



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

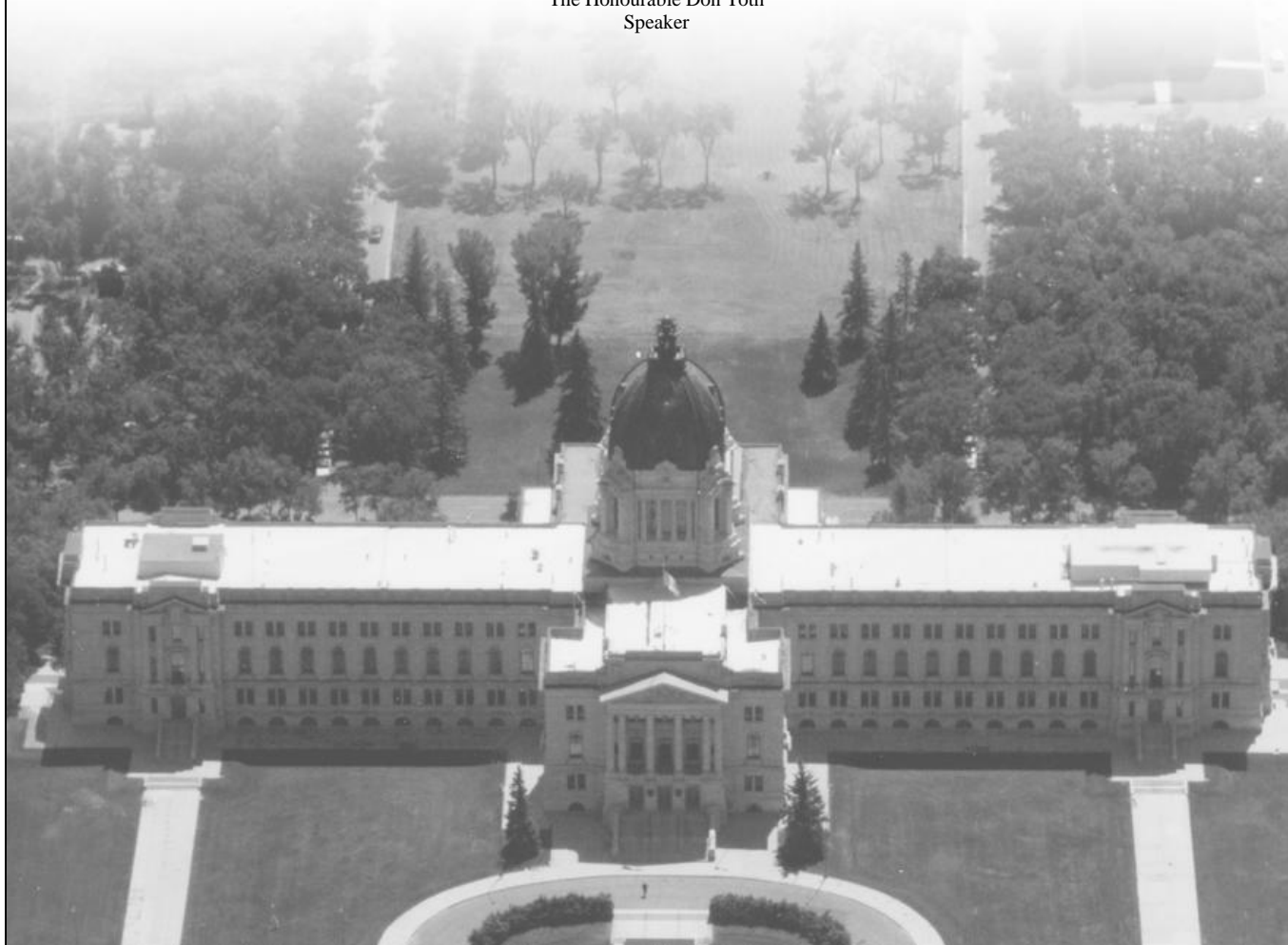
of the

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
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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
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Hickie, Darryl	SP	Prince Albert Carlton
Higgins, Deb	NDP	Moose Jaw Wakamow
Hutchinson, Hon. Bill	SP	Regina South
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Iwanchuk, Andy	NDP	Saskatoon Fairview
Junor, Judy	NDP	Saskatoon Eastview
Kirsch, Delbert	SP	Batoche
Krawetz, Hon. Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
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McCall, Warren	NDP	Regina Elphinstone-Centre
McMillan, Tim	SP	Lloydminster
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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
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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 Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and all members of the Assembly a distinguished individual who's joining us today in your gallery. We have with us the current Liberal leader for the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Ryan Bater. Mr. Bater was elected a little over a year ago as the Leader of the Liberal Party in the province of Saskatchewan. And I'd like all members of the Assembly to join with me in welcoming him to his Assembly on behalf of all of us. Take care.

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

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the east gallery I'd like to welcome the grade 8 students from Alvin Buckwold from the great constituency of Saskatoon Eastview. With the students today is Mrs. Christine Rayner, Mrs. Jennifer Robertson, and Ms. Keila Campbell.

I'm looking forward to meeting with the students and discussing how the legislature works, and we'll meet with them after the Assembly . . . and question period. And I would like everyone to welcome them to the legislature today.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Well it's a real pleasure to join the member from Saskatoon in welcoming the kids from Alvin Buckwold School. Gee, that's my old class. That's the class I left before I came. I was teaching grade 8 at Alvin Buckwold School, but I think these kids may have been in kindergarten or just preschool when I left.

Anyways I want to join the member in welcoming them here to the school. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: — Members, as well I'd like to welcome and ask you to join with me in welcoming to our Assembly Mr. Rob Parker from the National House of Prayer in Ottawa. Rob is seated in the Speaker's gallery with members of the Saskatchewan House of Prayer. I'd invite members to join me in welcoming Rob to the Assembly today.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to present a petition today in support of First Nations

University of Canada. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to recognize the importance of the First Nations University of Canada, to restore funding to the institution, and to call upon their federal counterparts also to restore funding to the First Nations University of Canada.

This petition is signed by individuals from the city of Regina. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Trew: — Thank you. It's my pleasure today again to stand on behalf of the Saskatchewan Student Coalition and present a petition in support of the implementation of the Saskatchewan scholarship fund that the Saskatchewan Party promised to implement in its 2007 election platform. The prayer of this petition, Mr. Speaker, reads:

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, Mr. Speaker, these signatures are all from Regina. I so present.

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

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition concerning . . . well requesting that minimum wage increases be indexed. And because minimum wage increases are often sporadic and do not always reflect the rising cost of living that's faced by minimum wage earners, and that indexing the minimum wage would ensure that minimum wage earners would be able to maintain a standard of living as the cost of living increases. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to commit to indexing the Saskatchewan minimum wage to ensure that the standard of living of minimum wage earners is maintained in the face of cost of living increases.

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

Mr. Speaker, I so present on behalf of citizens in Moose Jaw.

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

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to again present thousands of petitions, signatures on petitions that were presented to me in the legislature from people who are concerned about the elimination of chiropractic co-funding. And the petition reads:

We, the undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan, wish to bring to your attention the following: the possible elimination of government funding for chiropractic services. We, in the prayer that reads as follows:

... respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan honour the agreement negotiated between the Ministry of Health and the Chiropractors' Association of Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, again the petition is signed by people from a wide variety of communities around the province which I will again read. There are signs from Regina, Radville, Wilcox, Weyburn, Parry, Stoughton, Colonsay, Griffin, Midale, Melfort, Birch Hills, St. Brieux, Rose Valley, Naicam, Lake Lenore, Spalding, Nipawin, Prince Albert, Muenster, Kinistino, Rama, LeRoy, Tribune, Minton, Yellow Grass, Regina Beach, Southey, Lumsden, Silton, Strasbourg, Semans, Meadow Lake, Makwa, Dorintosh, Loon Lake, Dore Lake, Rapid View, Green Lake, Waterhen Lake, Beauval, Goodsoil, Candle Lake, Air Ronge, Wynyard, Wadena, West Bend, Foam Lake, Indian Head, Kronau, Balgonie, Kipling, Bethune, Cut Knife, Unity, Luseland, Denzil, Langham, Saskatoon, Weldon, Shellbrook, Crooked River, Debden, Macdowall, St. Louis, Reward, Wilkie, Kerrobert, Handel, Evesham, Canora, Big River, Crystal Springs, Melville, Hague, Leask, Grandora, Perdue, Osler, Bredenbury, Saltcoats, Theodore, Kelvington, Elrose, Kyle, Bjorkdale, Lacadena, Wiseton, Hafford, Battleford, Watrous, Allan, Milestone, Odessa, Rouleau, Zehner, Grayson, Govan, Waldheim, Climax, La Loche, Waterhen Lake, Assiniboia, Coronach, Carlyle, Laporte, Vanguard, Shaunavon, Limerick, Lafleche, Lumsden, Bethune, Carrot River, Choiceland, Ridgedale, Swift Current, Waldeck, Webb, Craven, Claydon, Simmie, Perdue, Macklin, Weirdale, Snowden, Parry, Dilke, Fort Qu'Appelle, Mozart, Wishart, Leslie, Fishing Lake, Elfros, Cupar, Birsay, Torquay, Redvers, Estevan, Admiral, Earl Grey, Whitewood, Stenen, Broadview, Leross, Windthorst, Lampman, Frobisher, Big Beaver, Oxbow, Carievale, Ogema, Viceroy, Radville, Tribune, Kenosee Lake, Creelman, Dilke, Bulyea, Craik, Davidson, Loreburn, Macrorie, Hafford, Govan, Rosetown, Moose Jaw, Cadillac, Mankota, Kyle, Maxim, Trossachs, Vonda, Waskesiu, Prud'homme, Lac Vert, Welwyn, Manor, Drinkwater, Benson, Tramping Lake, Paynton, Vibank, Pense, Estlin, Francis, Phippen, Handel, Mossbank, Creelman, and Dilke.

And I think the members of the opposition would be more concerned about where they're from rather than how I'm pronouncing them. I so present.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, I stand to request leave to introduce guests.

The Speaker: — I would ask the member to wait to introduce guests till we're finished with petitions. I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition to present in support of the middle school for Warman.

The petition indicates that the school is overcrowded. It was built for 350 to 400 students and now over 700 students are enrolled and that they expect a further 70 students to enrol in Warman Elementary School in the fall of 2010. The prayer reads as follows:

Whereas your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to recognize the urgency of a middle school for the fast growing community of Warman.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

And, Mr. Speaker, all of these signators on the petition are from the town of Warman.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling for the reinstatement of the domestic abuse outreach program. And we know that the domestic abuse outreach program provided a number of valuable services to women victims of domestic violence and their children, including helping women find emergency shelter, and accompanying women to their homes, court, and hospital or the police station, as needed. I'd like to read the prayer, Mr. Speaker. Reading the prayer that reads as follows:

... respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action to cause the provincial government to reinstate the domestic abuse outreach program as a provincial government service and make it available in all parts of Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, the people signing the petition come from the city of Saskatoon. I do so present. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition in support of the long-term care facility in La Ronge. With a waiting list of almost one full year for our seniors, it's appalling. 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 — a petition in support of affordable undergraduate tuition and a 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.

Mr. Speaker, I so present.

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

Mr. Furber: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition in support of reducing the interest on fixed-rate student loans to prime. The petition is being circulated by the Saskatchewan Student Coalition. And the prayer reads as follows:

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, the petition is signed by folks from the city of Saskatoon. I so present.

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

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present yet another petition on behalf of rural residents of Saskatchewan who question why the Sask Party government is leaving them behind with respect to issues of water in the province, safe and affordable water, Mr. Speaker. These individuals have been dealing with the situation for over two years and have not yet had any results with their petitions. 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.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

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

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

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise and present a petition in support of affordable rents and housing for The Battlefords, Mr. Speaker. The petition was initiated after rents in The Battlefords increased by more than

40 per cent for seniors, students, immigrants, and others. Mr. Speaker, the petitioners:

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

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by residents of the town of Battleford and the city of North Battleford. I so present.

[10:15]

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

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again to present a petition signed by residents of Saskatchewan concerned about this government's disregard for legal and constitutional rights. 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 to the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal that would allow marriage commissioners to opt out of their legal obligation to provide all couples with civil marriage services.

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

The signatures on this petition today are signed by residents of Saskatoon. And I so submit.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to present petitions on behalf of concerned residents from across Saskatchewan as it relates to the unprecedented mismanagement of our finances by the Sask Party. They allude to the shameful \$1 billion deficit. They recognize that this is getting worse, not better. 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 concerned citizens are residents of Estevan and Regina. I so submit.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon

Riversdale.

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to rise again to present a petition in support of the expansion of the graduate retention program. Again this petition is about fairness and about the need to maintain our best and our brightest here in Saskatchewan. 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.

This petition is signed by the residents of Regina. I so present.

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

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To ask for leave for the introduction of special guests.

The Speaker: — The minister has asked for leave for introduction of guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this honourable Assembly a group of young leaders assembled in your gallery. I would like to introduce these Saskatchewan student leaders, among them including Jeanette Murphy, the SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] Students' Association representative of Kelsey and Wascana campuses; Kyle Addison, the president of the University of Regina Students' Union; Katie Honey, the vice-president external for the University of Regina Students' Union; Jason Nauta, the vice-president, operations and finance; Kaytlyn Barber, vice-president, student affairs; and Chris Stoicheff, vice-president external for the University of Saskatchewan Students' Union.

Mr. Speaker, today these student leaders are joined by their colleagues, other post-secondary students. These students are here today to represent and support the academic community and career needs of Saskatchewan students and the Saskatchewan Student Coalition. I'm looking forward to meeting them a little later in the day, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would welcome my colleagues on both sides of the House to please join me in welcoming these student leaders to their Assembly.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to

introduce guests, please.

The Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Massey Place has requested leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to join with the minister in welcoming this delegation from the Saskatchewan Student Coalition. It's important to note that we have both the University of Regina and the University of Saskatchewan represented as well as SIAST campuses.

The Student Coalition has been doing great work here in the province, Mr. Speaker, and they've come today to the legislature to observe question period and see what answers are available to the causes that they've been promoting here in the province. I ask all members to join me in welcoming them.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Canwest Canspell Spelling Bee

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was my pleasure to attend the 2010 Canwest Canspell *Leader-Post* spelling bee. This competition, which celebrates literacy and fosters a desire for students to engage in learning, was made possible by the sponsorship of Canada Post, SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance], the *Leader-Post*, the Egg Producers of Saskatchewan, Air Canada, and Global.

In this region, more than 6,000 students participated in this program and, of that, 40 bright young students emerged to the regional finals.

I would like to specifically recognize Allyssa Lusung, a grade 6 that attends St. Francis in my constituency. I am very proud of her achievement and would like to recognize her parents, Elsa and Eleazar Lusung, who immigrated from the Philippines just a few years ago. The success of Allyssa can be attributed in no small way to their hard work and dedication to their family. I am proud to count Elsa and Eleazar as friends.

Every participant displayed exceptional literacy skills and confidence. They each have very bright futures before them. I would like to congratulate the winner, Miss McKenzie Warriner of Alameda School in Alameda.

I want to thank Mr. Marty Klyne, *Leader-Post* publisher, for his leadership to this event; Mr. Bill Wright as host; and the judges. I ask all members to join with me in extending our thanks and gratitude to those that ensured the success of the spelling bee and to congratulate all the participants. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Junior Achievement Awards

Mr. Michelson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night I had the pleasure to partake in a special event honouring the entrepreneurial spirit of our great province's youth at the Junior Achievement Awards for southern Saskatchewan.

Twenty-two awards were handed out, 10 of which were presented to two high schools in Moose Jaw. Mr. Speaker, it was a proud moment for me and the city that I call home, and an even prouder moment for the students and the parents of these outstanding young people.

The Company of the Year went to Two Delicious — that's T-w-o Delicious, Mr. Speaker — for A.E. Peacock Collegiate in Moose Jaw. This is the second consecutive year that that school has won this honour. Das Mugs from Vanier Collegiate received the award for production excellence. There were many other individual awards as well, Mr. Speaker. It was amazing to see the ingenuity of these young entrepreneurs.

In the JA [Junior Achievement] course, students form companies of which they become shareholders. They then operate the companies as a full-fledged business, designing products and creating marketing strategies. With the watchful eye of supportive teachers and business leaders, these students learn about the set-up and operation of a business and about making it viable in the marketplace. Last night I saw a display of creativity that was just amazing. These young people are the very definition of the new Saskatchewan — optimistic, energetic, and above all, a positive attitude.

The future of Saskatchewan is in good hands, Mr. Speaker.

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

Z99 Radiothon

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, we live in a world of hurt, hope, and happiness. And we're blessed to live in a time when we can change much of that hurt to hope and even to huge happiness. We live in a world of exceptional acts performed by exceptional people.

Today and tomorrow we can all be part of the exceptional acts of Z99's CC, Lorie, and Buzz. Today and tomorrow Rawlco Radio's Z99, the station that is world famous for CC's raging masses — that would be you and me — is having its 23rd annual radiothon in support of the neonatal unit at the hospitals of Regina, specifically at the Regina General Hospital.

Z99 from 6 a.m. this morning until 6 p.m. tomorrow at the Cornwall Centre is providing inspiration, hope, and happiness, and this year's radiothon is raising funds, Mr. Speaker, for a new vision of mother and baby care in Saskatchewan. The Rawlco centre for mothers' and babies' care is getting better every day, thanks to literally everyone involved. Z99 needs to be listened to and then we need to act. I am asking everyone to listen and then to donate to this year's mother and baby cause, Z99's radiothon. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Lloydminster.

Husky Oil Announcement

Mr. McMillan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise in this House and announce more good news for the people of Lloydminster and Saskatchewan. Earlier this year, Husky Oil announced the construction of an energy-efficient office building to serve their needs in expanding their regional operations. Just this past Tuesday, I had the opportunity to join the Premier in attending the sod-turning ceremony on this project.

Mr. John Lau, president and CEO [chief executive officer] of Husky, said, "The Lloydminster office building reflects Husky's commitment to the community and reinforces the importance of Husky's operations in the region."

In addition to this state-of-the-art facility, Husky has various infrastructure, production, and exploration, including heavy oil upgrader, cogeneration power plant, an ethanol plant, a logistics centre, and pipelines.

More importantly, Mr. Speaker, this building will be an environmentally friendly facility that utilizes energy efficiency technology and practices. The project demonstrates the commitment that Husky Oil has to maintaining a healthy environment as well as their commitment to the people of Lloydminster. Innovative and efficient projects like this one currently under construction in my great community represent the new direction that this province is heading. Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate Husky Oil on its new project, and the people of Lloydminster who will benefit from it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Vacation Home

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well the Premier claims people everywhere want to move or to invest in Saskatchewan. Where does he choose to invest? Phoenix, Arizona. Just a few months after becoming Premier, where does he choose to make his first investment? Phoenix, Arizona.

Rather than show a commitment to his home province by buying his vacation home here, he buys a home in the United States. Even the Premier now admits with his actions that there's a lack of affordable housing in this province. How many Saskatchewan families can fork over more than \$100,000 in cash to pay for a vacation home in Phoenix?

The Premier has tried to criticize the Leader of the Opposition for investing and living in Alberta during the years he worked in the private sector, but now he's investing in another country while sitting in the Premier's office. What's wrong with Cypress Hills? What's wrong with La Plonge? What's wrong with Duck Mountain or the dozens of other Saskatchewan resort areas where thousands of Saskatchewan families have invested?

Mr. Speaker, the Premier likes to talk about Saskatchewan first, but doesn't practise what he preaches. It is obvious his long-term plan does not include living and investing into Saskatchewan. I hope he enjoys his retirement in Arizona in 18 months.

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

The Battlefords Projects

Mr. Chisholm: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. An article published in the *Pipeline News* this March carries the headline, “The Battlefords Billion.” I’d like to quote from the article, Mr. Speaker:

A billion dollars is expected to be spent building three projects at the Battlefords. The first, already underway, is a \$250 million natural gas peaking power plant for SaskPower.

The second is a \$50 million multi-purpose recreational facility complex which will start this spring.

The third, and by far the . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. The member from Athabasca will allow the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford to make his statement. The member from Cut Knife-Turtleford.

Mr. Chisholm: — “The third, and by far the largest, is the recent announcement of a \$700 million baseload natural gas power plant to be built by Northland Power.”

Mr. Speaker, I’d like to remind this House that this \$700 million project is the same project the member from The Battlefords thought was a bad idea. The mayor of North Battleford was quoted in the article saying, “It’s all very exciting for us right now. What it means for us is reassurance.”

Before the members opposite start their same old tirade and dismissing the benefits, here’s what North Battleford’s city manager says, “These aren’t going to be low-end, minimum wage jobs. It bodes well for housing sales. The spinoffs are very significant.”

Mr. Speaker, the fact is The Battlefords are moving forward, Saskatchewan’s moving forward, but the tired, old NDP [New Democratic Party] are stuck in the past. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Success of the Energy Economy

Mr. Furber: — Mr. Speaker, we know that whenever the Premier speaks in public, he’s always eager to draw a laugh. His comedy stylings are famous, Mr. Speaker. And last spring’s budget predictions on potash, were they not so sad, would already be a comedy classic. But the Premier, like with potato chips, can’t stop at just one joke about pie in the sky optimism.

So like many experienced comics, he recently decided to try out some new material on the road. Live in Lloydminster, Mr. Speaker, he drew guffaws from the crowd with comically exaggerated claims that Saskatchewan would soon outdo

Alberta in oil production. Ever the improv artist, Mr. Speaker, the Premier kept pushing his premise: Saskatchewan would soon outdo Manitoba in hydro power and soon overtake Ontario in population and soon outproduce Quebec in poutine.

But seriously, Mr. Speaker, we know that Saskatchewan’s economy in general, and its energy sector in particular, are solid performers. So the Premier doesn’t have to make up tall tales when he talks about Saskatchewan’s energy economy, Mr. Speaker. He just has to smile quietly and say thank you, and just as all of the oil executives do, give credit to the NDP for the royalty and regulatory regime that’s made it all possible. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[10:30]

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Support for Post-Secondary Education

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year, Mr. Speaker, when the Sask Party had record revenues, tuition increased an average of 3.5 per cent across the province and significantly greater in a number of professional colleges. This year the Sask Party is facing a \$1 billion deficit, and students and their families are worried about higher tuition costs at university campuses and on SIAST campuses. Will the Sask Party listen to Saskatchewan students and ensure that tuition increases do not exceed 2 per cent?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, as part of our task of being fiscally prudent, we’ve made sure that investments in post-secondary education are a top priority, Mr. Speaker. That’s why in our first two years, Mr. Speaker, we’ve put more than \$1.1 billion in post-secondary education. It’s a record, Mr. Speaker.

The track record for the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, the track record for the members opposite, well they know, we know what they did with young people. They encouraged them to leave the province in droves, Mr. Speaker.

The population has increased by almost 30,000 since we’ve been elected, and for large measure, Mr. Speaker, it’s the confidence that young people have within Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan students are paying the highest amount of interest on fixed rate student loans across the country. Nova Scotia has paid interest to the government’s actual cost of borrowing. Newfoundland and Labrador has completely eliminated interest on student loans. But in this province, the Sask Party continues to heap record amounts of debt on students with interest rates 2.5 per cent above prime.

To the minister: in the budget next week, will the Sask Party listen to Saskatchewan students and reduce the interest on student loans to prime?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To speak to this important issue of student loans, student loans were certainly ignored by the members opposite. And that's why last year, Mr. Speaker, for the first time since 1994, we were able to ensure that there were additional dollars. It was the first increase since 1994.

Mr. Speaker, certainly the issue of interest, it is an issue that has been initiated since the policies were in place by the members opposite. It's something that we're interested in, Mr. Speaker. Certainly we'll be attentive to it, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party made a campaign promise to create "a Saskatchewan scholarship fund to retain our best students." Yet a full two years into their mandate, Mr. Speaker, all we see is more talk and no action. To the minister: will the Sask Party fulfill its promise to create a Saskatchewan scholarship fund in the next budget? Or is this yet just another broken promise from an incompetent government?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We've acted on more than 100 of our promises, fulfilling them, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite offers some stark language. What he's probably missed, Mr. Speaker, is the Scholarship of Honour that's been established for returning soldiers, Mr. Speaker. In addition to that, we've put forward a MITACS [Mathematics of Information Technology and Complex Systems] scholarship. And what we've been able to do, Mr. Speaker, is leverage Saskatchewan dollars with federal funding, helping about 30 students already, Mr. Speaker.

Is there more to do, Mr. Speaker? Of course there is. But, Mr. Speaker, with more than \$1.1 billion invested in post-secondary education, with the first movement and first support on student loans since 1994, our track record is solid. Is there more to do? Of course, and we're acting in the best interest of the students, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, the track record is one of not taking responsibility for the promises that they make. Minister after minister, Mr. Speaker, stand up, Mr. Speaker, and take no accountability for what they're doing. They don't actually realize, Mr. Speaker, that they've been in charge for two years. The promises they made about tuition, Mr. Speaker, the promises they made about a scholarship fund — all the promises, Mr. Speaker, that they've touted for so long, Mr. Speaker, they just simply stand day after day and don't take

responsibility for the role that they are in.

From the minister's responses, it's clear that there'll be double-digit tuition increases, no reduction for student loan interest rates, and not a dime to the long-promised Saskatchewan scholarship fund. Why is it fair, Mr. Speaker, for the Saskatchewan students to pay for the incompetence that this government has caused by their own inability to balance a chequebook?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, we've fulfilled more than 100 promises, Mr. Speaker, already. And certainly when it comes to the post-secondary file, Mr. Speaker, to ensuring that we're focusing on our students, our record is solid, Mr. Speaker.

What we've seen, and I'll just use one example, Mr. Speaker, we saw members opposite begin in 2003 to talk about an Academic Health Sciences building. Well, Mr. Speaker, there was a lot of talk and there was no action, no construction. We came in, Mr. Speaker, and you can count the cranes on the campus today, Mr. Speaker, as work is under way.

Another element to their legacy, Mr. Speaker, another element is they had the College of Medicine on probation, Mr. Speaker. How do you think the people of this province felt about health care when they were in power? We're acting to ensure there are more nurses being trained, more doctors being trained, and the Academic Health Sciences building is under construction. That's action, Mr. Speaker, while the others talk.

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

Child Care Spaces

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, this is the first time this Assembly has seen a gentleman strut sitting down, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there are other promises that the Sask Party hasn't fulfilled, and one of those promises was to improve child daycare. Mr. Speaker, there are young parents that are trying to pursue a post-secondary education, and they're finding it very difficult to find access to those child daycare spaces.

So my question to the Sask Party, if they could update us: how are parents supposed to pursue higher education, build a better life for themselves and their children when they can't find reliable, affordable, and accessible child daycare?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, our government has a very strong record in education in the two and a half years that we've been elected, as well as not only on education, but the child daycare piece, Mr. Speaker. We've funded more spots in the first two and a half years than that government ever did in its 16 years of existence, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have more work to do and the Minister of

Education is doing that work. We are opening up child daycare place spots in many, many different communities around this province, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Atkinson: — The areas that they have simply ignored is our campuses across the province. I'm going to give the members of the legislature a little update: 435 families are waiting for 66 spaces at the USSU [University of Saskatchewan Students' Union] daycare centre; more than 500 families are waiting for 45 spaces at the Wascana Daycare at the U of R [University of Regina]; and 250 families are waiting for just 45 on-campus spaces at Awasis child daycare at the U of R; and more than 300 students are waiting for 50 spaces at Wascana SIAST. Close to 1,500 families waiting for 206 spaces.

Can the government commit today that there will be money in next Wednesday's budget to deal with this very difficult issue facing young parents that are trying to pursue post-secondary education?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, obviously the issue of child care is profoundly important and that's one of the reasons that we're moving forward, Mr. Speaker, on student housing. That's vitally important.

And so what we've seen, Mr. Speaker, is a \$34 million initiative to move forward at the University of Saskatchewan, a \$6.8 million initiative on student housing in Prince Albert, and — just recently announced — a \$9 million initiative regarding student housing in Meadow Lake. All the members opposite would have to do is talk to some of those parents that are going to be living in student housing, Mr. Speaker, to see the connection between obviously their studies and their families. And we're helping to take care of the students' families, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Order. I'd just like to remind the ministers to have some relevance to the question. I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Another particular problem is the lack of child daycare spaces for infants and toddlers. The Wascana child care centre at the U of R doesn't accept children until they're 18 months of age. The U of S [University of Saskatchewan] campus daycare doesn't accept children until they're two and a half. That leaves a very large gap between when paternal benefits run out and when a child can be enrolled in child daycare, assuming that parents can find a space.

So to the government, to the government: what are these parents supposed to do? And why is this government not dealing with this very difficult issue facing parents that are trying to pursue a post-secondary education and better their lives?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, let's compare where we started two and half years ago. Two and a half years ago, if we compare our province, the province of Saskatchewan, to . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order. I'm having some difficulty hearing the response, and I'm certain the visitors are as well. So would the members allow the minister now to respond to the question presented? I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, if we compare our province to the province to the east, Manitoba, about the same population, Mr. Speaker, when we came to government in 2007, we had less child care spaces than Manitoba. In the two and a half years we've added over 1,000 child care spaces in this province, Mr. Speaker, a record that we're proud of. There's more work to do, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure what it would have looked like if it would have maintained under the NDP government where they ignored the issue, Mr. Speaker. We're in a time of growth in this province, and we know there's more to do. But, Mr. Speaker, we're taking action.

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, one of the interesting observations of people who study this is that when things are going well for the government, it's because they've done such a terrific job. And when there's difficulty, well let's blame the former NDP government. We have 1,500 people waiting for child daycare spaces on our campuses at the U of R, the U of S, and Wascana SIAST. We're simply asking a question that parents want to hear the answer to.

Can they expect any money in the budget to deal with 1,500 families waiting for child care when there's only 206 spaces on those campuses?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Once again, Mr. Minister, in a short two and a half years — we'll compare our record to the former government's record, Mr. Speaker — we've increased the number of registered child care spaces in this province by 31 per cent over where the NDP left off, Mr. Speaker. Thirty-one per cent in two and a half years; it's a good record. Is there more to do? Yes, there is.

The member opposite is asking what are you going to do in the budget. Well, there's only a few more sleeps and they can find out what will happen on March 24th, but I can guarantee you it'll be continuation of a very stellar record by this government.

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

Support for Low-Income People

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. All Saskatchewan people have a right to social and economic security. Yet today we know one in five children in Saskatchewan live in poverty. This week the government

refused to answer written questions on social assistance caseloads in this province, questions identical to ones they've answered on four previous occasions. That suggests that the problem's getting worse — much worse, not better.

To the minister: why is this government hiding these caseload numbers? Why are they trying to minimize the growing problem of poverty in our province?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Social Services.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite should know that there are more written questions sent to the Ministry of Social Services, probably about three times more than any other ministry. And it is very taxing for the officials to get the answers in a timely manner. And they are trying. So therefore I will definitely defend my employees in their ability . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. The Minister of Social Services.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — The NDP continuously criticize the government for their spending, so we've increased the housing budget. We have increased shelter allowances, rental supplements, and emergency shelter allowances. We've definitely increased significantly funding for disabilities. We've increased funding significantly for CBOs [community-based organization]. We've increased funding for child welfare, and we've increased funding for seniors. What would that member opposite like us to cut?

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

[10:45]

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, we know the questions that we've asked. They've got the data right at hand. This is not new information. This is amazing she would say such a thing. But we'll talk about some other things that are increasing in this province. But we know that this minister has told *The StarPhoenix* last fall that she didn't think eliminating poverty was a realistic goal. In fact.

But there are a lot of costs over which the provincial government has control, things they could do something about. Well here are some things that are increasing in this province: rising rents with some of the lowest vacancy rates in all of Canada. And this government spends next to nothing on affordable housing. They've increased rates for water, electricity, natural gas, camping, driving a car, or even riding an STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company] bus. And next week, more low-income people will be forced to live in pain, thanks to the government's cuts to chiropractic coverage.

To the minister: why is this government making it less affordable for families struggling to make ends meet?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for

Social Services.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, time and time and time again, I have spoken to the fact that we have set precedent in our country for making housing affordable for our clients. We have increased the housing, the shelter allowance, the rental supplements. We have increased the Saskatchewan employment supplement, and we have indexed the housing supplements to the rates within the community that the client lives.

We have completed over 537 units for social housing. We currently have over 900 in construction and an additional 200 that are in development and planning. That is over double what the NDP did in any given two-year time stretch.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, we'll talk about those numbers more in committee because I'm not sure if she's quite right on when she talks about 900 units. But this government is imposing real costs on Saskatchewan families. And there will be real consequences for those families, for taxpayers, and for our economy.

People can't afford chiropractic care will lose time from work or end up going to emergency rooms. Workers who can't afford rising rents, rising utility rates, and other rising costs will flee this province, making it harder for businesses to recruit workers. This government needs to stop making life less affordable and start making better choices.

To the minister: will the government commit today to action in next week's budget that will make life more affordable for families struggling here to make ends meet?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Social Services.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And that member opposite knows it's just a few more sleeps. He just needs to be a little patient when the budget will be introduced.

But he said that we make poor choices, so I am again curious. What does the member opposite think was a poor choice? Was the tax cuts that took all of the citizens, a lot of them seniors, off of the tax rolls, was that a poor choice? Eighty thousand low-income people off of tax rolls, was that a poor choice? Was increasing shelter rates, was that a poor choice? Was increasing supplements for low-income seniors, was that a poor choice? Was increasing spaces for child welfare, children that come into our care, was that a poor choice? Was increasing CBO funding, was that a poor choice?

We have done all of those, Mr. Speaker. I think that member needs to stand up and say which one was a poor choice.

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

Forthcoming Budget

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you Mr. Speaker. A recent article

in the *Canadian Business* magazine says, I quote, “For all its reputation for being attuned to business, the Saskatchewan Party government of Premier Brad Wall has a terrible track record at budget forecasting.” That’s what the business community is saying about this government — a terrible track record with respect to budgeting.

We know that what this Sask Party’s proposing as it relates to job cuts is being called nonsense by insiders, Mr. Speaker, yet they seem that they’re going to forge ahead. To the minister: what is he doing to ensure that the Sask Party doesn’t table another failed budget?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Social Services.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, our government has promised a balanced, prudent, responsible budget. And it’s just a few more sleeps, the members opposite just need to be patient for a few more sleeps, and they will see a budget that this province will be proud of.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, we keep hearing about a few more sleeps, a few more sleeps. It’s kind of child-like language and consistent with sort of fairy tales, and certainly consistent with the kind of fantasyland budget that they put together last year as it related to revenues.

But this year, Mr. Speaker, the problem is that fantasyland relates to the cuts that they’re putting together that their, I understand, their civil service is telling them won’t work, Mr. Speaker. But the Finance minister is very, very fond, and all members of that caucus, in blaming all the problems on potash and saying no one could have predicted what happened. But of course that’s not true. The same article from *Canadian Business* says, I quote, “Today, NDP finance critic Harry Van Mulligan’s March 2009 characterization of the budget as ‘blind optimism’ sounds prescient.”

To the minister: he didn’t listen to the NDP’s legitimate concerns last year, and his budget was a disaster as a result. Will he listen this year?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Social Services.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — I do have to make a comment that I did listen to the members opposite when they were government, and they used the term “just a few more sleeps” all the time. So that’s actually where that terminology came from. So if he needs . . . Yes, it’s a term that was used by the NDP many, many times over. Budget day is on the 24th, so that is when he will get the details of the budget, but . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I’d ask the members to allow the minister to respond to the question.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Yes, because that member has said, a number of times, irresponsible spending. I know my own critic has just referenced irresponsible spending. So we have a

number of members opposite asking us to spend more. Which message is it? Should we spend less or should we spend more?

We have been asked to spend more in revenue sharing. We’ve been asked to spend more on schools. We’ve been asked to spend more on housing. We’ve been asked to spend more on a number of areas. Which is it that the NDP want us to do?

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, it’s simply about having a plan, some direction, a strategy, something that this government is as deficit of as they are money. Mr. Speaker, whether it’s a golden parachute for their failed candidate in the by-election, 100 per cent increases to the salaries of political staff, or a \$26,000-a-day consulting fee for their political friend, this government is clearly not leading by example.

To the minister: will the Sask Party be rolling back their gifts to friends, golden parachutes, and massive wage increases to their political staff?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Social Services.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to say that our budget is one that this province and the people of Saskatchewan will be proud of.

And what is our plan? Well you know what? We have the lowest unemployment rate in Canada. Our plan is to keep that going. Mr. Speaker, we have for the first time in decades a growing population, and our plan is to keep that going. Mr. Speaker, we have put investments into infrastructure, and our plan is to keep those investments going — unprecedented amounts of money. Mr. Speaker, for the first time in many, many, many years we have growing numbers of students. Our plan is to keep all of that going as well as keeping the province strong, keeping the finances strong, and supporting those most vulnerable within our society.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, again it speaks to the misunderstanding by the Sask Party government of what’s going on in Saskatchewan. While we have a growing population, we have static employment — no gain. We have less people working in this province and we see it through the social assistance numbers that are skyrocketing. Mr. Speaker, far more people on social assistance.

Mr. Speaker, this week we’ve heard that this budget process has been extremely chaotic, that it has been without vision, no central theme, no direction, and no plan. Our inside sources have told us that the Sask Party is making cuts that they don’t understand, proposing a strategy that is “nonsense,” that they’re refusing to lead by example, and that Saskatchewan people are going to keep paying the price for the Sask Party’s incompetence. Now it’s our understanding that this budget process has been so disorganized that the budget isn’t even at the printer’s yet.

My question is: will the minister step up to the plate, lead by example, and fix this failed budget before it's too late?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Social Services.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I think that we need to remind the members opposite that we have the lowest unemployment rate in our nation and that Saskatchewan's unemployment rate is at 4.3 per cent and Canada is 8.2 per cent. That's a record we're proud of, and that's a record we plan on sustaining. And Saskatoon and Regina have the second and third lowest unemployment rates in Canada in the major cities.

Employment is up 3,100 year over year. There is 12,000 good, full-time jobs created in February of 2010 in our province. There are over 6,300 jobs on saskjobs.ca today, Mr. Speaker. We have the lowest youth unemployment in our country, Mr. Speaker. So I don't know what the member opposite is talking about because we have a very good record in our country for . . .

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Reality check for the minister once again. What we know is that the financial incompetence of this government is unprecedented. What we know is that it's come at a huge cost to Saskatchewan people, those individuals for example that are seeking domestic abuse support. Those individuals for example that are students that are trying to get an education and enrich their lives. Those individuals for example that are paying utility rates that are having huge increases being forced upon them. Civil servants within our province and those people in the province who are dependent on services and programs that they provide. And what we know is we're going to see tax increases across this province as a result of their broken promise to municipalities.

My question, my question to the minister opposite: what does he say, what does he say to all these individuals, all these organizations for whom they're forcing huge increases and affecting their quality of life?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Social Services.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Those increases that the member opposite from the party that just has negative things to say about our province simply have not taken place. I have gone through a number of things that have improved within our . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. I'd ask the members who just finished asking the question to allow the minister to respond.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — We will be introducing a budget on the 24th. And we have promised the people of Saskatchewan that it will be balanced, it will be prudent, and it will be responsible. The members opposite only to have wait a few more days.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the answers to question 793 and 794.

The Speaker: — 793 and 794 questions are tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to order the answers to questions 795 through 883.

The Speaker: — 795 through 883 are ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the answers to questions 884 through 888.

The Speaker: — Questions 884 through 888 are tabled.

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Biggar.

Rural Health Care

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At the end of my remarks I will be tabling the motion and the motion will read:

That this Assembly commends the current government's actions as it works towards addressing the many deficits in rural health care left by the previous NDP government.

The Speaker: — [Inaudible] . . . technical problem with the clock. Make sure it's corrected. I recognize the member from Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's great to be in this debate to really to contrast the record of the previous NDP government and the Saskatchewan Party government's record in the last two and a half years. As we know, and as the voters of Saskatchewan pointed out in the 2007 election when the NDP did not elect any rural members, spoke volumes about what the Saskatchewan people thought of the NDP health care or lack of health care programs in all of Saskatchewan, but particularly in rural Saskatchewan.

As we know, under the NDP created some of the longest waiting lists in Canada. And contrast to the Saskatchewan Party government's plan to reduce waiting lists to only three months. We have a plan. When we were in opposition, we asked the NDP government many times about their targets, what are their plans. And they never did have a target to reduce surgical waiting lists. The Saskatchewan Party government does.

[11:00]

What else did the NDP do while they were in their 16 years of rule? Well they closed 52 rural hospitals. And that was while

... It happened in 1993 when the then associate minister of Health, Lorne Calvert, was bringing that into the province. And it's very revealing that as a premier he didn't do anything to address those inequities in rural Saskatchewan health care. Under the NDP, up to 1999, closed 421 hospital beds. So there's just a record of cutbacks and neglect in rural Saskatchewan and in Saskatchewan concerning health care.

A number of other issues I'd like to raise concerning the NDP record. In 2003 the average surgical waiting time in Saskatchewan was 32.6 weeks. That was the worst in Canada at that time. It was quite, not only embarrassing but it was dangerous to the citizens of Saskatchewan to be waiting that long for surgeries. In 2004, 93 doctors left Saskatchewan, and that was at the same time while every other province in ... [inaudible] ... had an increase in doctors.

The NDP eliminated 136 long-term care beds since 2002. As we all know, our Health minister announced some time ago that there'll be 13 new long-term care facilities built in Saskatchewan. That's quite a contrast between what the then NDP government was doing and what the new Saskatchewan Party government has been doing since the 2007 election.

Many other things have happened under the NDP that just caused a lot of concern in health care in the province. Under the NDP, they delisted many drugs, including insulin and other diabetic supplies, in their 1992 budget. That was their first budget as government.

Mr. Speaker, I know the story is they didn't have enough money and the economy was bad, but after 16 years of rule, well maybe some of that concerns could be laid at their table because they were the government for 16 years. And we definitely agree the economy was very bad during 16 years of NDP government.

Under the Saskatchewan Party government, we've done some amazing things as far as the economy. In our budgets, we paid off 40 per cent of the debt in the province. That means that there's more money. Instead of paying interest on that debt, more money is going to health care in the province. We eliminated taxes to 80,000 residents in Saskatchewan — more disposable income in those people's pockets.

Other things that the NDP did to ruin the economy in Saskatchewan during their 16 years of rule, they. . . Well before that, previous government back in the Blakeney days, they nationalized the potash industry. And that was a disastrous move on the part of the NDP back in those times. It literally took decades before business confidence returned to the province. And now, as we see now is we have the potash industry that it is just doing amazing things and growing. There's record number of expansions under way in the potash industry. The potash industry has great confidence in the future of Saskatchewan and of the potash industry in the world, and we're going to see great things happen in the future for the potash industry in Saskatchewan.

You know, other things that the NDP did which really hurt rural Saskatchewan is they eliminated the GRIP [gross revenue insurance program] program. And this all speaks to, it speaks to rural health care and health care in particular because the

government needs the adequate revenue in order to support health care in the province. And under the NDP the economy was very poor, and they admitted to it. I mean they made comments that it was just impossible to grow the economy at any reasonable rate that other provinces were doing and the federal government were doing as far as economic growth.

And even their former leader Tommy Douglas said, without adequate revenues and a growing economy, government can't do anything as far as, you know, social injustice, social services, health care, and all those infrastructure. Those are all things . . . And that's something that the NDP government forgot about. You have to have a growing economy in order to fix the roads and highways. And that's what we have done in the Saskatchewan Party government since the 2007 election. We've put record amounts of money into infrastructure, building up the roads and infrastructure in the province.

Contrast that to the cutbacks that the NDP continued to carry out. As far as health care, insufficient funding to the College of Medicine over the last decade as the NDP were in government. And it actually caused the College of Medicine in Canada to be put on probation and risk losing accreditation. Not only . . . Again, that was embarrassing. But again, what a terrible situation that the NDP government put on the College of Medicine in the province.

As we know, the NDP would just like to identify different problems needed to be addressed. As an example, the NDP spent \$2 million on a study that identified \$1.2 billion in infrastructure repairs needed in the province. And then what? They did nothing about it. Well the Saskatchewan Party government is doing something about it.

Mr. Speaker, other areas that they identified problems and never did anything about is, according to a CIHI [Canadian Institute of Health Information] report, where Saskatchewan has the oldest equipment in the country. And the average equipment age is 13.5 years. Again the NDP did a lot of talking but they never did any of the walking.

Mr. Speaker, it's an interesting quote from the *Leader-Post* on November 14th, 2003. And I quote:

Romanow also admitted that his government was wrong to slash enrollments in nurse training programs. In 1991-92, more than 500 nurses graduated from the programs. By 1998-99, the number of graduates had fallen to 115. The provincial government has since increased the number of training spots and attempt to deal with the severe shortage of nurses.

Well there the former NDP premier admitted how wrong they were in slashing enrolments in nurse training. And again, contrast that to what the Saskatchewan Party government has been doing on nurse recruitment — 206 more nursing full-time equivalents as of December 30th, 2009. We set the target at 800 and we are 75 per cent there. That is quite a contrast to what the NDP did in their 16 years of government.

And in terms of nursing retention rates, we've gone from the worst in Canada a few years back to the best retention rate in Canada. And again it also goes hand in hand with the economy.

When you have the nurses that are trained in Saskatchewan and they have spouses that are looking for jobs, well they'll stay. First they have a job in Saskatchewan as a nurse and their spouse will have a job as well in the booming, growing economy.

There's a number of quotes from the former NDP members on the other side which talked about, they did not want to train nurses in Saskatchewan. The comments were made, why would the Saskatchewan government train nurses when they're only going to leave to other places to work? Well they never got it through their minds and through their brain that you have to have a growing economy. When you train the nurses and you need the nurses, well you have to make sure that they have a job here and that they want to stay here. So we're certainly doing very well as far as nurse retention and training and recruitment.

Again I'd like to quote from the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association news release, March 19th, 2008. And I quote:

"For the first time in over a decade, I am confident that the RN shortage is getting the attention it deserves," said Donna Brunskill, RN, Executive Director of the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association . . .

"The trend downward since the initial health reform in the early 1990's has been alarming," Brunskill said. "The increase in the number of RNs is good news. Our number increased from 8,958 last year to 9,151 this year." . . .

"The partnership of government, health authorities and SRNA in this ethically sound recruitment endeavour will alleviate the strains on our RNs and result in better quality care for the citizens of our province," Brunskill said.

Quite an amazing quote from the registered nurses.

Now to go on to some of the other improvements that the Saskatchewan Party has done in primary health care in rural Saskatchewan. We now have 91 primary health care teams — 70 established and one in development — and of these, 45 are in rural Saskatchewan, 17 are in metropolitan areas, and eight are in northern Saskatchewan. We have a provincial diabetes program, also a HealthLine — a 24-hour health, advice, and information line — vendors selected for the provincial primary health care electronic health record, and the introduction of publicly funded midwifery services in Saskatchewan. All making great improvements to our health care in the province.

We have also provided \$2 million to the Saskatchewan Academic Health Sciences Network to enhance training for health sciences students and assist in meeting our province's need for physicians and nurses. The announcement was made at the Regina General Hospital this past Monday. Also distributive medical education model will enable medical students to complete some of their studies and some residencies in Regina, providing an opportunity to train and establish relationships outside the usual practice environment.

Also other improvements that the Saskatchewan government has made is expansion to other communities and other health physicians are also being planned.

The strategy will also develop an enhancement of the physician application and licensure process in the development of the Saskatchewan-based program to assist foreign-trained physicians, provide \$54.9 million for medical equipment through including diagnostic and imaging equipment, \$37.7 million provided to several regions to continue the facility projects and major upgrades, \$100 million in 2008 and 2009 to regions to address urgent health facility maintenance and repair requirements.

Mr. Speaker, some very, very important improvements that we have made in the health care system is implementation of the provincial clinical pathway for hip replacement saw 307 more hip and knee replacement surgeries in 2008-2009 compared to 2007-2008 — major strides and improvements in health care in Saskatchewan.

Also, Mr. Speaker, 18,000 Saskatchewan seniors are receiving enhanced benefits to the senior income plan. That's \$190 per month for senior citizens up to a maximum of \$155 per person for seniors couples. Mr. Speaker, just a few of the improvements that Saskatchewan government has done since the 2007 election and certainly is in great contrast to the years of neglect of the NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move:

That this Assembly commends the current government's action as it works towards addressing the many deficits in rural health care left by the previous NDP government.

I so move.

The Speaker: — The member from Biggar has moved:

That this Assembly commends the current government's actions as it works towards addressing the many deficits in rural health care left by the previous NDP government.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from The Battlefords.

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to speak today in the 75-minute debate. The member opposite had 15 minutes to outline how he wants to commend the current government's actions. And, Mr. Speaker, I and my colleagues have 10 minutes to speak to this motion. It was interesting that even though he had 15 minutes to speak, the member from Biggar couldn't use that time fully to talk about commending the current government actions. I can only think, Mr. Speaker, that as he demonstrated, there aren't enough actions over there to commend, Mr. Speaker.

[11:15]

What he forgot about the current government's actions is that, Mr. Speaker, we've seen this government mismanage its fiscal resources to the extent that individuals in this province are going to have to pay for that mismanagement, Mr. Speaker. We're going to see, as we did this year, a continuation, Mr. Speaker, of communities waiting for health facilities to be announced and brought forward in their communities, Mr. Speaker. We're going to see a continuation of a deterioration of

services in health care, Mr. Speaker, and we're going to see a continuation of municipalities struggle in competition with each other for physicians and nurses and other health professionals within their communities, Mr. Speaker.

There really wasn't much to commend about the current government actions, Mr. Speaker. And the member from Biggar couldn't even take 15 minutes to go through what it was that he wanted to commend. But, Mr. Speaker, he wanted to go back . . . They're rear-view mirror looking, Mr. Speaker. That rear-view mirror looking continues to this day, despite the fact that they've had two years, more than two years, Mr. Speaker, to establish a record of their own. They are so afraid of their record, Mr. Speaker, that they continue to look in that rear-view mirror to look back 16 years.

Well, Mr. Speaker, they should go back a little more than 16 years, Mr. Speaker, because they talk about, they talk about some of the challenges that the New Democratic Party faced when they came to government in 1991. Go back just a year before 1991, Mr. Speaker, and we will see the development by the Conservative Party at that time, Mr. Speaker, the cousins of the Sask Party, the development of a \$15 billion debt that virtually bankrupted this province, Mr. Speaker, bankrupted the province to the point where municipalities, school boards, and health districts, Mr. Speaker, had to find ways to deal with that debt rang up by the Conservatives.

And now, Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party opposite is doing exactly the same thing that the Devine Tories did, Mr. Speaker, and it's falling again to municipalities, school boards and health districts, Mr. Speaker, to pay for that, pay for it, Mr. Speaker. We will learn from history, Mr. Speaker, but the members opposite should stop repeating it so that we don't have to pay again and again and again for their big mistakes.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let's just think about what's happened in the last year, Mr. Speaker. They had a \$10.2 billion — billion dollar — budget, Mr. Speaker, for expenditures. And what did they have to do with that \$10 billion?

Well they had to cancel projects around the province, Mr. Speaker, because they couldn't find the money to fund facilities in Meadow Lake, in Shellbrook, in Prince Albert, in Tisdale, in Kelvington, in Watrous. In Biggar, Mr. Speaker, the Biggar Diamond Lodge deferred for another year because of the mistakes of the members opposite. Kerrobert, Rosetown, Maple Creek, Kipling, Radville, Redvers. Every single person in this province that wants a children's hospital has to wait yet another year, Mr. Speaker, because of the current actions of the current government, Mr. Speaker.

And in my own constituency, people who care about the delivery of mental health in this province, Mr. Speaker, are waiting yet another year and maybe more because of the actions, the fiscal actions of the government opposite, Mr. Speaker. A motion that calls for a commendation of the current government actions can't even be supported by the members opposite.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in years prior to this, New Democrats in '06-07 had a \$6.8 billion budget and in '05-06 a \$6.5 billion budget. But, Mr. Speaker, what were we able to move forward?

Mr. Speaker, we built a new hospital in Swift Current, Mr. Speaker, with almost half the revenue, half the revenue that the members opposite have. We built a brand new hospital.

We did integrated facilities in Outlook and Maidstone and Ile-a-la-Crosse and Moosomin and Preeceville, Mr. Speaker. We announced and started that project, Mr. Speaker. We also announced and started the project in Humboldt, Mr. Speaker. Oliver Lodge, Hudson Bay, Lloydminster, and Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker. On half the revenues, roughly half the revenues the members opposite have, we supported health care facilities across this province, Mr. Speaker.

And the member opposite with \$10.2 billion has to defer projects all over rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker: Meadow Lake, Shellbrook, Prince Albert, Tisdale, Kelvington, Watrous, Biggar, Kerrobert, Rosetown, Maple Creek, Radville, Redvers, and Kipling, Mr. Speaker. It's just shameful that the members opposite think that they've got something to say about how their actions are helping people in rural Saskatchewan in particular.

And the member opposite sits there with the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook sitting next to him talking about what we're doing for rural physicians, Mr. Speaker. The member from Rosthern-Shellbrook has been working for a number of years — not very successfully, I might add — for physicians in the town of Shellbrook . . . Spiritwood, Mr. Speaker.

I think if there's great success to be had, the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook would be up talking about this, but he can't, Mr. Speaker, because of the failure of this party's actions in the last two years to support the promises he was making in his community in 2007.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this mismanagement of revenues has created no end of problems across this province. And in fact if we look at some numbers, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite in 2007 promised, Mr. Speaker, to deal with the physician shortage across rural Saskatchewan. Well in fact, Mr. Speaker, if we look at healthcareersinsask.ca, the website, we will notice that rural or physician vacancies in this province since 2007 is actually up 50 per cent — 50 per cent, Mr. Speaker, the number of vacancies. That's a great failure in commitments, Mr. Speaker. Nothing to commend there about government's current actions, Mr. Speaker. That is a failure.

Mr. Speaker, in 2007 the number of vacancies listed for nurses in the province, Mr. Speaker, hasn't changed very much to today. If you look today, Mr. Speaker, there's still 214 vacancies for nurses across this province. And if you dig into that, Mr. Speaker, the majority of those, Mr. Speaker, are also in rural Saskatchewan. The number of doctors, Mr. Speaker, it's now up to 123, the vacancies in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, also the member from Biggar talks about waiting lists. Well, Mr. Speaker, the waiting lists in Saskatchewan have increased since 2007, not decreased. And, Mr. Speaker, we know that activities that were put in place and, Mr. Speaker, for which funding had been announced for reducing waiting lists in Saskatchewan have not been followed up by the current government in their two years, Mr. Speaker. In fact they've been deferred.

In point, Mr. Speaker, the surgical care centre that was supposed to be built here in Regina. Surgical care centre was intended to ensure that we have more time in our operating rooms in our hospitals. Take the day surgery or surgery that doesn't require hospital stays out of the hospital, out of the operating rooms, and create more time available to deal with some of the more significant surgeries like hips and knees, Mr. Speaker, where our waiting lists are the longest. But waiting lists are longer now because this government misspent and can't follow through on not only the previous government's promises but their own promises, Mr. Speaker, to fund a surgical care centre.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think the most telling tale is that the government's current actions, which the member from Biggar wants to commend, has made it absolutely impossible to proceed with the children's health centre in the city of Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker, something that the Sask Party campaigned on, something that the New Democrats did commit to, Mr. Speaker, and started the process, and now, Mr. Speaker, deferred again because of the current actions of the current government.

Mr. Speaker, I see my time is up. I thank you very much for the opportunity to speak on this motion. And I look forward to the debate brought forward by my colleagues later in the morning.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

Ms. Ross: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to entering into the debate today. And I am pleased to be able to rise in the House today and speak in support of the motion put forward by the member from Biggar. And I'm going to read the motion again because I know the member opposite didn't really address the rural health care which is the focus of the motion:

That this Assembly commends the current government's action as it works toward addressing the many deficits in rural health care left by the previous NDP government.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We are working very hard to break the cycle that was developing in Saskatchewan by exporting our trained doctors and nurses and health professionals to other provinces and other countries.

And that is why our government has launched a province-wide agency aimed at recruiting and retaining more physicians to rural and urban Saskatchewan. Now this physician recruitment agency will act as a one-stop point of contact for physicians seeking to set up practice in Saskatchewan. I think this is a very, very positive move that we are making. It will also enhance and coordinate recruitment efforts across the province, working closely with health regions and communities to addressing the needs of their physicians. Mr. Speaker, we are taking action.

Now this agency will focus first on retaining our own medical graduates because we know that our students that come from Saskatchewan, that are trained here, are more than willing to locate here. So the people of Saskatchewan will benefit from the dollars spent training doctors in this province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as many of the members know, my husband teaches biology at the University of Regina. And he's been employed there as a laboratory instructor for over 20 years. And one of things that has really caused him great concern, probably within the last 10 years, was the amount of very highly qualified students who graduated top of their class but were not able to get into the University of Saskatchewan. And that's why our government has made great strides in ensuring that the brightest and the best of our universities are able to be trained here.

Now over the next four years, the physician recruitment strategy commits to reducing the annual turnover of physicians in Saskatchewan to less than 10 per cent. We are also making a commitment to increase the number of the University of Saskatchewan medical students and residents who will train outside Saskatoon by 25 per cent. These are going to be students getting real instruction right within our province, increasing the number of the University of Saskatchewan medical graduates establishing practice in Saskatchewan by 10 per cent. This is commitments that we are making: increasing the percentage of Canadian-trained doctors working in Saskatchewan by an additional 10 per cent, retaining and attracting physicians as a means of ensuring timely access to quality health care. That is a top priority of this government.

Mr. Speaker, we are working hard to solve this dilemma of our physician shortage and putting patient first by fulfilling our commitment to establishing a physician recruitment agency. Now the overall supply of physicians has been steadily increasing since we formed government. And the head count of licensed physicians in Saskatchewan including temporary licensed locums was 1,742 at the end of March 2007. Today we have 1,906 at the end of December 2009. Now that's an increase of 72 general practitioners and 92 specialists. So that's an overall increase of 164 doctors in Saskatchewan.

So when the members opposite make statements that in fact that we have a negative count, I'm not sure how they would consider 164 more doctors being less than. So I think that maybe they will have to recheck their figures.

In 2008-2009 a total of 84 undergraduates' training seats and 84 residency seats were filled, and that is an increase from 60 seats in the program. Mr. Speaker, that is a commitment that our government has made to train more of our locally owned, educated students. We've made a commitment of 3.5 million to develop a comprehensive physician recruitment strategy and better support for our rural physicians. And as we said, this whole motion speaks to rural health care. Adding 40 new training seats and 60 additional residence training seats positions to medical school enrolment, this is allowing our students to have the opportunity to be educated here in Saskatchewan and stay in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to providing education for our health care professionals in this province.

[11:30]

Mr. Speaker, our government also had an agreement signed with SUN [Saskatchewan Union of Nurses] that has produced major progress towards the target of employing 800 more registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses in

Saskatchewan. Now, Mr. Speaker, our government was not afraid to set a target. Now some people may be afraid of setting a target. We were not afraid of setting a target because we rolled up our sleeves and we went to work on solving the issue of 800 nurses that we were short.

And today, Mr. Speaker, we can proudly stand here and say that we have hired more than 75 per cent of the nurses. So in fact, Mr. Speaker, we are working towards that goal of 800 nurses. And we had made that commitment that we would look at 800 over four years, and this is two and a half years and we're already way over halfway to attaining that goal.

So I think in fact, Mr. Speaker, our government is working very hard to ensure that health care is a number one priority of this government. Now our government and our health regions are committed to addressing the nursing concerns, so we are working closely with SUN to achieve these goals. Together we are laying a solid foundation for a stable nursing workforce, and we'll provide patients with a safer high quality of care.

As you know, we undertook a patient-first review and one of the . . . the major finding out of that review was patient-centred care. Ensuring that we have adequate health care professionals is the first way and the best way of patient-centred care.

Health regions now employ over 560 more RNs [registered nurse] and RPNs [registered psychiatric nurse] than when the partnership was signed. This is great strides. The nursing vacancies has also declined from 518 in October 2008 to 403 as of June 2009. Mr. Speaker, this is impressive progress. We are right on our hiring target and it confirms that collaboration rather than confrontation is the best means of achieving goals. Our unique nursing partnership is a public policy initiative that I think we can all be very, very proud of.

So in terms of the nurse recruitment and retention, we have gone from the worst rate in Canada a few years back under the previous government to the best retention rate in Canada. I think that's something that all residents of Saskatchewan can be so proud of, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, rural Saskatchewan is once again the home of innovative, caring health care. We have different projects happening throughout the province which, in fact, are being very creative and innovative in being able to provide quality rural health care to Saskatchewan residents, something the previous government seemed to forget.

They were more than happy to close a facility such as the Plains Health Centre which was, in fact, the money was raised and it was built for the purpose of serving rural southern Saskatchewan. They had no qualms about closing that facility. We are proud to be able to make a commitment to rural Saskatchewan to provide high quality health care to ensure that the residents of Saskatchewan do not feel left behind but rather included in this province which is moving forward. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, it is with mixed feelings I enter this debate with great concern and disappointment as the Sask

Party abandons rural and northern Saskatchewan health care.

You know, you look at some of the health issues that rural and northern Saskatchewan . . . Of course being from the Cumberland constituency, and my colleagues before have expressed the great concern we've heard as we've gone out to the different communities when we're doing our outreach. And, you know, the Sask Party likes to spin things like everything's wonderful and going good. And I would like to inform them, Mr. Speaker, and everyone who's paying attention, that it's not going as good as they like to cheerlead and say it is.

There's so many concerns in the health care facility and I'm going to talk, Mr. Speaker, a little bit about some of those topics that affect the rural area and northern Saskatchewan. And there's many, many concerns out there. You know, I want to talk about long-term care. And, you know, they go around and they come up with a committee or a review and, you know, you'll watch the process that happened. And I took part when one of the members from the Sask Party came to La Ronge on seniors and wanted to do seniors' care and all that, and I took part in that. As we were serving in this House — and everybody knows it — hundreds and hundreds of signatures on petitions of long-term care with a waiting list of just about one full year to get into long-term care in La Ronge. It's appalling in the North. Something needs to be done and addressed.

And they can go around and say, oh they listened. But sad to say nothing's been done. They have nothing to say about it, but yet they want to cheerlead. They want to go around . . . Our seniors in the North have a right to the same health care and the waiting time as a southern and as a rural. It's important. It's crucial. We have that right. They have a right.

Some day I will retire and have to enter a, you know, long-term care home. I don't want to have to leave my community and leave my family to go away two, three hours to a facility that doesn't understand and can't meet the cultural needs that I have. You know, it's concerning. And being around family . . . You know, listening to some of the stories back home of some of the individuals that recently went through that, you know, lost their loved ones. It's sad to watch. All they wanted was to have their loved ones with them, just to spend time as they spend their last days on this earth.

You know, and it's appalling to see that the government doesn't take it serious. To see a waiting list of just about one full year for long-term care in La Ronge and the North, it's appalling. There's nothing else you can say. It's appalling. They had the money but unfortunately with their mismanagement of our finances they can't do anything. Oh they'll cheerlead again — and they're good at that — telling people, oh yeah, you know, everything's great. It's just wonderful out there. Just watch. It's the 16 years of the NDP that's caused all the problems.

Well let's get the facts straight. It's their cousins that they say, if you want to say, the Conservatives who drove this province's finances. I listen to it and I just find it so unacceptable to think anyone can blame and pass on to the past. Well maybe not everything was perfect in those 16 years. There was a lot of challenges, but people have to look at why those challenges were there, to deal with some of the health care needs that we're facing today. It's not all the past 16 years.

Nobody ever wants to talk about the 16 years prior to that. Oh you don't want to hear about it? But it's amusing to watch that, you know. I think the people know about it. The people know about those 16 . . . I go back and I talk to some of our community members. They make it very clear. Do they actually think that we don't realize what happened prior to 16 years? Do they think that we actually don't understand, don't get it? And it's sad to think that this government, the Sask Party government would actually think that people can't figure it out for themselves. It's very clear. But I want to go back on to health care because it's so important in the North and the rural areas.

Addiction services. You know, there's such a strong need for addiction services in the North and the rural areas. And people feel like they don't have the support, and I have to, you know, recognize the great work that our front-line staff are doing. We have addictions workers that do an excellent job and they care about the community people. They care about our youth and they try to help them and they do all they can, and they're burning out.

And then you go, from addictions you go to mental health. And mental health in the North and the rural areas, there's so much concern. And people, our young people are losing hope. They lose their battle with depression. They need more from the Sask Party government. But what do we get? Everything's great; everything's great. It's not great. I'm telling you, the people are starting to see it. They're being neglected. They know it. You can cheerlead and you can talk as a Sask Party government, oh, we're in tune with the rural area and the North. You are so wrong. And I think the people of our province are going to send you a message.

You know, you talk about doctor shortages. And we went out there and when you look at some of the recruiting, municipalities have to recruit doctors, have to get involved to make sure that they have doctors for their community members that they're responsible for. But it's not their responsibility to make sure that they spend \$800,000 on incentives to keep the doctors there or to bring them there. That's appalling. It's the provincial government's job. It's the Sask Party government's job.

You know, you look at nurses and they talk about all the nurses and they talk about all the things they're doing. You know, they like to really cheerlead, again like I say. But you know, we have, we have communities . . . I'll give you an example, and maybe some of the rural areas. One community I want to make mention of is Wollaston Lake. It's a fly-in, fly-out community. And if a patient has to be flown out from that community to Saskatoon or P.A. [Prince Albert], after they've been treated and get the treatment that's needed, they're sent home. They have to pay for the cost to go home. Yet they were air ambulated out, but they have to pay the cost to go home. And some of these people don't have the money. They don't have the money. What are they supposed to do? They phone us. They ask us. The government needs to fix this. This is wrong and it needs to be addressed.

And again we're going to go back to the mismanagement of finances. All I can say to them is the government has wasted, has mismanaged their finances so bad, they can't even assist

people. That is appalling.

You know, you look at, Mr. Speaker, health care workers and you look at the excellent job the front-line workers do. And I've watched them day in and day out when I see them and I go visit people at the hospital. They're busy. You know, the health care workers are doing all they can. And they do an excellent job. I commend what they do and we should be proud. But they have no contracts. This government will not deal with them fair. That is appalling and it's shameful. They put in their hours and they're asked to do what they need to do for their community members and they do it. And they do an excellent job.

You know, there's many, many, I guess, issues that come up and I'm just going to talk a few of them. You know, diabetes is so . . . amongst Aboriginal people and northern people, diabetes is, you know, it's . . .

An Hon. Member: — It's epidemic.

Mr. Vermette: — It is. It's an epidemic. It is. It's unreal where it's going. And instead of trying to assist and help out, I see this government cutting. Because of their mismanagement, they're cutting programs that give education, that give advice to people — how to eat right, how to take better care of yourself.

You know, when you look at all of this, and I want to go back to this because I think housing is a huge part of this. We have a lot of people who live in crowding, overcrowding of housing and all the different issues that come with overcrowding and the shortage of affordable housing. So people crowd in our northern communities and some of the rural areas. It's amazing how the connection is, but you know, a lot of people — young children, babies, the elder — they have respiratory problems. There are so many health issues that are caused by overcrowding that on the health system . . . [inaudible] . . . we have to do a better job to assist that. It is unreal the housing issues, overcrowding, it creates on our health system.

There are so many, so many, you know, so many issues that, you know — and my colleagues have talked before — that have gone on in rural area. And people are truly concerned, and all they want from their government, the Sask Party government, is to hear their issue, their concerns — address them. You have the decision. You have the power. You are now in control. You cannot continue to blame. Take the responsibility and do what's right for the people of our province. They have that right. That's all they're asking. They're not asking for more. They just want to be treated in their rural and northern communities, they just want to be treated with dignity and respect, and they deserve that.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cannington.

[11:45]

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to join in this debate in commending this government for the work they're doing across Saskatchewan in health care, and particularly in rural Saskatchewan.

It was interesting listening to the member who just spoke, Mr. Speaker, saying at the end of his remarks that the North just

wanted to be treated like everybody else. And, Mr. Speaker, I agree with him. The North should be treated just like everybody else. And yet he stands in his place, Mr. Speaker, and say, but we want special treatment for this and we want special treatment for that. So, Mr. Speaker, I guess I'm . . . Does he want the same that everybody else has in the South, or does he want to have a special treatment, Mr. Speaker?

You know, he was talking about the need for long-term care in the North. There's need for long-term care, Mr. Speaker, across the province. I guess it's . . . In the North, perhaps in his constituency in La Ronge, it was amazing to the people there that, all of a sudden, there were seniors there after November 2007. Is he telling me that the previous administration didn't realize that people were going to get older and that there was going to be seniors in La Ronge after November 2007? Because if they knew that was going to happen, why didn't they plan to expand the long-term care facilities in La Ronge and the other communities in northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker?

I don't think it was a surprise to anyone that seniors would get older in Saskatchewan, that seniors would get older in northern Saskatchewan. What it was, Mr. Speaker, was a failure of the NDP when they were in government to do long-range planning and to set goals.

The previous minister of Health, the member from North Battleford, wouldn't set a goal because they couldn't meet it. They wouldn't set a goal because they couldn't meet it. This government, Mr. Speaker, has set goals. We have set goals, Mr. Speaker, on nurses. We have set goals on new training seats in the universities for health care professionals. We have set goals, Mr. Speaker, for the training of new doctors, Mr. Speaker. And we're well on the way to meeting those goals, Mr. Speaker. And the previous minister of Health couldn't even set a goal because he knew that the NDP would not allow him to even come close to meeting those goals, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, health care has been an issue in Saskatchewan for a long time. And I think back to my early days when I got elected. I had the pleasure to go to Oxbow on April the 1st, I think it was 1992 or 1993, to do the opening of a new health care facility in Oxbow. Unfortunately Louise Simard, the NDP Health minister of the day, on April the 16th — 15 days later, Mr. Speaker — closed that brand new hospital.

When I got elected, Mr. Speaker, we had hospitals in Gainsborough, Oxbow, Lampman, Redvers, Arcola, Fillmore, and Wawota. Today because of the NDP's management of health care, we have hospitals in . . . We have a palliative care respite facility in Oxbow. We have a hospital in Redvers and a hospital in Arcola, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the rest of those facilities were closed by the NDP, Mr. Speaker.

And the members opposite in their speeches were talking about the facilities that they built. They mentioned Moosomin. Well, Mr. Speaker, prior to the 1991 election, the announcement had been made for the construction of a new hospital in Moosomin. The NDP cancelled it. They reannounced it for the 1995 election and subsequently cancelled it. They reannounced it, Mr. Speaker, for the 1999 election and subsequently cancelled it. They reannounced it for the 2003 election, Mr. Speaker. And finally, in about 2005, the work started on that facility. So, '91,

'95, '99, 2003, Mr. Speaker — 16 years before they finally got around to doing it. And this was not an unusual circumstance, Mr. Speaker. They did the same thing at Preeceville. They did the same thing at Humboldt, Mr. Speaker, all the while when costs were expanding, Mr. Speaker.

You know, Redvers in my constituency built a new hospital in the 1990s. The community said, we're not going to wait for the NDP government to do this. They paid 100 per cent of the cost to build that new facility, Mr. Speaker. And yet the minister of the day, the associate Health minister of the day, the member from Saskatoon Eastview showed up to do the ribbon cutting, even though the NDP government had not put a single nickel into the project, Mr. Speaker. That was the attitude that that government had towards health care in rural Saskatchewan.

This government, Mr. Speaker, has announced that we're going to be proceeding with a number of new long-term care facilities across Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Those negotiations are ongoing with the foundations to get their share of the money in place, 35 per cent which is the same rules that the former administration had in place. So those communities are in negotiations with the Health ministry to get their financing in place and to determine the size of the facilities, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, one of the issues that has taken place has been staffing in the facilities under the former administration. I have one long-term care facility in my constituency that has one wing closed, 10 beds are closed, because there wasn't enough nurses. Well what happened to the nurses, Mr. Speaker? Well when the NDP closed 52 hospitals across Saskatchewan, they let over 600 nurses go, Mr. Speaker. So those nurses either remained in the rural areas where there were no facilities and carried on their lives in another manner or they left the province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, then the members opposite when they were government decreased the number of training seats down to 160. Mr. Speaker, this government has raised that training seat level up to over 550 seats, Mr. Speaker. But it's going to take four years to get those students through and trained and into the workplace, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't happen overnight even though the fact that seniors got older in La Ronge seems to have surprised the members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, doctors, the same things happened. We had 60 training seats for doctors in this province when doctors were leaving. We knew we had a dearth of doctors, Mr. Speaker. But for the members opposite that wasn't a problem because their expectation was that the population of Saskatchewan was going to decrease down to about 750,000 so you weren't going to need these nurses; you weren't going to need these doctors.

And they had a second plan as well, Mr. Speaker. They were going to strip these facilities, these professionals from rural Saskatchewan and force everybody to move to the cities, Mr. Speaker. So there was no need to have facilities across rural Saskatchewan. There was no need to have professional nurses and doctors in our rural centres, Mr. Speaker.

Well under the Saskatchewan Party government, Mr. Speaker, these communities are growing. There is a need for more of these professionals. And yes it's a problem, Mr. Speaker,

because we can't train them fast enough because the facilities were not in place to do that. But we are getting there, Mr. Speaker. We're progressing very quickly on this. We've recruited a large number of nurses. We're almost up to our 800 nurses that we set as a goal, Mr. Speaker, and we will achieve that.

Mr. Speaker, the role of health care in rural Saskatchewan is changing, however. We're going to more primary care centres, Mr. Speaker, that will provide services to the communities. As well we're seeing a move to more partners within the fee-for-service doctors to cover off more centres, Mr. Speaker, because the new doctors want to have a lifestyle that is more reflective of their contemporaries and other professionals that they have met, say, at university.

So there is a change happening across rural Saskatchewan on how these professionals deliver their services. It makes it more difficult because now the doctors aren't prepared to be there 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You need more doctors to cover the same area than you did previously, Mr. Speaker. But we are training more doctors. More doctors are coming into the province. As my colleague said, we have 164 more doctors in Saskatchewan than we had in 2007, Mr. Speaker. It's getting better in Saskatchewan and it's going to be great soon as the budget comes down, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, don't worry; be happy. Well the Minister of Health was interviewed in November of '09 and said that:

Can I ensure that there will be a doctor in every community like there used to be? I don't . . . You know, we just can't do that. The system is changing, the environment is changing.

And also went on to say:

The way health care was delivered in rural Saskatchewan, especially 20 or 30 or 40 years ago, isn't going to be the way it's going to be delivered in the next number of years.

So basically the minister . . . And he also said that he's met with many groups from small towns. He meets with them every week and he said his biggest challenge is to change their expectations of how services are delivered.

He now has to change their expectations. Who raised their expectations, Mr. Speaker? Who told them there would be more care for seniors, more doctors in rural Saskatchewan, more nurses in rural Saskatchewan? He and his party during the election in '07 raised everyone's expectations, just to get the vote, I am assuming because now when it comes time to deliver, all the excuses are being rolled out. They don't have the money. It's our fault. What did we do for 16 years?

Well nobody is interested in what happened over 16 years ago. What they're interested in now is what was promised to them in '07 is not being delivered now, and frankly, according to the

minister, won't be delivered any time soon. In fact, what you thought you might get — you might get a doctor in your community — you will not.

The member from Cannington told the town hall meeting a couple of years ago, you go out and start competing with your other communities around you to get yourself a doctor. Now that I don't think is . . . That's cold comfort to communities in Coronach and Shaunavon who are out with their own personal recruitment agencies looking for doctors — the communities of Climax and Redvers, as the member from Cannington mentioned. And I have another letter from someone in Redvers who's equally distressed about what's not happening there.

People in Shaunavon and Arcola and Spiritwood and Lestock and all kinds of communities around the province who thought that when the Sask Party made a promise, that perhaps they had some intention of actually doing what they said, well they certainly found out in the last two years nothing that they promised has ever happened — a lot of hype.

And the Premier actually said to the SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] convention . . . I think one of the members last week in the speech, when the motion that I made was exactly contrary to this — and frankly was a much better motion — that the Premier said to SARM, be happy that this is, that rural health care is top of mind for us. Well that is cold comfort to know that the Premier has as top of his mind. Big deal.

Where is the delivery of the promise? There's nothing happening, nothing happening. When they talk about 13 communities going to get an upgrade in long-term care beds, funding was put on hold and basically cancelled because there's no money.

And given the fact that you're looking at putting agreements in place — I think looking at what happened to the chiropractors and when they bargained in good faith, came to an agreement, ratified the agreement, signed the agreement, and then the minister went, no, we're not going to honour that — anybody in this province who thinks that entering into an agreement with this Sask Party government means anything is wrong. And I think it's going to be evident. I mean there's 25,000 health care workers right now without a contract, over two years almost. What does that say to rural Saskatchewan?

A lot of those people, like thousands of those people, work in rural Saskatchewan. They have no contract. They have no respect. They have no indication from this government that there will be any honour in bargaining, that there will be any improvement to their working conditions. And they're the ones who deliver the services that we're talking about needing to have in rural Saskatchewan.

The doctors are at the table right now bargaining. How do you think they feel when the chiropractors' deal is ripped up? How do you think their confidence is in this government to see that something will actually occur, and if something is signed, it will actually be honoured?

Certainly it's not going to attract doctors. It's not going to attract any other health providers who are looking at the

workplace environment and the relationship with government and saying, I don't think so. It's certainly giving Saskatchewan a black eye when the government cannot be honourable in its dealings with its workers.

And I mean that's a whole other debate, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about honour with the workers. We're at war with labour. And the thing that the government has forgotten and the Premier has forgotten and the Minister of Health has forgotten is the people that we're at war with are the people that are looking after our mothers and fathers, that are going out into home care delivering home care services, that are assisting at our operations in our bigger centres that are being . . . They're the surgical attendants. They're doing our lab tests. They're doing our X-rays. They're doing our physiotherapy. They are the workers that are delivering the services that everybody says we need and want and expect and value, but you don't value the people that are actually delivering the services.

[12:00]

And this is very key to rural Saskatchewan's health and wellbeing, is that the people that are out there, that are working there, a lot of them are women. A lot of them are wives of farmers. A lot of them are teachers. A lot of them that work out there need to know that they can depend on this government to come through with what they promised.

If there is no honour in bargaining, this is just an absolutely appalling state of affairs. And if we're talking recruitment and retention, it will have nothing but a negative effect on that.

And it's interesting that the member that stood up, I think it was the member that moved the motion, from Biggar, that he talked about the academic health sciences — started under the NDP. He talked about primary health care — started under the NDP. He talked about the electronic health record, previously known as SHIN [Saskatchewan Health Information Network] — started under the NDP. I was on the first board of SHIN, so there's no way you can take . . . The Sask Party can take credit for none of this.

The children's hospital started way before the member from Silver Springs attached himself to that. And certainly the children's hospital must be really happy now when there's no money. And all of a sudden, after all the hype in Saskatoon, the member from Silver Springs really thought this was his to deliver — yanked the money away. I'm sure they're very happy.

And talking about recruiting Filipino nurses, the member from Nutana, when she was the minister of Immigration, she travelled to the Philippines to start that process. It happened under the NDP.

So there are now 123 vacancies for doctors. This is nothing to be proud of. We now have a Crown corporation to talk about recruitment. Well the minister and all the Sask Party have really been very, very negative about Crown corporations — we don't need them; there's no value to people. But all of a sudden we can get one to do recruitment and retention of doctors.

And the fact that some of their authority comes through

reaching agreements with people, well I've already talked about what an agreement means. It isn't worth the paper that it's written on. Anything that anybody believes the Sask Party agrees on, they can turn around and rip it up the next day. So their word means nothing, and I think the people of Saskatchewan understand that.

And I think that when we're looking at chiropractors, 21,000 signatures on petitions that say, keep chiropractic services. I spent a great deal of time over the last couple of days, Mr. Speaker, going through those petitions line by line and looking at what communities people are signing from. And there's 466 communities in Saskatchewan — cities, towns, and resort villages. There were 206 names yesterday and 189 today. Granted there's going to be some overlap, but I think those chiropractic petitions are going to contain signatures from every single community in the province. It means something to people that this is happening.

There's this low-hanging fruit comment that's coming out from members around the opposition, low-hanging fruit. Well get out of the orchard. There's this low-hanging fruit that they're talking about. If you looked around at the people that were here when the chiropractors and their patients were here, that low-hanging fruit feeds those people. It keeps them at work. It keeps them moving. It keeps them going.

And 21,000 signatures from all over Saskatchewan, mainly rural Saskatchewan, says a lot about what rural Saskatchewan thinks about the health care promises from the Sask Party. They do not believe it. And, Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting this motion. There's no confidence in rural Saskatchewan. And I would condemn them for what they have been doing.

The Speaker: — The time for debate has elapsed. I recognize the member from Athabasca for the 10-minute question period.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the member from Cannington, the passing tourist of northern Saskatchewan. When he made a reference to special services or special needs for northern Saskatchewan, the one question I have is, what does he mean when northern Saskatchewan demands extra or special services? And the second question I have for him, Mr. Speaker, when he spoke about 1991, the 16 years we were in power, the second question I have for him is that: was the government broke at the time? In 1991 when we took over from the former Tory administration, which he was part of, was the government broke? And secondly, what special or extra services does he think northern Saskatchewan wants?

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in 1991 we were looking at a situation where the previous administration had left that former administration with a \$6 billion debt at 19 per cent interest rate, Mr. Speaker. And you compound that over nine years, and you have a very significant debt.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, there was debt there, in place, in 1982. And there was debt there in 1991, Mr. Speaker. And there was debt there in 2007, Mr. Speaker, and we reduced that debt by \$2.6 billion, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this government has been

dealing with the debt left behind by the NDP and every previous administration.

What does the North want that's special? I don't know. I was listening to the member from Cumberland say, we want special treatment for this. We want to be treated the same as everybody else, but we want special treatment.

So I don't know what it is that the member from Cumberland wants that's special treatment, Mr. Speaker. But I was simply quoting what the member opposite had to say, that he wanted special treatment, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the most alarming actions from the NDP's mismanagement of health care in the great province of Saskatchewan was the closure of 421 hospital beds.

To the member from Cumberland: was the closure of these beds a response to the fact that the population in the province continually decreased under their watch? Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to answer the question. And they like to referring to all the things that the previous government did of closing hospitals. But I'll say this. What are you guys doing? And how many are going to be reopened?

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

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, this government talks about how they've raised the number of medical seats in order to support rural Saskatchewan. And that, of course, is a fine start. But there is much more to ensuring we have increased numbers of doctors in rural Saskatchewan.

To the member from Regina Qu'Appelle: what is your government's plan to ensure we have enough preceptors in rural Saskatchewan, and that they have the proper support and training to do this job well?

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much. I'd like to thank the member opposite for that question. Well that is exactly what the Minister of Health has stated, that we have undertaken an agency that will focus on retaining our own medical graduates, so that people of Saskatchewan will benefit from the dollars. We are committed to the rural Saskatchewan. We are ensuring that in fact facilities and people will be available to encourage and help educate our young physicians coming out. Thank you very much.

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

Mr. LeClerc: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government values the senior citizens of this province. Our government appreciates the hard work they have done in laying the foundation of this province. Mr. Speaker, when asked about the benefits of seniors making different lifestyle choices in regards to diet and exercise, an MLA from the opposition stated, I quote, "They will live healthier, longer, and die quicker."

To the member from Cumberland: why does the NDP government believe it is better for our senior citizens to die quicker?

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not exactly going to get into the comments of the previous, and the answer that came there. But I'll tell you what, I'll tell you what, I know that there are a lot of concerns out there. And I will say this to you — there are different things that need to be done for our seniors. And I'm not going to comment on the previous answer, so thank you.

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

Mr. Furber: — I listened very intently, Mr. Speaker, to the motion. And I also listened to the speeches of the members opposite, as appalling as they were, and not one of them spoke about the things that they're doing in their own motion. All they spent time doing was looking in the rear-view mirror talking about the past, which is what they've become accustomed to doing. And they'll be returned to the opposition where they can continue to ask questions in question period as they have all this week.

Now what they failed to talk about is the 16 years we spent paying off the debt of the guitar museum, the debt of the booze bill that was signed for by the Premier of the province of Saskatchewan. So I'm going to ask the Biggar member: in terms of hospital closures that were forced upon Saskatchewan people by their mismanagement before 1991 how many are they going to reopen?

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the questions. Well as we know, the former NDP government closed 52 rural hospitals. Under their watch, the health care in rural Saskatchewan was decimated.

Under our watch, since 2007 we have announced 13 new long-term care homes to be built in the province. In the Heartland Health Region, there's going to be a new long-term care home, in Kerrobert and in Rosetown and Biggar. This is the philosophy of the Saskatchewan Party: we're not closing hospitals, we're opening health care facilities in this province. And we will continue to do that during our mandate. Thank you.

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

Mr. Michelson: — Mr. Speaker, the member from Cumberland

was wanting facts when he started talking. Well the facts are there was 52 hospitals closed in Saskatchewan under their reign — 52 rural hospitals closed, Mr. Speaker. The former Health minister has even ignored his own constituency by ignoring the North Battleford hospital, and now he presents petitions to it. Mr. Speaker, during 1999 the NDP government caused the largest nurses' strike in the province through its complete incompetence regarding the management of health care. This Saskatchewan Party government has gone on to provide nurses with the largest wage increases their profession has ever seen and improved nursing conditions by hiring more nurses.

To the member of Saskatoon Eastview: why did your party expend considerable efforts undervaluing and ignoring the profession of nursing?

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

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, my question is to the member from Saskatoon Northwest. Oh, am I answering? Well I didn't hear it directed to me, actually, Mr. Speaker. I don't think it was directed to anybody.

But the members that are speaking in their speeches are talking about the value of seniors. And I'm interested to know, since we're talking about a bill of rights that's before the Assembly at the moment, I'm wondering if they're going to . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I believe a question was directed. And I understood the minister from Saskatoon Eastview was taking the question, so I would ask the member to respond to the question.

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I didn't actually hear the question since everything was so loud, so I certainly didn't hear it was me that was answering it. But I think that the members who have spoken, that their commitment to rural Saskatchewan has been clearly undermined by their actions in the last two and a half years. And talking about things that have happened under this government for 16 years, I think the member from Cumberland was clear that when our government came in 16 years ago, this province was bankrupt. There was no money. So now, there is no excuse, I mean, unless you're admitting bankruptcy, then there's no excuse for the programs you're cutting, the promises you're breaking, and the things that you are not doing.

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

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the member from Cannington. Mr. Speaker, we hear repeatedly the members opposite talking about how during the period where this province had no money and conversions had to occur, the closure of hospital beds. Today, they've now been the government for more than two years. They were left with a budget surplus of more than \$2.3 billion when they took over, Mr. Speaker. They haven't opened a single new bed, Mr. Speaker.

So to the member from Cannington: when can we expect him to reopen the 52 centres that he claims were closed, and when can

we see the multiple new beds that they're talking about?

The Speaker: — Time has elapsed on the 75-minute debate. Order. Order. Order. I think members would like to hear what the motion is for debate on private members.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 607

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by Mr. Yates that **Bill No. 607 — *The Public Safety, Security and Protection Act*** be now read a second time.]

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

[12:15]

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased once again to stand and talk about this very important piece of legislation. It's a piece of legislation that's important to all the people of the province of Saskatchewan and . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I'm informed that we'll have to have another speaker to the motion since you moved the motion. It's been brought to my attention. The member from Regina Dewdney has moved the motion. I recognize the member from Prince Albert Northcote.

Mr. Furber: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to enter into the debate today on Bill No. 607. It's an Act that proposes to provide public safety, security, and protection for the people of Saskatchewan.

And you'll note very clearly why it has been brought forward. It's because in opposition, members opposite called for an Act that's very similar to this one that would protect the public servants in Saskatchewan from scrutiny when they speak out against their employer. And now when we've brought forward similar legislation, they absolutely refused on every count to do anything about it. And so we are forced to bring forward a Bill, Bill No. 607, which reads, it's *An Act to provide for the Public Safety, Security and Protection of the People of Saskatchewan*.

And so it's hard to fathom that we live in a day and age in Saskatchewan where you have to bring forward legislation to protect the workers in Saskatchewan. But that's where we're at. And if it wouldn't be for the extremely archaic and brutal actions of the members opposite, we wouldn't have to be here, we wouldn't have to be speaking to this Bill today because what you would . . . provide a culture in the workforce, especially in government-employed facilities and agencies, where you would feel free to bring forward an issue where it affects negatively the public safety, security, and protection of the people of Saskatchewan.

But that's not the case. And I think we need to talk about why that's not the case. That's not the case for several reasons. It has

been proven very recently when people in the province of Saskatchewan who are employed by the Government of Saskatchewan bring forward issues that directly affect the public safety of the community and the people in Saskatchewan, that they are admonished for it. The ministers responsible will bully and intimidate them. They'll send the police service out to investigate them. They ask them about whether or not they have an affiliation with an individual political party.

And so what I find interesting in some of these instances, if you talk to the folks that are affected and were interviewed, what comes out of these interviews is that the first question is asked is, have you ever been a member of the NDP, which is contrary to the collective agreement they signed and work under, contrary to their human rights. But it's the first thing they're asked. And then they're asked, have you ever put up a sign for the NDP on your lawn? And the relevancy that that has to the public safety of the people of Saskatchewan is hard to fathom, but that's the question that's asked.

They also ask if you've ever been a supporter. Do you ever vote for the NDP? Well how in Saskatchewan today does that influence in any way whether or not they were speaking out on behalf of Saskatchewan people with respect to their public safety, security, and protection? It's unfathomable.

And so what's hard to imagine again is that we're here today speaking to having to protect people who are employed by the Government of Saskatchewan, who have a constitutional right to affiliate to a political party, who have a collective agreement in which they have an opportunity to vote for whoever they choose and support whoever they choose. And yet you've got a government here, a Saskatchewan Party government that starts a witch hunt process in order to go after people. And it's hard to believe that that's where we live today.

Now if you want to have a civil servant . . . or a civil service, excuse me, that are productive, that work hard for the people of Saskatchewan, you should respect them. That's where I would start. And so you have to ask yourself: where is the respect in Saskatchewan for the civil service, the people that work in our Crown corporations, that do the business of the people of Saskatchewan every day in this province, when the ministers opposite will start a witch hunt in order to find out who attempted to protect the public safety and security of the people of Saskatchewan? That's who they go after.

Now we should certainly understand the absolute, vital role that civil servants play in Saskatchewan. They provide a tremendous service in every aspect of their dealings. They do things like provide social services. They provide safety in correctional institutions. They also work to ensure that businesses have some of their things moved forward when it comes to regulatory regime structures. And so they do all of the business of the people of Saskatchewan. They play an absolutely vital role.

And not only are the members opposite going to cut 1,500 jobs, but also they believe that it's important to beat them up and to intimidate them. And if you look at what's going on with members opposite and the witch hunt that they start, it's unbelievable when a member of the civil service would come

forward to try to protect people in Saskatchewan and that's the treatment that they get when they're trying to carry out the very important work of the people of Saskatchewan.

So we have to ask ourselves what exactly . . . Because the Saskatchewan Party is used to doing many things, and one of them that they're very good at is promising things to people. But the other thing that they're not so good at is delivering on those promises. And if you look, many examples: Bill 5, a pulp mill for the city of Prince Albert, a second bridge for Prince Albert, airport improvements, the children's hospital, long-term care facilities including ones in Prince Albert. So they make those promises before the election, but they won't carry through on.

But in addition to making those promises, they've also done a few things. And that's proposed legislation in opposition to deal with this very issue. Now when similar legislation is brought forward, they oppose it. So what kind of government do you have who in opposition will propose legislation in order to protect workers whistle blowing or making claims against the government, when as soon as they're elected, the exact same legislation is brought forward, they deny it. So they want people to be protected when they're in opposition, but when they become the government, they want absolutely nothing to do with transparency and accountability.

They don't want people to be able to speak out against the government for any reason. And they certainly don't want people, if it hurts their government in any way, to speak out on the public safety, security, and protection of the people of Saskatchewan. And so you have to ask yourself, why would you believe anything that they say?

Because they promise many things. They go so far as to introduce legislation to protect people when in opposition. But when they become the government, look out. Look out. They don't want to keep promises in the many that I've listed, and they certainly don't want to protect people from whistle blowing on the government.

They campaigned on accountability and transparency. And so you have to ask yourself today, when you propose legislation as a member of the opposition and you want to have it read and introduced then passed, how is it that when you're in government, you won't pass the legislation? It's unfathomable.

Now there are a litany of examples where they are not accountable, where they're not transparent. We talked about some today in question period. We sent over a number of written questions pertaining to Social Services and Health, and they're ordered. So they don't want to be transparent and accountable and provide answers because they're hiding something. And what are they hiding? We don't know. We're going to find that out. But we're going to find it out in six months after, they hope, things have gotten better. Well it might not be the case. And so in six months, I guess we'll find that out.

But what it does is it speaks to the accountability of a government because they don't want to be measured. They don't want to be . . . And in spite of the fact that on a monthly basis the Department of Social Services compiles records on

how many people are accepting assistance, and when you can't provide them, what does that say? Does it say that you don't want to be accountable and transparent, or does it say that you quit keeping numbers? So are you a terrible manager in a ministry, or do you want to bury the information so that people can't find it? That's the question.

And so certainly they are attempting to instill a culture of cover-ups. It's hard to imagine. What do they have against transparency, Mr. Speaker? What do they have against transparency?

You've got the member from Indian Head-Milestone who, as a member of the opposition, talked to health care workers and said, there will absolutely be no reason that we could introduce essential services legislation. I'm in Lloydminster meeting with folks from CUPE [Canadian Union of Public Employees] just this week. And what do they say? That there are now more of them this week, as we stand here today, being told that they're essential. Over 90 per cent of the folks that work there are being deemed essential services. And so it's an issue of trust.

When you have a minister . . . well a member of the opposition who's now the Minister for Health, who will say that we don't need essential services legislation, then not only do they introduce it, not only do they introduce it, but it goes so far as to cover 90 per cent of people in his own ministry. And they did it . . . You have to ask yourself why they would do it. And the biggest reason is to kill unions. When the Premier says he's going to war with working people in Saskatchewan, this is a part of what he means.

So they introduce legislation, want to introduce it in opposition. We introduce it when they're the government, and they don't want anything to do with it.

Now you have to ask yourself, how it is that in 2010 in Saskatchewan you have a group of men and women, Saskatchewan Party government, that are elected to govern all people in Saskatchewan. You have a Corrections minister, the Minister of Corrections and Public Safety — ironic that public safety is a part of his mandate — who should be very accepting of this legislation. He should be the one calling for it. Because when you have somebody who voices an opinion on the direct impacts on public safety to the people of Saskatchewan and there's an absolute witch hunt that ensues, or they're asking questions about whether or not you voted for the NDP or whether or not you had a lawn sign, you can see that it's clear, absolutely fundamentally clear, that they are more interested in their own political futures than they are in the public safety, security, and protection of the people of Saskatchewan. That's a sad state that we live in, that that's the case here today.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's with sadness that we're here introducing this Bill, but we feel it's important. We feel it's important that the people of Saskatchewan feel free, the employees in Saskatchewan, be they working directly for government or in a Crown corporation, feel free to bring forward concerns that directly affect the public safety and security of the people of Saskatchewan. They should feel free to do that. We should live in a society and a province where that's encouraged, not discouraged — where it's encouraged that you attempt to protect the public safety of the people that you live and work

with in the community that you live and work.

[12:30]

Instead what we have here is a group of folks, the Saskatchewan Party, who absolutely choose . . . Not only do they choose to ignore the legislation. In fact they do exactly the opposite. They go on a witch hunt to try to find out just who it is that's protecting the public safety and security of the people of Saskatchewan.

Now it's absolutely unfathomable, absolutely shameful, but it's not entirely surprising. It's not entirely surprising because you've got an Agriculture minister who said that in opposition you could do and say anything — for 12 years, a lot of the times, I did.

And so you understand a bit of the motivation as to how they could introduce legislation in opposition, and when they become the government, not only do they not want to reintroduce the legislation themselves, not only do they want to introduce and pass their own legislation. When we introduced the exact same legislation, they want nothing to do with it. They want to walk away from it. This thing, in reality, should have taken one day to pass. It should have had the agreement of everybody because they agreed upon it when they were in opposition. And so on day one this Bill should have passed.

But it's clear, it's very clear that when you've got somebody who's the Health minister who says that we don't need Bill 5 and then they introduce it directly after becoming government, when you've got an Ag minister that says you can do and say anything in opposition and that he did for 12 years, where you'd get to this point.

But it's not acceptable to the people of Saskatchewan, and it's not right. You have to ask yourself when you introduce a Bill — we have introduced a Bill that affects directly government employees, Crown corporation employees — who would bring an issue forward that affects negatively their counterparts and companions? And who do they want to silence? Who does this Bill encompass? This Bill encompasses government workers and employees. So it's only that group of folks that they want to silence.

Now you've seen today, we asked questions coming out of their Finance department where it's interesting to note that the budget process is chaotic. And I would suspect that there'll be a witch hunt that ensues there because they know full well that they are absolutely chaotic in their own budget. They can't control that process. They have no idea what they're doing. And so they're going to try to find out how it is that everybody knows that their budget's chaotic. But it shouldn't be a secret, Mr. Speaker. If you looked at last year's budget, you'd understand that there's a good reason why it's chaotic.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's clear that for a number of reasons we think that this Bill should be moved forward. And it's with the best interests of the people of Saskatchewan at mind. Because we want to ensure that their public safety, security is protected properly and that they can ensure their own employment when they try to do the same thing. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased to be able to enter into debate on this private member's Bill, *An Act to provide for the Public Safety, Security and Protection of the People of Saskatchewan*.

Mr. Speaker, this is a Bill that I think is long overdue, given the circumstances that the people of our province and the public service in particular have witnessed in the last several months, Mr. Speaker.

I think the preamble is important because it suggests that Saskatchewan's public employees are employed by the people of Saskatchewan and that these public employees have a duty to work for and in the best interests of the people of Saskatchewan and that Saskatchewan public employees should not be punished in any manner for acting in the best interest of the people's public safety, security and protection, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, this is a principle that all members of the legislature who are elected in a free and democratic election should agree to, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we've had an incident in this province that I think is unprecedented. We have an incident where a duly elected member of the legislature rose in this House and asked the Minister of Corrections and Public Safety a series of questions regarding the release of a prisoner and the cover-up of that release, Mr. Speaker. And what was the aftermath of that? The aftermath of a duly elected member of the legislature, member from Regina Dewdney, asking a series of questions to the Minister of Public Safety, the aftermath of that was that the minister sat in this House and he asked that member whether or not the police had come to visit him.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is the Minister of Public Safety. This is the minister who is responsible for policing in the province of Saskatchewan. And for those of us that observe on these matters, it was clear that this was an intimidation tactic to silence a member of this Legislative Assembly that had been elected by the citizens in 2007.

And then, Mr. Speaker, after the minister tried to intimidate a duly elected member of the legislature, the minister said that he was going to launch an investigation. And he launched an investigation by hiring a couple of retired police officers to do the investigation. And what did those two retired police officers do at the request of the Minister of Policing?

What did those two retired officers do? They came and met with the member, a private member, a member of this Legislative Assembly, elected by the people of this province. They came and interrogated him for more than two hours — for more than two hours. This is unprecedented.

This is not a Member of the Legislative Assembly who has been accused of wrongdoing. This is not a Member of the Legislative Assembly that there is some thinking that they may have been involved in some illegal activity. This is a Member of the Legislative Assembly who stood in this House and asked a minister of the Crown a series of questions, a series of questions.

Now I know that the member from Moose Jaw is making fun of me. He can make fun of me all he wants, but you should pay attention because we are elected members of this Legislative Assembly and we have the right to speak in this Legislative Assembly.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have an elected member of the legislature that asked a series of questions to a minister of the Crown. He did nothing illegal. He did his job to ask the government, to hold the government to account. And what did that government do? They sent two retired police officers to interrogate that member. And that is unacceptable.

The members of the opposition are elected to ask questions. We are elected to hold this government to account and we will not be intimidated by the government. Now not only was this reprehensible enough. Then they decided to go on a witch hunt in the public service. And what did that witch hunt entail? It entailed a person who they identified as having been the possible source of the leak.

And what did those two retired police officers ask at the request of the Minister of Public Safety and Policing? What did they ask? They asked, are you a member of the NDP? Have you ever had an election sign of the NDP on your lawn? Have you ever voted for the NDP? Well, Mr. Speaker, my understanding is how you vote is a private matter. You go into the election booth and no one knows how you vote unless you are prepared to tell them, Mr. Speaker. And that is a right in a democratic society.

So not only did they ask those kinds of questions, which are irrelevant, Mr. Speaker . . . When was the last time a public servant was asked by an investigative group, retired police officers, at the request of the Minister of Public Safety, how did you vote? Did you have an NDP sign on your lawn? Have you ever voted NDP? Do you have a membership in the NDP? And I say, Mr. Speaker, that in the province of Saskatchewan where, as far as I know, we still live in a civil and democratic society, those kinds of questions should not be asked of any public servant, any public servant.

There is a reason for this Bill and I have just laid out the reasons for this Bill. Because people in this province, people who work in the public service should be able to have the right, the right to inform the public when our public safety, security, and protection is threatened, Mr. Speaker. We should give them the right to do that. And that's what this Bill is about. And there are reasons why this Bill has been entered into this Legislative Assembly by the duly elected members of the opposition. It is because of the actions of the Sask Party ministers of the Crown and their members, Mr. Speaker. And their members.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we do not live in a country where civil liberty and democracy is threatened. We live in a province where you should be able to get up in the morning and go to work. You should be able to do a decent day's job. You should be able to speak freely without threat. And by goodness, you should be able to come into this House as an elected member of the Assembly and ask the members opposite questions without, without, Mr. Speaker, without the minister of the Crown hiring a couple of former police officers to try and intimidate a Member of the Legislative Assembly.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there seems to be a pattern. We have a group of men and women in Ottawa, and they're Conservatives. And what have they done to long-time public servants when it comes to the Afghan detainee issue? They prorogued parliament. They have threatened those public servants. They tried to intimidate members of parliament. They've shut down parliament so that people can't get at the truth, Mr. Speaker. And we have the same kind of right wing, conservative behaviour emanating from the members opposite. The same kind of right wing behaviour. It is my way or the highway. It is my way or the highway.

And, Mr. Speaker, you know what I've noticed in the last two weeks? We've had citizens come to this Assembly as we've asked questions. And I have noted with interest some of the ministers that have been held to account by the members of this opposition, after they've sat down, they've stared up into the Assembly, and I can say that's nothing other than intimidation tactics, Mr. Speaker. Intimidation. It is bullying behaviour.

We citizens of this province should be able to come to this Assembly. Members of the opposition should be able to ask questions and, Mr. Speaker, there should be no retribution, Mr. Speaker. No retribution. No retribution.

But these men and women don't quite understand democracy. They think that they are the political masters, not only of the public service, Mr. Speaker, but they're the political masters of citizens in this province that for whatever reason may not agree with them.

And we hear, we hear ministers phoning up friends in certain communities and saying, you better be careful. We're going to be in office for an awfully long time and you're just not going to get that school. Or you better be careful. You better be careful. If you're coming to the legislature, you just may pay the price, Mr. Speaker.

[12:45]

Now what kind of democracy is this? What kind . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh, the member says, honest democracy. Oh, honest democracy. So I guess the honesty is, their version of honesty is that people can't come to this House where we speak and have their opposition speak on their behalf and ask the government to account for their public policy decisions. And the honesty I guess coming from the Sask Party members is, if you do that, you will pay the price. Well, Mr. Speaker, that may work for a little while but it's not going to work for the long term, Mr. Speaker.

There are literally thousands and thousands of people that work in the public service, in our Crown corporations, in health regions, and you know what? They talk to members of the opposition. Some of them talk to us and we've learned all kinds of things. And one of the things that we've learned is that there is intimidation tactics going on.

I'll give you the latest example. You know constituency assistants do work for us when we are here, when we're away from our offices, and apparently there's a new policy that has come from the Minister of Social Services.

Now for a very long time constituency assistants were able to contact the Ministry of Social Services in their area — Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, Regina, whatever the region was — and they could ask questions or get an update on what was happening with a particular case. Well now we've got a whole bureaucracy that we have to go through. It now has to go through the legislative services wing, whatever that means, and then off to the Chief of Staff of the minister. Well you know, I think we'll soon hear shortly that while they're doing the four by four in the public service, which is you cut 4 per cent of the positions every year for four years, or 16 per cent — in fact more than 16 per cent if you accumulate this — that they'll soon be asking for more staff in their offices because they're going to be so busy handling all of the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] casework, Mr. Speaker.

I find this unacceptable, Mr. Speaker, because I know that certainly when we were in office that Sask Party MLAs regularly contacted the civil service, Mr. Speaker. But we're no longer able to do that in the Ministry of Social Services. And this is a problem, Mr. Speaker, because it makes your work on behalf of your constituents more bureaucratic and bogged down.

An Hon. Member: — It's far more political.

Ms. Atkinson: — Exactly. Far more political, and that is key. The other thing that I noticed in terms of democracy — and today we saw another example of this — a number of questions were asked by the Health critic of the Minister of Health, and the Whip ordered them returned. Now why would that be? Then we have a question from the critic for Social Services. Now this is not rocket science. The Social Services ministry every month can tell you how many people are sitting on the Social Services caseload. And what did they do? They ordered that answer returned, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, something is a bit out of sync here, a bit out of sync. Because this is the group of men and women, now they don't talk about this in all their promises that apparently they've kept, but one of their promises was that they were going to be open, accountable, and transparent. Now does anyone have a definition of transparent? I don't think they know the definition of transparent. Do they know the definition of open? Do they know the definition of accountable? And the answer is, no. Open, transparent, and accountable.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the public service — and I know they don't like this — but the public service is going to be in this province long after any of us are here. The public service are going to be administering the province of Saskatchewan long after the youngest member of the Assembly, which I believe is my colleague from Massey Place — I may be wrong — but long after he has left the place of this Legislative Assembly, long after he's gone as an MLA.

The public service needs to be protected from us. They need to be protected from us because we have a political agenda. And that political agenda is not necessarily in sync with what the public service does, which is administer the day-to-day activities of public service. And the public service should have the right to inform the public, who they ultimately work for, when the health and safety and security of our citizens are at

risk.

Maybe we can't do that because we're political and we don't want to be embarrassed, but the public service should be able to do that, Mr. Speaker. And I think this is an important principle that all members of this Assembly should, at the very least, be able to agree with.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as I said, the public service represents all of us. They administer the public policy that comes from the government and they should be able to tell us. They should be able to tell us when our security and our safety and our protection is at risk, Mr. Speaker.

This Bill incorporates good public policy. This Bill incorporates a protection of that public service. This Bill prevents renegade ministers, renegade governments from going after people whose interest is to protect the health and safety and security of our citizens, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is the kind of Bill that we should all be proud of supporting.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we know that the members opposite have had difficulty with their public safety. There have been many, many incidents of people who have been released before they had properly served their sentences. And in fact we had one example of someone who had served their sentence, a woman I believe who had served her sentence, and they were in such a rush to notify the public that they indicated to the public that she was at large and not to be at large. Well, Mr. Speaker, we then learned that she had fully served her sentence and was free to go and was now a citizen of, I believe it was Alberta and that she was not at large. So they made a mistake.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know that sometimes mistakes are made. People are released when they shouldn't be released. People are released when they should be released and then everybody's advised that they — it's confusing — they weren't to be released when they should have been released, etc., etc. It's hard to keep track and it's sort of disorganized for these men and women.

But, Mr. Speaker, we need to be able to know. We need to know when mistakes are made and people are released. And we shouldn't have a government covering that up. We shouldn't. And if they're not prepared to deal with it, if they're not prepared to deal with it, then public servants should be able to tell us. They should be able to tell us because we're all citizens of this province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'll be interested to see which members of the opposition, or which members of the government enter into this discussion. And I suspect it's going to be very few. And I suspect it's going to be very few because they know that public employees are employed by the people of Saskatchewan. They know that public employees have a duty to go to work and work in the best interests of our citizens. They know that public employees should not be punished in any manner when they act in the best interests of the people when it comes to their safety, security, and protection.

They know that their behaviour has led to a person being intimidated by two retired police officers that were hired by their Minister Responsible for Public Safety and Corrections,

intimidated by asking, have you ever been a member of the NDP? Have you ever voted NDP? Have you ever had a sign on behalf of the NDP? They know this is wrong.

They know that it was wrong when those two retired officers went to a member of this Legislative Assembly and tried to intimidate him into divulging his source. They know that it was unacceptable to have a member of the legislature in a meeting with these two retired officers for two hours talking to these two retired officers trying to get information from a member of the legislature.

This was not someone who was accused of any wrongdoing. This is not someone who had maybe broken the law, maybe was involved in fraud, maybe was involved in a hit and run, maybe involved in . . . This is a member of the legislature — wasn't accused of any criminal offence. This was a member of the legislature I guess that was accused of standing up in this House, which we have a right to do, and asking the minister of the Crown, a Sask Party minister, a series of questions. And what does that minister of the Crown do to further intimidate this member of the legislature? He asked if the police had come to see him yet.

Now I know the minister was under some stress and whatnot. And he said that there'd been a lot of catcalls over to him from our side, but this is the Minister of Public Safety and Corrections and Policing. This is a minister that has some experience in this Assembly and this is a minister that I think has developed thicker skin than that. And this is a minister that goes out into the foyer to speak to the press and says, well he'd gotten a lot of catcalls and if he offended the member, he was sorry.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it didn't end there. He wasn't that sorry. Because then he proceeds to hire two retired police officers — now remember he's in charge of policing — to conduct an investigation, and they come to meet with the MLA for Regina Dewdney and proceed to ask him a series of questions because they were trying to find out the leak — unacceptable, unacceptable, unacceptable in a free and democratic society. And if this group of men and women think this is acceptable, then they do not believe in democratic principles, which I would hope all members of this Legislative Assembly would adhere to, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I've had an opportunity to put my comments on the public record. I know that we are coming close to the hour of adjournment. I know that this has been a serious sore point for the opposition. And I would hope that it would be a sore point for those members of the Assembly, the Sask Party members of the Assembly, that do believe in democracy. I would hope. I would hope, because some day you might be sitting over here. And I would hope that if any member of a new NDP government tried to intimidate you that you would find that unacceptable.

I would hope that you would adhere to the principles that we come into this Assembly, whether we're in government or opposition, and we have the right as private members of this Assembly or as members of the government to ask questions. And we should not be intimidated. You should not be intimidated in your own caucus. You should not be intimidated

in this Assembly. And we should be able to speak freely about what we believe in.

And, Mr. Speaker, this Bill is here because there has been intimidation — intimidation of the public service and intimidation of a private member of this Assembly, and it is unacceptable in a free and democratic society where most of us are children of immigrants that came here to escape that.

The Deputy Speaker: — The time of adjournment having been reached, this House now stands adjourned until 1:30 Monday afternoon. Have a good weekend.

[The Assembly adjourned at 13:00.]

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President of the Executive Council

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Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Crop Insurance Corporation

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Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Power Corporation
Minister Responsible for Uranium
Development Partnership
Minister Responsible for Innovation Saskatchewan
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
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Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated
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