



FOURTH SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

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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: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With us today we have a large contingency of teachers joining their Assembly. I can't of course introduce them all by their names nor do I know all of their names. But we know we have a large number of teachers joining us today. We want to welcome them to their Assembly and thank them for the great work that they do in the classrooms with our future of our province, which is the students. Thank you.

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

Mr. Broten: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to extend a special welcome to the thousands of teachers who I met on the steps of the legislature this morning to express their concerns and to add a special welcome to the many teachers who have filled the galleries here in the Assembly. We want to thank them for the important work they do around the year in every community throughout Saskatchewan, and we want to thank them for putting the interests of students first.

I would like to make a special welcome to Steve Allen, president of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, as well as Shelly Tootoosis, incoming assistant general secretary. If they're not in the Speaker's gallery, I'm sure they're filing in with others as we speak. So, Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members to join me in welcoming all these teachers to the Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Lloydminster, the minister responsible for Crown corps.

Hon. Mr. McMillan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce a couple of people from my area of the province. It's rare we get people from the Northwest travelling this long distance. But today we have two people — if you could give us a wave — Whitney and Carlito. They are representatives of Newcap, the television station in Lloydminster. And in fact they have a program called *Around the Region*, which ties in newsmakers, places, and people and exciting things that are going on in our region, and is a great attribute in our community. And I appreciate their interest in the Saskatchewan legislature. So please help me welcome them to their legislature.

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

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today too to welcome all the teachers to the Chamber here today in support of their action in terms of getting a fair collective bargaining process. I'd also like to, Mr. Speaker,

thank the many, many students that were outside today, some of which have joined us in the Chamber today. I'll single a few of them out. My daughter, Morgan Morin, is here as well as Bricanna Rotelick, who were here to support their teachers in getting a fair and respectful bargaining process as well as a fair and respectful collective agreement. So I want to thank all the students that came and joined their teachers today in the legislature and welcome them to the Chamber. Thank you.

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I too want to welcome all of the teachers that are in the gallery today and say that I listened very carefully to what teacher leaders had to say on the steps of the legislature. And I just want all of the teachers to know that I am extremely proud of my profession that is intelligent, articulate, and organized. I'll be leaving this Chamber in a couple of weeks, but I intend to return to my profession that made me very proud today.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud today to present a petition for the teachers. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to call on the government to immediately stop disrespecting Saskatchewan teachers and to return to the bargaining table with the willingness to bargain in good faith, thereby demonstrating that teachers are valued, respected, and central to the success of Saskatchewan's future.

And as in duty bound [Mr. Speaker] your petitioners will ever pray.

And the people that have signed the petition are from the city here. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order. I would ask our teachers to respect the rules and the procedures in the Legislative Chamber, and all those in the gallery. You're welcome to be here, but you're not to participate in any way, whether vocally or hand clapping. I'd ask your respect for those rules.

I recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in support of many of the people of the province who request that the government maintains quality health care services:

The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Saskatchewan humbly showeth that the Government of Saskatchewan ought to recognize the need for timely access to comprehensive and quality health care services for all communities within the province, including Wakaw and surrounding areas, and that the disruption of

emergency services and in-patient services at Wakaw Hospital will not serve the needs of the residents in this community and surrounding area; and

That the cuts in access to timely and accurate diagnostic and laboratory tests within the community of Wakaw and surrounding areas will also not serve the residents.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to commit to maintain quality health care services through the commitment of necessary funding to address critical retention and recruitment issues.

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

The petitions today are signed by many people from Regina, Young, Cudworth, Prince Albert, Muenster, Saskatoon, Wakaw, and Tisdale. I so present.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition in support of eliminating poverty in Saskatchewan. We know that freedom from poverty is an enshrined human right by the United Nations and that all citizens are entitled to social and economic security. And we know in Saskatchewan the income gap between the rich and the poor continues to grow, and now one in five children in Saskatchewan live in deepening poverty. And 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 Regina, Saskatoon, Unity, Martensville, North Battleford, Moose Jaw, and Nipawin. 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 from concerned constituents who live in the neighbourhood of Hampton Village, and it's about the need for a new elementary school:

We, the undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan, wish to bring to your attention the following: that Hampton Village is a rapidly growing community in Saskatoon with many young families; that Hampton Village residents pay a significant amount of taxes, including education property tax; that children in Hampton Village deserve to be able to attend school in their own community instead of travelling to neighbouring communities to attend schools that are typically already reaching capacity.

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan cause the provincial government to devote the necessary resources for the construction of an elementary school in Hampton Village so that children in this rapidly growing neighbourhood in Saskatoon can attend school in their own community.

Mr. Speaker, the individuals who signed this petition are residents of Hampton Village. I so present.

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

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise yet again to present a petition to restore funding equity to Regina Catholic schools. Mr. Speaker, Regina Catholic schools received less than \$275 per pupil less than Regina public schools, amounting to a funding inequity of \$2.7 million in total in the last fiscal year. And of course that total is growing, because there's been added inequity over the last year as well, Mr. Speaker. And this inequity, Mr. Speaker, affects Catholic schools all across the province. This funding inequity is placing program delivery and staffing levels at risk, and we're already seeing program cuts for the fall of 2011.

The Government of Saskatchewan has denied Catholic school boards in the province representation on the government-appointed committee mandated to develop a long-term funding formula for Saskatchewan school boards. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to address the funding inequity between Regina Catholic schools and Regina public schools that provides \$275 less per pupil funding for Regina Catholic school students, totalling \$2.7 million, and make known that the continuation for another school year of funding inequity places program delivery and staffing levels at risk in Regina Catholic schools; and in so doing, immediately restore funding equity to ensure that every student in Saskatchewan, whether enrolled in a Catholic or a public school, receives equitable resources to ensure every student in Saskatchewan has access to a quality education.

And, Mr. Speaker, these petitions are signed by the residents of Regina, Saskatoon, Muenster, Cut Knife, Battleford, Lloydminster, Maple Creek, Prince Albert, and Moose Jaw. I so present.

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

Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, I rise again today, as I have every day, to once again present a petition on behalf of residents of Saskatchewan concerned about the detrimental effects that Bill 160 will have on human rights law if enacted. And the prayer reads as follows:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan withdraw Bill 160 from consideration by the Legislative

Assembly of Saskatchewan and hold extensive public consultations informed by a public policy paper before any amendments to the Human Rights Code, the law that supersedes all others in our province, are even considered.

Today the petition is signed by residents of Regina, Prince Albert, Big River, Estevan, Shellbrook, Holbein, LeRoy, Humboldt, Saskatoon, Warman, Davidson, Christopher Lake, Zealandia, Moosomin, and Wynyard. And I so present.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, I rise once again to present petitions on behalf of concerned residents from across Saskatchewan as it relates to the mismanagement of our finances by the Sask Party. They allude to the record that includes the running of deficits and increasing of debt at times of record highs in revenues, in fact increasing debt by well over \$1.3 billion over the past three years, and the fact that we have these all-time highs in prosperity and revenues, and now claiming no money for teachers' contracts and other matters, Mr. Speaker.

And the prayer reads as follows:

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

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

These petitions today are signed by concerned citizens of Melville, Glenavon, Lemberg, Cupar, Montmartre, Meadow Lake, Turtleford, North Battleford, and Regina. I so submit.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Teachers Hold Job Action

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, thousands of teachers have come to the legislature today to express to the Sask Party government their frustration and unhappiness with the failed bargaining process for a new contract.

The job action we are seeing today across Saskatchewan is not something teachers pursue lightly and without very serious deliberation. Mr. Speaker, it was not necessary for the situation to get to this level, if only the Sask Party government had been listening to the concerns being raised by teachers across the province over the past months.

In earlier question periods during this session, I have read many excerpts from letters written to MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] by concerned teachers. While each letter

is unique, some common themes have certainly been evident. We have heard how teachers love what they do and how they truly care about their students' futures. We have heard how teachers have been asked to do more and more for their students with less and less. We have heard how young teachers find it increasingly difficult to get established as they begin their careers. We have heard that teachers do not feel respected and valued for the important work they do in every school throughout Saskatchewan. We have heard that teachers feel taken for granted.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if the Sask Party government failed to hear the message in the letters they received, surely they heard the message at today's rally on the steps of the legislature.

It's time for the Sask Party government to take teachers' concerns seriously and return to the table prepared to bargain in good faith. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan teachers and our children deserve it.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Canora-Pelly.

Skills Canada Saskatchewan Competition

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Skills Canada Saskatchewan is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to, and I quote, "promote skilled trades and technologies as a first choice career option for Saskatchewan's youth."

This year's provincial competition was held in Moose Jaw on April the 15th and hosted 400 competitors from all Saskatchewan school divisions and post-secondary and apprentice colleges. Participants competed in over 30 skilled trades and technologies, ranging from computer animation to workplace safety. Provincial gold medal winners will advance to the Skills Canada National Competition hosted by Quebec City on June the 1st to the 4th of 2011.

Of the 400 competitors, 39 students from the Good Spirit School Division competed in the competition. It is my pleasure to advise you that three of these students won gold and will now advance to the national competition being held in Quebec City in June. These students are: Julian Fidek of Invermay School in outdoor power and recreational equipment category; Brandon Beutel of Melville Composite School in welding; Gage Bush of Yorkton Regional High School in 3-D animation.

Mr. Speaker, the next world's competition that these students are eligible for is in two years time. So I want to wish these three students and all of our Saskatchewan competitors success at the nationals this fall, and good luck to achieving a gold status for world's competition in two years.

[10:15]

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

Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May is Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month. The Canadian MS Society

estimates that somewhere between 55 and 75,000 Canadians live with MS. As well, every day three more Canadians are diagnosed with the disease. It is a disease that affects many young adults and includes life altering symptoms such as loss of balance, impaired speech, extreme fatigue, double vision, and paralysis.

Canadians have one of the highest rates of MS in the world, and it is crucial that we raise awareness about the condition and invest in resources in finding a cure. The MS Society of Canada aims through MS Awareness Month and World MS Day on May 25th to increase awareness about MS, inform the public about the MS Society's services and mission, and to engage new and existing supporters in their efforts to end MS.

There are many ways for people to support the MS Society of Canada: by making donations, participating in an MS walk, or through supporting the MS carnation campaign, also taking place this May.

Right now we do not know the cause of MS, but researchers are getting closer and making many breakthroughs. It is important that people and the government of this province support MS research so that we can find an answer and end MS.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Yorkton.

Poster Contest Winners Announced

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Shand power station greenhouse is pleased to announce the winners of the 10th annual Energy & Our Environment poster contest. The contest helps Saskatchewan students in grades 5 and 6 focus on the impacts of energy usage and the environment. Mr. Speaker, this poster contest is used as part of the educational curriculum and it is very encouraging to see our province's students thinking of creative ways to protect our environment and increase conservation.

SaskPower received 656 submissions from students at 40 Saskatchewan schools for this year's contest. A winning poster was selected from each of the schools, and four grand prize winners were chosen. The four grand prize winners receive a mountain bike and a bicycle helmet. And in addition, each of the four, top four winners' schools will receive educational material on climate change for the school library and a cheque to purchase trees from its local nursery, to be planted on school grounds.

Mr. Speaker, this year's grand prize winning posters were created by Sarah Hicks of Outlook High School; Eunice Domingo, St. Joan of Arc School; Reid Armstrong from Churchbridge Public School; and Bentleigh Wichorek, Riverside Community School.

The Shand greenhouse is one of the ways SaskPower is reducing the environmental impact of generating electricity. And I invite this Assembly to join me in recognizing the participants in the 10th annual Energy & Our Environment poster contest. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

International Day of Midwives

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today around the world, people are recognizing the valuable contribution of midwives on this International Day of Midwives. Midwives play an important role in providing a positive environment for women who are expecting and delivering babies.

Midwives are health professionals who provide primary care to women and their babies during pregnancy, labour, birth, and the postpartum period. The midwifery model of care provides normal birth, enables women to make informed choices, and provides continuity of care and support throughout the childbearing experience.

In 2008, Saskatchewan proclaimed the final sections of *The Midwifery Act* based on the hard work done by the previous NDP [New Democratic Party] government. The NDP took the first necessary step of establishing the Saskatchewan College of Midwives in legislation and committing to fund it once implemented.

But today, more than two years after the Sask Party government's proclamation of *The Midwifery Act*, access to midwives is limited. Health regions are not adequately funded and health care for mothers and families is being neglected. Today we call on the Sask Party government to immediately deliver on its commitment to roll out a midwifery program that offers Saskatchewan women appropriate options for midwifery care.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all my colleagues to join me in acknowledging the Midwives Association of Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan College of Midwives for educating the community, creating awareness, and ensuring that women with low-risk pregnancies receive the maternity care they want and need.

And given that this weekend is Mother's Day, I'd also like to say happy Mother's Day to all the mothers in Saskatchewan. Thank you.

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

Mother's Day

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This weekend will be a very special one for women across our province as we celebrate Mother's Day. It is a time to thank those who brought us into this world and for all of their work and sacrifice. A mother's work is never done, and every day these women fill the most important job in the world.

Mother's Day traditionally falls on the second Sunday in May, the time of year when we see new life emerging all around us in this season of birth and renewal. As our province continues to grow, it's important for people to remember where they came from, and days like these to remind us to pause and give thanks to the people who are responsible for where we are today. There is an old saying that goes, nobody would be where they are today if it were not for their mother.

Mr. Speaker, I would like this Assembly to join me in recognizing the hard work and loving support that mothers have been and continue to provide to all of us in our daily lives. We will always appreciate your years of dedication to making us the best children we could be. Miss you, Mom. Thank you.

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

Appreciation for Teachers

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, we are joined by thousands of teachers here today that care deeply for their students and that value their work, teachers that are vital to ensure that we, as a province, progress socially and economically. This cannot be understated nor dismissed. This government has broken its promise to fund education adequately, resulting to cuts to programs, a massive reduction in educational assistants, increased class size and demands. The list goes on and is known all too well to teachers across this province.

Teachers prepare, enable, and empower the young people for the future. Teachers put in many hours of unpaid time to enrich and support the education of students. They are asked to do ever more and deliver the goods for the betterment of all. Their dedication deserves the government's respect, not long delays in contract negotiations nor organized attacks on a right wing radio talk show that's tied to the hip with this Premier and government.

Mr. Speaker, the very teachers that are here with us today and the thousands across this fine province are standing up for education. They care for and develop our students, and they are both working for and critical to determining a better tomorrow, a bright future for this province, making certain that our best days as a province lie ahead of us.

Mr. Speaker, this government has record highs in revenues, more money than ever before. It's past time that our teachers are invested in. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Contract Negotiations with Teachers

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in light of the fact that several thousand teachers have come to the legislature today, to their legislature to lobby the government to get a fair and equitable contract, I wanted to ask questions to the minister or to the Premier.

In light of the fact that the government has had and seen its way to give huge contract increases to CEOs [chief executive officer] of health regions — in fact the Prince Albert CEO of the health region there, I think, got a 60 per cent increase; political staff in the Premier's office got as much as a 70 per cent increase — why is it that this government has chosen to treat the teachers of this province with a lack of respect and to not put forward a contract that would give them even the cost of living increase that they so much deserve and more? Why have

we taken that approach as a society that we do not treat teachers with respect and give them a proper contract so they can get back to school and teach our children?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, I should want to clear up some of the information in the hon. member's preamble and then answer directly his question.

Mr. Speaker, we dealt in estimates the other night with the fact that health care managers in the province, even after the increases they're going to receive, will be paid at 65 per cent of the average of health care managers in Western Canada. And moreover, Mr. Speaker, with respect to political staff, this government's spending 20 per cent less on political staff than the previous administration did.

Mr. Speaker, all of our kids in our family are in the school system still, and they have benefited mightily from great teachers. We value the teachers of this province on this side of the House, not just as a government but as parents as well, and grandparents in some cases. And, Mr. Speaker, there's been an offer presented early on from both sides. Clearly the teachers aren't satisfied with the offer from the government trustee bargaining committee, neither is that government trustee bargaining committee comfortable with a one year, 12 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker. So there is a gap. The collective bargaining process can work, and we would ask teachers, we'd ask both parties to return to the bargaining table where we will find answers to this challenge, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — The only thing accurate in that answer is that the teachers aren't satisfied with less than 2 per cent, and I don't blame them. I don't blame them. Because in light of the fact that employees in this province who do the heavy lifting, whether teachers or health care workers, are required to take less than 2 per cent while political staff in the Premier's office received as much as 70 per cent, the Premier knows that's not fair, that it's not moral when you carry on in that manner to set these double standards for the teachers in the province and the political staff in that building. And I'm not critical of the political staff. It's just not fair, and you know that.

Can the Premier tell me why he continues on in this vein of treating the teachers with disrespect and not giving them a contract that they deserve? They don't take their job lightly or the work action lightly that they've taken. Ninety-five per cent of the teachers voted for work action. They're here today. Can the Premier tell me again why less than 2 per cent is an appropriate number for an increase for our teachers in this province?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, once again in terms of the hon. member's preamble, I want to inform this House that under the NDP, their government spent 20 per cent more on political staff than this government has spent, Mr. Speaker. There are fewer staff on this side of the House. Well, Mr.

Speaker, this is a comparison the hon. member is using, and we need to get the facts on the table. Mr. Speaker, we know that teachers are currently demanding through their union, through the STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation], they're demanding 12 per cent over one year. Mr. Speaker, we know the government . . .

[Interjections]

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

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, we know that the government trustee bargaining committee, with the offer that it has on the table currently, is presenting the highest offer in the country. In BC [British Columbia] and in Manitoba, there are zeros in the offer, Mr. Speaker. If teachers were to accept the current offer, and obviously they're not interested in doing that and we respect that, but if they were to do that they would be the second highest paid teachers in Western Canada, second to the province of Alberta, where because of the contract they have, teachers are facing massive layoffs in that province, in the province of Alberta. There are also, in a number of school districts in that province as a result of the contract that's been struck in Alberta, there are teachers working 20 per cent more hours in terms of teaching time or assignable time as a result of that contract.

So we've got to be comparing apples to apples and, Mr. Speaker, we want a fair contract for our teachers. We want to make sure that they are valued here in the province of Saskatchewan. We urge them to return to the bargaining table.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that we have a Premier, when we talk about potash royalties, is worried about the continued revenue stream to the potash shareholders, most of whom are foreign and not worried about the owners of the potash here in the province.

Now with teachers, he's worried about teachers being laid off in Alberta. That's not the debate. The debate is whether or not teachers here in Saskatchewan are being paid properly, not whether teachers are being laid off in Alberta. Now I'm not saying that I'm not concerned about the teachers being laid off in Alberta, but that's not his concern. That's not his worry. His worry is about the teachers who are in the gallery earning less than their comparables in other parts of Canada, and the fact that they are coming here today in large numbers because they feel they're not respected and they're not getting a fair contract.

In light of the fact that cost of living in this province is going up faster and faster with 20 cent a litre on gasoline, rent going up, cost of food expected to go up 10 per cent, why is it that less than 2 per cent is right for our teachers? Why is that a good position?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the Alberta situation is instructive and important for us here because we want to avoid a settlement where our school boards would have to, because of budgetary constraints caused by a settlement, potentially look at

layoffs, Mr. Speaker. That's what happened in Alberta. There was a large contract settlement in Alberta that has them now higher than the province, even though we're the second highest in Western Canada. And a result of that . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I would ask the opposition who asked the question to allow the Premier the same respect to answer the question. I recognize the Premier.

[10:30]

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, now as a result of that, certainly we see massive layoffs of teachers in that province, and moreover we see teacher/student ratios that are too high. They are high also in centres in this province. We want to see that problem relieved, not exacerbated. And so, Mr. Speaker, we do want to find a fair contract for teachers.

We understand they don't accept the government trustee bargaining committee position. The government also, that same committee, has difficulty with 12 per cent in one year. The best place to resolve this in the interests of all the parties is the bargaining table, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the teachers are going to feel very disappointed that rather than being listened to, they're being threatened by the Premier that if they don't take the contract, they're going to have layoffs. That's what he's saying here today, and that's shameful because there is nowhere else in Canada where there's more money than in Saskatchewan. If you look at the revenue to the province, it's higher than ever before. And if there isn't enough, go to the potash corporations and take a little bit more and pay our teachers properly. That's the thing.

I want to ask the Premier again. I want to ask the Premier again: in light of the fact that several thousand teachers have come here, and reasonable, they've been absolutely reasonable, writing letters, doing all the things that teachers or workers should do to get a contract, will he now sit down with them in a reasonable way and sort this out and get the job done?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, that's how I have concluded I think every answer that I've given, that the appropriate solution here is the bargaining table. We understand the teachers' position with respect to the offer that has been tendered by the government trustee committee. Mr. Speaker, I think they also understand that committee's position that 12 per cent in one year is also not acceptable. And so the solution is at the bargaining table.

And, Mr. Speaker, the evidence of this government's commitment to education can be found in each and every one of its budgets, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well, well the hon. members are heckling again. The truth of the matter is in terms of operating increases for school districts since we took office is in and around 20 per cent. The fact of

the matter is that after paltry investments in education capital and almost nil in terms of block funding, we've seen over \$400 million invested in education infrastructure in this province, Mr. Speaker.

We have a commitment to education, a commitment to the teachers and, Mr. Speaker, we also have a commitment to the students and their parents. The answer in this regard, in this debate, it will be found at the bargaining table.

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

Funding for Education

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan teachers do a tremendous job of educating the youth of our province, but the actions of the Sask Party government have resulted in making the work that teachers do more and more difficult. For example, the Sask Party's plan of reducing the number of educational assistants throughout the province means teachers are picking up more and more of the slack and the classroom environment is becoming more and more challenging.

To the minister: she wasn't prepared to come out onto the steps of the legislature, nor were any of her colleagues, so I'll ask the question to the minister here in the Assembly. Will she admit that her actions have increased the workload for Saskatchewan teachers, and why won't she recognize this reality when bargaining with teachers?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, time and time again the Premier has invited the teachers to return to the bargaining table, which is where negotiations should take place. In the member opposite's premise that we have cut education assistants, that is not true, Mr. Speaker. We have increased funding to school divisions year over year over year since we have been government, and it is the school divisions who make the decisions on their staff complements, Mr. Speaker. They have added certain other professionals to their complement. It is generally been asked for by parents. It's been asked for by the disability community to have, along with educational assistants, they would like to see other professionals work with their students.

School divisions have worked very diligently to be able to provide that complement. They have made some very good progress in providing better services for our students, and I commend them for that. But ultimately it is their decision on how they are going to hire their staff, and they've received increases in funding to make those decisions.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, the teachers in this gallery know the reality when it comes to educational assistants here in the province. They know the process that that minister began, and they know the process that that minister is continuing.

Not only has the Sask Party made life more difficult for

teachers through a reduction of educational assistants, but the Sask Party's broken promise on the long-awaited permanent funding formula for school divisions have left boards in limbo. By breaking their promise to provide a funding formula, the hands of school boards have been unfairly tied when it comes to issues like hiring new, young, talented teachers. And sadly we know the Sask Party's broken promise on the funding formula was motivated by political expediency and not by the best interest of Saskatchewan students.

To the minister: will she finally admit that she has placed her party's political fortunes over the interest of the province's education system?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, again I want to say to the member I'm not entirely sure, when we were in estimates, that he understands how the funding formula works. What we're using is the NDP funding formula that they had in place, and each and every year we add to that budget, making adjustments for student enrolment. For the LINC [local implementation and negotiation committee] agreements, which is money for teachers, we have adjusted the LINC agreements and ensured that they are fully funded.

And I want to just read an insert from the *Saskatchewan Bulletin*, on April 11th of 2011, by Steve Allen, the president of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation. And it says this, and I quote:

Allen noted that while he empathizes with school boards having to deal with the uncertainty, he maintained it was best to make sure to get the formula right before it is eventually launched.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for the lecture. I always do appreciate being informed by her. Mr. Speaker, the minister can hide behind the SSBA [Saskatchewan School Boards Association], just like she hid under her desk today during the reality. But everyone knows that the government has a majority at the bargaining table, and they can make things happen if they want to.

Mr. Speaker, every person in this Chamber can think of a teacher who made a huge difference in our life. Teachers are good at what they do because for them teaching isn't simply a job, it's a calling. Teachers don't choose their profession in the hope of becoming millionaires. They choose teaching because they know it's a way to make a true difference in the lives of many.

Mr. Speaker, simply because teachers have such a calling is no reason to take them for granted. However the pattern of behaviour from this government suggests that they are taking advantage of the goodwill shown by teachers every day in every school. To the minister: why does she insist on showing such disrespect to teachers? And when is this government prepared to sit down and bargain in good faith?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the member opposite that the government trustee bargaining committee has not left the table. And we are here, inviting the teachers to return to the table to discuss a fair deal. Obviously there is a significant gap between the two sides. If the teachers were to accept the government trustee offer, they would be the second highest paid among the Western Canadian provinces. They're higher paid than the Canadian average, Mr. Speaker. However if there's other issues they would like to discuss, I think that needs to be done at the bargaining table, and I think that is where those discussions need to take place.

Mr. Speaker, there is no one here more than I who appreciates teachers and the great work they do. I myself have talked many times in this Assembly of my three daughters and the teachers that they have had going from, you know, extremes in their academic abilities. And it's commendable the work that teachers have done with my daughters, who are all great successes now as young adults.

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

Care of Children

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I raised concerns brought forward in the latest Children's Advocate office report. Specifically I asked about the number of critically injured children reported to the CAO [Children's Advocate office] last year. It's jumped by more than 300 per cent from 13 to 43 between the years 2008 and 2010. The sudden and dramatic change is unsettling to say the least, and I received no answer in question period yesterday. To the minister I ask yet again: what steps are being taken to address this disturbing upswing in the number of Saskatchewan children who are being injured?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I agree with the member opposite: when there is an increase in injuries or, worse yet, in child deaths in our province, it's something that all of us take seriously.

When we had a coroner's inquest this spring and we looked at some of the work that was being undertaken in places like our foster homes, and we looked at some of the work we could be doing immediately and in the long term as well. Immediately we have a foster home safety checklist. We have a new protocol agreement. We have new child history forms. We have new, a more rigorous annual review when we do have incidents come forward. Mr. Speaker, we have 308 new home spaces in our province to make sure our children have the care they need. Whenever there is an injury, we take it seriously. I assure you it's something that we'll continue to look into.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, the Children's Advocate office

reported a 300 per cent increase in the critical injuries between 2008 and '10. Critical injuries include major medical treatments, hospitalization, and attempted suicides. We know, especially in the northern part of our province, these are alarming numbers for communities dealing with high rates of youth suicides. To the minister, she is the minister responsible to deal with this alarming level of youth suicides and attempted suicides in her care. After three and a half years in government, where are the programs needed to help these children?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, for far too many years, we had governments looking at children's issues in silos in each ministry. We had an opportunity this year to have seven ministers who are dealing with children bring forward a budget, a budget of \$34 million to make sure that we can talk about the needs of children and see them as a whole — not a child who is taken care of in social services or in health care or in education, but a child who matters to each one of us as a whole person. That's one of the steps that we've done. We also have a number of front-line care workers in place. We have a new computer system where we can look after our children and track them, Mr. Speaker.

There's more work to be done, but I'm really pleased that the front-line workers that care so much about our children and the work we're doing with the First Nations and Métis individuals and leadership across the province are making differences. They are successes. And we know that as we go forward there's more work to be done, but I'm very pleased with the work that we are doing.

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

Mr. Forbes: — So after three and a half years, there are no programs. In 2008 the Children's Advocate office reported 31 child deaths and 61 open investigations into child deaths. In 2009 another 31 children died and 66 cases were left uninvestigated. This past year another 34 children died, and by the end of 2010, 70 investigations into child deaths were still pending. Every one of those investigations not completed risks the lives and health of every child receiving care. To the minister: we know the Children's Advocate's office is doing their very best, but when will this government take responsibility for the children of Saskatchewan that are in their care and provide adequate funding and resources to the Children's Advocate office so the lives and health of our children can be protected?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, not only do the elected members in this room at this time care very deeply about the children, but so does everybody in the gallery. Every one of these teachers know that the importance of having children come to the school system that are healthy and ready to learn is what we need to do to take advantage of the potential we have in this province.

One of the things that we have to do is make sure that we have

more children in care of their own families or in extended care, and that's why I'm very happy that the number of children in care is decreasing. In March of this year we had 3,217 children in care, and that was down from 3,348 children last year, Mr. Speaker. And more importantly, we have more children that are in care of extended families. And when it's not possible for the child to remain at their own home, it's the best thing to do to keep them in care of their families.

We know that the teachers that are in this room today deal often with children that have been in care or have needs, and that's one of the issues that they talk about. I assure you that it's not just teachers, it's the social workers in this province who don't get paid the dollars that they should because their heart is with the children.

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

Proposals for Multiple Sclerosis Clinical Trials

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, that's going to make interesting *Hansard* reading.

Mr. Speaker, 3,500 Saskatchewan people are living with MS. In fact Saskatchewan has the highest rate of MS in the country. In October 2010 the Sask Party sent out a call for research proposals. They said the outcome of the competition would be announced in April of 2011. Mr. Speaker, it's May. To the minister: what is the status of the competition, and who is the successful applicant?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

[10:45]

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as we heard in an earlier member's statement, MS is very, very prevalent in Canada and nowhere higher than here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And it's a devastating disease.

I've had the opportunity to meet with many people that have suffered with this disease. I've met with people that have gone out of country, Mr. Speaker, that have had the liberation treatment. Some have seen great success. Some have seen limited success. And I've talked to one or two that really didn't notice much symptom relief whatsoever.

That's why our government has moved forward, first in Canada, first in North America, Mr. Speaker, as a government to put \$5 million into clinical trials through the Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation. Mr. Speaker, they're the professionals that understand the proper protocol around selecting research proposals, Mr. Speaker. The RFP [request for proposal] has been out. Research proposals have come into the Saskatchewan Research Foundation. They're in the process of evaluating and making the decision as to when those . . . which research group will further the clinical trial process here in Saskatchewan.

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

Ms. Junor: — Well back to my question, Mr. Speaker. The Research Foundation's website says April of 2011 and they will have their selection done. So I asked the minister, has it been done, and who has been selected? I ask that again.

I also asked, Mr. Speaker, before I asked a few weeks ago — and it was in April actually — I asked the minister if he had a database to track people who have MS. He's talked to some. He's visited with some; he's responded to letters with some. And it would track, this tracking system would track how many years the person has been diagnosed with MS, if the person had received the liberation treatment, the results of the treatment, and the follow-up care the person was receiving because that was a problem also, Mr. Speaker.

The minister said, no because there's no guarantee everyone with MS will register. You know, another odd answer. Mr. Speaker, we can be assured that without a database, nobody is registered. To the minister: why not set up a database to use as the basis for the trials that are going to be announced, I would assume, fairly shortly that he wants to conduct and be proactive in getting the process moving?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation will be making an announcement as far as the successful deliverer of our clinical trials within the next few weeks, Mr. Speaker. We're very proud of that. In fact we not only are the leader, we're finding provinces and now a territory following in behind. Under the NDP government in Manitoba, after deliberations and seeing what we're doing here in Saskatchewan, they have finally put \$5 million in, as well as the Yukon that saw what we're doing here in Saskatchewan, that put \$250,000 in, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is very, very great research, important research that needs to be conducted. More importantly though, I believe the people of Saskatchewan wonder where that party is on the liberation treatment because the Leader of the Opposition has been all over the map. I realize the Health critic may be in complete favour of it, but the Leader of the Opposition has been all over the map. I'd like him to stand and clarify his position on liberation treatment.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I recognize the Minister responsible for Crown corporation investments.

Launch of Business Registrations Saskatchewan Website

Hon. Mr. McMillan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to take this opportunity to announce a new initiative to support hard-working entrepreneurs. Today in Saskatchewan, people across the province are rolling up their sleeves, making the most of opportunities, and opening new businesses. Mr. Speaker, these hard-working entrepreneurs are delivering new goods and services in our communities. These new businesses are creating new jobs across Saskatchewan. This province's entrepreneurs deserve tremendous credit for the fact that today Saskatchewan is a national leader in job creation.

Saskatchewan entrepreneurs are a do-it-yourself people. And they don't ask for much, but they need a government that keeps paperwork and regulation to a minimum. They need to focus on serving customers and creating jobs instead of bureaucratic forms. That's why I'm proud to announce that today we're making it easier than ever to register new businesses in this province.

Information Services is launching a Business Registrations Saskatchewan website to provide a one-stop shop. This website will register businesses with a corporate registry, register as an employer with workmen's compensation board, and register with the province's Minister of Finance for provincial sales tax. Business Registrations Saskatchewan means new entrepreneurs won't have to send the same information three different places to three different government agencies.

Mr. Speaker, this is another example of Saskatchewan's commitment to give new businesses room to grow in today's Saskatchewan. Today's announcement builds on good news the Minister of Finance delivered in his budget.

On Canada Day, the small-business tax rate in Saskatchewan will drop from four and a half per cent to 2 per cent. Mr. Speaker, that means entrepreneurs in Saskatchewan will be able to reinvest about \$8 million of their hard-earned dollars back into their businesses. This government knows that investing in small business pays dividends by creating jobs in our communities.

Mr. Speaker, today we're proud to work with entrepreneurs to move Saskatchewan forward, and that is the Saskatchewan advantage.

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

Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, I want to respond briefly to the minister's ministerial statement. ISC [Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan] is making another small advance in its important work of making government accessible and information accessible electronically as opposed to by paper. This initiative started under the previous NDP government with the electronic transfer from paper to digital in respect to property and property records in the province of Saskatchewan, the land titles office project. And ISC has built on the success of that again and again and again.

It is clearly the case that Saskatchewan businesses are conducting their businesses in the 21st century and entirely appropriate that they deal with their government in the 21st century.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Further ministerial statements?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Estevan.

Health Care Delivery

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at the end of my remarks, I will be moving this motion:

That this Assembly recognize the positive steps taken by the Ministry of Health in regards to moving forward with innovative initiatives such as surgical wait times, the Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society, STARS, a non-profit, life-saving organization, and other third party health care delivery options within the public system.

Mr. Speaker, I will begin by thanking all the health care professionals in our province. They provide services that are just the tops and they are truly dedicated and professional, and again for that I thank them.

Mr. Speaker, as you will know that our province has signed a 10-year agreement with the Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society, or STARS. And STARS was founded in Alberta in 1985, and it has flown over 20,000 missions. So it has a long and reputable history of providing emergency care. STARS is a non-profit organization that provides rotary wing, or helicopter, medical transportation. And Mr. Speaker, STARS will be coordinated with existing ground and fixed-wing air ambulance services.

STARS operates 24 hours a day and it has a paramedic and a flight nurse, both with critical care skills, and two pilots on every mission. There is also an emergency physician on call who accompanies them on approximately 20 per cent of their missions. And, Mr. Speaker, again we have very dedicated medical staff in our hospitals, and they work tirelessly to provide the best health care. But unfortunately sometimes it's time — something they have no control over — it's time that isn't on their side. And this is so important, especially when they have to transport a patient to a local hospital to be stabilized before they in turn travel on to a specialized facility. And sometimes a specially equipped ambulance has to be dispatched from Regina or Saskatoon, furthering the wait time for the person needing the care.

And STARS helicopters are like a hospital emergency room, Mr. Speaker. And again, I've said it before: I had the pleasure to visit the STARS facility in Calgary and also to tour and, you know, just have a peek inside the helicopters that provide this service, and it is truly a trauma centre that can go out to wherever it is needed.

So this is just another way that, when time is of the essence, we have a way to improve on our already high-quality emergency medical service. And, Mr. Speaker, we do have a great ground ambulance system and one of the oldest, most experienced, fixed-wing systems in Canada. And STARS again will add to these great systems, and we will be able to have more successful outcomes in emergency situations.

And, Mr. Speaker, as you and all members of this honourable Assembly know, my constituency and the constituency of Cannington . . . And I'm just going to use those two constituencies as an example. They are very diverse. Down in the southeast corner of the province there's the oil and gas industry, coal mining, agriculture, Boundary dam power station, the Shand power station. But these two constituencies, Estevan

and Cannington — and there's a reason I am including Cannington, for the member from that constituency — they are a distance from Regina.

My constituency, the largest centre is Estevan of course and it's just roughly two hours out of this city. But the constituency of Cannington extends right to the Manitoba border, so it takes three-plus hours to get there from this city. So if there's an industrial accident — and God forbid, Mr. Speaker — but if there is an industrial accident out there, STARS helicopter could fly right out to the site and transport the patient and treat the patient there. And, you know, it really alleviates the time factor when time is of the essence.

And you know, I guess we just have to take into consideration the amount of time that will be saved by not having to transport the patient to a hospital in Estevan — if, you know, the situation is that serious — to be stabilized and then on again to Regina. And I know again, from personal experience, that lots of times you have to wait for a specialized unit to come out of Regina which adds to the time factor.

So you know, I think that when lots of times it's time that you're up against and that can make the difference between life and death . . . And not only accidents, Mr. Speaker. When you think of other situations like heart attacks, and again time is critical.

And, Mr. Speaker, following the budget this year, I delivered a speech in this Chamber and I told you a very, very personal story. And I, to be frank with you, I find it a little painful to go into the details again but I will say that losing my precious, beautiful granddaughter Brooke, who would have been 15 years old last Sunday, has made me very passionate about the STARS program. And I hope, I hope to God I never see a STARS helicopter in my constituency, but it is very comforting to know that that service would be available.

And, Mr. Speaker, you know, I know the members opposite, they don't think much of the STARS program. They, you know, heckled and ridiculed it. But they're from urban areas, and I mean we know what they think of the rural areas regarding health care because look what they did when they were government. I mean they closed 52 hospitals and stuff. But I think that every person in this province, regardless of where they live, deserve quality medical care. And with the STARS, that would certainly . . . And I must also add that the member from, the members from Athabasca and Cumberland, I'd certainly like to hear what they think of the STARS program because it would be very crucial to their constituencies.

[11:00]

Mr. Speaker, the funding model is a partnership between government, corporations, and communities. And I have to say that Crescent Point Energy that is headquartered in Weyburn and headed by Scott Saxberg took the lead on this and provided \$5 million for this program. And the services that I went into above, they are expected to be available in the spring of 2012 for the southern region of Saskatchewan, and that's based out of Regina. And they will be available in the northern, pardon me, for the northern part of the province based out of Saskatoon in the autumn of 2012.

But back to Crescent Point Energy, I think it's also important that they have more, to know that they have more than 200 staff and contractors working and living in the province, and they are committed to supporting these organizations to ensure that their employees and their families are taken care of.

But, Mr. Speaker, that is just the tip of the iceberg as far as donations from corporations. And the Sask Potash Corporation announced a few weeks ago that they would donate \$27 million to the STARS program, the largest corporate donation in the history of this province. And Mosaic has also announced that they would donate \$5 million to the STARS program, and for that I thank them.

But, Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not thank the member from Melfort for spearheading this program and I know he worked tirelessly on it and has for many years, from the time when we were in opposition, and it's just great to see it moving to fruition.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to move on to the wait times and I'm going to refer to an article that's in *The Estevan Mercury*. It's in section A, the April 27th edition of *The Estevan Mercury*. And, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite might want to take note because in section A of *The Estevan Mercury*, April 27th — they may want to write that down — there is also . . . They might want to thumb through this section because there's a letter to the editor in there, and I know this is just a little bit of topic, but I know they'll be interested in this. And it's a letter that reminds the people of how the present Leader of the Opposition did everything in his power to stop the construction of Rafferty dam, and how wonderful that project is, especially this year.

In fact what people are saying down there, they say, you know what, Grant Devine should've made it bigger. And that was the Leader of the Opposition who said it would be nothing more than a dust bowl and he could walk across it. Well you know, I've challenged him before and the offer's still open. Try it. Try it today.

But, Mr. Speaker, in this . . . I'll get back to this article I'm talking about. And it's about how the Sun Country Health Region announced last Thursday that it received \$643,000 in funding from the Ministry of Health to expand surgical capacity in the region and that money will allow the Sun Country Health Authority to conduct an additional 125 surgeries between St. Joseph's Hospital in Estevan and the Weyburn General Hospital.

And this is, the ultimate goal of this is to cut wait-list times in our province. And this is all because of the information gathered by the Patient First Review, and this is what happened because of it. And I had the pleasure of touring that operating room and I went . . . Tara Daoust, the nurse manager at St. Joseph's, took me on this tour and she said, "If we can add more surgeries, the operating room girls are ecstatic. They love their jobs and they are passionate about it and you can see it."

And then she went on to say that, you know, how she "noted that patients are also happy about the chance to have their surgery done locally." And "It's closer to home. They don't have to travel."

And, Mr. Speaker, during our discussions, Tara and I talked. And you know, we talked about having to go to Regina or Saskatoon. And that's great to have that in place. But if you can have it done closer to home, it's just wonderful because you can be closer to your family and, you know, you can . . . It's just inconvenient and sometimes it can be costly for the patients and their families. So I want to congratulate the Ministry of Health.

And Marga Cugnet, the interim CEO, has also said that they are so pleased to work with their own surgeons as well as those from other regions who travel there, and how it's nice to have those services so close to home.

And, Mr. Speaker, we also, you know, have a third party delivery option and that's with the Surgicentre located in Saskatoon, and they provide outpatient health in the arthroscopies and ACL [anterior cruciate ligament] repair, and the Omni Surgery Centre in Regina.

And gosh, Mr. Speaker, time is really going fast here, so I'm just going to give you a couple of quotes that I have here, and what some people have said regarding the third party delivery. And I will quote Colin Craig, Canadian Taxpayers Federation, October 7th, 2010, and he says, I quote:

At the end of the day, Saskatchewan patients are receiving health services sooner than they ever did before the reform. As time passes, it will become clearer that this type of reform is also better for taxpayers' pocketbook, despite what the dark side would have you believe.

And Murray Mandryk, June 4th *Leader-Post*:

It was an NDP government that allowed private blood testing, ultrasounds [and it goes on to say] and X-rays in this province.

And it was also an NDP government that eagerly sent SGI no-fault insurance claims and workers' compensation claimants for the private CT scans in Calgary because it was faster.

Yet the NDP is now trying to convince us private ownership of one more diagnostic imaging tool will destroy medicare?

And, Mr. Speaker, I am quoting, and he says, "How in the hell does that make sense?"

And he also goes on to say: "But the Saskatchewan Party's greatest victory may be in trying innovative ideas that the NDP wouldn't even touch." And that's from the *Carlisle Observer*, January 28th, 2011, and again that's from Murray Mandryk.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move this motion:

That this Assembly recognize the positive steps taken by the Ministry of Health in regard to moving forward with innovative initiatives such as surgical wait times, the Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society, STARS, a non-profit, life-saving organization, and other third party health care delivery options within the public health care system.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion presented by the member from Estevan, and will the members take the question as read?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Just a quick reminder to members, that members are not to do indirectly what they can't do directly. I recognize the member from Regina Lakeview.

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise this afternoon to talk about the long history in Saskatchewan of innovation and good work as we move forward with our health care system. And, Mr. Speaker, it's appreciated when motions like this are brought forward to the legislature because then all of us can be reminded of the long history in this province of health care innovation.

And it goes right back 100 years when we look at the construction of some of our mental health facilities, both in Weyburn and in North Battleford. It goes back to the Cancer Agency being established in the '30s with the registry and a number of very innovative ideas. It goes back to the '40s when Premier Douglas kept the job as minister of Health and premier so that he could get the best advice from around the world to make sure Saskatchewan's health care system was built in a positive way.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in 2011, the Canadian Institute of Health Information, which I'm pleased to say is now being led by one of our best civil servants from this province, Mr. John Wright, this institution provided a report which is talking about the evolution of wait time measurement and reporting. And it's quite clear, Mr. Speaker, that the report that they've done, which was done at the request of the first ministers and the Health ministers in 2004, this report is another step along the way, shows that this is a long-term project where a number of steps that we took in Saskatchewan in 2001 with the health plan and then in 2002-2003 in setting up the registry of surgical times for our patients here in Saskatchewan, that all these things have started to continue the work of improving the situation for Saskatchewan patients.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's of little use and no purpose when the Minister of Health, our present Minister of Health gets on his rant about 16 years of nothing prior to 2007 because the people of Saskatchewan know that that's not true. When you go and look at these national reports from places like the Canadian Institute of Health Information, it's very clear that there's a strong base that's built and that the work is improving in Saskatchewan, but we've still got a long ways to go.

As it relates to health care, I think people are concerned that sufficient resources aren't being allocated to various parts of the system. Right now we have a major problem obviously with the priorities around the health services people who in many ways are the most crucial factor, other than the surgeons, in the work that's being done for people who are on wait-lists. So, Mr. Speaker, that whole area, we need to make sure that when we talk about this, we talk about what it is that we're going to provide for our fellow citizens in Saskatchewan now but more

importantly in the future.

Now another area that relates to this, and it relates to how our system has been set up in Saskatchewan, relates to the physical facilities that we have to complete the job. Mr. Speaker, I want to do just a very brief review of the capital budget for the province in the 2007-08 budget. This was the last budget that we as a New Democrat government had the opportunity to present.

And, Mr. Speaker, when we look at that capital budget and the plan that was there, it included the dollars to complete the provincial laboratory, which is out in the Innovation Place area at the University of Regina. It included the money to continue in the development of the Saskatchewan Hospital at North Battleford on a very planned basis. Mr. Speaker, it included the completion of the Cypress Regional Hospital in the Premier's riding. It included the completion of the Outlook integrated facility in the riding of the Minister of Highways. It included the completion of the Ile-a-la-Crosse integrated facility, both Education and Health, in Ile-a-la-Crosse. It included money to go ahead and complete the maternal and newborn care centre in Regina, which we were all pleased to be at the opening just recently. It included the money for the completion of the Moosomin integrated facility. It included the Maidstone integrated facility. It included the Preeceville integrated facility. It included the Humboldt integrated facility. It included the Saskatoon mental health facility. It included the Oliver Lodge facility, long-term care in Saskatoon. It included the six-bed addition to the Hudson Bay long-term care facility.

It included relocation of the MRI [magnetic resonance imaging] in Saskatoon to accommodate the work toward the Academic Health Sciences building. The money was there, not in Health but out of the university's portfolio, for the start on the Academic Health Sciences building. And it included the planning money and the commitment of money for the children's hospital, the child hospital within a hospital. And also, Mr. Speaker, it includes some money for free-standing surgical centres, starting in Regina and then in Saskatoon. These were ones that were going to be integrated right in within the system that we have in our province.

[11:15]

Now, Mr. Speaker, we knew from the experience in Manitoba that their, sort of, working with a private fee-for-service surgical centre didn't turn out that well for the people in the Winnipeg area and that eventually the government had to take that facility over and then integrate it into the system. Mr. Speaker, our goal was to have the same kind of situation here in Regina. We were working closely with the surgeons in Regina.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when the new government came in place, not only did they have the money to complete many of these projects — and I'm pleased to say that I was acknowledged at many of these projects, and I know that my other colleagues were acknowledged at some of these projects — that they were long term. They were 10-year projects, sometimes longer than that.

But, Mr. Speaker, the importance is that many of the things which this Minister of Health crows about have been in the

works for a long time, and they've been developed through the careful planning of local communities, of regional health authorities, of the provincial government, and in some cases, working closely with the federal government and First Nations as well.

And, Mr. Speaker, the importance of this is that when a motion is brought forward into this legislature about the new and innovative things that are happening here, that's a good thing. But I think it's also good to recognize that we have in this province a long history and a long legacy of making sure that we do things well.

Now what's really different in the year 2011 is that this province has the resources to do things for the people, with the people of the province that we've never had before, and that includes the workers — the nurses, the doctors, the people involved with physio, the people involved with all of the other very important professional aspects, the cleaning people, everybody. We all need to have them working together and being properly resourced to do that.

And, Mr. Speaker, when there are imbalances that take place in some of that work, it affects the results for all of us. But more importantly, it affects the result for your grandma, your son, your daughter, your spouse, or yourself. And, Mr. Speaker, that is not acceptable. Unfortunately for all of us, the number one issue, when people raise issues about government expenditure, is still the health care system. And, Mr. Speaker, we need to use all of the innovation of the past governments and the present government and, more importantly, the future governments to make sure we get this right.

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

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure and an honour to stand in the Assembly today and take part in this debate. I will be supporting this motion. And this morning I would like to discuss the improvements our government has made in health care, and feature some of the health advancements and innovations.

Mr. Speaker, our government has introduced a very ambitious plan to improve surgical care in Saskatchewan, and one of the plan's innovative strategies is the use of a third party outpatient surgery and specialized diagnostic, such as CT [computerized tomography] scans. Third party surgical and CT services will be performed through the publicly funded and administrated system. Patients will pay no fee. They will be referred through the health region. And I repeat that: patients will pay no fee.

Third party delivery within a publicly funded and administrated system is not new to Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. We have had private ambulance services, laboratories, X-rays, and long-term facilities for many years. We are expanding both public and private capacity in order to reduce surgical wait times. Third party cases will represent a very small percentage of the total surgeries and diagnostic tests performed in the province of Saskatchewan each year, Mr. Speaker. And I do believe that this is one more way to put patients first. It supports our efforts to reduce surgical wait times and improve patient care.

Mr. Speaker, many members of my immediate family are employed in the health service area, and we have a very close connection in the front-line trenches. One of my daughters, who has a dual degree in nursing and social work, works in the hospital. And she does come and tell me that we are making vast improvements in patient care. And my other daughter, who prior to working towards her master's in speech pathology worked with children, but is now considering working with injured soldiers who have returned home from battle. And my son-in-law is a physician, and he does travel to various communities when he's not at his private practice. So, Mr. Speaker, my family does keep me abreast of what is happening with various medical experiences, and I'm very proud of them and their ability to help others in Saskatchewan. And I would like to thank them as well as all the other health service professionals to their dedication to the people of this province.

I understand the challenges that health professionals face, but I also understand the challenges that patients face. And I believe our government is addressing these issues. The government is expanding both public and privately delivered surgical and diagnostic capacity in order to reduce patient wait times. Mr. Speaker, the vast majority of surgical and diagnostic procedures will continue to be provided through the publicly delivered system. Now approximately 78,000 surgeries will be performed in Saskatchewan in the 2010-11 fiscal year. Of those, approximately 700 will be delivered by the Omni and surgicentre facilities.

Mr. Speaker, there were approximately 146,000 CT scans performed in Saskatchewan in 2009-10. And when we were looking at the 15,000 scans per year through the Regina CT contract and adding more publicly delivered CT capacity in Melfort, the third party share of CT services will represent less than 10 per cent of the total capacity. Consideration is also being given to expand the types of services to include during the extension period.

Mr. Speaker, most of our loved ones in this Assembly have experienced or been touched by an illness or tragedy, and we do appreciate those that heal or help us. Many people have weighed in on our government's approach to enhancing Saskatchewan's health care system, Mr. Speaker.

Now in an editorial in the *Moose Jaw Times* talking about private versus public health care in the Omni Centre announcement, September 2nd, 2011, the following was said:

Venturing outside the conventional health care apparatus in this province was a risky move, and the provincial government should be commended for its willingness to try something to remedy a long-standing issue.

Mr. Speaker, on October 7th, Colin Craig of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation said:

At the end of the day, Saskatchewan patients are receiving health services sooner than they did before the reform. As time passes, it will become clearer that this type of reform is also better for taxpayers' pocket book; despite what the "dark side" would have you believe.

Mr. Speaker, another bold strategy of ours is the introduction of

the Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society, also known as STARS. And I had the pleasure of personally meeting some of the STARS personnel who provide the care and transport of patients, and my many thanks, as well as the patients', to their dedication and care.

In the past 25 years, STARS have flown over 19,000 missions, and STARS will be providing care and transport for patients in rural areas of Saskatchewan who are critically ill or injured — mine employees, farmers, tourists, trappers, fisherman — and they will stabilize these patients and bring them to the hospitals. They will transfer from a rural hospital to a larger hospital. And I believe this is very much needed.

And in talking with some of the outfitters, they were quite happy to hear that the STARS program will be implemented. I remember in the '70s when we were snowmobiling in a remote area up North, an accident occurred to a 12-year-old boy. And we had to bounce him out on this sled many miles to get to a road with this severely injured youth, and we almost lost him many times. And I believe we could have saved his leg if we had STARS program. This gentleman is alive today but is partially disabled because of this accident.

So I know there are a lot of people out there who agree with me that our STARS project is very valuable. And these dedicated medical helicopters will be flying intensive care units used for patients whose outcome depend on rapid care and when time is very crucial.

There's going to be two helicopter EM [emergency medicine] bases planned for Saskatchewan, one in Regina and one in Saskatoon, with fuel areas will be established for these missions outside of the response radius. So their capacity to respond to rural areas, First Nations, Métis communities, tourism, and remote industry work sites is a very, very valuable thing. And this helicopter will be an emergency room to the patient while providing ongoing, pre-hospital care required.

Mr. Speaker, I see my time is almost up, but I would like to tell you a few stories about people that had their lives saved by STARS.

This is Joe's story. When Joe returned to his home after a motorcycle ride, he was involved in a collision with a car just outside of Brooks. The impact threw Joe into the air onto a barbed wire fence with his motorcycle landing on top of him. Witnesses quickly called 911, and paramedics arrived and called for STARS. They transported Joe by ground ambulance to Brooks hospital where the helicopter picked him up. He reached Foothills Medical Centre in critical condition from the loss of blood and had to be resuscitated twice. Over the coming days, Joe had three surgeries, but today he is back at work. And this is a great story because of STARS.

So, Mr. Speaker, I do see my time is up, and I do support the motion. I think we are making great headways with our medical personnel, STARS, and third party delivery of surgical and diagnostic services, so I thank you very much for your time, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a real honour to be able to enter into this debate that has been put forward by the member from Estevan where she speaks about surgical wait times, the Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society, or STARS, and other third party health care delivery options within the health system.

I just want to remind all members of the legislature that it was the province of Saskatchewan that successfully introduced publicly funded and publicly administered universal health care into this province in 1962 and that, as a result of the work that had been done in the province, the federal government then chose, as a result of a Supreme Court justice's report — Emmett Hall, who was a proud Saskatchewan son — that the federal government would implement universal medicare into our country. And now across the land, that governments at their peril would try to dramatically alter publicly funded health care is now a given, Mr. Speaker.

[11:30]

Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member from Sask Rivers talk about STARS. And I want to report to the public that every Health minister in an NDP government, including myself, looked at helicopter ambulances for the province of Saskatchewan. Every minister — whether it was the member from Lakeview, the member from The Battlefords, myself, former Premier Calvert, Louise Simard — all ministers had the Ministry of Health, we called it the department in those days, look at the notion of a helicopter service in the province. And every time we did that, the Department of Health came back and recommended that we not implement this kind of service because it was far, far too expensive and difficult to administer.

Now, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh they say, well the Potash Corporation is there. I think most people in the province, including the teachers that were here today, would say maybe what we need to do is increase the royalties just a little bit because this donation from the Potash Corporation doesn't take away from the massive profits that they are presently experiencing, Mr. Speaker.

I listened to the member talk about a lad that was injured in a remote part of Saskatchewan many, many years ago. And she said that if this ambulance service, STARS, was in Saskatchewan, perhaps this man would not have a disability today.

It will be very interesting to watch how many citizens, once the program is up and running, how many citizens expect STARS to come and get them. And STARS won't be able to come and get them because there are other traumas in the province, and they're going to have to pick and choose.

One of the questions that I think citizens will be interested in, if a citizen who hasn't made a corporate donation to the STARS program is injured at the same time as a worker whose company has given a donation to STARS, how will STARS pick and choose where to go, Mr. Speaker? And I think this will be an important question to watch as we watch STARS be implemented in the province of Saskatchewan and administered in the province of Saskatchewan. Will there be picking and choosing? Because in a publicly funded system where the

public pays for these kinds of services, decisions are made on a triage kind of basis, Mr. Speaker.

Now I know the members opposite don't like the point that I'm making, but I think that there will be some difficulties with the STARS program as we gain more experience from that program.

Mr. Speaker, I also note that STARS was in the province of Nova Scotia and they made a decision, because of the expense, that they were going to get out of STARS. And I think we'll have to wait and see how much public money will need to go into the STARS system in order to make this STARS system work.

At the same time as the government is introducing STARS, we know that there are road ambulance operators in the province whose employees are sitting on standby at a very small amount of money — I think it's a little over \$4 an hour; they're not full-time positions — and they're having a very difficult time making ends meet. We know that, for instance, the ambulance personnel in the city of Saskatoon don't yet have, as far as I know, an agreement in place to deal with the escalating costs of living that they're presently experiencing. So, Mr. Speaker, while the members opposite can be pleased with STARS, the devil will be in the detail and the devil will be in how this system actually operates.

I do note that the government opposite are quite pleased with what's happened with wait times. Now there was release, a recent CIHI [Canadian Institute of Health Information] report that was released in March that talks about wait times in Canada.

Now here's what the public needs to know, and this is a group of men and women that have been in office for close to four years. Well the reality is that for knee replacements in the province of Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan ranks third last in the country with 60 per cent of procedures being done within acceptable waiting times.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know that whenever the government wants to brag about their place, our place, in the country, ministers are busy issuing press releases. But when you're third worst in the country, I'm afraid you have to find the report and release it to the public because that's not a press release the government likes to give to the media.

When it comes to hip fracture repair surgeries, Saskatchewan was last in the country with only 72 per cent of procedures being done within the acceptable time period.

Now, Mr. Speaker, my brother was in a very, very serious farm accident last Thanksgiving. And, Mr. Speaker, I saw people in the emergency room waiting for surgeries. Because it was the long weekend, many of those folks didn't get their surgeries until after the long weekend, Mr. Speaker. And I do know that when someone goes to the hospital with a hip fracture, they can be waiting there for some time.

Now, Mr. Speaker, for cataract surgeries . . . Many of us are members of the sandwich generation. Our parents are requiring cataract surgeries and Saskatchewan ranked second last in the

country with 62 per cent of procedures being done within the acceptable time period. Only Alberta was worse, which is a province that the men and women referred to in question period today when they were talking about teacher bargaining.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's fair to say that there are issues around with the STARS ambulance service. We know that they were invited to leave the province. While we know that STARS received a donation from the Potash Corporation, it will still require significant public funding from the province. And we know, when we look at Alberta, about 25 per cent of the funding for STARS comes from the province of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that the government can spin, and they spin regularly, about how wonderful everything is in the province of Saskatchewan. They issue press releases telling us how wonderful it is, and we're making progress. But when you dig down into the data, when you do the research, it's quite clear that this is spin. It is not factual.

And the facts of the matter are that Saskatchewan has a very difficult record at the moment when it comes to certain types of surgeries, according to the data. And while the minister can talk about the massive improvements, it's quite clear from the data that Saskatchewan is lagging behind in terms of wait times for surgeries. I note the member opposite said there would be about 78,000 surgeries performed in the province of Saskatchewan. Well Mr. Speaker, when I was the Minister of Health and other people were the ministers of Health, we were doing about 93,000 . . .

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

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure that I rise to speak in this debate. Mr. Speaker, when the Saskatchewan Party became the government of this province, we received a health care system that was in shambles.

The record of the previous government, which is now the opposition NDP, reads as follows: April '99 — and they find this laughable; they find this laughable — the NDP threatened to throw striking nurses in jail. In jail. April 2000 the NDP raised fees on seniors' long term. The most vulnerable, the older people that are on fixed incomes and they raised theirs. September 2002 the average surgical wait time in Saskatchewan was 32.6 weeks. Mr. Speaker, that was the absolute worst in Canada, and this is their record.

In May of 2004, the NDP fired 92 nurses with 160 more health-related job firings expected. August 2004, Mr. Speaker, 93 physicians left Saskatchewan while every other province saw increases. Ninety-three physicians, boy, if we had them back now. October 2005, Saskatchewan suffers the longest waiting list in Canada, almost double the national average, almost double the national average. July 2006, Saskatchewan wait times too unreliable to publish. Then in November, 2006 Saskatchewan has a shortage of over 700 nurses. All of a sudden, whoa, we're short 700. Didn't see that coming. Here we go.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite habitually accuse the

government of being at war with labour, but under the NDP government the Health Sciences Association of Saskatchewan was on strike for 28 days and bargained for 18 months before reaching an agreement . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Mr. Speaker, I sure like listening to the other side, but it would be nice if they'd listen to my side.

Mr. Speaker, the SEIU [Service Employees International Union] and the SGEU [Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union] had to bargain for 22 months with the members opposite in 2004-05 before finally reaching an agreement — a terrible, long time. And they're the friends of labour.

Mr. Speaker, I find it shameful that those members opposite are questioning this government's health care record while it's on their record, while it's on their record that they treated Saskatchewan patients and medical staff.

Then in late 2002, the cruellest cut of all: the University of Saskatchewan College of Medicine had been put on 24-month probation. If no remedy had been found for problems in 12 areas, the college would have lost its accreditation. Unbelievable. Dr. Roger Pierson, a professor in the department of obstetrics, gynecology, and reproductive sciences said, and I quote, "The news itself is depressing . . . It's depressing because this has never happened to a medical college in all of Canada . . ." Never in all of Canada.

Dr. William Albritton who became dean of the College of Medicine said, and I quote, "It would seem that we need somewhere between 20 and 30 faculty positions in order to achieve what the report suggests is our faculty deficiency." They had chipped away at them until they were short by 20 to 30 staff and had no money for them. This is the NDP record, and that is what the NDP did to health care in 16 years.

Now I will proudly share the Saskatchewan Party's record in just three and a half short years. First we set ambitious goals to reduce surgical times, wait times to no more than three months by 2014. More to do? Yes, always more to do. But our government's bold action to increase surgeries and to drive down wait times has shown results for patients. From 2007 to February of 2011, we have significant improvements for patients: patients waiting more than 3 months, down 23 per cent; patients waiting more than 18 months, down a whopping 70 per cent. Saskatchewan's surgical initiatives launched last April until February this year results are patients waiting over 12 months, dropped by 30 per cent; waits over 18 months, dropped by 47 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, these are wonderful statistics. It's showing what's really happening. Today's record shows 2,733 fewer patients waiting for surgery than previous year. That's wonderful news. Eighty-four per cent of all patients that had surgery received their procedures within six months, within six months. Patients waiting for hip and knee replacement in the last year alone dropped by 2,466. That's amazing. That's wonderful. That's showing progress. Eighty-nine per cent of invasive cancer surgeries performed in 42 days. Sixty-six per cent of slower growing cancer surgeries performed in 42 days.

[11:45]

And a big one for my area, not in my constituency but used extensively by my constituency, is the new Humboldt Hospital. That was another one of those round TUITs, and two members on the other side mentioned it. They didn't get around to it. It was on their list, but they didn't get around to it. So it was promised for three elections, but we finally built it, and it's there. It was a wonderful day, and it was great to be there at the grand opening of the new Humboldt Hospital.

One of the brightest stars in the changes we made to health care is the STARS program. And the member from Saskatoon Nutana said they looked at it — a round TUIT again — but they said they could not afford it. So we looked at it, yes, and we looked at it broader than they did. We went to Crescent Point Energy, and they're taking the lead and \$5 million to the program. Mosaic committed \$5.5 million. Potash Corporation has committed to building a hangar and buying an AW149 helicopter to service the base in Saskatoon — approximately \$27 million, the largest donation in Saskatchewan history. So that's how we can afford it, yes.

Our government believes that teaming with non-profit organizations like STARS who has 25 years of experience — that proves it works, that shows it's a viable system — will allow us deliver the best in emergency care possible to all people within our province. STARS Alberta has a long and storied history of providing emergency care. They came into existence in 1985 and have flown over 20,000 missions. Mr. Speaker, that shows the depth and the breadth of all that STARS program has done for us, and it's going to continue.

Mr. Speaker, I've given both sides of the story but what the NDP did to health care and how Saskatchewan Party has started the rebuilding process, but the true judge is in what the people of Saskatchewan say. And I would like to quote Lewis Draper, former NDP MLA and semi-retired rural physician. In the *Leader-Post* in December of 2009 said, and I quote:

It is sheer hypocrisy for Judy Junor to carp about health care. She and the present leader of the NDP were both part of the . . . [cabal] that spent 15 years shredding rural Saskatchewan service centres, SaskTel, SaskPower, and rural highways depots along with 52 rural hospitals, firing 660 nurses, and leaving 52 rural doctors no place to work.

Mr. Speaker, that's by a former MLA.

An Hon. Member: — NDP?

Mr. Kirsch: — Yes, NDP MLA.

And one last quote: "In the 1999 election campaign, the Saskatchewan . . ." And this is, sorry, from the *National Post*, 2006. "In the 1999 election campaign, the Saskatchewan NDP was re-elected on a promise to cut wait . . ."

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

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to enter into this debate, which is a 75-minute debate on a motion brought forward by the

Saskatchewan Party, a motion that essentially is designed to simply compliment the government on work that it has done to involve third party primarily private sector deliverers of health care, Mr. Speaker.

And just to begin, I want to indicate that I would not be supporting the motion, Mr. Speaker, because there's much more to this debate than simply cheerleading for the philosophy behind some of the things that are being done.

Mr. Speaker, the argument that I want to make in the 10 minutes that are provided to me, Mr. Speaker, the argument that I want to make is that government is all about choices. When delivering programs and services to people, there are always options and choices that the public has. Sometimes those choices are driven by philosophy, sometimes those choices are driven by a practical review of all the options that are available. What we see the Saskatchewan Party doing with health care in Saskatchewan today and what we see the Sask Party trying to celebrate in the motion before the Legislative Assembly today is simply philosophy, Mr. Speaker. The argument is based on philosophy.

Unfortunately, regardless of the cheerleading that's going on here and elsewhere, the choices are made on the basis of philosophy and not on the basis of a practical review of the options available and therefore, Mr. Speaker, the results will not serve Saskatchewan residents well and will ultimately result in higher costs for Saskatchewan taxpayers down the road.

Let's take a minute to talk about this waiting list circumstance that we find ourselves in, Mr. Speaker. Let's take a look at waiting lists for surgeries. Governments, here in Saskatchewan and across Canada, have different options with the way in which reducing waiting lists for surgeries can be dealt with. The Saskatchewan Party has never talked about what those options are, Mr. Speaker. We need to be talking about the options so that Saskatchewan people can fully understand what course of action governments could be taking to further reduce, even further reduce the waiting times and waiting lists for surgery, Mr. Speaker.

Waiting lists for surgery have certainly been a challenge for governments for quite a number of years, and not just here in Saskatchewan, but right across Canada, Mr. Speaker. In fact the federal government, about six years ago, made it a focal point of an election campaign and then Health minister at the national level, Tony Clement, started a program, Mr. Speaker, that provided some federal funding to provincial governments to assist in the reduction of waiting lists across Canada. It was a targeted program, Mr. Speaker, and ministers of Health across the country addressed the needs that existed within their jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker.

Saskatchewan actually made some very reasonable progress during this time, working with physicians and health professionals and health regions, examining all of the options that were available, Mr. Speaker, looking at activities that were taking place elsewhere in the country, Mr. Speaker. And as a result of initiatives that were taken, funded by the province with assistance from some federal funding, wait times for surgeries started coming down in Saskatchewan. And actually Saskatchewan was seen as a leader in this regard, Mr. Speaker,

as we took advantage of new technologies and communications processes to deal with this matter in the public eye.

Mr. Speaker, just for example, in 2004-2005, as a result of the activities that took place within government, there was a 31 per cent decrease in the number of individuals waiting more than 18 months for surgery. In '05-06 there was a further decrease of 24 per cent. In '06-07, Mr. Speaker, just before the provincial election, the results showed not a percentage but a decrease by 2,100 cases.

So, Mr. Speaker, there was progress being made, considerable progress actually being made. The start was being made because within the publicly administered, publicly financed, publicly delivered health care system that we all support, Mr. Speaker, we were able to work with the best options available to help to reduce wait-lists. And then on top of that, Mr. Speaker, we also developed the Saskatchewan Surgical Care Network and a website that increased transparency of the surgical care system for patients, the public, and all of the partners that were working in the health care field, Mr. Speaker.

So a lot of things were taking place back prior to the election in 2007, Mr. Speaker. Choices were being made. Options were being considered. And now, Mr. Speaker, here we are three and a half years later, and what is the Canadian Institute of Health Information saying about the circumstances in Saskatchewan? Well, Mr. Speaker, it's pretty clear. The message is things haven't improved very much, Mr. Speaker, as this government moves not on options available within the publicly administered managed part of health care, Mr. Speaker, but as the government moves on its philosophical bent to more private sector, third party providers.

Canadian Institute of Health Information says, when it comes to hip replacement surgeries, Saskatchewan ranks second last in the country with only 69 per cent of procedures being done within the acceptable time period. The national average, Mr. Speaker, 84 per cent.

For knee replacement surgeries, Saskatchewan ranked third last in the country with 60 per cent of procedures being done within the acceptable time frame. The national average, 79 per cent.

For hip fracture repair surgeries, Saskatchewan was last in the country with 72 per cent of procedures being done within the acceptable time frame. The national average, 78 per cent.

And for cataract surgeries, Saskatchewan ranked second last in the country with 62 per cent of procedures done within the acceptable time frame. The national average, 83 per cent.

So, Mr. Speaker, progress was being made. Progress was going forward within the administered system, Mr. Speaker, publicly administered system. Things have not improved.

Mr. Speaker, what are some of the other options to move forward, Mr. Speaker? The government has put forward a private clinic, Omni surgeries, for helping to reduce surgery wait times, Mr. Speaker. But on the table, the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region had, prior to the 2007 election, Mr. Speaker, begun work to developing a plan for a stand-alone surgery centre here in the city of Regina, Mr. Speaker, a centre

that would do day surgeries — primarily cataracts, biopsies, perhaps gall bladder procedures, Mr. Speaker — that would remove these surgeries from the hospitals, allowing for greater amount of hospital operating room time, Mr. Speaker, to be devoted to more intrusive surgeries like hips and knees and other things like that, Mr. Speaker.

Bottom line, the argument that I'm trying to make here today in the 10 minutes allocated to me, Mr. Speaker, very simple. There's a choice that governments can make. You can either do a philosophic choice or you can do a choice based on options, based on practical analysis, Mr. Speaker. The government has chosen the wrong option. This will prove to be more costly and service the Saskatchewan people less well.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the House for its time this afternoon.

The Speaker: — The 65-minute debate period has concluded. It's time for the 10-minute question period. I recognize the member from Martensville.

Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we all know, private delivery in a publicly funded system is part of the reality of health care in Saskatchewan, as it was under the NDP previously. If we look at private deliverers in Saskatchewan, doctors are private deliverers as are many laboratory functions and ambulance services.

And my question is to the member for The Battlefords. If the NDP was completely okay with private delivery within a publicly funded system when they were government, why are they so completely opposed to private surgical delivery within a publicly funded system now?

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

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is part of a significant debate across Canada. Everyone, I think, understands the value of publicly delivered, publicly financed delivery of health care to the public.

Health care began, Mr. Speaker, as doctors and hospitals. And over the years, as financing became available, additional services were provided to people under the health care banner, Mr. Speaker. And during that period of time, other services became available, not specifically related to hospitals and doctors, Mr. Speaker.

The bottom line is, as funds are available and the public sector can support those funds, Mr. Speaker, we add it to the mix and provide better and increasing services. The bottom line, Mr. Speaker, this is a province that has been very successful in being a leader in publicly delivered health care, Mr. Speaker. We want to remain that way.

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This question is to the member from Sask Rivers. I want to know whether the Ministry of Health — so I'm talking about the officials — recommended to the Sask Party government that STARS be implemented.

[12:00]

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

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you for the member for the valuable question. Changing the health care system is a challenging task that takes time and unwavering effort. It requires strong and collaborative partnerships among multiple stakeholders, including all levels of government. STARS is partly funded by private donations, business, and general public.

Mr. Speaker, there is more work to do, but I believe our efforts are showing results for patients, and I believe our government is moving forward. Thank you very much.

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

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we've heard a number of things through the debate. And one of things that we heard, Mr. Speaker, is one of the members opposite talking about the opposition talking about the Sask Party government wanting to go to war with labour.

Now what was interesting, Mr. Speaker, is that the member didn't quote as to where this comment came from. And this comment came from none other than the Premier of Saskatchewan himself who talked about this on the Gormley show that he would be more than willing to go to war with labour, Mr. Speaker.

So I just want to make sure that the member is informed as to why we talk about this; that it was actually the Premier of the province himself who talked about going to war with labour.

So, Mr. Speaker, at a time where we're seeing contract bargaining coming to all sorts of problems in the province, Mr. Speaker, as we've seen today, and we know that the health care workers of the province still don't have a contract, how does he feel, the member from the Batoche . . .

The Speaker: — The member's question period time has elapsed. I recognize the member from Batoche.

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud of the record we have of working, not with labour always. That's what we have to achieve, not working for them, but with them, to achieve goals. And I think we're setting a high standard. We've settled many a dispute already and there's many more that we will soon be settling. Thank you.

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

Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, third party delivery within a publicly funded administrative system happened under the New Democrats. We have a long . . . We have a private ambulance service, laboratories, X-rays, and long-term care facilities for many years. The NDP pursued third party delivery to improve Saskatchewan health care. Now our government has introduced an ambitious plan to improve

surgical care in Saskatchewan. One of the plan's innovative strategies is to use third party outpatient surgery and specialized diagnostics such as CT scans.

To the member from Regina Lakeview: what health services should be delivered through the public . . . through the third party deliverers, and why?

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are very proud of the fact that we worked with all of the people who provide services within the health care system when we were government. But we were very careful to analyze the cost of how these services were provided, and that's why we recommended and we had plans to go ahead with a surgical centre within the city of Regina, and then subsequently in the city of Saskatoon, that would work with all of the surgeons, the private providers that are here in the province. And the reason we did it was we knew the experience in Manitoba, in other provinces, was that the costs were not able to be contained in a way that was appropriate. And so, Mr. Speaker, I think that it's absolutely crucial that we look at all of the providers, that we work with them, but that we're very careful in how we analyze the costs. The problem we have here is that the Minister of Health, but more importantly the Premier, is making philosophical choices that are inappropriate.

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

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the member from Batoche, who in his own constituency has a hospital in Wakaw where the emergency services have basically been shut down . . . The community is told to take the ambulance to Rosthern. The roads to Rosthern have basically been shut down because of floods. People can't move well, Mr. Speaker. Can the member from Batoche give us some indication of what advice he's giving to the residents of Wakaw with regards to their emergency circumstances?

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Batoche.

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The situation that we're dealing with, including the highways, is what we inherited. They were only graduating 55 medical students a year for years and years and years — 55 medical students. And then all of a sudden they say there's a doctor shortage. Well of course there's a doctor shortage. You weren't educating them.

So now we've moved it up to 100 and 120 residency seats. We're fulfilling this. We're growing this province. And it's going to take time to get these students graduated, but at least we're doing something, not just standing there and watching the numbers go down and down like the previous government did.

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

Mr. Michelson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the member of Saskatoon Nutana. We know that your party has always been afraid of setting goals because they would not be met. These words are spoken many times in the legislature but,

just so everyone is clear, they were spoken firstly by the current member from The Battlefords when he was Health minister and referring to nurse recruitment.

Setting goals is one of the many differences between the Sask Party and the New Democrats. The member from Saskatoon Nutana mentioned it, that previous NDP members, ministers, Health ministers considered the use of helicopter ambulances. It was a good idea then; it's a good idea now, but they wouldn't bother setting a goal to implement it. We think it's a good goal.

Mr. Speaker, to the member of Saskatoon Nutana: why didn't their party take the time to initiate this target specifically to reduce wait times?

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for the question. Here's what's interesting about the member's question. But the member and the members have not answered this question: did the Ministry of Health, which has all of the experts, did they recommend to the government that they implement this STARS program?

Well, Mr. Speaker, I know that the member from North Battleford, the Premier Calvert, Nilson — or the member from Lakeview — myself, we all had the ministry look at this. And in fact I was the minister that undertook an ambulance review. Now, Mr. Speaker, there was no recommendation that supported implementing helicopters in the province. In fact the ministry said that we have a long ways to go to have a decent road ambulance system in the province of Saskatchewan that could get the patients from where they need to be or to where they need to be.

So, Mr. Speaker, they haven't answered that question, and you know what? They won't because they never got a recommendation from the ministry.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the member from Batoche. He and I have a lot of our heritage in common. And I'm wondering if as it comes up to Mother's Day, is he's been listening to his mother about putting the best construction on everything. And I would ask him specifically about his speech as he says that.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 2 — Housing

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by Mr. Forbes.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased and honoured to be up today to speak a bit on what people have been speaking about in this Assembly for a great number of days, and that of course includes the challenge of the high cost of rent, the current situation with housing in the province, and of course the affordability issue that many, many families throughout northern and certainly southern Saskatchewan have suffered through.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that this private member's Bill, moved by the member from Saskatoon Centre, and I'm quoting from this document, Mr. Speaker:

On the proposed Motion No. 2 moved by Mr. Forbes:

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

And further, that in making this call, the Assembly urges the government to do the following:

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

Now, Mr. Speaker, this motion moved, and again I quote from the headline, "On the proposed Motion No. 2 moved by Mr. Forbes." Now, Mr. Speaker, as customary in the Assembly, we certainly can't make reference to the member by name but certainly by the seat that they are from. Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that the member from Saskatoon Centre who has championed this housing issue for a very long time, I certainly want to thank him for giving me the opportunity to express myself to the Assembly, some of the challenges that we face certainly from my perspective and certainly from my region and that of course is northern Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the member from Saskatoon Centre has long advocated for many people in his area and many people from the rural and from the urban settings. And, Mr. Speaker, he was gracious enough to sit down with me and with my colleague from Cumberland to talk about some of the northern issues in general, the underlying causes of poverty. And certainly housing is one of the primary things that we look at when we talk about trying to address the root causes of poverty. And I was very pleased that the member from Saskatoon Centre took the time to seek advice from us and certainly offer his perspective and his points of view as well when it comes to the southern part of our province.

So what we're trying to do here, Mr. Speaker, with this — I'd like to make reference to him as being a champion of this issue — is to try and figure out where we go from here as a province and certainly where we go from here as a party to address the

challenges of rising rents and of course the affordability and certainly the condition of many of the houses that Saskatchewan people suffer under.

Now I want to turn my attention, Mr. Speaker, to northern Saskatchewan. And the reason I do that is I speak with a bit of authority in the sense that I've lived in northern Saskatchewan for all my adult life, and I certainly see first-hand and foremost some of the challenges attached to our housing file as we have lived in that area for years. I want to say that not out of disrespect to some of the southern issues and certainly some of the inner-city issues because obviously the member from Saskatoon Centre has a lot of information and has a lot of perspective and certainly has a lot of solutions.

And I'm quite excited about some of the work that he's done and very, very enthusiastic in terms of some of the policy that he's trying to design, and to assure the people in those particular areas that it is an absolute wonder to watch this member work because he's understanding of the issues. He's got some very innovative approaches, and the attention that he's affording the issue about homelessness and certainly the affordability and the rising rent is tremendous. And I want to point out that not only is the member from Saskatoon Centre doing some this work; the leader of our party is doing an incredible amount of work to raise the level of importance that this has for many, many families throughout Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, from our perspective, from the opposition's perspective, I don't want to speak too much about the southern root causes of challenge when it comes to housing because we have some experts. We have some people dedicated to that. We have our entire party in sync with this whole notion of rent control, this whole notion of affordability, and the list goes on as to why we think this is an important issue.

As we've pointed out from time to time from the southern perspective, renters throughout our province have faced a massive increase in their rent. Now, Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of daughters that live in Saskatoon, and they tell me about some of the rents that they have to pay. And it's just absolutely phenomenal in terms of some of the cost. And their chances of ever affording a home on their own, Mr. Speaker, while they're still in school and they're going through some transitions, you know, in their education and their family matters, they will eventually be able to buy their own home, but it's going to take them a long time.

And one of the things that's most remarkable about Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker, is that many, many years ago — and I'm not saying 50 or 60 years; I'm talking about 10, 15 years ago — as was evidenced in some of the other major centres, it was a Saskatchewan dream for many families to own their own home, Mr. Speaker. That was available then and, Mr. Speaker, today it is not. There are many families, young families that can't afford a down payment for some of the housing stock in their cities. They simply can't have that starter home that many of our parents or grandparents had. They don't have that opportunity because the affordability is not there; the costs are right through the roof. And, Mr. Speaker, that is a crying shame because obviously Saskatchewan people from previous generations had that opportunity, and they built this province on having that affordability opportunity presented to them. So many young

struggling families today don't have that same Saskatchewan dream of owning their own home. And that, Mr. Speaker, is a crying shame.

[12:15]

And that's why our leader and our critic for Housing is always constantly at this current government for one simple message: is that you have the resources; why aren't you addressing this issues for young working families, young families that are starting out, and give them the same opportunity of having that Saskatchewan dream of home ownership that our parents and our grandparents had, Mr. Speaker? These guys, this party is sitting on record revenues, record revenues, Mr. Speaker, and they're not doing nothing to address the affordability issue on housing for young families that are starting off and many, many other families in general, Mr. Speaker.

So that's one of the things that, I think, is why it's important that we enter the debate, to tell people out there in Saskatchewanland that this is an issue. It's affecting a lot of people. And while it's not fair, some of the things that that government is doing with the resources, the windfall that they enjoy, Mr. Speaker, I tell people, well it's not fair that they're not doing anything. They simply don't care. They simply don't care, and that's what I tell a lot of young families that are starting off that are struggling.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the next option, completely putting aside the whole notion of home ownership, is of course the whole notion of being able to afford a place to live. And as I mention, as you see the rents increase, and the rents are skyrocketing in a sense of the increases. And what does that party do? They sit on their hands. They say, oh nothing we can do. And the greatest news I heard coming out of these guys . . . And we talked about all the challenges related to the housing affordability and the rent issues and on and on and on. They have no solution at all. And, Mr. Speaker, the sad thing is even if they had a solution, they had no plans to do anything about it anyway.

So one of the greatest announcements we heard off these guys in the last couple of months is they said to address the housing challenges — the sustainability, the affordability, the rent, and all the challenges attached to housing — they said, we're going to have a conference. That's what their solution was. We're going to have a conference, a three-day conference. So everybody's saying, well what's that going to do to help the affordability issue, sit around a room and talk about it?

Well, Mr. Speaker, once again they've managed people; they've not managed the issue. So people go to these conferences with great ideas. And unless and until they have real money attached to a strategy on housing — you can have a hundred conferences — it ain't going to make no difference, Mr. Speaker. It ain't going to make no difference. Young students, young families, Aboriginal people, immigrants, the elderly — they're all people facing housing problems now. And I'm sorry, a conference ain't going to be any part of the solution.

And while ain't ain't a word and you ain't supposed to use it, Mr. Speaker, I say it for the fact to try and make it as simple as I can to those folks across the way that a conference ain't going

to do it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned and as the member from Saskatoon Centre has mentioned, let's look at rent controls. Let's look at rent controls in the sense of making sure that we don't have people being taken advantage of when they have no choice but to rent. And we're talking when people rent a unit, and there's varying degrees of cost of course, but I know of an example. My daughter pays something like 1,500 bucks a month, you know, for a two-bedroom place. And that's fairly expensive for her. It's a huge proposition. And there's oftentimes that she says, well I simply can't afford it. She's going to school. So help is afforded to her from a number of different sources just to help her cover some of the costs.

And it's an expensive proposition, paying \$1,500 every 30 days. And if you were to translate that at a cost of per day, I would say people are paying 70 to \$80 a night to sleep in their own apartment — 70 to \$80 a night to sleep in your own bed in an apartment in some parts of the city. Now, Mr. Speaker, that's an awfully expensive proposition. And then you throw in the cost of food, the cost of fuel, the cost of power, the cost of telephone, and all these costs are all going up. You layer that on to some of these young families or young people trying to make ends meet, all of a sudden you find that you just simply can't cover those costs. It becomes an affordability issue. And this government is sitting on billions of dollars, and the rest of the people are suffering and they're struggling. And there's many, many young people that are going through that, Mr. Speaker.

So not only have they diminished and dashed the hope for a Saskatchewan dream of families owning their own homes, they are now dashing the hopes of many young people that are able to afford to live in some of the cities to do the things they want, whether it's employment or whether it is education or for other means. And that is putting a huge strain on the affordability that many young people are often speaking about.

So, Mr. Speaker, I tell a lot of young people that, don't sit back and don't wait for this government to come up with solutions. We ask them to get active. We ask them to get petitions going, a letter-writing campaign. Get involved with politics. Because a lot of the folks that are in charge of some of the money, Mr. Speaker, especially from across the way there, they simply don't care the effect and the impact it has on young people and young families. They don't care. So if they don't care, don't expect a solution from them.

I would encourage and urge a lot of the young people out there that may be listening to make sure that they participate in the democratic process and that they can actually architect policies through our party to make sure that this issue is addressed using resources from our potash, using resources from our tax base, using resources from our economy. What's wrong with that concept, Mr. Speaker? Absolutely nothing wrong.

The only thing missing is the participation of our young people. And I challenge them here today to get involved with politics, to get involved with policy decision making, the policy decision-making process, to architect different concepts in different ways where young people and people that are struggling financially are able to take advantage of some of the great opportunity in homeownership and certainly in the other

aspects of living in Saskatchewan. And the best way and the only way to get involved in bringing your perspective is to become involved with some of the processes afforded to you, whether it's education, the arts, or participating in the electoral process.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in northern Saskatchewan, I want to point out that the housing stock in northern Saskatchewan need a lot of work. There's a lot of challenges in northern Saskatchewan. People out there that have been living in some of these communities and some of these houses, they see they're paying a lot of money for their rent. They're paying a lot of money for their rent. And there are a lot of complaints. And I want to focus particularly on three areas, Mr. Speaker, if I may.

The first one is on the elders. Now I travel a lot of different communities, and I talk to a lot of older people. And they tell me a number of things, that many people that are older want to live in their own home. They've raised their children in that home. They raised their grandkids. Sometimes you take nieces and nephews. They have an extended family. And they bring these family members into their home and they help raise them, which is an incredible sacrifice and it's a great show of love. Now after they've raised their families, Mr. Speaker, it's that whole different culture in the North. They have many, many children that go through their homes, and they help as much as they can.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as you get older, of course living in a house for a year has its wears and tears of having children around and raising a family and takes a lot of money to maintain a home. So as people get older, the costs for maintaining that home becomes more and more their responsibility, and they all live on fixed incomes.

I think the base salary for old age security nationally, I think, is around \$500 or \$525. That's their base allowance allowed nationally through the old age security. If you are able to prove financial hardship, then there's a supplementary that you can apply for and add on to that amount of roughly \$600. So many of these older people have roughly \$1,100 a month, if they qualify through the old age security, to operate and to live with.

Now if you look at some of the housing stock that are in place in northern Saskatchewan, many of the older people, they start looking at what they have to pay for. The elders, they have to pay for the maintenance on their house. They've got to pay for the costs of power. They've got to pay for the cost of heat. They've got to pay for the cost of food, of fuel, of medicine, Mr. Speaker. They've also got to pay the costs of helping raise children, because as you do these things, it all adds costs to your home.

So all these older people living on some meagre amounts of money, many of them are doing a tremendous amount of work with that small amount of money. And as you know, in northern Saskatchewan we don't have many people that are 70 to 80 years old that have any pension plans, Mr. Speaker. Many of them didn't participate in that process in their early years. They lived off the land and they certainly survived in that way, and they taught their kids how to survive, and that's how we sustained our families and our community.

So years later the only thing that they have coming into their homes, in terms of financial support, is maybe a bit of CPP [Canada Pension Plan], but largely the *Old Age Security Act*. That's kind of what many of the elders in northern Saskatchewan count on.

Now given those low numbers, Mr. Speaker, in terms of what they have coming in versus what they have going out, you can see there's not a lot of room for error. And it's amazing, Mr. Speaker, the amount of financial management that I've seen many elders display in terms of how they are able to make ends meet. And I say to myself, my goodness, I wonder how many other families throughout Saskatchewan can do what the people in northern Saskatchewan, the elderly people, do with the amount of money that they have coming in versus all the costs and meeting all those costs that they have.

So the moment you start talking about rent, the moment you start talking about rent increases for the elderly, which has an impact on many of the people in my communities, right away it comes at the cost of their budget. So 50, \$60, or \$100 is actually a huge jump for them. And that's why, when we talk about affordability of rent as a party, that's exactly who we have in mind — the elderly people and the elderly people throughout the province, but in my case more particularly, the elderly people in the constituency of Athabasca and certainly from Cumberland as well.

But I want to say that any kind of rent increases, Mr. Speaker, have a dramatic detrimental effect on the finances of many older people. So when I'm sitting there and I try and find some support mechanisms for elderly people. And there are programs out there like the RRAP [residential rehabilitation assistance program] program, the emergency program to help build and fix up your homes. I looked at the HASI program, the home adaptations for seniors' independence which is designed to help meet some of the cost of fixing your bathroom to adjust for older people and, you know, funding of that sort.

So the old people say, well can we apply for some of these programs? Obviously RRAP, ERP [emergency repair program], these are some of the programs that have been around, been around for a long time. Now what happens now, Mr. Speaker — and this is the sad reality — is that some of the older people have applied for RRAP or ERP. And one of the conditions that I find absolutely ludicrous and unacceptable, and the fact that in almost to a point where it's disrespectful, is that if you owe any property tax, if you owe any property tax on your home then automatically, instinctively you become ineligible for any program support, either through RRAP or ERP or the HASI program or any other program that Sask Housing has in place.

And one of the things I think that's very unfair is that in the future, if and when the people of the North, the elderly people apply for some of these programs, they're told, well sorry, you know, you simply don't, aren't eligible for this program because you have land tax arrears. And guess what? That makes you ineligible. All that is is a cheap excuse to not spend the money that this government has set aside for those programs, and in the long run it saves money on the backs of the old people. And, Mr. Speaker, that is a crying shame when you talk about affordability of housing. It's a crying shame when nothing's being done to help the rent, and it's a crying shame

where rules are made up on the fly by that party to stop older people, senior citizens from taking advantage of the programs that are out there, Mr. Speaker.

Now I looked at some of the conditions of these homes that many of the elderly people live in. And they're very proud. They're very proud people, as we have many very proud elderly people throughout the province.

In northern Saskatchewan, I look at the elders as a source of strength because they're very proud and they're very independent. They don't want to stay in a nursing home if they don't have to, Mr. Speaker. They don't want to be able to count on anybody for any help if they don't have to. They don't want to be able to go and bother anybody for some of the things they might need. They're fiercely independent.

And, Mr. Speaker, the other thing I find most amazing about the elderly people in my area — and I'm sure it's prevalent across the province — is the fact that if they're ill, if they're ill, they won't express it either. They'll keep a lot of their illnesses away from their family members or from their children because they simply . . . That's just the way they are.

And so you look at all the pain and suffering that they go through, the elderly people, the pain and suffering that they go through, whether it's their health or the challenges with their kids or making ends meet in their home. The last thing we need to do is have a government that doesn't care about their problems. And that's exactly what we're getting from this government, Mr. Speaker, in refusing to address the issues of affordability and having decent housing for many people throughout this province. And that includes housing seniors in northern Saskatchewan or giving the means for them to keep their own house where they're able to live independently for the rest of their days. And there's nothing to support that, nothing at all, Mr. Speaker, and that's a crying shame.

[12:30]

And the worst thing is, the worst thing is it's not as if we're in a deficit, Mr. Speaker. It's not as if our debt is growing, Mr. Speaker. This government enjoys record revenues, record revenues. They're enjoying that. They're enjoying record revenues.

I look back at some of the history of this province. When the NDP first took over the government, I think their budget was 3 billion. I think their budget was 3 billion in 1991, and these guys have \$11.2 billion. That's almost four times the money we had when we first began government, Mr. Speaker.

And now you sit back and you say to them, well we can't afford to do these programs. Well absolutely you can. You have the money. You have the money. And, Mr. Speaker, that's the problem that we get so frustrated on this side, and we tell a lot of elderly people throughout my riding, and Cumberland the same thing, is that it's just not fair, the things you're going through, but the Sask Party don't care.

We know what's going on, Mr. Speaker. They're making special deals with their friends. They're giving their friends some special projects. They're giving their friends some special

deals. And, Mr. Speaker, they're setting themselves up. They're setting themselves up for after government life. That's exactly what's happening on the other side.

And they simply don't care what's happening today in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, where young families can't afford to buy a house, where young families and single mothers face skyrocketing rent and where elderlies in the northern part of Saskatchewan simply can't afford the burden any more of trying to make ends meet month after month after month, as their health deteriorates, as their bills mount, and there's no help from a government that's flush with cash.

And that's the problem, Mr. Speaker, of why the people of northern Saskatchewan and many elderly people don't support the Sask Party. Because they don't care about the elderly people. They don't care about the North. And they don't care about the vulnerable people that Saskatchewan has right now, Mr. Speaker. They've got record revenue and the people of Saskatchewan have no support for them whatsoever.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I go back to the . . . I've been to a few homes where elderly people . . . Again I go back to my example where they say, well we need help fixing our home up, but now we have these land tax arrears and we're no longer eligible.

So I walk in this one elderly couple's place in Ile-a-la-Crosse and they say, well nice for you to come see us; we're glad you're here. I would like to show you our bathroom and see the problems we have, and our bedroom. So I walk into the house and I go look at the bathroom and the floor is quite in poor shape. Over the years of course, you know, as you get . . . bathroom has a lot of moisture and there's mould and there's weakened floors and the toilet is now sitting awkwardly, and then that was pretty poor shape, that particular bathroom. And then the older lady said, well, you know, we think we can over time try and fix this up, but it'd be sure nice if we had help. And I said, well that doesn't look . . . Your bathroom doesn't look all that great; I think you need help now before you fall right through the floor.

And she said, well there's another problem here. And I said, what problem is that? So I go into her bedroom and she pulls open these long curtains, and when she pulled open these curtains there's a 3-foot-high mould film on her walls. There's mould all along her walls just under the window. She said, we had to close this because the mould stinks. I said, oh where do you guys sleep? And she said, well we sleep right here and my husband actually hasn't been feeling well because I would think it's because of the mould. Well absolutely it's because of the mould.

So I'm sitting there saying, okay, you've got a bathroom problem. You've got a mould problem. Have you ever tried to get any help from the government to fix these through some of the programs? And they said, well we tried, and we'd like you to try again. So we make some inquiries and we find, oh no, they're not eligible because they haven't paid their land taxes in a number of years.

Well, Mr. Speaker, news flash to the Saskatchewan Party MLAs over there. A lot of elderly people can't afford to pay their land taxes. If there's anything that they have any money

left over, it's being used to help buy food, to pay their bills, to heat their homes. And their cost of running a home in northern Saskatchewan is a heck of a lot more than it costs to run a home in any of their communities, Mr. Speaker, and that's why they don't care.

And the Minister of Finance is chirping from his seat. If he had to sleep in a room that had mould across his wall, Mr. Speaker, you'd see action then. If he had to go into a bathroom where you're worried about falling through the floor, I'm pretty sure you'd see action then.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance sitting there making less of what the elderly people are going for, or challenged with in northern Saskatchewan, I want him to get up and say, yes we're going to commit to doing that. We're going to commit to that. Will he do that today, sir? Will he get up and say, we're going to put an extra 7 or \$8 million into elderly care when it comes to housing improvement? If you're not prepared to do that, then perhaps the member shouldn't chirp from his chair, Mr. Speaker.

Now going back to the elderly, the example of the elderly people when it comes to housing and affordability, Mr. Speaker, number one is that as the older people were showing me throughout their house, I said, have you made any effort to pay your property taxes, even as much as you can each month? They said we made one payment, but that was about a year ago and we had \$50 left because we just had won some money in bingo. And so we made a little payment on our property taxes.

And I said, well how long has this been going on? And she said, well it's been going on for seven or eight years. Our land taxes have piled up. And I said, well why have they piled up? And they said, well here's our bill each month. Each month it shows those older people going in deficit at least a couple hundred dollars per month. And guess what? The last thing they're going to worry about paying for is property tax. The last thing they're going to worry about paying for is insurance on their home. So many times in northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, the two places that aren't being paid, when it comes to elderly people owning their home and still living in their home, are property taxes and insurance on their home. And that's a huge, huge detriment to many older people owning their own home.

And why is it that we can't stand up in this Assembly to a government that's flush with cash? They have the cash, Mr. Speaker. They have the cash. Why is it in this day and age, 2011, we can't say to elderly people that own their own home, all throughout Saskatchewan, that if you own your own home and if you live within a defined amount of money — and be fair about that — then we will not impose rules on you that say you have to have your property tax fully paid before, before you're eligible for these programs? I think we need to give them a break, Mr. Speaker. I think we need to recognize the fact that they're having these struggles and that this is unfair. This is unfair of us to ask them for more, when they have no more to give. And that's one of the important things, I think, that a lot of the elderly people have told me in northern Saskatchewan is that it's affordability. It's affordability.

You know, we have to travel south for our medical

appointments. We have to travel south for our dental appointments. We have to travel south for our optometrist appointments. And, Mr. Speaker, all those trips cost money. Because we've got to hire somebody if our kids don't take us. And a lot of the kids are quite busy. Then we have to go on our own and that costs money.

So at the end of the day, you look at all these costs: medical costs, housing costs, food costs, the whole notion of heating your home. All these costs add up. And I'm sorry, but many northern people in northern Saskatchewan, and Aboriginal families as well and Aboriginal elders, they simply do not have the means to meet all those costs. And at the end of the day, they simply have a choice to make — either you pay your power bill or your property taxes; either you pay your food bill or you pay your insurance bill. And guess what, Mr. Speaker? We can't eat an insurance policy, so we buy food. And guess, what, Mr. Speaker? We simply can't pay our power bill with a property tax invoice. We have to pay it with cash.

So many times seniors in northern Saskatchewan that own their own home, they ought to be supported. They ought to be supported with some real programs that recognize their real issues and their everyday challenges meeting their financial obligations. And, Mr. Speaker, this is pretty prevalent. As I mentioned at the early outset, a lot of these older people are proud. They want to remain as independent for as long as they can and why can't we afford them the dignity to do that? And the best way to afford them the dignity is to recognize their financial limitations and to get rid of some of the rules that make them ineligible, ineligible for repairs to their homes because they haven't had their full property tax bill paid. If they make even a small effort to pay those property taxes, then I think you're going to find that many elders would try.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I also want to point out, in terms of the notion of property taxes, I think in northern Saskatchewan many of the mayors that are in charges of these northern communities, you know, they would certainly, I think they could become part of the solution. Mayors are encouraging people to pay their property taxes all the time. That's a foregone conclusion. And I think one of the things that in northern Saskatchewan in specific communities, if the mayors find at the end of the day that 7 or 8 or 10, 15, 20 older people that owned their homes, they can't afford taxes, there's an affordability issue. It's clearly defined.

If they even got a letter from the mayor saying, we're working on the property tax issue. We're satisfied that they're making every effort to address those issues, therefore we think that they should become eligible for these programs and not have the non-payment of property tax become a deterrent for them to get in these programs. I think even that would be acceptable, Mr. Speaker. Because as I mentioned at the outset, there are so many different hard choices that the elderly people have to make in northern Saskatchewan, that it just becomes ridiculously unfair to them that they can't do many of these things because people across the way simply don't care.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned at the outset, my colleague from Saskatoon Centre is obviously very in tune and is a champion of this whole notion of rent control and can speak with a bit more of authority and certainly with a lot more

intelligence when it comes to the province-wide issue. But as I mentioned, I'm speaking about northern Saskatchewan specifically, and one of the groups I wanted to talk about today obviously was the elderly people. Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to continue working with the elderly people, continually encourage them.

And there are many times I'll walk into their homes, I'll see the condition of their homes, and I feel so bad for them. I know I will help them with their application, but at the end of the day if they owe any property taxes, well right away the Sask Party says you can't have any programs unless you pay those property taxes. And they'd say one simple message: we don't have the money to meet all these costs, and sometimes you'll take food over property tax for the last \$100 that we have left in our accounts.

And that's one of the things I think people ought to know when it comes to northern Saskatchewan, that the elders there are suffering and the programs that are being offered to them to help them become independent and stay independent, they can't take advantage of that because of the onerous rules put in place by the Sask Party. And certainly, Mr. Speaker, what is even more of a compelling argument is that they're not putting any resources to address any of their issues when it comes to making sure their homes are safe, affordable, and certainly comfortable.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to northern Saskatchewan in general, I want to talk about the population in the North and how important and how integral the whole notion of safe housing is part of what we need to address. And I look at northern Saskatchewan and you see the demographics of how many, many communities have such a huge amount of young people. Some communities are as high as 60, 70 per cent in terms of young people living under the age of 30 years old or 25 years old. I don't have those stats handy, but that's roughly a fair idea as to what kind of a breakdown in terms of our population of young versus old.

And I can say, Mr. Speaker, that many of these young families — there are single mothers or there may be other circumstances where they have three or four kids — it's always an ongoing challenge of raising a family if you don't have the proper housing. And, Mr. Speaker, and every time you have a house . . . And I'll give you a good example. La Loche is a growing community, and our party, and our party when we were in power, I think they figured that we built in terms of housing units — and it could be apartment blocks; it could be housing — I think over a period of seven or eight years, we built something like 2 or 300 units, Mr. Speaker, and that housed 2 or 300 families.

But in the process of building those houses, Mr. Speaker, another 2 or 300 applicants came in. And all of a sudden this whole notion of trying to find houses for La Loche alone became such a challenge. But at the very least, we put in 2 or 300 housing units in that community to help them address the housing challenge. And guess what? If a child has a decent house to live in, has a safe room to sleep in, and has three meals a day, they become very productive people at the end of the day. But if there's seven or eight people living in one house and there's all the interruptions of having all these people in the

home, it's hard for a child to have a place that they're able to live in peacefully and to feel safe, Mr. Speaker.

[12:45]

And one of the things I looked at when the minister talked about her housing strategy, where she's granting contractors, or building contractors, money to build houses, and she said, well they're for modestly priced houses. So what's modest to her? Well modest to her is 300,000, Mr. Speaker. And 300,000 is not modest in northern Saskatchewan. That's very, very expensive.

So why is it the Sask Party's ignoring all these growing families in La Loche, where houses are needed, and saying we're going to give them to our contractor friends who give us money, who give money to the party? We're going to reward them for helping us last election by giving them all this construction work. We're going to make them richer. And then guess what? They're going to have money to build houses for those families that are eligible for a \$300,000 mortgage.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if my memory serves me correct, you've got to have an income of at least 110, \$120,000 each year to be able to afford a \$300,000 mortgage, given how the mortgage rules work. So a news flash to the Minister of Housing: there's probably going to be maybe three or four people in 10 or 12 communities in the North that can afford a \$300,000 mortgage, and you better have a contractor friend that's going to want to come and build it for that price in northern Saskatchewan because as you move north, there's going to be more cost attached to that.

So the whole notion of her strategy, talking about the hundreds of millions she's going to put into housing, it doesn't fit. It doesn't apply to northern Saskatchewan whatsoever. It doesn't apply to rent control. It doesn't apply to helping seniors keep their home in good shape for longer. It doesn't apply to the elderly people that have trouble paying their property tax. It doesn't apply to northern Saskatchewan families. And it certainly doesn't apply to people that have low incomes.

So as she announces this grand plan of giving builders the money to build modest homes, as she described them, well \$300,000 is a nice home, Mr. Speaker. And why can't, why can't we use some of that \$300,000 that she's giving to her contractor friends to fix the mould in some of the elderly people's homes in northern Saskatchewan? You know how many homes 300,000 could help in northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker? It could probably help 50 or 60 homes. You know how much another 300,000 would do to help fix another 50 or 60 homes? And all of a sudden you've got 3 or \$4 million, can fix a lot of homes, fix a lot of poor bathrooms, take away a lot of the mould, help address the insulations of these homes so they're properly heated, help the elderly people live in dignity for the rest of their life or help a young family afford that home. You know how much benefit that would have?

And this government didn't do a darn thing to address those challenges that they are aware of as a result of some of my colleague's work from Saskatoon Centre, and they chose not to do anything. What they said instead is, we'll give our contractor friends who'll give us a whole whack of money during the election, for our election, and we'll give them this bonus. And

they can build these modest homes for people that need homes. And that was their solution. And oh, by the way, we're going to have a conference too. So people on this side of the Assembly are saying, well that goes to show that they don't understand what the social agenda is for Saskatchewan. But if you want to reduce crises in families, in low-income families, you don't ignore their needs. You help them address the real issue of housing, of housing in general in northern Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, I look again at the notion of affordability. So people in the North said, okay, if I find a contractor and he can build me a house — because they're going to subsidize him to build a house — and the price is 300,000, well how many people in northern Saskatchewan can afford a \$300,000 mortgage? And how many banks, how many banks would go to northern Saskatchewan to lend somebody \$300,000 to build a house in a market that doesn't exist? How many banks would do that?

So right away the minister has said no, we're not going to put any money in this housing opportunity in northern Saskatchewan. We're not putting one red cent. And she didn't say it that way. She said, oh we've got this program. But in essence, she has eliminated every person in northern Saskatchewan from taking advantage of this program because (a) not too many people can afford a \$300,000 rent; and (b) not very many banks will go into northern Saskatchewan and give somebody \$300,000 to build a house in a market where the banks know they'll never get their money back in case the mortgage has been defaulted.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we all understand that. And the member says, the minister says, well I didn't understand it. Well she'd be foolish to say that because we know she understands that, and we know that she knows about all these challenges. And yet she continued to ignore, she continued to ignore some of the challenges when it comes to housing, and continues to ignore some of the challenges that young working families have and young single mothers have in trying to find a decent house to raise their kids in — a decent, safe house. That's all they want, a house where you can afford to live.

And, Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party, despite all the money they have and talk about having quadruple what the NDP had in 1991, they're still not putting any money where their mouth is when it comes to providing safe, affordable, decent housing to many people of Saskatchewan's North.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I tell people in northern Saskatchewan that okay, fine, if we're not looking for solutions from the province because you've got a bunch of people that don't really care there, if we don't want solutions from them, then we've got to find our own solutions. And that's why, Mr. Speaker, we often talk about the notion of resource revenue sharing, resource revenue sharing for northern Saskatchewan communities. Now if anybody on the other side says, oh we're not going to do that . . . And I heard the Premier mention that one day here that when it comes to northern resource revenue sharing, that ain't on. He ain't going do there. He's not going there, is what he said.

And, Mr. Speaker, we had that same kind of relationship around Esterhazy. Esterhazy has the resource revenue-sharing

agreement around their community with the mines. They got that. We know they've got that. They've had that for years.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the other point is I tell people of the North, if Regina and the Sask Party don't want to provide solutions for us, the solution that we have to implement as a people and as a region is resource revenue sharing. And they say, well what the heck is that, what is resource revenue sharing? Well I'll tell them that in northern Saskatchewan, we have uranium, we have gold, we have — in due time, it'll come back — we have forestry, we have tourism, and all these operations in northern Saskatchewan. Let's say the northern administration, admin district — NAD [northern administration district] line, the buckskin curtain they call it — in the buckskin curtain, runs north of Meadow Lake right across towards Cumberland House, they generate hundreds of millions of dollars from the resources out of northern Saskatchewan. The government coffers bulge at the money that they get from northern Saskatchewan. They make a lot of money off the North.

Now I'm saying out of all the money they're hauling out of our northern area, that the non-Aboriginal community, the Métis and the First Nations ought to get together and form a strategy that says, before one more truck leaves our northern Saskatchewan area, we want our roads fixed. We want our houses built. We want training programs for our young people, and we want services that you get in southern Saskatchewan. Otherwise you get nothing. You get nothing. And we say that, Mr. Speaker, to absolutely every one of the Sask Party MLAs across the way, that unless and until we get northern resource revenue sharing addressed, then you guys . . . We don't have any hope of you guys delivering programs that affect our lives every day. We will do it on our own.

And I tell people of the North that you take the example of the pride that the elderly people have, the hope and ambitions that the young people have, and the desire that young mothers and young dads have to build a better life for their kids. The solution in my books, the solution and the ultimate solution is to have northern resource revenue sharing where we say to every company — and some of them are thinking about it — every company, you want to operate in the North . . . As a government, as an NDP government, we're going to go down the path of resource revenue sharing where every day you get a chunk of those royalties that goes into your community to address some of the challenges with housing, to address some of the challenges of repair for our elderly people, to address some of the challenges around roads, to address some of the challenges on training.

And, Mr. Speaker, that is the solution. We start taking resources from northern Saskatchewan, and we start building our own future using our own land and our own resources as opposed to waiting for the Sask Party to wake up and start addressing some of these challenges.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think what's important is that when we talk about northern resource revenue sharing, I want the people of the North to understand what we're saying, what we're doing. Because as we see evidence, this party across the way, the Sask Party, doesn't care about the northern and the Aboriginal people in general. They have no regard whatsoever. And I've said it a hundred times, and I'll keep saying it another hundred

times, Mr. Speaker, because that is clearly the message that they're giving.

Now, Mr. Speaker, for the record, I look at housing as a particular issue right now. It goes right across the board. Whether it's addiction services for, a good example would be, drugs, Mr. Speaker. No services in northern Saskatchewan. Young families that are struggling with housing issues may have young people in their homes that have drug problems. Is there any place for them to go to get counselling and support? No. Does that affect the goodwill and the spirit of the home and of the family? Absolutely. Absolutely.

Look at the child's advocate report that came out where you have over 90 people, over 90 people, 90 children over the last three years actually died in Saskatchewan. And that's not anything that any minister wants on their watch. So, Mr. Speaker, you look at all the decline of some of our communities, the decline of some of the communities as a result of an uncaring government. And you say, well how do you know they're not caring? How do you know they're not caring? Because they're not addressing housing issues that affect the seniors. They're not addressing housing issues that affect the working people. They're not addressing housing that affects the single mother and therefore creates an unbalance within the family, Mr. Speaker. There's no programs to help a young person deal with drugs. And the list goes on as to how a family is broken down as a result of inaction by the province of Saskatchewan and in particular the Sask Party government.

And I say this very clearly and very loud, that we had 90-plus children die in government care over the last three years. And that is not something, Mr. Speaker, that any minister can boast about. That is actually a stain on a government's record of dealing with families in crisis. And guess what? Housing is one of those factors that add to that crisis. And that's my point. That's one of the worst things that anybody could want under their watch is to have 90-plus children die in the last three years while in care.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that signals there's a problem. And the question you've got to ask is, how many more children have got to die before this government wakes up to address the root causes of poverty and the root causes of the destruction and dysfunction of families? Before more children die, we're asking them today to rise up to the occasion and use some of your wealth and your resources to finally do something to help the families that are struggling. Do something with your money. Do something to plan for the future. Don't just sit on your bags of money as you pontificate from atop your mountain of cash of how you're doing all these wonderful things.

Why is it, under your watch, we have lost 90-plus kids? Ninety-plus children, Mr. Speaker. It is because they don't care. It's because they don't care. They take care of their families and they take care of themselves, but if you're from the North, if you're from rural or the inner cities or some of the other places in Saskatchewan that they don't care about, guess what? This whole notion of wealth and opportunity bypasses many, many people of Saskatchewan.

And it's a shame, Mr. Speaker. It's an absolute shame. And it's a huge blemish that when you have over 90 kids die while in

care of that government and that minister, Mr. Speaker, because she has not responded to the crisis when it comes to housing affordability. She has not responded when it comes to the crisis of single mothers out there asking for help. And, Mr. Speaker, it's worse when you have the money and you don't do anything about it. And, Mr. Speaker, forever, forever and a day, that is not a record that any minister wants. And guess what, Mr. Speaker? She has that on her record.

The Speaker: — It now being 1 p.m., the time of adjournment, this Assembly is adjourned until 1:30 Monday afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 13:00.]

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Harpauer	7523
Brotten	7523
McMillan	7523
Morin	7523
Atkinson	7523

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Belanger	7523
Junor	7523
Forbes	7524
Brotten	7524
Morin	7524
Quennell	7524
Wotherspoon	7525

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Teachers Hold Job Action	
Brotten	7525
Skills Canada Saskatchewan Competition	
Krawetz	7525
Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month	
Junor	7525
Poster Contest Winners Announced	
Ottenbreit	7526
International Day of Midwives	
Morin	7526
Mother's Day	
Wilson	7526
Appreciation for Teachers	
Wotherspoon	7527

QUESTION PERIOD

Contract Negotiations with Teachers	
Lingenfelter	7527
Wall	7527
Funding for Education	
Brotten	7529
Harpauer	7529
Care of Children	
Forbes	7530
Draude	7530
Proposals for Multiple Sclerosis Clinical Trials	
Junor	7531
McMorris	7531

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Launch of Business Registrations Saskatchewan Website	
McMillan	7531
Quennell	7532

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

Health Care Delivery	
Eagles	7532
Nilson	7534, 7541
Wilson	7535, 7541
Atkinson	7537, 7540
Kirsch	7538, 7541
Taylor	7539, 7541
Heppner	7540
Morin	7541
Wyant	7541
Michelson	7541

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 2 — Housing

Belanger7542

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