



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

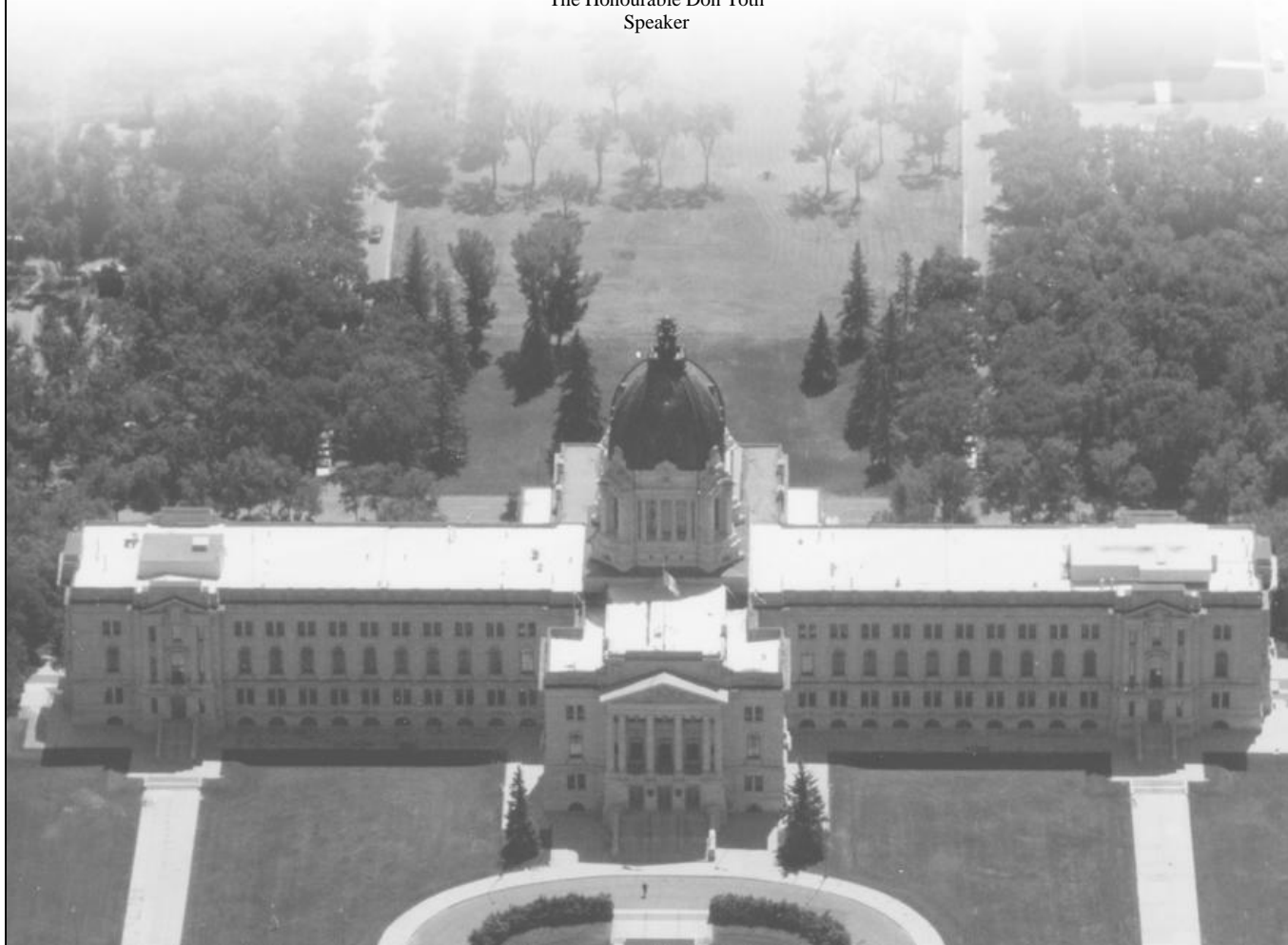
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Speaker — Hon. Don Toth
 Premier — Hon. Brad Wall
 Leader of the Opposition — Dwain Lingenfelter

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

[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to introduce a group of 26 students, a group from the Regina Christian School here in Regina. These students are with us here today. Their teacher, Tim Irvine, is with us, a number of chaperones and students.

I'll be unable to meet with the students later, but I know my good friend from Regina Elphinstone will be meeting with them. I want to welcome you here to the Assembly today and I know all members will want to join with me, Mr. Speaker, in giving them a warm reception here today.

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

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In the west gallery I'd like to welcome my papa and grandma, Bud and Ora Wooley who made the trip from Vernon, BC [British Columbia] to be here today. And papa is a World War II veteran, serving on the HMCS *Buttercup* chasing U-boats in the North Atlantic. And also my wife Alaina and my son MacGregor who . . . It's his first question period so he may be participating in debate, Mr. Speaker, but it will be in a manner similar to the members opposite of random yelling.

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

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you I'd like to welcome to the Legislative Assembly a person named Margaret Akan. Margaret Akan's seated in your gallery. She's here visiting with the Saskatchewan House of Prayer, but when she's not doing that Margaret works as the executive director for the All Nations Hope AIDS Network and has been doing that job for many, many years, doing a lot of good work for the community. We happen to be neighbours in terms of offices up and down 5th Avenue and it's really good to see Margaret here today in her Assembly. Please join me, all members, in welcoming Margaret to her Assembly.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud today to rise and present a petition on behalf of concerned citizens of Saskatchewan who are concerned about the safety of the highways in our province. This particular petition pertains to the No. 10 Highway and it states in this petition that No. 10 Highway is a major traffic artery to

year-round tourist destinations. Mr. Speaker, I will read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the Government of Saskatchewan to construct passing lanes on Highway 10 between Fort Qu'Appelle and the junction of Highway 1 in order to improve the safety for Saskatchewan's motoring public.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good folks from Yorkton; Dauphin, Manitoba; and Langenburg, Saskatchewan. I so submit.

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

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm pleased to present a petition that was organized by the Saskatchewan Student Coalition, and the petition is in support of the implementation of the Saskatchewan scholarship fund that the Saskatchewan Party promised to implement in its 2007 election platform. And the prayer reads, Mr. Speaker:

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

Mr. Speaker, these signatures today are from Regina and Balgonie. I am pleased to submit.

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

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition that speaks to the issue that the Government of Saskatchewan needs to recognize the integral role of all health care providers as valued members of the health care team, and that adequate funding needs to be provided and the installation of good faith in the provincial collective bargaining process. And, Mr. Speaker, the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to commit to negotiate a fair and just collective bargaining agreement with health care workers in the province of Saskatchewan.

On behalf of Saskatchewan citizens, Mr. Speaker, I so present.

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

Ms. Junor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to again present petitions on behalf of people who have now had their worst fears realized and have seen the elimination of the funding for chiropractic services. There's 1,400 more signatures here today, Mr. Speaker, and the prayer reads:

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 again, Mr. Speaker, the signatures are from across the province — Colgate, Swift Current, Kyle, Beechy, Admiral, Abbey, Hazlet, Davidson, Delisle, Saskatoon, La Ronge, Marsden, Blaine Lake, Dalmeny, Martensville, Bruno, Outlook, Kindersley, Perdue, Radisson, Osler, Hanley, Langham, Waldheim, Clavet, Major, Kenaston, Warman, Nipawin, Hudson Bay, Fairy Glen, Choiceland, Radville, Codette, Arborfield, Gronlid, White Fox, Carrot River, Prairie River, Tisdale, Love, Prince Albert, Melville, Indian Head, Climax, Southey, Sifton, Regina, Dysart, White City, Kelliher, Vibank, Craven, Grenfell, Balgonie, Luseland, Unity, Scott, Wilkie, Tramping Lake, Battleford, Vawn, North Battleford, Meota, Consul, Shaunavon, Frontier, St-Denis, Laird, Edam, Delmas, Spiritwood, Livelong, Medstead, Neilburg, Qu'Appelle, Wilcox, Cudworth, Regina Beach, Rose Valley, Lac Vert, Spalding, Clair, Watson, Naicam, Carmel, Melfort, Borden, Buchanan, Canora, Yarbo, Kamsack, Bredenbury, Sturgis, Killaly, Foam Lake, Lipton, Lintlaw, Churchbridge, Fenwood, Hyas, Neville, Saltcoats, Redvers, North Portal, Macoun, Glen Ewen, Torquay, Bienfait, Frobisher, Whitewood, Usherville, Cochin, Stewart Valley, Battleford, Pelly, Rockhaven, Wroxton, Imperial, Macrorie, Radisson, Hepburn, Arelee, Hanley, Domremy, Alvena, Albertville, Birch Hills, Muskoday, Debden, Aberdeen, Parkbeg, Drinkwater, Neidpath, and Birsay. I so present.

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I have a petition in support of maintaining educational assistants in the province of Saskatchewan. As we know, the government has published a document that reveals that the government is considering changes that would drastically reduce the number of educational assistants in the province and replace them with a small number of professionals, which according to this petition is no substitute for the loss of in-class support. And the prayer reads:

... cause the government to provide funding for the required number of educational assistants to provide special needs students with the support they need and maintain a positive learning environment for all Saskatchewan students.

And this petition, Mr. Speaker, is signed by people from Melville, Ituna, Norquay, Yarbo, and Saltcoats. I so present.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to rise today to present a petition calling for protection for renters from unreasonable increases. And we know that Saskatchewan renters are facing a combination of high rents and low vacancy rates in many communities. I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

take the following action: cause the government to consider enacting some form of rent control with a view of protecting Saskatchewan renters from unreasonable increases in rent.

And, Mr. Speaker, the signatories come from the city of Regina. I do so present. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition in support of new long-term care bed facilities in La Ronge with a waiting year of almost one full year, with a waiting list of one full year. I'd like to read the prayer 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 circulated by the Saskatchewan Student Coalition, a petition in support of affordable undergraduate tuition cost, and it requests 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 today to present a petition in support of the expansion of the graduate retention program. The petition is being signed by many folks from around Saskatchewan because the Saskatchewan Party government amended the retention program to exclude master's and Ph.D. [Doctor of Philosophy] graduates as well as students who graduated from post-secondary institutions from outside Saskatchewan. The prayer reads:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the petition today is signed by folks from the city of Regina. I so present.

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

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I stand to present a petition on behalf of rural residents of Saskatchewan dealing with another water issue, that a government ministry has directed that customers may no longer treat non-potable water using methods approved by Sask Health, and that Furdale residents dealing in good faith with SaskWater for over 30 years have paid large amounts for the domestic systems and in-home treatment equipment. And the alternative water supply
...

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. I would ask the member to move to the prayer please. I recognize the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

Ms. Morin: — I'll go straight to the prayer, Mr. Speaker. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to withdraw its order to cut off non-potable water to the residents of the hamlet of Furdale, causing great hardship with no suitable alternatives, to exempt the hamlet of Furdale from further water service cut-offs by granting a grandfather clause under *The Environmental Management and Protection Act, 2002* and *The Water Regulations, 2002*, and that this government fulfills its promises to rural Saskatchewan.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, these petitions are signed by the residents of Furdale. I so present.

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, I stand today to present a petition in support of the withdrawal of Bill 80. Mr. Speaker, we all in this province understand that *The Construction Industry Labour Relations Act, 1992* provides a stable environment for labour relations in the construction industry. The results of that are stable labour relations and quality of work and safe construction sites which benefit the people of our province. Not to forget to mention that the contracts, trades contracts support an apprenticeship system of training which does result in a highly skilled workforce. And the petition reads as follows:

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

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

This petition is signed by people in Assiniboia, Regina, Anaheim, Melville, Grayson, Edenwold, and Mossbank. And I so present.

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

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise to present a petition in support of affordable rents and housing for The Battlefords. The petitioners, Mr. Speaker, are motivated by recent rent increases of 40 per cent in the community. Mr. Speaker, the prayer calls on the Legislative Assembly to ask 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 revenue or rent control to better protect tenants in a non-competitive housing environment.

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by residents of The Battlefords, supported by residents of the Lloydminster area. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[10:15]

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

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I again rise with a petition signed by residents of Saskatchewan concerned about this government's disregard and disrespect for legal, constitutional, and human 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 will 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.

And today the petition is signed by residents of Saskatoon, and I so submit.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today 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 two consecutive deficit budgets and the two consecutive years of debt growth, Mr. Speaker. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly condemn the Sask Party

government for its damaging financial mismanagement since taking office, a reckless fiscal record that is denying Saskatchewan people, organizations, municipalities, institutions, taxpayers, and businesses the responsible and trustworthy fiscal management that they so deserve.

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

These petitions are signed by concerned citizens in Weyburn and Estevan. I so submit.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a new petition, this time in support of the Saskatchewan film and television industry. This petition basically deals with how the Sask Party government has allowed the film industry to languish over the last couple of years, and now has clearly kicked it to the curb with shutting down SCN. The prayer reads as follows:

. . . to cause the provincial government to make changes to the film employment tax credit that will allow the Saskatchewan film industry to be more competitive with other provinces, to reverse its decision to shut down Saskatchewan Communications Network, and to work with the industry to reverse the decline in film production.

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

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Poverty Costs

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This week is Social Work Week and the theme, Poverty Costs, draws attention to the many side effects of poverty, including hunger, homelessness, disease, malnutrition, drug and alcohol abuse, and crime.

The cost of poverty affects us all, Mr. Speaker, but yesterday's budget offered nothing to Saskatchewan families who are living in poverty. We saw drastic cuts to employment and literacy programs and community-based organizations. We saw hundreds of people lose their jobs, and social workers are among the casualties of the Premier's ham-handed cuts. The only funding increase we did see was to address the growing number of people receiving social assistance.

Mr. Speaker, poverty's rising under the Sask Party government and the gap between the rich and poor continues to grow. But unfortunately this Premier and this minister refuses to work with the community to develop a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy.

Mr. Speaker, it is truly unfortunate that the Premier does not recognize the many costs associated with poverty. While he ignores those costs and make decisions which forces more and

more people into poverty, social workers will continue to be on the front lines working alongside those individuals, families, and communities. I ask all members here to join me in thanking social workers for all the work they do, especially at a time when the Premier's forcing Saskatchewan's most vulnerable to pay the price for his government's incompetence. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Thunder Creek.

Population Trends

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, the NDP [New Democratic Party] once declared that it was impossible for Saskatchewan's population to grow by even 1 per cent per year. In fact, yesterday the NDP leader predicted that we would soon see Saskatchewan's population starting to drop. Mr. Speaker, Stats Canada released its latest population report today, and the NDP leader is wrong again. In our government's first two years in office, Saskatchewan grew by 30,511 people. That's the fastest rate of . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I recognize the member from Thunder Creek.

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, that's the fastest rate of population growth in any two-year period in nearly 80 years. Saskatchewan grew by over 14,700 people in 2008 during the so-called boom. And then we grew by over 15,700 people in 2009 in the middle of a worldwide recession, Mr. Speaker. That speaks volumes about the strength of our economy and our province.

I would also note that in 2009 Saskatchewan recorded net international in-migration of 8,571 people. That's the highest number of new Canadians coming to our province in any year since records began to be kept in 1946.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has thrown off the defeatist attitude of the NDP that held us back for decades. And today our province is growing and moving forward. The balanced, forward-looking budget delivered yesterday by the Minister of Finance will keep Saskatchewan growing and moving forward.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Rural and Northern Health Care

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday's budget offered absolutely nothing except cuts, clawbacks, IOUs [I owe you] for northern and rural Saskatchewan. But in last Thursday's 75-minute debate, we can clearly see why. The member from Cannington obviously does not understand the needs of northern and rural Saskatchewan.

When I spoke last week, I mentioned health care in rural and northern areas of the province seven times. And each time I was trying to convince the members opposite that rural and northern areas have special health care needs that don't exist in urban areas. I am talking about basic services that are taken for granted in the urban areas but are not easily available in isolated locations throughout rural and northern Saskatchewan. Unique circumstances deserve unique solutions.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am trying, I am saying again, northern and rural areas want health care that puts them on the same standing as urban areas in the South. The member from Cannington disrespected northern people when he said we have to stop calling for special treatment.

My point is so simple, even he should be able to understand it. I want the member to know that we deserve health care where we live. Northerners deserve to be understood and treated with dignity and respect. Rural and northern people deserve to have access to quality health care just like everyone else. And unfortunately the Sask Party offered nothing in yesterday's budget to address the shortfall. Mr. Speaker, the Premier and his government ought to be ashamed of their betrayal of northern and rural Saskatchewan.

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

Wait-Lists

Ms. Schriemer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again the NDP is wrong about population numbers, and it also appears that Springfield Elementary's best and brightest had better go back . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I would ask the . . . well there's a handful of members on the opposition side to at least give the members the opportunity to make their statements without undue interference. I recognize the member from Saskatoon Sutherland.

Ms. Schriemer: — It also appears that Springfield Elementary's best and brightest had better go back to Ms. Krabappel's classroom. Just yesterday the member from P.A. [Prince Albert] Northcote rose in the House and made the statement that the truth about wait-lists in the province of Saskatchewan is that they've doubled under this Premier. Well, Mr. Speaker, the truth is wait times are shrinking. Our government is ensuring that patients receive cataract eye surgery, hip fracture repairs, and cancer radiation treatment within the benchmark period. The Canadian Institute of Health Information says this year's numbers are an improvement over last year's, which completely contradicts the statement made by the member . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Members' statements. We'll get to the point of order as we normally do. I recognize the member from Saskatoon Sutherland.

Ms. Schriemer: — That this year's numbers are an improvement over last year's which completely contradicts the statement made by the member from P.A. Northcote, who we will hereby refer to as angry Bart. Bart is known for not doing his homework. This is also true of angry Bart. One of today's headlines says that wait times are decreasing. Ay, caramba, Mr. Speaker. Tracy Johnson, manager of special projects at CIHI [Canadian Institute of Health Information] says, "the report is good news since most Canadians are receiving priority surgery within the appropriate time." This shows yet again the disconnect between reality and the NDP.

The Speaker: — I just want to remind members that if members would not interfere, the member making the statement would have the appropriate opportunity and that the Speaker just gave the opportunity because of the Speaker's interjection to make the statement in the appropriate time period.

I recognize the member from Prince . . . Order. Order. The members are asking to stop the clock; stop the clock goes back to zero. The member from P.A. Northcote.

Mr. Furber: — Oh, she's quite a ray of sunshine, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Order. Members are to note that they are not to question the rulings of the Speaker. Order. We'll move to the next statement. I recognize the member from Lloydminster.

New Democratic Party's Track Record

Mr. McMillan: — Mr. Speaker, the NDP was wrong about the population, the NDP was wrong about wait times, and they were wrong about the budget.

Yesterday in his post-budget rant, the Leader of the Opposition pointed to the green sheet and said it proved the budget was not balanced. He pointed to the summary deficit line and said, how could a government claim the budget is not balanced? Well, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition's researchers are either incompetent or they're setting him up.

We decided to look if the NDP had ever had a summary deficit and said it was a balanced budget. We didn't have to look very far. I have the green sheet from the NDP's last budget, the 2007 budget, and guess what it says. It says there was a \$701 million summary deficit, and at the top of the page the NDP called it a surplus.

Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP doesn't seem to know what his own party was up to while he was in Calgary. It makes you wonder why he benched his Finance critic, who would never have made such a rookie mistake. Mr. Speaker, as usual the NDP was wrong, wrong, wrong — wrong on population, wrong on wait times, wrong on budget balance. You really can't believe anything they say.

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

Magic Show

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday we all witnessed an attempt at a true magic show by the Premier and his Finance minister.

First of all, they magically removed the debt in the province of Saskatchewan. How did they do it, Mr. Speaker? Well it's quite simple. They just erased it off the balance sheets. The Sask Party has found the trickiest and cheapest way to get rid of their total debt — whiteout. Abracadabra, it's magically gone.

But that wasn't the only trick they used yesterday. They also turned one-year capital expenses into 20- and 30-year projects. Poof, spending is magically reduced. The Premier's also privatizing licensing and inspection services, completely

making yet another budget item disappear. What a magic show, Mr. Speaker. What a spectacle.

But the best hoax the Premier and his Finance minister tried to pull off — they redefined public debt, magically making government loan guarantees disappear and, in the flash of a red pen, understating the provincial debt by hundreds of millions of dollars.

This may look flashy, but let me assure the people of Saskatchewan that these so-called balanced books are nothing more than smoke and mirrors. Magic tricks may be fine for a kids' birthday party but they will certainly not suffice when managing the finances of the province. The people of Saskatchewan are finding out that there is nothing more painful to watch than a brutal magician.

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

2010 Budget

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, this government clearly got plenty of experience with scissors yesterday. They cut \$2 million from early learning and child care. They cut \$3 million for training for young people. They cut a half a million dollars to regional parks, and the environment, Mr. Speaker, was hit particularly hard. They cut more than \$3 million from the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority alone. They cut more than \$2 million from industrial environmental protection. They cut almost \$1 million from the green initiatives programming. And they cut a quarter of a million dollars from the Prairie Adaptation Research Collaborative or PARC, a program that is finding solutions for reducing the impact on climate change.

So what does that mean for Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker? The environment will not be protected, rural Saskatchewan people won't have access to quality drinking water, students will lose their chance for a summer job, parents won't be able to get their kids into child care, Saskatchewan people will struggle to make ends meet. In short, Mr. Speaker, people will be asked to pay more and get less.

[10:30]

U of S [University of Saskatchewan] economics professor, Eric Howe, notes:

The economic costs are straightforward. We are the ones who are going to pay. There is no none else. So the costs will end up coming out of our standard of living.

And all of this, Mr. Speaker, comes at a time when the government has 30 per cent more revenue spent than the last NDP government. Never before, Mr. Speaker, has a budget with so much hurt so many.

The Speaker: — First of all I'd like to bring to the attention of the members, some members have been wondering about the mikes and why different lights are on. At times we've run into problems with the mikes and then the staff then put the closest mike on for members to use.

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Unparliamentary Language

The Speaker: — Before we move to questions, I'd like to respond to the point of order raised yesterday. Members are well aware that it's not permissible to accuse or suggest that another member is not being truthful. This practice is codified in our rule 50(f) and in paragraph 484(3) of *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms* in the 6th Edition and on page 618 of *The House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, 2nd Edition, 2009.

After reviewing the record from yesterday's question period, I wish to highlight two matters that affect the ability of members to engage in respectful and dignified debates in this Assembly.

First I would like to address the point of order raised by the Opposition House Leader. The statement at issue relates to the truthfulness of members. It was made by the Premier and directed at the member from Prince Albert Northcote. At page 4472 of *Hansard*, the Premier states that the member was providing information that was "not completely the truth . . ."

In this Assembly, many Speakers have ruled that the integrity of members should not be questioned and that the imputations of intentional falsehoods are not permissible — November 4th, 2008; May 15th, 2008; December 20th, 2007; March 26th, 2001; May 11th, 2000; April 29th, 1999; and May 27th, 1998. These rulings are further supported by the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, 2nd Edition, 2009 at page 618, which states:

The proceedings of the House are based on a long-standing tradition of respect for the integrity of all Members. Thus, the use of offensive, provocative or threatening language in the House is strictly forbidden. Personal attacks, insults and obscenities are not in order. A direct charge or accusation against a Member may be made only by way of a substantive motion for which notice is required.

In his point of order, the Opposition House Leader suggested that the Premier had called into question the character of the member and suggested that members of the opposition were not being truthful. On this note, I would like to remind members that last week on March 17th, the Leader of the Opposition apologized to the Assembly for implying that a member was not being truthful. In addition on November 16th, 2009, I ruled a member out of order who implied that a member was not being truthful.

I find that the statement by the Premier questioned the honesty of a member of this Assembly and ask the Premier to apologize and withdraw his remarks when I've completed my statement.

The second point raised by the Opposition House Leader relates to allegations that members are under investigation. I have some concerns relating to the insinuations made this week by members from both sides of the Assembly. Once again, previous Speakers have ruled on April 11th, 2007, and May 12th, 2000, that members should be cautious in how allegations are phrased. Attacks on the integrity of members and the

impugning of inappropriate activity are not in order. These types of allegations only create disorder.

I appreciate that it is not always possible to prepare in advance every remark or intervention that is made in the Assembly. Indeed often the most effective and compelling debates occur when members passionately and forcefully present their positions.

Nevertheless I do wish to caution members on their choice of language. I would like to remind members that personal attacks only incite others and bring down the level of debate. Challenging the position of another member is acceptable; questioning their character is not. A personal charge or accusation against another member may only be done by way of substantive motion. I would ask the Premier to withdraw and apologize. I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw the remark and apologize.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

State of the Provincial Economy

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, my question deals with the issue of the deficit that was announced yesterday by the government's own documents that show a deficit of \$622 million. And I want to quote from the *Leader-Post* today, individual by the name of Keri McFadden who talked about the deficit in the province. And from the article, I quote, "Keri McFadden, CEO of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Saskatchewan, agreed that the government is running a deficit, either way you look at it," either accounting system that you use.

I want to clarify that to read, "Keri McFadden, CEO of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Saskatchewan, agreed that the government is running a deficit, either way you look at it." He says, either way it's a deficit. My question to the Premier is this: how do you stand in the Assembly and claim to the people of the province, when the chief of the CEO [chief executive officer] of Chartered Accountants says it's a deficit, your own document claims it's a deficit, why do you not admit today you're running a deficit?

The Speaker: — Order. Just remind members to direct their comments directly through Chair, not directly at members. I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we make that statement that this is a balanced budget because it is a balanced budget, Mr. Speaker. And you know, and you know, in this we look to others who have governed in the province of Saskatchewan. We look to others who have some experience with respect to bringing down a number of budgets.

We look to the green sheets actually that the hon. Leader of the Opposition, who just asked the question, was quoting from in our budget; the same summary sheet for the last budget of the NDP, Mr. Speaker. The same sheet where he was saying several

times yesterday, this is your paper, not mine. Well this is his document, not the government's. It's from the last NDP budget. It highlights the fact that it is a balanced budget, that there's a General Revenue Fund in surplus for the 14th consecutive year, and that the summary deficit, Mr. Speaker, under the NDP was \$700 million. Then though, because GRF [General Revenue Fund] was balanced off with the savings account, they said it was a balanced budget in '07 and '08. It is a balanced budget today, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, question to the Premier: the rating of the Crown corporations whereby the government is taking every penny of profits from the Crowns with the exception of SaskPower, stripping away every bit of profits in our Crown corporations, how does the Premier explain to the people of the province that this isn't part of a way to pay for his deficit? And will he admit today that this money will be used to solve the deficit problem and will lead to much higher rates for the utilities in the province?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, if you take a look at roughly the amount of dividends that have been taken by governments of all stripes in our first two years and by the New Democrats, even when he was the minister of CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan], you're going to find roughly about a 70 per cent dividend taken from the earnings of the Crown.

Mr. Speaker, if you total the earnings from the Crown corporations in 2010-2011 forecast budget, the subtotal is 263.9 million. SaskPower's earnings are predicted to be 134.2 million. Mr. Speaker, we are taking zero dividends from SaskPower, making the dividend this year less than that 70 per cent number that the previous government used to take. So once again, Mr. Speaker, once again — and I'll carefully word this — the hon. member's information is not true.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite can say what I'm saying isn't true all he wants and be allowed to do it. But my question to the Premier is this, and I want to have a caveat on this to explain to him, the reason there wasn't as much money to take this year is because he took at all last year. That's the problem.

And the fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, the Premier who asks the public to tighten their belt should look at his own office. Because the one place that was spared, the one place that was spared in this belt-tightening exercise was his own office. I say to the Premier, how is it that you ask the public, through their utility rates, to pay more while at the same time his own office, the Premier's own office, is getting more money under this budget?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's a pattern, there's a pattern developing here, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the

member for P.A. Northcote said wait times were going up. We find out today according to CIHI they're going down. Yesterday the Leader of the Opposition said our population was going to decline. Today we found out we broke our own record set in December of this past year. Yesterday we found out that the member's characterization of a balanced budget in '07-08 somehow doesn't apply to the same budget this year.

And on this most recent question, Mr. Speaker, again the member is wrong. I think he's just going to continue to stand up and say whatever he wants. But I will note for the record that the Executive Council budget for the province of Saskatchewan, those are the offices of the Premier, are down 3 per cent. Ministerial travel down 38 per cent. Government travel down 15 per cent. Government advertising down 46 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, a question to the Premier. He will know if he's getting advice from his ministers properly, the Premier will know this, that in the last year, last year and this year, this government has taken \$1 billion out of the Crowns — \$1 billion. This will add a lot to the utility rates of every citizen of this province.

My question to the Premier is this: aren't the rate increases that we're seeing at SaskPower, SaskTel a result of this kind of improper management of the fiscal arrangement in this province where \$1 billion is taken out of the Crowns, transferred to the General Revenue Fund, and then that is treated as not an increase but as a tax grab through the Crown corporations?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that member is going to stand up and quote erroneous figures, and we will stand up every time and correct him.

The dividend that we're taking from the Crown corporations, Mr. Speaker, is \$254.9 million without the SOCO [Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation] money, Mr. Speaker. That's roughly 70 per cent of the total earnings of Crowns because, unlike the NDP, we are going to leave SaskPower alone completely.

The NDP, the NDP's practice with respect to SaskPower was to require them to pay a dividend every year to help them with their budgeting position, Mr. Speaker. And the net result was an infrastructure deficit at SaskPower that we are now dealing with on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker. We are going to continue to deal with that deficit. We'll make important investments through SaskPower. We know that's a bulwark of a growing economy.

Mr. Speaker, we've got lower taxes in the province which help with the cost of living issues that certainly are in the growing economy. And, Mr. Speaker, all of that wraps up into the final point which is that Saskatchewan is leading the country in growth, and it's going to continue to happen, Mr. Speaker.

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

Government Spending

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier spins and spins and spins. This gamesmanship does nothing but hide the fiscal shell game that we see from that government opposite, Mr. Speaker. This Sask Party knows that they can't get away with building another budget on faulty revenue forecasts; not after last year's fiasco. So this year they've replaced those faulty revenue forecasts with dubious spending projections.

Let's start with total spending in the budget. The government says they're spending 10.12 billion in this budget. To the minister: is this in fact a cut from what they spent last year?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Gantefer: — Mr. Speaker, what we've said when we presented the budget is that compared to last year's budget, the spending is reduced by \$121 million, 1.2 per cent. And that is the actual fact.

In comparison to the forecast expenditures, it is a closer relationship, and so we began this process of restraint last year when we recognized that revenues were not going to be what we had anticipated. We're carrying it on in this budget, and we're going to have that spirit of restraint existing into the years going forward.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Spirit of restraint, Mr. Speaker. With the second consecutive deficit budget from this government, spirit of restraint. This issue speaks directly to the fact that this is a budget that you can't trust from a Premier you can't trust. From their own documents, the facts prove that this is a \$12 million increase year over year.

In his budget spin the Premier pretends that this is a spending cut. We know that it's not. The media knows that it's not. The facts prove that it's not. To the minister: we all know this is a spending increase, why is the Premier pretending otherwise?

[10:45]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Gantefer: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, everyone understands — I think everyone, but obviously not the opposition — that you compare budget over budget. That's what exactly we have done. And in the comparison of budget over budget, spending indeed is down \$121 million.

And by way of interest, Mr. Speaker, last night I had dinner with the banking institutions that provide funding or potential loans to the province of Saskatchewan for its needs. And they have indicated to me that they're very, very pleased with the action that the government has taken. They have said, clearly, that in Canada, federal or provincial, Saskatchewan is likely to be the only jurisdiction in the entire country that has actually reduced its spending budget for budget, which is a comparison that every jurisdiction uses.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party's trying to convince Saskatchewan people that they've reduced government spending, but it's simply an accounting trick.

Driven by political self-interest, this government is changing the way it finances capital projects and government entities such as Treasury Board Crowns. Instead of paying for projects as they go, the government will now amortize that spending over a number of years. Mortgage it, if you will, Mr. Speaker. This artificially lowers spending in this budget and adds debt to the bottom line. To the minister: will he admit that all his budgeting changes are really just accounting tricks to hide the fact that the Sask Party government cannot get a handle on its spending?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, we are not the first government in the world that it thought it would make more sense if you amortized capital spending over the life of the asset. That makes sense in business; that makes sense in government. Mr. Speaker, it isn't the first time it was attempted in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I would like to point that back in the 2002-2003 budget tabled by former Finance Minister Cline, they used an education infrastructure financing model, but because they didn't properly set it up and organize it, they got an audit qualification in . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. I'd ask the opposition members to allow the minister to respond to the question. I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, the reason that that attempt at amortizing the costs for education were dropped was because it wasn't done properly and it wasn't done professionally, and the Provincial Auditor gave an auditory qualification in 2004.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is nothing new. It's a common sense approach. It's a businesslike approach. And that's what this government is doing.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition reminded us just moments ago that this government couldn't muster even a modicum of restraint when it came to spending on themselves and their cronies. They can't tell the difference between a spending increase and a spending cut. They've resorted to accounting tricks to hide and artificially lower spending in this year and in future years, making accounting changes on the fly in the middle of a budget cycle for political self-interest and expediency.

To the minister: does he really expect anyone to believe the spending forecasts in this year's budget?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, actually I certainly do understand that people believe what is in our government's budget. In fact I'd like to quote from a *Globe and Mail* editorial that came out this morning. And I quote, "Amid the ruin that has devastated most governments' balance sheets, Saskatchewan stands out as a beacon of light, tabling another balanced budget yesterday."

This was *The Globe and Mail*, Mr. Speaker. So while most people in the country, while people in the country understand it, the only people that don't seem to understand the good, common sense approach that this government has applied to this budget are the members opposite.

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

Chiropractic Services

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the government announced they will be de-insuring chiropractic care. Chiropractic patients will be forced to seek care from other areas of the system, going to emergency rooms, general practitioners, specialists. Off-loading onto the health system will increase wait times and add extra cost. Mr. Speaker, this is typical Sask Party math — save a dollar, spend three.

To the minister, Mr. Speaker: will he recognize that eliminating chiropractic care is short-sighted, won't save money, and in the end will cost the health care system more money?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, as we go in through the budget cycle and the budget process, difficult decisions had to be made. Our government made those difficult decisions. One of the decisions was to no longer subsidize . . . It wasn't an insured service, so when the member opposite says de-insure, that's incorrect. As we've heard from many other statements in the last day, some inaccuracies.

It was a subsidized service, Mr. Speaker. It will no longer be subsidized for the general population. We are coming into line with three other prairie provinces, Mr. Speaker. Alberta, Manitoba . . . Alberta, British Columbia, and Saskatchewan are covering for low-income, Mr. Speaker. There's only one province that now subsidizes for 12 visits, that's Manitoba. Nine other provinces and territories do not cover any sort of chiropractic service, Mr. Speaker. It was a tough decision but it was a decision our government made.

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

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure the over 22,000 people who signed the petitions asking for this not to be done really don't care about the semantics that the minister is worried about.

Mr. Speaker, the implementation date of April 1st is absurd. Chiropractors have contracts for services with SGI

[Saskatchewan Government Insurance], WCB [Workers' Compensation Board], and private insurance companies that will now need to be renegotiated. It's obvious the government hasn't thought this through. In less than a week, in less than a week chiropractic care will be de-insured and chiropractors don't know if they will be able to refer patients for X-rays or to specialists or even have time enough to notify patients who won't be able to pay when they come.

To the minister, Mr. Speaker: after April 1st will chiropractors be able to refer patients for X-rays and to specialists?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, as I said in my previous answer, chiropractic services are subsidized by the Government of Saskatchewan, were subsidized. They still are for low-income. It is not an insured service. I'm not sure if the member understands insured services and non-insured services. This is a non-insured service, Mr. Speaker, that we covered a portion of, Mr. Speaker. And if you look over years, for a number of years, it has been gradually, the proportion that patients had to pay has gradually been increasing.

In fact, under the NDP government at one point, it was completely covered by government and then they moved to only subsidize a part of it, Mr. Speaker. And we've seen across the country and province after province moving away from that subsidy. Mr. Speaker, we are no different, but we are covering for low-income. In other words, 43,000 people in Saskatchewan are eligible for these services and will be covered by this government, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, the minister didn't even answer the question, didn't even come close. The government knew for months that they were going to de-insure chiropractic care, but instead they chose to leave patients and chiropractors hanging out to dry wondering can they refer to X-rays, can they refer to specialists, will they have to pay the moment they come next week.

For the government to negotiate for months, knowing full well they would not sign the agreement, is shameful. Where is the honour in bargaining? There is none. Now the government is giving chiropractors and their patients less than a week to transition into this new system. Mr. Speaker, to the minister: will the minister at least move the implementation date to July 1st and give chiropractors and their patients time to adjust to this horrific and devastating decision?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, as I said, the subsidy that was put into patients' visits for chiropractors was about a \$12 subsidy per visit and it was unlimited, Mr. Speaker. Now we're covering for low-income up to 12 visits a year, Mr. Speaker.

It was interesting when the chiropractors were here, and they cited two examples of people that were going to be affected by

this program if we de-insured . . . or didn't subsidize, we didn't subsidize, Mr. Speaker. Those people are covered under our program, Mr. Speaker. The only thing that is changed is the subsidy. If chiropractors were referring in the past, as far I understand, Mr. Speaker, that has not changed at all.

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

Selection of a Chief Electoral Officer

Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier refused to hold a public inquiry into the Sask Party caucus rejection of the chosen candidate by a bipartisan committee for the position of Chief Electoral Officer. To the Premier: why is he afraid the public will find out?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read from *The Election Act* section 4(3), "The Chief Electoral Officer shall be appointed by resolution of the Assembly." Mr. Speaker, we should have a candidate that will pass the resolution of the Assembly when one is brought forward. It is not, Mr. Speaker, the choice of the committee. It is not the choice of the Board of Internal Economy. It is not the choice of the opposition. It is not the choice of the government members. It is not the choice of the media. It is the choice of all of the members of this Assembly.

The role of that committee, Mr. Speaker, is to do nothing more than to try and facilitate a pre-selection process, to bring forward some recommendations. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm quite willing to work with the members opposite to try and get that process back on track and to try and come up with an acceptable resolution.

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

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's a process in place to hire a Chief Electoral Officer and that process was followed. A March 24th *StarPhoenix* article states, ". . . the premier has the duty to either accept the results of that process or make it absolutely clear why he would allow his caucus to throw it out."

To the Premier: since the Premier's refusing to accept the choice of a bipartisan committee, will he make it absolutely clear to the public and the members of the legislature why he's rejecting the chosen candidate?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, we have answered the question.

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

Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, I beg to differ. Mr. Speaker, to have the Premier throw out the choice of a bipartisan committee and appoint someone he wants throws suspicion on the

bipartisan nature of the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer. The March 24th *StarPhoenix* article states, “Not only does it harm the office of this most critical public servant, it also throws into question Saskatchewan’s democratic process.”

To the Premier: is he going to cast suspicions on not only the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer but Saskatchewan’s whole election process to fulfill his agenda?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, we have provided answers to the question. We stand ready and willing to work with the opposition to try and come up with an acceptable candidate.

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

Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, my learned friend the Attorney General endorsed the chosen candidate, calling him “ideal.” To have the Premier to use his caucus to reject him without providing reasons leaves the impression that, to quote *The StarPhoenix*, “. . . the only reason the Saskatchewan Party would refuse his appointment would be an effort to gerrymander the electoral boundaries or to subvert the electoral process by stacking the office.”

To the Premier: which is it?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, it is essential that we have a fair, impartial and apolitical process in place. Mr. Speaker . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, we will do everything we can to assist in a fair, appropriate, and apolitical selection.

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

Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, *The StarPhoenix* also said, and I quote:

If Mr. Wall and Mr. Morgan believe that the process of choosing non-partisan officers of the assembly is flawed, they should change the system. That shouldn’t be done in midstream, however, after one officer — the one responsible to ensure the most fundamental operation of a democracy — has already been chosen.

Mr. Speaker, why is the minister and the Premier trying to change this process to suit their own agenda?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

[11:00]

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, this is a process that affects 58 MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly]. It

affects the public, Mr. Speaker.

[Interjections]

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, it says simply in the Act, the Chief Electoral Officer shall be appointed by resolution of the Assembly. Mr. Speaker, this side of the House will not allow itself to be hijacked by that side of the House, Mr. Speaker. We will ensure that we have a fair, appropriate, and impartial process that will take place so that we have a Chief Electoral Officer in place before the next election that will enjoy the confidence of this House and of the public of the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. D’Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

The Speaker: — I would ask the Government House Leader to state his point of order.

POINTS OF ORDER

Mr. D’Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, after listening to your ruling today on points of order, I would like to point out that during question period the member from Regina Rosemont impugned the honour of the Premier by stating a Premier you could not trust. I would ask that that member opposite withdraw that remark and apologize.

[Interjections]

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

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. If you listen very carefully to the words from the member from Regina Rosemont, he stated that the budget could not be trusted, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, I think you need to review the words very, very carefully about what the member said and the context in which it was said. And I think that you will find that it will be a point of order not well taken.

The Speaker: — I’ve heard the point of order and the remarks from the Opposition House Leader. And given the nature in which the point of order was raised, I would like to review *Hansard* to ensure that I have accurately commented in regards to the point of order.

The Opposition House Leader, why is he on his feet?

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise on a point of order.

The Speaker: — I would ask the Opposition House Leader to state his point of order.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. During

question period today, when the Premier rose to respond to questions from the Opposition Leader, he commented that those . . . the answers provided by . . . or pardon me, the questions and the statements by the Leader of the Opposition were not the truth, Mr. Speaker. You cannot say indirectly what you cannot say directly, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like you to review the *Hansard* carefully to rule whether or not the Premier, just minutes after he rose in this House to apologize for the very same thing, once again broke the rules of order.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the point of order, Mr. Speaker, the . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. I would ask the members to allow, I would ask the members to allow the Government House Leader to respond to the point of order.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Premier was not inferring that the Leader of the Official Opposition was not being truthful, but that the facts that the member was quoting were not the truth, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Order, members. Order, members. In regards to the point of order, I will again do the same thing. I will review *Hansard* to make sure that the ruling is accurate in regards to the point of order that was raised.

I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, when the Government House Leader rose yesterday in response to a point of order that I raised, he once again created a point . . . broke the rules, Mr. Speaker, when he maligned the character of the Leader of the Opposition by stating that it was common knowledge that he was under investigation, Mr. Speaker, a fact that is not the truth, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, in a response to a point of order, you cannot, cannot, repeat, Mr. Speaker, maligning a member of this Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On that point of order I believe the word was “was” under investigation, not “is” under investigation, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the Official Opposition was investigated both by his own party, Mr. Speaker, and by the police, Mr. Speaker.

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I believe members . . . Earlier today the Speaker made a statement about comments in regards to members and how the members should weigh their statements. Here again I will review *Hansard* and will appropriately respond to the points of order.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to order the answers . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. I would ask members to come to order. Members are aware of the rules that when the . . . Order. Members are aware of the fact that when the Speaker is on his feet members are to be quiet.

I recognize the Government Whip, and I would ask members for their attention so we can hear the response from the Government Whip and appropriately acknowledge written questions. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to order the answers to questions 971 through 1,009.

The Speaker: — Questions 971 through 1,009 are ordered.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATE

MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Gantfoer that the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.]

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure and an honour to rise in the Assembly to respond to the budget. And I want to say to the . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. I find it disheartening that when the Leader of the Opposition's trying to speak we have such disorder and mainly from his own benches. I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for helping me out. I appreciate that very much. It is indeed an honour and a privilege to be here in the Assembly leading a party that is historic in this province and one that has a record of financial competence, a record of introduction of medicare right in this very Assembly — great leaders like Tommy Douglas, Al Blakeney, Woodrow Lloyd, Lorne Calvert, Roy Romanow. And to be here leading this party is a great honour for me, and I want to say thank you to the party that I represent for giving me this exceptional honour.

I want to say as well that leading this group of men and women, the 20 MLAs, the 19 besides myself who make up this team of New Democratic MLAs, I just want to say thank you to them as well for coming together in an amazing way over the last few

months to become a very, very enjoyable group of people to work with. But more importantly than that, a group of people who work tirelessly every day, every day to represent the people in their constituencies. But not only that, working all over the province, weekends, holidays, to make sure that the ideas and the principles that the New Democratic Party stand for are well established throughout the province. And I just want to say publicly, thank you to each and every one of you.

I want also to recognize my family — my wife Rubiela and my children who put up with me and allow me to do this job. Because as all members of the Assembly know, this is not a job that is great for family life; you have to be away a lot. For younger members of my caucus who have children, they have to arrange child care. They do amazing things. I know the member from Riversdale, who has a small child, has to move the family during session and come down to Regina.

This is an exceptional job in many ways. And I just want to say thank you to my family for all the tolerance they have in allowing me to do this work on behalf of the people of the province and also to my extended family, my sisters in particular, who have been very instrumental in helping me get my political career going initially and then, after a small intermission, to allow to re-establish in politics.

And as I approach this budget, as I approach the budget, I also want to say thank you to the people in my former constituency of Shaunavon where I started my political career and where we still farm and have a home and spend our summers. And for my younger children, our two at home, spending their summers at the farm in Shaunavon is what I know they'll always remember. It's where they want to go on weekends. Great community. One of the best theatres, the Plaza Theatre in Shaunavon. Any of you have been there, it's one of the best and I think one of the oldest in Canada. It still gets first-run movies, any of you who are interested, because it was established by the Durham family, and their contract with the Plaza was that as long as the family owns the theatre, they will get first-run movies. And if you're booked up in Regina, coming to Shaunavon for a little break is a good place to go.

So it's an amazing process to be elected from that part of the province and then to have had the opportunity to run and win an election in Elphinstone. And I know the MLA from that area — I think he's been there for now three terms — is doing a wonderful job. I had the privilege of being elected there four times. It's a great constituency.

But there are not many people who get a chance to represent two different areas of the province in the budget when it's introduced, to represent the people from that area and now to represent the people from Douglas Park. Again, I want to speak on their behalf during this budget debate.

Mr. Speaker, I want to start my remarks on the budget by thanking the Minister of Finance because I've been in government and I've been deputy premier. And I know how much work goes into it on the physical side by a minister when they have to put together a budget document. And while I don't agree with many things in the budget, and I'm going to go into those in some detail, I do want to say thank you to him for the effort that he has put into the budget process. Because there's

no way that this individual hasn't spent many, many days and hours and weekends collaborating with his staff to put the budget together, and I want to thank him for that.

Having said that, I think it is a difficult process if you don't have the trust of a certain group of people in the process. You have to have trust from every level within your department and in the government to make this happen. And I know he does have a great staff over in Finance and CIC and the departments that bring forward ideas and concepts. Those men and women are doing the absolute best job they can do, and there are thousands of them involved in this process. I'm not sure what the level of the civil service is right now, but it's something over 10,000 I believe. Not everybody's involved, but it does affect every department when a budget is being put together. And a lot of work has been done.

But what we fear on this side of the House is in that process, and we watched it in the 1980s under the Devine administration, is that after the work is done and the plans are set in place and the ideas come forward, and I see this in other ministers' portfolios under this government, that the plans come forward — and we talked about it earlier, and we were asking questions in the House about when recommendations come from committees and they come forward — and then there's interference from the centre.

[11:15]

And in this case, I will say there's interference from the Premier's office and I believe there's interference in that process from the Premier himself. I think there is when it comes to the issue we were debating in question period. I don't think these ministers put together bad plans. Some may argue, even in my own caucus, that it is the Minister of Finance who is the culprit in this bad budget. My view is it is not his responsibility as to the parts I want to talk about. I think this comes from somewhere else.

I watched it in the Devine government, and this is where I get my background because there were two individuals in the Devine government who controlled everything in the first years. It was Grant Devine and Eric Berntson. And ministers, good ministers — Paul Schoenhals, Pat Smith, Gord Currie — I watched those people and they were strong ministers. And they did the best they could with their staff, and they would put together plans. And they would come up, and they would end up in the office of the premier of the day, Grant Devine, and they would end up in the office of Eric Berntson and they would be changed. And bad mistakes were made and the backbenchers of the day were told, you clap. No matter what is going on, just keep your mouth shut and clap. That's what they were told.

And I watched day after day as the deficits came and the members in the backbenches were told, you just clap. Don't think. Just clap and we'll take care. We're in the front benches. We'll look after you. You guys, you have a different . . . Yours is to hold the bench down so it doesn't fly around in this room. And I remember that rumour coming to me from backbenchers who were told that in their caucus meeting. That's what they told me.

And the decisions were made by two people. And the advice of the professional people, the thousands of men and women who do the work because those two individuals said, we don't believe in government; government is bad. Where we are is the politicians who were elected finally kicking out that socialist horde of the Blakeney administration. Eric Berntson and Grant Devine will make the decisions from now on. That's what they were told, and some backbenchers told me that. And I see it happening again. I see it happening again and I think that we shouldn't let it happen.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to arranging budgets, it is important that every member of the legislature — not the leaders — have an opinion and have a say in what happens. And when you come to the issue of chiropractic services in this province, I know there are many members on that side of the House who have been lobbied by individuals and by the profession to see that that cut wasn't made. And those members caved when it came to the Minister of Health coming from the Premier's office that it should be cut.

Because the staff . . . I know what the staff would have said in the Department of Health. They would have recommended against it. Do you know how I know that? Because the Department of Health, it is going to cost money. Why? Because last year 125,000 people used the services of the chiropractic profession in this province, 125,000 people. Many of them now will not be able to afford or will not go to that service but will go to their family doctor.

What is the subsidy for the chiropractors now, Judy? What is the . . .

An Hon. Member: — Ten million.

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Ten million, but per person?

An Hon. Member: — Twelve dollars.

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Twelve dollars. So that's the cost to the taxpayers as a whole, \$12. Now if that individual doesn't go there and goes to see the family doctor, the charge is 40 or \$50. Now it doesn't take a rocket science, and I know that many of the members in the backbenches know this. And they know that the 10 million won't be saved. It will be saved in this column, but the health budget will go up by 20 or \$30 million.

I know this because in 1991, after the terrible mess of the Devine government, we had to look at these kind of tough decisions. We had to cut things. And we looked at this very issue. And do you know what? We came to the conclusion that we would be worse off financially if we cut that \$10 million out, and the debt would actually grow.

And many of the members in the backbenches know that. But they sit quietly because the Premier and the member from Kindersley have taken them to these great heights. And they claimed that they were the reason that they won the last election. And if we listen to you backbenchers, we're going to lose the next election. So just be quiet. We'll call the shots, and we'll make the decisions. Your job is to pound the desk when our ministers get up to speak.

But I, one thing that I've noticed in the last little while — and this is a true story, and many of us watch from over here — that back two rows have gone quiet. They've gone quiet. They're rather bored, they say. That could be. They could be bored, might be bored. But I don't think it's boredom in question period. I think you're listening, and when we talk about issues, many of you say, that's exactly the point I was making in caucus. That's what they say. That's what they say on some of these cuts. I know that. I know that.

And now, I know that what the members will be told, this is what the members will be told. I know what they're going to be told at the next caucus meeting: look, you guys back there who are sitting quiet — the member from P.A. Carlton, he will be told, and the other members in the backbenches — look, you're not cheering enough. And I want you to start cheering again. That's what they'll be told. And I know that. Because this is the cycle that happened, this is the cycle that happened under the Devine administration.

But this, Mr. Speaker, my warning to those members of their caucus, and my own caucus, never let your standards — when it comes to speaking out and arguing and debating in your caucus — go silent. Never quit thinking. Never quit putting ideas forward and never expect or accept less than what you need for your people who you represent. That's what you need to do. Because at the end of the day, you're responsible to your constituents, not to the Premier and certainly not to the member from Kindersley, certainly not to the member from Kindersley. Remember, he's the guy that tried to talk you into \$3 billion from potash last year. That's what he told you in the backbenches when the argument was this: the number from Finance was something very different last year. It wasn't 1.9 billion and it certainly wasn't 3 billion. It was something different. It may have been higher than what the number ended up because I think there was an element of surprise in the potash revenue and production. But no one in their right mind would have thought about \$3 billion from potash.

So the number came from Finance, and the minister from Kindersley said, that's wrong. It's \$3 billion. Forget what those professionals over there say, it's 3 billion. And the Premier said, we'll I've got two numbers here — I've got the professional number and I've got one from my political whiz kid, the member from Kindersley — and I've got to balance somewhere between. So he didn't take the 3 billion. He didn't take the professional number. And he took 1.9 billion. Then they told that number to you folks, and you bought it, and you shouldn't have.

Because any of you who can read, if you read *The New York Times* — and all of you have it online — you will know that at the very moment during the budget debate last year where that number was being used, ships were lined up in Shanghai and China, and they couldn't unload because the financial circumstances and the worldwide recession were everywhere. And 90 per cent of what we produce in this province — 85, 90 per cent — is exported. And if you're exporting it into a world ravaged by recession, how does the Premier get up in his place and say, we'll be unaffected by the recession? That doesn't seem to add up.

So come to the point. We are now on a budget that isn't any

more believable, no more believable than the one we heard at this time last year. No more believable. And why isn't it believable? Because it's being crafted in the same way. This is not a budget that is coming from the professional people in the various departments. They would have had a lot of work to do putting numbers together, bringing it to the cabinet planning. And then two individuals would have called the shot — the Premier and the member from Kindersley.

And the problem is that if you don't get a handle on that, there will be a crash in the government's ranks. I watched it happen when Eric Berntson . . . Finally people started questioning on the privatization of SaskEnergy when they quit believing what he was saying. And Grant Schmidt came in, and they took over that political . . . It was the end of the Conservative Party of Saskatchewan. That was the end. And it could have been, it could've been salvaged if the members of their party had taken bigger control and greater control in making the decisions.

And I say this to my own caucus: never give away the power you have as an MLA to someone else. That's a very, very important lesson to learn.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about a number of the substantive issues in the budget. This budget, the way it is crafted, is a jumble of numbers that are not well thought out. There is no need that we as a province are in this predicament. *The Globe and Mail* that was quoted this morning, the editorial that said, "Saskatchewan is the only jurisdiction to see a cut in their spending." They didn't look back for the previous two years because what they would have seen is that in the first two years there was a 32 per cent increase in spending, in the first two years, and then a one and a half per cent cut in this year.

And if you would've looked at the three-year period for all the provinces across Canada, you would see that Saskatchewan was the highest spending province of any jurisdiction in Canada over that three-year period. Because budgets aren't done in silos one year at a time, and the last one is forgotten about and the next one isn't thought of. And I understand why this government would like to forget about the last one. I would like to forget about it too and so would the taxpayers of this province because it added a lot to the debt, and it led directly to what we're facing today.

Now the question is, are the two people calling the shots about budgets experts on doing budgets in their personal life or in their business life? And I would question whether or not they have the experience and should be given the authority within the caucus or within the government to make those kind of decisions.

And Al Blakeney taught me one thing about governing. He made it very clear. When he saw politicians dabbling in the interest and decisions of the work of the deputy, he would say to the politician at the cabinet table . . . And I can't quote because I would be releasing secrets. But he made it public in speeches he gave that when he saw a minister dabbling and acting like a deputy minister, he would tell that minister, look, if you don't want to be the minister and you want to be the deputy, resign as minister. Go put your name in and apply for the job, and then you can be the deputy minister. That's what he said.

And I also heard him talk about deputy ministers who pretended they were politicians. He would say to his deputy — because of course the Premier appoints all the deputies — he would say to that deputy, if you want to be a minister, get out of that job, put your name on a ballot, and come through that door. But don't try to say, I'm the minister but I want to be the deputy. Because quite honestly, when you're elected as premier, you're not the deputy. You're not the administrator of the department largely because you don't know how to do it.

And I don't say this critically of this Premier. I say it of any premier or members of this group who will be premier some day. That's the role of your experts. Just as a CEO in a company has to believe in and trust your vice-presidents, your senior vice-presidents. And when you don't — get rid of them. Put someone in who is professional. But don't try to do their work. Trust them, believe in them. Because when the day comes that you don't trust any of your staff, you're finished.

[11:30]

I have read a lot about a special president in the United States, Ronald Reagan, and I've talked about him before. I don't think he was the brightest president in the United States — he was Republican, one of the reasons — but the fact is, he was very good at one thing. In fact the fact that he understood himself and knew he wasn't the most brilliant person in the world, he assembled around him very brilliant people. They were wrong politically from my thinking because they were Republican, but in terms of a strategy, he knew what he had to do. And I'm not saying he wasn't brilliant; he was in his own way. But he understood that his weaknesses he had to make up in another way, and that was by putting around him the brightest people from all over the United States. And he did it impeccably, and he was a very popular president.

My advice is that this government is not listening to the brightest people around them. What they are doing is, they don't trust the brightest people. Maybe they think they're politically in the Liberal Party or the Green Party or the NDP, but they really believe that government has to be of their ilk. And that is just wrong. It's wrong politically, and it's wrong economically because that is how you get to the point of making big mistakes.

And I hear them — the Minister of Health yelling from his seat that, what do I know about government? But I understand that I know as much as he does, I hope, or I've got some big problems.

But I want to say that it is very, very important, but I want to say that this lesson I learned from Al Blakeney has stuck with me. And I know that if I ever get the honour of sitting in the premier's chair, it will be one of the lessons, one of the many lessons I've learned from one of our leaders.

And the beauty of our movement and party is that we have leaders we can hold up on pedestals and understand and be very, very proud of. Whether it's Tommy Douglas or Woodrow or Al Blakeney or Roy or Lorne, they are people we believe in and trust. Now that is important. And at our convention this weekend, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at our convention this weekend, I think and hope the three former premiers will be there. I don't

know if they'll be able to make it, but nothing would make me more proud than to have our three former premiers come to the convention where we're meeting this weekend in Prince Albert.

Now I think I understand why at the convention of the Sask Party a few weeks ago there were no profiling of previous leaders. I think I know why. I didn't hear from Mr. Hermanson. Or Dick . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well they laugh about Hermanson. I don't know why. I don't know why. Elwin Hermanson was a credible individual. His mistake was he told . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Now they're laughing at Rick Swenson. This is what they do with their former . . . That's what they do with their former members. They laugh at them. I don't understand it.

An Hon. Member: — Where was Dick Collver?

Mr. Lingenfelter: — And I didn't see Dick Collver at the convention. Dick Collver is down in Arizona. I didn't see Grant Devine. I didn't see Grant Devine. I didn't see any of the leaders . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well you saw Lorne Scott. Good. That's excellent. But none of the leaders of their party, of their great party, the Sask Party, no former leaders were invited. And I think I know why. But that's a difference between our two parties. It's a very big difference. Theirs is a party with no history, very little at present and I guarantee you no future in this province after the next election.

Mr. Speaker, I said yesterday that you can't trust this budget. And I want to make it clear I'm not talking about the Premier. I'm talking about the budget. You can't trust the budget. You can't trust the budget because it's brought to you by the same people who brought you last year's budget. That's why. And the people know that. And they know the mistakes that were made in last year's budget. Much of it was intentional. It was a sleight of hand, a sleight of hand to try to trick the public.

Now this year they've said, okay, now we got the numbers right. We're putting in \$78 for oil. We're putting in \$4 for gas. Now we got the numbers straight. And I think they're close. But where is the sleight of hand in this year's budget?

Well we're going to change the accounting system. That's what we're going to do this year. We're going to change the accounting system. Now if you're going to change an accounting system, there's a way to do it. Often in companies, from time to time, they change their accounting system, and that's no problem. What you do when you change your accounting system, you hire experts. You bring them in. You have committees set up. In this case, there should have been a committee of the Legislative Assembly. You study it. You analyze it. You work on it. And then at the end of the day, if there's a vote on it, then you pass a new accounting system. And there's nothing wrong with that, nothing wrong with it at all.

But when you try to slip it in without talking about anybody, not talking to the experts, not having a committee of the Legislative Assembly, and you balance your budget by changing the accounting system, that's not the right way to do that. And many of you know that. Many of you know that.

So the sleight of hand is not the numbers on the resources this

year. The sleight of hand is in the accounting system. But whereas last year it took us six months to understand and to get out to the public the sleight of hand, this year it took 20 minutes, 20 minutes. Everybody's talking about it. Everybody's talking about it. I had many calls this morning saying, why don't they just admit they have a deficit? Why don't they just say it? They would feel better, and they wouldn't have to go through all this turmoil.

It's like last year's budget. Someone said to me that last year's budget, it was like a movie. They said — the Minister of Education would know — it's like a movie. They said it was like *Dumb and Dumber* because the two people who are arranging the budget. They said it is like an old movie. Yes, it's an old movie. It's from back in the Devine era. That's why they made the association. I'm glad the Minister of Education understands that because he doesn't have many friends these days. So he's more comfortable here with us yelling at him than he is out there with the teachers.

Another member of my staff said the budget isn't like *Dumb and Dumber*. It's like the *Trailer Park Boys*. And I don't know which of the two it is, but it is a problem budget. It's problem budget for the people of the province because it's being put together . . . Well, Mr. Speaker, the member from Moose Jaw North is finally speaking, finally giving us a little speech from his chair and . . .

[Interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. The conversations are getting quite loud. I'm having trouble hearing the speaker that has the floor. I will recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Lingenfelter: — As I said, the deficit is \$622 million. By their own document . . . I have it here somewhere. Yes, here it is right here. The document is called the financial highlights of the 2010-11 budget, dated March 24 — that was yesterday — 2010. And if you go down the sheet, you go through all the numbers — revenue, expenses, GRF surplus, CIC board organizations — then you come to a line that says summary deficit in brackets, surplus, no brackets. And then a number — yes, it's in brackets — that means it's a deficit, \$622.7 million. This is their document, your document.

And then the minister . . . The one thing, I'll give the minister credit; he kept a straight face when he said there was a surplus. There's a shot of the minister in *The Globe and Mail* today wiping the sweat off his brow. And I understand it's a tough job because if I was taking my direction from that Premier, I'd be sweating as well. So I don't think he wants to do it. I don't think he wants to do it. I don't blame the minister. I don't think this is his budget. I put it squarely on the shoulders of the Premier and the member from Kindersley because that's who's calling the shots in this group.

Now where are the big mistakes and glaring errors in the budget? I just want to touch on a few because I know that . . . The detail of the budget I'm going to leave up to my members of the caucus who are shadowing these items, and they do a good job. So I know I don't have to go through the detail. But there are a few places I do want to highlight.

One of them is health, and health because . . . I'll start there because it's the biggest issue in the province. In many communities — whether Canora or Nipawin or Shaunavon or Leader or Swift Current — it is the biggest issue. And why is it the biggest issue? One of the reasons is because of promise made — promise made by the Premier — by the now Premier. And I'll use his own example of waiting lists in his own riding because he doesn't know of them. He doesn't have a clue.

I use those as an example because he will know that he promised, he made a big promise about health care in rural Saskatchewan. The promise was that he was going to fix waiting lists. And then he was going to get doctors into rural areas. This is the Premier, the member from Swift Current. He said he was going to fix the doctor shortage in the province.

Now how has he done? Let's do a little report card. And I want to use his own area, Swift Current, as an example on waiting lists. Now let's have a look. In December of 2007, on the number of patients waiting — this is from one of their documents, I believe — the number of people waiting was 861. Eight hundred and sixty one. This is in Swift Current. It was in the Premier's riding. Now how much is it up? How much is it up . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . No, not 15. Ninety per cent, it's up 90 per cent, the waiting list, up 90 per cent. That's what it's up. And he says, this is a promise he made. He made the promise that he was going to end the waiting lists, or get them down at least. And what he has done is driven, in his own riding, in his own area, up 85 to 90 per cent. And that's a shame.

The other area was doctors. He was going to solve the doctor shortage. Now how are we doing there? Mr. Speaker, there is an increase, an increase of 50 per cent in the number of vacancies for doctors in this province. Now this is why people are upset with the Premier. And when you go and talk to them in rural Saskatchewan . . . It's not just health care workers. They're upset. I understand why. They're working harder and longer, and the waiting lists keep going up because they can't get enough staff. But they upset people the most who are on waiting lists, who can't get their family into institutions for treatment.

And what is the government's solution? Well let me tell you. What they're going to do is they're going to cut staff. Their solution is to cut staff. The population of the communities are growing. Needs are going up. Not enough staff in the hospitals, nursing homes, home care. Their solution, what's their solution? Cut staff.

Now how is it that the public of Saskatchewan, who are already upset because there's not enough service, how is it that the solution is to cut back on staff? Now if you ask the question — where you're going to cut? — is it in the Department of Health where 40 per cent of the employees are? They say oh no, it's not in Health. Well is it in Education? Oh no, it's not in Education. Is it in Highways where snow has to be removed or potholes filled? And Lord knows there's lots of potholes this spring on the roads of Saskatchewan. They say no. But the fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, if you're cutting staff in government, you're cutting programs. And waiting lists will grow even longer, and they will grow quickly. So let's make no mistake about it. The cut that they're talking about in staff in

government is cuts to programs.

I was talking to a surgeon one time who told me that one of the key shortages in his operation were people to clean the operating theatre because you need people to clean up after each operation because you have to have it clean so that infection and those things . . . And the surgeon said that that person who does that kind of work is every bit as important as the surgeon because if he does his surgery impeccably well and they get infection, it doesn't help very much. He said we may be in different pay scales and we may have different respect even in the community, but — the surgeon said to me — make no doubt in your mind that the person doing the cleaning in the surgical theatre is every bit as important as the surgeon.

[11:45]

And that's the mistake these people made because they look and they make their judgment based on income only or the political card that people carry. And that is a big mistake. So in the area of health we have a big problem.

The other area that we're not dealing with properly in this budget is cost of living, and I'll use a few examples. Students for example, the students in this province believe that the tuition fees shouldn't go up more than the rate of inflation which is probably one and a half or two per cent. And as a result of this budget, I would be surprised if tuition doesn't go up 4 or 5 per cent or double the rate of inflation — 100 per cent more than what it should be going up. And that is not good for students in this province.

The other thing is student housing. No announcement of increased student housing directly that will affect the problem students have coming into our cities to go to university or to technical school. We have the lowest per capita student housing in this province, where we have major universities, of any cities in Canada. And we need to fix that. Now people will say, well there needs to be more emphasis on it by your party as well. And I agree with that and we need to do more.

The other area is child care. Waiting lists at both our universities are well into the hundreds of people on waiting lists for child care, and there is nothing in this budget that deals directly with that. There's words but there's no direct program to deal with child care in our universities or at our technical schools, and we need to fix that.

The other issue is bursaries, and we need a much better program for bursaries in the province. There was a time when we had more students got bursaries than took student loans. That's now reversed. There are many more students having to take the student loan than are getting bursaries. And that needs to be addressed because one of the reasons that students are having a great, difficult time after they graduate . . . those who could make it through. Many of them do. They work hard. They get the job done. But the problem is their student loan, they simply can't afford it, especially those who start out on relatively low pay for their first few years. And we need to do something to pitch in and give those graduating students a hand.

I want to say again in the area of cost of living, utilities, what can I say? The fact that they're taking all of the profits out of

the major Crowns with the exception of SaskPower will mean that rates will increase much faster than the rate of inflation. Everything that SaskTel does this year in terms of construction or building cell towers will have to be borrowed. The money will have to be borrowed because all of the profits went to this government's debt problem — a problem created in last year and the year before in those budgets, stripped away. And this will only mean utility rates will go up even faster.

So what the people of the province have to know is that every increase that's applied for and granted by this government going forward, they can look to this budget and say this was a plan that this Premier and these ministers put in place that affect their cost of living.

In terms of rent, my colleagues have talked about options we're considering in the New Democratic Party as we do our policy renewal around rent. We're looking at all options, and we're considering everything from rent control to social housing to help alleviate that problem, not only in our great cities but in our communities across the province. And we'll fix that.

The other area that I want to talk about for a moment is the issue of environment. And if there was a great disappointment for members in our caucus, it was that the environment is absolutely pushed to the bottom, off the table, is not to be talked about. The only thing I ever hear the members talk about in terms of environment is a project called sequestration at Weyburn. And they go around the world. They talk about and give speeches. And I don't doubt why they're doing it because it is a world-class operation, but the difference is they had nothing to do with creating it.

I know why they're proud of it. But the fact of the matter is it was an arrangement done between the Government of North Dakota — Beulah, North Dakota where the coal gasification plant is — the Alberta Energy Company, which was a Crown corporation out of Alberta, and the Government of Saskatchewan. Three governments got together to create a situation to bring the CO₂ from Beulah, North Dakota across the border. I was there when we did the agreement of the interchange because it was a big issue. We had to apply to the International Joint Commission to get a permit to bring CO₂ pipeline across the border.

We signed the deal, we did the deal with Alberta Energy into the Weyburn oil field, and we started injecting CO₂. And it was the first one in the world that was done on a commercial basis. And the people who were involved from Alberta, North Dakota, and Saskatchewan should be proud of that because it's still held out as a world-recognized sequestration program.

But I might add, has nothing to do with the Sask Party or the member from Swift Current. The now Premier had nothing to do with it. They like it, they like to give speeches about it, but like many things, they had nothing to do with it. It's the same on oil royalties. On the energy side when it comes to energy policy I was to . . . I was invited by John Lau and his wife Heather to come to the sod-turning of the new office building in Lloydminster a couple of weeks ago. And while I was there, the president and CEO, John Lau said, I want to say one thing where I give the Premier credit — that he didn't change the royalties that were put in place by the NDP government. That's

what he said.

So on the issue of energy and royalties, I think we have a pretty good track record on environment as it relates to sequestration. I think we were world leaders. But I think there's a lot more to do, a lot more to do.

The other thing the Premier said while he was . . . The other thing the Premier said, the other thing the Premier said about oil and oil production, he said about oil and oil production, he's been going around the province saying how we're going to take over from Alberta in oil production. Well he says it differently. He twists it in a political way to make it sound like it's oil production. And the fact of the matter is that the oil production in Saskatchewan has been virtually flat since 2001.

Do members on the opposition benches know what the oil production is in Saskatchewan or what it was in 2001? Well no, I have a statistic here that I need to read to you because the oil production in Saskatchewan has stayed around 423,000 barrels a day, absolutely flat, varying a few thousand barrels a day, for the past 10 years — for 10 years. I don't know if the member from Meadow Lake knows that . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh, so he does know it's been flat . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . No, it hasn't. No, it hasn't. That's my point. No, no, it hasn't. No, it hasn't. This is my point, see, because you're in cabinet. You're in cabinet, and you should know and . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order. I'll ask the opposition benches to come to order. Order. I'm having a hard time hearing the speaker. I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, the member from Meadow Lake says that it's been going up, and what I thought was . . . This is what I thought when I started my speech, that the Premier and the member from Kindersley were spinning the backbenchers, but now I find they're also spinning the cabinet ministers. Now this really worries me. This really worries me because here are the numbers. Here are the Saskatchewan numbers. In 2001 the production per day in Saskatchewan was 426,000 barrels; in 2009 it was 423,000, a decrease, a decrease of 3,000 barrels a day.

Now how is it that the Premier, the Premier wanders the province, and how is it *The Globe and Mail* has a story today that oil is greasing the wheels of the Saskatchewan economy? Because the Premier's spinners have spun the eastern press that the oil production is going up like crazy. That's what's happening. That is funny. Now I understand how they can spin the press. I understand how they can spin the press, but it baffles me how they can spin the ministers of his own government. I don't get it.

Now all of the members of the opposition, I'll send this across to you, because oil production is the same as it was . . . Or the government. The members need to know that oil production is about the same as it was in 2001 because I think that you're being told something different. I think the member from Prince Albert Carlton, and I mean this sincerely, we need to know this because when the member from Kindersley, when the member from Kindersley told you that he was going to get 3 billion from potash, and you believed him, okay, you got tricked once. But

when he tells you oil's going up rapidly, and you get tricked again — come on, let's go. Let's get on with it. We're getting paid. Shut the movies off.

Go to the channels. Google oil production in Saskatchewan. Come on, let's do some work. It's time to go to work. There's work to do and you're part of it. You're not here to watch movies all day; you're to know the statistics on potash and oil and exports, not what the boys in the front, the two of them, the Premier and the member from Kindersley, tell you. You need to know the statistics and we do too. We all need to know because the public is depending on us. They're depending on us to know these facts and make the argument.

The one other area that I just want to touch on, and I wish I had more time because it's probably the most important for the future economy of Saskatchewan, that is the Aboriginal situation in this province. The Aboriginal people in this province will someday be the majority of the people in this province, and we need to do a better job as legislature in many, many ways. One of them is candidates. Both of the major political parties in this province have to do a better job of engaging First Nations and Métis people, Aboriginal people, in our parties. We need to get more nominated. We have to get them at our policy conventions. We have to include them in our policy renewal forum.

We need to get many, many more Aboriginal people involved. And not just, not just in this place but in many other, many other areas as well. But when I look at this budget, what is a great disappointment? That Aboriginal issues are not on the agenda in any meaningful way, any meaningful way, and they need to be put in place as soon as possible. And that's our responsibility as well.

The whole area of the North that is under so much stress and duress in this period, with the forestry industry in great, great demise and partly responsible to this government, partly responsible to the world economy and the North American economy — we're not doing enough as a society to deal with the issues in northern Saskatchewan. This is leading to some very, very drastic situations in families in northern Saskatchewan.

And I know my colleagues, the member from Athabasca and Cumberland, will deal with this, but I just want to add my voice to that plight in northern Saskatchewan. And again I'm not blaming this government, but their problem is, they haven't made it better. In fact they're making it worse. That's what I'm worried about.

And when I look at the money that's being taken out of some of the programs in northern Saskatchewan, it is not a good thing to be doing and it's not the right thing to be doing. And I think we have to have a long debate in this Assembly about what we're doing on Aboriginal issues and issues in northern Saskatchewan.

And I, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to say a few more words and then I'm going to take my place, but I do want to say to members of the government that — and the legislature and people who might be listening to this — that there is an issue of trust that is needed to be dealt with in this budget by this

government as well.

Because before he got elected Premier of the province, the member from Swift Current promised many things. He promised to fix waiting lists in the province and they have gone up in his own area, as I said, by 90 per cent.

He promised to fix the doctor issue, rural doctors especially, and the vacancy numbers on doctors in this province has increased by 50 per cent in two years. He said no promise to cut out chiropractic services. There was no promise made to do that, and there's a trust broken on that because there was a trust made that he wouldn't be doing that, and plus there is no need to do it. There's not an economic reason and he needs to fix that. The public deserve that.

[12:00]

In the area of agriculture, there was a trust broken that they would look after the interests of agriculture. And we see a cut in this budget of \$93 million, \$93 million.

There was a trust built on not privatizing Crown corporations and we've seen privatization like never before. Many areas, including in this budget — and we will deal with them — are being privatized. This one area I will give credit to Grant Devine and Elwin Hermanson is at least they had the courage of their conviction to state what their intent was on privatization. And we had a wonderful debate; we had a very large debate.

This government, by the stroke of a pen, with the power plant at North Battleford, a gas-fired generator that SaskPower knows how to do in their sleep, was signed by this government and privatized with one fell swoop — 8 per cent of SaskPower, 8 per cent. No debate, no discussion. Broke a promise where he promised he would not privatize — 8 per cent of SaskPower.

He's broken a trust with the workers of this province, with the workers. Pardon me, maybe he didn't. If I remember right, he did promise to go to war with the workers of the province. That's the one promise he's kept. We are at war with the working people of Saskatchewan.

The sad part is that the health care workers in this province who are without a contract for two years, the people he's gone to war with, are 75 per cent women. Seventy-five per cent of that union are women. And the member from Big Muddy laughs. He sits in his chair and laughs and figure out who he's going to fire. He sends the signal out he's going to fire a lot of the civil servants. And he sits there in his chair and he laughs like that, like a bully he is.

But I'll tell you this. I'll tell you this, that you may be able to bully us in here. We can handle ourselves. I'm not worried about the attempts to bully the NDP. I can handle that. But what irritates us to no extent is the bullying of the unions who are working in the health care system, 80 per cent who are women. When they come to this building, they slam the doors and try to lock them out. They don't give them the respect.

And the home care workers who are being told that they need to sign a contract where they will be on standby for 12 hours to get paid for 8 — there is no need for that. When they're told that

they have to work at multiple sites in order to earn a living of \$17 an hour or \$18 an hour. That would mean you're not on the job in Shaunavon but you have to go to Eastend when they tell you to, and you have to pay your own way. Or you may have to go to Gull Lake. That is not fair. It doesn't show respect. And how are you going to get workers in that program with that kind of an attitude? As the Saskatchewan Medical Association says, rural doctor shortage is at a crisis level and something must be done immediately.

These are broken promises and I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that we are very much opposed to many of the things that are being done in this budget.

And I want to . . . My last word, and I'm going to quote from John Ibbitson, one of the many conservative columnists. This is a conservative columnist who writes in *The Globe and Mail*. Now he's referring to the Conservative government in Ottawa in this case, but he could have been talking about this conservative government, this Sask Party government. And here's what he said, "There's a lot to be said for open, honest and gimmick-free government. The Conservatives should try it some time."

I give the same advice to this government.

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

Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure and honour again to, of course, stand in this House and be able to take part in a debate of the budget as we do with throne speeches as well. And I'm very proud to be the member who seconded this year's budget, and rightfully so because it's a forward-thinking budget. It moves us into the future. And the big part of my future, of course, are my two lovely daughters Alyssa and Mackenzie.

And I have to, I want to thank all the ministers and the entire caucus who looked at this year's budget through some very tough times, and focused on the future — the future of our children, the future of those who are currently in school who will be able to form our province's future, be able to develop our strong work ethic. And this budget shapes that going on forward, Mr. Speaker. So I'm very proud of that work they've done.

I'm very proud of the Premier and the Finance minister for leadership they've shown under these times, that Saskatchewan weather that recession, the worldwide recession, quite well. We've got . . . Numerous independent forecasters are predicting that we will do very well in '10-11. And I want to thank the Premier and the Finance minister for their stewardship and leadership with this great caucus.

I also want to thank my wife Charlene, of course, for sticking by me. It's very tough, like the Leader of the Opposition said. There's a lot of time we're away from home and most of us have to travel for other reasons as well. So our spouses are the ones that have kept the home fires burning and they take care of the issues around home — small things like paying the bills, taking the kids to practices, to different school functions after hours as well. So I want to thank her for that.

I also want to thank the Premier's wife because she reaches out to all the spouses at different times throughout the year, not just at convention. And she asks and checks on how things are going back home because, of course, we all know that she does the same as they all do. They've got three young children who are very active in the community and sporting events and school, and she has to be home to ensure they get to all the functions. And she's the one that checks homework in the evening whenever the Premier's not home as well. So she understands. She gets it. So I want to thank her as well for that.

Today I just want to start off I guess with using the quote that the Minister of Finance did during question period from *The Globe and Mail*. And I want to quote, it says:

Amid the ruin that has devastated most governments' balance sheets, Saskatchewan stands as a beacon of light, tabling another balanced budget yesterday . . . what is encouraging about this budget is that the government has taken a pre-emptive stab at spending cuts, although times there are relatively good. Other jurisdictions could stand to learn from its example.

Well you know what, Mr. Speaker, it's one of those kind of things that happens that . . . removed from Saskatchewan and a province that we understand has a massive deficit budget. And like other jurisdictions in this country, Manitoba just tabled their budget and they've had to change their legislation to allow for that to happen because it's a deficit budget moving forward for a four-year projection, I understand.

So we've done quite well in Saskatchewan. Notwithstanding it's not just because of government, for sure, to be sure in that. It's because of the industry leaders, people in the mining sector, the people who've put their blood, sweat, and tears into this province throughout the years developing small businesses and large alike. It's the men and women on the farm, the family farm, who stick with that and they persevere through times good and bad, and we have to thank them as well.

My only experience on a farm was when I was about 12 years old. I had to go and help my uncle and my cousins herd a bunch of cattle for a couple of weeks. So I'm by no means an expert in agriculture or the farming economy, but I know that I have uncles who've farmed and who've ranched and they have done very well. And they've also had to tighten their belts as well during the bad times. So they get it as well.

My heart goes out to all farmer families because that's very unpredictable. Mother nature rules as do world economy market prices, so they stick to it . . . [inaudible] . . . came and they're doing their thing then, and they're still doing it now with the families who've stuck around. The legacy continues. So thanks to them.

The issue within this province right now is that we have a base of economy that is driven by a number of things. But we also have to talk about the fact of what's happened the last couple of years. We've paid down \$2.6 billion in debt. Now as most of us would, I would think, when we have debt in our households, we wish to take care of that first because that lowers serving cost. It lets us have more money in our pockets in the long run.

And we've done that in this province in recent years. And because of that, our debt servicing costs are reduced. And that is something that the people of this province have told us, from near and far, that they're very proud of, that a government took the step. They had a surplus and, you know, notwithstanding the fact that it was there. We recognized there was a surplus left by the previous administration. And we used part of that surplus to pay down the debt and as well as looked at other means to do that. And we've put into legislation rules now that govern that. So any surpluses will go to the debt. Half goes to debt; half goes to the GFSF [Growth and Financial Security Fund]. So that's one of those things that a fiscally prudent, responsible, forwarding-looking government will do. And we've done that, Mr. Speaker.

The era of restraint though. We all recognize what happened in the world economies and how that's driven down market prices on lots of commodities. But when other provinces were looking at doing things differently, they went to deficit positions. And we've been quite blessed that we've had great officials, to be sure, that have supported and helped the ministers, but we've also had the leadership from the Premier looking at . . . We didn't want to be like anybody else. We want to be doing something different to set us apart from other premiers and other governments in Canada, and that's what we've done, Mr. Speaker. And we've done that solely looking within, for sure. We looked at reducing the size of government — the cost of government operations more importantly — to help us balance the budget, but also to make it sustainable moving forward.

To be sure we've had a great population increase in the last two years. That is, for the most part, we have also a great immigrant population that's moved to the province as well. So we've new citizens so we've done very well on that. They need to be supported, and government offices and operations will support them. And like I said yesterday, like was stated yesterday by the Minister of Finance, we have officials that will, and great civil servants who will still man the snowplows. They will be there during the tough times to ensure that services are rendered and provided to our citizens. And they are a very professional civil service, so we commend them as well for that. They understand this province. They're seeing the benefit of living in this province under a Saskatchewan Party government. People are coming. We're looking at the issue of . . . We have a bigger tax base than before.

We have a new . . . Across North America, Saskatchewan is being looked at, and even internationally — China, Japan, the Asian markets. When our ministers travel abroad, not just in North America but out of the country, they are told that their people are taking heed. They're looking at Saskatchewan as being a leader on so many different fronts. And part of that, to be sure, is a government who looks at removing barriers to growth.

We said we'd do that and we've started that process now. Over the last two and a half years things are going quite well. We're hearing from industry leaders that it's easier to come to Saskatchewan, do business, quicker to get businesses up and running, and for expansion as well. So we're very happy to be able to help those drivers of the economy.

It's not just the large businesses, but mom-and-pop operations,

those young entrepreneurs who are starting up in our province. The ones that hire three or four people at a time and help them get a foot up in their cities and buy homes and purchase goods and services, start their families and lay down roots. It's those small businesses along with the large that we have to thank as well.

The revenue that we forecasted of course, Mr. Speaker, is at 9.95 billion. The non-renewable revenues are expected to generate 2.1 billion, including 1.1 billion from oil and 221 million from potash. We looked at the leaders in industry. We took their word.

Our analysts in Finance comparatively looked at what's happening around the world, as well in the global markets. And we have for sure put in caution in this year's budget. Something to be very proud of as well, that we have looked at the chance of what could happen globally.

And to be sure there are some opportunities out there for higher speculation on the price of potash, price of oil. But a government of all political stripes will always take the prudent, cautious measures. And that's what we did this year, which is really important to do . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well the member from Saskatoon Meewasin says, not last year. Well I have to wonder what he has to think about the previous, when he was here, when they used economic measures and they put at risk and lost hundreds of millions of dollars across this province in businesses. So we did very well otherwise. Failed businesses, I might add.

So the General Revenue Fund surplus is forecast to be \$20 million which includes a transfer of, for sure, 194.2 million from the Growth and Financial Security Fund, the GFSF. This will still leave a balance of \$510.8 million in the GFSF, Mr. Speaker. Like all of us should be doing, we should all have money in our savings accounts for those things that come up — unexpected expenses. We need to have those available. Those funds have to be there.

And some of us for sure go to the bank, and we use the equity we've developed in our homes over the last two years in a great province and now we're getting some money back on those investments as well. Members on both sides of the House have investments. I understand that.

And everyone's doing very well because of that. So we sure as heck want to keep our savings account available for us, and it's there for unforeseen circumstances that happens. We use that as well to balance the budget for the GRF, Mr. Speaker. And that's again sound financial practices.

From the past as well, I might add, from the past as well, not just something the new Saskatchewan Party government who came to govern in 2007 has done. It's been done in the past. So we are still maintaining that focus going forward on a basis that we have to have money available, and use the GRF as a means to take in revenue and have expenses. That's why we say it's a balanced budget.

[12:15]

And the public debt will still stay at \$4.15 billion, Mr. Speaker.

And that again too goes to the fact that we paid \$2.6 billion off initially over the recent years, and we have some debt-servicing cost reductions now. So it helps the government and the people of this province. It isn't just the government that benefits. People of this province benefit from those reductions in servicing to the debt.

Moving forward as well, in this year's budget and as in the previous budgets, there's money for major infrastructure capital. \$632 million will be done this year, spent this year. Now it's a reduction from the highest levels in the previous two years, but it's still the third largest capital spending budget in Saskatchewan's history, Mr. Speaker.

Something the people of this province see in the summer, I can state, I know that No. 11 Highway is going to be having 30 more kilometres paved or built this summer by Hague and Macdowall. You see operations 24-7. They're stockpiling the aggregate to get that project going. And you know what? We see other roadwork that is going to be paved as well with the No. 11 Highway, as well as we see in Regina with the Lewvan interchange.

We see rural roads are going to be repaved this year and developed. We . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Thank you for that. The Yorkton truck route . . . I have to say I've been in Yorkton a couple times now, and not for the best reasons. My father's in the hospital so I do visit him there. But I see the development in Yorkton, how it's expanded, and I see those two mills there and . . . [inaudible] . . . the canola crushers and it's growing. And I have to tell you that, like Prince Albert, it's one of those kind of communities that you can see people's optimism. It's truly different than it was years ago. There's optimism for the future, Mr. Speaker.

Well the member from North Battleford talks about a forestry centre. I thank him for the opportunity to talk about that because it's interesting that it was built by a previous MLA from Prince Albert Northcote. And you know what? He did serve the community. Absolutely he did. I will not say bad things of Mr. Lautermilch at all. He did a great job on certain files. However I will say that that forestry centre, which was supposed to be the centre of excellence for forestry, was supposed to be populated by all these scientists, researchers moving forward. When you looked at what actually was in that building, very few people working there, very few — less than half I would argue — had anything to do with the forestry industry under the NDP government.

It was there for all that time, so in 2007 it didn't change. It was the same numbers. It's populated now by the fine prosecutors from the prosecutor's section in the provincial Justice department ministry. Also some lawyers are in there as well, some private sector people as well. So it's still there to be sure, but it became quite the white elephant from when it relates to forestry, I'll tell you that, Mr. Speaker. And that was known in Prince Albert.

One they were talking about here is that, in our budget as well, we have Health, Social Service, Education budgets — the core service budgets — that are still increasing in spending. We're seeing that this year in the budget. The services will be provided. School divisions will see an increase of \$33 million in

this year's budget.

Health spending's increased as well. And I will say that in Prince Albert in the Victoria Hospital, in the regional health authority there, for years they put forth budgets asking for increases under the previous administration — always had money pulled back in the end. They never got their increases they asked. They got some to be sure, but never what they asked. In our first year of forming government I met with the CEO, I met with the health region people and they told me what they needed, and this government delivered. We increased their budget, their operating budget, by almost \$30 million so they could have no more deficits. We give them additional money for infrastructure, for renovations that they were sorely in need of because the hospital is of course the funnelling point for the North. And the great women and men who work in the health care service and the doctors provide service there tirelessly day in, day out, through the good weather and the bad. But people recognize that Prince Albert hospital as the point for the first acute care facility.

Now my colleagues who have facilities in the North and in rural Saskatchewan around Prince Albert, there are doctors and nurses and health care professionals out there as well that have recognized that Prince Albert is an area where they can send patients to and they'll get the treatment they need. But if not, they can get transferred to Saskatoon or Regina. But we do know that there's a shortage of physicians. We've talked about that, and I'll be speaking about that in the next little while as well, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to move as well, that the debt in the government will not be rising. It's not going to rise at all.

So the Growth and Financial Security Fund is projected to have a year-end balance of what I said, of \$510.8 million. So by the accounting mechanisms used from both sides, I'd have to say, as still a rookie member of this Legislative Assembly, hearing both sides of it, it's good that we're able to agree on one thing. We both use the same mechanisms and we both have balanced budgets. And this government will maintain that balanced budget forecast thinking going forward as well. So we're very happy with that.

And I'm very proud to be a member of the Legislative Assembly that can actually manage that and moving forward. Because, like I said before, Mr. Speaker, my daughters, I hope they stay in Saskatchewan. I truly hope they will because their mother would be very heartbroken. I'm sure she'd have something to say to me if they had to move out of Saskatchewan to pursue academic careers and maybe opportunities in other parts of the country, maybe in North America and the world. Now notwithstanding that, I wish them all the best.

I have two very smart daughters who made the honours with distinction in this year's first report card.

An Hon. Member: — Must take after their mother.

Mr. Hickie: — So they take after, yes, member from Martensville, it's true — they take after their mother, absolutely. Some of their athletic prowess does come from their

father; some, albeit not as much probably. They've done very well on their own there too, by the way. But they're great role models. They're lovely daughters.

At the recent Premier's dinner in Prince Albert, I had my daughters help out with seating of some guests and other things that they helped out with that night. We had a couple of members of mine who . . . friends of mine who I worked with previous to this job. And you all know I was a police officer. So they're still members of the Prince Albert police service. They walked up to me and asked if I still had my chunk, which means for us it's slang for our service revolver, service pistol. And I laughed. I said, why would you ask that? Because my daughters are so beautiful, I should have it because well, the boyfriend is going to come down and beat the door down. And I laughed, and I said, you know, I guess for all those young men out there right now that could be listening or could want to check this out, I may not have it, but I may have it. So they have to watch their . . . because their mother, their mother will have more to say about the young men coming to the door than me, I think. Because, like I said before, with this job we're here so much.

But I'm very proud of my girls. And again, it goes to the future of this province and the opportunities they'll have for academics and for jobs, which I'm very proud to say, as a government member, that we've done a lot to advance that cause for their future.

And we talk about what our commitment is to our universities. And what we talk about with that is we're going to move forward on training the future workforce, through labour force development programs and supporting our post-secondary education institutions to minimize tuition costs.

Well you know, on that note, I want to say that, like most members in this House, we went to school many years ago. We took student loans. I recall paying back my student loan, and I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, it was very expensive. Interest was quite high back in those days. And I'm very proud that the Minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour, a good friend of mine, has put forth that we will have the prime rate on the student loans now, which is something that for me, looking forward as well for my daughters' education, is important because although we're saving as well for their education, it's going to be quite expensive. I admit that.

We have to understand that the costs rise in universities, whether in Saskatchewan or other provinces. And we have to pay that share, but if we can't, there's the student loan repayment program we're going to put in place. Will make it much easier on them, and I'm sure myself because I'm sure my wife will make sure that I help them out there too. And we're, as a mother and father, we want to give them a good foot up as they get out of university and start their careers as well. So I'm very happy for that.

There's also provisions we made in this year's budget as well that I . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . A conflict of interest. I know I never developed the budget, so I guess it's okay.

The full-time students can also earn as much as they choose during their study period and it won't affect their eligibility for financial assistance. And again, hear, hear and kudos to the

Minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour and his caucus colleagues and ministerial colleagues that recognized that as a means, because students will work. They still want money. They still have to, you know, have some sort of fun . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Exactly. And it gives them a chance to not be ineligible, having those funds ineligible when they get their loans.

And of course ownership of vehicles by students is allowed without affecting the level of financial assistance. Well I know when I did my student loan, I had to sell my vehicle. I was out of school for a number of years. My parents couldn't afford to put me through school, so I had to get a student loan. But I had to sell my vehicle. I loved that car. It was the first car I ever bought, working because it . . .

An Hon. Member: — What was it?

Mr. Hickie: — A 1982 Cutlass Calais — beautiful vehicle, classic car. It was one of two that were in Prince Albert at the time. And you know what, sad to say I had to sell that car because I couldn't hold that vehicle because it was an asset. And it was, I was deemed that I had an asset that I wouldn't qualify for a student loan. So sad to say, I had to sell that car. And I was able to get a student loan.

That's fine. I sold it to a fireman friend of mine and he took care of it. And today it's still on his farm. He keeps it covered, and he still has it out every once in awhile for show and shines . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Maybe I can. Maybe one day when he wants to sell it back to me, I'm sure he'll sell me it for a lot more than I paid for it. And hey, I sold it to him for it as well.

The member for Cut Knife-Turtleford there has got an idea. Maybe I should get it for my daughters, the member from Sask Rivers says. You know, that's a great car. They'd love that car. And it's a two-door car. It's a nice little vehicle. It's a great car; it's perfect. Of course I would love to buy myself a nice Mustang, but we'll have to see if I can afford that when they go to university as well, like I've already said.

So Advanced Education, Employment and Labour has done great things moving our province forward as well. And again to the officials there, and to the members of the minister's office who carried that torch and worked very hard on those initiatives, I thank them for that.

You know, we're also taking a responsible leadership role in recognizing that there's still people out there in the province. The most vulnerable people in our province still have needs to be met, for sure. And you know what, I want to thank the Minister of Social Services because there were increases in that budget that talk about things that we've talked about for a number of years like *Children First*, absolutely. You know what, the children we looked at, there is issues out there in the welfare system and foster care. And children are the future of our province. We have to be there for them, and we are. Four-square we're behind those, behind the Social Services minister. We expanded spaces, funded spaces. So we understand there are people in our society who need help, for sure. They need to have that support service there for them, and they are there.

Disabilities as well, we've done that as well in this year's budget. I'll talk about those in a little greater detail I guess, as we move forward as I go through my speech. You know what? We've also talked about how in the past, I sit here, and others have as well, that to be sure we knew that there was an economic recession. And we had to weather that storm like everyone else had to . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . The responsible government. Absolutely, the member from Yorkton says that.

The responsibility lies on those legislators to make sure that they don't do things that put the entire province in jeopardy. And we didn't. We recognized those opportunities. We recognized the hurdles as well. And working within industry leaders and analysts we take advice, we produce budgets moving forward, and we weathered that storm to remain strong. In fact I venture a safe guess — I know that it's in my speech here somewhere; I went over it again last night and again this morning — analysts say that we're going to lead the nation in '10-11.

Well we're one of the only provinces that are going to be able to do that because of our fiscal stewardship and our sense of commitment to this province to see its better days. Its best days are still ahead of us. We never say that, ah well, we've had enough, we're going to shut the doors and turn the lights off . . . [inaudible] . . . should be happy and we're going to stay the way we are. Because heaven forbid, heaven forbid that we should not grow . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well I tell you, the member from Regina, tomorrow's the better day than it is today, for sure. Absolutely. And it goes again to the people in our province who see that future. They commit their own blood, sweat, and tears and their own capital, their own money to develop those costs. They carry the charge forward and like so many other people in industry, industry before, they believe in this province.

Now, days in the past, we're talking. For sure, absolutely we have a province right now though that is leading the nation. We have our Premier who is being asked to speak at numerous media outlets when he travels abroad. And we, we send a message day in, day out.

Everyone on this side of the House in government talks about the future of this province with pride. And we don't take complete ownership to what's happened. We give it back to the people in this province who stuck it out. Absolutely. Far be it for us to have any kind of an arrogant attitude to think that we are the ones that truly are what they are moving for. They're moving back because of opportunities.

An Hon. Member: — We set the table.

Mr. Hickie: — We set the table. The member from Yorkton says we set the table. And we invite them to come back and sit down and eat the great dinner that we're serving in this province. And you know what? People stay. Like many of us have a good family dinners we want to, we sit back afterwards. We talk. We visit with our family and our friends. We talk about the future that we want to see for ourselves and our province and our families.

An Hon. Member: — The families are coming home.

Mr. Hickie: — And the families are coming home. The member from Lloydminster says, absolutely they're coming home. They're coming home because of economic opportunities. They're coming back to Saskatchewan because they want to be with loved ones. The loved ones are saying, why are you somewhere else? Why don't you come back here? This province has got potential. It's changing. Every day it changed . . .

An Hon. Member: — Great place.

Mr. Hickie: — Great place to come back, exactly. You know I have a friend of mine who happens to go to Calgary to do some investment courses, good friend of mine. And in Calgary, one of the individuals that he actually sits on these investment courses with happens to be a member of an oil company. I won't go and say which one it is, but I think we all know it. It's been in the media quite a bit. But he happened to be running outside in Calgary, downtown Calgary, running around at lunch time, as every lunch time he goes and gets in shape. He runs.

He got asked by a roving reporter, man on the street kind of idea, what do you think about the next mayor for Calgary? Who should that be? Because, you know, there's a mayoral race there going on there I understand, and so he gave his opinion once he caught his breath. He said, you know what? I'd like to see Brad Wall be the mayor in Calgary. Because you know what? His optimism is what we need in our province, in our city, and he just exudes it day in, day out with everything he touches, everything he attends, everything he does. And that's the kind of person they want.

Now of course the Premier's not going to go to Calgary. He has a great home and not going to abandon Saskatchewan like maybe someone else did in the past. I won't go into that though. That's history. I'll leave that alone. But now we have people coming back to the province who see the rejuvenation, the pride, and the sense of ownership in our province. Attitude. Positive attitude. Change, absolutely.

So we also know that there's going to be a great mayor race in Calgary, and they're going to find a person who will be leading that city forward. And we wish them all the best. Because, I believe, a member from our caucus happened to be out in Calgary a while back on a particular *Macleans* kind of an open forum session with a bunch of people, I believe. And a comment she made . . . I happen to watch it on CPAC [Cable Public Affairs Channel] that night, just happened to turn the TV on. You know most of us political junkies, we watch CPAC quite a bit. We watch what's going on in politics.

[12:30]

I caught the moment when she was asked her view on Calgary. I can't quote for sure exactly what she said, but if I'm wrong, she'll remind me. And it was a member from our caucus, the Minister of Environment, who was there representing Saskatchewan. And she made a comment that Calgary is the place that Saskatchewan built because so many people moved out of this province and developed that city.

An. Hon. Member: — Under the NDP, Calgary was Saskatchewan's largest city.

Mr. Hickie: — That's right. Under the NDP, Calgary was Saskatchewan's largest city, the member from Wood River says. Thank you for that. I appreciate that.

Moving on though, we also would recognize the expertise we have there in Calgary, Alberta: developed a lot of those corporations; a lot of that potential in the oil and gas sector; another again, entrepreneurship. And they're coming home. We have people from Alberta who are investing in Saskatchewan. We know that the oil service sector is seeing that. We see the oil drilling sector seeing Alberta companies looking at Saskatchewan.

China bid for the first time ever on land sales just recently. Of course now they weren't successful, but to be sure, I'm sure they'll be back at next year's sale. And you know China sees that there's potential in this province — the wee province, I believe, is what it was referred to in the previous administration a few times.

We are no longer a wee province; we're a have province. We are going to be the kind of province that looks at every opportunity available. I've had the honour of being able to talk to various energy sector leaders from other parts of the world in this job. It's a great job by the way, Mr. Speaker. I'll tell you, I've done things and seen things and talked to people over the last two and a half years and never would have had the opportunity to do this. So I want to thank the members for allowing me to do that.

But the people of Prince Albert Carlton, the people that voted for me, I forgot to thank them when I did my introduction. I was very remiss in not thanking the people who voted for me. You know what? It's a slim margin, mind you, Mr. Speaker, of 61 votes. And I recognize that, I don't take that for granted whatsoever. It was a very tough night, hard-fought campaign. And I'm happy to have been elected.

Moving forward, the work's already started in Prince Albert Carlton again. So we'll see what happens. It'll be another tough race, and I admit that. I take nothing for granted. And the democracy will rule. And I wish the people in Prince Albert Carlton all the best who go to mark that ballot box.

But they're not marking it for Darryl Hickie. They're not going to mark it for the NDP candidate who, I understand, will be nominated this weekend. They're going to mark it for Brad Wall or Dwain Lingenfelter. I truly believe that when that day comes, November 7th, 2011 . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh, I stand corrected. I apologize, Mr. Speaker. I can't use names and I apologize for that. Sorry, the Leader of the Opposition or the Premier of Saskatchewan. I recognize that. Still a rookie; sorry, I'm still learning.

That's what the people are going to decide for. They're going to decide on the two leaders. I'll be very happy and I'll be blessed to be carrying the banner with a Premier who's got vision, who doesn't look backwards. He's looking forward all the time, as all of us are on this side of the House. We don't hear anyone talking in this caucus about the good old days. We talk about the days still yet to be challenged and hard-fought and to make things different in the province, to make it the best place in the world to live. And we're very proud to do that moving forward,

Mr. Speaker.

So on that day, democracy will reign, in so much as that I'm hopeful that I will be back. And I will work very hard to spread the message of a government and a party that is always forward-looking, responsible, using the balanced budgets like we have in the last three now, and developing a future for our children. Like I've said many times already, it's very important.

And you know it's not just Sask Party government children. No. It's the children of opposition members and grandkids that are still in the province, and the opportunities that'll be around for them as well, moving forward because of the work, the stewardship of various ministries who are looking at protecting what's already here for the future as well, but also ensuring that our province is safe, a place to come to, move into. We have programs and supports available.

And, you know, I'll be talking about some of the initiatives under Social Services in this budget that are very exciting. The new home program. Over 1,000 new homes can be bought by low- and moderate-income people. That's ingenuity. That's the way of doing business. That's the way you get things done. We're not giving people handouts; we're giving them a hand up. And that's critical. We recognize that.

So you know what, Mr. Speaker? It's one of those things that make me wake up every morning to feel very proud that I'm a member of the government and under a Saskatchewan Party government. Because the colleagues I work with every day, and every night because we're working some nights, to be sure . . . We have a vision; we have a plan. And although others in this province, other people for sure, will actually look at, you know, what we've done and ridicule and mock us and say we're not doing our job right.

To be sure, Mr. Speaker, the people in this province that I talk to . . . And I'll tell you a story about last night. After the budget, I was in my office. I got a text from a good friend of mine who did not vote for me in the last election. I know he didn't. He told me that. We're very open and honest about our politics. But he said to me in the text that he will be voting for me now because of what we've done in this province for three consecutive years.

The budget again this year is strong. He has daughters. He has a wife in the service industry that needs to have a strong government, a strong province to do well, as does his sector. And we support his sector as well. I'm not going to tell you what sector that is because it will give it away.

But very proud to say that. And it took . . . I don't talk about politics with him a lot. We do talk politics because it's something we both are really excited about. But he, unsolicited, unsolicited he sent me the text last night. So I'm very proud of that friend of mine now who's seen the way for the future. Yes, he's seen the light. Exactly.

Getting back to the economy, of course, we did recognize that it was a global recession. A world downturn in the economy caused numerous financial institutions to close, to send many people out on the street in the United States. Record numbers of receiverships, home . . . and bankruptcies as well. Canada did

much better of course, and Saskatchewan did much better than some other places in Canada.

So the optimism for renewal, I've talked about it a few times. The optimism for the resurgence of a province that's led the way in the nation through recession, who itself to be sure had to recognize that we were not immune to that. I've heard that many times in the past. Yes, better to be here than someplace else. That we were also told by other people who told us that. So you know what? There's a sense of optimism that sees us moving forward.

And I see the analysts see the same thing going down the road, so that's great. Economic leaders in Canada, we've been told by independent analysts. So the forecasters have said that. RBC [Royal Bank of Canada], one of the biggest financial institutions in our country, if not the biggest based on profit margins for sure, they said that we are going to lead the nation. GDP [gross domestic product] growth is going to be up this year and then up again next year. So that tells you something, Mr. Speaker, that that particular institution truly believes in our province. They see the future moving forward right.

So we're having lots of fun with this, Mr. Speaker. And we're moving on with the whole purpose going forward of make sure we have, we do renewal within this caucus. We don't sit back and get told to do anything. Backbenchers, we are always at the table, always able to contribute our thoughts. And this year's budget was one time that I will tell you that we had a very great day, that we were able to sit as a caucus — and it was a long day to be sure — but each one of us had the opportunity to say, speak our mind on issues moving forward. Represent our constituents, what we heard back home over the last number of months when we weren't in session . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Absolutely. We're not told to do anything in this caucus, Mr. Speaker, and the people watching this, they should know that.

The Saskatchewan Party government caucus is not directed and told by any one member what to do or not to do. We have an open, open communication lines. The Premier is available for us to speak at any time with him as well. He wants to hear from his caucus. He wants to because, to be sure, we all have busy lives and sometimes to get connected back in our communities is something that a leader of an opposition party or a Premier should do, and not be talking about himself. In a person that shows a little bit of arrogance. To be able to say that, you know what, I listen to the people, I'm a man of the people, and that's exactly what our Premier is.

We talked about some good, some good stories coming out of this budget and you know what, Mr. Speaker, it was a person by the name of . . . from MNP [Meyers Norris Penny]. I can't say the names I guess . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . MNP, Meyers Norris Penny. You bet. I guess I use the corporate name, that's good. So, you know, it says here that:

While the government is in maintenance mode all right having to deal with the serious drop in potash revenue and at the same time living up to its previous commitments, it's a delicate balancing act and I think they've done a pretty decent job under trying circumstances. So on a scale of 1 to 10, I'm going to give them an 8 on this budget and

I think that's fair.

From an accounting firm, Mr. Speaker, that is world renowned, has offices all around the world, and takes a leadership position — and not just to single them out to be sure; there's accounting firms that do great work as well and who are internationally recognized — but to have that kind of independent third party financial institution saying that, that bodes well for the stewardship and the work that was done by these ministers and our Finance minister and the Premier and the people who helped to direct this . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And the caucus members — thank you — the caucus members who also took an active role and developed this budget.

We can all be very proud of that day because what we had our input in came to fruition. And as of yesterday's budget speech and some of the stories in the local media as well, we hear that we're doing very well that way. So the forward-looking part of this budget of course we talk about still maintaining infrastructure programs — I've talked about the highways in one — but we still have, for municipalities we see an increase in their municipal funding for infrastructure programs. We see the maintenance of our revenue sharing unlike any other time. In my city it rose I want to say well north of 50 per cent, closer up to 60, closer to 70 I think, monies received from a provincial government in the past.

So we recognize that the government, as members of Prince Albert, have done very well. I hear that every day in my office. I don't get one person complaining in my office at all about the revenue sharing didn't increase this year. We talked about increasing to one point of PST [provincial sales tax] within the term of our government and we will get there next year, Mr. Speaker, to be sure. And the people of Prince Albert will see additional money because of the government's, you know, commitment to that.

We also gave money under the MEEP [municipal economic enhancement program] program last year that was never looked at, never even knew it was coming. Municipalities across Saskatchewan got the extra money for economic expansion and they used it for their own needs. And Prince Albert benefited to the tune of \$3.7 million. That was a huge contribution from a government to the city, one time, that let them take on projects and plans that they had wanted to do for years.

And I'm very proud as the government MLA to be able to do that for them — argue on their behalf for what they needed — and to attend a couple of different openings and projects that actually that money funded. So again it's one of those kind of things that as a member of government I take a lot of pride every day and when I wake up, what I've done.

We talked about the leverage that we have of investment dollars from the Conservative government, the federal government in Canada, and that partnership is moving forward. We still see increase in those dollars coming to Saskatchewan and we can actually say that — I can use these numbers here, actually — that the federal-provincial-municipal infrastructure programs increased to \$115.8 million. That's a 71.7 per cent increase over last year's budget, Mr. Speaker, over last year's budget.

So we have a strong relationship in Ottawa, absolutely, to be

sure. They recognize Saskatchewan as becoming a leader moving forward. But we also recognize, as they do, that there was a deficit in so many different levels. And infrastructure is one that we had to make sure we had a partnership working forward because this government is seeing a population growth. We're seeing industry come to Saskatchewan. Infrastructure, to be sure, had to be developed and we need to have the help of the federal government, which they did. And moving forward on that file, the numbers speak for themselves, Mr. Speaker, quite nicely.

There's also the issue that there's actually, you know, investments of 551 million to build, operate, and maintain the provincial highway system, including 250 million on new highway construction, repaving. Those are good numbers, Mr. Speaker. This is the second largest highways capital program in the province's history. Again, that spans north, south, east, west, rural, municipal — on all different levels, Mr. Speaker. That's one thing that the Minister of Highways and his staff did a great job on.

Seeing that future, recognizing that we had to have those developments, you know, the previous minister as well saw that and I give him credit as well. He needs to be told that him and his staff took the direction, did a great job moving forward, looking at roads that need to be looked at to support our economic development, absolutely. It's hard to believe that roads were being chewed up and put into gravel. They weren't being repaved and fixed.

Now they have trouble with the trucks on those roads. So for 16 years that happened. In deficit position . . . [inaudible] . . . planning for decline, not for the future. We now are, with the great partnership with the federal government, moving forward for infrastructure dollars. We have to repave those roads. And one road, by the way, has to be repaved is a very small road for sure, 8 kilometres up in the Emma Lake area. It's a road that goes from the 263 . . . not 263.

An Hon. Member: — Murray Point access road.

Mr. Hickie: — Murray Point access road. — the member from Sask Rivers, thank you very much for that — Murray Point access road. Now it goes to the Murray Point campground, but it also goes to various beaches where there are people who have some very beautiful lakefront property, absolutely.

And under the NDP government, they chewed up that road, put it back to gravel. Now not just gravel that, you know, you see on some other roads. Big boulders were still chopped up in there. I had people complaining they had rocks go through the floorboards of their truck. And these people are pulling big trailers, to be sure. They're pulling some nice, beautiful boats as well. So you know what? They've endured that.

And the dust that comes off that road now . . . because it's still gravel. That'll be fixed this year. The Minister of Highways has assured me it's going to be done this year. It's 8 kilometres. It's a small chunk of road, but the people up there would be very happy, Mr. Speaker. And those people aren't just from Prince Albert. They're from all over Saskatchewan and Alberta that come to that area, with cabins and property. So those people are going to see that road worked on this summer and completed,

and barring any major problems with weather, to be sure, absolutely. We have to recognize mother nature has that upper hand on us.

But the men and women in the Highways crews are going to be working that road. We want to say thanks to them as well because they do work tirelessly under some of the hottest days and some of the coldest days as well. So thanks to them, we can see those projects go forward. So very happy with that.

[12:45]

I mentioned the Lewvan interchange and west bypass in Regina. The Yorkton truck pass has been talked about, along with the No. 11 Highway as well, for infrastructure. So we're seeing those kind of initiatives.

We will also have money now to fund projects that, when completed, will see 600 kilometres of highway resurfaced, 600 kilometres of highways resurfaced. That's an amazing number, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: — How many? How many numbers?

Mr. Hickie: — Six hundred kilometres. That's huge. That is huge. That's like for me to drive from Prince Albert to Regina and then halfway back again. That's a lot of roadwork. There's a lot of roadwork has to get done, but left outstanding by the NDP government, in deficit position. Now we're fixing that, so we're doing quite well.

I want to talk about Social Services. Now I see I've still got some time, so I want to work on this, that the . . . And I hope the members on my side are okay with me standing on my feet still talking because I'm having a lot of fun here.

I tell you, when you're talking about good things, Mr. Speaker, it just flows. You don't have to think about a lot of stuff. All these good messages come out to you. You're just having fun, which is great. You're not struggling to find words to belittle or to, you know, be negative — negative, negative, negative. No, no. When you're in a province that you're in a government that has good messaging, we have good supporters that tell us we're going a good job, it's a positive attitude — it's great, easily, to do this, kind of talk fast. Or I sure should because I've only got 15 more minutes, shouldn't I? I hear you now.

I want to talk about Social Services now. We have a great minister who has dealt with many, many things. We have a challenge. We had a challenge when we formed government, for sure, from the various agencies that oversee what Social Services does. And there was deficits there as well left for our government to inherit.

But we have 2.9 million for transit allowance, assistance for the disabled now, 12 point million for grants in lieu of taxes, and 9.6 million for the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency. So that is a group that helps out from Municipal Affairs to all of us because of the fact that they have to do the assessments. And we're seeing property values rise. We're doing quite well.

I am happy to say that I turn the real estate channel on in

Regina occasionally as I'm going through the channels at nighttime. And I see that their prices are pretty high, to be sure, but people in this province are paying for those homes, so they have money. They're making good money at good jobs, and they see a future. So it's an investment. It isn't a hindrance; it's an investment. So it's actually very positive, Mr. Speaker.

You know what? We're actually seeing that — I've talked about it a bit; I want to just go through this one more time — that on our transportation priorities and with the federal government recognizing that, we're going to see the largest contribution in the history of this province from a premier and cabinet that talked about, you know, equalization's happening everywhere else. We're a have province, Mr. Speaker, but the federal government still provided \$113 million, the largest contribution in the history of this province, to support us in transportation.

It bodes well to have a man or a woman who's the premier of the province who can actually work with, work with and not get upset and walk out of the meeting with the Prime Minister, and quite frankly, forgets his briefcase, has to send his official group to go back and get it. So we have a premier, we have members . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I don't know. I think it was Mr. Calvert. Very good man, though.

I want to give credit to Mr. Calvert. He was an honourable member of this Legislative Assembly, to be sure. He worked as the leader of the opposition and the premier with honour and pride and dignity. And every time I can talk about a man of his status, I will give him all the recognition and all his due course for sure.

I also talk about the MLA, the former member from Prince Albert Carlton, Mr. Myron Kowalsky, who I tell you did great service for Prince Albert Carlton and for Prince Albert as a Member of the Legislative Assembly. I've been to a couple of events. One was a funeral of a good friend of mine, but I've been to other events as well that Mr. Kowalsky attended. And every chance I get, I will always say to him face to face, eye to eye, that he was an honourable man as well who served the community of Prince Albert very well. And I will always say that about him. And he did a great job for the citizens, and I've got to tell you, it's good to be able to talk to him sometimes and see how he's doing very well.

He had a health setback after leaving government, for sure after retiring, but he's rebounding quite well. He's looking well as well. So I give him credit for that — strong man . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Absolutely I'm talking . . . yes, Myron Kowalsky, absolutely I'm talking about Mr. Kowalsky, good man, good man, Myron Kowalsky, a good man, yes.

The next thing is health care. We want to talk about what's happening in health care. For sure we know we need more physicians in this province. And I'll touch on the wait list that was brought today by some members of the opposition, surgical wait lists. To be sure, it's hard when there are people in the province who need to see a physician, a specialist for surgery, and there aren't enough physicians in the province.

Now that equates back to poor planning on the part of the previous government that could have funded, that could have

funded additional training seats at our university, who could have looked at talking and taking the advice . . . I would probably think years ago . . . that we got advice after forming government to assure that we had training seats expanded for physicians. Plus we have the recruitment strategy we funded as well, so 3.5 million to continue the physician recruitment strategy and agency, 6.6 million to continue medical education systems enhancements. This also includes physicians' training seat expansions and postgraduate and internal residency seats. Those are the kind of things we've got to have. And again, Minister of Health and the Minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour, they work together on these files. We don't just have our own little silo mentality. We take care of ourselves, but we work together as a team on this side, Mr. Speaker.

And again it goes to the point that we don't have someone telling us what to do and not to do. We are able to approach any minister, any given day of the week. We can approach the Premier and talk, and we're allowed to speak our mind on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker. We will not have that kind of tactic ever . . . If it did happen . . . I must say it did in the past. But this government, this caucus respect each other to the point . . . We have disagreements, to be sure, but we talk to each other with dignity, and we do things with the highest ethical standards on this side when it comes to working with other people in caucus. So very proud that we can maintain that, and we will. That's how you govern. That's how you work as a team. Been quite lucky as members on this side as well.

Other members as well in the House who've been on sports teams . . . some of them higher level than I've been at, for sure. But you recognize that team ethic, the work ethic that goes with the team efforts. The being able to see when a member of your team is having a tough day, you bring that person's spirit up. I see that my daughters' volleyball teams now. They're excellent volleyball players, and the teammates they play with, all help each other out. Some kid doesn't block a spike, maybe doesn't make the set properly, they all walk up to her and they say, listen, next time; don't worry about it. And they're all a team, right? That's good to see that. And not just the six girls on the court, but the six girls who are sitting on the bench as well are always there for their teammates. So that's one of those things that . . . Teamwork leads to positive results, always working together, and that's important.

So the health care budget is for sure a large amount, \$4.2 billion. But regional health authorities have to be commended because they provide the core services for their communities and for their areas, Mr. Speaker. Now the Minister of Health has an official that is a deputy minister, who is an amazing man who worked around internationally through health care. And he's led his leadership ability and stewardship under . . . [inaudible] . . . with advice, of course, from the minister, to ensure that the health system delivery in this province remains of highest priority for us to fund and to provide services that are long overdue in some cases as well. Looking at things like reducing the wait list times. We've contributed — what was it? — \$10 million this year for a long-term study to, in the next five years, to reduce the wait times. It takes money. It takes perseverance. It takes leadership, and that's what this government has, as do the officials at the highest level in this government, Mr. Speaker. It's important.

There's a \$123 million increase to regional health authorities to provide base funding of 2.6 billion to maintain the delivery of health care services to the Saskatchewan people. Now that is something that I was told before — I mentioned it early on in my speech — that we had the CEO of the Parkland Regional Health Authority, needed to have some more money to remove the deficit position she was in to support the services, recognizing that the great facility in Prince Albert is the funnelling point for acute care from the North, to be sure. And as a government we listened, and I was able to take her concerns to the Minister of Health and the Minister of Finance, and we were able to additional funding.

Last year, year before, and this year, we see it rising again. So it's good to know that not just Prince Albert, but the regional health authorities will see an increase. And that's an important part of our health care delivery in this province because there are innovative ways of doing business for sure, Mr. Speaker, but the people who are doing that, the hard and heavy lifting, are the regional health authorities. They're executive administration people, the staff that work in the hospitals day in, day out, and they're valued members of our province. And each of them is valued members of the delivery model, and we want to thank them for their commitment to that, Mr. Speaker.

So one more thing I think is important that we had a funding increase this year of 109.3 million to Saskatchewan Cancer Agency funding for drugs and medical supplies and operating costs. Well you know what, Mr. Speaker? There are people in this province who for sure told us when we were in opposition . . . not me personally of course because I wasn't here. I was a member of the Prince Albert Police Service at that time, but I heard the stories, read the stories and that there was requirements for certain expansion of drug coverage for cancer patients. The Cancer Agency is a workhorse and the delivery of health care to those people who are battling a disease, various diseases involving cancer, that they need the support of the people. And there are great people working there, to be sure. But when we listened to their needs, I'm proud to say our government listened and we responded, responded with things that they tell us they need, and that's what a good government does. And we recognize that people have that battle and to have that support from a government and that agency will help those people see success and have a brighter future for sure.

The 6.6 million I talked about for the continuing medical education system enhancements and training physician seats is something in this province that is long overdue, needed that, Mr. Speaker. And again, it will bode well for the future of this province, to be sure. As our population continues to increase, families are being born; kids are coming into this world. Prince Albert has the highest rate per capita of births, Prince Albert health region, at that hospital. The great doctors and nurses that work there tell me every year it gets more. And that's people who are having children. That's the future of this province.

So we have to make sure that we have a health care system that can deliver that. And those physicians have to be trained and retained in this province. So the Minister of Health and his officials, along with the people from the University of Saskatchewan in the college, are doing a great job and moving that file forward because those children will need physicians, to be sure, in the future. And that's where we're going to be

looking at having that strong presence, strong presence there, Mr. Speaker.

We — in Health as well — took on this challenge with this tobacco legislation, Mr. Speaker. We need to make sure that we have a healthier population in this province. And we also know that — you know what? — there are populations within our demographics within our province that tend to be heavier smokers, start smoking at a younger age as well. And by doing the work that the ministry has on this file when it comes to tobacco, the tobacco tax and the legislation, the control strategy, again, leaders again, Mr. Speaker, looking for the future.

I talked about the Head Start program on a home that the Ministry of Social Services has. As you can tell, there's a common theme I have, Mr. Speaker. It's about the future. It's about the positive nature of the people in this province who are having families, who are putting up, setting down roots. And they're working hard day in, day out, to be sure. Some people work two jobs. Some people work the one job. They're doing very well because they see a future in this province. But a home, a home provides security, Mr. Speaker. And that's what these people will have now. Over a thousand of these homes will be built for low- and moderate-income families.

Again, ownership, pride, safety, and security. I was able to attend a couple of ribbon-cutting ceremonies for low-income housing units in Prince Albert just a few weeks back. And the common theme that surrounded that was the safety and security that these families will now feel by having a place to call home, and the security, being able to have a place that's there for them all the time. So they're going to be very much entrenched in the economy in Prince Albert because they'll have a place to start off. It's a good starting point for them. And they can go and seek employment and advances and other opportunities that may not have been available to them because they lacked that stability, that safety and security of the home, Mr. Speaker.

The next thing that's actually one of those great initiatives our government took on . . . and to be sure, it was started in the previous administration; I will give credit where it's due, absolutely. Child care spaces, we talked about childcare spaces. But we have a pre-K [pre-kindergarten] program in this province as well that we're implementing. And this year's budget, we will continue to invest in those two very, very, very important initiatives at different levels.

I just said this week in my member statement, I was able to talk about the seats that we opened up in Prince Albert, working with the different school divisions and Ministry of Education and the community groups — Family Futures and Children's Choice. So great leadership on those two levels, I want to give them a big thank you as well for what they do day in, day out. Great people work there.

So we also see that families need those child care spaces. And you know what? By putting these child care spaces in schools like we have in other institutions, like some of the churches and such, people can take their kids there. They know it's a safe environment for them. And they can actually move forward, and they can actually see themselves getting education opportunities and job opportunities because there's stability for their children there, Mr. Speaker. It's a great thing there in

Prince Albert.

They're very happy in Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker. You know the member from Cumberland wants to talk about people in Prince Albert aren't happy. That bodes well for the way their attitude is, Mr. Speaker. They always talk about doom and gloom. That's their new mantra over there. The member for Cumberland wants to talk about being not happy in Prince Albert. Well I'll tell you what, Mr. Speaker. Many people in Prince Albert are very happy. And they go ahead with that doom and gloom story, Mr. Speaker. And I tell them, maintain that mantra and we'll see what happens in the times ahead, Mr. Speaker.

The one other thing that we want to talk about for sure, Mr. Speaker, before the time comes to conclusion here, is that I want to support this budget, Mr. Speaker, happily, proudly. And I will not listen to doom and gloom, Mr. Speaker. People in Prince Albert want to see a government move forward. They want to see us maintain our positive . . . best days are still ahead, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — Time being 1 o'clock, this House now stands adjourned until 1:30 Monday afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 13:00.]

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