



FOURTH SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

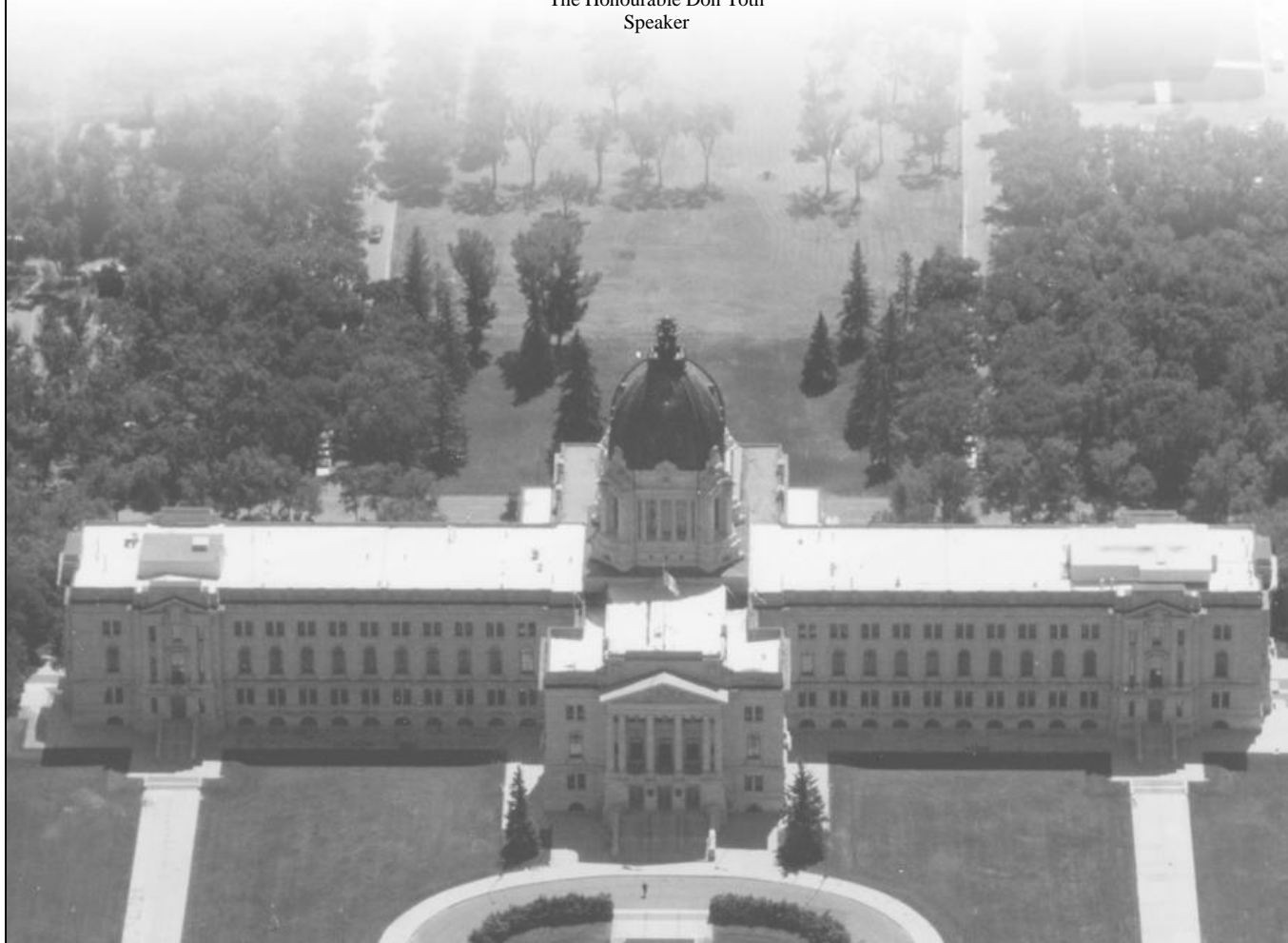
of the

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

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

[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — Before I recognize the Premier, if I could just have a moment just to introduce. We've been joined today by a number of staff members from the communications and technology service branch of the Legislative Assembly Service. With them we have staff member Meghan Trenholm who recently joined the ranks in the role of help desk analyst. I ask members to welcome the staff members to their Assembly today.

I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last evening in Regina, for the constituency of Regina Lakeview, there was a nomination meeting for the Saskatchewan Party. And so it's an honour to introduce to you and through you, to all members of the Assembly, someone that members of the Assembly will know quite well. He's a former president of the U of R [University of Regina], Bob Hawkins, currently a professor of law at the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy.

Mr. Speaker, obviously Mr. Hawkins has been involved in public life in a number of places across our country. He is currently the vice-president of the Children's Health & Hospital Foundation of Saskatchewan and was honorary lifetime director of the Children's Hospital Foundation of Western Ontario. He's a Doctor of Canon Law, St. John's College, University of Manitoba.

Here back in the province, past board member of the Regina Symphony, the Wascana Centre Authority, the Regina regional economic development board, Communities of Tomorrow, and the Saskatchewan advisory council.

Mr. Speaker, he's received teaching excellence awards at Queen's and the University of Western Ontario.

He's married to Marie-France Menc who's here as well. And, Mr. Speaker, they have three sons, Nicolas, Pierre, and François. We're very much looking forward to having Mr. Hawkins join us here on the floor of the Assembly some time late next year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to introduce to you Pat Maze who's seated in your gallery. Pat Maze was recently nominated to run for the New Democratic Party in Regina Wascana Plains.

Pat and his wife Belinda have been very involved in the community here in Regina. Pat was born and raised in Regina and currently the president of the Regina public school teachers, and also a member of the executive or past executive

of the Teachers' Federation.

He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree, a Bachelor of Education, a Master of Education degree at the University of Regina. He also has served on the senate and board of governors of the University of Regina, and works with the elementary and high school levels in terms of teaching and coaching, and former level 6 international and WHL [Western Hockey League] hockey referee.

The list goes on, Pat, so you have to forgive me if I don't read it all. But one of the outstanding things of course, he and Belinda have four children and I just want to point out that his oldest is captain of Campbell Tartans. I say that only because that's where my son in grade 9 goes and he aspires to join that football team. But they were in fact the provincial champs this year.

And I want to congratulate Pat for taking on the task and I know that in a few months you'll join us here in the Assembly. So welcome and enjoy today's Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs, the Minister Responsible for First Nations.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to introduce through you to this Assembly, three very special guests seated in your gallery: Arthur and Elaine Anderson from the George Gordon First Nation, and their grandson Nigel. Would you stand, please? Nigel's here from Calgary and visiting grandma and grandpa.

Reverend Anderson was the recipient of the male Citizen of the Year Award at the 12th annual Circle of Honour Awards in First Nations. Reverend Anderson served in Germany, Cyprus, and Africa during his 29 years with the Canadian Forces, later finding his calling as an Anglican priest. He has dedicated his time to bridging the gap between First Nations and non-First Nations cultures while working tirelessly to improve the lives of First Nations youth.

I recently had the opportunity to speak with Reverend Anderson at the Saskatchewan First Nations Veterans Association dinner last month. We chatted about the grave markers program. We chatted about the great contribution that First Nations people have made to our safety. His sacrifice and dedication for the country and his people have impacted both lives here at home and abroad, and I look forward to having the opportunity to speak with him after question period.

Colleagues, please join me in welcoming Arthur and Elaine Anderson and their grandson Nigel to the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the minister in welcoming Arthur Anderson and Elaine and Nigel to their Legislative Assembly.

The last I saw Arthur it was at the funeral for the past grand

chief, Howard Anderson, where Arthur was guiding the community through grieving the loss of a great warrior for the province of Saskatchewan. And certainly Arthur is one of those warriors for the people in Saskatchewan.

In addition to being an Anglican priest, he was a paratrooper, Mr. Speaker, and completed 265 jumps. I don't know if he can still do the one-handed push-ups, but we'll see about that perhaps out in the rotunda.

But certainly I want to join with the minister in welcoming Arthur and Elaine here and commending them on the tremendous work that they've done over the years and congratulating them on the Circle of Honour Award and the continuing to work with the community, but also with the First Nations Veterans Association. So ta wow. Ēkosi.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, if I may do one more introduction to members of the Assembly through you . . . And he won't be pleased about this at all because he prefers to be not introduced. But he's a long-standing friend of mine and many on this side of the House and is . . . Maybe this is not necessarily a good thing, but is in part responsible for my early interest in politics, in my early employment here in this building. He served this province for many, many years, he and his wife Margot, and is now living back in Ontario but is visiting here for the . . . has been here for the last couple of days, Mr. Speaker.

I'll just tell you a very brief story about how we used to make fun of a briefcase that he used when he was working here in the building, a lot of us. It was seemingly quite tattered and didn't look very good, frankly, at the time. And we made fun of him until he pointed out that it was actually his step-grandfather's briefcase, the Rt. Hon. John George Diefenbaker.

Ladies and gentlemen, to you and to all members of this Assembly, John Weir, a friend of Saskatchewan. We welcome him back here today.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join the Premier in welcoming John Weir here to the Assembly in Saskatchewan. Of course, in the 1980s, John worked in government and carried out the duties of a staff person in the government, I think in a very diligent way. And I know we had a short chat in the hall yesterday, and I really appreciate the fact that you're back here in Saskatchewan, and I hope your endeavours here in the province, whether it's trying to enhance the economy of the province, that that goes well. And I want to join with the Premier in welcoming you here to the Assembly today.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to welcome a group of Aboriginal students from the U of R who are enrolled in their first year of university. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to try and do my very best to do the name, nitocipamin oma student success program, and that's Saulteaux,

you know, for the record. And these students, Mr. Speaker, are here to watch the Assembly today, and they're accompanied by the student success facilitator. And I'll try my darndest to say this name right, and it's Ms. Osawa Kiniw Ihkwe Kayseas.

And, Mr. Speaker, the oma success program helps Aboriginal students from all across the province transition from high school to the U of R. And I want to say in my own language of Cree.

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

In my own language, Mr. Speaker, I have indicated I'm glad they're here and there's a lot of room. And I'm very, very pleased that we see the effort of the facilitator at the U of R and these students making the transition because the renaissance of the Aboriginal people have begun many, many years ago. And you are complementing that rebirth of our Métis and First Nations and other Aboriginal people throughout the province. So I'd ask all members of the Assembly to welcome these champions of the renaissance of the Aboriginal people to their Assembly today. Thank you very much.

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

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you I'd like to join the member opposite in welcoming these students to their legislature. We know how significant the University of Regina is, especially when it comes to helping to support, foster, and facilitate greater inclusion and access, especially for First Nations and Métis students right across the province. We're delighted to have students from the U of R for the second time this week. And so I would ask all members to join me in welcoming these students to their legislature, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you to all members of the Assembly, it is my honour to introduce some grade 12 students from O'Neill High School in the constituency of Regina Coronation Park. These are social studies students, and it's the, depending how you count it, it's the second or fourth group from O'Neill that's been here this session. And I know you might wonder if I can't count, but we actually had three groups from O'Neill one day just a couple of weeks ago. But it's nice to see the interest that is taken by that great high school in Regina Coronation Park.

Mr. Speaker, there is a chaperone, Ms. Antonio, and there are two teachers here today. One is Mr. Neumann and the other one is, of note, is related to one of our members here, in fact a daughter. So please join me in welcoming Deanna Yates and all of the grade 12 students, teacher Mr. Neumann, and chaperone Ms. Antonio to the legislature. I hope you enjoy this day and I very much look forward to meeting with you a little bit later after question period.

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 concerned citizens of Saskatchewan who are concerned with the safety conditions of our highways. Mr. Speaker, the prayer reads as follows:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good folks from Fort Qu'Appelle, Cupar, Balcarres, Regina, and Dysart, Saskatchewan. I so submit.

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

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people from the province of Saskatchewan who wish to bring to our attention the following: that Saskatchewan Seniors Association has approximately 180 senior centres throughout the province, with the vast majority of them being in rural Saskatchewan; that these centres provide much-needed recreation and social activities as well as important health clinics and workshops which contribute to an enhanced quality of life for many of the seniors who use them; and that due to the skyrocketing costs of utilities, insurance, taxes, etc., many of these face closure in the next few months, and that the closure of these centres will lead to the deteriorating mental and physical health of seniors, which will lead to additional stress on long-term care facilities and hospitals:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan cause the Government of Saskatchewan to provide the much-needed funding to assist seniors' recreation centres to remain open and active within their communities.

And, Mr. Speaker, these hundreds of signatures are from the communities of Chitek Lake, Leoville, Milden, Big River, Hodgeville, Herbert, Morse, Saskatoon, Swift Current, Blaine Lake, Hepburn, Wynyard, Debden, Hanley, Dundurn, Tisdale, Hudson Bay, Consul, Nipawin, White Fox, Porcupine Plain, Zenon Park, Gull Lake, Rosetown, Fort Qu'Appelle, Lemberg, Indian Head, Lipton, Canora, Kamsack, Preeceville, Wakaw, Alvena, Biggar, Meadow Lake, Shellbrook, Shaunavon, Crystal Lake, Stenen, Kerrobert, Spiritwood, Mistusinne, Mistatim, Melfort, Marcelin, Watson, Govan, Nokomis, Duval, Livelong, Macklin, Leask, Tadmore, St. Walburg, Choiceland, Regina, Rosthern, Unity, Lloydminster, Luseland, Flaxcombe, Kelliher, Kindersley, Leross, Balcarres, Marshall, Hazlet, Edgeley, Lone Rock, Sturgis, Denzil, Prince Albert, and Holbein. I so present.

[10:15]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon

Centre.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, 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 that Saskatchewan's income gap between the rich and the poor continues to grow, and now one in five children in Saskatchewan live in deepening poverty. And too often when governments cut spending, supports for social programs are cut first. I'd like to read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to act as quickly as possible to develop an effective and sustainable poverty elimination strategy for the benefit of all Saskatchewan citizens.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the individuals who signed this petition are from the city of Regina and the city of Saskatoon. I so present.

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

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to present another petition on behalf of Furdale residents who are looking for a permanent solution to their situation and not just a delay of a response, Mr. Speaker. A government ministry has directed SaskWater to cut off supplies of water for domestic use to Furdale customers. The 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 and irrigation lines. And the alternative water supply being referred to by a government ministry is a private operator offering treated, non-pressurized water at great cost with no guarantee of quality, quantity, or availability of water, Mr. Speaker. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, these petitions are signed by the residents of Nipawin, 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 to present petitions on behalf of concerned citizens from across Saskatchewan as it relates to the unprecedented financial mismanagement of the Sask Party government. They allude to the two consecutive deficit budgets, the billions of dollars of debt growth, both now and into the future, Mr. Speaker. Over the next four years alone, Mr. Speaker, a damaging \$4.2 billion of debt being added to our balance sheet, all as a result of this government's mismanagement, and at a time I might say of unprecedented highs . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. The member is entering into debate. I ask the member to go to the prayer.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

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

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

These petitions are signed by concerned residents of Regina. I so submit.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

The Gift of Christmas

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honour of the season that is upon us now, the Christmas season of warmth, light, thanksgiving. And, Mr. Speaker, it's a paradox that because of this time of the year the sun rises late, low in the sky throughout the day. It seems to hug the southern horizon for warmth and set early, bringing on long, cold winter nights.

But we know, Mr. Speaker, that in a few short weeks a different cycle will begin, and as now the long, slow shift begins towards the new light, new warmth, and new life in the spring. Even here in the legislature, Mr. Speaker, the routine cycle of media scrums takes on a different feeling in the shadow of the rotunda's Christmas tree, and the marble palace takes on a magical glow in the dark of night when it's lit by spotlights full of colour.

As we think about this building, Mr. Speaker, we should take the opportunity to thank all of those who help us in our routines and the daily work in the House — the Pages, the tour guides, the media, the security staff, the cafeteria crew; the maintenance, library, office, and the administrative people who work in the building; the caucus staff, as well as the staff in the ministers' office; and as well, the people who come every day from the House of Prayer, in particular Richard and Joanne Lepp who are with us here today, I believe.

Mr. Speaker, we in this province are blessed with many gifts — gifts of peace, of freedom and prosperity — that I believe we should strive to share with all. But perhaps the greatest gift we share, Mr. Speaker, is the gift of Christmas. And this time of year we can give thanks for all the blessings of the past year and hope for the new year to come.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Weyburn.

Weyburn Golfer Completes Successful Tour

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise in the Assembly to recognize Weyburn's own Graham DeLaet, who just completed a successful rookie year on the PGA [Professional Golfers' Association] tour. The Weyburn area is known for its rich history of athletic accomplishment and, Mr. Speaker, Graham is a part of that proud tradition. With the season complete, Graham has finished among the top 125 money winners in the PGA tour, which has secured him a spot in the 2011 PGA tour.

With earnings of just over \$950,000, Graham was the highest Canadian on the PGA tour this year, and his accomplishments have been nothing short of remarkable — tied for third at the Shell Houston Open, tied for fifth at the Viking Classic, tied for sixth at Frys.com, tied for 18th at the Bob Hope Classic, and tied for 18th at the Justin Timberlake Shriners tournament, Mr. Speaker. At the end of the season, Graham ranked sixth in driving, sixth in greens and regulation, and 49th in all around ranking.

Mr. Speaker, Graham was born in Weyburn where he attended school and excelled in his academic endeavours and also hockey, golf, and volleyball. He graduated from the Weyburn Comprehensive and then went on to attend Boise State University where he went on a golf scholarship. After turning pro in 2006 and with his success in the 2010 season, it's a testament to his hard work and dedication.

Mr. Speaker, Graham is truly the pride of Weyburn, Saskatchewan. He has been a tremendous ambassador for our province and our city. And I would ask all members to join with me in recognizing Graham DeLaet on a successful 2010 PGA tour.

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

Poverty in Saskatchewan

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This year we've seen a Salvation Army report which indicates Saskatchewan is tied with Manitoba for the top spot in the country in terms of homelessness. Twenty per cent of Saskatchewanians say they've been homeless or at risk of being homeless. That means one out of five people we pass on the street are in danger of not having a place to sleep at night.

Mr. Speaker, the face of poverty is homelessness. And housing and access to affordable and good food are key factors for good health and well-being. It's a sobering reality when many individuals and families are only one paycheque away from being on the streets.

Mr. Speaker, it's getting harder for too many people to get by in this province. They are paying more and getting less, and this government continues to ignore this problem. This year we've seen drastic cuts to employment and literacy programs and community-based organizations. We saw people losing their jobs, and front-line workers and social services were among the casualties of these government cuts. The only increase we see is the growing number of people receiving social assistance and the public housing waiting lists.

The cycle of poverty must be stopped. And as we, the members of this legislature, turn our focus to family and the holiday season, I would ask that we don't forget those who are losing their voice in this province, those who feel the many effects of poverty including hunger, homelessness, disease, malnutrition, drug and alcohol abuse, gambling, and crime. We can and we must do better by these people. Thank you.

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

Breast Friends Inspire

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday in the House we heard of a very special group of Saskatchewan women. Breast Friends from Foam Lake, Saskatchewan, is comprised of Patti Hack, Cecile Halyk, Linda Helgason, Darlene Cooper, Jeannie Johnson, Val Helgason, Anne Reynolds, Nat Dunlop, Charlene Rokochy, and Jacquie Klebeck. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say that Jacquie Klebeck works here in our legislature in my ministerial office.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday we heard how these women have self-published national bestselling cookbooks to raise funds for many cancer causes including \$100,000 for our children's hospital. Well, Mr. Speaker, last night these women took their cause to a national television audience in a big way, appearing on a very special edition of *Dragons' Den*, a CBC television show involving entrepreneurs pitching their ideas to the dragons in order to raise investment capital.

Mr. Speaker, one of the highlights of last night's show was when Patti Hack from Breast Friends told the dragons that the

group was initially started to raise \$3,000. When Patti Hack indicated they raised over \$1 million to date, the look on the face of the dragons was priceless. Brett Wilson, one of the dragons, commented, well you surpassed the \$3,000 and you forgot to stop. Well, Mr. Speaker, these women were inspired to act due to the loss of close friends and relatives. They have turned tragedy into triumph. Breast Friends made *Dragons' Den* history last night when all five dragons bought into their proposal.

Mr. Speaker, 10 women from Saskatchewan have inspired their province and their country, and for that we say thank you.

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

The Logic Box

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, let's review a few numbers, a few financial facts. This Sask Party government's spending has increased more than 35 per cent over just three years. Even at mid-year, with spending at all-time highs, this government is adding an additional \$443 million in spending, proving another budgetary miscalculation.

The result of this spending is two consecutive deficit budgets and a massive increase to public debt — \$4.2 billion over the next four years, a shameful increase of 55 per cent. This number excludes the hundreds of millions of dollars of public debt hidden off balance sheet by this government. And of course this mismanagement comes at a cost to Saskatchewan families and communities now and into the future.

But it is the holiday season — a season of giving, Mr. Speaker. So I have a gift for the Minister of Finance. It is from the citizens of southeast Saskatchewan who have asked me to gift it to the minister. The gift, Mr. Speaker, is called the logic box. I quote from its packaging: "Discover the beauty of math. Mentally invigorating. Get lucky with probability." And most importantly: "Think sharp and be nimble with numbers."

Mr. Speaker, I wish the Minister of Finance a Merry Christmas, and on behalf of some fine rural citizens from southeast Saskatchewan, I gift him the logic box. I will send it across the floor momentarily. May its teaching serve us all well in 2011.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. I'd just . . . Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. I must remind the member of the rules of the Assembly 46(g) about exhibits on members' desks and 50(p). And I ask the Page to pick up the gift and bring it to the Speaker's dais.

Thank you. Next statement. I recognize the member from Yorkton.

[10:30]

Christmas Blessings

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As this fall session comes to a close and we make our way back to our constituencies and homes, friends and families, it allows us to prepare for the approaching Christmas season and to reflect on the many blessings we enjoy in our province. We have come to be aware of the fact that by divine providence, Saskatchewan is blessed with a strong economy and resources of biblical proportions. And because of this, we enjoy one of the best qualities of life anywhere.

However, we should keep in mind those in need and going without, not only during this time but throughout our year. As this Christmas season approaches, my hope and prayer is that even though we celebrate in our own individual ways, and the focus of Christmas tends to be on gifts, we still remember the essence of Christmas, the giving of the most important gifts we can give: the gifts of love, hope, and charity; and those we can receive: those of freedom, faith, family, and friends.

But, Mr. Speaker, the most important gift ever received, the gift of the Christ child. As Isaiah foretold of the coming Messiah, the Lord himself will give you a sign. The Virgin will conceive a child. She will give birth to a son and will call him Emmanuel, which means God is with us.

As the Christian community celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ and the year draws to a close, to everyone, especially our service members here and abroad, Merry Christmas and may you be blessed with a prosperous, safe, healthy, and Happy New Year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Gifts

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is the time of year when we remember the three kings who are famous for the gifts they brought: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These gifts are celebrated today, Mr. Speaker, but things have changed a lot in 2,000 years.

And in our province, we see the Sask Party government giving gifts to the public that are nothing to celebrate: coldness, arrogance, and indifference. We see the coldness, Mr. Speaker, in the government's decision to freeze any increase in minimum wage even as they reward their friends and donors with construction contract gold. We see the arrogance, Mr. Speaker, in this government's refusal to heed the will of the public on the release of private health information. The public has been incensed, Mr. Speaker, at this violation of their privacy, but the minister has stated frankly that he knows best and their personal information will be given away. We see the indifference, Mr. Speaker, on a range of files, from education funding to contracts from doctors or more appropriately, the lack of education funding and the lack of contracts for doctors.

The murmurs of discontent are growing, Mr. Speaker, because the people aren't happy with what this government's been giving them. That's why it's beginning to look a lot like the people of Saskatchewan are hoping Christmas comes early next

year when they give themselves the gift of a new government.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Contract Negotiations and Supply of Physicians

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, a week ago the doctors in the Cypress Hills health region withdrew their service in an attempt to bring attention to the fact that they haven't had a contract for 19 months. Also that it's getting more and more difficult to attract and retain doctors in the province. The doctors are trying to make a statement to the government, and today they've withdrawn their service in Five Hills Health Region, which includes Moose Jaw, Gravelbourg, and a number of other communities.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier is, when will this government realize that their inaction when it comes to getting contracts for doctors and other health care workers is leading to a very difficult time in retaining and attracting doctors and health care workers to this province?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well obviously, Mr. Speaker, everybody in the province of Saskatchewan would like to see resolution to the contract talks. We're hopeful and optimistic that that's going to happen very, very soon, Mr. Speaker.

And in the meantime, we continue to make progress in terms of attracting more doctors to the province, training more doctors here in Saskatchewan, training more residents in Saskatchewan. These were campaign promises that this party made, and in government we are keeping those promises, Mr. Speaker.

There's now 6 per cent more physicians in rural Saskatchewan than there were in 2006. There are 8 per cent more physicians overall across the province of Saskatchewan. Eight hundred and thirty nurses, more nurses now practising.

And the results are in, Mr. Speaker: the number of people waiting 12 months has been reduced by 25 per cent. The number of people who've been waiting 18 months — far too long for surgery — it's down 50 per cent in just three years, and more progress to come, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier can brag about how great things are in the province as it relates to health care, but the fact of the matter is that the situation is grave in many areas. A 40 per cent increase in doctor vacancies in the province by their own analysis. That's their study. If you go to their website, you'll find that there's a 40 per cent increase in doctor vacancies.

Waiting Your Turn report says that wait times have actually increased from 25.2 weeks to 26.5 weeks and that we have the lowest number of doctors per capita of any province in Canada, and that in fact 46 doctors last year left the province and only

23 came. These are the facts.

How can the Premier be proud of that record as it relates to health care in the province?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well it's interesting, Mr. Speaker. We do now know in the province of Saskatchewan the number of vacancies in terms of doctor positions in the province. Do you know why we know that now? Because this government actually produces that information for the public.

Those members in, those members in government, they refused to tell anybody anything about what was a chronic shortage of doctors. And while we were short doctors, they refused to train more at the U of S [University of Saskatchewan]. They refused to fund more residency positions, Mr. Speaker. They refused a physician recruitment strategy.

Now in this province all of those things are being addressed — more training seats for doctors, more residency positions, Mr. Speaker, physician recruitment in Saskatchewan. Seventy-four per cent of Saskatchewan patients now have their surgery performed within three months because we are slowly dealing with the years of NDP [New Democratic Party] neglect of the need for front-line health care workers, Mr. Speaker.

Wait times are being reduced. More progress needs to be made. We believe the contract will be settled soon. And we hope the NDP understand that this problem, their problem, is now being dealt with on this side of the House.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier makes the point, but the problem is the trained surgeons and doctors that we're training in this province are moving out of Saskatchewan to other provinces where they're respected. That's the problem. In fact the doctors, the SMA [Saskatchewan Medical Association] issued a press release yesterday in which they say, and I quote, "A timely contract resolution would demonstrate to physicians and patients that the government is serious about health care in Saskatchewan."

When will the Premier stand up and defend families's right to timely health care in this province?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the member's question was about timely health care. When we took over from his party, Mr. Speaker, from his party in power for 16 years neglecting nurses, neglecting doctors . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well they're asking, what have we done? We're going to get that. But when we took over, 2,878 people waited 18 months for surgery or longer, Mr. Speaker. What have we done? In . . .

[Interjections]

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

Hon. Mr. Wall: — What have we done, Mr. Speaker? In three

short years we've cut that number in half, Mr. Speaker. That's what we've done for timely health care in this province. What have we done? We're funding more doctor's training seats. We're funding more residency positions. We're recruiting more doctors, Mr. Speaker. There are 8 per cent more physicians practising today than there was in 2006. There is more work to . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. The Premier can complete his comments.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the College of Medicine is no longer under probation as it was when those members were in government, Mr. Speaker.

That's what we've been doing. There's more work to be done, but in three short years we see significant progress. That's why more Saskatchewan people are satisfied with health care than any other province in the country.

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

Children in Care

Mr. Forbes: — All right. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Day after day more concerns emerge about the state of the child protection system in our province, and day after day the minister refuses to act to address this very important crisis.

First the Provincial Auditor said that the minister doesn't even know how many children are in her care or where they live. Then a former senior Social Services official raises serious concerns about the policies and procedures not being followed, and children are being put at risk. Now a family has come forward to state that three foster children were placed in their home without any background checks being done.

My question is this: after all this, does the minister still deny there are massive problems in her ministry?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the members and everyone in this province that we take child safety very, very seriously. The members opposite know that we can't speak directly to any cases because of confidentiality, but removing children from their homes is only done in emergency situations, Mr. Speaker. I'm hoping that the members opposite hear me clearly when I say children are only removed when the level of risk and the immediacy of risk is unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, the work that we are doing within our ministry is very, very important. That's why we engaged a panel of people who cared very much about children to look at the child welfare review system. And that will be released before Christmas. I'm hoping the members opposite will be looking at those recommendations as well and realizing these issues didn't happen overnight. It's been years and years in the making, and

we will be addressing the issue.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Well we are curious about how long the minister has had this report and how long she's been sitting on it. But we know three foster children were placed in a home that was under construction, and absolutely no background checks were done on the foster parents. And it's fine for the minister to say she takes this very seriously, but the problem is that she hasn't been taking any steps to ensure that proper policies that were designed to protect children are now being followed.

To the minister: when can we expect action to address these serious problems will be addressed in her ministry?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I've had the opportunity to speak to many people that work in this ministry in the last four months — people not only from Regina, but from Saskatoon and Prince Albert and Yorkton and The Battlefords — and they all talk about the system that they believe requires some change. And that's why our government in 2009 undertook to have a panel look at the whole system. This is the first time any jurisdiction has looked at not just part of the welfare system, but the entire child welfare system.

The report interviewed 1,200 individuals. They interviewed not only people that are in the system, but people that work in the system. Everybody agrees that there's a need for change, and we are working on it. I've had the report for about six weeks. It will be released before Christmas. When Alberta did their report, they had it for about six months. We're working quickly because we know something has to be done.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Well, Mr. Speaker, we find it alarming that she sat on this report for six weeks. That's an outrage when we could be talking about it here. And they think it's funny. This is alarming.

It's been a week of alarming news about the children not being protected, families being torn apart unjustly, and a minister incapable or unwilling to do anything about it. And yesterday she said, and I quote, "I don't want to be a parent to 4,800 children." So it's no wonder that Saskatchewan people have lost faith in this minister and in the Sask Party government when it comes to child protection in our province.

To the Premier: after all this alarming news, will he finally agree that more oversight is needed in the child protection system? And will he agree today to establish a special all-party committee so that we can take the urgent steps to fix this system and better protect children?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite talked about six weeks being too long. How about 16 years of knowing that there was an issue, and there wasn't anything accomplished?

Under the NDP they had 21 children in one foster home, Mr. Speaker. For 16 years their child welfare budget was at a standstill. We've increased it by 106 per cent in three years. The NDP left a wait-list of 440 people with intellectual disabilities on a list. And did they address that issue? No they did not. We have addressed the issue. We'll have 70 per cent of those people off the list in two years. Mr. Speaker, we've reduced the number of children living in homes with more than four children by a third.

We've increased budgets. We've created over 150 residential spaces. We've looked at the automatic tracking system, and we've launched a new foster home database. Mr. Speaker, we know that there are issues there, and we are dealing with them because 4,800 children deserve to be able to call somebody mom that they know.

[10:45]

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

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party promised in 2007 election platform to stabilize greenhouse gas emissions by 2010 and reduce them by 32 per cent by 2020. A promise made, a promise broken.

This week leaders from around the world are in Cancun trying to reach a new agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions when the Kyoto accord expires in 2011.

To the minister: will Saskatchewan use this opportunity to finally outline a plan for addressing the climate crisis, or will they continue to make future generations pay the price for their inaction?

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

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to see, that after 25 days and roughly 307 questions, that that member has finally been upgraded from tersely worded member statements to a couple of questions, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, that member will know that it was this government that put in place legislation that would provide for a framework to legislate, or to regulate the greenhouse gas emissions in this province, Mr. Speaker. That legislation has been passed. It was passed by this government. And, Mr. Speaker, the people of this province and the Ministry of Environment are working very hard to put in place a regulatory framework to put this plan into action, Mr. Speaker. Meetings have been held over a number of months to put in place the regulations that we would need in order to move forward on this file, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Morin: — Well, Mr. Speaker, after 25 days here's a news flash for the members opposite. Government corruption . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Apparently they find this funny, Mr. Speaker, but government corruption always trumps government complacency, and that's where the questions are coming so far in the last 25 days, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, climate change is having a big impact here on the prairies. Farmers' incomes are taking a big hit due to the extreme weather, excess moisture in some areas and drought in others. So far this government has let Ottawa take the lead, going so far as to base their new lower targets on Ottawa's. But earlier this week Canada's environmental auditor — this is something they'll want to listen to — said that this country has no real plan to deal with climate change.

To the minister: why is this government hitching its wagon to a horse, in this case the federal government, that's clearly going nowhere? Why are they making Saskatchewan farmers, families, and future generations pay the price for their inaction?

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. I'd just remind the member to be mindful of the words and terms that would be used in speaking about members or individuals or government. Temper the comments.

I recognize the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, if the member wants to talk about inaction, I think that she should probably start with the fact that emissions rose by 70 per cent under 16 years of NDP government. Talk about inaction on this file.

Mr. Speaker, *The Management and Reduction of Greenhouses Gases Act* was passed in this House, Mr. Speaker. Regulation, the consultation process on the regulations have been taking place over a number of months, Mr. Speaker. In fact I can tell the member opposite that nearly 200 people have taken part in eight plenary sessions over the last number of months. Twenty-five bilateral meetings have taken place with nearly 100 individuals, Mr. Speaker. Several focus group sessions have taken place as we move forward in drafting these regulations, consulting with the people of Saskatchewan, including, Mr. Speaker, including the NDP candidate for Saskatoon Greystone. I hope they're not saying that that has been a waste of time because certainly Mr. Prebble has found it a worthwhile experience.

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

Ms. Morin: — The time wasted, Mr. Speaker, is they put in their document, in their election platform, promises to the people of Saskatchewan that the people of Saskatchewan voted for, and this government has done nothing on that file so far.

There are no targets in legislation, none whatsoever. No legally binding commitment to reduce emissions. Instead we're supposed to take the Sask Party's word for it. Given that they have already broke their promises numerous times, Mr.

Speaker, that's just not good enough. If the Sask Party were serious about meeting its climate change commitments, if they were serious about protecting farm incomes in future generations, it would be prepared to make its greenhouse gas reduction targets legally binding.

To the minister: will the government amend its greenhouse gas legislation to include binding greenhouse gas reduction targets, or are they leaving some room, wiggle room to break yet another promise?

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

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, if the member was serious about this topic, maybe she would have waited before day 25 to actually raise it, Mr. Speaker, prior to the Christmas break, Mr. Speaker.

The member talks about saying that the government has done nothing on this file, Mr. Speaker. It was this government, the Saskatchewan Party government, that brought forward legislation, something that wasn't done by the previous NDP government, Mr. Speaker. Sixteen years of inaction by that government that saw emissions rise by 70 per cent.

We passed the legislation, Mr. Speaker. We are working on the regulations. If the member opposite believes that nothing has been taking place, I have a hard time explaining that to the 200 people that have attended plenary sessions, Mr. Speaker, to the 84 individuals that have attended the bilateral meetings, Mr. Speaker. Those individuals don't believe that they have been doing nothing on this. They are working with the Government of Saskatchewan, the Ministry of Environment, Mr. Speaker, after many, many years of inaction by that former government.

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

Out-of-Province Medical Care

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over a month ago, we raised the issue of Christopher, a man who went out of the country to have a brain tumour removed because he couldn't get diagnosed in Saskatchewan. The Ombudsman recommended that Christopher's medical expenses should be covered by the province. At that time the minister said, and I quote:

We are certainly taking a look at it because we think there are some issues there around the case that may need clarification. We're taking the Ombudsman's recommendations very, very seriously.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: this case has been on his desk for over a month. The Ombudsman's report has been on his desk for over a month. Christopher has had the surgery. He's incurred the costs. Is the minister covering Christopher's out-of-country costs, yes or no?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, I'm very aware of this

case and the situation. In fact I had a meeting with the Ombudsman to hear his concerns with the way this case was handled through the Ministry of Health, Mr. Speaker. I've certainly had the opportunity to talk to officials in the Ministry of Health and hear the reason why they had denied the coverage at that time. Mr. Speaker, taking that all into consideration, we'll be looking at this case. We haven't made a final decision on it, but it is working its way through the process, Mr. Speaker.

But what I will say is, that's why it was so important for us, as of yesterday, to set up the health services review committee that will look at decisions that are made by government, made by the Ministry of Health. And if it is a denial for example, Mr. Speaker, before, citizens of our province had no recourse, no place to have a second opinion if it was a denial.

Mr. Speaker, this committee will be up and running in the new year. Certainly they've been looking at cases such as this one, Mr. Speaker, and making recommendations to government.

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

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad the minister brought up his health services review committee because it's just another hoop that patients have to jump through to get no answer.

They're not going to get coverage because it's going to enforce the policies that are there. The minister has said that none of the rules around the coverage are going to change. So all this committee is going to do is make sure the current policy has been followed. There will be no exceptional circumstances received and no second look.

To the minister: Christopher needed this surgery. He wasn't able to be diagnosed in Saskatchewan. The Ombudsman recommended that his expenses be paid. The minister's had the file for over the month to look at and look at and look at. This committee is retroactive . . . There's no retroactivity in this committee, so Christopher's not going to get any decision unless it's the minister's. Yes or no, Mr. Minister?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, the oversight committee, the health services review committee is an arm's length away from government, Mr. Speaker, that will look at certain denials. But it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, when the member from Saskatoon Eastview in 2008 was asked about this . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order. I would ask the member to allow the minister to respond to the member from Saskatoon Eastview's question. I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, when the member opposite was asked about out-of-country travel a couple of years ago she said the policy was put in place so there would be

medical oversight, so there wouldn't have political interference, so that who you got to know, Mr. Speaker, would not have any bearing on it.

Mr. Speaker, two years ago she didn't want political interference, today she's asking for it, Mr. Speaker. She's all over the map.

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

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, 16 years look in the mirror is no comfort to people who are coming to this legislature to get their issues dealt with. Christopher, Christopher needs an answer. He's had the surgery. He's incurred the cost. The minister has given him nothing except he's going to look at it. Well we've seen what looking at it does with this minister. Nothing happens. Is Christopher going to get his money? Yes or no?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, I said earlier that a final decision has not been made on this. I've looked into it from both sides and will be moving through, Mr. Speaker, both sides — the Ministry of Health and what the Ombudsman had to say. And we'll be moving forward, Mr. Speaker, and just making a decision on this shortly.

But the member opposite says that we've done nothing, Mr. Speaker. In three years of this government we have done more than they did in 16 years. They looked at Avastin, and they couldn't make up their mind on Avastin, Mr. Speaker. They looked at the nurses' issue. Oh, we wouldn't want to set targets because we'd never meet them, Mr. Speaker. They never looked at the position recruitment issue, Mr. Speaker. In fact under their government we saw the College of Medicine under probation, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, under this provincial government, Mr. Speaker, we're getting things done, and we'll continue to get things done many years into the future.

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

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, a quick review. This minister has failed kidney transplant patients. He's failed to protect patient's privacy in this province. He's failed to negotiate with health providers, both doctors and other health providers like represented by Health Sciences.

He's failed to provide rural health care. We've been out there, seen there's no services, no doctors, no ambulance, no lab. He's failed to provide transparency in contracts like the Amicus deal. And he's failed people in exceptional circumstances. He's provided daily inadequate and inaccurate information to this House. Will the minister, Mr. Speaker, just admit he is a failure, he can't do his job, and resign?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — I want to thank the Minister of Health because I'm pretty sure he wanted to hit that ball over the fence,

Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I hope he has no intention of resigning, not any time soon, Mr. Speaker.

Because under his leadership, under his leadership, we've started to address the shortage of nurses in this province. Under his leadership, we're finally starting to train enough doctors in this province. Under his leadership, we're increasing the residency program for doctors. Oh, and we're actually expanding it to rural areas. Under his leadership, people waiting for surgery longer than 18 months has been cut in half in three years. Under his leadership, we have made the improvements to the out-of-province approval for those who seek health care, Mr. Speaker. And under the leadership of the Minister of Health, Saskatchewan people feel more satisfied with their health care system than any other place in the country.

Mr. Speaker, we know there's more work to be done on wait times. With respect to the doctor issue in this province, we're going to continue to do the work. And here's why I think we'll be successful — because of the member for Indian Head-Milestone, Mr. Speaker.

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — I'd ask members to come to order. Order. I realize we're getting close to the end of session, but we have a bit of business we have to deal with yet. Order.

[11:00]

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

SaskPower Demonstration Project

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today for the first ministerial statement I've made since assuming responsibility for SaskPower. I'm delighted to draw attention to an exciting new SaskPower initiative, the demonstration project to explore the benefits of self-generated power projects at urban and rural municipal rinks.

We all know how vitally important rinks are to the community life across our province. They are more than just recreational facilities. Rinks are where Saskatchewan children learn the value of teamwork and co-operation, of working together, quite literally, for a common goal. Rinks are where captains are made, where leadership is not taught so much as nurtured and seen. Rinks are where parents and grandparents cheer our children to the very best of their abilities. And rinks are gathering places, where on any given weekend you can find friends, and family, and neighbours.

Running these rinks, we know, isn't easy. They take an enormous amount of time, mostly volunteer time, to operate. They also take a fair amount of money. Keeping the ice in good condition for skating, for hockey, or curling can be costly.

That's why we want to see if we can help offset the power bills that rinks face. Under this demonstration project SaskPower

will install wind turbines at two community rinks. Those turbines and the rinks will be monitored and evaluated to see how well this program works.

Wind resources in Saskatchewan are usually at their greatest during the late fall and winter months when the demand for rink operations reaches its highest mark. Rinks could benefit from self-generating electricity during the operating season or other high-use times and receive credit for excess power during periods of reduced demand in the offseason.

We're inviting all interested communities to apply by mailing or faxing in their expressions of interest. And they can also do so online at www.saskpower.com. The deadline for applications is January 14th, 2011.

SaskPower estimates that the cost of this wind turbine demonstration project will be about \$1.6 million. To qualify, the rink needs to be within the good energy area or a high energy area. There's a map online that shows which communities fall within these zones. The rink must also have an artificial ice surface, must use more electricity in the year than the selected wind turbine will generate, and must have a useful remaining life of five years or more.

Mr. Speaker, before I conclude, I want to take a moment to offer my sincere thanks to the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] for Last Mountain-Touchwood for his leadership and dedication and hard work in helping with this important file for our government. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you I offer my thanks. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I want to say thanks right off the top to the minister for providing me an advance copy of the remarks to better inform my comments and response. This is a good announcement and certainly it's I'm sure one that will be quite useful in terms of the communities that are able to take this on.

It's a demonstration project, Mr. Speaker. And I guess one of the questions that we have in the opposition is that the projects are expected to be up and operational in the summer of 2011, and there's a three- to five-year monitoring period attached to that. So in terms of being a demonstration project and then being available for uptake across the rest of the province or through the high energy or good energy areas, three to five years would seem to be a fair amount of time for others that don't get accepted in this first round for the two community projects.

So we'd like to see if there isn't a way to perhaps truncate that period of time to make it . . . We suspect this will be a very popular and successful project. And is there a way to get this out the door faster and further, is something that we'll be watching very closely, Mr. Speaker.

I guess another question I'd have is, will this be available to First Nations communities? And certainly we had Arthur Anderson here today from George Gordon's. George Gordon's of course has had a larger proposal around wind power,

something which the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood is also well aware of. That project to date has not met with the kind of co-operation that I believe Gordon's was hoping for from this government.

So in terms of the broader question of engagement with First Nations on wind power, that's one thing that we're watching very closely. But in particular as it relates to this program, will First Nations be able to apply to this program? So we'd urge the minister to make that clear in the information surrounding this.

Again this is a good project. But it's, in the grand scheme of things, not to make light of \$1.6 million of expenditure, but there's a great interest in wind power across the province. And certainly I can think of the rinks at Balcarres or Southey or Strasbourg — you know, while we're fixated on Last Mountain-Touchwood here, Mr. Speaker, you know — three rinks that are very much the pride of those communities and three rinks that have been very well supported by the communities over the years. Those would be three rinks that I think would be interested in this right off the bat.

So again two demonstration projects with a three- to five-year monitoring process attached to it. We think that this is possibly something that should be going a lot further and a lot faster. So again we'll be watching on that.

We're also interested to see how this complements or works in concert with the uptake around the municipal rink program in terms of retrofitting and making the cost more affordable for local communities. And again as the minister has talked about in his remarks, rinks are very much the heart of the community. You know, be it . . . I can think of my own neighbourhood, the different sort of hearts that beat and that are well attended throughout the season. And certainly I know that's true again for places like Strasbourg or Southey or Balcarres or throughout the province. So if the municipal rink program just has the uptake that we think it should, that's one thing. But we're interested to see how this goes in concert.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, in the opposition, we think this is a good step. We'd like to see it be a larger step but we'll be watching closely to see how this works out. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 618 — *The Municipal and Public Employees' Pension Plans (Amendment) Act*

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

Mr. Furber: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 618, *The Municipal and Public Employees' Pension Plans (Amendment) Act* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — The member from Prince Albert Northcote has moved first reading of Bill No. 618, *The Municipal and Public Employees' Pension Plans (Amendment) Act* be now read the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be considered a second time? I recognize the member from Prince Albert Northcote.

Mr. Furber: — Next sitting.

The Speaker: — I remind the member . . . Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Forbes: — To seek leave under rule 59 to move a motion of urgent and pressing . . .

The Speaker: — I'll ask the member to hold that. We have His Honour here for Royal Assent, and we'll do that after.

I remind members that His Honour is here for Royal Assent.

ROYAL ASSENT

[At 11:09 His Honour the Lieutenant Governor entered the Chamber, took his seat upon the throne, and gave Royal Assent to the following Bills.]

His Honour: — Pray be seated.

The Speaker: — May it please Your Honour, this Legislative Assembly in its present session has passed several Bills which in the name of the Assembly I present to Your Honour and to which Bills I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

Clerk: — Your Honour, the Bills are as follows:

Bill No. 905 - *The Sisters of the Presentation Act, 2010*

Bill No. 152 - *The Commissioners for Oaths Amendment Act, 2010*

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

Bill No. 158 - *The Correctional Services Amendment Act, 2010*

Bill No. 148 - *The Animal Protection Amendment Act, 2010*

Bill No. 156 - *The Freehold Oil and Gas Production Tax Act, 2010*

His Honour: — In Her Majesty's name, I assent to these Bills.

The Speaker: — May it please Your Honour, this Legislative Assembly has voted the supplies required to enable the government to defray the expenses of the public service.

In the name of the Assembly I present to Your Honour:

Bill No. 163 - *The Appropriation Act, 2010 (No. 2)*

to which I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

His Honour: — In Her Majesty's name, I thank the Legislative Assembly, accept their benevolence, and assent to this Bill.

[His Honour retired from the Chamber at 11:12.]

The Speaker: — Please be seated.

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Ruling on a Point of Order

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day, I have a statement in response to the point of order that was raised yesterday, and I'd like to share it right now.

I'm prepared to rule on the point of order raised yesterday by the Opposition House Leader with regards to the ministerial statement given by the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

First I would like to remind members of previous rulings relating to clarifying acceptable ministerial statements on March 24th, 2010; March 17th, 2009; April 23rd, 2008; April 15th, 2008; and December 19th, 2007. Members will appreciate the difficulty faced by the Speaker in determining the appropriateness of a ministerial statement as it is being delivered. Often it is only once a statement is well under way, or has been announced, that the Speaker may be able to discern whether the statement is in order.

The Speaker does not monitor government announcements and does not always know if a statement relates to something previously announced or the timing of announcements. Compounding my difficulty in making an immediate ruling is the need to ensure fairness to the opposition by affording an equal opportunity to respond to the statement.

In previous rulings, Speakers have . . . And the information put forward by both House leaders . . . I wish to clarify for the guidance of members the acceptable guidelines for ministerial statements. Several rulings have outlined that ministerial statements should not comment on matters that have been previously announced, must refer to a new government direction, policy, or program, and must be made at the earliest opportunity.

I find that the ministerial statement provided by the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women relating to women building a Habitat for Humanity program in Regina contained information that was announced by the government earlier in the day. As outlined in my ruling on March 24, 2010, a new announcement is one that is made in the Assembly at the earliest opportunity. In this situation, the minister made a new announcement earlier in the day. It is not unreasonable for the minister to make a new announcement in the morning and later the same day make a ministerial statement in the Assembly. Therefore I find the point of order not well taken.

I recognize the member from Saskatoon Centre.

[11:15]

MOTION UNDER RULE 59

Children in Care

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I seek leave under rule 59 to move a motion of urgent and pressing necessity in light of the findings of the Provincial Auditor late last week, the revelations brought forward by a former senior Social Services official, and the news yesterday that children are being placed in foster homes without background checks and without proper approvals.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to move a motion that will propose the establishment of a special all-party committee to examine this important issue, and I'll briefly read the text of that motion now. The motion:

That this Assembly immediately establish a special all-party committee to consider the Pringle report and to review the situation of children in care in Saskatchewan and to make recommendations to the Legislative Assembly; and

That that committee have the power to sit during the intersessional period; and

That the committee have the power to send for persons, papers, and records, to examine witnesses under oath, to receive representations from interested parties and individuals, to engage such advisers and assistants as are required for the purposes of the inquiry, and to hold meetings away from the seat of government in order that the fullest representations may be received without unduly inconveniencing those who desire to be heard; and

That the committee be instructed to submit its report to the Legislative Assembly on March 7th, 2011, on the first day of the spring period of the fourth session of the twenty-sixth Legislative Assembly.

I ask that leave. Thank you.

The Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Centre, under rule 59, has asked for leave to move a motion of pressing and urgent debate. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — Leave has not been granted.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the answers to questions 635 through 645.

The Speaker: — Answers to questions 635 through 645 have been tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to order the answers to questions 646 through 649.

The Speaker: — Questions 646 through 649 are tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the answers to questions 650 through 657.

The Speaker: — Questions 650 through 657 . . . Pardon me, was that tabled?

Mr. Weekes: — No, answered.

The Speaker: — Answered. Okay. I believe earlier I should have said ordered.

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Biggar.

Health Care Wait Times

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand in the Assembly and speak to the 75-minute debate. I will be moving this motion at the end of my remarks:

That this Assembly recognize the efforts of the Government of Saskatchewan in reducing wait times through publicly funded health care in collaboration with Surgicentre and Omni medical centre.

Mr. Speaker, after assuming government in 2007, quite frankly our government was left with a crisis in medicare left over by 16 years of NDP rule. We inherited the longest waiting lists in the nation at 27.2 weeks. Saskatchewan had in 2007 the longest waits between specialists and treatment in Canada at 16.5 weeks. And as I said, quite frankly medicare was in a crisis because of the NDP's mismanagement and underfunding of medicare.

It's quite amazing, Mr. Speaker, that through the NDP's 16 years that they closed 52 rural hospitals. Actually it's incredible to see that the College of Medicine had nearly lost its accreditation under the NDP. Can you imagine a government allowing something like that to happen? It was an embarrassment to our health professionals and to our university in Saskatchewan to have something like that nearly happen.

Mr. Speaker, you know we, in opposition, we would ask questions about wait times and we'd ask about what . . . You know, obviously we needed more health care professionals, doctors in rural Saskatchewan and urban Saskatchewan. We needed obviously a lot more nurses and health care professionals. And when we asked the member from North Battleford when he was the Minister of Health, well they didn't believe in setting targets for increasing the number of nurses and health care professionals because, well the comment was, what if they didn't meet them? Well, Mr. Speaker, certainly our government has set targets, and we have met and exceeded those targets, Mr. Speaker. Our target was to have 800 more nurses, and we now have 830 more registered nurses in this province.

Contrast that terrible scenario that the NDP government left the new Saskatchewan Party government in 2007 to what we have

done in government, Mr. Speaker. Since our government took office, the number of people waiting 18 months for surgery has been cut nearly in half from 2,878 to 1,446. The number of people waiting 12 months has been reduced by nearly 25 per cent, from 5,425 to 4,152. The number of people waiting six months has been cut by nearly 14 per cent, from 11,347 to 9,795. And the source of the rest of the information came from the Saskatchewan surgical patient registry, September 30th, 2010 compared to September 30th, 2007. Seventy-four per cent of Saskatchewan patients now have the surgery performed within three months, and our government's goal is to have 100 per cent of surgeries done within 3 per cent by 2014.

We're making great progress, Mr. Speaker, but, you know, we're not done yet. Obviously having any waiting times in our surgical procedures is not right. We're going to continue to reduce those numbers and improve our health care and our medical system in this province. Mr. Speaker, our government has committed to improving surgical services for all residents. We know that some patients wait too long for surgery, and we're taking action to address those concerns. Our Patient First Review report clearly identified surgical wait times as a major priority for Saskatchewan residents.

Through the Saskatchewan Surgical Initiative, we are working to improve patients' access to surgery and diagnostic procedures. We want to improve the surgical care experience by patients and ensure that within four years no one in the province has to wait longer than three months for surgery. And obviously the answer, part of the answer is, to reducing those surgical wait times, is to have a third party delivery of selected day surgeries that we all know has been introduced to improve the access. Regina's Omni Surgery Centre and Saskatoon's Surgicentre Inc. are providing procedures within the health care system. This innovative initiative will help us serve patients more quickly.

Mr. Speaker, I have to speak from a personal point of view about wait times and surgeries. My wife has now had both her knee replacement operations done. In July of 2008, she was put on a waiting list, and even in 2008, in eight months she was able to have the first knee replacement operation. Six months after that, in August of 2009, she had her second. And from a personal point of view, I know the kind of, you know, suffering that she went through. Because her issues with the knees didn't develop overnight. They progressed or became worse over, really, a decade. And her quality of life wasn't very good at all in the last few years — terrible pain, taking enormous amounts of drugs, and having to deal with not only the pain, the side effects of drugs.

But she's a wife and a mother, and she works as an EA [educational assistant] in Biggar. And it was very difficult for her to cope. Now just think if she had to wait two years longer than what she did. She only waited eight months to get the procedures done. What if she had to wait another two years before she got in? That would be, you know, it really would take a tremendous physical toll on her and really add to her suffering that she had to endure for many years.

We see people in communities that . . . There's another lady, Cathy, in our church that now has gone through the pre-op sessions, the education sessions at the Saskatoon City Hospital.

And she expects to have her surgery done in a matter of a few months. And I'm sure with the improvements that we've made that she will have completed her knee replacement operations as well.

Because it's just not a matter of dollars and cents. It's just not a matter of statistics that we look at wait times. It's a matter of the quality of life and the suffering that people are put through waiting to have surgeries done. And under 16 years of NDP government, these wait times became worse. They became so bad that so many people were going out of the province, spending their own money to have surgery done. I know this fellow in Biggar did that. He went to California to have his knee replacement operation at his own expense. He was fortunate enough to have the money that he could do that, but not everybody does.

I know the NDP talk about two-tier systems, and they always bring up the medicare every election. They talk about medicare, what's going to happen if they're not in power to protect medicare in the province. And, Mr. Speaker, under their rule, there was a two-tier system. If you had money, you went to United States to have your operations or you went to Alberta or British Columbia to a third party clinic to have your operations at your own expense.

And it's interesting to know when we debate these issues, under Workers' Compensation, under the NDP and today, Workers' Comp sends their patients out of province or wherever they can get their operations done the fastest. Why? Well first of all it is an economical thing to do to get these patients operated on and up through rehab and working so they can go on with their lives and work. So it's a savings to Workers' Comp and SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] to have their patients looked after quickly and promptly. But look at the lessening of the human suffering of these patients when they can get timely surgeries out of province or wherever they can get the procedures done.

So it's, Mr. Speaker, it's been a long uphill battle to get these surgical wait times down, but we are certainly doing some very good work. The Minister of Health, as the opposition was told in question period, has done outstanding work to get the surgical wait times down.

Talk about lack of doctors. Under the Saskatchewan Party government, there's 6 per cent more rural doctors practising in this province, 8 per cent overall. That's a huge improvement to what the NDP has done in the past.

And I already talked about targets of 800 new registered nurses in the province, and we've exceeded that by 830.

Talk about opening up training seats in the province, training more doctors, more residencies being trained in the province. We have some residents working in Swift Current at that hospital on a pilot project to increase the number of potential doctors that will stay in the province and work and live in our communities and to improve our health care. We've come a long way, and we certainly intend on continuing to reduce the surgical waiting list.

There's a number of other things, Mr. Speaker, that we have

done in health care since coming into government in 2007. We've committed 3.5 million for physician recruitment strategy and the establishment of the physician recruitment agency which will address the shortage of physicians in the communities. And we can see that it's working. We've got 6 per cent more doctors practising in rural Saskatchewan and 8 per cent more overall in the province as I mentioned.

Also 300 registered nurse education seats have been created to train Saskatchewan nurses. And if we train our own people in Saskatchewan, they're more likely — nurses and doctors and all health care professionals — they're more likely to stay in the province and work rather than leave. And we have gone from the worst nurse retention rates in Canada, a few years back, to the best retention rate in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

We've provided \$200 million for the construction of the children's hospital in Saskatoon. That was something that was long sought, long needed in the province. And under the Saskatchewan Party government and our Minister of Health, this has been accomplished.

[11:30]

We have announced \$143 million for 13 new long-term care facilities to replace 13 outdated facilities in the province, and one of those will be built in my hometown of Biggar. That will create more than 540 long-term care residents that will benefit from this investment. A hundred million dollars in the 2008-2009 budget was provided to regions to address urgent health facility maintenance and repair requirements. This was a record amount of funding provided for one fiscal year.

Six point five million dollars in capital funding and 1.1 million in annual operating funding to the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region to support the development of a 45-bed integrated brief and social detoxification facility in Regina. More good news, Mr. Speaker: \$3.8 million operating funding increase for the Irene and Les Dubé facility for the mental health facility, and the new building houses 54 beds for adults plus 10 beds in a separate section for children and youth, including a dedicated adolescent unit, Mr. Speaker.

As I was saying, there's many improvements going on in the health care system in Saskatchewan since the Saskatchewan Party achieved government. And we only need to look at the polls that are being done that fully 50 per cent of the people of Saskatchewan are finding good results in our health care facilities. And it's interesting, 50 per cent you might not think is good, but that's the highest polling numbers in Canada.

And, Mr. Speaker, we're not content to stay just with 50 per cent. We're hoping to have much higher numbers than that in the future as we proceed along to improve the surgical wait times and other areas that we've had to deal with since assuming government. And if we have more doctors and more health care professionals, Mr. Speaker, our health care system will improve.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to read that motion and make that motion:

That this Assembly recognize the efforts of the

Government of Saskatchewan in reducing wait times through publicly funded health care in collaboration with the Surgicentre and Omni medical centres.

The Speaker: — The member from Biggar has moved a motion. Will the members take the motion as read?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's kind of interesting, this whole debate, but really when it gets right down to it, it's not rocket science. The member opposite in his closing comments said if we have more doctors and health care professionals, our health system will improve. That really wraps it up, Mr. Speaker, and that's what we really need to aim for, is providing not only more doctors and more health care professionals but also facilities for them to work in.

The member opposite also began his comments talking about what they had inherited from the NDP, well previous NDP government. And, Mr. Speaker, there is a couple of things that he forgot. One of the things that they did inherit was the immigration and recruitment program for nurses which was begun by my colleague, the member from Nutana who was then the minister responsible for Immigration. Her and a group of health professionals and representatives from the Department of Health had been to the Philippines, had signed the initial agreements to get the program off the ground. So the member opposite forgot to mention that they also inherited that.

They also inherited, Mr. Speaker, \$33 million that in the '06-07 year was dedicated and committed to two surgical care centres, one in the city of Regina and one in the city of Saskatoon. Planning had begun. There was a fair bit of it done for the centre here in Regina. And the whole idea, Mr. Speaker, was that day surgeries would be done in surgical care centres which would alleviate the stress on the surgical theatres in hospitals. The day surgeries could be done in the surgery centres; the more complicated cases that required longer term care for those patients in recovery could be done in surgical theatres within the more traditional hospital setting.

But, Mr. Speaker, when this government was elected, they conveniently ignored the planning that had been going on for the surgical care centres owned by the province of Saskatchewan, run and managed by the Department of Health at the time. They ignored the planning that had gone on. They in fact disbanded the team that had been assembled to do the planning. While this team waited to see what was going to happen with their planning, they were left in limbo and were finally disbanded, Mr. Speaker, and the whole idea for surgical care centres just kind of disappeared. There was no talk of it by this government. There was no talk of that by the Minister of Health, and that whole idea just lingered out in never-never land and was never moved on or maintained by this government.

Mr. Speaker, then we went through their first budget where it was again ignored. The \$33 million that had been dedicated to the surgical care centres was spent elsewhere, utilized in other

ways. And then we came to a point where they again announced surgical care centres to be initiated in Saskatoon and Regina. But, Mr. Speaker, that was the absolutely disastrous year where we'd seen what had been an anomaly with the income to the province and revenues to the province from potash had just skyrocketed. And this government expected that those never-ending dollars were just going to continue on into the future, and they built their budget accordingly.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that even though the kind of worldwide recession was taking hold, we were seeing everything begin to slow down in other places in the world, this government just ignored that, said no, we're going to get \$2 billion out of potash. And they initiated a budget that even though the revenues weren't accounted for — on paper, but not actual revenues — they continued to spend that money, and mid-term we hit another brick wall when we'd seen the lack of resources.

And, Mr. Speaker, what we'd seen then was again reductions in spending. The minister pulled back funding to a number of initiatives. Long-term care centres, surgical care centres again just disappeared off the map. We never heard anything more about them.

So, Mr. Speaker, after question period today when the Minister of Health . . . He has someone reviewing this. He's putting in place a committee to make decisions on something else. You know, he needs to look at his door when he walks into his office. It says, Minister of Health. When we are introduced as the minister in this House, Mr. Speaker, when you introduce people . . . you may introduce the Minister of Health or the Minister Responsible for Health. And that's the fact. Mr. Speaker, as ministers we are responsible. The buck stops at our desk.

And these decisions do land in our lap because we have the final say and final input on them, Mr. Speaker. So even though this \$33 million that was intended for provincial surgical care centres was spent elsewhere, it has flip-flopped back and forth between going ahead, not going ahead, going ahead, just disappearing off the map, to where we get to a point now where the government made the decision to move ahead and use private surgical care centres for these simpler day surgeries.

And, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the government's own data on the Saskatchewan surgical initiative document, we can see quite clearly that over the past four years the number of people waiting for more than 12 months for surgery has dropped by 51 per cent. So, Mr. Speaker, all you have to do is look at that, look at the number of programs that have been initiated over the past number of years that set the stage for better service, better utilization of resources — which could be the operating theatres themselves but also the important resource of our medical professionals, doctors and the teams that are in place — to utilize these facilities. We have seen a substantial drop in wait times right across the province. And clearly the number of people waiting for more than six months has dropped by 27 per cent over this period of time.

Now the members opposite say here, well you know you need to do something to be able to take credit for it, and we haven't really seen anything being done on that side of the House. Mr.

Speaker, obviously more can be done and should be done within the public health care system. And the government's claim that the public system is really running at full force and there is absolutely no capacity, is simply not true.

Mr. Speaker, we can talk to people that currently work in this system. They can always point out areas of efficiencies, areas where we could be utilizing resources better. And yes, there is a need for an investment. But, Mr. Speaker, think of the money that is going to these private surgical care centres. Why would not that money be invested into our health system to build and maintain long-term assets and services that could be utilized by the people of Saskatchewan?

Mr. Speaker, and to say that these surgical care private centres are only being used to reduce wait times, then what happens? Do we just drop the service, Mr. Speaker? I think everyone realizes that once these services are there, it's very difficult to switch and invest that money back in the public sector. And that's why we're seeing a huge push back on this whole idea of privatizing Saskatchewan's health care system and making some fairly big inroads into it that we have seen from this government.

Mr. Speaker, why was not the investment made in the surgical care centre or ambulatory surgery centre for the Regina Qu'Appelle health district? Well, the first time this government announced it, it was \$3 million in funding for this new surgery centre for the Regina Qu'Appelle health region. And while it was cut and it was rather short-sighted and not a lot of vision on behalf of this Minister of Health, now they're spending 5.5 million on a contract with a private, for-profit company.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the question is still there. Why would you not invest this in provincial services? Mr. Speaker, we can look at the changes that have happened over the years, but there is capacity within the public sector within our system that we cherish here in the province of Saskatchewan. And the government needs to quit making purely ideological changes to it and really address the needs within the system to adequately fund it.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Northwest.

Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government's latest in a long line of health care improvements was the Patient First Review. In the Patient First Review, Mr. Dagnone made a profound statement. He said residents are "... proud of this province's health care heritage, but they want to see the 'care' restored to 'Medicare'." The Patient First Review included young and old, rural and urban, rich and poor, with special emphasis on including First Nations and Métis voices.

Over 4,000 Saskatchewan residents shared their experiences and ideas and opinions. From this research, problems, possible causes and solutions, as well as recommendations were identified. Three themes emerged as guiding principles for the report. Patient First must be embedded as a core value in health care. Health care in Saskatchewan needs to function as a cohesive system, and front-line providers must be empowered to deliver patient and family-centred care.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is through the implementation of these and other recommendations of Mr. Dagnone and his team that our government has resuscitated a health care system that's been neglected for 16 years by the former government.

There are many differences between the governments of past and the Saskatchewan Party government. First of all, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll speak to the MS liberation trials. Our government is following through on our commitment and is investing \$5 million to fund clinical trials on multiple sclerosis. Ours is the first province to move forward, initiating clinical trials of liberation procedure.

[11:45]

Liberation procedure is a potentially groundbreaking discovery for treatment of MS [multiple sclerosis]. We are aware that it's still in the trial stages and is not yet proven as a scientifically valid therapy, but this funding will help determine its validity as a treatment. And this research is extremely important to the people of Saskatchewan, and our government is moving forward in searching for a cure for this deadly disease.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the surgery piece, if I for a moment just speak about the Saskatchewan surgical care initiative, this is another way to put patients first. It's supporting our efforts to reduce surgical wait times. Too many patients in Saskatchewan have waited too long for surgeries and diagnoses and our government is looking to fix that through an ambitious plan to improve surgical care in Saskatchewan. One of the innovative strategies contained in the plan is the use of third party outpatient surgery and specialized diagnoses.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan patients will pay no fee. They will be booked through the health region and will not be able to jump the queue. Third party strategies for surgeries and diagnostic tests will be performed through the publicly funded and publicly administered system. Services will only be contracted to third party facilities if they are at or below the RHA [regional health authority] cost and can meet all the quality and safety requirements.

Contracting outpatient surgical and CT [computerized tomography] services will not result in any loss of employment for any employees. Moreover, Mr. Speaker, it's expected that increases in capacity within the health region as part of the four-year surgical plan will result in added employment in the public system.

The previous government was well aware of the continuous increasing surgical backlog which in turn created longer waiting lists, yet they did nothing. Our Saskatchewan Party government heard the people and they're satisfied with the quality of the health care system. They are unhappy with the wait times for surgeries, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We heard what the people were saying and moving forward to alleviate those concerns. The Patient First Review is going to allow us to take the appropriate steps going forward. These steps will ensure that the people of Saskatchewan are receiving the highest possible health care.

Another difference between the previous government and our Saskatchewan Party government is doctor recruitment. While

the former government failed to form a plan to recruit more doctors, this government has implemented an aggressive physician recruitment strategy. Our strategy will increase the number of physicians working in the province. The strategy will include a new and improved assessment for foreign-trained doctors. The assessment will ensure physicians are screened with sufficient rigour to ensure patients receive safe, high-quality care while meeting the needs of communities and health regions in more efficiently recruiting international medical graduates. This will be another big step forward for physician recruitment and retention, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Our government will remove the barriers that previously existed based on international medical graduate country of training. Other benefits of this new assessment process will include the orientation of the Canadian practice environment IMGs [international medical graduate] will receive prior to assessment. This will assist IMGs' assessment in the province and increase their chances of success.

Another benefit will be the elimination of the current group practice requirement. This will mean that IMGs can go directly into their community to which they were recruited to practise independently once they have passed their assessment.

There will be a larger volume of IMG graduates that could be assessed throughout the year, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This new assessment process will closely align Saskatchewan with national licence standards currently under development, allowing for full labour mobility between provinces. Along with increased physicians comes an enhanced access to health care for all the people of this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, on the issue of efficiency, our government also strives for further efficiencies within the health system. Saskatchewan health regions are finding significant financial efficiencies by reducing overtime and sick time. In the first six months of 2010-11 fiscal year, the number of hours worked at premium rates per full-time employee is down 20 per cent in the same period a year before. This is a saving of \$8 million, Mr. Speaker.

Health regions and the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency are doing a good job of reducing overtime which is at considerable cost to the system. The introduction of the primary health care information technologies solutions at West Winds Primary Health Centre means improvement to patient care, more efficiencies, and better decision making at the point of care.

Mr. Speaker, this technology will improve patient care by allowing the health care professionals at West Winds to assess their patients' records electronically. The doctors and nurses that care for patients will now have access to the files to see what procedures and tests they have had or may need, and will result in better overall health care for their patients. Our government is working with all our health care partners to make the change needed to strengthen and sustain our health system into the future.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read some excerpts from an article in the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix*. The article is titled "Surgicentre serves 100. Health region keeps cutting wait times."

During its first two months of performing surgery cases for the public system, the Saskatoon Surgicentre has seen more than 100 patients.

In an agreement with the Saskatoon Health Region, the Surgicentre is performing three specific surgery procedures two days each week . . .

The Surgicentre performed 50 such surgeries in October and 61 in November and expects to do between 60 and 65 each month going into the future.

That subsequently frees up space in hospital operating rooms . . . [and as] Jenny Bartsch, director of surgery services with the Saskatoon Health Region [has indicated].

"Even though they are . . . doing cases that are having excessively long wait times, it provides us with the opportunity to do those (other) procedures in hospital, so it gives us additional capacity . . . [within the system]."

The health region is continuing to reduce wait times from last year, according to the most recent surgical data from Sept. 30. It's made progress in reducing wait [times] for hip/knee replacements, recording a 50 per cent drop from 12 months ago in people who have wait times more than six months, and a 60 per cent drop in those waiting more than one year.

Saskatoon was the first health region to implement a new clinical pathway for hip and knee surgery patients, which streamlines the patient's movement through the system from pre-operative to post-operative stages.

The region has seen such success with the hip and knee surgeries that those procedures no longer have the longest wait times.

. . . During the first six months of this fiscal year . . . a total of 16,278 surgical procedures have been performed in the region.

The increased capacity in the region due to the agreement with the Surgicentre means the region is expecting to see more procedures in the second half of the year.

Mr. Speaker, we know the job isn't complete, but our government is moving forward in the right direction. There seems to be a common theme, Mr. Speaker. The former government was very good at closing hospitals and creating huge infrastructure deficits within the health care system. However our Saskatchewan Party government believes in building hospitals, investing in future infrastructure, addressing long-term care issues for seniors, and most importantly, Mr. Speaker, putting all patients first. Mr. Speaker, we put the care back in the medicare.

Mr. Speaker, I'll be supporting the motion.

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

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise today and enter into this debate. I think my remarks are going to start with what's the current situation in the province right now and is that the doctors are out in Moose Jaw. This is certainly a damning reflection on this government's initiatives.

They can talk about all the new seats they put in the medical college, but if they can't keep the doctors who are here — either residents or interns or practising physicians — it isn't going to matter. And having travelled rural Saskatchewan this summer, the key issue in rural Saskatchewan in many, many, many communities is whether or not we have a doctor. And right now we're seeing doctors saying, if you don't get the contract settled, doctors will leave, and you won't have doctors.

Right now we're seeing more doctors leaving the province than are coming here. That's a pretty good statement on what doctors see in Saskatchewan from this government. They don't see any respect. Two years negotiating a contract? No, I don't think so, Mr. Speaker. I don't think doctors are going to . . . Well they're certainly not putting up with it, obviously.

And this is an unprecedented action that doctors are taking — last week in the Swift Current area and today in Moose Jaw, for heaven's sakes. I mean we haven't seen this sort of action from doctors for decades. And it's a definite reflection on the Sask Party and the way they deal with people, especially in the health sector.

They have had absolutely no success until they got the essential services to ram down people's throat with the 25,000 health providers. That's how they did that two-year contract. Now Health Sciences is out with all our support people. And the professionals, they're out still looking for a contract. PAIRS, our Professional Association of Internes and Residents, they're out waiting for a contract. Now doctors. Teachers are waiting in the wings. There is no success in that government at all with negotiating. They don't know how to do it.

And when your Premier says, I'm going to go to war with working people, well that sets the stage for what we've got right now. And doctors are definitely questioning the Sask Party's commitment to health care and are saying, and I quote their president: "A timely contract resolution would demonstrate to physicians that the government is serious about health care in Saskatchewan."

They're not. I mean the government isn't giving them . . . Settling a contract soon: the Premier said that last week; now he's saying it this week. Soon is a pretty loose definition while the people in Moose Jaw are facing cancelled surgeries, while the people in Swift Current had surgeries cancelled, let alone the daily appointments that are needed in all the clinics in Caronport and Assiniboia and Gravelbourg and Moose Jaw. And it's just going to get worse, Mr. Speaker, until the government gets serious.

You can talk about reducing wait times, which the Fraser Institute hasn't given them credit for at all because wait times have not been reduced. And we're not going to see those wait times reduced unless we can keep our doctors, because the doctors perform the surgeries. I mean that's an interesting connection but it obviously hasn't been made. And we see that

our wait times have increased by over a week in Saskatchewan. I mean that's nothing to crow about. It isn't a success story. And we're losing doctors.

And people are calling my office. In fact yesterday I've talked to somebody who works in an operating room. And the way that the operating rooms are being told now is to focus on the high-profile surgeries like the hips and knees. Other surgeries are being set aside or really, really put back on the back burner and delayed — very complex surgeries and surgeries that concern people. But they don't reach the radar of the Sask Party.

So doctors in those specialities like plastics, they're not going to stay here because they're only getting one hour every two weeks to do surgeries. This is a situation that is percolating, that we're only going to see it get worse because this is not a government who knows how to actually manage anything.

And as I said in question period in my last question, this minister has failed, he has failed in so many areas. And to latch on to giving nurses a contract . . . That's his only, the only place he can go to look for a compliment. And to get a standing ovation on that is pretty, pretty lame. When we see more . . . We see 120 vacancies in the province; that's not anything to crow about.

And I'm happy that the member from Saskatoon read out his comments because I know he hasn't done any research, doesn't really know any of the situation. But he did talk about Saskatoon. And when Saskatoon in the spring, in May, actually did increase their surgical output, they did more surgeries in Saskatoon in the spring. They demonstrated in Saskatoon that with changing the processes of how the surgeries were booked and how things were done in the operating room, more surgeries could be done.

So it certainly begs the question, why aren't we funding the health districts to do the surgeries that are clearly there? They have the capacity to do them. So Saskatoon demonstrated that clearly, and the member from Northwest in Saskatoon read it out and validated that. Saskatoon can do it. So why would you cancel the surgery centre in Saskatoon and give it to the private sector?

The Sask Party has told the public that the public system can't afford or can't do the surgeries that we need to have done. That's simply not true, Mr. Speaker. Saskatoon demonstrated, yes they could. Give us the correct amount of money; we'll do the surgeries. We have capacity.

And as my colleague from Moose Jaw said, a lot of health providers are telling us the CAT [computerized axial tomography] scanners are sitting dark, the MRIs [magnetic resonance imaging] are sitting dark, the O.R. [operating room] theatres are not being used properly. There are still all those things to be dealt with, and yet we see this government turn around and give the surgeries to the private sector.

Private sector clinics are going to want to make a profit. That's what they're there for. So where's that profit going to come from? It's going to come from the patients and the taxpayers of Saskatchewan. And we had in our 2007 budget money to build

two surgery centres for the public system — one in Saskatoon, one in Regina. We see the Sask Party took that away, as the member from Moose Jaw talked about, took it away — took the planning, took the committee away, took that away — and turned around and tried to convince the public that the public needs to have this parallel for-profit system, that that's going to serve you better.

Well anybody who's had this happen, provinces who have actually done this, Mr. Speaker, have found it doesn't work. There are provinces who have had private clinics in Calgary, in Ontario, in BC [British Columbia], where it has turned out that those private clinics have not been cheaper for the public's money. And the public has in some cases even had to take over those clinics where it isn't . . . I mean the clinics weren't able to manage because they couldn't make a profit, so now the public system has to take them over.

So I don't know why we think it's going to be different in Saskatchewan, where it's been unsuccessful in Calgary; it's been unsuccessful in BC; it's been unsuccessful in Ontario. We think we should try it and think that we can make a success of it? I don't think so, especially with the lack of experience, the lack of knowledge, the lack of commitment, and the lack of any connection to the health community that this government has, and in particular this minister.

If you're looking at health providers, 25,000 of them, two years to get a contract — and a very unsatisfactory contract as it is — they feel disrespected. That is a message to the whole health system. Because those people are the underpinnings of the system. We need to have special care aids and long-term care aids and dietary people and maintenance and housekeeping. All of those people keep the system running.

To hang your hat and all your success on making sure nurses, there's enough nurses in the province . . . It's a good thing to have enough nurses. We definitely need enough nurses, but you can't stop there. And now nurses are phoning and telling me what else is wrong in the system. So that isn't going to last very long, Mr. Speaker, because nurses do know what's going on and they're going to tell us, and all the other health providers in health sciences — all the professionals, the technicians, all of those people are left without a contract right now too, Mr. Speaker. How is that going to work to help wait-lists?

[12:00]

Those are the people who actually provide the service. If you don't respect the people who provide the service, how would you expect the service to be done? And if you're going to put the patient first you better actually look at the whole system that the patient's in. If the patient isn't getting surgery in Moose Jaw, how can the patient be first today? If the patient didn't get any services in Swift Current last week, how can they be first? It's pretty hypocritical I think, to say those things and then not to do them. If you're going to say them, you should actually deliver on what you've said.

And the lack of experience that we see from this government in actually dealing with issues, many of the things that are coming to this legislature, people have to come to this legislature with their issues to get any movement. They have to let the cameras

shine in their mouth to get the dental therapy that they need. That's a pretty serious thing to ask people, to have to come here to get their issues dealt with.

I think there should be some way that people actually can trust that the government and the minister in charge of whatever portfolio . . . Be it Social Services, where people are looking to the minister now to take care of our vulnerable children. And she has said she doesn't want to be their mother, so basically doesn't really care to do the job. Those are things that demonstrate to people that this government is not serious about fixing the issues that are wrong in the system. Particularly in Social Services, the light's being shone on that right now.

But the issues in the health system are equally as grave. And the thing with not signing a contract with doctors and with interns and residents, you aren't going to be able to have the procedures done. That's a fundamental. You have to have your health providers to be able to provide your services. And I don't think the government has made that connection and has certainly sent the message to health providers that we do not care about you. We do not value what the services you deliver. And in the workplace you're not a key part of it. You're not a key part of the health services because we don't respect what you do.

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

Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I begin I have to comment on the members opposite and their diatribe with respect to an issue and problems with respect to our health care system. You know, the thing is about our health care system, as with any complex organization where all the pieces of the puzzle have to start to fit together, is that status quo . . . I'll speak about the status quo. And it isn't about maintaining a status quo with our health care system, a publicly funded health care system. It is about moving beyond the status quo and using that as a benchmark, a springboard to moving us forward. And this government is absolutely committed, absolutely committed to a health care system that serves the people of Saskatchewan.

In 2007 after 16 years under the NDP, Saskatchewan had the longest total waits in the nation. Saskatchewan had the longest waits between specialist and treatment in Canada at 16.5 weeks, Mr. Speaker. Today, 2010, today in Saskatchewan, total wait times are down to 26.5 weeks. Saskatchewan has the shortest waits in Canada for GP [general practitioner] to specialist consultation at 6.7 weeks.

Mr. Speaker, we understand. We know we have work to do. We have work to do to bring the health care system, to move the health care system with our partners, with the health care workers, with the physicians. We know we do. But the direction comes from the top. The direction comes from government. And this government has communicated and has taken action in the direction of excellence in health care in the province of Saskatchewan.

Latest Saskatchewan Surgical Care Network data, Mr. Speaker, that I'm referring to, more surgeries performed and fewer people on the wait-list this quarter compared to last quarter, which means 85 per cent of surgeries are done in six months, 94

per cent in one year. Hip and knee pathway showing results: 69 per cent of hip replacements done in six months, up from 63 per cent; 60 per cent of knee replacements done in six months, up from 48 per cent. Nearly 90 per cent of invasive cancer surgeries done in six weeks; 87 per cent of slow-growing cancers done within three months.

Let me speak a little bit about the third-party delivery of health care services in the province of Saskatchewan. Omni in Regina and the Surgicentre in Saskatoon are seeing patients and helping the government, helping the people of Saskatchewan cut into the wait times.

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, I am not satisfied where Saskatchewan ranks with respect to wait times, rankings we've held for way too long. That's why our government is committed to improving surgical services for all residents. We know that some patients wait too long for surgery. We get that; we know that. And this government is prepared to lift up the rock of our health care system and deal with what we find underneath and look and get a true picture of what we're dealing with. Hence the Patient-First Review, all of those types of activities that have been undertaken by this government to really get to the root of the problem that we're facing in the province of Saskatchewan. We're taking action to address it.

The Patient-First Review, as I spoke about earlier, clearly identified surgical wait times as a major priority for Saskatchewan residents. Through the Saskatchewan surgical initiative, we are working to improve patient's access to surgery and diagnostic procedures. We want to improve the surgical care experience for patients. And, Mr. Speaker, you can look at . . . We hear of patients that have had not a great experience within our health care system, but then, Mr. Speaker, you hear of people telling stories about the positive experience that they've had with our health care system. There is more work to do, to be sure.

Third party delivery of selected day surgeries has been introduced to improve access. Regina's Omni Surgery and Saskatoon's Surgicentre are providing procedures within the public health care system. This initiative, innovative initiative will help serve patients more quickly. We are also building and expanding our health workforce to better meet Saskatchewan residents' need for health care services. This includes training, recruiting, and retaining more doctors and nurses and improving health care environments.

I must speak a little bit about what the members opposite are saying with respect to the residents' — I don't know how to call it — study session that's happening today. Contracts, negotiations — and I speak from experience on this, Mr. Speaker — contracts taking a term or a time to get resolved, to get to bring successful resolution and a win-win for both parties, it does take time. And in no way, and in no way does a negotiation or one that is taking some time, Mr. Speaker, does that indicate a lack of respect. And in fact this government has an incredible amount of respect for the health care workers, for the residents, for the physicians in this province.

We value opportunities to review other organizations' survey information about health care systems. The Fraser Institute's report is one perspective, a part of a bigger picture. The report

shows information from a small number of Saskatchewan specialists. And this information is supplied of course on a voluntary basis and is largely opinion. However, the institute's data does provide insight about the experiences of surgeons and patients in various surgical specialties. We can learn some valuable things from the report. The more information sources we have at our disposal, the more informed our decisions will be.

Our Patient First Review and the subsequent Saskatchewan Surgical Initiative is helping us make changes based on patient input and patient experiences. The goal, Mr. Speaker, is to transform our surgical care system. In other words, status quo is not on.

Just a few of the projects under way, Mr. Speaker: third party delivery of day surgery within the public system, again provided by the Omni Centre in Regina and the Surgicentre in Saskatoon. Specialist directory — this is intended and hopefully this is exactly what patients will find — helping patients work with family doctors to see who has the shortest wait times for referral and surgery and identify the most appropriate surgeon.

Patient pathway streamlines care for people considering hip or knee replacements. Surgical safety checklists provide province-wide implementation. Surgical information system computerizes hospital, operating room scheduling process, and supply management. Releasing the time to care, and we know we are hearing this from health care providers across the province, frees up ward staff to spend more time with patients by improving efficiencies.

Mr. Speaker, we have committed \$5 million in funding to the SHRF [Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation]. It will be used specifically to fund clinical trials focusing on the liberation procedure. And I know my colleague, in the presentation that he made a few minutes ago, spoke quite extensively about that. But I want to move on from that. He has covered most of what I would want to cover.

We have committed 3.5 million for physician recruitment strategy and establishment of physician recruitment agency, which will address the shortage of physicians in many communities. And this is but one part of it, Mr. Speaker. We have hired Edward Mantler, CEO [chief executive officer], for the physician recruitment agency.

Three hundred registered nurse education seats have been created. Sask trained nurses are more likely to stay and work here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, my time is coming to an end. I want to wrap up by saying we will hold steady and help bring unprecedented positive change for the benefit . . .

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

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I think that the members opposite brought this motion today especially for me, because this week is the ninth anniversary of the announcement of the action plan for Saskatchewan health which has formed the framework for

the health system over the past nine years.

And, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of new members, especially on the government side, who don't actually know the history of that action plan. And so, Mr. Speaker, if they go back and look, many of the things that they or the Minister of Health crow about actually come out of the plans that were laid and the foundation that was laid. And in this legislature and in this province, it's much more important to look back and work with what governments have done, whether they're of your persuasion or not, and build on that. What we've seen for the last three years is a direct attack on all kinds of things, which has not helped, but especially in this area.

So, Mr. Speaker, when I was taking a look at this particular motion, I thought it would be informative to take a look at the 2007 budget. Now we were being very careful. We had a budget of \$7.8 billion, and we had to sort of step back and not do a lot of things that we wanted to do. But one of the things that we had in that budget was the surgical information system — which the Premier was crowing about, you know, an hour or so ago — which was to automate the delivery of surgical services within the province. And, Mr. Speaker, much of what has been talked about by the Minister of Health as it relates to the surgical initiative comes directly out of that work, which then previously comes out of the action plan.

Now what we know is that in the next year there were huge amounts of revenue, and so that the budget actually increased to \$10 billion in one year. But unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan haven't seen the benefit of that money, and they're not certain where it goes.

Now one of the issues then becomes, what is the problem dealing with surgical issues in Saskatchewan right now? Well one of the issues frankly, if you talk to the people involved in the system, is that the government has spent way more money than they're taking in. And so they've gone back and tried to budget and cut back.

[12:15]

But one of the ways that you cut back is you hold the line on the regional health authorities. You hold the line on various contracts. And what do we get? Well we get situations where contracts aren't being signed with the workers. We get regional health authorities that have to effectively manage within their means. We get money being borrowed, but borrowed in agencies and other places. We get the Amicus deal, which is off line borrowing which is going to show up in other places.

Now I'm especially curious listening to the Minister of Health. And I have a great deal of difficulty understanding a lot of his comments. But I thought it would be helpful to take a look at the 2007 budget and the four-year capital plan, and what the plans were in that budget.

Basically in that year the Cypress Regional Hospital — that's in Swift Current — was to be built. It was completed. The Outlook integrated facility was to be completed; the Ile-a-la-Crosse integrated facility was to be completed. And they were. The maternal and newborn care centre was continued budget to be completed, and this was just completed

in October of 2010. The Moosomin facility was to be completed. That's been done. The ground floor development at Royal University Hospital, that's been done.

The Maidstone integrated facility — I know the member from that area will be pleased about that — it was scheduled to be completed. The Preeceville integrated facility was scheduled to be completed. The Humboldt integrated facility was on schedule to go ahead. The Saskatoon mental health, which has now been completed; that was in this one. The Oliver Lodge, which we just heard about a few weeks ago, it was in here to be completed. The addition at Hudson Bay, that was to be dealt with and completed. And the moving of the MRI into the new Academic Health Sciences building, the initial work on that was to start.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when I go through that list and compare that with the Minister of Health and all of the announcements that he's made about work that he's done in the health care system, I think this covers it all. So it was all part of the four-year plan before the government that we have now was in place.

Then I start trying to figure out, well are there other projects that have been completed or started? And the answer is, not many. There's a few places where there's some dirt been dug, but other than that there aren't anything that's not on this list.

Mr. Speaker, we have a government that had a balanced budget presented to them, with cash in the bank. They ended up trying to meet the needs of a number of different groups. They spent all the money, increased our budget from the \$7.8 billion to the \$10 billion level, and now they're still operating in a deficit situation. I think this year we're already up at the \$10.5 billion expenditure.

And what's happening is that they didn't budget and plan to deal with the health contracts, with the health services people, all of the people who provide the main structure, support — the cleaning and the cooked food and those things — within the health care system. And they haven't provided for the doctors. They haven't provided for the interns and residents.

And so what we have, Mr. Speaker, is a situation where they went with great optimism, with lots of plans to sort of continue with the work that we laid out nine years ago this week, and frankly I think we were quite pleased that that was their intention. But all of a sudden, by making an arrangement with the nurses, they've satisfied one small group, maybe even given them a little more money than might have been necessary at that point, and effectively caused problems right across the board.

What do we hear this week, Mr. Speaker? The teachers are having a hard time getting a contract because of, once again, of this nursing contract and the standard that it set there. All these things come back on to this whole issue of surgical care and the kind of work that's being done.

Now in 2007 we had the money set forward in a mid-year statement that would allow for the building of a surgicentre in Saskatoon, a surgicentre in Regina. And these things would have been within the regional health authorities' management and would have provided the kinds of services that are being

now contracted out by this group. When you talk with the people within the regional health authorities, they say they would prefer that method.

What we know is in the city of Winnipeg, they ended up — and quite a number of years ago — with a surgical centre, a privately run one. Eventually it was purchased by the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and now is run as part of their system. It ends up working very well in providing the day surgery support.

So the concepts are there, but it's important that they be managed and run within the system.

Mr. Speaker, when we see the kinds of problems that arise, it also reflects a certain attitude by some of the members who are now in government who were too many years in opposition. And I know one of my colleagues talked about . . . It's very similar to a situation where you have people who are involved in very difficult management decisions around how we use the people's money, and you have a three-year-old who's playing with the matches of management, and they start a fire, and they don't know how to put it out. And instead of sort of owning up and saying, well I started the fire, they point fingers around at their 16-year-old brother and say, well they should have, you know, prevented me from doing this.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we've been trying hard to tell these people that it takes a very careful management of the funds and making sure you don't do things unless you know you can pay for them. And, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to surgery and health care, many of the people in the province are realizing that the funds have disappeared, and these people in government are not able to manage.

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, listening very attentively to the member opposite talk about the three-year-old with matches . . . Well if he's equating that with the current Sask Party government, I would suggest their 16-year-old government or brother was an arsonist that went around burning down 52 hospitals around rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. That's the kind of respect they had for health care in rural Saskatchewan.

The member for Saskatoon Eastview says, the nurses tell us everything. Well they would have told them before 2007 and the NDP did nothing about that message.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. The 65-minute debate has elapsed. I recognize the member from Moose Jaw North.

Mr. Michelson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow recently wrote that the issue of private versus public health care is not the actual issue. Well, Mr. Speaker, we couldn't agree more. To the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow: if the private versus public is not the actual issue, then why does your party lobby hard against any and every innovation that would improve the delivery of health care services for the people of the province?

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

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, you can go back a number of years and look at Five Hills Health Region in the city of Moose Jaw, my community, Mr. Speaker. So I've paid close attention to it, and the member from Moose Jaw North should also.

There has been year after year where the professionals and the health care people and professionals in the city of Moose Jaw have worked hard to manage the resources, initiated a number of new programs to do with rearranging workplaces, rearranging time schedules that have paid dividends not only to the patients in Five Hills, but we have picked up extra surgeries from the city of Regina. Mr. Speaker, there is ample opportunity for the public system to address the issues that are out there if this government will quit hog-tying them, give them the proper resources, and let them do the job they're trained to do.

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

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the member from Northwest. He read an elaborate statement on how much work the Saskatoon Health District had done on reducing their surgical wait-lists and wait times. And they had done that. This was in May. They had shown that with the proper amount of money, the correct funding, they could actually do more surgeries. There is capacity in the public system.

So, Mr. Speaker, my question to the member from Saskatoon is, you've cut the funding for the health district this year — they got less than they needed — and you're telling them zero growth for next year. What's your message to the public system? Don't bother doing it? We want the private system to do it?

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

Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, recent poll came out that Saskatchewan was leading the country, leading the country in health care satisfaction. We've provided more doctors, more nurses, more health care professionals, and more residents into the system, Mr. Speaker. The government opposite when they were in power closed 52 rural hospitals, Mr. Speaker. This government's committed to advancing health care in Saskatchewan. We inherited a huge deficit which we're addressing, Mr. Speaker.

The College of Medicine, the College of Medicine almost lost its accreditation. I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, my father immigrated to this country in 1952 to become the new first head of the department of anesthesia. And in 2002 when that college almost lost its accreditation, the people that built the college . . . It was disrespectful to the people that built that college and disrespectful to the people of Saskatoon. Mr. Speaker, this government has worked very, very hard to help advance the interest of health . . .

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

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member from Saskatoon Eastview just said today in her speech, study sessions unprecedented and haven't happened in decades. Well in the Regina *Leader-Post* on May 15th, 2003, it states:

"We are going back to the negotiating table with a creative final solution for this situation. What happens will depend totally on the department's response and Health Minister John Nilson and cabinet's response to the proposal," said Saskatchewan Medical Association (SMA) president Dr. Joel Yelland.

The SMA, which claims it didn't orchestrate the study sessions, said the doctors were acting independently. However, Yelland promised "further political action will unfold Friday morning depending on the government's response."

Mr. Speaker, to the member from Saskatoon Eastview: will she rise and take back her earlier remarks now that they have been found to be false or will she . . .

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

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, doctors are organizing rotating study sessions in this province which we have not seen for a very long time. They are actually initiating these study sessions in response to the lack of response from the Sask Party government, the disrespect they are feeling.

And their quotes are pretty clear. Every time they have been talked about, about this, they are very clear about why they're doing it. This is about the Sask Party's response to no contract for two years. And this is what they're doing. They're actually bringing their members out into study sessions; surgeries are being cancelled; visits are being cancelled. This is something that the doctors have felt necessary to do, and it hasn't been seen for a very long time.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the member from Biggar. Has the member from Biggar informed his constituents about the special deal that his government has made with the people at Amicus and how it affects the project that they have locally, where they have to raise their 35 per cent of their hospital project?

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The citizens of Biggar constituency's so happy and proud that they were given one of the 13 long-term care homes that was announced. And as I mentioned in my member's statement yesterday, there was a fundraiser. Knights of Columbus held a fundraiser, and there were thousands of dollars that were raised to go towards the community's share of the long-term care facility.

The member opposite refers to a pilot project that's being done in Saskatoon and the issue around that. There's going to be 100 beds. The pilot project also includes the spouses are going to be able to live with their spouses regardless of what level of dependency they're on, live with their spouses in the new facility in Saskatoon. It's a pilot project. By our accounts it's going to be a great success, and we're looking forward to having all 13 new long-term care homes being built in the near future.

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

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member from Moose Jaw Wakamow dismissed the very real increased cost of health care as merely an appearance. In her infinite wisdom, she went to suggest that the solution to health care can be seen in jacking up personal and corporate income tax rates for Saskatchewan. To the member from Regina Lakeview: do you believe that the solution to the Saskatchewan health care is an increase in personal and corporate income taxes?

[12:30]

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

Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, that member, the only answer to everything is to reduce taxes. Give me a break. There is a role for government, and there is a role for people in this province to contribute to health care.

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

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the member from Wascana Plains. Given the fact that the surgicentre that they promised after the election in '07 was scheduled for Regina and now Regina has no ability within the public system to do any more surgeries, so they say . . . Although I'm hearing that there's capacity within their system as well. This year's budget from the Sask Party government has decreased funding to Regina Health District, and they've been told zero growth for next year. So you're actually starving the public system to let the private system take over. What is the member telling her constituents about that?

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Wascana Plains.

Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to draw to the member's attention that health care spending in the province has received a bump up of 3 per cent in this fiscal year, Mr. Speaker, more surgeries performed and fewer people on the wait-list. Mr. Speaker, we are, as I said earlier, we're taking that status quo and using it as a springboard to moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, we have lots more work to do. But I'm going to speak again to the hip and knee pathway showing results — 69 per cent of hip replacements done in six months.

Mr. Speaker, we are moving our health care system forward, and the people of Saskatchewan in the Angus Reid poll

obviously agree with us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I know why the NDP keep complaining about more doctor training seats, 120. Mr. Speaker, they keep complaining about more residency training, 120 seats; more nurses training, Mr. Speaker, 565. It's because they didn't get the training done. They left training for doctors at 60 seats. Nurses, they cut back to 165, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, they succeeded . . . This government is . . . They failed. This government has . . . They succeeded in cutting the training seats, Mr. Speaker. This government is succeeding. When, to the member of Regina Lakeview, when will the NDP get over their envy of success of this government?

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

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to answer this as the minister of Health, which the member still thinks I am. But, Mr. Speaker, the plans for the medical school were to be increased over a number of years, the nursing ones — all of those things were being done. The money . . .

[Interjections]

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 615 — *The Seniors' Bill of Rights Act*

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

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to rise and do second reading on *An Act Respecting Seniors' Rights*. The Bill actually, given that a private member's Bill can have no money attached to it, this Bill is based on principles. And the Bill says, whereas freedom from poverty is a human right enshrined by the United Nations, and citizens are entitled to social and economic security, many seniors live on fixed incomes, and many seniors are victims of abuse — physical, emotional, and financial.

Therefore the Bill is asking that we enact a seniors' bill of rights. And the definition of senior is any person 65 or older. But the bill of rights says that:

Every senior in Saskatchewan should have the following rights:

the right to freedom, independence and individual initiative in planning and managing their own lives;

the right to access viable, affordable and cost-effective services and programs that are molded by the principles

of strengthening independence, affirming dignity and expanding choice;

the right to be able to remain in their communities and in their homes with a support of community-based, long-term care services;

the right to a system where long-term care needs are met, regardless of income, in a culturally and linguistically a sensitive way as those needs change over time;

the right of access to public and private services, allowing aging in place where possible;

the right to transition between the various forms of long-term care with minimal disruption and maximum attention to quality of life;

the right to an opportunity to choose a healthy lifestyle and be supported in this choice by effective, culturally appropriate programs designed to foster health and wellness without regard to economic status;

the right to protection from abuse, neglect and exploitation in the community and in health care settings;

the right of consumer empowerment to make informed quality of life decisions;

the right to be fully informed of all programs and benefits, financial and otherwise, available to seniors including the criteria, amounts and conditions of the programs and benefits.

In accordance with *The Tabling of Documents Act, 1991*, the President of Executive Council or designate shall account to the Legislative Assembly each year the number of seniors who are not able to access the rights set out in . . . [this Bill].

Mr. Speaker, many seniors' associations have written and contacted me about the Bill. It's been out since last spring, and they are very, very pleased with this Bill. They understand that the money cannot be put into a Bill, but they do want the principles of the Bill enshrined in legislation. There's the Council on Aging, the Seniors Mechanism, the Saskatchewan Seniors Association. All have an opinion on what this government needs to do to address the needs of seniors, and those needs are very, very significant, Mr. Speaker.

I've been rising every day, bringing petitions in this last little while from the Saskatchewan Seniors Association that runs the seniors' centres around the province. And as I've said, most of them are in rural Saskatchewan, and I visited many of them, Mr. Speaker. And their concern is that without some influx of money from the government . . . And they have asked. They've asked last year, and they're asking again now that some amount of money is put forward for these associations to keep open.

And as I said in my petition and again today, most of them are in rural Saskatchewan. Seniors have a place to gather to either have health programs or workshops or other initiatives that keep them busy. It's a place to socialize. It's a place to have

some of the health programs that the district can run through the seniors' centres, like foot care. And many of the seniors rely on those for their outings.

Now the ones we visited, Mr. Speaker, some of them are saying they can't turn the heat on. Well if you can't turn the heat on, you're not going to have seniors coming. You can't provide any services there if you can't have heat. Right now they'll all be shut if they can't have their heat on. And rising heat costs, rising taxes, rising maintenance costs — a lot of those centres are not being able to raise the money because a lot of the people that are in those centres relied on money from initiatives that seniors would do themselves, say bake sales or other activities. Many of them, the seniors, are not able to do that any more.

So we still need the services in rural Saskatchewan, but we're not getting any funding for it. So they're asking for about three hundred-and-some thousand dollars a year to keep the 180 seniors' centres open, which will in fact benefit the main health system because those seniors will be healthier longer, and they will not come into the long-term care system. They may not need home care. So I think it's a very good investment in our seniors.

The thing that the Council on Aging . . . They have presented a brief, and I think many of their recommendations capture pretty much everything that we need to see done for seniors. A lot of seniors are . . . they're living independently, and they want to continue to live that way. We don't have adequate home care services. In fact when Nokomis . . . It was announced by the Saskatoon Health District that Nokomis would lose its lab services. And the doctor there said if Nokomis loses their lab services, he can't practise. So the health district said they would revisit that, and they would probably continue their lab services there. But they were going to have to look at home care services because they have to find the money somewhere. So home care is going to be looked at, and I would assume there'll be reductions in home care.

Well that isn't going to help the objective of keeping seniors living independently and in their homes. Many, many seniors prefer of course to live in their homes, but they need the supports that the government and the community can give them so they can do this.

We do need a shift in priorities because many seniors are telling us, we're not really all that interested in the illness model. We need to have something that looks at how do we keep healthier longer. And that's what the senior centres are doing. That's what home care will do for them.

That's what walking paths . . . There's one in Eastview. There's a walking path. There's a primary health centre in Eastview that deals with a lot of seniors' issues. Seniors can walk into the primary health centre. It's attached to Scott, Forget tower, so seniors can go down to the primary health centre in their housecoat and slippers if they have to. And the nurse from there, the nurse practitioner, she visits all the seniors' complexes around there with appointments on certain days so that she can actually service that whole area.

That is a model that is working extremely well, and seniors are very happy to see that. It keeps them close to their community.

It has services close to their community. It limits the necessity for them to get on the bus or in a taxi and travel to a doctor's office somewhere or to a clinic somewhere where they would have to have tests and procedures done.

And I think that, as the Council on Aging talks about, we need to talk about what keeps seniors healthy. And seniors at 65 aren't the ones we're talking about or hearing the most about from the government. We're hearing most about the long-term care. And the seniors that the Council on Aging represent and the Seniors Mechanism and the Saskatchewan Seniors Association, these are active seniors who want things in place so they can continue to be active and continue to contribute to society and continue to participate in many of the things that they enjoy.

So just to focus on long-term care needs in the province is a very narrow view of what seniors need. And they do feel as if they've been abandoned. They do feel that no one's paying attention, and we've heard that quite clearly. We need to have some policies in government that actually reflect this independent living, the ability of seniors to participate in their communities, the ability to enjoy living in their own homes, and with affordable housing.

The issue of affordable housing is significant for seniors. Many seniors are living on fixed incomes. And the increase in utility rates which is happening on a regular basis, I've had seniors come into my office and tell me that they don't turn on their stove, so they don't cook. They don't turn on their lights. They're choosing to take their medication half of what they should take or every second day instead of every day. I've even heard them say they're starting to sell their grave plots.

Like this is a serious issue for seniors who don't have the ability to afford living in a home that they've had for 40, 50 years. They can't afford the taxes any more. We've done nothing to address the issue of how seniors are able to afford to live in their own homes, let alone the whole issue of where do they go next — into affordable housing. We don't have . . . We have long-term care. We have some seniors' low-income housing, but not enough.

But there's a gap in there where the seniors in affordable housing or low-income housing can't get into long-term care, and the criteria for long-term care, Mr. Speaker, is absolutely ridiculous. People who simply can't even move, who are a danger to themselves and their spouses and anybody else in their complex are being left in their homes because they can't qualify. They don't qualify to meet the definition of long-term care that this government has put in place now. And people that are left in those situations, they have one option. They can go into personal care, and the personal care homes costs them money, and they don't have that money.

So they're coming and saying, what do we do? We don't have the money. Are we going to end up sleeping outside? They're going to be homeless. We're going to have seniors who are homeless. And I don't know, Mr. Speaker, how we're going to deal with that because that is becoming an issue that people simply cannot . . . They're wandering. They need to have 24-hour attention but they can't afford it. So how are we going to deal with seniors who we see sleeping on park benches?

We have an issue of seniors who are gambling, who are gambling away their life savings because no one's watching them. We have banks who see seniors taking out vast amounts of money on a daily basis, and there's no way to trigger a look at this or trigger the family to be notified until there's no money. And the family comes because there's no money, and mom or dad can't pay their rent. Now the family gets to look at it. But what are we doing to protect seniors from that kind of abuse?

The seniors who have been diagnosed with dementia have been told they don't qualify for long-term care but have spent all their money at a VLT [video lottery terminal], and nobody's watching. There's no way to actually police this or to empower banks to ask the family to step in and look.

We have privacy laws that are put in place to protect people's privacy, which is understandable. But once somebody's been diagnosed with dementia or is displaying symptoms like that, there should be some way to be a bit flexible so that we can protect some of the people from losing their money like this. There's been suggestions that we use some of the money that's collected from these VLTs to help seniors in their affordable housing because they are a lot of the ones who are losing the money. And that's an interesting suggestion, Mr. Speaker.

And we do have in Saskatchewan, in fact I've been told I have the highest concentration of seniors in the country in my riding. I have many, many, many seniors' complexes and nursing homes and a lot of seniors still living in their own homes. So I do feel a real affinity to seniors' issues, and I do spend a lot of time talking to seniors.

And the ones who are in the care homes or the affordable housing that's in Eastview area, they're quite happy. It's the ones who can't get in there, the ones who are now coming with these issues of affordability, of issues about how come they can't meet the criteria for long-term care when they clearly cannot stay on their own — they're a danger to themselves and to people around them.

[12:45]

And what the Council on Aging also says is that we really do need to have a better image of seniors, and this ageism is sort of an underlying theme. When people only talk about long-term care, then we see people thinking of seniors as needing care and having to go in and have all these things done for them. They forget to see the senior from 65 on who's active, who wants to stay active, who wants to stay in the community, wants to stay in their home. So there is that issue of ageism that the Council on Aging is very, very keen that we do something to deal with. And they call it an almost outright discrimination that strips people of their rightful place in society based on their age alone. So I think this is something we should not ignore.

When we talk about seniors, we have to talk about a wide variety of issues that face seniors from 65 on. That's our definition. So we should look at what affects them all and not just when they finally can qualify for long-term care, which many of them don't even qualify, end up not being able to get into long-term care ever. They're actually falling through the cracks in the system, Mr. Speaker.

We don't have a secretariat any more, a seniors' secretariat where we had specific attention paid to seniors' issues. We actually had a policy lens that would look at seniors' issues and policies that are developed around seniors' programs. We don't have one point of intake so that people can go to one place and know that they can get the information. We've lost all that. And I think that that's another thing that seniors are very concerned about and would like to see addressed.

We do not have, as I said, any way for people who have high needs to get into personal care homes. There is that huge gap in the system where we don't have any assistance for people who simply can't afford to go there. And it really creates an extreme hardship for people on low income. Now they're starting to decide they can't afford to turn on their lights and they can't afford to turn on their stove. Heaven only knows what they're buying for groceries. And I certainly know the damage that's going to be caused in the way they take their medications.

So we really have to have some attention paid to what we do, what we offer seniors in that gap between assisted living and long-term care, especially if our criteria for long-term care continues to get tighter and tighter and tighter. And as I said, most people want to live in their own home.

Another interesting thing that the Council on Aging brought up, and I hadn't actually thought of this, there is no shelter for abused older adults. There are no shelters. The shelters that we have in this system deal with mostly women and children leaving abusive situations, and they're not viewed by older women as anything that meets their needs. So the Council on Aging says there are also no shelters accessible to older women with functional limitations — so anybody who's disabled or needs walkers or wheelchairs. And there is no provision for any personal care or assistive services in those shelters.

And there are no resources whatsoever for abused older men. There is nowhere for them to go. And I visited recently, Mr. Speaker, the Salvation Army shelter or home in Saskatoon on Avenue B or C. Very interesting to actually see how men are living in Saskatoon and what they're living with. So I found this an extremely interesting comment, that there are no shelters for abused older men.

And I'm not talking physical violence. The abuse that happens to seniors, many times it's financial; many times it's emotional. And I know the federal government is doing some work with advertising about trying to encourage people to report it, to actually not tolerate it. So the abuse of older men is not what we traditionally think of as physical. For women usually it's physical, but there's certainly a lot of women who are being targeted by phone scams and even by relatives that they should be able to trust. But for older men, there is nothing. And that's actually a very interesting comment.

Now seniors also have no . . . There's no assistance for seniors in their property tax. We're one of the few provinces who do nothing for that. And I think seniors with the goal of staying home in their own home . . . Seniors have owned those homes for many, many years, have paid them off, but their property taxes keep rising. And there's nothing that meets those needs. So we really do see that there are several, several things that need to be done.

What we do have is . . . Like I said, the abuse of the older adult is something that is extremely, extremely disturbing. When I hear the story about the person who's gambled all their, all their money away, and no one's been able to get in there, I wonder what you can do to protect people from these sorts of things. And that is a financial abuse in itself.

And I know there's all kinds of other abuse that's happening to older adults from their family members, from telephone scams. Many of the things that we have seen on TV, hopefully that will help raise public awareness and stop, at least stop the telephone scams if not stop the families from abusing the adults. And I know Nova Scotia has done a lot of work on seniors. They've got a policy handbook and a guide for developing and evaluating policies and programs.

We have lost all of our ability to look at seniors' programs. We had an advisory committee for seniors. Actually when I was the minister responsible for seniors, we had an advisory committee compiled of older persons that would look at different issues and then advise the minister. We don't have any of that any more. We don't have any ability to hear from seniors. They can present briefs, but I know one group was told by the Minister of Health that he was pretty busy and so hadn't had time to be doing this. That's a pretty dismissive thing to say to people and it certainly does speak to how much importance this government puts on seniors' issues.

So the purpose of the Bill, Mr. Speaker, was to raise the awareness of all of us about seniors' issues and the rights that we think, certainly as the NDP opposition think, that seniors should have enshrined in law, that these rights are theirs. And then we think that policies should be developed that strengthen or promote or enhance those rights. So all of our policies that are developed from the government should be, should be dealt with, looking at what is best for the senior. We should look at having a central part, a central place in government where seniors' issues can be dealt with specifically to their issues and to their population.

We also need to have, like I said, a seniors' lens, which I thought was interesting. We talk about that in women's issues, a gender lens. Now we're looking at a seniors' lens and I think that that's a very . . . a seniors' policy lens. And I think that's a very good thing to be looking at because we're having, as I said before, a huge increase in seniors coming in our population — not only in Canada, but in Saskatchewan in particular. And I think many of the issues facing seniors about income, about housing, about utility rates, about property taxes, about accessible programs, about ability to find out what's going on and what's available for them, as well as adequate and appropriate long-term care facilities, we need to have all of that, all of that into our policies.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think looking at this Bill, the intent as I said was to put in principle, put into legislation the principles that we have, that we all agree on and all believe in, and that we find some way to actually give seniors a voice in saying, I am not getting this; I am not being served well. And have some way of recognizing that they do have legitimate concerns and they do have the right to all the things I read at the beginning of my second reading speech.

And I know, Mr. Speaker, my time is getting short and I do have to read the motion at the end and make a motion to one . . . It is, the Bill is 610. So I want to make sure that we have time for that because many seniors . . . I'm going to speak actually in a few minutes at a seniors' Christmas party. They've had the seniors' bill of rights for a few months. They've passed it around to all of their members and people who come in there. The Saskatchewan Seniors Association, as you've seen in the many, many, many hundreds of people from all over the province — I've read so many of their communities — that they're all really very interested in this.

The seniors' centres are a key part of the health of the seniors, especially in rural Saskatchewan. People really do want to see this government act on that, and they need to have some indication that that's a serious concern.

They were turned down last year when they asked, and now again they're asking for I think it's around \$300,000 that would keep the seniors' centres open. And that I think is pretty cheap, Mr. Speaker, considering all the things that will happen to seniors who won't have this access to programs, workshops, and a place to socialize and to visit with their friends.

A lot of times seniors are victims of loneliness and isolation. And seniors' centres are a very, very good place for them to go to visit with their friends, to keep abreast of what's happening in the community, and to also have some of the programs that the health districts run through them.

Now I think that when we talk about loneliness, we also have to talk about transportation. Many times we heard about how seniors are isolated and how they can't get out and what they need in transportation. That's something I haven't even talked about, Mr. Speaker. But many of the things that we have and would expect to see for seniors come through these very good agencies who work on behalf of seniors, like the Council on Aging in Saskatoon, the Seniors Mechanism here in Regina, and the Saskatchewan Seniors Association working on behalf of seniors' centres.

Those people are all volunteers, pretty much all volunteers, but they're active seniors who are very, very interested and concerned about the lives of seniors and making the lives of seniors better. The work that they do is amazing, and I think that we can't thank them enough. Their volunteers are truly amazing, and they have a wide, wide base of volunteers. And I'm looking forward to meeting many of them this afternoon when I go to speak to them at their Christmas party.

And I think that I would like to be able to tell them — I'm certainly going to be showing them the *Hansard* — I certainly would like to be able to tell them when this Bill comes back again that all of the members of this House supported a seniors' bill of rights; that we all agree in principle with the principles that were defined in the Bill; that seniors do have a right to all the things I read in at the beginning of my speech.

So I think that we really do need to make sure that as the legislature here, as members of this legislature, we send that message to seniors, that despite what we do disagree on in this House — we have valid and legitimate disagreements — we do have a common concern about the rights and privileges of

seniors; and that we do have a concern for them and that we do have a commitment to actually work to make their lives better and recognize the many, many years of service and commitment that they've given to Saskatchewan; and that they really do deserve our respect and our attention, and they do really deserve the commitment that this Bill will give them.

So, Mr. Speaker, given that, I now move second reading of Bill No. 615, *The Seniors' Bill of Rights Act*.

The Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Eastview has moved second reading of Bill No. 615, *The Seniors' Bill of Rights Act*. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise on this particular issue because it is an important issue. The member opposite talked about seniors sleeping in the streets. If that is the case, Mr. Speaker — and I've seen no evidence of it — that's because those members did not provide any additional long-term care beds. It seems to be a surprise to them that people actually aged and became seniors.

I have a lot more to say about this particular Bill, Mr. Speaker, and I will at a later date. So at this time I would move that we adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — The member from Cannington has moved adjournment of debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried. I recognize the member from Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be rising to move adjournment, but before that I would ask leave to make a brief statement to the House concerning our recess.

The Speaker: — The member from Cannington has asked for leave to make a statement regarding the Christmas season and adjournment. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cannington.

MOTIONS

House Adjournment

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, before I move adjournment of the House, I would like to take the opportunity to wish all members of the Assembly and all residents of this province a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, Mr. Speaker.

The conclusion of the fall sitting of this legislature gives us an opportunity to express our gratitude to the many people that make it possible for the members to carry out their duties in this legislature. First, Mr. Speaker, our spouses and our families for their support, their patience, and their perspectives, Mr.

Speaker, which they often provide to us.

Mr. Speaker, a thank you to our respective staffs, both here in the legislature and our staff in the constituency office, Mr. Speaker. Without their support, without their due diligence, our work as elected members would be significantly restricted. And they allow us to talk and meet with the constituents across the province.

[13:00]

I'd like to also thank and wish a Merry Christmas to the staff of the legislature, Mr. Speaker; Journals and Hansard; the Speaker's office; the Clerks and their staff; the Pages, who did an excellent job; the Sergeant-at-Arms; visitor services; and the various other staff around the building, financial services; maintenance; and the cafeteria, Mr. Speaker.

On behalf of the government members I would also like to take the opportunity to thank the Opposition House Leader and the opposition members for their co-operation in this session. We managed to complete and pass a number of significant pieces of legislation, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to thank the opposition for their co-operation.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to also wish Merry Christmas and a thank you to our constituents and thank them for the honour of being able to represent them in the Saskatchewan legislature.

As the new year approaches and we reflect on the year that has passed, we know that 2010 saw significant progress within our province, but also some hardships, Mr. Speaker, especially the many farm families in rural Saskatchewan that were affected by flooding and the people across the province with all the storms whose homes and businesses were also flooded, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, over the next few weeks we shall share in the joy and fellowship of this Christmas season, and we will keep those families and all the families in our province in our minds, of those who are less fortunate, Mr. Speaker.

In closing, I would like to once again thank you, Mr. Speaker, and all the members of the Legislative Assembly and wish them a very Merry Christmas and a healthy and Happy New Year, 2011. With that, Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Before placing the question, I would recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would ask leave to just make a few comments about Christmas as well, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The Opposition House Leader has asked for leave to make a few comments regarding the season. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like

to join with the Government House Leader in wishing a Merry Christmas to all members of the Assembly and our families, Mr. Speaker, but more importantly, to the people of the province of Saskatchewan. This is a very special time of year for families, a time when families get the opportunity to get together to share some special time and of course, Mr. Speaker, to reflect upon the meaning of Christmas.

Mr. Speaker, I'd be remiss also if I didn't thank the many people who make our jobs easier — those who work in our offices, those who work in the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker, those who work at various roles in support of doing our jobs, Mr. Speaker. And there are some that spend long hours and are very flexible to meet the needs of the members — those who work in the office of the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker, those who work in Hansard, and those who are Pages who go out of their way to make our lives easier, Mr. Speaker. There are many, many people in this building who work very, very hard on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan to ensure that this Assembly operates and functions and delivers for the people of Saskatchewan the policies and procedures that provide the services to them across our province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this has been a very fulfilling session in many ways. We've had the opportunity to debate very serious issues to the people of Saskatchewan, the opportunity to look and examine the services of which the people of Saskatchewan rely upon, Mr. Speaker. And that's our role as members of the legislature.

So, Mr. Speaker, at this time I would like to just take the opportunity to thank all members and those staff who work in this building for their hard work over the last several months and to wish everybody a very Merry Christmas across the province of Saskatchewan and all the members and employees of this Assembly. And have a very happy holiday season.

The Speaker: — Before acknowledging that we're now past 1 p.m., the Speaker would like to as well extend his wishes and greetings to the members. But first of all, a thank you to the Clerks who serve us at the table: Mr. Putz, Ms. Lang, and our Law Clerk, Mr. Ring. Acknowledging the work of the Pages who've served us this fall session: Laura, Alana, Sydney, Kayla, Quinn, and Tristan, we want to say thank you so you. To the staff in the Speaker's office who certainly have been an asset to the Speaker as well: Irene, Kathy, and Anna, thank you so much.

And without going through the full list, as well acknowledging the work, as both the House leaders have already mentioned, the staff of the Legislative Assembly, those staff members who make our job and our duties much easier to perform. As well I would like to say a special thank you to the House leaders, the Whips, and the caucus Chairs, and the leaders of the two political parties for their involvement, their support, their words at different times of just bringing the Speaker to attention. I think by co-operating together it makes it a lot more easier for the Assembly to work together. So I thank you for your thoughts and your input.

At this time I want to extend my best for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. And we look forward to seeing you in the spring. And being past the hour of adjournment, this Assembly

stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m., March the 7th, 2011.

[The Assembly adjourned at 13:06.]

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