



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

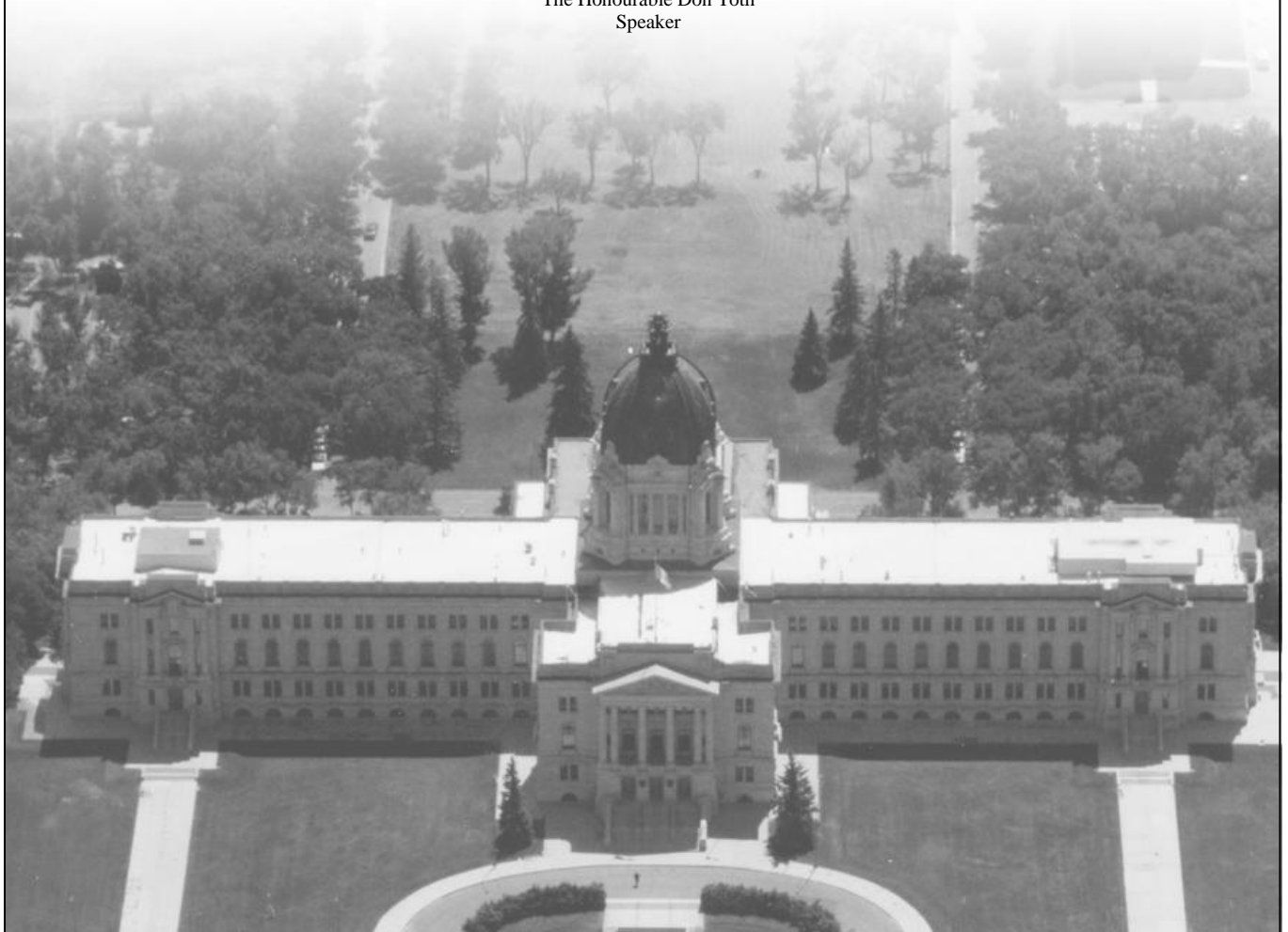
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**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

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(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

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

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly today some special guests that have joined us in your gallery. I won't introduce all of them by name, but you can see, Mr. Speaker, we're joined by current members of the naval forces of the country and naval reserves as well, some retired members, Mr. Speaker.

I will introduce three very special guests who joined us earlier today for a ceremony in the rotunda. Commander Derek Moss is the commanding officer of Her Majesty's Canadian Ship *Regina*; Lieutenant Commander Corey Thiemann is the commanding officer of HMCS [Her Majesty's Canadian Ship] *Queen*; and also joining us from British Columbia, coming home from British Columbia, is Commander (Retired) Neil Sorsdahl of HMCS *Saskatchewan*.

Mr. Speaker, we had the opportunity to gather in the rotunda today and pay tribute to the Royal Canadian Navy to honour their 100 years of service to our country, 100 years of protection and of defence of the freedoms in our country and also the defence and the securing of our prosperity in the country. And we also had the chance to accept from them a great token, a wonderful montage, a framed montage of HMCS *Saskatchewan*, both iterations which we will display proudly in the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

I would ask that you and all members of the Assembly pay honour and welcome to these who have joined us today in the Legislative Assembly, thanking them for their presence and for their service to Canada.

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

**Ms. Higgins:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with the Premier in welcoming Commander Moss, commanding officer of Her Majesty's Canadian Ship *Regina*, also Lieutenant Commander Corey Thiemann, commanding officer of Her Majesty's Ship *Queen*, and also retired Commander Sorsdahl, who we learned during the ceremony today hails from Mossbank, which is just south of Moose Jaw.

And I was very pleased this afternoon to hear the Premier's comments when he spoke about the numbers of Saskatchewan and Prairie boys that joined the navy during World War II. I actually had a bit of a debate over this in Newfoundland. It got quite heated, I'm afraid, because they didn't believe me that there was such a large Saskatchewan presence.

The ceremony today was wonderful to mark the 100th anniversary, but I have to say it also brought back some very

fond memories, as my late father-in-law served in the navy on the HMCS *Kelowna* and was based at Prince Rupert during the war.

So this afternoon, good information, very good commemoration of the 100th anniversary and 100 years of the navy in Canada. But also some very good memories for many families I'm sure you've brought right across Canada. So thank you very much and welcome to the legislature.

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

**Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'd like to join with the Premier and the member opposite to welcome our guests to the Assembly this afternoon, our special guests. They are part of the senior service of Canada, which is sometimes a little tough for me to say, knowing my background. But I definitely would like to welcome our special guests here today.

Mr. Speaker, there's other members in your gallery that I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly. And I'm very pleased to introduce Murray Daku. If you'd stand please, Murray. Murray is currently a vice-president at Hitachi Canada Industries in Saskatoon.

Murray was born and raised in Saskatchewan, received his mechanical engineering degree from U of S [University of Saskatchewan], 1987. He has been employed with Hitachi in Saskatoon for the past 20 years. Murray is an active board member in the business community, and is currently serving as the Chair of STEP [Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership]. He is also the Chair of the Boiler and Pressure Vessel Safety Board under the Ministry of CPSP [Corrections, Public Safety and Policing].

And, Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet I also have two other guests in the gallery, two brothers from my constituency that have quite an interest in politics. And I'd like to introduce Shaylor Layman. And Shaylor is from Woodrow. And his brother, Shelby Layman is from Assiniboia.

And I would ask all members to welcome these guests to their Assembly this afternoon to watch the proceedings. Welcome.

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

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to introduce to you and to members of the Assembly 22 grade 10 students who are seated in the east gallery. They've come here today with their teacher, Erin Harlos.

I want to say to the students and to their teacher, welcome to our Assembly. We're going to be meeting with you a little later, so I just want to say greetings, and enjoy the question period. And we'll see you shortly.

**Hon. Mr. Toth:** — And if members would allow, the Speaker would like to extend a warm welcome to Murray as well, and your mom . . . Bert and Violet are doing well. Thank you.

## PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

**Mr. Harper:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and present a petition on behalf of concerned citizens of Saskatchewan who are concerned over the condition of Highway 123. Mr. Speaker, Highway 123 is an important link to the outside world for the communities of Cumberland House. And like so many communities in northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, the Cumberland House important link is the only road in and the only road out and therefore, Mr. Speaker, it is of great importance to the people living there. I'll read the prayer, Mr. Speaker:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good folks from Cumberland House. I so submit.

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

**Mr. Trew:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce a petition that was originated with the Saskatchewan Student Coalition. This petition is in support of the implementation of the Saskatchewan scholarship fund, that being the fund that was promised by the Sask Party in the 2007 provincial election. And the prayer reads:

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on today's petition are all from Regina and I so present.

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

**Ms. Higgins:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition on harmonized sales tax, and that such a harmonized tax would adversely affect the people of Saskatchewan and that clearly, Mr. Speaker, there has been no consultation on any introduction of this unfair tax or this tax increase. And the prayer reads:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan stand firmly opposed to the Saskatchewan Party government's stated intent to pursue the implementation of a harmonized sales tax and thereby increase the taxes which Saskatchewan people pay on a range of items including agricultural products, books, children's clothing, children's footwear, dentures, electricity, food and drink, hearing aids, medical devices, newspapers, optical

appliances and orthopedic appliances, and in doing so, to cause the provincial government to recognize the hardship it would cause the people of Saskatchewan if the government implemented a harmonized sales tax, and in doing, to cause the provincial government to refrain from handling . . . [oh jeepers, Mr. Speaker, sorry] and in doing so to cause the provincial government to refrain from handing over our taxing authority to the federal government.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, with some difficulty, I so present.

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

**Ms. Junor:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of people protesting the Government of Saskatchewan's heavy-handed essential services legislation that is making a mockery of collective bargaining in this province. And indeed, it has now been recognized by the United Nations internationally as being significantly flawed. And the petition reads:

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

And the petition is signed by people from Regina, Mr. Speaker. I so present.

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

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition in support of maintaining educational assistants. As we know, the Ministry of Education published a document in November that would see the drastic reduction of the number of educational assistants in the province. And the prayer reads as follows:

. . . 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 is signed by people in Mossbank, Moose Jaw, and Tantalton. I so present.

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

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling for the reinstatement of the domestic abuse outreach program in Saskatoon. We know that the domestic abuse outreach program provided a number of valuable services to women victims of domestic violence and their children, including helping women find emergency shelter and accompanying them to their homes, court, and hospital, or the police station as needed. It was a model for other programs

in Saskatchewan. 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:

To cause the provincial government to reinstate the domestic abuse outreach program as a provincial government service and make it available in all parts of Saskatchewan.

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

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

**Mr. Vermette:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition in support of a new long-term care facility in La Ronge. With almost one full year of a waiting list for our seniors, this is appalling. The prayer reads as follows:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

It is signed by the good people of La Ronge and area. I so present.

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to present a petition that has been circulated by the Saskatchewan Student Coalition on the issue of tuition, and a call for affordable tuition costs and a request that the Sask Party government's actions match its rhetoric on this issue. 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. Today I rise to present a petition regarding the expansion of the graduate retention program. The petition is being signed by residents of Saskatchewan because the Sask Party government amended the retention program to exclude master's and Ph.D. [Doctor of Philosophy] graduates, as well as graduates from outside of Saskatchewan. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial 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, this petition today is signed by the good folks from Southey, Kronau, and Regina. I so present.

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

**Ms. Morin:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly regarding the Sask Party's lack of action with respect to climate change.

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action:

To cause the provincial government to immediately, without delay, acknowledge and recognize that climate change is occurring and the impacts of climate change are escalating and worsening, and in so doing to cause the provincial government to undertake immediate actions to mitigate climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, actions which will serve to protect the Saskatchewan people from the significant costs to our economy, global security, and the quality of life which climate change threatens to bring about, and to also protect Saskatchewan people from longer and more frequent droughts, reduced river flows as the glaciers which feed our rivers shrink, erratic rainfall with more frequent and more serious flooding, and loss of at least the southern part of Saskatchewan's valuable boreal forest which is treasured by so many in our province.

And in so doing, to cause the provincial government to immediately, without delay, begin the process of creating a meaningful, significant, comprehensive, and broad-based strategy including enacting substantial and meaningful legislation and substantial and meaningful regulations to meet the commitment solemnly pledged repeatedly in October and November of 2007 during the last provincial election by the Premier, the current member from Swift Current, who at the time of the last provincial election was serving as the leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, to reduce our province's greenhouse gas emissions by 32 per cent from the levels of greenhouse gas emissions which our province produced in the year 2007 and to meet said 32 per cent reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by the year of Our Lord 2020, 10 years from now or one short decade away.

And in so doing, to cause the Premier to instruct his Minister of Environment, the current member from Martensville, to recognize the importance of honouring the Premier's solemnly pledged commitment and to set about the important task of developing a substantial and

meaningful plan to seek a reduction of our province's levels of greenhouse gas emissions, rather than continuing to evade all responsibility in her duties, to actually address this critically important issue which will directly affect our province's economy and the quality of life for all our residents.

And in so doing, to cause the provincial government to immediately, without delay, reject the intensity-based reduction targets which the provincial Sask Party government has shamefully followed the federal Conservative government in adopting, in favour of absolute reduction targets, and to immediately enact said absolute reduction targets in the new management and reduction of greenhouses gases Act.

And in so doing to cause the provincial government to immediately, without delay, reverse its ill-advised decision to cut all funding to the prairie adaptation research collective and to recognize that the Prairie Adaptation Research Collaborative is a valuable and much-needed organization in that it generates practical options to help Saskatchewan adapt to current and future impacts of climate change and fosters the development of new professionals in the emerging science of climate change impacts and adaptation.

And in so doing, to cause the provincial government to immediately, without delay, restore the full amount of funding which it recently cut to the Prairie Adaptation Research Collaborative.

Mr. Speaker, these petitions are signed by the good residents of Domremy, Muskoday First Nation, and Birch Hills. I so present.

[13:45]

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

**Mr. Iwanchuk:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition in support of withdrawal of Bill 80. Mr. Speaker, the existing construction industry labour relations Act, 1992 has provided a stable environment for labour relations in the construction industry in our province. 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.

And the petition is signed by residents of Denare Beach, Regina, Qu'Appelle, Saskatoon, White City, Pilot Butte, and Grand Coulee. I so present.

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

**Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise in the Legislative Assembly and present a petition from residents of Saskatchewan who note that seniors living in our province, many live on fixed incomes and are victims of physical, emotional, or financial abuse. They, in the prayer that reads as follows:

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

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

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to present petitions on behalf of concerned residents from across Saskatchewan as it relates to the unprecedented mismanagement of our finances by the Sask Party. They allude to the two consecutive deficits that the Sask Party's created, and they recognize that debt growth is growing by the billions under their management. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly condemn the Sask Party government for its damaging financial management 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 of Humboldt, Saskatoon, and Regina. I so submit.

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

**Ms. Chartier:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise again today to present a petition in support of the Saskatchewan film and television industry. And this petition is signed by residents who are concerned about this government's failure to address issues critical to the film and television industry which is thus driving out jobs and investments from Saskatchewan. The prayer reads as follows:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action:

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 the 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, White City, Prince Albert, and Muenster. I so present.

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

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — With leave, Mr. Speaker, to introduce a guest.

**The Speaker:** — The Minister Responsible for Advanced Education and Employment has asked for leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

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

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all members of this Assembly, I'd like to introduce Doug Richardson, a well-known, energetic citizen of this province, former chief of staff to John Turner. He's made considerable contributions to our country, to our province, and to communities well beyond.

Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all members of this Assembly to join me in welcoming Mr. Richardson to his Assembly.

**The Speaker:** — Why is the member from Saskatoon Nutana on her feet?

**Ms. Atkinson:** — With leave to introduce a guest.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

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

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to also introduce Doug Richardson to the Assembly and welcome him here today. Doug is a constituent of mine. But also he is a person that I used to attend the University of Saskatchewan with and have known for a long, long period of time.

Mr. Speaker, he has served on the board of SaskTel — I believe he still does — and he brings a certain wisdom and business acumen to that board. And I think that Doug has done a good job on behalf of all the citizens of the province, whether it's serving on the board of SaskTel, working with the University of Saskatchewan, or any other myriad of interests that he has.

So I want to join with the minister in welcoming Doug to the legislature and I hope he enjoys question period.

#### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

#### Canadian Navy Centennial Celebration

**Ms. Higgins:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Canadian Navy made a centennial presentation today at Regina City Hall where Mayor Fiacco accepted a gift commemorating the service of two warships that bore that name of the city of Regina.

The first, HMCS *Regina*, was a Flower class corvette built at Marine Industries Ltd. in Sorel, Quebec and commissioned into the Royal Canadian Navy in January of 1942. She saw service in the North Atlantic and in the Mediterranean.

On August 8th, 1944, while rescuing survivors from the American merchant ship, *Ezra Weston, Regina* was torpedoed by the German *U-667*. She sank in 28 seconds with the tragic loss of 30 members of the crew.

The second HMCS *Regina*, a Halifax class frigate, was also built at the MIL [Marine Industries Limited] shipyard in Quebec and commissioned in 1993. She has carried the name of the Queen city to ports around the globe. From time to time she's been able to assist in promoting Saskatchewan trade. The main passageways in *Regina* carry familiar names like Albert Street and Victoria Avenue. When *Regina* is alongside in a foreign port, it's not unusual to see her mascot, Gunner the Gopher — and I hear this is Gainer's seagoing cousin, Mr. Speaker — visiting local children in hospitals and schools.

In naval tradition, there is a different toast for every day. And while we don't have anything to toast with here — a sailor would never toast with water, Mr. Speaker — Tuesday's toast does seem appropriate today. To our sailors.

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

#### New Bridge for Saskatoon

**Mr. LeClerc:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I stand in the House to deliver some good news to the people of Saskatchewan, specifically the good people of Saskatoon. Last night at a meeting of Saskatoon City Council, councillors ratified an agreement to build the south bridge. The contract was awarded in a joint venture between Graham and Flatiron construction companies whose price came in between 30 to \$40 million lower than other proposals. The total value of the project is to be 224 million, which includes building the bridge, the freeway, and the interchanges.

Mayor Don Atchison says this bridge will unite the city. The Circle Drive bridge project provides an urban bypass to divert commercial vehicles and other traffic moving in through Saskatoon's downtown core, helps maximize the capacity of existing infrastructure by reducing the congestion on Idylwyld and Circle Drives.

This project was made possible through the co-operation of municipal, provincial, and federal governments. Our Sask Party government committed \$98 million to this very special project. Mr. Speaker, this is just another example of how our government is moving Saskatchewan forward through important investments in infrastructure. Our government is

looking towards the future for planning for growth, something that was inconceivable by the previous NDP [New Democratic Party] government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Disposition of Pension Income

**Ms. Morin:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise to commend the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Regina Douglas Park, for showing his personal leadership by acting to give one-half of his monthly MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] pension to charity. Upon his return to this legislature, the Leader of the Opposition began receiving a salary for his position, but he also continued to receive his MLA pension which he had been collecting for a number of years after leaving public office to work in the private sector.

He attempted to have payments from his MLA pension stopped but was told this was not possible under the law. One-half of the money paid into the MLA pension fund comes from the individual member while the other half comes from taxpayers, so the Leader of the Opposition took the step of ensuring that one-half of each month's MLA pension payment goes to charity.

For this decision, the Leader of the Opposition should be commended, Mr. Speaker. I note that his actions have somehow been criticized by the member for Kindersley. Perhaps that member's comments would carry weight if he would publicly call upon all of the current Sask Party members to give up their taxpayer-funded pensions or if he had come clean with the public about his run-in with the law on that Saskatchewan highway a few years ago or if he had publicly called upon his Premier to pay back the people of Saskatchewan for the thousands of dollars of liquor that he stole while serving in the Devine government.

In this case I know Saskatchewan people will dismiss the mudslinging of the member from Kindersley . . .

**The Speaker:** — The member's time has elapsed, but I would just ask members also to be mindful of the words they choose, whether it's member statements or question period. I recognize the member from Batoche.

### HMCS *Weyburn*

**Mr. Kirsch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the course of the navy's centennial celebrations, I expect we'll hear various members honouring the many ships which have borne Saskatchewan's name. Of the many ships in, if I may call it, Saskatchewan's navy, only two were ever lost in combat. The first, HMCS *Regina*, has already been mentioned. The other was the HMCS *Weyburn*.

Built in the Port Arthur shipbuilding yard, HMCS *Weyburn* was commissioned into the Royal Canadian Navy in November of 1941. After service in the North Atlantic and the Gulf of Saint Lawrence, HMCS *Weyburn* was assigned to escort duty in the Mediterranean. On February 22nd, 1943, in calm seas at 10:17 a.m., *Weyburn* struck a mine off Cape Espartel, east of

Gibraltar.

Dazed sailors were emerging from below through dark passageways and the searing steam from burst pipes. According to Lieutenant Pat Milsom:

I found many of the men already had given their own lifebelts to supplement those of others who were injured or were not strong swimmers. That was just like our men, thinking of the other fellow first.

Seven members of the crew, including the captain, Lieutenant Commander Thomas Golby, lost their lives. Mr. Speaker, we will remember them.

[14:00]

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

### Health Care Provision

**Ms. Junor:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Health minister proudly declared that Saskatchewan people do not care if their health care is delivered in a private system. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's simply not true. They do care.

They care about making sure that quality health care is available to everyone in this province regardless of how much money they have. They care about not going bankrupt when their child is severely ill. They care about not being handed an invoice when they walk out the doors of a hospital. They care about the decades of hard work by people like Tommy Douglas and Roy Romanow to create the strong system we have today.

Mr. Speaker, even if the members opposite cannot grasp the above principles, maybe they can understand the simple economics. Publicly funded health care is proven to be the most cost-effective model of health care delivery. Furthermore the Sask Party made a commitment in their 2007 election campaign to "providing all citizens with access to a comprehensive, publicly funded and publicly administered health care system."

They also promised a children's hospital and long-term care facilities. Obviously we could not trust their promises then, and we cannot trust them now.

This minister is trying to pull a fast one on Saskatchewan people. Mr. Speaker, he's trying to tell them that their only choice is to put taxpayers' money into the private sector. But they won't be fooled, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan people do care about this government's slow erosion of our public health care system, their backdoor privatization, and their failure to protect the institutions like medicare that we value the most.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Cannington.

### Double-Dipping

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in 2008 and 2009 the NDP made speech after speech after speech condemning the practice of anyone collecting both a salary and pension from the same employer. "This is called



double-dipping and, Mr. Speaker, it is wrong, wrong, wrong.” Those are the words of the member from Saskatoon Nutana, Mr. Speaker, on March the 3rd, 2009. The member from The Battlefords said, and I quote, “Taxpayers in this province don’t want to pay . . .”

[Interjections]

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. Order. I would ask the members to allow the member from Cannington to make his statement without interference. I recognize the member from Cannington.

**Mr. D’Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I quote from the member from The Battlefords who said:

Taxpayers in this province don’t want to pay twice for the same service.

[If you went] If any of us went to coffee row . . . [and asked] do you favour that someone could retire today, draw their pension, and get . . . back to the same job and then draw both pension and salary . . . the simple majority of people would say no, that’s double-dipping. And that’s not appropriate.

Mr. Speaker, that’s what the NDP said about double-dipping in the past. But today they’re saying, now that our leader is the one that’s double dipping, can we ignore everything we said in the past? To quote the Leader of the Official Opposition, you bet we can. I think the NDP leader summed up his profound sense of entitlement best when he said, and I quote, “For me it works, because I think . . .”

[Interjections]

**The Speaker:** — Order. The members of the opposition were constantly involved in interfering. The Speaker got up. The Speaker allows the member, the Speaker allows the opportunity for the member to have the 15 seconds that the Speaker took. The member can complete his statement. Then we will go to the member from Prince Albert Northcote.

**Mr. D’Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I quote from the Leader of the Official Opposition: “For me it works, because I think I’m doing what is right.” Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Forestry Industry

**Mr. Furber:** — Mr. Speaker, it’s reported that Eacom Timber has raised \$145 million to acquire Domtar saw mills in Eastern Canada. A spokesperson for RBC Capital Investments has offered positive comments, stating of the company’s CEO [chief executive officer]: “Doman’s timing is pretty good and he’s widely known.” And according to the *Montreal Gazette*, Mr. Speaker, the governments of Ontario and Quebec have supported the deal because they want a sustainable future for hard hit forest product communities.

The *Gazette* also reports that “EACOM’s only Western asset

will be an idled sawmill in Saskatchewan.” Now to know why that mill is idled, Mr. Speaker, we need only ask the member from Kindersley. Back when Eacom was looking to invest in Saskatchewan and help out a hard hit forest product community here, he cut them out of any share of wood allocated under the FMA [forest management agreement]. At the time he claimed he had “grave concerns” about the company, saying it wasn’t viable and that the CEO was “a shady character.”

Mr. Speaker, the markets appear to have come to a different judgment. Market analysts have come to a different judgment as well, as have the governments in Ontario and Quebec. It’s now the judgment of the minister that’s in question.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Kindersley has been caught making another dreadfully incorrect forecast. Combine this with his prediction on potash, and we believe both the member and our province would be better served if the member from Kindersley would keep his deliberations to himself.

**The Speaker:** — Before we go to oral questions, I just want to acknowledge that earlier on I had asked the Clerks to stop the clock whenever the Speaker interjected in the statement by members. And I’m informed that the clock was stopped; it was my mistake for not realizing that. And indeed I have to acknowledge the member from Cannington had exceeded the 90 seconds.

### QUESTION PERIOD

#### Health Care Provision

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health. Yesterday in the Assembly the minister made the astounding statement, and I quote, people could care less whether it was privatized, referring to medicare.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that in the last 24 hours, members of the opposition have received many phone calls, many texts, many emails from Canadian and Saskatchewan residents from right across the country indicating that Saskatchewan people and Canadians care a great deal about medicare in this province.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is this: is his government so out of touch with the reality and the public of Saskatchewan that he believes that he can privatize medicare and get away with it in this province?

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

**Hon. Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, I will restate what I had said yesterday. I was using the example, I was using the example of ambulance services in Regina and Saskatoon.

I’ve had the opportunity to talk to many private deliverers of ambulance service around the province whether it’s Dave Dutchak in Saskatoon or Walter Dutchak in North Battleford, whether it’s Sally Graefer in Fort Qu’Appelle. And I can quite easily report that not one of those operators have had a patient ask is this a privately run ambulance or a publicly run ambulance. All they’re really worried about is making sure they get quick care and professional care and get to the hospital in time, Mr. Speaker. That was the statement I made yesterday,

and I'll stand by it today.

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

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, I can well understand why the minister would want to restate, restate his comments from yesterday where he said, and I quote. I want to quote from the minister when he said, people could care less whether it was privatized, referring to medicare. I want to restate for him clearly what he said yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, during the last election campaign the Premier, the now Premier, made it very clear to the public that he was not interested in privatization. What we're seeing here today, whether it relates to SaskPower or medicare, we are moving very directly towards privatization.

Can the minister tell me where he got the idea and when he had the courage, and why he didn't have the courage to say this publicly to the people of Saskatchewan during the last election campaign? We all know that the previous leader Mr. Hermanson had the courage of his conviction to say what he believed. Why didn't the minister have the courage to admit to the public that he would move to privatize parts of SaskPower, and in this case particularly medicare?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, I tell you, Mr. Speaker, this party made a commitment in the last election campaign, Mr. Speaker, that under the auspices of a universal system, a single-payer universal public health care system, this government would take the necessary steps to reduce NDP wait times for health care. And we're doing that, Mr. Speaker. We're doing that in the province today.

It wasn't very long ago, it wasn't very long ago, that the member opposite was in the cabinet of a government in 1996 that was reported as saying in 1996, March of that year, that private health care may play a larger role, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Health at the time in the NDP government said they were open to the private sector playing a larger role. And then there's a quote in the article that goes something like this, Mr. Speaker, and I'm quoting, "Both ideas were endorsed by Saskatchewan Union of Nurses President Judy Junor."

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

**Mr. Lingenfelter:** — Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is this: at a time when the great debate in the United States is around public health care and they have made in the last couple of weeks great strides in moving towards public health care, the Premier talks about waiting lists. And how his plans to improve the waiting list situation, I think this is his fourth plan, how has it worked so far in his own area? In Cypress Hills region, it's up by 100 per cent. Three plans from this Premier, and the waiting list is up 100 per cent.

My question to the Minister of Health is this: at a time when the United States is moving towards public health care after many years of debate, how is it that this government gets it so wrong that we're moving in the other direction towards private health care in this province?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to be very clear. The changes that we're going to bring to reduce wait times in the province are part of a universal publicly funded health care system with a single payer, Mr. Speaker. We know that last week, after the member for P.A. [Prince Albert] Northcote erroneously pointed out that wait times were increasing, wait times are actually falling down, Mr. Speaker.

[Interjections]

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, the CIHI [Canadian Institute of Health Information] report pointed out that wait times were less in the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, people are waiting too long for surgery in the province of Saskatchewan. We accept that. We have inherited a bit of a bulge in the wait times.

We're keeping up with current demand, but we have to take care of this bulge, Mr. Speaker. We're going to do it with additional money in the budget. We're going to deploy the facilities all around the province to get it done. We're going to use private partners, as has been used in the health care system for a long time in different areas, Mr. Speaker. We intend to give the people of this province quicker surgeries. The NDP offered them only ideology, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Support for First Nation and Métis People

**Mr. McCall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In last week's budget, that government killed the Aboriginal employment development program. Since its establishment in 1995, nearly 5,000 First Nations and Métis people have been hired directly. Over 2,000 have received work-based skills training, and more than 40,000 people have received cultural awareness training.

To the minister: why is Aboriginal employment development paying the price for that government's incompetence and financial mismanagement?

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

**Hon. Mr. Hutchinson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Aboriginal employment development program, with a modest budget of under \$800,000, was in operation for 15 years. And during that time good work was done, to be sure. But in a decade and a half, Mr. Speaker, circumstances change. Economies change, and program offerings have to change as well or they become outdated. That's exactly what the NDP allowed to happen to this program. And at the end it was old, tired, and ineffective, much like the NDP themselves.

Can we do better, Mr. Speaker? You bet we can. We worked closely with the real experts in career training and job readiness, and that's our colleagues in the Advanced Education and Employment, Labour ministry. And we've benefitted from

expert advice and insight provided by First Nation and Métis citizens. Together we've created a new approach that is more focused, more integrated, and more comprehensive, with programs specifically designed to meet the needs of Saskatchewan's First Nation and Métis people. And with a budget of nearly . . .

**The Speaker:** — Member's time has elapsed. I recognize the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

**Mr. McCall:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Partners in Aboriginal employment development received a letter from that government on budget day, telling them the Sask Party had unilaterally broken the third party agreements that had been signed. That's 111 agreements, Mr. Speaker, signed by upwards of 200 community partners. They were told that "current Aboriginal employment development program agreements are no longer valid."

To the minister: what gives him and that government the right to tell their community partners that their Aboriginal employment development agreements are no longer valid?

[14:15]

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for First Nations and Métis Relations.

**Hon. Mr. Hutchinson:** — Mr. Speaker, here's what we're glad to tell the people of Saskatchewan. It's just too bad the member can only focus on what's not in the budget rather than what's in the budget. If he did, he'd see exciting new initiatives designed to significantly increase the participation of our province's First Nation and Métis citizens in Canada's strongest economy.

Initiatives like the creation of three new northern enterprise regions that will increase the pace and range of economic development dramatically in the North, the population of which is 85 per cent First Nation and Métis citizens, Mr. Speaker. Initiatives like a 70 per cent increase in funding to the Clarence Campeau Development Fund, an extremely effective and well-organized group that provides loans, mentoring, and business-planning services to Métis interpreters all over the province, and initiatives like the creation of a brand new \$3 million economic development fund to ensure that Saskatchewan's First Nation entrepreneurs can count on appropriate assistance to grow their business enterprises.

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

**Mr. McCall:** — Mr. Speaker, the only problem with the increases that the member is talking about opposite is that they don't equal more than what they've already cut from this budget, Mr. Speaker.

On budget day a reporter asked the minister the following question, "You've had some cuts to your ministry today." The minister starts his response by stating, "We've had all kinds of exciting news." That's what he actually said, Mr. Speaker.

Later in the interview, when pressed on the killing of AEDP [Aboriginal employment development program] in reference to

the partners and potential partners of AEDP agreements, he said, and I quote, "These people have their own resources. They're simply asking for the right insight, the right experience, and we're delighted to be able to provide it."

Mr. Speaker, the insight and the experience was the Aboriginal employment development program. What on earth is that minister talking about?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister for First Nations and Métis Relations.

**Hon. Mr. Hutchinson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned before, by the end of its 15-year run, the Aboriginal employment development program became old and tired and ineffective, much like the opposition themselves. And we are not alone in this opinion. Who else thinks so? Why, Mr. Speaker, it's the leadership of Saskatchewan's First Nation and Métis citizens themselves, the very people the program was intended to serve. They told us the program, while valuable at first, had become old and tired and ineffective and in need of replacement with something better, something more focused, something more integrated, and something more comprehensive.

Clearly, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what we've done with these new programs which I will call exciting. It's time the opposition woke up, smelled the coffee, and realized that its stuck-in-the-past approach is not helping move our First Nations and Métis folks forward. It's holding them back.

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

**Mr. McCall:** — And, Mr. Speaker, another thing about AEDP, this is a program that's been regarded as a best practice in Aboriginal employment development, and it's also leveraged about \$1 million each year in funding from the federal government.

The Sask Party math here escapes understanding. Cut \$786,000, lose roughly \$1 million dollars in federal funding annually, and then run around telling people how delighted and excited you are. When is that government going to start making sense? When are they going to move forward on First Nations and Métis employment development instead of doing their level best to move the cause of Aboriginal employment backwards in this province?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for First Nations and Métis Relations.

**Hon. Mr. Hutchinson:** — Mr. Speaker, we are blessed here, blessed indeed. After an entire year's silence during which the member opposite found nothing related to First Nations and Métis citizens worthy of his commentary, we have question after question today. It's a banner week. It's a banner year, Mr. Speaker. We are delighted and excited with the new programs, millions and millions of new dollars being invested to help our First Nations and Métis folks move ahead with their very important priorities with respect to economic development. This is great news from the ministry, great news for the people of Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Support for Post-Secondary Education

**Mr. Broten:** — Mr. Speaker, until that exchange I thought I knew who the weakest minister was on the opposite side, but I think there's a new reigning champ over there.

Mr. Speaker, my question is on behalf of all post-secondary students in the province and it's to the Minister of Advanced Education. Can he explain how tuition increases of at least 5 per cent in the province is helping university and SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] students?

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

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Mr. Speaker, thanks very much for the opportunity to provide an update to the people of the province who are very pleased with our track record, and that is \$1.6 billion invested over the course of three budgets, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly what we see is over 70,000 students. And when we look across other provinces, Mr. Speaker, we see reductions in Alberta. We see BC [British Columbia] sitting at zero. We see Manitoba coming in a little bit higher. We see New Brunswick sitting at 3 per cent. Five point one per cent increase in post-secondary education funding in this budget, Mr. Speaker — 5.1 per cent, the highest of any Canadian province that has yet come forward with a budget, Mr. Speaker. We're very pleased with our track record, and we're going to do our best to ensure that affordability and accessibility remain key themes that students can bank on when it comes to this government, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Mr. Speaker, this budget was a disappointment to post-secondary students from across the province because they will face a huge tuition increase as a result of the Sask Party government's incompetence. As Chris Stoicheff of the Saskatchewan Student Coalition says, "Unfortunately tuition is set to increase five per cent and that sort of increase is unsustainable."

To the minister: why is he asking post-secondary students to pay the price for the Sask Party's inability to manage the books?

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

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Mr. Speaker, we can see and we can turn to Kyle Addison, University of Regina student junior president, and in a quote, "And in the overall scheme we're pretty happy," Mr. Speaker. Certainly we're hearing from students, faculty members, certainly from administrators saying they appreciate the priority that this province has put on post-secondary education.

Included in that investment, Mr. Speaker, we've seen reducing interest rates to prime, Mr. Speaker. We've seen the elimination of vehicles as being factored into student financial assistance. And we've ensured that students have the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to benefit even more from the graduate retention program by additional investments, Mr. Speaker. Our track record is solid: affordability and accessibility when coupled with excellence and innovation. Mr. Speaker, we're leading Canada in post-secondary education, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Mr. Speaker, I know the minister likes his speeches on tuition and affordability, but he's the only one, Mr. Speaker, because every time he addresses the issue of tuition, it simply means students will be paying more. Students tell me that accessibility to post-secondary education has a tremendous amount to do with affordable tuition. To add insult to injury, increased expenses for students aren't only about tuition. Whether it's SaskPower bills or housing costs, we've seen life become much more expensive under the Sask Party.

To the minister: at a time when the Sask Party continues to increase the overall cost of living, why is he forcing students to pay more through higher tuition?

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

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Mr. Speaker, again with \$1.6 billion, Mr. Speaker, invested in post-secondary education with additional dollars to ensure that tuition remains reasonable, Mr. Speaker, with additional dollars so that we can move forward on student housing, whether we're talking about Prince Albert, whether we're talking about the University of Saskatchewan, whether we're talking about a brand new initiative in Moose Jaw, Mr. Speaker.

We can see that these investments, Mr. Speaker, when coupled with additional investments in student financial assistance, we're leading the country in investments in post-secondary education, ensuring that affordability and accessibility coupled with excellence and innovation — this is the characterization of post-secondary education in the province of Saskatchewan. And we're pleased and proud to stand with the students, the faculty members, the senior administrators in making sure post-secondary education remains a priority for this province, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well for years now we've been hearing the minister going on and on about his so-called tuition management system. But so far, all students know is that this tuition management system means they'll be paying more and more each and every year.

To the minister: if he wants students to trust him, perhaps he should just tell it like it is. Will he admit today that his so-called tuition management system is nothing more than an euphemism for unsustainable tuition hikes?

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

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Mr. Speaker, when it comes to credibility with students, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite might want to begin with the fact that they raised tuition 99 per cent at the University of Saskatchewan and 88 per cent at the University of Regina, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to credibility, they can see \$1.6 billion, Mr. Speaker, over the course of the last two years.

We've moved forward with student financial assistance for the first time since 1994, Mr. Speaker. What we see members opposite being unable to grasp the significance of the investments being made by this government, especially as they relate to post-secondary education to students, to faculty, to the administrators. Mr. Speaker, our track record is solid. We are leading post-secondary education investments in this country, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Labour Legislation

**Mr. Iwanchuk:** — Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, the 16 provincial unions, and five national unions filed a complaint with the United Nations in 2008 over the Sask Party ham-handed approach to labour legislation. The United Nations International Labour Organization has now ruled against the government and in favour of Saskatchewan workers. The Sask Party has mismanaged the labour legislation files so badly, Mr. Speaker, that the United Nations is now recognizing the government's incompetence.

To the minister: will he now recognize that the Sask Party's labour legislation violates international law?

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

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Mr. Speaker, as this government came into office, Mr. Speaker, there was a strike on both university campuses. We saw more than 400 people per day being turned away from the Royal University Hospital, Mr. Speaker. That's a sad legacy of those members opposite.

What we said, Mr. Speaker, is that we would move forward with essential service legislation, Mr. Speaker. We would do so in a fair, balanced, moderate, reasonable fashion, Mr. Speaker, based on best practices from across the country, Mr. Speaker.

The people of this province support essential services, Mr. Speaker. And certainly what we are working to do is ensure that the highways remain plowed, that the hospitals remain open. And in a fair and balanced way, the right to strike remains, Mr. Speaker. This is based on the best practices from across the country, and we stand by this legislation, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Iwanchuk:** — Mr. Speaker, is it any wonder that member's caught the attention of the United Nations with that

answer? He's caught the attention because he doesn't understand at all.

Mr. Speaker, this isn't just about being horribly embarrassed on the international scene, this could have huge implications here at home. A similar ruling in BC in a BC case resulted with the Supreme Court of Canada ruling in favour of the union complainants. The government was slapped with 100 million worth of penalties.

Bills 5 and 6 are currently being challenged before the courts, and the Federation of Labour has indicated its intention to use the United Nations decision to seek damages. To the minister: why didn't he listen to the NDP when they told him there would be consequences if he rammed through this legislation?

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

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Mr. Speaker, more than 70 per cent of the people of Saskatchewan support essential services. More than 75 per cent, Mr. Speaker, more than 75 per cent of the people of this province, Mr. Speaker, support secret ballots, the democratization of the workplace, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as it relates to taking advice from the NDP, Mr. Speaker, I'll just make reference to 1998 when a certain complaint was registered by the ILO [International Labour Organization] to the members opposite, Mr. Speaker. And certainly, Mr. Speaker, their track record is one that is not very encouraging in this area.

The people of this province support essential services. The people are safer, Mr. Speaker. The right to strike remains, Mr. Speaker, and we ensure that we're working with the best practices like those across the country. As one of the last provinces to move forward on essential services, it's the abysmal record of the members opposite that certainly remains in question, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Iwanchuk:** — Mr. Speaker, the member now stands up and gives credibility to the United Nations. He now talks about the ILO. He should listen to them, then. Mr. Speaker, despite the prestigious United Nations body condemning his labour legislation, the minister pledged yesterday, he pledged yesterday to fight against working people all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada.

Let's be clear. The Sask Party government walked away from a court battle with the federal Conservatives that could have resulted in 800 million a year for Saskatchewan families. The Sask Party walked away from that battle, but they are not willing . . . They're willing to fight on in their war on the working people of this province in spite of international condemnation. To the minister: what kind of sense does this make? Why is the Sask Party fighting with working people in spite of the serious rebuke from the United Nations?

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

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Mr. Speaker, our track record on working people goes something like this: more jobs, more people, higher wages, and lower taxes, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan under this government has the lowest unemployment rate in the country for nine consecutive months, Mr. Speaker. Saskatoon and Regina, the second and third lowest unemployment among Canada's major cities, and the lowest youth unemployment in the country. Employment is up 3,100 jobs, year over year. Out of the top 10 cities for economic development and business climate, we see five right here in the province of Saskatchewan. Average weekly earnings, Mr. Speaker, a record at \$832 per average weekly earning, Mr. Speaker — another record.

What we see, Mr. Speaker, more working people, more people in this province, lower debt, Mr. Speaker, and the people of this province as a result are supporting this government.

[14:30]

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

**Mr. Iwanchuk:** — Mr. Speaker, what we see from this government are mismanaged finances, privatization, and going to war with the working people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, the minister doesn't get it. The Sask Party rammed through their labour legislation without any meaningful consultations. The NDP warned them repeatedly that their approach was wrongheaded, but that has become the pattern with the Sask Party. They pressed on in their incompetence. Now the United Nations has condemned his legislation and demanded that he keep them, Mr. Speaker, that he keep them informed of the corrective action that he is taking to fix this ill-conceived legislation.

To the minister: will he do the right thing, consult the parties, and fix his failed legislation?

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

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Mr. Speaker, our record on consultation regarding the legislation in question, Mr. Speaker: 84 stakeholders contacted, 20 meetings, ads in 100 papers, 40 emails received, 30 letters received. Mr. Speaker, as a result, a number of amendments were moved forward, Mr. Speaker. And the members opposite know this, Mr. Speaker. We spend enough time in committee, at least they should know it, Mr. Speaker.

The bottom line is, Mr. Speaker, with a growing economy, with a growing population, with the lowest unemployment rate in the country, Mr. Speaker, we certainly see the track record of this government. We're rolling up our sleeves, and we're working on behalf of the working people of this province, and that's what we're going to continue to do, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Cannington to

state his point of order.

### POINT OF ORDER

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During members' statements, the member from Regina Walsh Acres accused the Premier of theft when she said, and I quote, he stole liquor. Mr. Speaker, that is unequivocally false. I ask that she withdraw those remarks and apologize unequivocally.

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

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In response to the point of order, Mr. Speaker, it is well known during that period of time, and we have before us a number of newspaper articles that in fact say just that, Mr. Speaker. It's the headline. The member has admitted that it was an experience, that he lost his way, and in fact that they hoped he had learned from it, Mr. Speaker. These are facts that are well recorded, Mr. Speaker, and I think, Mr. Speaker, the point of order should be taken not well taken.

**The Speaker:** — Order. I've listened to the point of order and the response, and I will take a moment to look at *Hansard* as soon as it's available to make sure I've recorded accurately and responded accurately to the point of order.

Why is the member on his feet?

**Mr. Yates:** — With leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

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

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House a member seated behind the bar on the opposition side that should be familiar to many people in this House, the current Leader of the Conservative Party of Saskatchewan and a long-time member of this Assembly, Mr. Rick Swenson. And I would ask all members to show their appreciation for him taking the time to join us today here.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### WRITTEN QUESTIONS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Government Whip.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the answers to questions 1032 through 1046.

**The Speaker:** — Questions 1032 through 1046 are tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

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

questions 1047 through 1052.

**The Speaker:** — Questions 1047 through 1052 are ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the answer to question to 1053.

**The Speaker:** — Question 1053 is tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Mr. Speaker, I wish to order the answers to questions 1054 through 1091.

**The Speaker:** — Questions 1054 through 1091 are ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the answers to questions 1092 through 1097.

**The Speaker:** — Questions 1092 through 1097 are tabled.

### SPECIAL ORDER

### ADJOURNED DEBATES

#### MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

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

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

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to stand and for a few minutes conclude my remarks prior to moving the amendment.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday I took a great deal of time to go through the situation of the current budget with the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, pointing out to the people of Saskatchewan that in the province's own document, their own 2010-2011 budget financial highlights document, Mr. Speaker, that it shows very clearly under summary financial statements on a summary financial basis, Mr. Speaker — which is the accepted accounting principle for all governments in Canada except where? Except Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And why not in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker? Well because if we were operating under summary financial statements, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance couldn't change the accounting rules whenever he wanted to, Mr. Speaker.

So unfortunately Saskatchewan, as a result of a Finance minister who believes he has to be able to change the rules to make it look the way he wants, Mr. Speaker, we have a situation. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I believe it's probably higher than the Minister of Finance. He's probably directed directly by the Premier, Mr. Speaker, not to move to nationally accepted financial statements on a summary basis, Mr. Speaker, so that the Premier can do what he wants, when he wants, how he wants, and try to convince the people of the province of

Saskatchewan that he's not only not running a deficit, but he's not adding debt.

But, Mr. Speaker, both those things are not true, Mr. Speaker. Because today in the government's own highlights of financial statements, Mr. Speaker, they're showing that they have a \$622.7 million deficit as of budget day, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, that doesn't include many, many expenditures some of which the Minister of Finance has already admitted he didn't put in the budget and knows will be expenditures in this fiscal year.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to just to highlight a few of those. One would be settlements for health care contracts, Mr. Speaker, that aren't in the budget. When asked, Mr. Speaker, those things are outside the budget. Teachers' salaries, Mr. Speaker, teachers are going into bargaining in March, Mr. Speaker. In fact they're at the table now. The contract would end in March, Mr. Speaker. Pardon me, Mr. Speaker. The contract would end August 31st. Pardon me. I have to be accurate on that: August 31st, Mr. Speaker. But nonetheless, several months prior to the end of the fiscal year and, Mr. Speaker, no money, absolutely no money budgeted for teachers' salaries, Mr. Speaker. No money . . . [inaudible] . . . for the health services association collective bargaining, no money for the Cancer Agency collective bargaining. No money for many government agencies that would come from the General Revenue Fund, Mr. Speaker. No money set aside.

So, Mr. Speaker, he put forward to the people of Saskatchewan a budget he knew would be wrong the day he put it before the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Now, Mr. Speaker, to put a budget before the people of Saskatchewan that you expect them to trust and believe in, Mr. Speaker, it should contain the expenditures that the people of the province of Saskatchewan should be seeing in that fiscal year, Mr. Speaker. We shouldn't have a Finance minister standing and telling us that no, my budget doesn't contain these expenses I know I will have.

Mr. Speaker, that just doesn't have credibility. You should undertake to put before the people of the province a budget you know to be accurate and contain the entire expenditures you expect in that fiscal year. Now, Mr. Speaker, we have before us a budget that doesn't do that, but we also have a budget, even without that, that shows a \$622.7 million deficit on a summary financial basis. And if you add the expenditures they haven't put into this budget that they know should be there, Mr. Speaker, we're not talking 622.7 million anymore. We're talking over \$1 billion, Mr. Speaker, \$1 billion.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to take a minute now to talk about another key element in any budget, that of debt. Mr. Speaker, I go to page 62 of the budgetary documents, the budgetary summary supplied by the Government of Saskatchewan to the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And on budget day we had the government tell us, the Finance minister and the Premier tell us the debt wouldn't increase.

Mr. Speaker, I have before me their budgetary summary, page 62. And it shows in, Mr. Speaker, in 2009 government debt on the General Revenue Fund was \$7.7 billion. 2010, Mr. Speaker, it's \$8.1 billion. Now 7.7 to 8.1, that's an increase in any mathematics class I ever took. You know, you take 8.1 and

subtract 7.7 and it's an increase — increase of only point four billion dollars or \$400 million, but nonetheless an increase. And, Mr. Speaker, let's just look another year. You go to 2011, all of a sudden it's up to \$8.8 billion. So you subtract from the year before, from 2010, 8.8 subtract 8.1, lo and behold, you have an increase of what? \$700 million, Mr. Speaker. This is coming right from their budgetary document, page 62. It's available online as well, I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, so the people of Saskatchewan can go look for themselves.

And, Mr. Speaker, through each year through 2014, the government is projecting increasing the debt of this province on a General Revenue Fund basis, increasing to a total of \$11.8 billion by 2014. Mr. Speaker, that's an increase from 2009 of over \$4 billion, Mr. Speaker. I want to just say that for the people of Saskatchewan. In their own projections and how they plan to manage the province of Saskatchewan, they intend to increase public debt — the money you and I as taxpayers must pay back. They intend to mortgage the futures of our children and our grandchildren by over \$4 billion in just five years, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that's a huge burden to put upon our children and grandchildren.

And what does it tell me, Mr. Speaker? It tells me that we have a government in power identical to that of the 1980 Grant Devine government who spent money recklessly, that spent far more than they were bringing in and, Mr. Speaker, believed that they could accumulate debt in any way they chose and they could mortgage the futures of their children and our grandchildren and they don't care. Well, Mr. Speaker, we saw this record in the 1980s. We saw this record and we saw this type of reckless, reckless increase in debt.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about another measure of debt that's widely accepted across North America and the G8 [Group of Eight], Mr. Speaker, and that's your debt to GDP [gross domestic product] ratio, the percentage of debt as the percentage of your GDP.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we go to 2009. It was 11.9 per cent. Now what's the debt to GDP going to be in 2010? 14.3 per cent, Mr. Speaker. Wow. An unbelievable over 2.5 per cent increase in debt to GDP ratio. Mr. Speaker, that's incredible. That means they're spending money considerably higher than the growth of the economy of the province of Saskatchewan. Well if a government undertakes an expenditure track that's greater than that of the growth of the GDP in your province, Mr. Speaker, you're doomed. You're doomed to go in debt. The red ink is flowing unbelievably fast, Mr. Speaker.

But let's look at the outer years. In each of the years between 2010 — today — and 2014, Mr. Speaker, we're going to see the ratio of debt to GDP increase, Mr. Speaker. So in each year over the next four years, Mr. Speaker, of this government and their plan, they expect the government debt to increase faster than the economy of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. That is unsustainable, Mr. Speaker. And only once in our history have I ever seen or ever heard in my lifetime, Mr. Speaker — and I'm 47 years of age — where any government in this province undertakes such a reckless, reckless look at the future, Mr. Speaker. And that was the Grant Devine government in the 1980s, Mr. Speaker.

[14:45]

So today in 2009, we're at 11.9 per cent debt to GDP. In 2014, we'll be at a rate of 16.5 per cent, Mr. Speaker. That is an entire 5.4 per cent greater, 5.4 per cent greater, Mr. Speaker. Our debt to GDP will rise 5.4 per cent, Mr. Speaker. It's not sustainable, Mr. Speaker. When you're increasing your spending by 5.4 per cent more than what you're doing, than what the growth of the economy is, Mr. Speaker, that is significant, Mr. Speaker, absolutely significant, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about just two other areas before I wrap up my comments today. One is the government's move to privatization. Mr. Speaker, this government can say they have no intent to privatize our Crown corporations, but then why are all their actions in the contrary direction? Why are they privatizing power generation? Why are they privatizing units and cost-effective units in SaskTel? Why are they selling off good sustainable business units out of SaskTel, undermining the financial viability of the company, Mr. Speaker? Why are they doing this? Why would a government who tells the public of Saskatchewan, the people, the taxpayers that they have no intent to do so, why are they doing it, Mr. Speaker?

Well I don't know. But I don't know how long they think they can fool the people of Saskatchewan when they say they have a balanced budget and they don't, when they say they're not increasing debt and they are, when they say they're not selling off our Crown corporations and they are, Mr. Speaker.

And on top of selling off profitable business units and privatizing portions of our Crown corporations, Mr. Speaker, they've stripped the entire equity from our Crowns, Mr. Speaker. They've stripped the equity from our Crowns so that any improvement in our Crown corporations is going to result in utility cost increases to the people of Saskatchewan. And we're seeing it already in power. In 14 months, we've seen a 16 per cent increase in urban power rates and 20 per cent for rural power rates, Mr. Speaker, in just 14 months. They're stripping the Crowns, Mr. Speaker. They're increasing your utility rates and they're setting our Crowns up for total privatization one piece at a time, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, why would a government say they're not going to do that, then do it, Mr. Speaker? I'll tell you why. Because they ideologically believe that the government, even through Crown corporations, should not be involved in the economy, Mr. Speaker. It should only be done by the private sector.

Mr. Speaker, everybody knows that a strong economy has a mixture of both private, public, and co-operative sectors, Mr. Speaker, in order to have a strong, sustainable economy. Mr. Speaker, I don't know why the members opposite don't understand that as well.

Mr. Speaker, I want to spend my last five minutes or so contrasting why we're in this economic situation we're in, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to say, Mr. Speaker, very clearly, we're in this economic situation because we have a Premier today, a Premier today that doesn't understand. He doesn't understand business. He doesn't understand accounting. He doesn't understand good public policy and, Mr. Speaker, he doesn't



understand how to lead.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I will say he does understand how to cheerlead. He's a good salesman, slick as can be. But, Mr. Speaker, you can do that for so long before the people of Saskatchewan come forward and they understand what's going on in front of them. They see right through that slick salesman attitude, Mr. Speaker, and they understand what's going on in their province.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has sold people that . . . he put billboards up saying he reduced the debt by 40 per cent. Well in one day he might have done that, Mr. Speaker, but the very next day he started adding to the debt of the province, Mr. Speaker. So that particular billboard would have been accurate on a single day, Mr. Speaker, not beyond.

And, Mr. Speaker, so he's out there saying that, Mr. Speaker. I hear ads today on the radio saying that he has a balanced budget with no deficit and that he has no increase in debt in this fiscal year. Mr. Speaker, his own, his own budgetary documents say that's not accurate, Mr. Speaker. They say that's inaccurate. It is not telling the facts to the people of the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, you have to tell the facts, Mr. Speaker. The people will understand, Mr. Speaker. They will understand that he isn't telling the facts to the people.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a few minutes and contrast what the Leader of the Opposition did when he was a member of the government and had to deal with a similar financial situation left by a previous right wing government, Mr. Speaker. He fought hard to balance the books, Mr. Speaker, and put in place a foundation in which this economy could grow. He was instrumental in the changes to the royalty rates that made the Saskatchewan economy boom, Mr. Speaker. He balanced the books. He made the tough decisions. He dealt with the debt established by the previous government, Mr. Speaker, the previous Conservative government which the Premier was part of, Mr. Speaker, as a ministerial assistant in a back room telling them how to do . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — Delivery. Delivery boy.

**Mr. Yates:** — Yes, he was also the delivery boy from the liquor stores as well, Mr. Speaker, but that's secondary. And some day we'd hope he'd pay the \$19,000 back to the people of the province of Saskatchewan, that he really owes to the people of the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, he didn't pay that \$19,000 back to the people of Saskatchewan.

But today I want to talk primarily about the budget, Mr. Speaker. And the \$19,000 is money owed to the people of Saskatchewan which would help with his own deficit right now. If he paid the \$19,000, it would make a minor change in the budgetary documents, but it would help.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has a track record of being a steadfast leader, whether it's in this legislature as a senior cabinet minister of the government being responsible for the economic turnaround of our province, being the Minister of Economic Development when we put that foundation for the great economy we have today in place and built it over a series

of years, responsible for measured tax cuts, Mr. Speaker, over the years that helped grow the economy till in 2007, before the election, we reached our peak, Mr. Speaker. We had an economy firing on all cylinders, Mr. Speaker, on a foundation built by the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk for a few minutes about the success of the Leader of the Opposition in his private life as well, Mr. Speaker, as a successful farmer, a large farmer, Mr. Speaker. But also has been a successful executive in an international energy company, Mr. Speaker, working around the world with different governments and workers across the world, Mr. Speaker, in order to help improve, of course, the financial situation of the company that employed him, but also for the well-being of those workers and the people of that country, Mr. Speaker. And he brings that wealth of experience back to this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of the people of Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, I personally want to thank the Leader of the Opposition who left a position paying several times more than he would make being the Leader of the Official Opposition to come and present for the people of this province an alternative to the Brad Wall government, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier's government that is taking us down a road of debt and deficit, Mr. Speaker, the likes of which we haven't seen since the 1980s.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition came back so that we could present an alternative, a solid alternative through an opposition led by an individual who has extensive government experience, Mr. Speaker, extensive economic development experience, extensive financial experience, who understands the farming community of our province, Mr. Speaker, understands the business community of our province, Mr. Speaker, and understands what it takes to make the tough decisions, Mr. Speaker, to keep an economy growing, to be able to provide services for its citizens and, most importantly, Mr. Speaker, understands you have to do that in a way that's compassionate and caring for the citizens under . . . of whom you have the ability to make those decisions, Mr. Speaker.

So when I contrast the Leader of the Opposition with the Premier, who in two business ventures that he undertook, Mr. Speaker, went bankrupt . . . Mr. Speaker, the Country Music Hall of Fame went bankrupt with the government money. Government money and, Mr. Speaker, \$150,000 of government money. When you can't sell country music in Swift Current, Saskatchewan, you've got a problem, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we contrast the Leader of the Opposition — a solid history of involvement in both the farming community, in government in this province, Mr. Speaker, and in the international business community, Mr. Speaker. That experience, Mr. Speaker, prepares him to be the leader of this province like none other, Mr. Speaker. And when you contrast it to the current Premier, Mr. Speaker, there is no comparison.

So, Mr. Speaker, at this time I want to consider, I want to bring forward to the people of the province of Saskatchewan real concerns about a government that, led by a Premier, that it says they have a balanced budget when they have, by their own documents, a \$622.7 million deficit. A government that tells us

they haven't added to the debt when their own budgetary documents say they are, and over the next four years debt will increase by \$4 billion or more, Mr. Speaker, in their own projected spending. And a government who is going to increase their spending greater than the level of GDP by more than 4.5 per cent over the next four years, Mr. Speaker.

That is a very, very serious concern to the members on this side of the House. But even more importantly, Mr. Speaker, it is a serious situation for the people of the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, it's time that the Premier and his government told the people of Saskatchewan the real story of how they're operating this province, and about the programs they're cutting, and about the deficit and debt that they're accumulating, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, as a result of this budget's actions by the Premier and his government, I move an amendment to the budget motion:

That all the words after "That the Assembly" be deleted and the following be added:

that the government no longer has the confidence of the members of the Assembly and the people of Saskatchewan for the following reasons: presenting an inaccurate portrayal of the province's debt and deficit while forcing Saskatchewan people to pay the price for the government's financial mismanagement through hurtful cuts to important programs and services.

And this motion is seconded by the member from Cumberland.

**Mr. Vermette:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to enter the debate on the budget presented by the Sask Party government . . .

**The Speaker:** — The motion presented by the member from Regina . . . Order. Order. I'd ask the members to allow the Speaker to bring forward the motion, the amendment to the budget motion moved by the member from Regina Dewdney. Will the members take the motion as read?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Agreed. I recognize the member from Cumberland.

**Mr. Vermette:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to enter the debate on the budget presented by the Sask Party government and to second the amendment brought forward by the member from Dewdney.

Mr. Speaker, why am I not supporting the budget, the Sask Party budget? Well let me tell you why. It's because of the cuts to the programs, and here are a few of the programs that are being cut, Mr. Speaker. I just want to highlight a few of them, and there's many of them, but I just want to highlight a few of them at this time.

First Nations and Métis Relations, in that department some of the cuts that have impacted a people that are very proud, trying to be a part of this province's economics, with the education and trying to be true partners and trying to come to work with provincial and other government and other organizations to make sure that they are truly seen as partners and want to do

that. And I see some of the cuts to the programs that are affecting First Nations and Métis are totally appalling from this government. The Sask Party government has lost touch with the Aboriginal people of this province.

Northern skills training, the program, this program had an opportunity to help Aboriginal people, northern people, to gain access to jobs, some training, and access to meaningful employment and to take their part and paying their share of the taxes and taking care of their families. And they were very proud. It does something for people when they have a job. You have truly something to get up in the morning to go to, you're very proud of. You're providing for your family. And northern people, Aboriginal people, truly feel like that. Many people in our province want to wake up in the morning, have a job to go to. And unfortunately here's a program that was cut affecting First Nations and Métis people and northern people. So I just find it very odd that this government brags about its connection to the people of our province.

Yes, you know, Mr. Speaker, the people did elect a Sask Party government in 2007. We know that. There's 38 members on that side; there's 20 members on this side. But you know, Mr. Speaker, there was hope. And some people had hope when they seen the record profits that were in the . . . and I guess the surplus that was in the budget. People were very excited to see that. Okay, here's a government, they're going to take a direction, advice from the people. And, Mr. Speaker, the people felt like, hey, the NDP government left you all this money, a surplus of money — an inheritance if you want to call it that — and they were hoping that the government would do the right thing for all people and would take care. But unfortunately as we go through budget after budget after year . . . they're going into their third year of mismanagement, mismanagement of the money, the people's money that was meant for programs like northern skills training that was meant to do some good.

[15:00]

You know, I'm going to go into looking at First Nations-Métis pre-K [pre-kindergarten] education. Why would anyone want to cut a program there to educate people with pre-K, a pre-K program? I don't understand why anyone would want to cut an education program, Mr. Speaker. They have no idea.

Yet on one hand they want to send the message out: we understand; we want to work with the communities; we want to consult. They don't. They don't consult the people out there. They don't do that. They make the decisions and then they go to them, well here's what's good for you. People don't want to be treated like that, Mr. Speaker. They have a right to be treated with respect, dignity . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — And decency.

**Mr. Vermette:** — And decency. Right on. You know, I just want some of the cuts that are affecting First Nations and Métis, you know, I'm going to get a chance to go into some of the other areas, Mr. Speaker, and I will. There's lots of room and lots of time to do that.

You know, we're looking at the health. Health had a budget increase, you know, 123 million. Well that's good. But when

you find out how much the nurses will take in their salary increases that this government negotiated, what is going to be left for increased spending from this government?

Well Aboriginal people and northern people and members of this province, Saskatchewan residents, Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of people dealing with addictions. Lots of people dealing with addictions, Mr. Speaker, a lot of families and it's not good. We need to reach out. The government needs to reach out and try to assist those community members. It's unreal, the hurt that's going on in some of our communities. You know, promoting health care. You know, Mr. Speaker, you look at mental health and the youth suicide. So many of our youth and our community members are losing their battle with depression. They need more help, more services to come into the communities.

And let's be honest here, Mr. Speaker, this government has an obligation to those communities to bring the services where those communities are needed, not to have people travel so far away out of their communities. It needs to be addressed. This government has an obligation to deal with it. We've been talking about it. We've been bringing up concerns. The members opposite . . . My colleagues have done an excellent job of trying to bring the concerns forward, Mr. Speaker, of the needs, not only in the North, not only in First Nations reserves and Métis communities, but all over this province. And I think my colleagues and myself have done an excellent job, doing the job we've been asked to do as official opposition on behalf of the people to send the message to that government.

You know, you look at long-term care, the needs, the North. And I'm going to be very clear, petition after petition, day after day in this House to that government reminding them about the seniors back home — our elders. They want to be able to stay in their communities. They want to be with their loved ones, with their community members. And they want to speak their language. And they want to know that there's a presence, and they want their family to be able to come and visit them. Well unfortunately they don't have a community with a long-term care facility 10 minutes away, sometimes 5 minutes away from a community. The North doesn't have that opportunity. We have to go three and four hours away from our communities.

You know, there's sometimes a waiting list in some of the other communities I've heard about in the South. And sometimes those places are full, and I know there's a waiting list. But the people there have access, maybe sometimes 10 minutes away from their community, 20, until their long-term care facility opens up or a bed opens up in their community so they get to move back. But the waiting list is almost one full year for the North, one full year. No other community except for the North experiences that. That is appalling. Something needs to be done and addressed.

And, you know, we serve petitions day after day in the House and we have hundreds of signatures from people back home, appalled. And some people have to lose, Mr. Speaker, have lost their loved ones. And they've been away from their community and have to bring them back home to bury them. And to watch the struggle that some of my community members have to deal with, it's so sad to watch the compassion, but you know they still have hope. And I still have hope that the Sask Party

government can do the right thing by listening to the people.

But I can tell you one thing, Mr. Speaker. The people may send the message to the Sask Party, and you may not be the government in 2011. Mark my words on that one. You may not be. You may not win enough seats. The people may send you a message. You have lost touch with the voters. You have lost touch with the people. You have lost the support.

So, Mr. Speaker, you know, I'm going through the list, and we're looking at different things. We go to highways, Mr. Speaker. In the North, we know there's a lot of wealth generated by the highways economics, and the economics that come out of the North help everybody in the province. And I realize we all have to work together. Provincial coffers, there's money there. I look at the cuts. We've been raising petitions in the House, concerned about Highway 102, Highway 123 to Cumberland House, Highway 135 to Pelican Narrows. Wollaston Lake Road, they want an all-weather road, and they have to. But it's going at a snail's pace. They're very unhappy. People are tired of waiting.

When projects were announced under the current government, I don't see anything in this budget in Highways that's going to help any of the northern communities. When you're cutting 78 million out of it, how is that going to address some of their concerns? When you had all the money prior, how are you going to use those dollars? And maybe the Highways minister will say, oh no, we're going to commit what we have to make sure some of the northern roads are addressed.

And I'm not talking about maintenance. I'll say this much. We have maintenance people out there that work on those roads, day in and day out, and they do an excellent job. It isn't about them. They do an excellent job. They're unionized, and they do a good, good job for our province . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . There you go. There you go.

You know, you look at First Nation road access, the pilot project with the \$5 million, they call it deferred. Okay, a nice way of choosing that word. Okay. I say cut; they say deferred. I guess that will have to come out yet.

Mr. Speaker, you know, we do the job we're asked to do on behalf of the people back home and people that give us support. And they want to be able to have access to their MLAs and share their concerns, their hopes, their wishes, and what their needs are truly, you know. And we have a lot of staff, Mr. Speaker, that are out there in all of our offices, CAs [constituency assistant] and our families. And I want to thank my wife and my family for their support. I'd also like to thank my CA, Vicky, in my La Ronge office; in the Pelican office, Bernice. They do an excellent job dealing with peoples' concerns and I just want to acknowledge them. And, you know, I just want to acknowledge the team that I have supporting me back home in the Cumberland constituency. And that team is growing more and more all the time, and I think will continue to grow when they see the Sask Party government leaving them way behind. And that's wrong.

You know we're looking at housing, and housing is a huge issue in the North. And I know they came out with a new program, headstart to a home program. You know, very few

details. You know, they cheerlead about it. We don't know exactly what it's going to mean to us in the North, but I can tell you this: the people back home know they need more housing. And they see Sask Housing budget being cut — another shot.

We in the North have a lot of Sask Housing units and we rely on that. We need a lot more. We have overcrowding in many of our communities, Mr. Speaker. The health that our young people, infants, our young people, our seniors, our elders are dealing with because of the overcrowding, it creates more health dollars to be spent, whether it's provincial or federal dollars. You have overcrowding. If one person is sick . . . Sometimes we have three families living in a home that was designed for one family. Where do I see this government's commitment to those community members back home? There is no commitment from that government. The Sask Party will not commit to that. That's appalling, and the people see that back home.

You look at the rest of the province, and we've seen affordable housing, not only in the North. Saskatoon, Regina, other communities are feeling it. It's not just about the North. It's all over. This government has an obligation. This budget doesn't do enough to help those people. Because of this government's mismanagement of our finances, those people are being asked to pay, and that is wrong, Mr. Speaker. That is wrong, Mr. Speaker.

You know, looking at some of the other areas, Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to Forestry, and it is an honour to be the critic of Forestry. You have to try and understand what some of the forestry industry is going through, the communities' impact. And you know there's private people in that business, lots of them in this province. They were looking for help and assistance.

And then I see the government is supposed to do that. They know that. And again the Sask Party government turned their back on them. Why? Because of their mismanagement of the finances, that's why. People are seeing it. You look at the community of Big River. They know the Sask Party turned their back on them. They see that; they know that.

You know, they have an MLA, supposed to fight for them. I don't know what the MLA representing Big River did for them, but I'm hearing from them they're not happy. They're not happy at all about it.

You know, when you have the members and they're supposed to represent their communities, their constituencies and do a good job, and the people elect them . . . And I understand that. We all get elected. Whoever gets the most votes is who represents those community members. But you're supposed to represent all the community members. We have an obligation and that's what you're asked to do.

So when I see the members not dealing with the issues, forestry . . . And there's a number of those members from the Sask Party that have a lot of the forestry in their constituency. And the communities and the workers and the families and the industry and the private sector, you need to stand up for those communities. Tell your government, tell your government to help them. Don't sit there and do nothing and cheerlead when

you're asked to. Start fighting for the people that need your help.

We go into the forest fire management budget was cut. Another cut, Mr. Speaker. The North is going to feel a large impact, but so will some of the other communities — Prince Albert, Meadow Lake, you know. There's so many different communities that will be impacted. Denare Beach, Buffalo Narrows, you know. You have communities, La Ronge, you know, you have so many communities that will be impacted.

And I wonder, what was the thinking behind all that to come up with the \$30 million cut to the forest fire management budget. Especially, Mr. Speaker, it's going to be such a dry, dry spring. There are so many people concerned about that. And to see cuts like this, you know, I'm really waiting for the minister to explain, Mr. Speaker, exactly who will be impacted by this \$30 million cut. Who exactly will be impacted? The people want to know. They have a right to know. They're waiting. Some people have families. They rely on those dollars when they're working. But they're not hearing much. Why is that?

You know, what's going to happen at the end of the day, should we have a fire season that we have never seen anything like it, especially with no harvesting of the forest — thanks to that government, the harvesting.

[15:15]

So if you have that, no plan from them with the forestry sector. You have a task force that apparently Delbert Kirsch went on and we seen what happened there. We asked the member from Batoche, we see his task force, and nothing ever materialized from that. So the member from Batoche says, oh yes, you know, yes, we're working on it. And he went and did a tour, as far as I know and that's what I heard. And he was going to . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh, government paid for it, more taxpayer's dollars. You know, same community, Duck Lake, there you go. Good one. They're waiting for some water. In case they have fires, they're not going to have any water. Interesting.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, we look at this and I think the people in the North are really concerned. They're tired of this government ignoring them, their concerns. But I know we'll continue the fight and we'll bring petitions. We'll do all that we can. And as their representative, I will bring their petitions here, listen to their issues, their concerns. I will express those the best way I can. That's what I was asked to do, and I will do that. I will do all I can, Mr. Speaker, to bring the concerns from back home, and I will do my part in here. I will continue to work on behalf of the people of the Cumberland constituency. And like I said, we have a lot of issues to deal with and there's many issues.

You know, you look at a budget and, Mr. Speaker, they're going around trying to explain how good this budget is for the province. And they're trying to sell it and it's not going over very well. They know that, but they're scrambling around, trying to make sure everybody understands. Put the spin on it. Well they're going into their third year, and I think the people are starting to see the spin and they're not buying it anymore.

People are not buying it anymore, Mr. Speaker when they're seeing programs affected by this government because of their mismanagement, their decisions. The people trusted them, gave them an opportunity to represent all people in this province and take care of our finances. You were given that responsibility and do the right thing for all of us. Do the right thing on behalf of people of this province, Mr. Speaker.

You know, I want to make comments and referring to the Minister for First Nations and Métis Relations, responsible for Northern Affairs. You know, he did an interview and he made some comments today. And I'll be honest with you. Some of the stuff that the minister made comments to the radio station about some of the projects that were going to be cut, and he talked about exciting times and how excited he was, like I don't get it. And people back home are waiting patiently for that to happen. And hopefully he can come and explain exactly, you know, his stand on that.

But on that note, he talks about the enterprise regions will be taking care of, I believe, the trappers' needs. And the minister did not try to use the enterprise regions to deal with the trappers to understand them. Let's be honest here. And I really don't think the minister should try to pull the fur over the trappers' eyes, to be honest with you.

You know, I look forward to seeing the minister attend the trappers' convention April 9th and 10th in La Ronge. And you know, seeing him there'll be good. And more so, you know, I want to hear the minister say exactly about his budget cuts. And here's what I would like to hear him explain himself to the Trappers Association. You know, the minister's comments that the monies would be better spent elsewhere as opposed to covering trappers' conventions is sure to go over well with all the trappers there, Mr. Speaker. I just can't wait for his response to them.

I don't imagine it will be much of a response. Now we go back to some of the northern communities, and we look at trappers and we look at the commercial fishers and we look at the different sectors working in the North, in the mining, and we see a lot of the revenue going into the government's coffers. And northerners watch that and they understand, yes, economics is good. People understand that. And we're training.

But what the people don't understand is how the Sask Party government continues to turn their back on them and not deal with some of the issues. There are many issues. We know there's roads, there's housing. We watch all the different programs that are being announced. Maybe there's some new ones in the South, you know. And there are some programs.

And you know, the autism budget that came out, I will commend the government for that. Very positive. There's a good thing they did so I want to acknowledge that. But, you know, again they had to be pushed and had to do some lobbying and the people worked hard. And the people that lobby received some money to help them out in their struggles and that is a good thing. I think, Mr. Speaker, and I think we'll see that more and more people coming to this House, lobbying that government, Mr. Speaker.

They're responsible. They make the decisions but I think, Mr.

Speaker, they don't consult, they don't talk to anybody, Mr. Speaker. They just go ahead and make the decision and then deal with it later.

Well we're going to try to help them. We're going to try and bring people forward that will come to their Assembly, bring their issues and their concerns, and hopefully the government will hear, whether it's through a petition, a member's statement, an introduction, or meetings being set up with the different ministries, the different ministers, and try to make sure they understand the issues of Saskatchewan people.

We're going to do all we can to work with them and try to assist them, Mr. Speaker, because we have a job to do and I understand that. And I watch . . . You know, we sometimes have difference of opinions, but at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, this House is supposed to represent all of Saskatchewan people. Very clearly we have our political beliefs and I'm glad I'm on this side of the House, very glad of that. You know . . .

[Interjections]

**Mr. Vermette:** — And I thank you. The Sask Party members say it makes it unanimous. I appreciate your support. Again, you guys, thank you very much for your support. You know, they like to come up with their little comments every now and then and I, you know, yesterday, Mr. Speaker, I mentioned to them in a calling out from the House I yelled out at the minister and the member from Kindersley. I said, what's your prediction in potash? Is it going to be 3 million this time . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Or 3 billion, sorry. You know, 3 billion.

And it was amazing to see the member from Kindersley. You know what he says? He says, no, it's going to be between zero and 10 billion. Well you know what? They were off on 3 billion; they went minus. They went minus 200-and-some million so I don't know if I really see that's even going to be in the ballpark.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, we have a lot of work to do and it's going to take some seriousness. And I'll be honest with you, Mr. Speaker. We're going to do all we can on this side of the House and we're going to talk to people to get rid of the Sask Party government in 2011.

And I'll tell you, we had a wonderful convention. A lot of momentum building, a lot of teamwork. And I see a team coming together like I've never seen a team coming together. I've seen the labour. I've seen the leadership, the past leadership of First Nations. I've seen Métis people, I've seen northern people, I've seen all across the province coming together, excited and saying, we're going to do something. We're going to do something. And I know what they're going to do, and we'll wait and see, Mr. Speaker.

They're going to get rid of that government. They're going to get rid of that government that mismanages their finances, that doesn't consult with First Nations and Métis and the rest of the people in our province — does not consult with First Nations, Métis, the Aboriginals, others.

So, Mr. Speaker, we're going to do all we can to work hard on

behalf of all of the Saskatchewan residents. And we're going to work on behalf of all of them. We're going to work on behalf of the agriculture people. We're going to work on behalf of the northerners. We're going to work on behalf of . . . Well he wants to laugh and say about farmers.

Well let me tell you there, the member from Meadow Lake, let me tell you about the farmers. You cut money out of their budget and you say you're in tune with them? And you cut the budget? Whatever. The member can say what he wants. You cut money from their budget, \$90 million-plus from the agriculture budget, and he wants to say he's in tune with them?

There's so much more that needs to be said. And I know that a lot of my colleagues . . . so much my colleagues want to say. There's so much more to say about . . . And I guess, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to have a chance to meet with the trappers on the 9th and 10th and talk about some of the issues. And I mean, for the trappers, some of the fur prices are going up and I'm glad to see that.

And some of the trappers, you know, we had our elders. They used the trapping to educate their young people, teach them part of their . . . And you know, some of the people have had three and four generations to learn the trapping industry. And they've taught them well. But we have some people who trap, Mr. Speaker, and they've been trapping since, I believe, '73, some of them.

And now they've come out with legislation and I don't know why they figure they're not hearing the trappers. But when you pass legislation that affects trappers and you don't even consult with them, and you bring in regulations and rules that do not, do not help them. But they see that this government is not supporting the trapping industry, the fishing industry. There are so many people asking out there for help.

And, Mr. Speaker, I have listened to many of my colleagues talk about some of the issues, the finances of this past government, and we talk about the past record of my government and the past NDP government. And I have to be honest with you, you know. Our track record prior to . . . And the member from Wood River's always going on about different things and he talks about, he talks about 16 years of the NDP.

And I have to be honest with you. Sixteen years of the NDP and they did some tough work and they had a tough job to do and some of these members that were there had to go through that tough work. So I remind the member from Wood River, when he talks about that, he never wants to talk about the previous years, the Grant Devine years. He never talks about the Conservatives and what their government did. He doesn't want to talk about that. Who incurred the debt? All he wants to go on is 16 years of the NDP.

Well they have the job now and, you know, your track record's going to come out and we see exactly what's happening. They're not doing such a great job. They're mismanaging the finances. Sure they're trying to put the spin — everybody's happy. Well you guys need to understand, Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party must understand. Your government, you're not in tune with the people, Mr. Speaker. They are not in tune. They

are so behind, but you know, they go around trying to spin it off — oh your numbers, the numbers, the numbers.

I think at the end of the day the people will truly start to see them for what they are, the broken promises that they make. Mr. Speaker, the broken promises that they make, all the things that they promise and then they say, oh we can't keep those. PST [provincial sales tax], 1 per cent — oh we can't keep that. No. Well you know why? Well 16 years of the NDP.

Well you know what? It's just about three years of the Sask Party and we see where our finances are. And I think we're getting response from the media, from some of the . . . if you look at some of the different people responding to the budgets, the comments that are in the press, some of the interviews that are being done about their budget. You know? It's all smoke and mirrors. There's no way. It isn't working. They aren't selling it.

And I think at the end of the day, and I truly believe this, there are areas where, when we form government . . . And we will form government. The NDP will form government. They will form government. And when they're done with their policy review and they will go out to the communities, and as our policy review, they will talk to the community members. They will talk to the stakeholders, the industry, the community members, our elders, our First Nation leader, the people, the Métis, and we will talk with anyone in the province, talk about policy. We won't close our doors and hide it. It will be very open, transparent. And we will develop some policies that the people of the province want and we will have a platform to go on. And the people will decide who they're going to believe, who they're going to trust with their finances, and who has the best track record.

[15:30]

You know, Mr. Speaker, I look at the leadership of both sides. You know, we all have leaders of the party and currently I look at the Leader of the Official Opposition. And I look at the resumés, and I look at the track record and I'll be honest with you. If you look up the experience and the job, I'm very proud of our leader, the business side. He has sat in this House, he has represented us 100 per cent. You couldn't ask for better representation. You can't ask for better commitment.

This man is 100 per cent committed. He's worked unbelievable, tirelessly that he works. He shows that. His compassion for our province, for the people, I've seen that. The promise that he has given to all of Saskatchewan people as a leader to do all he can to assist them, to hear their concerns, and to work with them when they have hope, hope. He tells them, don't lose your hope. Never lose your hope. Work hard. And I believe that. Work hard, continue to work. When people have hope, there's a chance, Mr. Speaker. And he truly sees the people. He encourages them — don't lose hope. Fight with us.

He talks to the labour movement. He tells them the same thing. Work with us. We'll fight hard. We've seen what the Sask Party does. And I can tell you, you can't ask, Mr. Speaker, for a better group of MLAs on this side of the House to work for, who work hard and tirelessly. I'm very proud to serve with these individuals. I have learned a lot. You know I haven't been here

long, Mr. Speaker. We have lots to learn. I will do my best representing my community, my constituency.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I have compassion for my home and the community I represent, which I hope we all do. But I listen to some of the concerns and some of the hurt that's going on back home and some of the grief I see in some of our young peoples' faces. And they don't want the government to come in and just fix it. They know that. The leadership knows they can't ask the government, just fix it.

But I say this, and I challenge that government, Mr. Speaker, when the people come forward and the people have issues and the people come up with solutions, Mr. Speaker, and they've looked at it and they've talked about it amongst themselves and they say, yes we have issues and we have concerns, and these are the things that are bothering and we're having trouble with, whether it's our youth, whether it's community, I mean you can talk about many different issues that we're faced with. But when they have those issues and they come together with solutions — solutions, not just issues and concerns and want to leave them at anyone's door, they're very proud — when they come, Mr. Speaker, with the answers and they come up with some solutions, I challenge that government when that happens to make sure they respond to them. Take some of your money, the people's money, if you have any left, and please help them.

Now if they won't, if they won't help them, Mr. Speaker, I will remind them. And I will go . . . [inaudible] . . . and remind them. In 2011 you'll get a chance to speak. You'll get a chance to do an evaluation on all of us in this House. And you pick somebody who you felt fought for you and tried. I remind us all, we're supposed to represent our constituencies. And it doesn't matter if you're a backbencher, if you're a critic, or if you're a minister, you're supposed to speak up for the community you represent. And I will encourage the backbenchers, when you see things that your government is doing that is not going to help the communities, speak up and say something. You have a voice and it's a strong one. We all have to work together in this House to make sure the issues and the concerns of our people are heard.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of work to be done. We know that. Again, I ask and say this: education. I look at the K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] education in the province, and I'm very concerned with what the government has done. And I don't believe they consulted as they say they do. Oh everybody likes, you know, K to 12 system.

They've taken away the ability for divisions to generate any revenue. When they isolate or there's a situation where they identify that they need the help, they can't generate any money to deal with that issue that has come up in their school division. The government took that away from them. They said, you will not have the ability to generate any revenue to help the situation or an issue or a circumstance that may arise in your school division. We will not allow that. We'll tell you how much money you're going to get. We'll tell you how much money you'll get, and that's all you're going to get. And you can ask us. We might let you ask us if you need more. So there's so many concerns out there.

You look at capital and some of the capital projects that were

announced under that government. There are such a snail pace moving, it's unreal to see. I've said this in the House. By the time they're done Churchill High School, my grandkids will be graduated and out of the school. They need to get them on board and get the facility done, tendered, and on with building it. It can be a beautiful facility. It can be positive for the community.

There was a lot of people that did a lot of letters back home, letters of support from industry, from organizations, letters from students, from staff, from the parent council, from the school division. A lot of people put letters forward to bring attention to that government about Churchill High School renovation. And they were pleased. And I acknowledged all the help they did. And their work of lobbying got the government to put the money forward. Make the announcement, we thought.

Well here we are. We'll be going into, what, 2011? And where are we? You know, where are we? We're going to be there? In a short period of time, 2010 will be done. So I'm wondering, is it going to happen in 2010, or is it 2011 like I said? I'm just wondering where it's at. But it needs to get done. It needs to get done.

But, Mr. Speaker, at this time I've had an opportunity to share some of my thoughts and the concerns that I've heard from community members. And I mean there are a lot of issues but they're, like I've said, housing, roads, addictions, mental health, the commercial fishermen, the trappers. There are a lot of issues that have to be addressed, a lot of issues that that budget did not address. The Sask Party budget did not address the issues in the North or in a lot of our province, did not touch. Why that is? Well I think one thing it could be, they have lost touch with the communities' members. They're not in tune with the community like they want to spin it around. They are not.

I think, Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of work to be done. And I know our party, the official opposition, I know myself will work hard on behalf of the community members. And like I said previously, this official opposition, the 20 members, will work hard on behalf of the Saskatchewan people. We will hold that government accountable for the finances, for the program cuts, for talking and looking at different areas that this government does not consult when it makes its decisions. We will bring up those concerns, Mr. Speaker. We will bring them up through petitions, member statements. Organizations, individuals will come here and we will make sure that their concerns, their issues are heard by the government. We will hold them accountable.

Now at this point, I think I know other members want to get in on the debate, so at this time, Mr. Speaker, I think I'll end on that note.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Greystone, the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

**Hon. Mr. Norris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to participate in the debate on the 2010-11 budget and in particular to support our government's motion and oppose the NDP's amendment.

Before I get into the substantive comments, Mr. Speaker, what I'd like to do is pay a special thanks to the people of Saskatoon Greystone. These are attentive and engaged citizens, Mr. Speaker, that I have the honour of representing in this Assembly, in their Assembly. And certainly, Mr. Speaker, in addition to the people of Saskatoon Greystone, I would also like to extend a special thanks to my family. Most immediately and directly to my wife, Martha, for her tireless efforts that enable me to be here on a daily level, Mr. Speaker, and do my best on behalf of the people of Saskatoon Greystone. And she is a great asset in that work.

I would also like to . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Indeed. I would also like to thank my daughter, Jacqueline. She's now 10 and playing soccer and violin and dancing. She's increasingly busy, Mr. Speaker, and what's becoming apparent is I'm not there as often as I should be, Mr. Speaker. And I appreciate her patience and her joie de vivre.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to my wife and daughter, I'd like to pay a special thanks to my mom and dad, my sister, my grandparents. Bill Norris is just returned back from the hospital, 87 years old and doing quite well in his recovery, Mr. Speaker. And my grandmother standing beside him, as she has for many decades, making sure that he's able to carry on and having a high quality of life.

Over the course of the last year, Mr. Speaker, I have also had the occasion to pay tribute to my grandmother, Blanche Côté, who's no longer with us and for that, a person who has been missed tremendously and continues to be.

To my colleagues on this side of the House, a special thanks. We are a close knit family. We work tirelessly together, and my appreciation to each and every one of them is only coupled with my appreciation for our team back in Saskatoon Greystone and the team both at the constituency office. Kalle is there and Lesley's there. Kalle's on maternity leave. As well as the team here: Kathy's involved, Linda, Jenn, Lindell, Laura, and Mary, chief of staff. These people help to ensure that I'm as well positioned as possible. And certainly I know their burdens are heavy when dealing with the present company, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Indeed, with their MLA.

Mr. Speaker, more directly, for the people of this province we want to make sure — within the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour, just as more broadly across government — that we're rolling up our sleeves and working diligently every day to ensure that the interests of the people of this province, the interests of this province are being acted upon and secured, and together that we're helping to move this province forward.

I think this speech offers a unique opportunity on an annual basis to highlight some of the key program priorities, some of the broad objectives, if you will, for the next fiscal year, as well as some important new initiatives to be undertaken within the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour. And again, not done in isolation, but done in a coordinated, coherent fashion to ensure that we're maximizing coherence, cohesion and co-operation right across government, Mr. Speaker.

Thanks to the determined work of our Minister of Finance — a remarkable colleague who has been tireless in his efforts — this budget is balanced. It's responsible, and it's forward looking. And, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to highlight some key comments to reinforce that. The Greater Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce has said:

Saskatchewan is quite unique in its ongoing commitment to [balanced budgets and] debt reduction. This commitment is remarkable and should be celebrated by every citizen concerned about future generations.

That from the Greater Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce.

More broadly, Mr. Speaker, *The Globe and Mail* on March 25th wrote:

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

[15:45]

Mr. Speaker, and so as we see this budget in its characterization in being balanced, responsible, and forward looking, we can see that we've made difficult decisions, ones that focused on sustaining our growth and sharing the benefits of this growth with the people of our province. And we do so in a fashion that characterizes, Mr. Speaker, characterizes the prairie population, the people of this province, that is, characterizes the people of this province with values like prudence and discipline, with a focus on the future and appreciation of young people.

Mr. Speaker, significant steps have been taken to focus government investments to help people and to help ensure that our progress, the progress of Saskatchewan, is sustained. Our budget is balanced. It's fiscally responsible. And we've ensured that these measures, these measures which are so vital in order for the province to address challenges that lie ahead, we've helped to ensure that these are in place to sustain the progress and forward momentum that we've seen in Saskatchewan since the 2007 election, Mr. Speaker.

A number of independent outside analysts are clear. Saskatchewan will emerge from the global economic recovery as a fiscal leader right across Canada. The province has already distinguished itself as an economic leader this past year. And the members present will be familiar with a number of statistics, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan has the lowest unemployment rate at 4.3 per cent. This is running at nine consecutive months to have the lowest employment rate in the province. Employment is up year over year, 3,100 jobs, Mr. Speaker; average weekly earnings, \$832, Mr. Speaker, year over year. This is the second highest earnings growth in Canada, the third highest earnings across the country, and a record, Mr. Speaker. Certainly the statistics go on.

What we can say is, as we look most importantly at population



growth, the members opposite oversaw an era where tens of thousands of people left this province, Mr. Speaker. Since the 2007 election, we've been able to see almost 30,000 people either return to or come to Saskatchewan for the first time. And certainly there will be some announcements to reflect the success that we've had even in this fiscal year, especially regarding immigration.

This is a significant story, Mr. Speaker, these indicators, each one highlighting the forward momentum that Saskatchewan has under our Premier and this government, all of this done in the midst of a global recession. We know that we're not immune from those forces, Mr. Speaker, but that we have weathered these forces as well as any could expect. Because we're not immune, Mr. Speaker, it's one of the key reasons that this budget remains so forward-looking.

It makes key investments in health care and in education and in advanced education and in other areas to support those in need. Some of the guiding principles, some of the guiding principles, Mr. Speaker, that we have taken in deliberating through the ministry, Mr. Speaker, these include . . . The government's goal is clear. Let's maintain the province's economic momentum and ensure the people of this province are sharing in the benefits that accrue as a result.

As the ministry prepared its budget, we were guided by the following principles: invest carefully; second, ensure that the people of this province are getting real value for every precious dollar from our services and programs as well as those being offered by third parties; determine how service delivery can be undertaken more effectively, more efficiently, and certainly, Mr. Speaker, with new innovation.

As well we've said, let's identify our core programs and services. Mr. Speaker, we added to this, invest strategically and enhance innovation to support the ministry's primary goals, and of course the future of this government and the future of the province. As a result, the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour has been able to maintain funding of our core programs. The ministry's budget totals \$846.1 million, Mr. Speaker, an increase of \$7.7 million.

Regarding Saskatchewan's economic momentum, we made realistic and practical decisions on how best to facilitate Saskatchewan's continued economic growth. We will achieve this by continuing to support a highly skilled and educated workforce and by fostering safe, fair, and productive workplaces.

I've spoken publicly for some time about the province's talent challenge. Mr. Speaker, that is, we know that we need more people with the skills training, the education, the personal and professional development to ensure that we're able to maximize the opportunities that present themselves today and into the future.

What's important is, as we look to the future over the course of the next five to seven years, we know that Saskatchewan will require an estimated 80,000 skilled workers in order to keep up with labour market demands. This, Mr. Speaker, is a real challenge but it's also a real opportunity.

Of course to move forward, Mr. Speaker, we know that importantly we need to invest in Saskatchewan, and the key to addressing this opportunity is our substantial investment in post-secondary education within Saskatchewan. This was affirmed last year with a significant injection of capital through the knowledge infrastructure program, and it is encouraging to see these much-needed projects under way at our universities, at our technical institutes including SIAST, at our regional colleges where we've committed a record amount of capital.

By the end of the two-year knowledge infrastructure program, the province will have contributed more than \$55 million. And, Mr. Speaker, this is not done in isolation. This is done in partnership with an initiative from the federal government, an initiative that is greatly appreciated within the province of Saskatchewan because it allows us to help address the infrastructure deficit in our post-secondary system that we inherited from the members opposite.

In this budget we've made another strong statement about the vital role of post-secondary education and the vital role that post-secondary plays in the life of today's Saskatchewan and for tomorrow. Universities, technical institutes, and regional colleges will receive an additional \$26.8 million in operating funds, an overall increase of 5.1 per cent. This is the highest of any Canadian provincial budget offered so far this fiscal year, Mr. Speaker.

On top of the support we already provide through the graduate retention program and a robust array of other services, we are introducing several additional enhancements to the Saskatchewan student loan program. These enhancements come as a result of valuable dialogue with students and other stakeholders over the course of the last two years.

Mr. Speaker, we're reducing rates on repayable loans to prime. We're allowing full-time students to earn as much as they choose during their period of study without affecting their loan eligibility. And, as we heard especially from young parents, ownership of vehicles by students is allowed without affecting the level of financial assistance that they'll now be able to draw upon. It is noteworthy that two-thirds of every provincial dollar given to students is already non-repayable. Essentially this is a de facto grant.

As a result of this budget, average tuition fees will, for university students and others, will be kept reasonable as we strive to ensure that affordability and accessibility, as well as excellence and innovation and inclusion, these are the defining themes of post-secondary education in contemporary Saskatchewan.

I'm quite pleased that the government, through this budget, has already surpassed our promise — another promise — to increase operating funds to post-secondary institutions by \$125 million in four years. We have provided an additional . . . We've provided an additional 176.3 million in just three. Another promise kept, Mr. Speaker, out of more than 100. And we know there's more work to do, but another promise kept.

With this budget the government also meets its platform commitment for 120 medical residency seats. And certainly, Mr. Speaker, we hear from across the province, there's more

work to do here. As we see the progress on the Academic Health Sciences building, as we see construction under way, Mr. Speaker, as we see these new seats, it stands in stark contrast to a College of Medicine that rested on probation under members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

As well, our belief in excellence and innovation will be underscored through support through some exciting initiatives within the research realm. And certainly even today, I've spoken with an official at Canadian Light Source synchrotron who expressed how pleased he was that the Canadian Light Source synchrotron in Saskatoon at the U of S will receive operating funds, the first million, as a four-year commitment which will total over 11 million. Needless to say, the ministry is pleased that we've been able to provide a strong foundation for post-secondary education.

But the ministry serves the people of this province, Mr. Speaker. And the feedback we've received from students, from professors, from lecturers, from university administrators, and college presidents, we certainly know, while there's more work to do, they're pleased that this government has put such a priority on post-secondary education.

I'd like to draw on a very specific theme that some of the members opposite have raised, and rightfully so, Mr. Speaker, and that is regarding investments in First Nations and Métis peoples and communities, Mr. Speaker. Last year, last February, the Canadian ministers of Education and Advanced Education met. We met here, in Saskatchewan, to address post-secondary education and K to 12 for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people, the first time in Canadian history that a summit was held to find ways to eliminate the gap that exists in educational outcomes.

This month we've been able to follow up on that. And we've been able to help host through the Public Policy Forum, in co-operation with the Johnson-Shoyama school, a second summit regarding the future of Aboriginal post-secondary education in Saskatchewan. I spoke there about the ethical imperative of closing and eliminating the education and training gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians, a theme that, while at a recent CMEC [Council of Ministers of Education, Canada] meeting, I drew to attention again, Mr. Speaker, ensuring it was the first item that was listed on the press release that was issued at the end of that.

We all know that education is a path to prosperity. And that's why this budget recognizes the strong partnerships between the post-secondary sector, as well as industry and other initiatives like the multi-party training plan, which we launched an additional version of — and certainly I want to give credit to members opposite; there have been earlier phases — but this most current phase was launched in La Ronge, Mr. Speaker.

The member opposite made some reference about the North. This ceremony that had students, that had faculty members, that had industry representatives and government representatives certainly demonstrates a very tangible and collaborative commitment to ensuring that we are eliminating that educational gap.

I also want to highlight our record on the Northern Career Quest

partnership. This is an ASEP [Aboriginal skills and employment partnership] initiative, and that means we have federal dollars and provincial dollars and private sector dollars coming in. It's the largest of its kind in Canada. It's \$33 million, and it's offering assistance and support and training to more than 1,000 northerners, Mr. Speaker. It's focused on making sure that that training allows individuals to enter into the sector of mining, Mr. Speaker.

The 2010-11 budget provides \$38.8 million in direct funds specifically for First Nations and Métis post-secondary educational and training opportunities, Mr. Speaker. This represents a 5.1 per cent increase over last year's budget and reflects our ongoing commitment to all post-secondary institutions to support First Nations and Métis students across this province.

The ministry will also provide an estimated \$125 million through indirect support so that First Nations and Métis people have the skills and knowledge and education to participate fully in, benefit completely in, and contribute to in new and innovative ways within our economy and of course across our communities.

The total package in this budget within the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour is up over \$160 million for our First Nations and Métis people because we know that this population represents a vital element in our strategy to help Saskatchewan meet its full potential.

Our overall commitment to employment and job skills training remains as strong as ever, with investments up over \$100 million. And I want to be frank, Mr. Speaker: some of our programs have been reduced. Some of our support has been eliminated. Some of these programs are going to change shape. We've taken these decisions because these programs were not meeting the needs of learners nor workers nor employers in an evolving Saskatchewan labour market. We're focusing on real results. This said, we continue to provide significant support to our apprenticeship training programs, including a 10 per cent increase this year, Mr. Speaker, in this budget.

Now I want to read back, Mr. Speaker, from a rather raucous day, November 26th, 2009, when the member from Saskatoon Fairview was asking a number of questions of me in this Chamber as we sat in committee. And I made reference to more than \$17 million that we were investing at that time; it's now gone up by 10 per cent. And what did the member from Fairview say? "You're wasting money." Mr. Speaker, the member from Fairview ought to be ashamed because dollars for apprenticeship training never wasted, always maximized, because we want to make sure more of our young people have the skills training they require to have fulfilling careers, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to make sure for the record that everyone understands what the member from Fairview has offered in November, Mr. Speaker. In the year that ended June 30th, 2009, just as a reference, Mr. Speaker, more than 5,000 apprenticeship positions have been created, a 32 per cent increase over the previous 12-month period. As we invest in our people here, we'll also undertake action to ensure that we remove barriers to labour mobility.

[16:00]

This budget positions Saskatchewan to effectively meet the labour market needs of the province, and is responsive to key sectors of our economy as we work to meet our talent challenge, Mr. Speaker, that is investing in Saskatchewan in post-secondary education, in skills training, personal and professional development, allowing people across Saskatchewan to meet their full potential, Mr. Speaker.

We also have a second element, and that is we want to make sure our expat community from across Canada and around the world knows it's a great time to come home. And certainly as the population continues to increase, we know anecdotally indeed they are. And they're delighted to see that this government is rolling up its sleeves and working as hard and as diligently as we can to be fiscally prudent and at the same time attentive to the needs of this province.

A third component of helping to meet our talent challenge, Mr. Speaker, relates to inviting newcomers from across the country and around the world. It relates to an immigration strategy that we've recently launched. Our immigration strategy continues to play a vital and pivotal role in meeting our labour market demands while enhancing our communities. Mr. Speaker, our goal is to have more diverse and dynamic and cosmopolitan communities stretching right across this province. And we're well on our way as newcomers are now living in more than 160 Saskatchewan communities.

This budget reflects our continuing commitment to attract and retain newcomers for our growing economy and our increasingly diverse communities. Our target numbers remain on track. We will enhance our efforts to recruit and attract immigrant entrepreneurs and to recruit international students. We're also going to make sure that we put increasing emphasis on the family class category as we will strive to provide additional settlement services that effectively meet the needs of our new neighbours.

In concert with my counterparts across the country, we have also adopted a pan-Canadian approach so that foreign qualifications are recognized in a fair and more consistent and certainly a more timely manner. There's a lot of work to do here, Mr. Speaker, and this work is just getting under way thanks to this pan-Canadian framework that's been agreed to by all provinces.

We're convinced this framework will speed up, that is, accelerate the integration of newcomers whose skills match the needs of Saskatchewan's labour market and our employers. And we also know that newcomers are helping to create more jobs, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to just address one additional issue, Mr. Speaker, on this theme of making sure that we have more diverse, dynamic, and cosmopolitan communities. That is on March 26th, in a rather unfortunate statement, the member from Regina Walsh Acres rose from her seat and made the following allegation: the Saskatchewan Party government has cancelled funding for the Status of Women's office.

Mr. Speaker, I want to correct this empirical inaccuracy. In fact

I find it to be a rather cynical ploy. What I can say, Mr. Speaker, is the dollars are actually going up for the Status of Women's office in this budget, Mr. Speaker, and we've found a way to help and ensure that even more dollars are going to be channelled into programming for women right across this province. There's certainly a lot more to do in this area, Mr. Speaker, but I will say it is a shameful statement that the member from Regina Walsh Acres offered earlier this month. This is vital as we continue to build more diverse, dynamic, and cosmopolitan communities and a Saskatchewan that's more inclusive, Mr. Speaker.

And so as we continue to meet our talent challenge, that is, making sure we're investing in post-secondary education, skills training, personal and professional development, ensuring that individuals across our province are better able to meet their full potential, especially in an increasingly competitive global economy . . . And secondly, we're inviting our expats from across the country and around the world back to Saskatchewan. And we're seeing real success there, Mr. Speaker.

Then we also focus on ensuring that newcomers from across Canada and around the world are coming to Saskatchewan and doing so in record numbers, Mr. Speaker. We also want to make sure that that notion of equality, that notion of fairness, that notion of inclusion resonates right across our province. That's a shared responsibility, and certainly we want to make sure we're doing our part, Mr. Speaker.

To this, Mr. Speaker, we also want to make sure that we're rolling up our sleeves and supporting a growing economy that focuses on healthier and safer workplaces. We want to make sure that, through enforcement and education, workplace safety is an increasing priority. And I think we have a track record that demonstrates the progress that we're making, while there's certainly more to do. In the '08-09 fiscal year, there were issued 775 stop work orders. That's a 269 per cent increase over the '06-07 period, the period when the members opposite were in office. We have certainly . . . We offer this as an indicator of our commitment to occupational health and safety.

As well, Mr. Speaker, in '08-09 the ministry conducted more than 3,800 inspections of workplaces, a 6 per cent increase from the last year of the NDP's record. And we're certainly committed to rigorous enforcement when it comes to occupational health and safety; our campaigns are focusing on education, awareness, and enforcement.

We're also making sure that workplaces are safe for young workers. If you can believe it, Mr. Speaker, when we came into office, after 16 years of the NDP, there was no minimum age of employment in Saskatchewan. We were one of the last provinces not to have that taken care of. Mr. Speaker, what we've been able to do is ensure that there is a minimum age of employment. And we've been able to ensure now that for our young workers, those that we want to ensure succeed in their studies, we now have work-based training available through a certificate. We've also put conditions on them — no more than 16 hours per week, no working late at night or early in the morning on school days, and we need to make sure their families are engaged, Mr. Speaker.

These are some of the key initiatives that we think are going to

help move the province forward. Mr. Speaker, as we see an increasingly inclusive, vibrant Saskatchewan, one that has increasing investments in post-secondary education, increasing investments in training, one that demands greater accountability and real results as it relates to taxpayer dollars, we think this is the right balance to move Saskatchewan forward. And that's why I'm absolutely delighted to be supporting this government and our Premier, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is a pleasure to enter into this very important debate. And I think it's interesting to follow the member from Greystone as I've listened intently to his words about the future of what's happening here in Saskatchewan. And of course it's not quite the same picture I see in Centre; it's very grim indeed. And some of these things that I'll talk about in terms of the budget and how vague it is and some of the questions . . . I will definitely be voting for the amendment and voting against the budget because I think there's some serious, serious flaws in it.

I do want to say before I start into my formal remarks, particularly as the critic of Social Services, there's some real issues that I think that we need to pay attention to. And I know my colleagues on this side have done an incredible job raising some of those issues, particularly around the First Nations University and how we need to make sure it's supported and that it gets the funding it needs to move forward.

There's been a lot of work done, and I just have to say to the students, thank you for the leadership they have shown because this is their legacy. This is their future and it's also their children's future. And we need everyone in this province to step up to the plate — including our 13 Conservative MPs [Member of Parliament] who seem to be holding back, who don't seem to be pushing the federal government to step up to the plate. That needs to happen and we need all hands on deck for that.

I also want to take a moment to talk about the SCN [Saskatchewan Communications Network] fiasco that's unfolding before our very eyes, and it's one that I think, really it just illustrates . . . it's the metaphor for this budget about how we cannot trust this budget, how we cannot trust this government. On one hand they say, we're all for young people; we're all for innovation. We hear that all the time. Innovation is the key to the future. And yet they take away something that so many young people take heart in, in their future, and yank it back. We know there's going to be expenses to it, but it is amazing to see the momentum behind that move and around the SCN and saving the SCN.

And I just want to read into the record a letter I received from Leanne, someone who I know and who really believes firmly . . . She's an independent producer, but she is so eloquent in terms of what she believes needs to be done to save SCN and the reasons why. And I'll quote, and this is the quote:

SCN served to nurture the industry in many ways. For one, it was a jumping-off point for many emerging producers who could more easily get a foot in the door. For all producers, SCN played a little-known yet key role as a

trigger for financing many other sources. This means that if SCN gave your program an initial and often a small investment, you then became eligible for larger national funds. Without SCN's initial investment, you had no access to these other and in many cases necessary funds. The funding process in Canadian film and TV production is so delicate and intricate that, without SCN, independent Saskatchewan productions will face a nearly insurmountable task of pulling together the necessary funding for their projects.

She goes on, I quote:

More than all of this, the most distressing issue is that young filmmakers like myself will soon be faced with no other option than to leave the place we call home. It's a sad truth that all the graduate retention initiatives in the world can't sustain a population of emerging filmmakers that have no industry left in which to work. I fear we will face a mass exodus of young talent if we don't convince the government that there are viable and mutually beneficial solutions to maintain a profitable industry that can move forward in a technologically innovative way.

And I just think Leanne was so eloquent in putting together this note to many of us, and I think the minister probably received the same. And I just want to put it on the record because I know that I've seen so many young people really hope for a future here in Saskatchewan, and they see this as their way to tell the Saskatchewan story that they're so proud of and yet couple that, as the Minister from Advanced Ed likes to say, couple it with innovation. And yet this really speaks to being let down and yet another issue of trust.

And I also want to raise for a moment, just quickly, and I just want to echo my colleague from Cumberland, his issue around the forest fire. Are we truly prepared? And clearly if there's ever an issue for northerners, it's this one around forest fires. And to be cutting money out and saying and being . . . The gamble last year, the gamble last year was on potash and the price of potash. It seems, from the Ministry of Environment, the gamble this year is there be very few fires. And as the member from Cumberland says, it's kind of dry out there. This may not be the year to be doing this. And for southerners, it's a huge issue.

And yet again, it speaks to the trust of this government when last year they blew it right out of the water with their potash predictions. And they make light of it in the House now and they think — oh well, hey, aw shucks — anybody can make that mistake. No truly, no, not anyone can. Only the Sask Party's capable of that size of mistake. And looking at the forest fire, how they're preparing for it, causes me some worry.

The other worry is a little bit long, more long-range than environment. And that's around the capacity for the new environmental assessment regulations. It's been very quiet. The minister takes a lot of pride in consulting through out-sourcing essentially through Clifton, the assessment, the consultations around environmental assessment and in talking to people in different ways. But I have yet to see anything in terms of the public at large being engaged.

But clearly, you know, the key thing around environment is making sure of clean water, clean land, and clean air. It's pretty straightforward. But if you don't have the capacity, if you are stripping away the capacity internally to do that, then you have some real issues in terms of the long run. It may work well in a short-term budget where they're up against the wall right now. But to launch a new program, such an intensive, major program, such a major program and then not provide the capacity, that's outrageous. That's outrageous to be moving it forward, to be moving it forward and taking away on the other hand.

And the other issues, I'll go to health really quickly. The chiropractors, people who depend on that — we've seen the petitions come forward. I just want to be on record saying this is going to come back, come back and bite this government. No wonder many people don't trust this government. When you have over 30,000 people responding through petitions so quickly — so quickly — no wonder they have some concerns. And of course yesterday when we heard the plans, terms of the waiting lists and taking it into a new realm in terms of privatization, we have some real concerns about that.

[16:15]

One area that I also want to talk about, just highlight very quickly, is the issue around justice. And we saw that this budget talks about gangs and increasing support to help with that issue. And I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a big issue for people who live in Saskatoon Centre. I mean, it's a big issue right across this province. In fact it's one that western Canadians wrestle with as well. We just have to look at Vancouver, but we see that in our cities here, in our communities right across the province.

And I have to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was surveyed because I went to a conference about a year and a half ago, in January of 2008. It was a conference dealing with gangs and the gang initiative. And I had a follow-up survey just a few weeks ago and the person said, so what have you heard in the last year and a half? And I really had to tell the person, I haven't heard anything. I had to google it actually, to see if there were anything happening. I just haven't heard what's been happening from this government. Now maybe they've been quietly working away, but I think they need to let people know what's going on. And I will be looking forward to hearing more about the money they've set aside, particularly around gangs. That's a huge issue.

And I have to tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was shocked, just shocked and dismayed last November when we heard about the demise of the domestic abuse outreach program. When one of the clients called me and said, this is what's happening, and what can you do as my MLA? And so we started the process and we were able to expose that, and we were able to expose the fact the government hadn't consulted with the local community groups about how the delivery of that program would be. It was just a simple cut. In fact it was actually a dropped ball between Justice and Social Services. No one knew until we actually asked the question in this House.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is it any wonder why people don't trust this government, any wonder why? You look, you look at the different areas we're talking about. And I'm just scratching

the surface. There are real concerns. People are being let down. And on one hand this government is saying, trust us, trust us. And then you just have to look and see how people have been let down. Whether you're a chiropractic patient, whether you're a client of the domestic outreach program, whether you're a northerner worried about the fire season that's coming up, you have some real, real concerns. So that's some of the things that we look around.

But I have to tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are three key areas that really we'll be paying very close attention to in Social Services. And right off the bat, well there'll be housing, there'll be working around the children's issues, and of course the poverty rates that we see going up.

And I have to look and I take a look at this news release dated March 24th, 2010 and it talks about government investing in housing, children, and families. And it goes on and on about the . . . I'll talk a little bit about housing in a minute. It's interesting. Three paragraphs talking about housing.

But nowhere in this news release, nowhere in this news release — and it's the third budget of this government — not one word about reconvening the all-party committee on children who have been exploited through the sex trade. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this was one of the key promises of the Sask Party in the last election. It was. Where is it now? It's not even being mentioned. So clearly it's being dropped.

Now I have to say to the Minister of Environment, she at least said she was breaking a promise around climate change. Will the Minister of Social Services come forward and say, listen we're not going to do that? We're breaking that promise. Because that was a key promise. That was one that I hear about in my communities that I represent in Saskatoon Centre. And there's not been one word about that. And when I look at how much they're spending, how much they're spending on the child welfare review — \$831,000 — I hope it's well spent.

But one key part, one key part this minister has to realize is around children who are exploited through the sex trade. And I've said this in the House before that, you know, there are two words that are not mentioned in that review and that was the Internet or gangs. Clearly in the 10 years that have intervened since that all-party committee was convened, things have changed.

And now we're having a situation where clearly the government is breaking a promise. Again an example of trust, an example of trust because this government likes to say, we've kept all our promises; we've kept all our promises. Well we can come with many examples of significant promises, significant promises, and in this one to the children who are exploited on our streets, in our communities. And unfortunately they're being exploited in their own homes through the Internet.

We need to get a handle on this. And I am disappointed that this government has not taken the opportunity yet to do anything about it and this is their third budget. And clearly, it's a gap — it's a gap — and so I have some real serious problems about that.

And I have some real serious problems . . . And I'll just quickly

go through the book here. We'll have questions. And right off the bat, we see there's 57 less employees in Social Services. We don't know where they were lost. Were they cut?

**An Hon. Member:** — Was it the caseload?

**Mr. Forbes:** — Yes. Was it caseload? Who knows what's happened with these 57 less employees?

And if you look over on page 131, here are some startling numbers. We know the assistance, the Saskatchewan assistance program is going to get a boost of \$23 million. We know, and that's needed there, likewise with TEA [transitional employment allowance]. But we see SIP, SIP, the Saskatchewan Income Plan. This plan that the government is so proud of is losing \$3.1 million — that's over 10 per cent. Why is that? Why is SIP losing that much money? We'll have questions about that.

Child care subsidies, child care parent subsidies going from 17 million down to 14.7 million — a 2.5 million cut. And we also see in the disabilities community-based organizations, a cut of \$8 million.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will have some questions about what does this all mean. What does this all mean? And as well when we look at the housing, the housing budget . . . Now I know and the minister and we'll get into this in estimates, but if you look at it straight up, last year it was 28.5 million and now it's 11 million. Where did the \$17 million go? And so I have some real strong questions about that.

I've some real strong questions about that because clearly this minister, if one thing she's known for, she's not known for keeping more than one ball up in the air because she can't keep track of all the things that are happening in her portfolio. But one thing she is really good is massaging the numbers and the words. For example, she'll often talk about . . . Last year she talked about how there were 1,100 housing projects under way and now there's down to 900. And we know that's not quite accurate. She's talking about units and part of that issue is the 400 beds college quarters. There's actually 120 units.

But the other one, and I was so disappointed to see it cut, was the Lighthouse project in Saskatoon. At first it was 120 units, then went to 65, and now it's right off the books and it's been cut. So we have some real questions about that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, so I want to move into housing because this is one that really there are some real questions about.

I've been able to bring in and talk about questions around high rents. And we've seen this rental market failure now going into its third year and people coming in and talking about how the rents are going up 20, 40, and we even had somebody talk about virtually 100 per cent rent increase for a bachelor suite in Saskatoon, going from 425 to \$800. And I think it's about time that we took a serious look at what can we do to stop that kind of gouging. And plain and simple, it is gouging. When you have that kind of increase, it's beyond a reasonable increase to provide for maintenance and upkeep. This is gouging.

And so we have some serious questions about that. And this is

the opportunity. It's been three years and I think that we all have to take a moment and say, along the housing continuum, we've seen some real strengths. But when it comes to affordable rental for seniors and young people and students, it's just not working. And we need to do something about that.

And we see the minister often talk about rental supplements. And she will often bring that up, and I think that's an interesting idea. But the problem with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they were not supposed to be a permanent solution. They were only supposed to be temporary until people resolved the issues. It was not a permanent one. And that particular program last year, it cost \$10 million. What we could be doing with \$10 million is amazing for affordable housing.

And we see the waiting lists go up. And in fact I've got the results now in terms of what Sask Housing has on its books and what the waiting lists are. And we see over the past year that we still have over 1,800 people on waiting lists and whether it's social housing, affordable housing, or senior housing.

But I want to talk about senior housing here. We still have Moose Jaw going up. For seniors, their wait times last September were 2.4 months. Now it's seven months. Here's Swift Current. Swift Current was a real challenge last fall, with 7.5 months. Now it's 10 months, over 10 months. And overall the waiting list for seniors continues to grow. It was three months last September and now it's knocking on three and a half months. And there's still over 700 seniors on that waiting list and not much is happening with that.

And we can talk about the social housing, where we see the waiting lists still hovering around 644, 645. But it's grown from 2.9 months to 5.2 months, almost a half a year for people to wait to get into social housing. And of course Swift Current, 8.3 months to get in. And so there are some big numbers here, some real concerns. And we see, in affordable housing, Swift Current hitting 7.7 months.

So we have some real issues and we have some real questions. And I do have some real questions about this head first program. Not an awful lot. Actually it's interesting; there's more words in the press release than in the actual books, which make me think that it was kind of an afterthought. They really didn't . . . They found out that yet again they were heading into a budget with nothing about housing and they better get something in about housing. Because one of the books doesn't even refer to it; the other one has just a couple of lines. And the most you can find out about the head first program is actually on the press release and it talks about a minimum 1,000 houses over five years. And I think this is going to be very interesting is if they actually set some benchmarks and how we're going to move forward with this.

But again it doesn't meet the whole housing continuum. We've said this on this side time and time again. There needs to be a full, complete, comprehensive housing strategy that talks about rent, that talks about home ownership, that talks about seniors, talks about students, the whole package. We need to see the whole package, Mr. Deputy Speaker, not this piecemeal approach that this minister, this government, this Premier, is known for — known for photo op strategy. Where can they get the most photo ops?

And clearly if this example, your Headstart on a Home, I'll celebrate when the 1,000th family moves in. I have to see this to believe it. We've seen too many times where this government, this minister is not straightforward in her announcements, where she mixes her units and beds and different things like that and really it's hard to keep her information straight.

And so we have some real issues around housing because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is one that goes right to the heart of what many families are facing in this province today in terms of affordability, and housing is the very first thing. And particularly seniors, where we see this government doing so little for seniors. As I said, the minister will talk about rental supplements; Seniors don't qualify. We see the SIP program, yet it's being cut by 2.5 million. How does that work? But they'll get up and they'll talk about SIP but they won't talk about the cut today. And so we have some real, real concerns with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But the real concerns, the real concerns I have, and we present petitions time and time again and one of the most important petitions we present — and I know the Anti-Poverty Coalition in Saskatoon is gathering as many names on this — is how can we eliminate poverty in Saskatchewan. And we know that this is a challenge. We see the use of food banks going up and that is a fact, and it's been going up ever since this government came into power. And we've seen cuts, cuts in child care, the subsidies I've just talked about here. We've talked about cuts in terms of education and training. And we've talked about cuts for health supports, particularly for vulnerable populations, and whether that's domestic abuse outreach or it's chiropractic service.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know this minister took a lot of pride on December 31st, 2008, talking about how the social assistance rates were going down in this province. And you have the Minister of Labour talking about how the employment numbers are going up. But clearly this is not the case.

[16:30]

Over the last 15 months, the number of people who are on the caseloads for Saskatchewan Social Services has climbed. In November of '08 . . . And I'll read these numbers into the record and these numbers come from written questions that the minister has answered. November of '08, it was the lowest point, the lowest point that it's been in Saskatchewan — 23,678 caseloads for Saskatchewan Social Services. It's climbed now to February '10, 2010 to 26,773. That's an increase of over 3,000 cases, many more people . . . We don't know how many people, but these are the caseloads. That's a climb of 13 per cent.

And the other one that the minister likes to talk about, particularly the news release of December 2008, was when she was talking about TEA. TEA did hit its lowest point in 2008 November, when it was 2,200 . . . I'll say it again, 2,266. But then it climbed to 3,084 in February 2010, a climb of 818. That's a climb of 36 per cent.

And, Mr. Speaker, we saw the minister in supplementary estimates last year defending how they had cut the budget

because they assumed everything was going to keep going down. And we said, that's not the numbers we see. And the graph, Mr. Speaker, is very dramatic, is very stark as we see the numbers continue to climb. And we don't see a plan by this government, what they're going to do about poverty in Saskatchewan. There is absolutely no plan, no strategy.

So how can you say, how can we say to people, trust this government? You cannot say that. Many people are living just a paycheque away from falling into the poverty trap — just a paycheque away. And we know, we know that the income gap between the rich and the poor is widening, and we don't see anything that this government is doing other than band-aids.

There's no overall strategy, and a refusal to work with people in the community to develop a strategy. And the first one would be to develop some benchmarks so we could measure this in a way that we could all agree and have some meaning. We see some other strategies, and I know and we've heard the ministers and members of the other side: we're not afraid of benchmarks, we're not afraid of benchmarks. Well they sure are because they don't talk about the benchmarks of poverty.

They don't talk about the benchmarks of poverty. And they don't talk about the benchmarks of homelessness and they don't talk about the benchmarks of food banks, of hunger in our communities. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that's shameful. And that's the reason why people don't trust this government and don't trust this Premier because of this kind of budget. This kind of work is dishonest because it doesn't represent what's really happening in Saskatchewan. Because you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are judged by how we treat the most vulnerable in our society, not the richest. And this is what this government does, this is what this government does.

So simply, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be voting for the amendment. I think it's the only reasonable thing that you can do in light of things that we've seen from this government over the past while. And I'll be voting against the main motion. Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Recognize the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy.

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the Assembly and speak in support of the budget that was tabled by the Finance minister of the province, Mr. Speaker.

Before I get into my comments, I want to recognize and thank a number of people. First of all, Mr. Speaker, the staff in my office here in Regina, Mr. Speaker: to Darin and Melissa and Marg, Heather and Bob for all that they do in ensuring that I am prepared as well as I can be and informed. And I greatly appreciate their support in what they do in their daily jobs here in the legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank obviously the staff of the ministry. This was obviously my first time through the budgetary process as a member of the cabinet, and they provided a great deal of support and information as we moved forward in writing this budget.

Mr. Speaker, to my constituency assistant Marcie Swedburg who has been doing a great job for the people of Weyburn-Big Muddy for over 10 years now, Mr. Speaker. She has served the constituents of Weyburn-Big Muddy in that capacity for a great many years, and she does a great job each and every day for the constituents of Weyburn-Big Muddy. Mr. Speaker, I can't tell you how many times that I'm talking on the phone or meeting people throughout the Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency when people mention how they have contacted our office in Weyburn and have received help from Marcie, from my constituency assistant, and there's a great many times when people compliment the hard work that Marcie does each and every day. And so I want to thank her.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to, certainly want to thank my wife Amanda who is, Mr. Speaker, is obviously my biggest supporter. Certainly I wouldn't be here without her, Mr. Speaker. Amanda is, I think in my obviously biased opinion, Mr. Speaker, she is the most talented and creative person that I think I have ever met. And I thank her very much for her love and her support.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to certainly thank the constituents of Weyburn-Big Muddy, who have been very supportive of me, in not only being MLA now into my . . . has been my second election, but my first full term. And certainly since being appointed to the cabinet, they've been very, certainly very supportive as I take on new duties and am away from the constituency a great deal more than I used to be prior to cabinet appointment.

And, Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank my colleagues in the cabinet and in caucus for their support and the great work, I think, that we have all done together in putting this budget together, Mr. Speaker. There was a great deal of input and advice and counsel from members of the caucus from all parts of the province when it came to, not only the budget as a whole, but also when it came to looking at the budget going forward for Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport. And so I want to thank my colleagues very much.

Mr. Speaker, just before I get to the actual budget, I do want to make a few just short comments about the Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency. And I in fact, I want to on the floor of the Assembly, I want to mention a couple of special events that are coming up and a couple of special people, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, we have a number of special anniversaries in the constituency. There have been certainly many centennials over the last year. I know the community of Radville, which is just outside of the constituency, celebrated their 100th being an incorporated entity. The RM [rural municipality] of Weyburn was also 100. So, Mr. Speaker, this year, the RM of Brokenshell, which just lies to the west of the city of Weyburn, is celebrating their 100th anniversary, Mr. Speaker.

Also in the city of Weyburn, Souris School, which is a landmark in our community — it's located on South Hill — it turns 100 years old, Mr. Speaker, as a school. The actual building will be 100 years old and it has been used as a school since its beginnings. So on May, I believe it's May 21st, the citizens of Weyburn and the teachers and students and former teachers and students are going to be celebrating a very

important anniversary.

Mr. Speaker, it's also the 100th anniversary of the Weyburn power building, Mr. Speaker. This was the original building that was used to generate power in the city of Weyburn. And it was 50 years ago this year that the Soo Line museum actually moved into the old power building. So the building is 100 years old and the museum is 50 years old. And I want to encourage everybody who may, the many people that may be watching, Mr. Speaker, or certainly my colleagues on both side of the House, if they get a chance to stop and take a look around at the Soo Line Museum, Mr. Speaker. It has great displays on the old Souris Valley Hospital, certainly a number of displays about the community and the surrounding area. There's even an eight-legged calf that is on display, Mr. Speaker.

But one of the things that is most interesting about the Soo Line Museum in Weyburn is the Charlie Wilson silver collection, Mr. Speaker. And I want to encourage anybody who hasn't seen it, it is the largest privately held collection of silver in the world. It contains 3,333 pieces of silver that was collected by Charlie Wilson. The silver ranges from all the way back to the 1750s up until the 1970s. And it is something to behold when you see two floors in a large building full of silver that this gentlemen who resided in the Weyburn area for almost his entire life, I believe he was a bachelor farmer, and he travelled the countryside going to auction sales and estate sales, and he had an eye for silver, and so he collected it all. And upon his death about a decade ago, he left it to the museum. And so I would encourage all members and all residents of this province to go look at the silver collection.

Mr. Speaker, one final comment. I want to recognize somebody that has certainly helped to put Weyburn, Saskatchewan on the international map, Mr. Speaker, and that is Graham DeLaet. Mr. Speaker, Graham DeLaet is a product of Weyburn. He attended school in Weyburn and he learned, certainly learned a number of sports, but he excelled at a fairly early age at golf. Mr. Speaker, he's the first citizen of Saskatchewan to ever get their PGA [Professional Golfers' Association] tour card, Mr. Speaker.

He was very successful on the Canadian tour this last year. He was player of the year. He led the Order of Merit, and this past fall he qualified for the PGA tour, so he's now an official member of the tour. In his first tournament, Mr. Speaker, the Sony Open in Honolulu, he finished 25th, and in his second event, the Bob Hope Classic, he tied for 18th, Mr. Speaker. Graham is certainly well on his way to having a very successful career.

And I can tell the members that just in the last two weeks he has signed a sponsorship deal with Transitions Optical. And he'll be the official PGA player to represent that company on the tour. And we're certainly all very proud of Graham and what he's done. And so I would just want to mention that for the record, Mr. Speaker. So congratulations to Graham.

Mr. Speaker, I'm please to obviously support this budget that was produced by the cabinet and the caucus members and tabled by the Finance minister. Mr. Speaker, we as a team have worked very hard to produce a budget that is balanced, forward looking, and responsible, Mr. Speaker. As has been mentioned



by the Finance minister, it's a budget that is balanced. It will produce a small surplus over the year, Mr. Speaker.

We're going to see no increase in the size of government debt, Mr. Speaker, remaining at \$4.15 billion, which is a 40 per cent reduction from when this government took office very shortly ago. And, Mr. Speaker, the Growth and Financial Security Fund at the end of the year will have a balance remaining, over half a billion dollars, Mr. Speaker, over \$510 million in the balance, Mr. Speaker.

It's a budget that does a number of things. It reduces the size of government, reduces the footprint of government. We've heard many times how the size of government has rapidly exceeded the growth of the population of the province, Mr. Speaker. Much of the growth in the population just happens to have occurred in the last couple of years since this party has formed government, Mr. Speaker.

It is a budget that will maintain important capital spending, Mr. Speaker. It will see infrastructure spending in this province of over \$600 million in this year. And, Mr. Speaker, when you put that in the context of this government, this government has put in place a spending program for capital of nearly \$3 billion in three years of government, Mr. Speaker. And that is something that I know when I'm in my constituency, and whether it be the assistance that we've provided to municipalities in terms of a number of capital projects that they have been putting in place . . . We heard from the member from Saskatoon Northwest that talked about a bridge that's very important to the economy of not only Saskatoon, but Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I look around my constituency, and I'll talk about that in a few minutes, of what that has meant for the Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to see that it's going to, this budget will allow for some highway improvements in the Weyburn area, Mr. Speaker. That's certainly one thing that I've heard a lot about from my constituents. In fact I had a constituent that sent me an email last summer, and he was very pleased to finally see construction all across the province. He was actually saying that he was finally happy to be inconvenienced by construction instead of potholes and traffic that's backed up because areas where you have to slow down because the road was in such bad shape, Mr. Speaker.

[16:45]

Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased. I think the Highways minister is doing a very fine job in this province, Mr. Speaker. One of the projects that we're going to see in our constituency is there's going to be around the village of McTaggart, which is just on the west side of the city of Weyburn, Mr. Speaker, that's been an area where I've heard for long before . . . I've had relatives that lived in McTaggart in years past, and I've heard for many years that from Regina all the way to Estevan, it was probably the only community on Highway 6 and 39 that didn't have proper turning lanes going into the community.

And, Mr. Speaker, I remember in fact my first debate in Weyburn as a candidate in 2006 against Mr. Karwacki for the Liberals and a very nice gentlemen for the NDP, Graham Mickleborough, who, you know, I certainly have a great deal of

time for. Graham and I certainly remained friendly through the election and since the election. In fact I think he was promised a little bit more than the NDP could deliver when he was signed up as a candidate, but that's another story, Mr. Speaker.

And I remember in that campaign, Mr. Mickleborough was going on the party line of Mr. Calvert saying that they were going to twin the highway. They were going to twin the highway all the way from Regina to Estevan. And I recall, Mr. Speaker, I recall a constituent that stood up at the microphone after Mr. Mickleborough said that. And he said, well that's fine to say, but you can't keep up with the highways that we already have in the province. How are you going to build anymore highways when you can't repair the ones we already have? And another constituent had made the comment that the turning lanes was an issue.

So I'm pleased to see that we're going to, in this budget, finally build proper turning lanes at the community of McTaggart. It's certainly something that those citizens, and I think anybody that's ever driven on the very busy highway between Estevan, Weyburn, and Regina, certainly see that that's very important, particularly for safety, Mr. Speaker, residents of McTaggart that are turning in and out of the community. And I'm pleased to see that happen.

Mr. Speaker, while I'm on the Highways minister, Mr. Speaker. He came down to an event last week in the constituency. And he's such a great Highways minister, Mr. Speaker, that he was going to look to see the condition of the highways, Mr. Speaker. And instead of turning at Francis to come to Weyburn, he drove clear on to Stoughton. But I know it was not because he missed his turn. I know it was because he wanted to check the highway's conditions.

Mr. Speaker, since I've told a couple of members that story, I'm hearing that's not the first time that's happened with him. Mr. Speaker, I think we'll have to get him a G, S, one of those satellite things for his car, Mr. Speaker.

**An Hon. Member:** — GPS [global positioning system].

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** — And yes, I know. The member is helping me from Moose Jaw. I know it's a GPS, to the member.

But, you know, it's funny though, Mr. Speaker. You put him in a golf cart and he knows exactly where to go. You put him in a car and he doesn't seem to know which way to go, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to hearing his response to that.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased in this budget, the agriculture budget. Mr. Speaker, we are fully funding the farm stabilization programs in this province, Mr. Speaker, something that wasn't always the case, Mr. Speaker, when the members opposite were in government.

Mr. Speaker, I attended an event in my constituency with the Agriculture minister, the municipal minister, with the Highways minister, myself, and my seatmate, the Minister of Corrections. We were in Willow Bunch at an RM ratepayers' dinner, Mr. Speaker, last week. And, Mr. Speaker, my constituents, for members' information, the community of Willow Bunch and that area was actually split by the highway, and so part of the

community in that area is represented by myself and part is by my seatmate. And we had the opportunity to spend the evening in Willow Bunch at the ratepayers' meeting.

The Minister of Agriculture did a great job in his speech. He's certainly a well-respected member of this cabinet, and I would say probably the most popular Agriculture minister that we've had in this province in a long, long time, Mr. Speaker. It's been a great, great many years, probably since before I could even spell the word agriculture, Mr. Speaker.

But we've done a number of things like the wildlife damage compensation program, expanded crop insurance to include some new crops, yield cushioning, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to limiting the impact of consecutive poor growing seasons.

Mr. Speaker, we're moving AgriStability to Melville instead being administered out of province, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite, I've heard other members opposite that, you know, don't see that as a really big deal. But, Mr. Speaker, when you talk to producers, that's a big deal that we're bringing the administration back to this province, Mr. Speaker.

When we look at the past number of years, whether it was drought issues in the Southwest that crept along the south part of the province into my constituency, whether it was cattle programs that the Agriculture minister has put in place, it's certainly . . . There's no reason why anybody wouldn't see why this Agriculture minister has been so well received across the farm community in this province and across rural Saskatchewan. And I'm pleased to be his colleague, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when I look at my constituency . . . I think it was a number of months ago when the members of the other main party in this province sent a mailer out to all the households in my constituency and many others, Mr. Speaker. I know there's been a billboard that's been just outside of Weyburn over the last month or so, Mr. Speaker, and I'm not sure exactly what it says, but it's doom and gloom or the sky is falling or something like that, Mr. Speaker.

And you know when I look at that and I talk to my constituents and I look at the investments that this government is doing around the Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency, Mr. Speaker, water upgrades for the community of Pangman, Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, a recreational project when it comes to the swimming pool at Bengough. Mr. Speaker, there is a report on the radio today about the work that's under way at the Crescent Point Place in Weyburn. It used to be the old coliseum. The front lobby, for those who know it, is actually . . . I understand they've torn down, demolished the old lobby part. They're going to be building on to that, Mr. Speaker.

The courthouse is receiving some upgrades right now that we're in the middle of. Both in the public and the separate school system within the city of Weyburn are both in the middle, at different phases of capital projects. There's a new daycare that's being built in the community, a new group home, Mr. Speaker. This is over the last number of years under this government, three budgets. Not just in this budget, Mr. Speaker.

But, it's not only the government investment, Mr. Speaker, it's

what the private sector is doing. You know, we have two new hotels that have been built in the city of Weyburn, Mr. Speaker, a brand new Ramada Hotel, and a Canalta. Mr. Speaker, Canalta is the company across Western Canada that actually builds the Ramada hotels and a number of other commercial chains. They've actually decided to brand their first Canalta hotel in the city of Weyburn, Mr. Speaker. Both are about a hundred room hotels, beautiful hotels. I believe a third one is, they're going to be breaking ground soon. Mr. Speaker, there's many residential developments going on right now, a commercial development.

Mr. Speaker, when my constituents, when they're talking to me and they see these doom and gloom billboards and mailouts, they really ask, you know, it really comes down to, what province are the members opposite living in? When you look at the amount of development that is taking place in this province, Mr. Speaker, it's really hard to see where they're coming from.

Mr. Speaker, I want to, before my time ends here, I want to get to Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport ministry. Mr. Speaker, we've done a number of things, in this budget, and in this budget year, a number of announcements.

One is the Capital Commission, Mr. Speaker. That was a campaign commitment that we would have in this province a provincial Capital Commission. Mr. Speaker, it's going to, it's really a beginning point in this, in this process, Mr. Speaker. We're going to, and people will see as they look at the budget, we actually have a new vote for the Capital Commission. And we're going to make sure that all of the assets of the capital — whether that be Wascana Centre Authority, the Conexus Arts Centre, Government House, the Archives, Mr. Speaker, this legislative precinct — we want to make sure that those assets that are funded by government, partly or in whole, Mr. Speaker, that we put them all under one umbrella so that we can start to make sure that we are bringing all of these partners together and really showcasing the provincial capital, making sure that we're showcasing these assets that we have together. So more work is going to be done on that. But, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that we finally have been able to move forward in making that announcement.

Mr. Speaker, we have a very exciting announcement coming up in the next couple of weeks. It's a new program, it's going to be called community vitality, Mr. Speaker. It's \$9 million over three years, Mr. Speaker, and it's going to enhance the culture and the cultural facilities and recreational facilities around the province. It's going to volunteerism, work towards volunteerism, increasing community involvement and volunteerism, Mr. Speaker. And we're going to engage Aboriginal and youth leaders across the province, Mr. Speaker. We are going to have a full announcement in the coming weeks, but it was included in the budget. And so I want to talk about it tonight, Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things in forming a balanced, forward-looking, and responsible budget obviously, Mr. Speaker, we had to look at our budget to see where we were able to make reductions, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased that one of the areas that we've been able to keep whole in our budget is the funding to our third party organizations that we fund in this province, whether that be the Saskatchewan Arts Board or the

Western Development Museum or our urban parks, our partners at Tourism Saskatchewan, SaskFilm, Wanuskewin Heritage Park, the Science Centre, the Saskatchewan Heritage Foundation, the Conexus Arts Centre, the Archives Board, Government House, Mr. Speaker.

Those are areas that we were able to, while we were looking for reductions in our budget, those were areas that we were able to keep their budgets whole from what they were last year, Mr. Speaker. And I look forward to working with all those organizations over the coming year to ensure that their important programs continue going forward.

Mr. Speaker, certainly we were not alone in finding reductions in our budget. Mr. Speaker, one of the areas that we have reduced is parks capital. I think when people look around the provincial park system they will see significant amount of investment, Mr. Speaker. And to put it into context, in the first three budgets of this government, the Saskatchewan Party government, we've invested \$24.2 million in capital in our provincial parks. The last three budgets of the NDP government was just around \$12 million, so we have doubled the amount of funding going to provincial park capital.

Mr. Speaker, people will see that in a variety of areas. One of the biggest areas is the fact that we're bringing on 1,000 more electrified campsites across the provincial park system. Mr. Speaker, we are certainly well on our way to achieving the thousand by the time the next election rolls around.

One of the other areas, Mr. Speaker, is regional park funding. This government made a commitment that we would fund regional parks to \$2.4 million over four years at 600,000 a year. Mr. Speaker, in our first budget it was 600,000. Last year it was \$1 million. This budget it's going to be a little over \$500,000, so that brings us to \$2.1 million over our first four years. To compare where the members opposite were over the last three budgets of their government, they funded regional parks to the tune of \$425,000 compared to our \$2.1 million, Mr. Speaker.

So certainly we have done much more. In fact for many years the members opposite, the funding that they would give to the regional parks was \$75,000, which allowed the association to run an office, Mr. Speaker, to hire one staff person and keep the lights on in an office. This is our investment, Mr. Speaker, in regional parks, is allowing those regional parks to match dollar for dollar investment. \$2.1 million over the last three years has meant a \$4.2 million investment into the regional park system across this province, Mr. Speaker. And that's something that we are very proud of on this side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, I certainly have a number of other areas that I want to talk about, Mr. Speaker. One of the areas is certainly that has had a lot of attention is the film industry, Mr. Speaker, and I want to set the record straight. On the film and television industry, we have made sure that SaskFilm's budget remains the same. Their budget is still in place. The film employment tax credit is still in place, Mr. Speaker. It's competitive with other provinces. We'll have more discussions on that in the future, Mr. Speaker. The sound stage is still in place and it is used by the film and television industry, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly when we look across the provinces, four other

provinces had a public broadcaster in Canada. One is owned today in Alberta, is owned by CTV [Canadian Television Network Ltd.]. So the public broadcaster, Mr. Speaker, is not across the country and certainly not only owned by the provincial government across the piece, Mr. Speaker. And I look forward to having discussions with the industry as we go forward and move to make that industry as competitive as possible while knowing full well, Mr. Speaker, that those individuals that are in that industry, the producers and the production companies, are running a business, Mr. Speaker. And they will have business decisions that they need to make, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I want to certainly say that I will not be supporting the amendment put forward. I'll be supporting the budget. Mr. Speaker, it's a good budget. It's a balanced, a forward-looking, and responsible budget. Mr. Speaker, I don't where else you'd want to live in this country. The highest population ever in this province right now, Mr. Speaker, the lowest unemployment rate in Canada, Mr. Speaker. The best job creation record, certainly a far better record than the members opposite. And I support this budget. Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — This House is now in recess until 7 p.m.

[The Assembly recessed until 19:00.]

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