



FOURTH SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

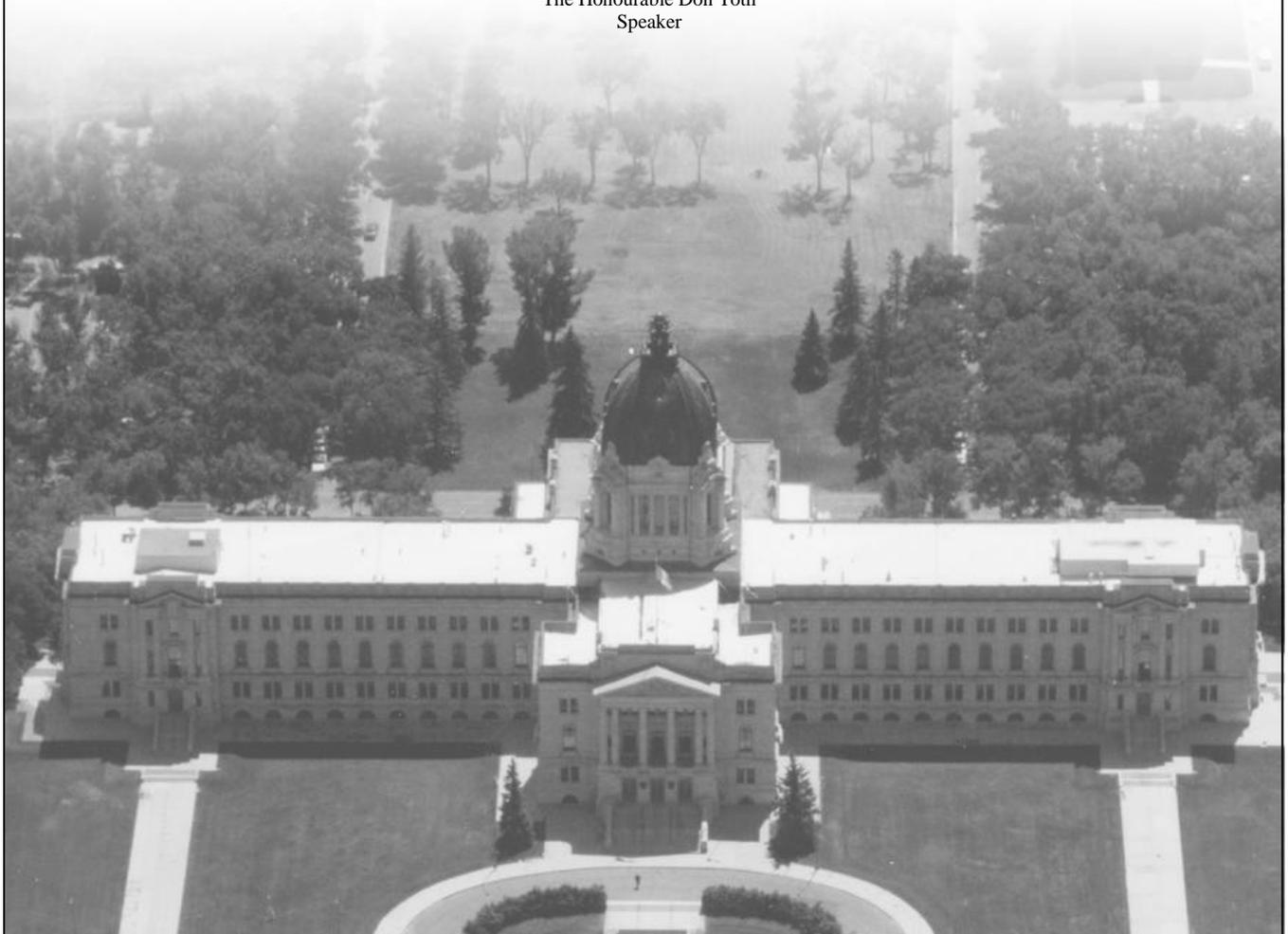
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

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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
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Wall, Hon. Brad	SP	Swift Current
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Wilson, Nadine	SP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Wotherspoon, Trent	NDP	Regina Rosemont
Wyant, Gordon	SP	Saskatoon Northwest
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney

[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to make an extended introduction of guests in your gallery this morning.

The Speaker: — The Premier has asked for leave for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave is granted. I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Joining us in your gallery today are five guests. I'll introduce three who are no strangers to government in our province: deputy of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety, Al Hilton, has joined us this morning; Gerald Tegart, deputy of Ministry of Justice has joined us; and deputy minister to the Premier, Doug Moen, is here.

Seated in front of them are two very special guests, Mr. Speaker. Assistant Commissioner Dale McGowan joined the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] in 1978. He received his police training here at the RCMP training academy in Regina. Throughout his career he has served in Saskatchewan and in Alberta and British Columbia and all three northern territories. He has a wealth of operational, northern, and First Nations policing experience. In his time with the RCMP, he has served in numerous . . . and led operational units including general duty policing, serious and major crime sections, homicide units, and as a criminal operations officer.

Assistant Commissioner McGowan has been involved in and led a number of complex and high-profile criminal investigations throughout his career, and has received the Commanding Officer's Commendation for Investigative Excellence in regards to his work on the Giant mine homicide task force. He is the recipient of the Queen's Jubilee and Long Service Medals. Assistant Commissioner McGowan has held executive positions within the British Columbia and Saskatchewan associations of chiefs of police, and is a member of various national and international associations and boards.

And, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of a very grateful province of Saskatchewan, we want to thank him for the great leadership he has provided to our province, to the home of the RCMP, to "F" Division. He is leaving behind a very healthy relationship with respect to the government, with respect to policing partners of the force right across this province. He leaves behind a province that is safer today for his leadership and for the efforts of the RCMP. And we thank him now as we introduce the new lead at "F" Division. But if I can ask all members to join me in thanking the assistant commissioner for his efforts.

Welcome, Chief Superintendent Russ Mirasty, to the legislature and to the province. Russ joined the RCMP in 1976. He served in six divisions in various roles including detachment policing, highway patrol, police dog service, and divisional Aboriginal policing services. He left the RCMP for a short period to work in the Lac La Ronge community in our province. Upon his re-engagement into the force, he accepted the position as the north district commander in "F" Division. Since 2009, Chief Superintendent Mirasty has been serving as the director general of national Aboriginal policing at headquarters in Ottawa.

Russ was born and raised in Saskatchewan. He is a member of the Lac La Ronge Indian Band and maintains a strong relationship with his home community. Mr. Speaker, very notably, Chief Superintendent Mirasty is the first First Nations commanding officer in a province or territory in Canadian history, and we welcome him and we look forward to working with him on behalf of all members of the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, we have a great relationship with the Mounted Police. They are our provincial police force. It's something that we're very proud of in Saskatchewan. And as I have told the members, the RCMP leaders that are with us this morning, earlier in my office, there is only one thing that could put at risk this relationship that we have — if the Mounties in red serges present the cup on Sunday to the wrong team. We're hopeful that that won't happen, Mr. Speaker.

I hope all members will join me in welcoming these gentlemen to their Legislative Assembly, in thanking Dale and welcoming Russ.

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

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased to join with the Premier and, at first, thanking Assistant Commissioner McGowan for your dedication and work on behalf of all the people of Saskatchewan.

The work the RCMP do in our province is without doubt exemplary, and we all, all members of this Assembly would like to thank you and through you all the men and women who you have had the opportunity to lead on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. And your leadership is noticed and welcomed, and we wish you in your future endeavours great success.

And to your successor — also a Saskatchewan born and raised Saskatchewan citizen and a very proud, I expect, successor in your shoes in Saskatchewan — we wish him all the success in the future. You can count on the support of all members of this Assembly in all that you do. We very much appreciate and cherish the work that the RCMP do on behalf of all of us in our province. It is a difficult job and not one that is always easy to do, but you can know that we, all 58 members of this Assembly, do respect and cherish the work that you do. And we wish you the very best in your endeavours. Thank you.

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

Hon. Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the Premier and the member from Dewdney in commenting on our RCMP guests. First I'd like to welcome Chief Superintendent Russ Mirasty to his new assignment as the commanding officer of "F" Division. I look forward to working very, very closely with Russ in his new position.

I'd also very much like to thank Chief Superintendent Dale McGowan for all of the work that he has done for this province. We have worked what I would say extremely close in the last couple of years. And we can see a huge change in the policing in the province over the last number of years. We've got the police forces back up to a reasonable strength, the RCMP up to a reasonable strength, and that is due in a large part to the work of Dale McGowan. I wish Dale all the best in his new assignment. We hate to see him leave the province of Saskatchewan, but he's going on to bigger and better things and more challenges. So I would like to personally thank Dale for all the work that he has done, and welcome Russ.

And, Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet I would also like to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly a constituent of mine who is no stranger to us in the Assembly, Mr. Dave Marit. Dave, as we all know, is the president of Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities. So on behalf of all of us in the Assembly, it's very nice to see you here, Dave, and welcome. And everybody join me in welcoming Dave to his Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I'm honoured to join the colleagues that have gone before me to introduce, but I'd like to focus on Russ and just to welcome Russ here.

Russ is from La Ronge, La Ronge Indian Band, and I just want to welcome you here, Russ. You truly are an ambassador for Lac La Ronge Indian Band and our community. You make us very proud — your commitment to the North and to your people and your efforts you have done to try to make sure there is a level playing field. And I commend you.

And our community, Russ, is honoured to have you. And as you move up, we want to congratulate you but also want to make sure people know we are truly proud of you. You are truly have the northern spirit, and you truly care about the northern people. Teneki, Russ.

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

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to join with the minister and welcome Dave Marit to the Assembly. He's a frequent visitor, and we're always pleased to see him in the gallery. And I know that he does a great deal of work with SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] and otherwise, and it is appreciated in the province of Saskatchewan. So I would ask all colleagues to welcome him here.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I too want to join in the chorus of congratulations to our two special guests. Certainly to Chief Superintendent Dale McGowan, very thankful for the work you have done, and I wish you the very best in your new endeavours.

And also, Mr. Speaker, I also want to congratulate the new chief superintendent, Russ Mirasty. And you should know, Mr. Speaker, that Russ and I have had a history, not him chasing me around, but meeting on a number of occasions when I was a mayor and certainly as the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly].

But for the folks out there that may not know, there are different dialects in the Cree language. And Russ is from the La Ronge area and they use the TH dialect, and we in the west side use the N dialect. So I'll try my very best to tell him in our own language.

[The hon. member spoke for a time in Cree.]

... your new job. So I think, Mr. Speaker, in Cree I told him that I'm very proud of him. He went a long ways. And all our people will be told of this great accomplishment. And if he does have some confusion on some of the Cree words I used, there's actually the difference in dialect. So as opposed to me saying keyah, in La Ronge I'd say kethah.

[The hon. member spoke for a time in Cree.]

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the concerned citizens of Saskatchewan who are concerned over the deterioration of our highways, and this particular petition applies to Highway 22. Mr. Speaker, this petition states that the highway has deteriorated to a point where it's a safety hazard for the residents who have to drive on this highway each and every day. The prayer is as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the Sask Party government to commit to providing the repairs to Highway No. 22 that the people of Saskatchewan need.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

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

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

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition on behalf of Saskatchewan renters who are facing a combination of rising rents and low vacancy rates in

many communities across the province. And many of these renters have suffered rent increases in the hundreds of dollars each, Mr. Speaker, which makes it very difficult. And we recognize that a majority of Canadian provinces now have rent control guidelines, and that the argument that the private market would deliver sufficient affordable housing in the absence of rent controls has proven to be false. And the prayer reads, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to consider enacting some form of rent control with a view to protecting Saskatchewan renters from unreasonable increases in rent.

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

Mr. Speaker, I present on behalf of concerned citizens.

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

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present another petition on behalf of citizens who wish to bring to our attention that many seniors live on fixed incomes and are victims of physical, emotional, and financial abuse and that Saskatchewan seniors have a right to social and economic security and a right to live free of poverty, that Saskatchewan seniors have a right to protection from abuse, neglect, and exploitation:

We in the prayer that reads as follows respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan to enact a Saskatchewan seniors' bill of rights, which would provide Saskatchewan seniors with social and economic security and protection from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

The over 50 signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from the towns of Watrous, Young, Silton, St. Louis, Chitek Lake, Milden, Spiritwood, Leoville, Shellbrook, Edam, and Hoey. I so present.

[10:15]

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition in support of eliminating poverty in Saskatchewan. And we know that freedom from poverty is an enshrined human right by the United Nations and that all citizens are entitled to social and economic security. And we know in Saskatchewan the income gap between the rich and the poor continue to grow and now one in five children in Saskatchewan live in deepening poverty. I'd like to read the prayer:

We in the prayer that reads as follows respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan act as quickly as possible to develop an effective and sustainable poverty elimination strategy for the benefit of all Saskatchewan citizens.

Mr. Speaker, the people signing this petition come from Biggar, Estevan, Unity, Regina, and Saskatoon. I do so present.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to present a petition in support of the expansion of the graduate retention program, a call for fairness for post-secondary Saskatchewan students. Now the prayer reads:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I so present.

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

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition today on behalf of Furdale residents. A government ministry has directed SaskWater to cut off supplies of water for domestic use to Furdale customers. The same government ministry has directed that customers may no longer treat non-potable water using methods approved by Sask Health.

Furdale residents, in dealing in good faith with SaskWater for over 30 years, have paid large amounts for their domestic systems and in-home treatment equipment as well as for livestock irrigation lines. And the alternative water supply referred to by a government ministry is a private operator offering treated, non-pressurized water at great cost with no guarantee of quality, quantity, and availability of water. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise once again here today to present petitions on behalf of concerned residents from across Saskatchewan as it relates to the unprecedented mismanagement of our finances by the Sask Party. They allude to the two consecutive deficit budgets, the billions of dollars of debt growth.

Here just today, Mr. Speaker, we had the mid-year update tabled, Mr. Speaker, and our concerns are not alleviated. The province . . . Across this province, fair to say that green is the colour, but when it comes to the colour of ink, certainly it's red, Mr. Speaker, deficit red.

And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly condemn the Sask Party government for its damaging financial mismanagement since taking office, a reckless fiscal record that is denying Saskatchewan people, organizations, municipalities, institutions, taxpayers, and businesses the responsible and trustworthy fiscal management that they so deserve.

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

Now these petitions today are signed by concerned citizens and good folks of Sedley and Saskatoon. I so submit.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Elimination of Violence Against Women

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today is International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, as designated by the United Nations. Here in Canada, we will also continue to remember violence against women on December 6th, which marks the grim anniversary of the massacre at École Polytechnique in 1989.

November 25th marks the brutal assassination in 1960 of the three Mirabal sisters, political activists in the Dominican Republic. These sisters were dedicated to ending the brutal dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo. On November 25, 1960, Trujillo sent men to intercept the three women after they had visited their husbands in prison. The unarmed sisters were led into a sugar cane field and executed.

Mr. Speaker, women around the world are subject to sexual, physical, and emotional violence every day. Often this violence goes unquestioned or unchallenged. Currently one particular country's women are facing incredible levels of violence. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, approximately 1,100 rapes are reported each month, with an average of 36 women and girls raped every day. It is believed that over 200,000 women have suffered from sexual violence in that country since armed conflict began.

Mr. Speaker, women and men everywhere must stand together against those who perpetrate all forms of violence against women. We must never allow these atrocities to go unchallenged anywhere. I ask all members to join with me today in committing to take action to prevent violence against women today and every day and everywhere. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Newfoundland and Labrador Premier Recognized on Retirement

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this day, the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, Danny Williams, announced his retirement, his pending retirement — I think effective the 3rd of December — as Premier of that province.

And, Mr. Speaker, we would want to salute him from the legislature here in Regina today for his accomplishments as Premier and his contribution to the country. They are significant. They include \$2 billion in a five-year infrastructure strategy, the largest personal income tax cuts in Newfoundland, Mr. Speaker, record investments in the provincial education system. There's some symmetry here in terms of what each of our provinces are attempting to do, I think. And he also is largely responsible, his leadership and the economy of course in Newfoundland, for transforming that province, Newfoundland and Labrador, from a have-not province to a have province.

So on the occasion of the announcement of his pending retirement, we want to wish him all the best and thank him for his contribution to the country. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Go Riders

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, the opposition caucus is sporting green today in support of our Saskatchewan Roughriders this weekend for the 98th Grey Cup. Saskatchewan is in the Grey Cup for the third time since 2007 and the second time under head coach, Ken Miller. Mr. Speaker, the players, the coaches, and the administration will not be alone as they head to the Grey Cup because the 13th man will be out in full force, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this season has had its ups and downs, but with the end zone in sight, the people of this province couldn't be more excited for the Roughriders and the opportunity to catch a fourth cup for the franchise. Mr. Speaker, the season series currently stands at two games apiece with the Alouettes. And make no mistake about it, this truly is a rubber match between these two teams. They split the season series and also represented their respective conferences last year in this very same game, Mr. Speaker.

Riderville has been busy preparing and celebrating for the Riders' success in returning to yet another Grey Cup match. Fans will make the pilgrimage to Edmonton's Commonwealth Stadium to see their team win and capture the cup for the Rider fans in Saskatchewan and the Rider fans all across Canada, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, last year is last year and, although we did not achieve the success we'd hoped for, I know that the Rider fans support their team in full force. And I ask all members in joining me in honouring our Saskatchewan Roughriders as they compete for the CFL [Canadian Football League] championship this weekend. Thank you.

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

Depot Division Receives Inaugural Award

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last evening Dr. Vianne Timmons presented the inaugural University of Regina President's Community Award. This award was established to recognize individuals or organizations whose values, history of service to Saskatchewan, and concern for our communities have made a lasting impact on our province.

The award is presented to an individual or organization in any field of endeavour who has exemplified the University of Regina's motto — as one who serves. Mr. Speaker, the recipient must have a demonstrated history of serving the provincial community as well as showing a selfless concern for improving the lives of others and building a stronger community.

The first recipient of this prestigious award is Depot Division of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The RCMP was chosen for its 125 years of community contribution to our city, province, nation, and the world. The Depot Division of the RCMP was additionally honoured for its contribution to Mountie House built in conjunction with Habitat for Humanity.

One of the highlights of the evening was the acceptance speech made by assistant commissioner and commanding officer of Depot Division, Roger Brown. In his speech, he gave the audience a brief history of the RCMP, along with his vision for the future of the RCMP in Saskatchewan.

I'd like this Assembly to recognize the 125 years of service to our province from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the U of R's [University of Regina] recognition of that service. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Ile-a-la-Crosse Athlete Recognized

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to honour all northern Métis and First Nations people involved in sport. And I think back to a former neighbour of mine, a young man named Kris Georges. Kris was my good friend, and Kris won first place in senior boys' shot put, Mr. Speaker, but he was mere inches away from a provincial record.

I recognized him then for his accomplishments, and I feel it always necessary to bring him up as an example again in the Assembly because as a valued member of our community, Kris is somebody we're very proud of.

Mr. Speaker, I always wonder why we, as Aboriginal and northern people, do not celebrate our achievements enough. I observe other peoples, other communities, and other regions of Saskatchewan, and there's always the recognition, not boastful nor disrespectful, but an honest pride of what someone local has achieved in sport and other arenas in life.

I want to recognize Kris Georges, a local boy from Ile-a-la-Crosse, who was a provincial champion in shot put. Mr. Speaker, when I last saw Kris, he was pumping gas at a local store and I often see him walking throughout the community all the time. I know that Kris does not expect a community parade

for himself, but I want him to know that we are proud of him. I want him to know that we're proud of those that come from the northern communities and excel in sport and actually become provincial champions like him.

I ask all members of the Assembly to take the time to honour Kris and to recognize him in our own way. I call him champ when I see him, and I ask him to always keep the faith as people do recognize him for what he accomplished. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Go Riders

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It feels like déjà vu. A year ago this weekend, our province went through the spectrum of emotion in the blink of an eye.

This year our Roughriders started the football season with one goal in mind, and here we are, Mr. Speaker, in the middle of Grey Cup week, and our Riders are back in the big game. With a successful trip to Alberta last weekend, we know that the only acceptable outcome for the green and white players is a victory this Sunday.

Mr. Speaker, with the heart and focus of this Rider team, there is no question amongst the faithful supporters that they will give their all to bring back the cup to Saskatchewan. After all, 17,000 Rider plates sold can't be wrong.

Mr. Speaker, Rider fans from across the entire country cannot wait for the rematch with the Montreal Alouettes. As the Rider nation will congregate at the game and around TVs across Canada this weekend, we will all be able to agree on one thing: our team has done us proud once again this year. So on behalf of Rider supporters everywhere, I want to say that the sea of green will all be watching and cheering on Canada's team this Sunday. Let's go, Riders. Bring home the cup. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Saskatchewan Golfer Honoured

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the Assembly today to congratulate Battlefords resident Frank Fowler on his recent induction into the Saskatchewan Golf Hall of Fame. Frank Fowler, originally from Alberta where he started to love everything about golf at the age of eight years, is still teaching golf at the North Battleford Golf and Country Club and sharing his lifetime of golf knowledge and experiences with members and friends today.

Frank Fowler won junior golf championships. He won senior golf championships. And in between, he played on the Canadian golf tour for 12 years. And he played in the World Golf Championship in Tokyo, Japan with another great Canadian golfer, George Knudson.

He is already an inductee into the North Battleford Sports Hall

of Fame, and he is only one of two recipients of the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Alberta PGA [Professional Golfers' Association].

In The Battlefords, we know Frank Fowler to be a great golfer, a great teacher, a good friend, and an all-around good guy. I ask all members to join me in acknowledging and congratulating Frank Fowler on his induction in this inaugural year to the Saskatchewan Golf Hall of Fame.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

State of the Provincial Economy

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, today's mid-year update was released as it relates to our finances. The Finance Minister, I want to paraphrase from his scrum, his press conference just moments ago. And I paraphrase: "I think the former Finance Minister lowered expectations, and I am continuing to do that." Well certainly he has, Mr. Speaker.

Today's financial update confirms the Sask Party is still on track to run a consecutive deficit. Tom Ford, a former senior federal civil servant, commented on this record in the *Winnipeg Free Press* last week. He said, "Brad Wall, a Tory, is in deep deficit country." Today's mid-year budget displays a major deficit; this at a time of historic highs and revenues. My question is this: when will this Premier turn this around and get Saskatchewan out of deep deficit country?

[10:30]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, indeed I was very proud this morning on behalf of this government to table the mid-year report, Mr. Speaker, a mid-year report that shows that the people of Saskatchewan have confidence in this government. They have confidence in our economy.

Mr. Speaker, this report will show to the people of Saskatchewan that the province's revenues are up, that the province's surplus is up. The Growth and Financial Security Fund, known as the rainy day fund, is up, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, everything in this document will show that the people of Saskatchewan have tremendous confidence in the government. The only thing, Mr. Speaker, that's down overall, and we've heard about that over the last number of months, is the support of the NDP.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — We know that minister likes to turn up the volume when the heat's on, Mr. Speaker. And the heat's on and rightfully, Mr. Speaker.

It's pretty interesting. If this was really such good news, Mr. Speaker, that this government . . . And we know this Premier

and how he likes good news and cheerleading that he released this red ink into sea of green, Mr. Speaker. Simply not credible.

This minister, Mr. Speaker, and this Premier is on track to spend over \$10.5 billion this year. Compare that with the spending plan from the NDP in its last budget — \$7.8 billion just three years ago. In just three years, the Premier has increased spending by a whopping 35 per cent.

No wonder this Premier was ranked at the bottom of the heap of Canadian premiers by the Fraser Institute with respect to spending, and his record was called pathetic by the *National Post*. And no wonder he has taken us into deep deficit country. To the minister: when will it stop?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Well, Mr. Speaker, as indicated in the mid-year report, and I'm going to read one paragraph that says, "In total, GRF expense is projected to be \$10,539.1 million, an increase of \$415.0 million . . ."

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to ask the NDP [New Democratic Party] and the member opposite, what things would they have cut? Would they have cut \$200 million to the children's hospitals, Mr. Speaker? Would they have cut, would they have cut \$5.1 million to multiple sclerosis clinical trials, Mr. Speaker? Would they have cut \$144 million to assist agricultural producers in this province, Mr. Speaker? Mr. Speaker, would they have cut \$10 million to Social Services to ensure that those conditions are met? Mr. Speaker, would they have cut \$8 million to provide a long-term solution to the Fishing Lake problem, Mr. Speaker? What would that, what would that opposition have cut?

Well I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite when asked what would he cut, he said, just put us in the benches of the government and we'll tell you.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is this: debt is up in a massive way. Spending is up in a massive way, Mr. Speaker, 35 per cent over three years. And we have a second consecutive deficit budget, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely unacceptable and a trend line that's not sustainable.

Mr. Speaker, buried deep inside the Premier's own budget document is the truth about our debt. Page 62 of the budget summary shows that debt will increase 55 per cent or 4.2 billion over the next four years. That means this Premier is adding a huge debt burden to Saskatchewan people. This mid-year budget itself, this update shows that debt will increase by almost half a billion dollars in this year alone, Mr. Speaker.

And then there's all of that debt, Mr. Speaker, that that government and that Premier is hiding off of the books, Mr. Speaker, that taxpayers are ultimately on the hook for and paying a premium for. That includes long-term care deals, Mr. Speaker, power purchase agreements, and for-profit health care, Mr. Speaker. These massive increases to our debt all represent a major threat to our prosperity, Mr. Speaker. When will this

Premier provide the straight goods about our debt to Saskatchewan people, and when will he get a handle on it?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, it's known by everyone in this province that the debt of the province was reduced. It was reduced by over \$2 billion . . . [inaudible] . . . That's a known fact, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite asks for transparency. Well in the document on page 17, it will indicate that the general government debt will remain at \$4.1 billion and Crown corporation debt will rise, Mr. Speaker, will rise to \$4.3 billion to ensure that the infrastructure deficit for all of our Crowns will continue to be rebuilt, leaving, Mr. Speaker, a total public debt of \$8.5 billion.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let's go back to the last document of the NDP. Thank goodness it was the last one, Mr. Speaker. Because in '07, the debt of this government, Mr. Speaker, overall debt of all entities was \$10.5 billion. Mr. Speaker, projected, projected to rise, Mr. Speaker, in the NDP's very own document to over \$12 billion.

Mr. Speaker, they can't have it both ways. Mr. Speaker, their debt was over \$10 billion. Our debt was reduced by \$2.5 billion, and we're going to continue to ensure that our Crowns move forward.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Right, Mr. Speaker. But that minister seems to forget that this government left them \$2.3 billion, a booming economy, and in fact, Mr. Speaker, revenues that have been furnished to government that have been at all-time highs. Had that minister only kept his spending commitments, his promise from the last platform, Mr. Speaker, of that government, we'd have an \$8 billion surplus at this point in time, Mr. Speaker. Squandered — that's the fact.

Mr. Speaker, part of the problem here is that Saskatchewan is the only province in Canada that does not use summary financing. This allows the Premier to not only mislead the public but also exploit the fiscal tools to the detriment of Saskatchewan people. Last year they took \$800 million from the Crowns, this year almost \$500 million. A complete raid, Mr. Speaker.

This Premier tries to compare our finances to other provinces. Simply not fair, simply not accurate, Mr. Speaker. It's just politically expedient. We're playing by a different set of rules — inappropriate public sector accounting policies, Mr. Speaker.

Saskatchewan people deserve transparency and accountability, Mr. Speaker, and that means one set of books. To the minister: when will the Sask Party government stop playing games and be straightforward with the people of Saskatchewan through summary financials, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think what we're going to do as government is provide accuracy to the people and in fact accuracy to the NDP numbers.

Mr. Speaker, let's clarify for the people of the province of Saskatchewan. When we became government, Mr. Speaker, the General Revenue Fund debt, the General Revenue Fund debt was at \$6.8 billion. Mr. Speaker, the amount of dollars that were in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, as it was called then, was \$1.2 billion. Mr. Speaker, today there's \$4.1 billion in GRF [General Revenue Fund] debt, and in the mid-year, Mr. Speaker, the fund is at \$1 billion, Mr. Speaker. That's an improvement of \$2.5 billion.

Mr. Speaker, but that's on top of, that's on top of the largest income tax reduction in the province's history, the largest property tax reduction in the province's history, the largest infrastructure development in the province's history. Record tax reduction, record debt reduction, record investment in infrastructure — that's our government's record, and I'm proud of it.

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

Contract with Information Technology Office

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, an executive director in the Information Technology Office, William McMorris, is also the president of Common Sense Consulting Ltd. In 2009-2010, Common Sense Consulting received over \$216,000 from the same Information Technology Office. The minister has had a day to get information on this contract. Can the minister tell us today what services Common Sense Consulting provided under that contract, and whether the contract has been renewed for 2010-2011, and at what cost?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Crown Investments.

Hon. Mr. McMillan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will answer the member's question, and then I will take a moment to answer some questions I took notice of yesterday. Mr. Speaker, to his question today, William McMorris has a 30-year history of practising. He's a senior IT [information technology] professional. He was brought on to the ITO [Information Technology Office] to conduct a review of IT project management process. He was brought on at a time, Mr. Speaker, where different ministries, Mr. Speaker, were going in different directions, were not falling under the ITO. We needed to show value, to show that we had a common goal. And he has done that job very well.

Currently he is leading an improvement division in the ITO application maintenance area, Mr. Speaker, the largest ITO unit. His contract, Mr. Speaker, is a three-month contract. It is renewed on three months, and it is at \$1,200 a day, Mr. Speaker.

What is implied by this question, but not asked overtly, Mr. Speaker, is this William McMorris a relative of anyone on this side of the House. Mr. Speaker, I can assure those members if they want to sully contractors or the people of Saskatchewan for

political gain, there is no relation on this side of the House with a contractor. He doesn't play hockey with anyone on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker. I don't think there's going to be Christmas dinner. This gentleman was hired as a contractor because he's a good IT professional, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to answer question number one . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. The member did mention that he would also respond, having taken notice in response to the question here. The minister gave notice yesterday, and I would ask the minister to quickly respond to the notice given. I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. McMillan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the members opposite, there is 41 consultants hired by the ITO at this point, providing services to the ITO. When we took over government from those members, there was 80 consultants, Mr. Speaker. We have dramatically reduced the number of consultants. It's an expensive way to provide service, but in some circumstances it is the most appropriate way.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to make the members opposite aware that Health has had a major initiative. Education and Social Services. I would like the members opposite to know that this is currently a three-month process, Mr. Speaker.

What the member opposite has asked, Mr. Speaker, is it appropriate to have these consultants, Mr. Speaker? The members opposite would be aware that on July 31st, 2009 the *Leader-Post* had an article about a company; President Garry Aldridge is being contracted by the NDP caucus, Mr. Speaker. I would like to know if that was a tendered contract, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. McMorris is the president and director of Common Sense Consulting, the company under contract with ITO. The government directory, whatever the minister says today, lists Mr. McMorris as the executive director of customer services for the ITO. To the minister: is he saying that instead of paying an executive director's salary of about 90 to \$100,000 to do this job, a consulting firm is being paid over twice that amount to do it?

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

Hon. Mr. McMillan: — Mr. Speaker, I answered this in my first question. The company has been hired for a couple of different projects, Mr. Speaker. His first was to conduct a review of the ITO project management process. He's currently leading an improvement with the ITO application maintenance area, the largest ITO network, Mr. Speaker. He has been very successful in bringing many of the ministries into line with the ITO and making the ITO add value to the government of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

The members opposite yesterday, Mr. Speaker, asked how I knew it was just a drive-by slur when they started these accusations about a specific situation, Mr. Speaker. How does anyone know that there's unbiased allocations coming from the

opposition, Mr. Speaker? I find it fairly easy. If you see their lips moving, it's often a situation, Mr. Speaker.

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

Arrangements for a Long-Term Care Facility

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know the Minister of Health is looking forward to answering this question. Mr. Speaker, for months the Minister of Health has been ducking for cover over the Amicus deal. He's failed to answer why this deal has been structured differently from all the other affiliation agreements signed with the Catholic Health Ministry and other organizations over the years. He has never explained why this deal needs to be backed by a loan guarantee while volunteers across the province scramble to raise their community's share of 35 per cent of the cost of a long-term care facility.

So to the minister: why is Amicus not an affiliate?

[10:45]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, from the Patient First Review commissioned by this government, Tony Dagnone put out a report that looked at the health care system through the patients' eyes. One of the recommendations through the Patient First Review was to look at different funding models for facilities in our province, Mr. Speaker.

That's what we've done. We're looking at a different funding model. This funding model with the Catholic Health Ministry is a good funding model, Mr. Speaker. It will add long-term care beds to the complement of long-term care beds we have in the province, Mr. Speaker. What it will do is move people out of acute care settings into appropriate living conditions, Mr. Speaker, such as Amicus. It's a good deal for the province, Mr. Speaker. It's a good deal for the seniors, Mr. Speaker. And we're looking forward to the day when seniors move into that facility.

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

Ms. Atkinson: — The minister claims that this is a new and innovative financing model. But we know that taxpayers are going to pay for this over the long term because they're paying Amicus a higher per diem rate than any other affiliated nursing home. And we understand that it's at least \$1.1 million a year more than any other nursing home of that size. And they've also signed an agreement that would force taxpayers to pay off the Amicus mortgage even if Amicus decides to walk away from the deal.

So to the minister: why did the minister agree to these terms? Is this new innovation financing model a way to take long-term debt off the books of the province.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, what this agreement between the Saskatoon Health Region and the Catholic Health Ministry will do will put 100 new long-term care beds on top of the complement. A hundred beds. Something that that government didn't do in 16 years is build a new long-term care bed on top of the complement that was already there, Mr. Speaker.

As a result, it's our responsibility to make sure that the facilities that are needed in this province are built. This is a new funding model. The Catholic Health Ministry is building the facility. Yes, we're paying a higher per diem than other facilities because we're covering some of the capital costs, Mr. Speaker, as we go forward. That would be common sense, Mr. Speaker, to most people I think, but it doesn't seem to be able to resonate in the opposition benches for some reason, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, we have a government that released their mid-year financial report today, and they're quite pleased with themselves. But we also have an opposition that is worried about what the future is going to look like with these kinds of deals. We know that this is a \$27 million facility that is being built with no money but a loan guarantee from the Saskatoon Health Region because they've entered into this agreement with Amicus.

It's a great way to take debt off the books. And it's a great way to reward your friends because we know that the \$27 million nursing home is being built by a contractor who didn't have a tendered arrangement, Mr. Speaker. And that contractor contributed close to \$19,000 to the Sask Party.

So, Mr. Speaker, we want to understand why a government would enter into this kind of a deal with contractors that would start digging the ground before any kind of agreement was agreed to by the Saskatoon Health Region. And we think, Mr. Speaker, that there's something rotten in Denmark. And would the minister agree?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, the agreement between Miners Construction and the Catholic Health Ministry was put together because Miners Construction was the only contracting firm, general contractor that would put a fixed-price contract in place; a price guarantee, Mr. Speaker, where none of the other contractors were willing to do that. They interviewed the other contractors, Mr. Speaker, and it was the Catholic Health Ministry that decided to go with Miners Construction, Mr. Speaker.

It's interesting though that the opposition would be so against this agreement, Mr. Speaker, because it seems to be that there's some supporters of the Sask Party that are involved. I would ask members opposite, do they have anybody in construction companies that did any government contracts in the past? Have they had any relations with people in construction companies that have done government work? Because if they have, maybe there was an issue there too, Mr. Speaker.

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

Support for Affordable Housing

Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, this past summer the Premier was in Moose Jaw. And he was speaking to the issue of housing shortages, and he told the media in Moose Jaw, and I quote, "We have been building more units across the province. We have added a lot here in Moose Jaw." Mr. Speaker, can the Premier tell me where the units are because no one in Moose Jaw can find them.

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, we have added housing units right across the province of Saskatchewan, and Moose Jaw's an important part of it. Mr. Speaker, there are 700 more units that have gone up right across Saskatchewan. And we have units in . . . And 1,250 more are on the list at the moment. And I'm very pleased that in the North we've added units, Mr. Speaker. We've added units in North Battleford. We've added units in Moose Jaw as well.

In fact the Premier, when asked the question when he was in Moose Jaw, when he asked the . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order. The minister.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, there are 27 low-income families received home ownership in Moose Jaw since we became government. We helped fund the first-ever Habitat for Humanity in Moose Jaw under our government. Twenty families in Moose Jaw have received forgivable loans to purchase homes. Six more families involved in the neighbourhood home ownership program who are eligible to become owners after five years of occupancy. These initiatives, along with the other ones, has helped Moose Jaw's vacancy rate go from the point six that it was two years ago to 2.3 per cent today.

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

Ms. Higgins: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the minister may have forgotten to brief the Premier because no one knows of any of these units. And they aren't new units. They may be accommodating and helping families improve their situation, but it doesn't help the wait-list.

Mr. Speaker, there is a man in my constituency, David, who's disabled. He lives on \$800 a month. His rent increased from 385 to \$625 a month. And he writes, with the remaining funds, which is a mere \$175, he needs to wash his clothes in a coin-operated washer-dryer, pay his phone bill, pay his electricity and several other bills. Groceries, I might add, Mr. Speaker. He doesn't have a heck of a lot to live on.

Inaccurate statements in the media don't help people like David. When will we see some assistance and improvements in

the situation in housing in the city of Moose Jaw?

The Speaker: — I recognize the same minister.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no doubt that the housing issue is a huge one right across Saskatchewan. And that is why we have spent millions and millions of dollars since we've become government to deal with the issue.

We've dealt with issues in the North and in the cities. We've spent money to make sure that there are low-rental homes. We have spent money to make sure that people with disabilities have homes. We've made sure that there are more spaces for students when they are in school so that they can have a home. And all those spaces actually ensure that there is vacancy rates for other people as well.

Mr. Speaker, this is a huge issue. And we deal with it in the same context as we deal with the issues of cost of living, making sure that there are money for people to have, not just food and rent but also to make sure that they have money for drugs and for the living that we deserve in this province.

Mr. Speaker, everybody in our province is pleased to be part of Saskatchewan. And I think that the members opposite are the only ones who are negative, Mr. Speaker. I think that we have an opportunity to be proud of our province. Only those people are not.

The Speaker: — The member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, the frustrating part for all of us sitting here in opposition is that the government does a student housing project and checks it off the list: over. Done with. And they talk about it over and over.

The Premier has made statements . . . I mean, I'm worried that the whole housing piece falls into the same category as clean coal, the nuclear projects that were high on his list, carbon sequestration. They talk about them and announce them. And the minister's long-term care facilities, the 13 that have been put on hold, it's great to talk about them, Mr. Speaker. But that doesn't help the Davids of the world or the many other people that are struggling to make ends meet.

Mr. Speaker, when is this government going to quit ignoring people who are struggling to keep a roof over their head and start paying attention to the issues across this province for families?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Social Services.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, when we became government, one of the issues that we talked about a lot was housing. And I had an opportunity to speak with the former minister of Social Services and talked about affordable housing issues. And you know what he said? He said the issue was not addressed under the NDP. When they finally did get around to looking at it, you know what they did? They funded a task force and then they kept the findings a secret from the people of the province. They didn't bother to do anything for the struggling people of Saskatchewan to find shelter.

In fact, under their leadership in 2007 there was 58 affordable homes built. And they actually failed to increase shelter rates for 13 out of 16 years when they were in power. And the inflation rate during that time was 30 per cent, Mr. Speaker. They also failed to increase the seniors' income plan between '92 and 2007, and there was a 40 per cent inflation cost at that time, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, there is more work to do. And I'd be pleased in the near future to talk about Head Start on a Home.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Human Services Committee.

Standing Committee on Human Services

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Human Services to report Bill No. 151, *The Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies Amendment Act, 2010* without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be considered in Committee of the Whole? I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill and that the Bill now be read the third time.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Advanced Education has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 151, *The Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies Amendment Act, 2010* without amendment, that the Bill be now read the third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the minister.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 151 — *The Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies Amendment Act, 2010*

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, thank you. I move that this Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education that Bill No. 151, *The Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies Amendment Act, 2010* without amendment be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

TABLING OF SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, before orders of the day it is my pleasure to submit supplementary estimates accompanied by a message from His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

The Speaker: — I would ask members to rise for the message from His Honour. The message is as follows:

The Lieutenant Governor transmits supplementary estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2011, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Arm River-Watrous.

Support for Rural Saskatchewan

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to enter this debate on the motion that I'm going to be presenting at the end of my speech. You know, basically what this motion's talking about is the Assembly's recognizing the Saskatchewan government's efforts to rebuild the infrastructure and roads of rural Saskatchewan, but mostly to acknowledge that this government is listening and responding to the needs of rural Saskatchewan.

And I can speak to that, you know, being a member for many years. But I will start with the history of why there has been a distrust of the opposition when they were in power. That started in the early '90s, you know, with rural Saskatchewan. They felt that they were ignored by the NDP government. I know when they campaigned in the '91 election, Mr. Speaker . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. The Speaker has recognized the member from Arm River-Watrous and is having difficulty hearing what the member has to say with all the other debate. So I'd ask members to allow the member of Arm River-Watrous to address the Assembly.

[11:00]

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was discussing, what started years and years ago with rural Saskatchewan where they felt that they were out of touch with the NDP government. And it showed as the elections progressed. I'll start with when they first campaigned in '91.

I hate to go back into history, start to rehash it, but we have to when we talk about this motion of why there is no trust about the NDP government and why the present, people right now in rural Saskatchewan, they feel confident with the government, that they're actually listening to their needs and dealing with their problems, Mr. Speaker, something that the previous government didn't do.

When they ran on their election in '91, they didn't talk about tearing up GRIP [gross revenue insurance program]. Grain prices were very poor through the late '80s going into the '90s. Producers were looking for a form of stability in the agriculture, and what happens? They were looking towards GRIP. You know, it may not have been a perfect program, but it was a program there. It was a program that the producers were using, that a lot of the producers needed to help them operate their farms.

And what did government do at the day? They ripped it up, you know, and didn't put anything in place. If there was a problem with it, then work to put something in place, work with the federal government. That's something they didn't do. That was a rural . . . That's where they ignored rural Saskatchewan, you know.

And then as they carried on, what did they do? You know, they closed 52 rural hospitals, you know, which was hard for rural Saskatchewan. That was very, very hard and painful for rural Saskatchewan, and they didn't forget that. And it showed in the '95 election. It showed in the '99 election. It showed in the 2003 and 2007 elections, when there was not one member from the NDP elected in rural Saskatchewan, you know.

And what have we done to try . . . What else did they do through that period? They closed 32 rural agricultural offices, 22 extension offices, and did nothing to replace that. Opened one office in Moose Jaw with a toll-free line, then says, well this is going to help farmers. There has not been one thing that they did when they were in their terms to help rural Saskatchewan.

So when we were elected, you know, we campaigned on rural Saskatchewan. So one of the things we did . . . When we first got elected, you know, the cattle prices weren't good. We were suffering through many years of BSE [bovine spongiform encephalopathy]. We did what we could, you know. We started with a cattle payment to the producers of \$71 million, you know, \$71 million that went to 18,000 cattle and hog producers through the cattle and hog support program. That's \$40 a cow, \$20 a market hog, \$10 a weanling. And we did that without the federal assistance, you know.

And my producers in my constituency and throughout the many other constituencies, they appreciated that. I can remember guys coming up to me, phoning my office and saying, you know, at least you're doing something. You're trying to help us. You're trying what you can. We know that, you know, there's budgetary constraints. We know that there's other things you have to do, but you're actually trying to help us out there in rural Saskatchewan. And that was one of the messages that was come through us and to our members in rural Saskatchewan, you know.

Another program that we brought in shortly after we were elected . . . The Southwest was dealing with a drought, a drought that they'd been dealing with for quite a few years over the . . . you know, before we were elected and going into our term, you know. So we were looking at . . . And what were producers asking for, Mr. Speaker? They were asking for help with water programs to help dig wells, help to dig dugouts, help to dig anything to help with cattle at that end of it. So we stepped up to the producers in the Southwest to help in the drought. That was a good program.

We had producers in our area say, you know what, can you help us? Because I mean when you have cattle, it's getting expensive now to dig wells, to dig dugouts. It's an expense that, you know, many producers with the lower cattle prices were having a hard time to meet that demand. So we stepped up. We put that program across Saskatchewan. And that was a great benefit to many cattle producers. I know a few of them that had to dig very deep wells that before that were trying to just use surface water.

And you were depending on snow. And if you didn't have a lot of runoff, they were either hauling water . . . And if you've ever had cattle and had to haul water for a big herd of cattle, it's not fun, especially when it comes to the wintertime. That is not a very good job to be doing. It's not a very enjoyable job. I can remember doing it as a kid and it was not . . . You know, between your taps and your pipes and your tank freezing up and delivering cattle and hoping that they'll drink it before the trough freezes up.

Those are some of the assistance we did. Going from drought . . . As you deal in Saskatchewan, you go from one extreme to the other when you're dealing with agriculture. And now we're dealing with flooded farm land, you know, and producers, it was a hardship for them.

So what did we do? This present government said, we have to help some way that we can. We have to show rural Saskatchewan that we're behind you, that we're helping you any way we can. So we came up with the program. It was \$360 million to help farmers with flooded program, the excessive moisture program. That provided \$30 per eligible acre for cropland unseeded as of June 20th. And you know, it's going to help a lot of producers, you know, pay some of the bills through the summer and the winter. With that also working with, we've also enhanced crop insurance. Working with them two programs are trying to help producers get through a difficult year. And we've had a difficult year in rural Saskatchewan.

But when I talk to producers out there, you know, they know we're trying to help. They know that we've given out some payments. You know, if you've applied . . . We've applied some programs to help you through the bad years, through the flooded years, through the drought years — something that the opposition never did. I think the most they ever, ever gave was \$10 an acre and I think that was . . . I forget the year of it. That's one time. These are a couple of programs we've just brought out in the very short time that we've been elected.

You know, some of the other things that we've dealt with is looking at how wildlife damage . . . which it's grown over the years. Out in our way, in my constituency, I think as many other

constituencies, you've noticed a great influx of deer, moose, animals that we haven't even seen. In my constituency and around my farm, I have never seen moose up till last five, six, seven, eight years. Mule deer; we never seen a lot of mule deer. Antelope. We're seeing racoons.

They're providing damage, you know, unfortunately. It's nice to see the wildlife but the more wildlife you have, the more damage that they cause to the crops.

More geese or snow geese. We have thousands of snow geese. We're in a fly pattern through the Davidson area that comes up through Rosetown, goes through Last Mountain Lake. Thousands and thousands of geese. And do you know how much damage they can do?

So one of the programs we did to help the farmers was to bring in 100 per cent compensation for wildlife. That's something that they asked. They said, you know, that the wildlife is out of our hands. We can't control that. Can you help us in some way? So we stepped up and we helped them that way.

You know, going back to when we closed, when the NDP closed 52 rural hospitals, I can remember Watrous trying to open up a long-term care facility. And just in question period today, the member saying, well you know, there's these long-term care facilities that . . . No work's being done.

Well I tell you, right now in Watrous they're pouring cement, the frame is up, there's carpenters working on it right now as we speak. I was there on November 11th; I just had to go around the place. The frame was up then. They'd taken one day off, November 11th. I think they were going to take off the following Sunday, but the contractors were back on, on Sunday. There's electricians working there. There's carpenters working there. There is cement workers working there. So that facility is going ahead under our government.

The town of Watrous and area, they asked for that support since about '93 or '94. They were asking the present government to throw in their share. Every year they would come down, ask the health district . . . [inaudible] . . . ask the former government, can you help us with that? And they said no.

One of my first meetings when I was, Watrous was in my constituency, that was with a long-term care facility organization. They wanted to meet with me and say, can you help us any way you can? In opposition I raised it quite a few times. When we were in government, I brought the Health minister out there, and he said, yes, we need to work on these facilities and we need to do what we can. So they made Watrous, as 13 others, a priority for rural Saskatchewan.

That is why it speaks to this motion, why there is confidence in this government from rural Saskatchewan. It's been there, and it's been growing as we talk to the producers because they know that we're trying to work with them, that we're listening to them and in any way that we can.

Highways is another thing. The highways were deplorable. I know when I first got elected in '99 that was basically . . . I won, probably, the election just on that issue alone. When I'd talk to somebody in the household, I'd just say, you know, how

are the highways in your area? It was like . . . They would say, basically terrible. Will you do what you can if you form government? And I say, yes, we will work towards that.

Since we've, in my constituency alone, we've worked on No. 2 Highway. I think that was in the first term. That was a terrible stretch right around from the junction of 15 right around Watrous; it was just brutal. We redid that. Then we worked on No. 20 by Lockwood, rebuilt that. That's an important stretch of highway going to Lanigan and hooking up with No. 16.

And then this fall, we also did a chunk sitting right in front of . . . going from junction 15 south towards Imperial and Simpson that needed to be rebuilt. I have one more chunk of highway, Highway 15 that needs to be rebuilt, and I know that we're working towards trying to get that done. We're making that, what you call a route that we can transport heavy equipment and also for if you have high loads, overhead loads, because there's very few power lines on that line. We're working on that, and we've talked to the area transportation board in that area. We've worked with them and said, what do you make priorities? You know, when we work with people in rural Saskatchewan and the boards, we will sit down and listen to them. We will sit and listen to them. That was something the other government didn't do.

I can also talk about SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company] when I was there. And I won't say when they first started that program, it was 100 per cent wrong, because there needed to be something done in that area. But when things started to go wrong and things weren't going right for the producers, says, you know what? The rules you're setting out isn't right. The way you're setting things out, we want to have some meetings.

The present government didn't meet with them. Didn't listen to them. And that they . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . As one member is saying behind me, they thought they knew better, and that was wrong. And when you start thinking about it that way, that's where you lose votes in rural Saskatchewan, because you have to work with the people. You have to listen to them. And that's something the last government didn't do, and this present government is doing. We're sitting down with people and listening to them and trying to work with them at that.

Talking about in the Outlook area, what we did there, we've also . . . You know, there was never any irrigation done, infrastructure since the '80s. Nothing through the '90s was ever done in that area, and that is a huge potential in that area. What did we do? We put \$30 million into irrigation infrastructure to help that area. You know, right now we're only . . . Right now out of that lake, I think only 3 per cent of the water is used for irrigation. We're passing on huge amounts of water to the Hudson Bay that we could be using to grow rural Saskatchewan, to help the producers. And that is one way of doing it.

Another way is some of the water is going towards the M1 Canal to help some work that needs to be done on it, which some communities feed, get their water supply off of. And we're hoping maybe other communities will join that, would join that and draw more money from that. That is one way that

we've been working in rural Saskatchewan to help them grow through the many different ideas as we work forward as that.

And we know that there's more work to do, but we're willing to sit down. Crop insurance? Yes, we need to do more things in crop insurance. We need to help the producer. But we're going to sit down with them and we're going to listen to them and say, you know, what ideas can you present that can maybe make this program a little better? How can we work together to make this program a little better, but still make it cost-efficient for the producers and also reality for the government?

So, Mr. Speaker, with that I will move the motion:

That this Assembly recognize the Saskatchewan government's efforts to rebuild the infrastructure and roads of rural Saskatchewan and acknowledge that there is a new sense in rural Saskatchewan that their government is listening and responding to the needs of agricultural producers.

I so present.

The Speaker: — The motion before the Assembly is the motion presented by the member from Arm River-Watrous. Will the members take the motion as read?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, I listened to the speech from the member, and the thing I heard over and over again was that they're trying, they're trying, and they're trying. And so that's the new phrase from over there about trying. Now, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if that meant what they were trying when they laid out plans for the 13 long-term care facilities and then pulled back the money. And he talks about Watrous. Well there are 12 other homes out there sitting.

But, Mr. Speaker, also out there . . . Before I get in there, just a remark. In terms of Neilburg, in terms of trying, here's what they're actually doing in terms for rural infrastructure in Saskatchewan.

I had the good fortune of being out in Neilburg this past summer and attending a meeting with about 400 people there. And they were trying, what they were trying to do there is cut the ambulance service to Neilburg. And they were trying to cut that ambulance service to Neilburg, and the people stood up. And there were over 400 people who came out from that town, and they said, you're not going to take our ambulance service away.

[11:15]

And you know what, Mr. Speaker? You know what's happened? Here's what their trying has got them. Here's what the government is trying. Because there's two stories here, Mr. Speaker; there's two stories.

They were pushed back, and now they've got a deal with

Neilburg. They've got a deal with the Neilburg ambulance and here's what it is: the local RM [rural municipality] has to put in \$72,000. So this is \$72,000 that's coming out of money that could have been used for rural infrastructure. This could have been used for rural infrastructure, and they're doing that all across the province.

They're going out and making rural Saskatchewan pay twice for health care. And that money's coming out of RMs, and it's coming out of rural infrastructure. Money that should be used for those communities, that's where it's coming out. And that, Mr. Speaker, that's what they're saying when they're trying. And so what do we have? It's costing \$117,000 a year for that ambulance because the government can't afford it because they're rolling in red ink. And that's what they're hiding. And they're pushing back, pushing back the cost of health care onto rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this summer I went all across this province. And time and time again we heard this story all over the province, and we can name different places of what is going on. But this is a great example of what is actually happening out there where rural municipalities are having to pick up these costs. And they're standing up, and they're saying we will take care of this. But, Mr. Speaker, what a sad day for Saskatchewan. What a sad day for infrastructure for Saskatchewan. What a sad day for health care because now it is not equal. It is not equal.

When I would come home on some days from being out travelling the province and we were driving in to my city of Saskatoon, we had . . . And we were passed because there was an emergency. There would be a fire truck. There'd be an ambulance, and there'd be police cars responding to that. And you know what, Mr. Speaker? It's seven minutes. And here they were cancelling ambulance service. They were cancelling ambulance service, and they couldn't get there in 30 minutes . . . [inaudible] . . . the occupational health and safety. Because there's oil around there. They had to do this.

And this is the deal . . . This is another creative solution much like Amicus, another creative solution. But this is worse because this is taking money out of people's pockets. And they're desperate out there in rural Saskatchewan because when the health care goes, if this ambulance would have gone, then the town. Because there's long-term care facilities, and those seniors are saying we're going to leave because we can't get to a hospital that's nearby. And this is, this is what they're saying: they're trying.

Now, Mr. Speaker, all summer I heard all sorts of stories. But I just want to return, for this is the same member . . . Because not only is the national press after these folks in terms of some of their dealings, but here's another thing that . . . and I wonder if we can guess who said this:

So I hope with that, that this government will look towards Ireland. And I expect Saskatchewan, when we form government, we'll be like Ireland one day. It will be one of the righteous provinces in this Canada. Thank you.

Now that was the member who just spoke. He just said that. He said that. He said that. Well you know, we are . . . You know what? In some cases . . . And I don't want to because I know in

the Ukraine they're having problems, and I know in Ireland they're having problems. But, Mr. Speaker, this is the folks that hitched their wagons to this sort of free enterprise stuff. And this is their approach. And I'll tell you what. That member might very well be right because this is where Saskatchewan is hitting with that plan. This is what they're trying, and this is what their plan is getting them. That's what's happening.

Mr. Speaker, I had the good privilege of going to about 55 communities and sitting down with people — reeves, mayors, local townsmen — in restaurants. Mr. Speaker, we went to one place, and we walked through the door. And I'll tell you the desperation, if you don't think there's desperation out there. We walked through the door and people looked at us. And I said, we're here on a health tour and to talk about some labour issues.

And you know what they said to me? They said, are you doctors? They said, are you doctors? I said, no, not a doctor, not a doctor. But my partner said she's a nurse. And they said, a practitioner, a nurse practitioner? That's what she said. And she said, they said, come and join us — because there was about 14 people sitting at coffee — and we sat down with them. And they started telling their woeful story, woeful story of what's happening to them, how they've been ignored. And then we were off to see the reeve, and we were off to see the mayor. And then we're off to see . . . because they wanted to talk us. And then, Mr. Speaker — here was the great one — I went up to pay for the coffee, and the person taking my money said, are you really a doctor . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes. Are you really a doctor?

Mr. Speaker, in terms of, in terms of the rural . . . Because these folks always talk about how great they are. And the member was going on and on about their rural and what's happening out there. Well I'll tell you, I'll tell you one thing. I'll tell you one thing that I heard out throughout: we have not seen any opposition MLAs here. You are the first. You are the first politician that has come in here. Time and time again I heard that, time and time again: you are the first and thank you for coming. Thank you because somebody cares.

And they had their plans on the walls, Mr. Speaker. And they talked about their bake sales all across Saskatchewan. And they may laugh over there. They may laugh, and they think that's funny. But those people were not. That was not funny. Because in most of those communities, that health care institution, that health care facility is the lifeblood. It is whether that community lives or dies.

And that's the message we got. And that's the message we got. And I was surprised because every day I sat here, Mr. Speaker, I thought these were the great saviours of rural Saskatchewan. I mean they wrap themselves in the rural flag and, you know . . . And there was all these huge stories about the NDP not doing anything. But I went there and they said, we haven't seen . . . Well I said, I don't believe that, you know, come on. You must be an NDP supporter, and you don't, you know . . . That's not true. Maybe they're just ignoring you and so they can't . . .

But you know, in some places, Mr. Speaker, I had coffee, and there were people lined up outside because they wanted to come in and talk. Because we could only have five or six people in at a time. And it wasn't an organized meeting. It wasn't an

organized meeting. And they said, to a person, we have not seen an MLA in here. And I stand up here and I'll repeat over and over again: they did not see anybody in there.

Now I know the member from Wawota, they saw him at a meeting, but that's a whole different issue . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, and I wonder what happened there. Is it highways or health care? Now this is arrogance. This is arrogance, and they can keep it up. For as far as I'm concerned, I'm glad if they do that because their days are limited anyways with the red ink.

Now in terms . . . Because there is no money, and they keep hiding that. And people still somehow think well we'll still try and work. But also they're sort of saying, but you know, thanks for coming. And did you know all of this? Did you know all this? Maybe, maybe here we'll tell you this, but don't say we said that. That's sad. That's sad because this is Saskatchewan. And that's a sad day for Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, just to get on the record some of the things . . . Because I walked into one of the places, and the person meeting me, the receptionist, we started talking. And I . . . Because the announcement had come down and the area was bad — because of a lot of wet — but an announcement had come down about what they were going to get. And I asked her, I looked at her and I said, is it enough? And she kind of went, you know, but she put her head down. Then later on, a couple of people talked to me that it wasn't enough. It wasn't near enough what was going to happen, what they needed.

Now I'm no expert. I have a farming background, but I have no expert. And they told me. And you should have seen the hurt in their eyes, Mr. Speaker. You should have seen the hurt in their eyes when they were doing that. Because not only did they say, we've never spoken to anybody from that side, but they were also saying this isn't enough.

But as rural people, the courteous people they are and everything else that I found and the welcome that we received, they were not prepared to at this time . . . But you knew now that those, particularly in health care, workers, they were going home, and they were going to be the main breadwinner in that family because there were troubles. There were troubles on the horizons.

And councillors are concerned up there, but they might not be speaking out. And they might smile over there and think that's okay, that nothing's happening. But there's serious things coming. There's serious things coming next spring, Mr. Speaker, when we have to pay for the costs that are upcoming.

Mr. Speaker, an experience . . . I will do that again. The wonderful people in rural Saskatchewan . . . I am from rural Saskatchewan as well. The members seem to think that they hold some sort of ownership of that. But they are not doing the job out there, and it's surprising how quickly, how quickly they are letting people down in all areas, whether it is in the grain producers or the cattle producers or in people working out in those communities. And, Mr. Speaker, they will definitely pay the price for that. I kid you not.

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

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure for me to enter into the 75-minute debate which deals basically with the subjects of rebuilding rural infrastructure and responding to the needs of our agricultural producers.

Mr. Speaker, I am an agricultural producer. My father was an agricultural producer. My grandfather was an agricultural producer. My son is an agricultural producer. And I hope that his children will be as well.

Mr. Speaker, I am extremely proud of our record in agriculture and in rural infrastructure, and I'm going to start out with some of our accomplishments in agriculture. I'm going to compare them. I appreciate that last member's remarks wherein he stated that we weren't holding up our end in rural Saskatchewan, and so I'm going to compare what we're doing, through my remarks, to what they did when they were in government, Mr. Speaker. And that member who just spoke was part of that government.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to start with some of the most recent announcements of our Minister of Agriculture on the agricultural front. And one I'm extremely proud of, Mr. Speaker, is the recent announcement of over \$30 million to restore and repair irrigation infrastructure in the Lake Diefenbaker area. Mr. Speaker, I want to say that this is an initiative that is more than assistance for irrigation farmers. This is probably the greatest infrastructure investment that can be made in terms of potential return, Mr. Speaker. Alberta did this 50 years ago with their irrigation infrastructure and, at that time, Saskatchewan had a far more advanced agriculture industry than Alberta does or did.

And when Alberta made this infrastructure investment in irrigation infrastructure, that brought more livestock production, more intensive livestock production. It brought a packing industry, a feedlot industry, spinoff industries, Mr. Speaker. And there is no infrastructure investment that can be made in any area of infrastructure that will bring more spinoff than an investment in irrigation infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, and spinoff not only in rural communities but spinoff in our cities as well.

Just a few weeks ago, our Agriculture minister announced, Mr. Speaker, that the Saskatchewan feed and forage program, the SFFP — which supports livestock and forage producers affected by excess moisture which has been a serious issue around the province this year, Mr. Speaker — the SFFP will provide financial support to producers who have to transport additional feed to their livestock and/or financial support to producers who have to transport livestock to different locations for grazing, Mr. Speaker, because of excess moisture.

Payments in this program, Mr. Speaker, will be based on the amount of feed to be transported, Mr. Speaker, or the number of animals transported over the distance haul. In addition to the program, the SFFP will provide \$30 per acre to producers to reseed hay, forage, or pasture land that was damaged by excess moisture.

Mr. Speaker, this has been a very difficult year in Saskatchewan agriculture, a near disaster in some areas of the province, Mr. Speaker. But in almost all areas of the province, a difficult year

to say the least, a year when producers have had some issues getting seeding done on time, getting into soggy fields to get spraying done in a timely fashion, getting haying done on time, Mr. Speaker. Many producers didn't get enough feed put up during the wet summer — and feed of a sufficient quality — to get their livestock through the winter, and additional difficulties at harvest time, Mr. Speaker.

But through this all, all of this adversity, our producers persevered, Mr. Speaker. And while our government is there to help them, our producers did a fabulous job of making these lemons that they were handed into pretty first-class lemonade with this farming season. And it's not a disaster province-wide, Mr. Speaker. It's a difficult, difficult season but certainly not a disaster.

One of the great things our government has done to help, well, all people of the province — but no group will benefit more from this than our agricultural producers, Mr. Speaker — and that's the historic education property tax reduction program. Mr. Speaker, education portion of property tax has been a serious burden on our agricultural producers, and I'm just speaking of agriculture producers in this context, Mr. Speaker, but all people of the province. And we pay the highest education portion of . . . or we did pay, until our government began to intervene with phase one of our program to reduce the education portion of property tax, Mr. Speaker, we paid the highest rate in the country.

And it's a tax on capital is what it is, Mr. Speaker, and it makes it difficult to do business whether in agriculture or in other businesses. It makes it difficult to own a home. It makes it difficult to prosper in Saskatchewan, and that is why our government has attacked this problem. Mr. Speaker, every government since Tommy Douglas was a brand new premier and promised to deal with this. Every government has promised to deal with it, and only ours so far, Mr. Speaker, has had the courage and the dedication and the will to take on this problem head-on. And we have implemented phase one of our program, Mr. Speaker, and I ask those members to stay tuned for phase two.

[11:30]

Young Tommy Douglas, when first becoming the premier of Saskatchewan, yes, he was going to change the world. In fact he said that this is a problem that needs to be addressed as soon as the finances of the province allow it. I believe though that's very close to a direct quote, Mr. Speaker. And I hope it's accurate, and I know that the gist of it is accurate. Mr. Speaker, the fact is that up to the most recent NDP premier, NDP premiers have been promising to do this for nearly 70 years now, Mr. Speaker, and I'm extremely proud that our government has taken the initiative to do it.

In the short time that's left, Mr. Speaker, I want to speak of a number of agricultural programs that have been initiated by our government and enhanced by our government — \$360 million, Mr. Speaker, in the excess moisture program. That's a program, Mr. Speaker, that provides \$30 per eligible acre to our producers for land that is taken out of production for the season due to excess moisture.

And I know that the members opposite — who failed to respond in any significant way in the past, in 2005, 2006, and 2007 when similar issues existed in our agricultural communities and large areas of the province, Mr. Speaker — although they say that this is nowhere near enough, our producers think it's enough, Mr. Speaker. By and large, they do. And it's so much more than has ever been done for a similar disaster previously in the history of the province, Mr. Speaker, that previous efforts pale in comparison. In fact, Mr. Speaker, this program, the excess moisture program, is the largest provincial agricultural disaster response in Saskatchewan history.

Mr. Speaker, on top of that, our government has been enhancing crop insurance in the three years that we've been the government, Mr. Speaker. And that in stark contrast to what the NDP did when they raised premiums, reduced coverage, tore . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well no, and continued, Mr. Speaker, to take the, if I can say, the teeth out of our crop insurance program. And our crop insurance program, enhanced under this government, Mr. Speaker, has paid out over \$250 million already in this year, Mr. Speaker. And that's a quarter of a billion dollars income to our farmers from our enhanced crop insurance program, Mr. Speaker, and I'm very proud of that.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to get time to deal with a number of other agricultural issues. And I'm going to run out of time, clearly. And I had hoped that if I had time to deal with all the agricultural issues that our government has improved, initiated, or enhanced, that I could get on to other rural infrastructure, like roads and hospitals and schools and so on. But it looks like I'm going to run out of time.

I just want to wind up my remarks, Mr. Speaker, by saying that I'm very proud to be part of this Saskatchewan Party government who have honoured our commitment to rural Saskatchewan, and I'll close my remarks with that.

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to enter into this debate, a motion that's been put forward by the Sask Party where they are congratulating themselves for their efforts in rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to have this particular motion introduced on the day that we get our mid-year financial update. And, Mr. Speaker, the mid-year financial update is not good news for farm families across the province, particularly when we see that debt is escalating in the province of Saskatchewan.

I just wanted to remind the members opposite that, when they came to government in 2007, they had \$2.3 billion in the bank that had been left to them by the previous government — over \$1 billion in the GRF and also over \$1 billion over at CIC, the Crown Investments Corporation. And we note that basically with the mid-year financial here, I think the cupboard is now bare over at CIC. Now despite the fact that the Sask Party government inherited \$2.3 billion in cash, they've basically blown the money, Mr. Speaker.

They expect rural families will somehow still have faith in the

Sask Party and that the Sask Party will deliver on their multiple election promises to rural Saskatchewan. But when you think about what's happening in rural Saskatchewan and what we're hearing from families living in rural Saskatchewan, there is beginning to be a belief that rural Saskatchewan is being taken for granted by the members opposite.

Now there are a number of important issues for people who live in rural Saskatchewan — health care, education, highways, infrastructure, support for farmers and livestock producers. All of these issues are important if you reside in rural Saskatchewan and outside of the two major centres of Saskatoon and Regina. And I think the Sask Party's true attitude — and we see it every day in this Assembly — where they somehow believe that when it comes to rural Saskatchewan that they have all of the answers, that they've done a good job and everything is skittles and beer out there when it comes to the attitude of citizens living in rural Saskatchewan and the government opposite.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to remind the members that in this year alone we had over 12 million acres of unseeded or flooded seeded acres, and livestock producers right now are having to truck in feed. And we know that there is a credit crunch, and there is a credit crunch coming in the spring of 2011. And the question that is important for people who are those livestock producers and those farm families that live in those areas that have been affected, what is the government doing to prepare for the credit crunch that is coming next year? And I suspect, Mr. Speaker, that the answer is not much. We heard the government today talk about what they've done to reduce education tax on farm land and pasture land. We heard what the government has done for the part of the river valley that has irrigation — \$30 million for new irrigation. We heard what the government has done in terms of this year for livestock producers.

But we haven't heard what the government's plan is going to be for next spring when that credit crunch comes — and it is coming, without a doubt. The major lending institutions are preparing for it. They're talking about the credit crunch and they are preparing for it. And the question is, what is the Sask Party government doing to prepare for this credit crunch? And we don't see a lot of evidence that the government is doing anything. Because how they respond to this will be important in terms of how those farm families and how those livestock producers view the government.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we know that food bank usage in rural Saskatchewan is up. And we know from those volunteers that have food banks in rural Saskatchewan that a number of people are coming forward. And they're farm families that are going into those food banks because of the economic difficulty that they are finding themselves in, particularly because of the unseeded and flooded acres that were experienced this year. Mr. Speaker, we know from those farm families that there are many moms and dads that are trying to figure out how they're going to pay this year's bills and they need to figure out how they're going to have money to get started next year. And they're stressed to the maximum.

Mr. Speaker, I had the honour of being the Agriculture critic for a time in opposition and a number of farm families continue to contact my constituency office and explain to me and my constituency assistant what's happening to them. And I know

that there are parents that can't quite figure out how they're going to pay those bills at the moment and clothe their kids. And they feel as though they've been backed into a corner and there's really no one, nowhere to turn, and no one to talk to.

Farmers are telling us that when they call the minister's office, they're told that the minister is monitoring the situation. Well that's kind of cold comfort if you don't know how you're going to pay your electrical bill or your gas bill. It's cold comfort.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I guess the question for us is, when is the government going to stop monitoring the situation and agree to provide farmers with assistance for those seeded, flooded acres and those unseeded acres? And we really haven't seen a lot of action on the part of the government.

We know that the Sask Party is basically ignoring livestock producers. And livestock producers have had to suffer through BSE. They've had to suffer through the high Canadian dollar. They've suffered through drought and now they're suffering through flooding. And APAS [Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan], which is a representative farm organization, and many producers have been calling upon the government to provide them with \$150-a-head payment and a \$75-a-head payment for feeders. And this is money that they think that they can use to pay vet bills and help support their livestock operation.

Now, Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the member from Fairview, talked about his experience going around the province this summer and meeting with rural residents about what's happening in health care. And we know that the doctor vacancy in rural Saskatchewan has increased under the Sask Party's government. We know that long-term care beds are closing and that over 80 long-term care beds have been closed this fiscal year to deal with the health regions' budget problems. We know that emergency rooms are closing, and we know that today at 5 p.m. the Shaunavon Hospital will be closing from 5 p.m. onwards.

So, Mr. Speaker, we know that there are a lot of problems in rural Saskatchewan. Now in the case of Shaunavon, what are these people going to be doing? Well I guess they're going to have to go to Swift Current or Maple Creek for emergency services. Is this the Sask Party's plan for providing health care in rural Saskatchewan? We know, Mr. Speaker, that there are a number of emergency services that have gone out of existence in rural Saskatchewan, and yet if you are a person who is injured, you want to get yourself by ambulance to a health centre or to a hospital as soon as possible.

Now this government continues to talk about all of the rural hospitals that were closed by the NDP, and we've had an opportunity to review all of those rural hospitals and what facilities are now in place. And, Mr. Speaker, there are health centres in most of those centres that had a hospital. And those health centres are able to provide services, rural services, rural health services to people living in those areas.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know that the Government House Leader was asked about a situation in his own constituency where there were going to be three long-term care beds closed and two respite beds closed at the Wawota Deer View Lodge. And what

did the minister . . .

The Speaker: — The member's time has elapsed. I recognize the member from Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise today on this debate that deals with rural Saskatchewan. And listening to the members opposite, I certainly have to admire them for getting up and speaking, Mr. Speaker, especially the last member, Mr. Speaker, who seems to be suffering a bit of a faulty memory as to events that happened in the past, Mr. Speaker, and that was very sure to read her notes from the NDP research, caucus research department, Mr. Speaker, the department of making stuff up.

[11:45]

Mr. Speaker, the first member that spoke, the member from Saskatoon fairway, was surprised to find that people in rural Saskatchewan were so polite and friendly when he went out to visit, Mr. Speaker. Well the people in rural Saskatchewan are indeed very polite, very friendly, and willing to talk to anyone — including the people they don't agree with, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, and I understand how the people in rural Saskatchewan wouldn't know who he was and might even mistake him for a doctor, because in the 16 years the NDP were in government they never went to rural Saskatchewan, so the people in rural Saskatchewan would have no opportunity to have got to know any of those members, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Saskatoon Nutana is talking about how the Saskatchewan government of today, the Saskatchewan Party government, is doing nothing for agriculture. She's obviously ignoring, perhaps on purpose, the fact that Saskatchewan government now has a feed and livestock transportation support program to move hay from the areas with lots of hay to the areas that have a shortage, Mr. Speaker. As well, and has been mentioned by my two colleagues, Mr. Speaker, a \$30-an-acre support program for agriculture over and above, Mr. Speaker, crop insurance. If you didn't seed under crop insurance and you were in crop insurance — and you could make the management decision not to be in crop insurance if you wanted to, to self-insure — but for those who were in crop insurance, got a \$50 an acre support program for flooding or not being able to seed plus an additional \$30, Mr. Speaker.

And I remember a few years ago, back in the late '90s, when there was flooding in southeast Saskatchewan — because we got 50-some inches of rain — the NDP were finally, Mr. Speaker, forced into providing \$10 an acre, \$10 an acre. And they did that only because the election was that year, Mr. Speaker, only reason they did it.

Mr. Speaker, this \$30 support program, along with the \$50 through crop insurance, was the largest one-time provincial ag disaster response. And you have to look at it, Mr. Speaker, the time frame in which it was done: it hadn't even stopped raining yet and the money was available, Mr. Speaker.

I can remember the year when the NDP finally came up with

some money, Mr. Speaker; it took another year to actually get the money.

Mr. Speaker, crop insurance has been greatly expanded and covers many, many more services. You know, Mr. Speaker, this is not a problem we normally have in my area, but compensation is available if you have beaver problems, Mr. Speaker. Now in our area we do have some beavers, but they generally are well-behaved and don't damage the crops, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the reason I say that is I've had beavers on my land, Mr. Speaker. And occasionally they would knock a tree over, but they were very well-behaved beavers because they would chop it up into shorter pieces and drag it back into the slough, and I didn't have to worry about it. I just wanted them to start eating willows.

Mr. Speaker, as my colleague from Thunder Creek talked about, the property tax reductions, largest property tax reduction ever in the province of Saskatchewan. It was something that was an irritant and a financial burden on the people of rural Saskatchewan ever since there has been education property tax. And the Saskatchewan Party government is the very first one to have stepped forward to deal with that, Mr. Speaker, and I think the courage of the Premier and this government needs to be commended for that work.

You know, the member from Saskatoon Nutana is saying that this government is not responding; you know, the NDP would have, would have. And yet I look back in history and I look at the BSE situation that occurred in the early 2000s, I think it was 2002 . . .

An Hon. Member: — 2003.

Mr. D'Autremont: — 2003, my colleague corrects me. You know, cattle prices went straight down into the tank. There was no value in cows. If you shipped a cow, they sent you a bill for the transportation because there wasn't enough value in the sale of the animal to pay the transportation cost.

And yet what did the NDP government do, Mr. Speaker? Not a thing, nothing, Mr. Speaker. And fact is, it was one of our colleagues in opposition, Brenda Bakken, who approached Dairy Queen Canada and got them to utilize just Canadian beef, Mr. Speaker. That was more than the entire government run by the NDP did, Mr. Speaker, and that was just one backbench member on the Saskatchewan Party side.

You look now . . . One of the areas of complaints that I have received for many years is wildlife compensation for crop damages. Well under this government there is now 100 per cent coverage, Mr. Speaker. Not only that, but it's just not for ducks eating your swath; it's also, Mr. Speaker, for new types of grazing which would never come covered under the NDP. Swath grazing, bales, corn grazing, Mr. Speaker, are now being covered by Saskatchewan Crop Insurance. Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party government responds very quickly to the requests and demands of agriculture in Saskatchewan.

And one of the other areas that I wanted to touch on was infrastructure and roads, Mr. Speaker. Under the NDP, very little was done in rural Saskatchewan for road maintenance and construction. And fact is, one of their former ministers of

Highways' proposal was to turn everything back to gravel, Mr. Speaker. Back to the 19th century for the NDP was their slogan, Mr. Speaker.

Well since this government has come to power in 2007, we've had work on No. 8 in my constituency, No. 9, No. 13, No. 18, No. 33, No. 47, and No. 48, Mr. Speaker. There's still more work to do and we're moving in that direction. We still have more work to do on 47 north of Stoughton, No. 318, and No. 361. And I know that there are other members in the House here who want more work to be done on No. 48. I can lip read sometimes.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party government is doing a lot of work on highways. One of the areas though under the NDP was they had a highways partnership program. And the way this partnership program worked was the government went to the municipalities and said, oh you want your highway fixed through your municipality? You pay half of the cost. You tax your ratepayers for half of the cost while they're still paying the same fuel taxes, the same income taxes, the same corporate taxes. You have to pay extra if you want your highway fixed, or else we're not going to fix it. That was the NDP way of fixing highways in rural Saskatchewan — that if you didn't want to pay extra, we weren't going to fix the highway.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP, because of that kind of attitude to rural Saskatchewan, didn't represent any of rural Saskatchewan. Which makes it very interesting, Mr. Speaker. The first speaker, the member from Saskatoon fairway, when I look at his agricultural experience, Mr. Speaker, I think the only greenery that he knows about is actually found on the fairways, on the golf courses, Mr. Speaker, because he's certainly not an agriculturalist in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party government is fulfilling its commitments. It's meeting its promises to rural Saskatchewan in both agriculture and infrastructure, Mr. Speaker. And I will be more than pleased to support this motion.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to enter the debate. And when I was asked if I'd enter the debate, I said well I'm not the premier person to speak on rural Saskatchewan. But my leader assured me of a couple of things. Number one is that we ought to understand rural Saskatchewan a heck of a lot more even though you're a northern MLA. I think it's important that we understand that Saskatchewan has got a lot of opportunity and there's a lot of things that we all need to learn about Saskatchewan.

So when I was given the opportunity, I said I was most certainly trying to learn about rural Saskatchewan. As a northern MLA, it's quite important. And in fact, we do have a lot of similarities, Mr. Speaker, of how the North is ignored and how this government has also ignored rural Saskatchewan. So certainly from that perspective, it does give me a bit of credence in terms of some of the points that I want to make as a northern MLA as it relates to this motion made by the member from Arm River.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I tell the people of rural Saskatchewan this,

that it's important that they know that we are as a northern MLA trying our darndest to listen and learn from the many errors made over the years, and certainly the mistakes being made by this current government as well. I think they have taken a very arrogant position when it comes to rural Saskatchewan. And I think eventually they will pay because, quite frankly, people . . . Their memories live for a long time and memories die hard, Mr. Speaker.

Now I tell the people of rural Saskatchewan a couple of things. First of all, in relation to the damage done to rural Saskatchewan over the years, they know and we know that when we assumed government in 1991, the province of Saskatchewan was flat broke. They were flat broke, Mr. Speaker. And we can thank that era and that party across the way whose many members now hide behind the Saskatchewan Party banner, but we know who they are. They broke this province, Mr. Speaker, and there was a point where we even had difficulty making payroll to the people that worked for the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

So I go back to my point earlier that the 2 and \$3 million that we paid each and every day on that debt left by the 1990s Conservative government, of which many members from across the way are part of, that's the culprit, Mr. Speaker, right there, Mr. Speaker.

There were some sacrifices that had to be made, and everywhere we went — northern Saskatchewan, rural Saskatchewan, urban Saskatchewan — every single individual had to pay a price for their mismanagement, Mr. Speaker, and we continue paying that to this day, Mr. Speaker. The only problem that people often say to me is, they say, well why aren't these guys talking about that? Why aren't they talking about their history, as the member from Cannington says?

Well obviously, Mr. Speaker, they don't want to talk about that history because that history is the one, is the history that has hurt this province, including rural Saskatchewan, and have driven the nail in many rural communities' coffins because we, as a government, had to assume a huge debt, and every single day 2 to \$3 million in interest payment alone. What could a government do facing those challenges, Mr. Speaker? We had to make sacrifices in the North. We had to make sacrifices in urban Saskatchewan and yes, even rural Saskatchewan.

So before we get the high and mighty response from the Saskatchewan Party and this silly motion made by the member from Arm River, I remind the people of rural Saskatchewan of one thing: you know the history of the Conservative Party. You know the history of the Saskatchewan Party. They're the ones that put this province deep in debt, and they're the ones that ultimately should be held responsible for the decline in rural Saskatchewan, for the decline in northern Saskatchewan, and the decline of Saskatchewan in general.

And thank goodness we had, thank goodness we had people like Roy Romanow, the former premier, people like Calvert that come along and they worked very hard with a very amazing bunch of cabinet ministers, including Eddie T., that turned this province around. They turned this province around, Mr. Speaker, and they actually rescued Saskatchewan from the depths of despair, Mr. Speaker, and from the depths of deficit.

And what happens now, Mr. Speaker? Now this member comes along and he has this motion saying, well let's congratulate ourselves because we're doing all these wonderful things for rural Saskatchewan . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . No, no, you've created the problem to begin with, sir. And secondly, you're not going to do anything about the major problems that exist because you never intended to do this. You're just simply doing this to change the channel, Mr. Speaker.

And there's one opportunity I was thinking, how in the heck do they characterize the Sask Party? Because all they've actually done, Mr. Speaker, is they said a lot of things. And they said, if this happens, if that happens, if this happens. Well, Mr. Speaker, if my aunt had wheels, she'd be a bus. And that's one of the things that a lot of people in rural Saskatchewan have said. They always premise their positions with the big word if, if, if. And, Mr. Speaker, if we can just take that word out of their vocabulary, then maybe some of those words would mean something.

So I would remind the people of rural Saskatchewan of a couple of things. Don't listen to them as they rewrite history. Don't listen to them at all. Because we know the facts. And the people of Saskatchewan, especially rural Saskatchewan, know their history. The younger ones may not, but the older ones know exactly how this province got into that mess at the time. It was largely thanks to them. So they're the ones that have certainly had rural Saskatchewan come into decline, Mr. Speaker. The whole province was affected by them.

[12:00]

Now I'm trying to figure out how I can characterize the Sask Party. Like how in the heck could they be congratulating themselves and patting themselves on the back? How do I characterize that as a government? Because they're very confusing to the people. And then it dawned on me. I'm trying to figure out how I could do this. There's two points I want to make, Mr. Speaker. First of all, what do you get when you cross an octopus with the Saskatchewan Party government? And I'm not certain of a really good answer, but what I do know — I'm going to give people a hint — is a self-serving, ugly creature that keeps patting itself on the back. And that's not a very nice sight, Mr. Speaker. Not a very nice sight at all.

And my point is, the time for pretense is over. Stop patting yourself on the back and start dealing with the problems of rural Saskatchewan like you said so when you became elected. Because people, quite frankly, are not impressed. They're not impressed in the least bit.

And, Mr. Speaker, I notice as well that some of the Sask Party guys are wearing the Saskatchewan Roughrider jerseys, you know. And we're all cheering for the Roughriders. We want the Roughriders to win. Right? We want them to win. But the problem is, is the Premier and the Saskatchewan Party guys are waving the Saskatchewan flag and the Roughrider flag because they want to hide behind that. They want to hide behind that. And they want people not to think about the deficit that they're putting in place, nor the credit crunch that's coming to many rural Saskatchewan families, nor the lack of services that they are responsible for.

So they'll wave the flag. And I've actually asked this last year when the Montreal Alouettes were playing against our beloved Roughriders, I was thinking, well what the heck happened there? We lost the game. Well apparently there was a 13th man. Now rumour has it that the Premier was at the end of the field. And as soon as they missed their field goal, well he rushed out there with his Roughrider jersey, trying to lead the parade so it makes it look like he's a hero. Well all of a sudden the flags flew. And here we thought it was one of the Roughriders, and here it was our Premier. He wanted to lead the parade because we won.

And so there you go again, Mr. Speaker. It's not all about pretense and parades. The fact of the matter is you've got to have progress and programs, and you have to have the money to do so. And you guys left us with zero money to do anything for rural Saskatchewan, and we all pay the price. So don't try and fool anybody with these silly little motions because it doesn't confuse anybody. It doesn't make anybody any happier. They know the facts, and they know what you are not doing.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that I end this with two points I made earlier. Number one is, we said, please don't mess this up. You had two and a half billion dollars in the bank, a booming economy. Things were happening. People were moving to Saskatchewan. We said, please don't mess this up. And three long years later, you're making a mess of things, you guys. You're making a mess of things.

So please don't try and change the channel with your little motions. Don't try and change the channel with your Saskatchewan Roughrider parade. That doesn't work. And especially this year, leave the Roughriders alone, you guys. Stop trying to politicize their game. Let them play their game. If they play their game and not worry about that 13th man jumping on the field, then maybe we'll win.

So please don't mess up the economy. Don't try and change the channel. And for crying out loud, stop trying to politicize the Saskatchewan Roughriders. Let them do what they do best, and that is win a football game for all people of our province. Thank you.

The Speaker: — Time has elapsed in the 65-minute debate. We'll go to the 10-minute question period. I recognize the member from Moose Jaw North.

Mr. Michelson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we've come a long way in the last three years to serving agriculture in this province. Apparently the member from Athabasca can't get past 1991. I think he'd like to be the minister of Agriculture at some point.

For 16 years the farmers in this province had to endure the agricultural ignorance of the NDP government. Yet in spite of the NDP's complete indifference toward the province's agricultural sector, our farmers continue to work hard and look after the land, Mr. Speaker.

We have a question about the NDP's sad record for farmers. To the member from Athabasca: where was the NDP plan to address education property tax on agricultural land, and why was it never mentioned in their last platform?

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, first of all, if any party can't get past 1991, it's that party opposite. Because every time they run into trouble, they say, they say, oh where were you guys for the last 16 years? I think you guys need to kind of go off and do your own job and stop looking back at the 16 years and start doing your own stuff. Figure it out, Mr. Speaker.

And the other thing that's really important as well, Mr. Speaker, is that this government, the former NDP government has done more for rural Saskatchewan in the 16 years that you guys could ever hope to do, given the financial restrictions that we had. You weren't here. You don't know the challenges that the government faced at the time. You just come here to rewrite history, Mr. Speaker.

So once again, their point is, you can't get past 1991. You're guilty of that. Now it's time for you guys to grow up, figure out what you're going to do as government and finally help rural Saskatchewan instead of trying to confuse them. Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, to the member from Cannington. Doctor vacancy rates are increasing, long-term care beds are closing. Mr. Speaker. The emergency rooms are closing. And today at 5 o'clock in Shaunavon, the hospital will be closing from 5 p.m. today to tomorrow, Friday the 26th. Now during this time, there will be no emergency outpatient services or in-patient admissions available. People have to travel to Swift Current or to Maple Creek for emergency services.

Now they pride themselves and they have been patting themselves on the shoulders of a good job. Do they consider this providing health care to rural Saskatchewan where we still had highways or health care?

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's indeed a pleasure to respond to this question. The mid-term financial report just came out today, Mr. Speaker, and I note that Health has a budget of \$4.4 billion. Mr. Speaker, that's with a B; the largest ever budget in Health in this province, Mr. Speaker. So we are funding health care in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Highways in the same document has a total budget of over \$600 million, Mr. Speaker. I believe that's the second or third largest Highways budget in history, the first one or two being our government's previous years, Mr. Speaker. So again we are providing more funding for Highways than has ever been done, Mr. Speaker.

The member opposite asks about the health care closures, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, they closed . . .

The Speaker: — The member's time has elapsed. I recognize the member from Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Mr. Speaker, the NDP has faced . . . [inaudible] . . . drought in rural Saskatchewan for a long time. In fact some are wondering if the NDP can point out rural Saskatchewan on a map. One NDP insider is rumoured to have said, I think I can see rural Saskatchewan from my house. But in all seriousness, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to rural Saskatchewan, the only thing Saskatchewan farmers can expect from the NDP is neglect.

To the member from Saskatoon Fairview: the NDP refused to even tour the drought area in southwest Saskatchewan. After several consecutive years of dry weather, why didn't your former government provide any support to help producers affected by drought?

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, we should be living . . . That's the problem over there. They're living in the past, and Saskatchewan families are suffering today. They're suffering today, and they had record rainfalls in many areas with over 12 million acres left unseeded. And that member is talking about the past. These are serious issues.

The flood aid provided was \$30 per acre, split between the federal and provincial government. Now a poll was done and the 30 acre payment was announced, that 56 people in that poll said that this wasn't enough. I myself heard that throughout Saskatchewan, that it wasn't enough. And, Mr. Speaker, a well-known agriculturist, Larry Weber, says that they won't even come close to compensating farmers for their losses.

Now again, as the member from Athabasca said, continuously they talk about the past. The issue is right now for these farm families. The issue is what are they going to do over the winter? What are they going to do next spring? And we have these nonsense questions about what we did in the past, Mr. Speaker. The people of Saskatchewan want to know what's going to happen to them this . . .

The Speaker: — The member's time has elapsed. I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the member from Arm River. He spoke about highways, and certainly I would consider northern Saskatchewan as part of the rural landscape. Highway 925 is the only road to and from the community of Dillon, Michel village, and St. George's Hill, and it's the only infrastructure link for the hundreds of people who use this highway. There is substantial amount of traffic on this highway that's involved with transporting goods and services to and from these Dene communities. The current road needs significant upgrading. Will your government commit to upgrading and paving Highway 925?

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Arm River-Watrous.

Mr. Brkich: — When we took government, we took an infrastructure that was basically wrecked in rural Saskatchewan. We had to almost start from scratch after they ran it into the

ground. So we poured record amounts into Highways throughout every budget. We also spent more money in the North than they ever did, each and every year.

If you check the budget, you check the record amounts we put into Highways, which we did every year, we're building highways. And it's going to take us . . . We're still working at it, and it's going to take us a few more years to rebuild everything that you ran into the ground when you, over 16 years . . . It is going to take us more years, but we are going to do it. You did it in; it took you 16 years to run it into the ground. We're going to rebuild it in about four or five when we're done, with more record money going towards Highways than you ever put in each and every budget.

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

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The writing was on the wall in the year 2007. Saskatchewan was fed up with the provincial NDP. In fact, Mr. Speaker, all government announcements at that point were poorly coordinated efforts to reverse bottomed out support throughout the province.

And as the member from Cannington said, 2003 was the worst year because of the BSE. The farmers and ranchers were going through the worst time in their lives, and what support was there from our provincial government? Absolutely nothing. To the member from Saskatoon Fairview: why didn't the NDP provide any support to cattle producers during the last 16 years, and especially in the year 2007?

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, again here we just had a question on grain production and livestock and, Mr. Speaker, the program of giving ranchers \$30 per seeded acre for hay and forage and pasture land. This includes, Mr. Speaker, about point two two per metric ton loaded mile to haul in the feed.

Mr. Speaker, this is not what producers want. They want action now on these issues. It's much the same as the grain producers. People — livestock producers — say this is not enough. They need \$150 per head and \$75 per head for feeders. Mr. Speaker, we are calling on that, and that's our position now.

When you come up against problems like this, it does little good other than to make yourself, perhaps on that side, feel good to talk about what we did. But, Mr. Speaker, the important thing is it's not helping the producers today. It's not helping their farmers, and they do that at their own peril, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question and it's directed to the member from Cannington. Mr. Speaker, we know that there are over 12 million unseeded or flooded seeded acres, and livestock producers are having to truck in feed, and that there is definitely a credit crunch and it's going to get a lot worse next spring. I'm wondering if the member from Cannington can illuminate us on what the Sask Party is doing in

advance to protect producers from this imminent credit crunch.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well building highways is one of the important things, because farmers need to be able to transport that feed from the areas where we have an abundance to the areas where we have a shortage. And, Mr. Speaker, the government is looking at that very issue because we're providing support funding for the transport of feed from the areas of surplus to the areas where there is a shortage, and we're also providing transport supports for the trucking of live animals so that they can be moved from an area of shortage to an area where feed is available, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, on the credit idea, grain prices are up, Mr. Speaker, significantly. Cattle prices are up, Mr. Speaker. And farmers, because we had an open fall this year, managed to get a significant portion of their crop off. It may be some grade deterioration but the prices are still very strong, Mr. Speaker.

Crop insurance is in place . . .

The Speaker: — Time on the 75-minute debate has elapsed.

[12:15]

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

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

Motion No. 2 — Housing

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a delight and an honour to rise today on a priority motion. And I'll read the motion at the end, and I'll make sure that it gets in as proper as it should do.

But I do want to frame it, first of all, by reviewing the motion. And what I'm doing is calling on the government to recognize the urgent nature of housing and an affordability crisis here in Saskatchewan. And because of the news that we've seen in the last week or so, particularly highlighted by the Salvation Army in its press release where it's had to turn away people from its emergency shelter in Saskatoon due to overcapacity for the first time . . . And they've never had to do this. Winter's been always a challenging time in Saskatchewan, but this is its first time, even with an increase of eight beds.

But what we're going to be asking this government to do, asking this Assembly to urge the government to do, is immediately assist emergency shelters to increase their capacity to provide desperately needed services during the cold winter months, and to immediately begin the process of developing a comprehensive, affordable housing strategy and a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy to address the underlying causes of this crisis.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have talked about this many times before and in fact actually just this week, earlier this week, I did ask questions, and it was . . . From the other side, we heard calls saying that nobody was turned away; nobody was turned away.

But, you know, that was not the case, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I'll quote from two stories here: one from *The StarPhoenix*, November 20th by a Lori Coolican, "Demand exceeds capacity at local shelters." And I'll quote:

For homeless people in Saskatoon, the arrival of winter temperatures this week coincided with another grim reality: The shelters are full.

In a news release issued Friday, the Salvation Army residential co-ordinator Jordon Cooper said the organization has had to turn people away for the first time due to a lack of capacity.

Both the men's shelter on Avenue C and the new Mumford House shelter for women . . . are full.

So this is a crisis. This is truly a crisis. And the winter is only beginning. Here we are at the last weekend of November . . . But it was November 20th. By mid-November, they were already experiencing full shelters. And we saw this. In fact the article talks about the YWCA's [Young Women's Christian Association] crisis shelter for women and children is also full. And we saw last year where they had record numbers. Over 3,000 people had come to their doors and they could not provide services.

So this is becoming way too commonplace and this government is not taking this seriously. In fact — and we'll talk more about this — they tend to look back to the previous years and blame. If they can blame somebody, they can, and if they can make reannouncements, they do. And they've done very, very little to address this issue. And it's all part of a bigger package when it comes to affordability. It's all part of a bigger issue in terms of poverty and housing. And what are we doing about it in this province? And I have to tell you, not very much.

Again I want to quote from CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation]. Essentially they quoted Jordon Cooper again, saying that this is the first time this has happened, but he's concerned about the trend this is taking. He said that the men's shelter with room for 54 people had run out of space and was waiting for eight beds on order to arrive.

It's a crisis, Mr. Speaker, and we have to do something. We have to come to terms with this and get on with the program and talk to people who are out on the streets, who are experiencing this first-hand, and with the front-line organizations such as the Salvation Army, and say, what can we do to make sure this doesn't happen in a province like Saskatchewan?

We are blessed in a province like Saskatchewan where we have excellent resources, excellent resources that we can get our fair share of royalties from — I'm thinking of potash — that should be able to provide people with the kind of help they need when things are not going well. And often we see a problem where somehow it breaks down where the government thinks they can manage a situation and not recognize the situation for what it is. It is a crisis and we have a problem.

And we need to do something about it today. And we can do something about it. And we see different organizations who are

tackling this problem. But they need the provincial government to step up and put their shoulder to the wheel and make this happening.

Mr. Speaker, we just had a very interesting 75-minute debate about things that were happening across the province, and I just want to talk about some of the experiences I had this summer where I've been touring around the province talking to people about housing. Whether it was in Cumberland House, North Battleford, Regina, Estevan, Moose Jaw, the situation is all the same — housing is a crisis. And what I do, Mr. Speaker, is I do submit a series of written questions, and I have some stats that I think the members opposite would be very interested in hearing.

You know, we have three types of housing that Sask Housing provides. We have seniors housing, we have affordable housing, and we have social housing. And we are seeing a trend that causes us to worry deeply about what's happening in this province because this government is not taking this seriously.

For example let's talk about seniors for a minute. In January 2008, we had 521 seniors on the waiting list to get into seniors housing in Saskatchewan. Twenty months later, we have 916 seniors on that waiting list — from 521 to 916. The waiting time has also grown. It was three months, and that's too long; now it's 4.7 months. That's way, way too long, Mr. Speaker.

Where are some of the areas that we see, in this province, the biggest concerns? Right in the Premier's hometown. Swift Current has 120 seniors on the waiting list. And you know, Mr. Speaker, what the waiting time is in Swift Current for a senior to get into a seniors housing complex? It's 11 months. It's 11 months, and that is really, really deplorable. I don't know what the words are you can describe this when you tell a senior you have to wait one year to get into a housing complex in Swift Current. That's not right. That's not right, and we should be doing something about that. And this is in the Premier's own riding. This is in the Premier's own riding.

Melville, six months waiting list. And in La Ronge, in La Ronge, 13 months. La Ronge has grown from four months waiting time back in September 2009 to 13 months in September — one year. It's grown by a year. The member from La Ronge raised this issue yesterday and got a pretty pathetic answer from the Minister of Social Services, who really didn't know her file on this. Thirteen months for a northerner to wait to get into a suitable housing circumstance is way too much.

What about affordable housing, Mr. Speaker? Here the stats are also equally alarming. Now the numbers have . . . When we started out in January 2008 gathering stats for written questions, there were about 205 families on the affordable housing list, 205 families and individuals. It's grown now to 408 — almost doubling, doubling in 20 months. And yet this government seems to think that it should take credit for the good work it's done. But have the members over there actually asked about some of these stats? From 205 families and individuals on waiting lists, now we have 408. And the wait time to get into those units has grown from 2.5 months, 2.5 months to 4.8 months — almost doubling, almost doubling.

And where are some of the hot spots here? Saskatoon, four months. North Battleford, 5.8 months. Tisdale, 12 months — 12

months in Tisdale to wait to get into affordable housing. What about the Premier's riding? What about the Premier's riding? I would think he'd be more interested in this, a little bit interested in this. This has gone up to 16 months — 16 months.

Now this isn't me making up the stats. These are written questions. Answers have been provided by the Minister of Social Services. This is alarming. These are alarming stats.

Mr. Speaker, social housing. Here we go with the numbers here. What is the circumstance in the Premier's riding of Swift Current? How long do people have to wait to get into social housing in the Premier's riding of Swift Current? Twenty-four months. Twenty-four months. Seniors are 11, affordable housing is 16, and if you're looking for social housing in Swift Current, in one of our hot spots for the economy, it's 24 months. Estevan, five months. North Battleford, 5.3. And La Ronge, four months.

But the most alarming stat, Mr. Speaker, the most alarming stat about housing in our province right now is that social housing, the waiting list has now grown from 396 in January 2008 — and I want to say that number again, 396 — it is now, in September, 1,023. It's gone from 396 to 1,023. That is a shameful record, shameful record, and yet the minister seems to want to congratulate herself and this Premier and this government on the good work they've done on the housing file. And I have to tell you, it's deplorable. It's just sad when we have situations in Salvation Army happening and it brings to the forefront about the circumstances too many people are finding themselves in Saskatchewan when this kind of stuff happens.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to review those numbers and just give you a better idea of what some of these issues are. In social housing, January '08, 396 on the waiting list, 1,023 now — 396 to 1,023. That's more than doubled. Wait times have gone from 2.9 months to 4.5. Affordable, 205 to 408 — doubling, pretty much doubling. The wait time to get in, 2.5 months to 4.8 months. Senior housing, 521, and this is the saddest one of all. Senior housing, 521 seniors waiting to get into . . . Their housing is now 916 and the wait time, 3 months to 4.7 months.

Mr. Speaker, when you add those numbers together, in January 2008 there were 922 people on the waiting list of Sask Housing units across this province in different categories — 922. In September, in September it's 2,347. That's more than double. That's more than double. And yet we see what's happening at the Salvation Army and we ask, why is that happening? Well we know that's why it's happening. It's plainly becoming unaffordable in Saskatchewan.

As people turn to Sask Housing, this government is not doing anything for them and so they're having to go to the shelters. And the situation really puts people at risk as we turn into the winter months. So, Mr. Speaker, I have some real concerns and I think we should pass this motion. We should pass it today, and we should get on the work that needs to be done.

Mr. Speaker, the minister the other day was answering questions about social services and the caseloads, and again it becomes very clear that she does not know her file. And she needs to be brought up to speed on this. She seemed to imply

that actually social services caseloads or recipients were going down and somehow the numbers . . . There was a good news story in there somehow, and she always finds a way to spin those numbers. I don't know. But again, what are the true numbers?

Well the lowest point for people on social services, the caseload, was in November 2008. There were 23,678 cases. The biggest number of caseloads, March 2010, 27,424. For the members opposite, that's an increase of 3,746 — 16 per cent increase in the caseloads, 16 per cent increase. Mr. Speaker, we have so much this province has to offer, but yet more and more people are turning to the measures of last resort, turning to social assistance. This is not good news.

TEA [transitional employment allowance], the lowest point, November 2008 with 2,266 people on TEA. That's the training employment allowance. Highest this past summer, August '10 with 3,440 people on it — an increase of 1,174. A whopping 52 per cent increase. These are the people who could be at work but can't find work. For some reason, the system is not working for them. And one of the biggest challenges they have is finding suitable housing, finding suitable housing so they can be at work. A 52 per cent increase. This is shameful. This is dreadful news and this government needs to do something about it.

And we know, Mr. Speaker, children bear the brunt of this. They bear the brunt of this. And we know in March 2010 there were 15,634 children who were part of families receiving social assistance. We don't know what the number is today. And of course this government, with its record of transparency, would not share that number. And we should be hearing what those numbers are because this is a very bad circumstance.

[12:30]

Well often this government likes to compare our record. Well our record in September '07, with the SAP [Saskatchewan assistance plan] and TEA caseloads together was 25,998 cases representing 44,853 people. That was the lowest, Mr. Speaker. That was the lowest since December 1990. And yet this minister, I don't know where she gets her numbers from.

But the September '10, September 2010 caseload, when it was 27,076 cases, represented a 1,078 caseload increase. This is shameful. This is very . . . This indicates a government that has not stepped up to the plate and done the work that it needs to do and develop a strategy that addresses the issue of poverty, that addresses the issue of housing here in Saskatchewan. For too many people, they're being left out. And in November and December, what that means when you're left out in Saskatchewan, you're left out in the cold. And we are deeply concerned about what's going to happen this winter when people turn to the Salvation Army and other shelters and there's just no place. And there's no place because they can't afford a place. They can't afford a home.

Now this morning, yesterday . . . Well this morning, the Minister of Finance released the supplementary estimates. And for two years in a row now, two years in a row, the Ministry of Social Services was not able to get it right in terms of predicting how much they needed to provide for the people who are turning to them for help.

A year ago — in fact we warned about this — we warned that they were being overly optimistic about cutting social services. And they cut it in the budget previous, and then they had to come back a year ago and ask for 13 more million dollars for support for those who are asking them for help, for social assistance and TEAs. This year they've come back for another \$10 million. And why is that? Why is that? Because yet again, for the second year, this government has mismanaged its file and missed the mark in terms of understanding what the real issues are there.

And for several years now we've been calling for an anti-poverty strategy, and this government refuses to do that. In fact the former minister even talked about a poverty strategy as some sort of blue-sky and wanted to do something about it. We can see how this government has mishandled this file, completely mishandled this file.

And when we travel around the province, and whether it's Cumberland or North Battleford or Estevan, we see the challenges that people have. And yet somehow these members opposite have not brought it forward, and that has not laid it out for the Minister of Social Services to say what really are the issues that they're facing. Right across Saskatchewan, this is a challenge. And I've illustrated that with those quotes of those stats.

Mr. Speaker, there's been several groups who've stepped forward, talked about what the issues are, and I just want to highlight a few of these reports because they're important. Because it's not just the NDP calling for this. In fact, actually, we've been hearing this so much that that's why we're bringing it forward. When we go home to our communities and we travel about, we hear about this all the time.

Last summer we heard about, and I think we all read about PATHS, the Provincial Association for Transition Houses and Services of Saskatchewan. They released a report called *Saskatchewan's Housing Crisis: Addressing the Needs of Women and Children Who Have Experienced Violence*. And we see the connection between, if women do not feel they can leave their home and be safe within their community, they may stay in an abusive situation, particularly if that situation . . . if they cannot find a three- or a four-bedroom circumstance, it's very tough for them to leave.

So we see where there are services provided, but this next step of having a home that they can set up their own place and be safe is a challenge in Saskatchewan. Because there is just a limited number of units, and the units, whether they're houses or apartments, the rents are so high that it's a real challenge for women in those kind of circumstances who are facing violence on a daily basis. And it's just really unfortunate.

And I'd just take a quick look at some of the recommendations they are looking at, and one of the first, the very first one is talking about rent controls. And we do have to have that discussion, Mr. Speaker. We absolutely do have to have that discussion.

Mr. Speaker, they talk about the problem about condos and I think that's really important. Rent and regulations are very, very important, but access to safe and affordable housing is so

critical.

Mr. Speaker, I found it very interesting that just last week the HungerCount 2010 was released and in fact we had the CEO [chief executive officer] of the Saskatoon Food Bank, who is running for the Sask Party opposite, has called for the very thing. He says and I quote, *The StarPhoenix*, Wednesday, November 17th, 2010, that, and I quote, "'Saskatchewan needs a provincial poverty reduction strategy to help stop the increasing reliance on food banks,' says Paul Merriman, Saskatoon Food Bank and Learning Centre CEO."

And he's seeing this really unfortunate increase in the number of people in Saskatchewan turning to the food banks. And so what the food bank association of Saskatchewan is calling for, a strategy, a plan of how do we address poverty in Saskatchewan. And of course, a very big component of that is housing.

And here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to talk about tracking . . . [inaudible] . . . homelessness in Regina. And right off the bat I know many of us will recall last January where there was a very unfortunate circumstance where we had a group of low-income individuals living in a business centre actually, not in a housing circumstance, but actually in a former business office complex because that was the only place they could get. And truly that is not the kind of circumstance that we want to see.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I found it interesting that earlier today the Premier referenced the retirement, the announced retirement of Danny Williams. In fact actually I was at a poverty round table yesterday that Danny, Premier Williams' name came up because the best example of a province that's been able to turn poverty around in Canada is, of course, Premier Danny Williams. He was able to cut the poverty rate in Newfoundland from 12 per cent to 6 per cent. He cut it in half in Newfoundland.

We often think about Newfoundland as being a have-not province, but we know they're on the same path as we are. They're blessed with strong natural resources. And their case with oil, they've been able to really turn the corner on that. And one of the goals was, for Premier Williams and his cabinet, was we are going to reduce poverty. And they did. They cut it in half from 12 to 6 per cent.

And yesterday people were talking about, why can't we in Saskatchewan take a look at what they're doing in Newfoundland? Why can't we make a real difference to people here in Saskatchewan? And of course the key to their success was having it right across cabinet. It wasn't just the minister of social services; it was the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Justice, a whole host of people working together to make sure it worked. The Ministry of Education's very important as well.

So we need to make sure that when we talk about what can we do, when we ask that question — what can we do? — we look across Canada. And there are provinces who are turning the corner. There are provinces who are turning the corner. And it's a very tough corner to make, but it can be done. And we take a look at Danny Williams in Newfoundland and say, hey, he's been able to do a good job. Can we take a look what he's done? So I think he deserves a lot of credit. And today when he announced his retirement, we need take a look at him as the

statesman he is and say, what can we learn from him?

And of course I wanted to just take a second and acknowledge the role that . . . My colleague from La Ronge yesterday talked about the Canadian Conference Board, acknowledging the challenges that particularly northerners have, particularly in Saskatchewan.

But, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in Saskatchewan people have not sat back and said, we can't do anything. People have stepped up to the table and said, we can work on issues. We can do the right thing.

And one that I do want to draw attention to is this. And I hope many of us have seen this. It's a framework about having a discussion about poverty here in Saskatchewan, and it's called *Let's Do Something About Poverty*. It's a group of activists in this province who've taken a look across Canada and have noticed that many other provinces — as I said for example Newfoundland, where they have turned the corner because they have a strategy — and said why don't we do that here?

We need to have a discussion. We need to have people come to the table, and we need everybody to come to the table. And we need them to come in a non-partisan manner and get hard on the issues because those issues are challenging people every day, i.e., the Salvation Army circumstance.

So *Let's Do Something About Poverty*, a very important document. And I think it's very important that we all take a look at some of the things that we could be doing to make sure everyone here in Saskatchewan benefits from our natural resources in a fair way — our seniors, our children, our single parents, our young moms, everyone who may find life more challenging because of the barriers that are put in front of them.

I just want to take a minute here and talk about some of the questions that this plan asks us to consider on the back here. And they're doing a good job of circulating this around. I know during poverty awareness week, this was their main issue. They wanted to make sure they got a framework, a discussion paper out there. They don't have the answers. Nobody has the monopoly on the answers to this. We can all benefit from working together and particularly working with those who live in poverty and hearing their life experiences.

But they've put together five questions. And I just want to get this into the record because I think this is very important. Questions for a Saskatchewan action plan: what does poverty mean to you? Why should we worry about poverty in Saskatchewan? Well I think as legislators when we review our budgets we worry very much because we see a missed potential for people to be part of our society, to be meaningful partners. And whether that's in work or contributing through however they can, it's very important that they be part, that they're included in what Saskatchewan is for us.

And what would a poverty free Saskatchewan would look like? Well I can tell you right off the bat, what it wouldn't look like to me is people being turned away from shelters, that we would have enough emergency shelters so that we could care for people. And eventually we would hope that that would have to be reduced because we have the kind of prevention programs in

place, the kind of long-term housing solutions that could reduce the need. But we need to recognize there is a need today, and this government's missing the mark.

And what targets and policies should we adopt? Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that this government really likes to have targets. I think only about the nurses, and we often hear the Minister of Health talk about that. In fact he likes to describe that target as marvellous. Marvellous, he uses that phrase often. But why not use that same sort of energy on people who are living in poverty? Why cannot we set targets today and benchmarks and work together to resolve this issue? I think this is an important issue. We could all take a lot of pride in resolving this issue.

But instead, what do we see? We see the waiting lists for Sask Housing grow from 950-some to over 2,300. That's not something to be proud of, but those are real marks. We could turn that around. We can turn that around. And we should turn that around, but we don't. We see the caseloads growing, caseloads turning . . . going up. Why can't we say we want to turn those around? Set benchmarks. Let's do that job.

So I would encourage people to take a look. You can probably Google this on the Internet: *Let's Do Something About Poverty*, Poverty Free Saskatchewan. A wide-ranging group of people wanting to talk about how can we make a difference here in Saskatchewan.

[12:45]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I really actually wanted to talk a little bit at length about a report that came out last week. And I think the members opposite will find this very interesting. And actually, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is quite a . . . I won't refer to the whole guide, but it's a big book. It's a big report. I haven't read it all, but it's an important document. It was done by the report of the standing committee on human resources skills, social development and the status of persons with disabilities, November 2010, released last Thursday. I was able to download it, and I think there's some very important pieces. And I want to make sure the members opposite look this up because it's very key.

Because not only are the cities and communities stepping up and developing action plans and doing their job and saying we've got to get on with this, we cannot tolerate this situation, but it looks like the federal government is even saying we can do something about this. We can do something about this. It's called the *Federal Poverty Reduction Plan: Working in Partnership Towards Reducing Poverty in Canada*.

The Chair of course, the Chair is Candice Hoepfner. Some of the members of this report are from Saskatchewan. In fact the MP [Member of Parliament] from Estevan is part of this committee. Mr. Ed Komarnicki, part of this committee. So I think this speaks to the wide range of support across Canada for working on poverty reduction strategies — a plan. Now why this government refuses to endorse a simple idea like a strategy and a plan, a public plan, is beyond me.

From Saskatoon, from my city, Maurice Vellacott is part of this, the MP for Saskatoon-Wanuskewin. I know I've worked an

awful lot with Tony Martin the MP for Sault Ste. Marie. He's taken a real leadership role in this document. As well, the MP from Halifax, and I would assume there's three or four MPs. I don't know what riding he is, but Michael Savage also worked hard on this report. I was able to meet with those folks in Calgary. I met with Tony in Ottawa, Halifax. Very, very important issue here.

So they released some 300-page report about this. And I do need to say — I'm going to read parts of it — but every party has their . . . I won't say dissenting report, but they want to make sure they get their point of view in separately. So that's very important. I would encourage all members to take a read of this because it's very important. First of all, recommendation 3.1.1. And I quote:

The Committee recommends that the federal government immediately commit to a federal action plan to reduce poverty in Canada that would see, during its first phase, the implementation of the recommendations in this report.

This action plan should incorporate a human rights framework and provide for consultations with the provincial and territorial governments, Aboriginal governments and organizations, the public and private sector, and people living in poverty, as needed, to ensure the improvement in the lives of impoverished people.

The action plan should be reviewed every five years and should follow a three-step process: consultation, revision, and reporting to Parliament.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's a great recommendation. It's one that just provides a very important framework that all these other people are calling for, that we get together and develop a strategy so we have a plan forward. We do the consultation. We act on it, revise it as needed, and we measure the outcomes and report to Parliament.

Wouldn't it be a great idea if we had the same idea here in Saskatchewan, reporting to the legislature about how we are turning the corner on poverty here in Saskatchewan. How we are turning the corner on those waiting lists that are growing for Sask Housing. How we are turning the corner on the caseloads on social assistance and TEA. I think this is a great challenge and one that we should really step up to the plate and say it sounds like the right thing we should be doing here.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they go on. And they talk about . . . And I want to again quote here:

The Committee believes that all Canadians have a right to adequate shelter and that a comprehensive, long-term national housing strategy is essential to making this a reality. The Committee was told that the federal government must work with its provincial and territorial counterparts, as well as municipalities, service providers and other stakeholders, to develop and implement a housing strategy that includes measurable goals and timelines, reporting requirements, and accountability mechanisms. The strategy should include a plan to tackle homelessness based on the Housing First model. It should also provide for sustained funding for affordable housing

aimed at building mixed communities and increasing the quantity, quality and variety of housing options such as transitional housing, supportive housing, co-operative housing, and non-profit housing. Where low-income households cannot access affordable housing, it should provide for assistance such as rent supplements, shelter allowances and subsidies. Finally, the strategy should include provisions for collecting and sharing best practices.

Implementing a national housing strategy would demonstrate the federal government's commitment to housing as a basic right of all Canadians and represent a key contribution to the fight against poverty in Canada. A national housing strategy should be a government priority and should be enshrined in legislation. In fall 2009, the Committee reviewed Bill C-304, *An Act to ensure secure, adequate, accessible and affordable housing for Canadians*. If passed, this Private Members' Bill would require the federal government to establish a national housing strategy that fulfills many of the priorities outlined above.

I want to read the recommendation 5.2.5 in case the members opposite want to get to work this afternoon and get right at it. I would encourage them to do so. I quote:

The Committee recommends that the federal government, in collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, municipalities, service providers and other stakeholders, develop a comprehensive, long-term national housing strategy. The strategy should address the problem of homelessness, as well as the need for adequate and affordable housing in Canada, with the goal of providing a range of housing solutions to meet the needs of Canada's diverse population. It should provide for sustained funding to tackle these issues and include measurable goals, timelines, and accountability mechanisms.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, things can be done. And we've seen . . . Here's a committee, an all-party committee from Ottawa, releasing a report last Thursday — ironically, probably on the same day that Salvation Army in Saskatoon was turning away people. We can solve this problem in Canada.

In Saskatchewan we do have the resources. This province is blessed with the wherewithal to make things happen for those who find themselves in dire straits, and whether they're young people, young moms, people returning to the Salvation Army. And even as we think about what happened in Halifax just before Remembrance Day with the vets, we can make a difference so we can make sure everyone is valued. Everybody has a right to adequate and safe housing. That should be, in the northern clime like Saskatchewan and Canada, it should be just a given. It is a human right. But let's go that extra mile.

And so I think this is a very timely piece, and I think that we should do all that we can and make sure that we have strong, healthy, vibrant communities where we're all living together, where people are not isolated. We do not want to see the day where we go back to ghettos or high-rises, where people are living in unfortunate circumstances and their children are not safe. We think we have . . . I know we have the wherewithal to

make this happen.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do want to say that we should get past blaming. We should get past when we have the minister looking back and talking about the last years of this government. We are proud of the record that we have when we had the HomeFirst program and we provided 25 homes and different kind of scenarios for people. And I even want to point out that this current minister who likes to blame people, at least the former minister, the former minister had the graciousness when we opened up Monarch Yards, recognized the good work of the former premier, Lorne Calvert, in opening Monarch Yards because of the funding that we provided for housing. And of course, you know, housing doesn't get built in a week or two. It takes a long time to do this.

About a month ago, we were able to open up the Mount Royal training facility that was part of the funding for Station 20, and yet Station 20 remains part of the media's news stories. Yesterday the church has stepped forward — and I congratulate the churches in this very public act — to recognize that some communities have challenges that need that extra support. And it's more than just putting a roof over our head. It's making sure people have safe and healthy communities, safe and healthy communities. And I think that we should take a look at how can we make sure that happens.

I've talked about the stats from Sask Housing where we've seen the waiting lists go on, from seniors, basically doubling, and we've seen overall the number of people on waiting lists for Sask Housing going from 950 to about 2,400. This is an unfortunate circumstance that we have. We have the ability in this province to turn the corner, and I really encourage us to do that.

I think when the Poverty Free Saskatchewan people talk about what kind of province would they like us to see in Saskatchewan — one I can tell you that I would like to see — that in November and December, we don't hear about the Salvation Army having to turn away people into the cold. I think that's a very unfortunate circumstance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I think we can do something about that.

And this winter and as we approach the Christmas season and we think of those who are less fortunate than us, we should think not only of making a one-time contribution. But when we think about how can we make a long-term contribution, think about what they're doing in Ottawa and can we make that difference as well? Can we make that difference? And we can make a difference if we work together with all sorts of different groups, the different levels of government, and the people that are living in poverty. It can make a difference.

And I know that I could go on, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I could go on because there's been many reports. I can talk about the rural report. . . the report on rural poverty that was released just a couple of years ago. No one is immune to poverty here.

So with that, having said that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to make the motion. That it's moved:

That this Assembly call on the government to recognize the urgent nature of the housing and affordability crisis

across the province as evidenced by the fact that the Salvation Army is having to turn people away from its emergency shelters in Saskatoon due to an overcapacity for the first time, and further;

That in making this call, the Assembly urges the government to do the following:

- (1) To immediately assist emergency shelters to increase their capacity to provide desperately needed services during cold winter months; and
- (2) To immediately begin the process of developing a comprehensive, affordable housing strategy and a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy to address the underlying causes of this crisis.

Dated today, November 25th, 2010. I do so move.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Centre has moved a motion:

That this Assembly calls on the government to recognize the urgent nature of the housing and affordability crisis across the province as evidenced by the fact that the Salvation Army is having to turn people away from its emergency shelters in Saskatoon due to overcapacity for the first time, and further;

That in making this call, the Assembly urges the government to do the following:

- (1) To immediately assist emergency shelters to increase their capacity to provide desperately needed services during the cold winter months;
- (2) To immediately begin the process of developing a comprehensive, affordable housing strategy and a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy to address the underlying causes of this crisis.

Being that it is less than a minute to adjournment, I will ask the House indulgence that we adjourn the House — but is the member on his feet? — that we adjourn the House till 10 o'clock . . . I mean 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

An Hon. Member: — No. Monday.

The Deputy Speaker: — Monday. I will move that this House do now adjourn . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Okay. I can't. I declare this House now adjourned till Monday at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 13:00.]

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GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

CABINET MINISTERS

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Premier of Saskatchewan
President of the Executive Council

Hon. Bob Bjornerud
Minister of Agriculture
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Crop Insurance Corporation

Hon. Bill Boyd
Minister of Energy and Resources
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Telecommunications

Hon. Ken Cheveldayoff
Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations
Minister Responsible for Northern Affairs
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Gaming Corporation

Hon. June Draude
Minister of Social Services
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women
Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission

Hon. Dustin Duncan
Minister of Environment
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Water Corporation
Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated

Hon. Donna Harpauer
Minister of Education
Provincial Secretary

Hon. Jeremy Harrison
Minister of Enterprise
Minister Responsible for Trade

Hon. Darryl Hickie
Minister of Municipal Affairs

Hon. Bill Hutchinson
Minister of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport
Minister Responsible for the Provincial
Capital Commission

Hon. D.F. (Yogi) Huyghebaert
Minister of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing

Hon. Ken Krawetz
Deputy Premier
Minister of Finance

Hon. Tim McMillan
Minister Responsible for Crown
Investments Corporation
Minister Responsible for Information
Technology Office
Minister Responsible for Information
Services Corporation
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Government Insurance
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Liquor and
Gaming Authority

Hon. Don McMorris
Minister of Health

Hon. Don Morgan
Minister of Justice and Attorney General
Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety
Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan Workers'
Compensation Board

Hon. Rob Norris
Minister of Advanced Education,
Employment and Immigration
Minister Responsible for Innovation
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Power Corporation
Minister Responsible for Uranium
Development Partnership

Hon. Jim Reiter
Minister of Highways and Infrastructure
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Transportation Company
Minister Responsible for The Global
Transportation Hub Authority

Hon. Laura Ross
Minister of Government Services