have their first little girl, and she's cute as a button. And they're doing great work.

Mr. Speaker, I hear from the opposite side, what year did they come to Saskatchewan? They came to Saskatchewan, I believe, in the last two years.

An Hon. Member: — No.

Mr. McMillan: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, I believe that they did. There's some questioning about that. Mr. Speaker, I don't want to quibble about that.

My point is that they are being successful in Saskatchewan today. I think that these are such good businessmen, they would have even been successful under that government's leadership, Mr. Speaker. They're that good; they really are. But the fact that they're here today, they are doing terrific, Mr. Speaker.

I think a couple points that would highlight this, Mr. Speaker, is that we've seen a 137 per cent increase in the urban housing starts year over year, Mr. Speaker. We see big increases in non-residential housing starts, Mr. Speaker. And I think, I think that the confidence that business has to be building buildings in Saskatchewan is attracting a lot of workers and a lot of notice from across Canada.

I see it also from Eastern Canada. We've seen many people in the trades that have come to Saskatchewan for work, many in the Lloydminster area for the oilfield. They come out here for a month or two. They go back to Newfoundland or Nova Scotia where their families are. And you know, I thank those people for contributing to our province because we need their help, and we're providing some work for them.

But I'm also glad to say that those entrepreneurs are more and more moving their families to Saskatchewan. I certainly see it in my riding when you see people who have grown up in Newfoundland. They'll still tell you that Newfoundland will always be home, that the rock is a piece of them. But their families are here. They don't plan on leaving, Mr. Speaker.

They love Saskatchewan too. And I think that that is a testament to the strength of our province, Mr. Speaker.

I think that it's important that we ask ourselves what is the role of government in small business? And there would be those of you that'll tell you, that'll say you know, the less government in small business, the better. And that's certainly one way to look at it. I know in the past, we've seen where the government has gotten involved in businesses and really left a bad taste in people's mouth. One would be rotten potatoes, Mr. Speaker. I've never tried to eat a rotten potato, but I know that there's several people that were in that business — small businessmen.

And I would like to expand on this a little bit. You know the government may have had a disaster, the NDP government at the time, investing millions of dollars, tens of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money into building potato barns and potato industry and a lot of other things that it could be argued that they had no right being in. But, Mr. Speaker, with today's motion, I want to look at the small businessman.

How many people in that area bought trucks to haul potatoes or bought infrastructure pieces that could contribute to that industry? They believed the then government that they were going to invest and make a profitable industry. It didn't work out that way, Mr. Speaker. These people that had invested their own hard-earned money in trucks or in farms, in potato-growing equipment were left a few short years later with nothing more than a lawsuit suing the government to try and reclaim some of their losses. And like I say, Mr. Speaker, rotten potatoes leaves a bad taste in anyone's mouth.

I think I'd like to talk about what are more of the foundational elements which have made Saskatchewan a beacon to the rest of Canada and really around the world for their entrepreneurial spirit. You know, I think that a large piece is our commitment to infrastructure. We said, you know, you're not going to haul your products across a bridge that won't carry the load. There's roads out there that businesses will look at and say, this is not a good place to set up a facility.

Now you look at Saskatchewan and you look at the commitment our government has made to highways, to roads, to many pieces of infrastructure. I think that sends a signal. They're not all fixed. They won't be all fixed in another two years, in another four years but, Mr. Speaker, there's positive signs on the horizon. There's positive signs there today and that have been completed in the last two years, and I think — I know — that business looks at that and says, this is important to us.

One example that just pops into my mind is the heavy-haul roads in the Lloydminster constituency. We have heavy oil. You can't pipeline it, Mr. Speaker, to batteries, so trucks, tridem trucks, have to haul that oil from the well site to the battery.

There's a program in place that helps the rural municipalities keep the roads in a reasonable condition because of all that heavy traffic, and that benefits everyone, Mr. Speaker. The RM [rural municipality] needs the help. The oil company needs to get their oil to market, and the province is the beneficiary because we have a royalty on the oil. So there's partners in this,

and I think as long as everybody is working together and doing the right things, we will continue to see this level of success and optimism around Saskatchewan.

[12:30]

The Saskatchewan government's rethink on taxation, Mr. Speaker, that property tax, that's something we campaigned on very clearly in the election and made some very big investments in last year and will continue to next year, Mr. Speaker. The amount of property tax that people have to pay on commercial properties is a real decision-making instrument for businesses, small and large. If there's a disparity in the property tax between two jurisdictions, it is often the deciding factor between those two jurisdictions as where a company is going to invest their money, hire people, and build that province. And, Mr. Speaker, there's a role for property tax; we've identified it. We just think that Saskatchewan has to be competitive with the rest of Canada. We can compete with the rest of Canada head-to-head in almost any realm, Mr. Speaker, but we can't arbitrarily disadvantage ourselves about property tax, Mr. Speaker.

Income tax, Mr. Speaker, that is another thing. When people look at why they're going to invest in a province or if they want to quit their job and start another business, they have to have the incentive. And there isn't a lot of incentive if the income tax is too high, Mr. Speaker. Why would you want to start, earn extra money, and just have the government claw it back. Again, there is a role for income tax. There always will be a role for income tax, but it has to be competitive with the rest of Canada.

In the Lloydminster example, we have seen for far too long that Alberta had a more competitive income tax regime than Saskatchewan. Many of the entrepreneurs chose to live and locate their business on the Alberta side. And I think that that would be borne out through statistics that Saskatchewan and Alberta overall would very much mirror the example of what we see in Lloydminster in particular. The income tax is something that now a family of four on the Saskatchewan side of Lloydminster is very likely paying less income tax than the same family of four would be if they had located on the Alberta side.

And when I look at the business, Socko, and I see the two young Saskatchewan women that have started that, it shows a little bit of anecdote and I think potentially truth to the fact that an income tax rate that is competitive or advantageous in Saskatchewan, as it now is, is going to drive small business as well as the incentive for people to earn.

Mr. Speaker, I think that debt reduction, it doesn't seem like there'd be a direct tie between debt reduction and investing in a small business, but as a small businessman myself, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that is a major priority for me. When I look at a government like the Saskatchewan Party government, that has made a serious reduction in the provincial debt — 40 per cent in the first two years — it shows me, it signals to me that this government is serious about having a fiscally responsible regime. And within two years, to make that commitment, I think is fantastic.

The reason it would be important to me, Mr. Speaker, is as my

business grows, as it becomes more successful and I bring in more people and hire more people, if a government wasn't committed to debt reduction, you're going to see that. It'll catch up to you some day.

And the NDP would have raised taxes, Mr. Speaker, where our government has made a commitment to lowering debt, long-term benefit of the province for strengthening the province. And if you have a business, you want a strong province because you need everyone to have confidence if you want to be selling your products, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the corporate income tax has been lowered in this province in the last two years by 5 per cent. Now that is a direct, you know, a direct link. If businesses are looking at direct dollars and cents on their bottom line, the corporate income tax is something that couldn't be identified as maybe the largest or one of their largest decision-making instruments.

And to look at how that is borne out, Mr. Speaker, I have some statistics here about the number of incorporated companies in Saskatchewan. In 2005-06, it was 8,700. In 2006-07, it was about 8,986. When you get into the last two years, Mr. Speaker, it jumps from that 9,000 range up to 12,000. And then in this past year, 13,300 incorporated businesses. Now if you want quantitative proof of how policies and confidence in a province can drive investment, can drive the entrepreneurial spirit, I think that the proof is borne out in this.

Many of my friends, Mr. Speaker, have started trucking companies in the oil field. They have started steamers. They've started flushbys. I've got a friend, I spoke of him here a couple days ago, he started a oil field service company in Lloydminster, son of a former member. He now has, I would estimate, 20, 25 semis on the road, hauling everything from sand, salt water. They got pressure trucks, vac [vacuum] trucks, Mr. Speaker. And making a commitment to our community, to our province, locating it in Lashburn, Saskatchewan, where there's a willing worker base. But that is becoming a problem, Mr. Speaker. We're seeing that the number of people that are starting businesses in this province is getting to a point that our unemployment rate is the lowest in the country. Our unemployment numbers very closely match the number of job postings.

So I guess an economist would call that structural unemployment. Structural unemployment is almost zero because job vacancies and the number of unemployed pretty much balance, Mr. Speaker. And I think that that is a real reason why immigration from the rest of Canada coming to Saskatchewan to help us fill those positions is very important and people from around the world that are identifying Saskatchewan as a place of opportunity.

I think it's important we communicate to them that there is opportunity here in Saskatchewan and there will be for a long, long time, Mr. Speaker. And that is a good thing. I think one thing that a government, a government takes credit for a lot of things, but one thing I feel very comfortable saying is I think this government has communicated very well.

They have told the rest of Canada the Saskatchewan story, that we are more than wheat. We are more than maybe what we

were sold as in the past, that we are potash, we are coal. We are country gifts in Pierceland, Saskatchewan. We are recognized around the world as a leader in many, many things. And it takes a lot of hands in Saskatchewan to make us what we are.

And we have to tell the world that we're open for entrepreneurs that want to come here and be a part of it. It's an exciting time in Saskatchewan. Let's tell some people about it. And people are hearing it. They're hungry to hear it, Mr. Speaker. And a few examples of that would be the CNN [Cable News Network] has talked about us. You can see it on American news stations. American newspapers are talking about Saskatchewan. National news programs are saying, Saskatchewan, who knew.

And you know, 5, 10 short years ago, to see Saskatchewan's number at the top of the growth expectations, to have lead the country in the last two years, that was unheard of, Mr. Speaker. I was going to university out of the province back then and I took a lot of good-natured ribbing from my colleagues. And it's sweet desserts when I can call them up today and tell them that Saskatchewan's doing great and that we're looking into the future.

We're being a very responsible province, but we're a very optimistic province as well. That's all part of, I would say, the new winning attitude in Saskatchewan. It's a belief thing, Mr. Speaker. We believe in ourselves. For a long time it wasn't cool to believe in ourselves, that to be self-deprecating was the Saskatchewan way. And I think it's still good to have a good sense of humour and to be able to poke a little fun at ourselves, and it's what we are and what we should be.

But we should also be able to stand up and say, no, we're Saskatchewan. We're going to lead the country. We're going to drive investment. We're going to bring in people from the rest of the country to be part of this experience, to work in our industries, and to start their own businesses, Mr. Speaker. And we're seeing it. We can come up with countless examples.

When I started writing this speech, Mr. Speaker, I asked a couple of my colleagues, do you have examples of small businesses in your communities that I could speak about? And I started jotting down a few, and mine, of close personal friends, people across the street from my office and a few . . . Very quickly I got a list long enough that I wasn't able to use very many of the examples that was given to me from my colleagues, Mr. Speaker.

I think that one thing that we talked about in this legislature in the past, but it speaks to the view of the rest of the country of us, as well as of our own people here in Saskatchewan, and that is the second annual *Financial Post*/CFIB [Canadian Federation of Independent Business] ranking of Canada's top business-friendly cities. And I say the second annual, but the first annual, Mr. Speaker, was very similar results to the second. And it showed five of the top 10 cities to do business of in the country are where? Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. They are Lloydminster. They are Moose Jaw, Saskatoon, Regina, and Prince Albert.

Mr. Speaker, I hear many of my colleagues on the opposite side talk about the forestry industry. Well, Mr. Speaker, Prince Albert is somewhat a hub of the forestry industry, and the

optimism in Prince Albert has driven it into the top 10 in Canada, Mr. Speaker, as places to start a small business, for confidence.

We just finished the Crown corporations public hearings. We had many people from northern Saskatchewan come forward with business proposals, with optimism, with things that they want to be a part of, as Saskatchewan builds and builds to the future, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I think that as Saskatchewan moves through this year, through next year, we will be looking towards a province which is more and more diversified. Saskatchewan is the province that has the least reliance on our American neighbours to the south than any other province except British Columbia.

We sell our pulse crops around the world. They have been an excellent source of diversification for us. Potash, which really spreads far and wide around the countries, around the world . . . We see, we see everything from tillage tools, seeding equipment, manufacturing, Mr. Speaker. For a long time Saskatchewan had a, I don't want to say an inferiority complex but we had leadership that did not allow us to say, look at us. We are going to be aggressive; we are business people; and we're going to drive our products and our province forward. And, Mr. Speaker, that is important. That is very important to be able to go around the world, have people recognize that you're from Saskatchewan — well I hear exciting things about Saskatchewan and I want to be a part of it, Mr. Speaker.

Well I hear the folks opposite ridiculing the small-business sector, Mr. Speaker. I want to talk to them. I've talked to them about their exploits in the potato industry and how they devastated the small-business people. If you look at the spinoff effects of the potash industry, you know, how many mills, how many belt shops, how many spring operations, how many mechanics organizations, small-business people contribute to that industry.

And you don't have to look very far back in our history to see when an NDP government in all senses of the word nationalized our potash industry. They passed a law that stole a company from those who invested in it . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . They ask what year that was, Mr. Speaker. What year was that? Very good question.

Better question is, when was that law repealed? When did they repeal it? They left it on the books, Mr. Speaker. They had 16 years to send a signal to industry that we're not going to steal your business again. You know, fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me. Well, Mr. Speaker, they had 16 years to send a message that they weren't going to steal companies any more. They didn't do it. You know why, Mr. Speaker? I don't think they believed in it. I think they always wanted to keep that card in their back pocket; that if times get tough, we can always go and collect the potash companies again.

Mr. Speaker, that isn't going to happen under this government and I'm going to venture to say that isn't going to happen in Saskatchewan again because I think the electorate has been there, they've seen what that produces, the stagnation in an industry, the hit that a province as a whole takes.

They now see a government in power that says, we will repeal that law. A simple act of repealing that law, Mr. Speaker. It isn't contentious. I remember they argued against repealing it, much like they're arguing against many of the good pieces of legislation currently in front of the Assembly. But they argued against it, Mr. Speaker. What does that say? That says if you elect an NDP government again, well you know we're one piece of legislation away from having that power. And I think the people of Saskatchewan have seen that and think that, no. There's a new feeling of optimism, of entrepreneurial spirit that's going to move forward.

[12:45]

And, Mr. Speaker, when you talk about an entrepreneur, you're talking about somebody that has taken the money out of their pocket, mortgaging their house again. They're emptying their bank accounts, in all likelihood, to go after a dream. They think that they have what it takes to go forward and they're, in most cases . . . And it was the case for myself, Mr. Speaker. To buy my first piece of heavy equipment left me in a very compromised state. And you get that . . . You're hung out there, and you have to go to work. You have to find the contracts. You have to put in the long days, Mr. Speaker.

And to have it hanging over your head that something not in your own control, that a government could come in with a heavy hand and devastate your industry, Mr. Speaker, it is something that puts the chance maybe too big for a lot of people where, when you've got your family's investments on the line, you want to know that if I try hard, if I work hard, that the government of the day is going to support me, is going to stand behind me.

When I cast my bucket, Mr. Speaker, I want a chance at fresh, clean water where in the past it seemed a lot more like salt water was coming up, Mr. Speaker. And today it is fresh, clean Saskatchewan water, Mr. Speaker.

I know that when I was in small business, Mr. Speaker . . . And I plan to be in a small business again, Mr. Speaker. As I said earlier, it may be two years from now. It may be. It may be a much longer period of time. But regardless, I love being in business. I love the freedom of it. I love that you get to make decisions today that don't need the scrutiny of a lot of colleagues. But the reality is, you live and die with those decisions and sometimes you make bad ones, Mr. Speaker. I have made them, and you live with that as well. But when you get out there and you're doing the work . . . If you're involved in the oil industry as I was, Mr. Speaker, it was incredibly rewarding.

The good people in that industry, that worked for many of the big companies — the Huskys and CNRLs [Canadian Natural Resources Limited] — were very good to deal with. And the other contractors, Mr. Speaker. Most of that industry is run by contractors. Hauling the oil, doing the road maintenance, the welders, it's a series of contractors, of small-business people that contribute to their industry, to their community by the hard work that they do.

And many of them have built up from, you know, one little welding shop, one little truck. You know, next thing you know,

they've got three trucks, they're hiring two guys from out of province. They can't hire enough because they want to buy a fourth truck. And, Mr. Speaker, that is the Saskatchewan dream as I see it today. It is that I can identify a problem that I can fill. And usually these individuals, they fill it; they fill it well. And the problem is that the larger company or their contractor says, you know, we need you to do more. You're doing 14 hours a day. Can you do 16? And that's really what drives the growth in this industry.

I saw it in my business. I see it in very many of the other businesses in my area. It goes from one truck to two. You're hiring people. And it soon comes into, you may be in the pressure truck business, but they ask you to get a vac truck on with them as well, Mr. Speaker, to broaden your service horizons and to help them fill their need. And it becomes a very symbiotic relationship, Mr. Speaker.

I think that a government as we have has certain roles. I think we have provided very good leadership in workmen's compensation, in employment insurance, working with our federal counterparts, creating a tax environment as I spoke about earlier, Mr. Speaker. All those are very important.

But I think more important is the feeling of optimism that Saskatchewan is the place to invest and that, you know, maybe you've worked in this industry your whole life, you've worked for one of the larger companies — you may have worked for government, Mr. Speaker — and you identify an opportunity.

And it's that decision, that conversation over the kitchen table . . . I would bet most of these conversations are over the kitchen table, Mr. Speaker — husband to wife, wife to husband, often kids involved — saying, we're going to change our life. You know, we're going to take this chance. Everybody get involved. Is this something we can do? And it's probably one of the larger decisions people make in their lives. Do we mortgage our home? Do we mortgage our farm to take this chance? What's the upside? It may be more freedom. It may be more work. It may be building something that can be passed on intergenerational.

And I certainly see that in my community, that very many fathers and sons are in business together and the father retires and the son brings on his son. You know, the value of that cannot be underestimated, Mr. Speaker. And I've got two little girls — and I don't know, they're pretty young at this point — but at some point I hope that they're entrepreneurs as well. And I will raise them with the skills, I hope, that if they so choose, they could start their own business, Mr. Speaker.

But these conversations over the kitchen tables, they aren't taken lightly. They're probably something that people have thought about for years before they go forward and make that plunge. And the fact that we've seen such a deluge of people in Saskatchewan do that in the last two years speaks volumes in my sense of, one, their view of our province, of their view of the future. Because you don't invest your life savings in one year. You don't invest it in a short period of time and think, you know, I'll buy a welding truck or a gift store and a year from now I'll sell it. You invest that money today knowing that very likely 15 years from now you will be the guy behind the till or the girl behind the till or behind the seat. And often that isn't

the case, but I think that most people start with that expectation that this is something they want to do.

With that Mr. Speaker, I think that the examples I've given here today are exactly that. Maureen Currie really stands out to me as someone that her husband was working away from home a lot and I'm sure they had a long conversation as, you know, how long of hours can a lady devote. Obviously it was a successful store. She's now hired two people. Two people in that small town owe their employment to that one enterprise.

Same with the example, the store in Lloydminster. You know, your business starts to grow and you start getting the pressures of hiring employees. And that's where the role of government comes in that, let's make this as easy as possible for people that are doing this, to engage with their government.

And it's not a perfect system, Mr. Speaker. I see many things come through my office of examples of things that either are working all right and it's still a problem, or stuff that a government can work on. And I endeavour, and I know this government endeavours to ensure that we know that there will never be the perfect situation, but there will be an ever-improving one. Mr. Speaker, I am confident, under this government.

I also think that many of the projections that we're seeing out of eastern Canada and the big banks that Saskatchewan is going to grow at 3.6 per cent GDP [Gross Domestic Product] growth this year, I believe — CIBC [Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce] came out with today — 4.6 per cent next year. Large portion of that, Mr. Speaker, is driven by the private sector, by entrepreneurs. Many of them that have just started out.

And as I say, Mr. Speaker, between 2006 where we had just over 8,500 to today, five years later we see 13,500 people that have incorporated companies. That is a massive, massive improvement — I don't want to say improvement — increase in the number of people that have incorporated their companies and are now probably employing more people and contributing to their communities and their province through employment and services and goods that they bring in for other people to utilize and other companies to utilize in their businesses.

Now with that, Mr. Speaker, the number of people that were in Saskatchewan that are incorporating and the number of people coming in from out of province that are incorporating is a good sign. When I see in Lloydminster, people for lack of a better term . . . For 16 years all the industrial parks in Lloydminster were built on the Alberta side. And these industrial parks are a weather vane of a province. They are almost exclusively small businesses — there is hydraulic shops, there's dealerships, there's truck shops, welding shops, you name it, Mr. Speaker — but for the most part they are or at least started out as what would be considered mom-and-pop operations.

Now with that, why did all the industrial growth over that period of time go on one side of the city? Because there was a border and there was a difference in many things — in taxes, in confidence in employment issues. And what we see recently is a real growth on the Saskatchewan side, Mr. Speaker, and it is big companies. And by big I still mean small business. Redhead

Equipment, Mr. Speaker, is now on the Saskatchewan side. We see our local heavy diesel, heavy mechanic operations locating on the Saskatchewan side.

We see that one of our real estate companies in Lloydminster, Remax, relocated themselves, Mr. Speaker, from the Alberta side to the Saskatchewan side. And you know, one, it's a decision when a company has to decide where they're going to build their shop; but, two, when they going to uproot their business and move it, physically move it to the Saskatchewan side, now that is in my opinion is a gesture of confidence in a province. And I think that Remax has made that commitment to Saskatchewan with that move.

And I've talked to many of their realtors and I know the owner of the Remax in Lloydminster, and he is very confident and bullish about Saskatchewan and its future. And he has deep ties to the province. It's funny in Lloydminster: you talk to most of the businessmen and most of them have Saskatchewan roots. There aren't many Edmonton Eskimo fans in Lloydminster.

And I think you'll find that in Calgary as well, Mr. Speaker. And that goes back a long way in history that what drove out the entrepreneurial class to cities like Calgary or Edmonton out west. I think it's certain policies in our past that sent a signal that Saskatchewan was not the place that an entrepreneur would find his best options. And I see it in Lloydminster. I saw it growing up. And again, as I say, I think if you balance Saskatchewan and Alberta historically, there are countless stories of oil entrepreneurs, of countless number of entrepreneurs that made that assessment themselves, and the history is what it is.

But we know that at our core, our province was settled by entrepreneurs. I have my colleagues nodding their heads. Their forefathers, the people that they got their heritage from, came from Europe — many from England, from Scotland, from Ireland. Why did they leave there? Because they saw opportunity in Western Canada. By chance they ended up in Saskatchewan, but they stayed, Mr. Speaker.

The people that are our forebearers, those of us that were born and raised here in the province, made the conscious choice to come to Saskatchewan. They toughed it out through the lean years in the '30s. They toughed it out through the lean years of the NDP and they are still here. They are the purified strain of the business people that have survived.

So I would argue that part of the reason we see such aggressive, successful entrepreneurs, first generation, that have left our province into Alberta are because they are the purified strain of the entrepreneur. And now they're coming back, Mr. Speaker, just injecting into our province the optimism, the experience. And the people that are still in Saskatchewan come from that same hardy stock. And I see it of my colleagues and my friends that have made that commitment to Saskatchewan and just have that natural skill and tenacity to be successful in our province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I think that we are going to see this grow in Saskatchewan, and we are going to applaud them in Saskatchewan when they do succeed. So when they cast down their bucket, cast it down where you are, Mr. Speaker. And with

that, I would like to read the motion before the Assembly, Mr. Speaker. And the motion reads:

That this Assembly recognize the renewed entrepreneurial spirit in Saskatchewan, which is encouraging the establishment of new enterprises, while at the same time inspiring confidence in existing ones.

And, Mr. Speaker, I move that for the record.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Lloydminster has moved a motion:

That this Assembly recognize the renewed entrepreneurial spirit in Saskatchewan, which is encouraging the establishment of new enterprises, while at the same time inspiring confidence in existing ones.

The time of adjournment being as of now, this House now stands adjourned until 1:30 Monday afternoon. Have a good weekend.

[The Assembly adjourned at 13:00.]

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Duncan	4131
Eagles	4131
Lingenfelter	4131
Heppner	4131
Ottenbreit	4140

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Belanger	4131
Harper	4131
Forbes	4132
Vermette	4132
Brotten	4132
Furber	4132
Morin	4132
Iwanchuk	4132
Taylor	4133
Quennell	4133
Wotherspoon	4133
Chartier	4133

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Saskatchewan Party Convention

Belanger	4133
----------------	------

2010 Winter Paralympics

D'Autremont	4134
-------------------	------

Financial Projections

Wotherspoon	4134
-------------------	------

Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities Convention

Hart	4134
------------	------

Minister's Comments

Furber	4134
--------------	------

Good Economic News

Chisholm	4135
----------------	------

Comments at Convention

Morin	4135
-------------	------

QUESTION PERIOD

Support for School Divisions

Brotten	4135
---------------	------

Krawetz	4135
---------------	------

Atkinson	4137
----------------	------

Municipal Revenue Sharing

Higgins	4138
---------------	------

Harrison	4138
----------------	------

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

Health Care Services in Rural Saskatchewan

Junor	4140
-------------	------

Hickie	4143, 4151
--------------	------------

Trew	4144, 4150
------------	------------

Kirsch	4146, 4150
--------------	------------

Morin	4147, 4150
-------------	------------

Elhard	4148
--------------	------

Vermette	4149
----------------	------

Wilson	4150
--------------	------

Allchurch	4150
-----------------	------

Chartier	4150
----------------	------

Ottenbreit	4151
------------------	------

Yates	4151
-------------	------

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 2 — Saskatchewan's Entrepreneurial Spirit

McMillan	4151
----------------	------

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