



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

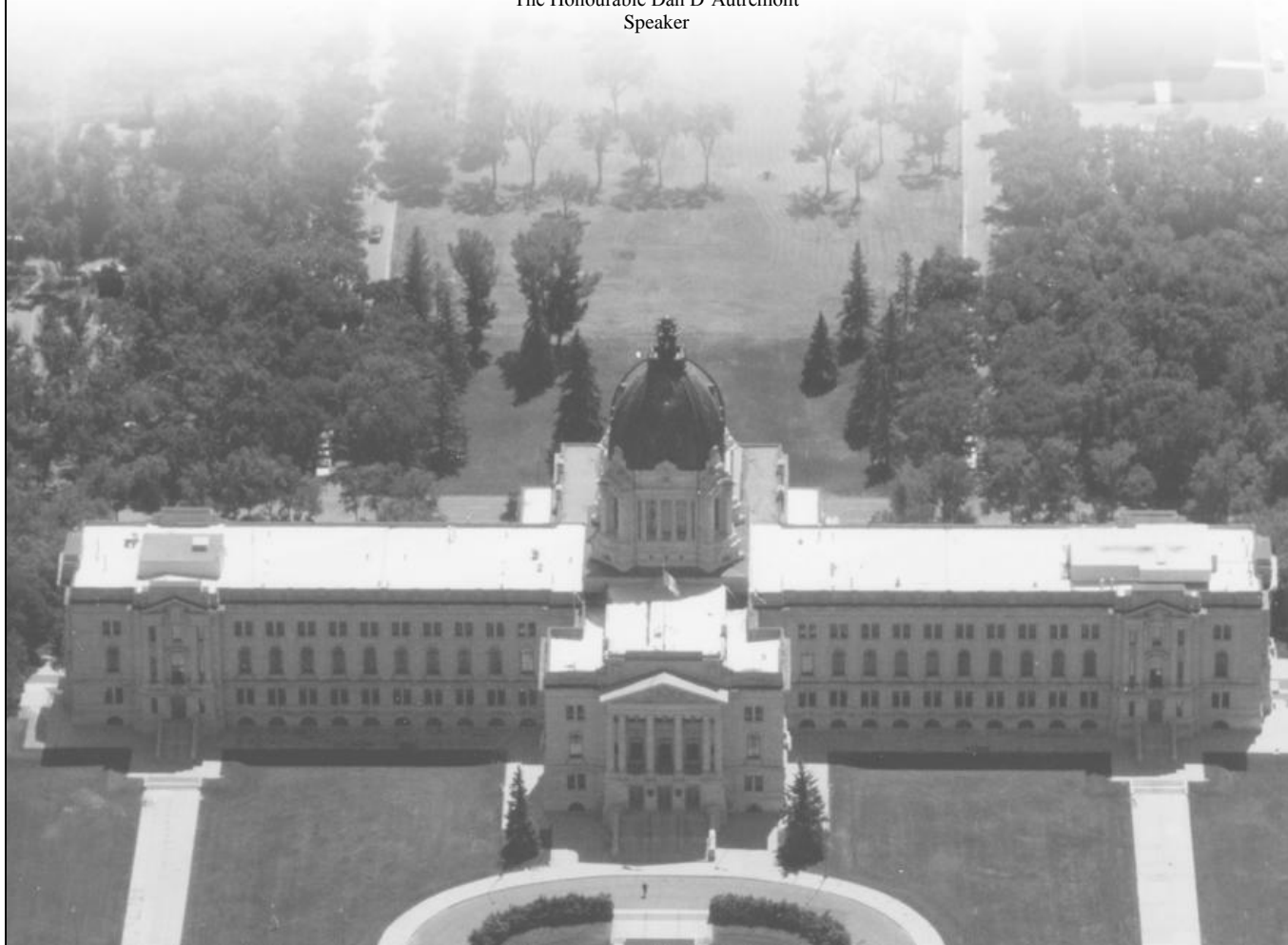
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Dan D'Autremont
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Speaker — Hon. Dan D’Autremont
 Premier — Hon. Brad Wall
 Leader of the Opposition — John Nilson

| Name of Member | Political Affiliation | Constituency |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 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 |
| Broten, Cam | NDP | Saskatoon Massey Place |
| Campeau, Jennifer | SP | Saskatoon Fairview |
| Chartier, Danielle | NDP | Saskatoon Riversdale |
| Cheveldayoff, Hon. Ken | SP | Saskatoon Silver Springs |
| Cox, Herb | SP | The Battlefords |
| D’Autremont, Hon. Dan | SP | Cannington |
| Docherty, Mark | SP | Regina Coronation Park |
| Doherty, Kevin | SP | Regina Northeast |
| Doke, Larry | SP | Cut Knife-Turtleford |
| Draude, Hon. June | SP | Kelvington-Wadena |
| Duncan, Hon. Dustin | SP | Weyburn-Big Muddy |
| Eagles, Doreen | SP | Estevan |
| Elhard, Hon. Wayne | SP | Cypress Hills |
| Forbes, David | NDP | Saskatoon Centre |
| Harpauer, Hon. Donna | SP | Humboldt |
| Harrison, Hon. Jeremy | SP | Meadow Lake |
| Hart, Glen | SP | Last Mountain-Touchwood |
| Heppner, Nancy | SP | Martensville |
| Hickie, Hon. Darryl | SP | Prince Albert Carlton |
| Hutchinson, Hon. Bill | SP | Regina South |
| Huyghebaert, Hon. D.F. (Yogi) | SP | Wood River |
| Jurgens, Victoria | SP | Prince Albert Northcote |
| Kirsch, Delbert | SP | Batoche |
| Krawetz, Hon. Ken | SP | Canora-Pelly |
| Lawrence, Greg | SP | Moose Jaw Wakamow |
| McCall, Warren | NDP | Regina Elphinstone-Centre |
| McMillan, Hon. Tim | SP | Lloydminster |
| McMorris, Hon. Don | SP | Indian Head-Milestone |
| Makowsky, Gene | SP | Regina Dewdney |
| Marchuk, Russ | SP | Regina Douglas Park |
| Merriman, Paul | SP | Saskatoon Sutherland |
| Michelson, Warren | SP | Moose Jaw North |
| Moe, Scott | SP | Rosthern-Shellbrook |
| Morgan, Hon. Don | SP | Saskatoon Southeast |
| Nilson, John | NDP | Regina Lakeview |
| Norris, Hon. Rob | SP | Saskatoon Greystone |
| Ottenbreit, Greg | SP | Yorkton |
| Parent, Roger | SP | Saskatoon Meewasin |
| Phillips, Kevin | SP | Melfort |
| Reiter, Hon. Jim | SP | Rosetown-Elrose |
| Ross, Hon. Laura | SP | Regina Qu’Appelle Valley |
| Sproule, Cathy | NDP | Saskatoon Nutana |
| Steinley, Warren | SP | Regina Walsh Acres |
| Stewart, Lyle | SP | Thunder Creek |
| Tell, Christine | SP | Regina Wascana Plains |
| Tochor, Corey | SP | Saskatoon Eastview |
| Toth, Don | SP | Moosomin |
| 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 |

[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of the legislature a group of students in the east gallery. These are 15 grade 12 students from Sheldon-Williams Collegiate in Regina Lakeview accompanied by their teacher, Lindsay Vindevoghel. And this is part of their education about what happens in their legislature. And I know that they're very interested to see the end of the session and the kinds of things that happen at the end of a session, but also to understand how our democracy works. So I ask all members to welcome them here to the legislature.

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

Mr. Makowsky: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the rest of the Assembly, I'd like to introduce a group of students in the west gallery, a grade 7-8 group from W.F. Ready Elementary School on Arens Road in the heart of Regina Dewdney. Their teachers today helping them out are Gisele Carlson and Michelle Wallace.

I couldn't help but notice in the front row there is a student with a no. 60 Roughrider jersey. Now I shouldn't assume that it is a Makowsky jersey. It could be a Cherkas or a Clark jersey, but that's . . . Oh okay, if it's not, someone of that age that's not my kid, that's certainly a great thing to see. So I look forward to meeting them later on after question period.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I'd like to join with the member opposite and welcome the crew from W.F. Ready and two incredibly fine educators, Ms. Gisele Carlson and Ms. Michelle Wallace.

Also of course they teach with my wife over at W.F. Ready as well, so there's some familiar faces there with those students there who maybe . . . By a show of hands, how many of you have had Ms. Wotherspoon as a teacher there? If you can let Ms. Wotherspoon know that we have an event tonight that I should pick her up for it about 6 o'clock. Sometimes Ms. Wotherspoon gets a little bit grouchy if I forget to tell her about the events that we're going to. So maybe give her that reminder and enjoy your day here today and have a wonderful day. All the best. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, an individual seated in the Speaker's Gallery. I'm speaking of Peter Gilmer. Peter Gilmer is a constituent in

Regina Elphinstone-Centre and does a tremendous amount of work with the Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry, an outreach of the United Church of Saskatchewan.

Peter has worked literally decades now on behalf of the poor and the disadvantaged in our Saskatchewan society and in pointing that better way forward for those individuals and helping us all to think about these things as we set about these deliberations in this Chamber. So I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming Peter Gilmer to his Legislative Assembly.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Best Wishes for the Holidays

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, these days it's easy to get caught up in the hustle and bustle of Christmas. For some I know the holidays are a very busy and stressful time, but I hope everyone can take some time to enjoy the true meaning of this holiday season and the values that Saskatchewan people are known for — giving, caring, and sharing.

Saskatchewan has a proud and diverse heritage where we all celebrate in our own individual way. My family and I will be celebrating Christmas in the same way our parents and grandparents did in our Norwegian tradition. I know many others will also be embracing their heritage at this time.

Mr. Speaker, as you know there are a number of new Canadians who have made Saskatchewan their home, adding to our multicultural tapestry. These cultures enhance the holiday season as we join in or share stories of their unique celebrations.

As we reflect on our past year, let us give thanks for all that we have, but let us also remember those who are having a difficult time this year. There are families and individuals who have not yet shared in the good fortune Saskatchewan is experiencing. Others are grieving of the loss of loved ones or facing challenges at work or at home. To those we must offer comfort and hope for better times in the future.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my family and the New Democratic Party caucus, I'd wish you and everyone in Saskatchewan all the best over the holiday season and into the new year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Information Technology Office.

Lloydminster Seniors' Winter Gala

Hon. Mr. McMillan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise today and make the Assembly aware of a recent event in my constituency, the first annual Seniors' Winter Gala. This gala was the brainchild of Colleen Groenen, the recreation director of Points West Living in Lloydminster.

This event brought together various youth organizations and 10 seniors' care facilities. An apt theme for this event was "The

Wind Beneath My Wings” in appreciation for what our seniors have built and inspired us to do. Colleen believes in the philosophy of keeping our seniors involved in their community, especially with our youth.

It was my honour to emcee this event along with co-host Norbert Cook. Norbert is a retired farmer and rancher, a community builder, and now resident at Points West Living.

Many volunteers and sponsors made this inaugural event a success. Rick Lucas, an exceptional teacher from Holy Rosary School, coordinated his students to cook a five-course banquet. The Lloydminster Comprehensive High School provided students to work, and Lisa’s Cosmo Club did the nails of residents beforehand. The serving was done by a very courteous group of Girl Guides and Boy Scouts, and the evening’s entertainment was all local musicians.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very positive event for our community, and I look forward to attending next year’s event as well. Thank you.

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

Jimmy’s Law

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to talk about a serious incident that has drawn attention to a situation we hope to work with the government on.

This past June, Jimmy Ray Wiebe was working alone overnight at a Yorkton gas station when he was shot and killed during a robbery. Jimmy’s friends and family along with worker advocates have proposed the idea of Jimmy’s law, which would protect late night gas and retail employees who work alone by ensuring these workers either work in pairs or are protected behind a barrier. A petition calling for these changes has garnered over 5,700 names.

It is in that spirit that later today it’s my intention to table *The Jimmy’s Law Act* which proposes to amend *The Occupational Health and Safety Act* to institute these protections for overnight workers. The proposed legislation is based on existing rules in British Columbia. We want to ensure that people who are doing late night jobs in this province have as much protection as possible.

I’ve spoken about this issue informally with the Minister for Labour Relations and Workplace Safety and look forward to continuing these productive discussions. In the past, the government has worked with us to pass legislation originally proposed by the NDP [New Democratic Party], including those concerning service animals, the respectful language Act, compensation for firefighter injuries, and highway workers.

We believe that this is another important piece of legislation, and I look forward to working with the government to reach a similar conclusion with Jimmy’s law.

Thank you very much.

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

Blaine Lake Community Cash Lotto

Mr. Moe: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take time today to recognize the Blaine Lake Senior Citizens Association. This fall, the Blaine Lake seniors along with many others from the area worked together to organize a very successful second annual Blaine Lake seniors’ community cash lotto. Some notable names of involvement are Anne Sitter, Annette Pollard, Pam Lavoie, and Karen Fiala.

Tickets were sold throughout the region by volunteers as well as having radio exposure the final week. The prizes were drawn on October 17th and totalled \$125,000, including 10 draws of \$500, 10 draws of \$1,000, one draw of \$10,000, as well as the grand prize draw of \$100,000. This lotto has been a tremendous success, selling out all 2,500 tickets last year and coming very close again this year, missing another sellout by only 108 tickets. Proceeds from this lotto are going towards the senior citizens’ building addition and towards the Blaine Lake Community Association’s skating rink roof project where they will be installing new energy-efficient lighting on the ice surface.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask all members of this Assembly to join me in recognizing firstly the Blaine Lake Seniors Association but also all those individuals involved in community building efforts across this province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Moose Jaw Rotary Carol Festival

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last night I took pleasure in enjoying the 72nd annual Rotary Carol Festival in Moose Jaw’s beautiful, historic Zion United Church. This festival brings many Moose Javians together to share in fellowship and one of the many joys of the Christmas season — listening to the joyous voices of the many talented performers.

The festival consisted of everyone from some of our high school choirs from Vanier, Central, and Peacock, to some of our elementary schools like Sunningdale, Palliser Heights, St. Agnes, William Grayson, and Cornerstone Christian. There were several instrumental groups that also took part in this three-day event, sharing with their audience their love of music and the joy of the season.

I am again amazed at the amount of talent the city of Moose Jaw puts forth. I want to forward an invitation to the members of the Assembly as well as the people of Saskatchewan to visit this or one of the many other fine and unique attractions of Moose Jaw and area.

Mr. Speaker, I’d like this Assembly to join me in acknowledging the Moose Jaw Rotary Club for their hard work and dedication and congratulate them on 72 years of bringing music and enjoyment to the friendly city of Moose Jaw. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moosomin.

Musical in Moosomin

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, on the weekend of November 25th through 27th, the Moosomin Convention Centre had the pleasure of hosting three sold-out performances of Andrew Lloyd Webber's excellent musical *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*.

For more than two hours, a large cast under the direction of Sandra Poole, Sherrie Meredith, and Raven Wood sang their hearts out with a large group of dancers accompanying them, complete with stunning choreography, beautiful costumes, and heavenly vocals. A live orchestra made up of local musicians provided the musical background without missing a beat. I had the privilege of attending the Sunday afternoon performance and was blown away by the production.

As one writer said,

They were singing and dancing, and doing it with such ease and talent that it looked as if they were all seasoned Broadway performers. Every choreographed move was right on time, every song sung professionally and beautifully, every movement and motion right on cue. Broadway had not come to Moosomin, but the Moosomin area had succeeded in creating Broadway.

Another person commented, "It was fantastic! I don't think you would see anything more professional and inspiring anywhere."

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of this Assembly to join me in thanking all the volunteers who helped make this production a reality and congratulate the cast and crew on putting on such a memorable show. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[10:15]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Yorkton.

The Meaning of Christmas

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we come to the end of this fall session once again and travel to our constituencies, our homes, friends, and families, it allows us to prepare for the approaching Christmas season, the season of the celebration of the birth of the son of God, Jesus Christ, and to reflect on the many divine blessings we enjoy in this province. Jesus came to Earth in a humble form of a baby with a message of peace and hope. He taught us in his time here to be mindful of those that are alone or hurting, have less or need help — in short, how to love. May we always live and think by his example.

During this Christmas season, let us also remember those with someone missing from their celebrations, Mr. Speaker, whether by distance or because they left this Earth much too soon. And let us pray that all who travel would be kept safe not only during the season but throughout the year.

The world tends to focus on decorations and presents as we celebrate the holiday season in our individual ways and cultural traditions. But may we all remember the true meaning of Christmas — the divine virgin birth of a child, the Messiah sent

to Earth for the redemption of all mankind. As John told us of the birth of Jesus:

The word became flesh and dwelled among us. We have seen the glory of the one and only Son, who came from God the Father full of grace and truth.

To everyone, Merry Christmas and have a safe, blessed, and prosperous new year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

Pension Plan Funding

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, as reported in the Provincial Auditor's report that was released last week, under this government, pension debt has skyrocketed. What is this minister doing to address this?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the pension liabilities in this province are indeed rising. There were decisions made by former governments in not only not putting aside the required dollars to fund the pension plans through the PEPP [public employees pension plan] program or also through the Saskatchewan teachers' program, which are all programs, Mr. Speaker, that have ended because we now have new plans.

Saskatchewan made the decision — a very good decision, I might add — in 1979 to move away from defined benefit plans to defined contribution plans. Mr. Speaker, there's an obligation for government to meet the required pension contributions to ensure that retirees continue to receive that pension, and we will do that, Mr. Speaker. And that is one of the reasons why you've seen in the estimates over the last number of years that contribution continues to rise and it will continue to rise for at least the next five to six years.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, for the minister to cast a stone at the opposition and their government record on this front is disappointing. And their record is clear. In the auditor's report — and I would ask all to look at page 224 of that report — that shows this astronomical growth. And the fact is the contributions that that minister references are far exceeded by the commitments that are being made by government.

Over the past four years alone, pension debt has grown from \$4.7 billion to \$6.2 billion. Now this is an increase of over 30 per cent, actually over 33 per cent, and represents more than \$1.5 billion. It's a major problem as addressed by the auditor's report. So to the minister: how is letting debt skyrocket in our best interest?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, we have an unfunded pension liability in this province. The pension liability continues to accumulate while people who have been under the plans continue to work towards the end of their careers. The

contributions that were not made in the past to those plans have now been committed to by former governments, by this government. We will continue to meet the obligation, Mr. Speaker, the obligation of the province to ensure that those pensions are indeed met.

We will do that. We will do that under the program that was in place under the NDP, and we will continue to ensure that pensions will be paid by the Government of Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, government has increased total debt three years running, three consecutive years. Pension debt has skyrocketed in the last four years. We know this government fails to report that pension debt properly, arguably dismissing its importance. The auditor has reported this as a major problem.

This growing debt, Mr. Speaker, we need to understand, represents the retirement funds of thousands of Saskatchewan people that have worked hard to earn and gain income security. They deserve to have confidence that their government will fulfill its obligations. And taxpayers deserve to have a plan to deal with this massively increasing debt. Action is required. To the minister, what's his strategy? What's his plan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, I think the plan of this government has been very clear. In the last four years, our government has reduced the debt of the province of Saskatchewan by \$3 billion.

Mr. Speaker, as the auditor points out, as the auditor points out, because of the improving financial position of the province of Saskatchewan, the government now will be able to meet the obligations of the pension plan much better than the outlook was a few years ago.

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker: the member opposite was part of an election platform that projected \$5 billion worth of spend. Mr. Speaker, I'm wondering where he would like to, what programs would we have to cut to ensure that the \$6 billion that he talks about today would be funded in one year, Mr. Speaker. What will he cut?

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

Plans for the Future

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, we've seen a rather thin Throne Speech that doesn't have a long-term vision for the province. We've understood here that we have some short-sighted management of our finances that the auditor has pointed out. We know that the Premier has magnanimously said, we'll listen to ideas from other places, including the opposition.

We also know that in a country, Norway, which didn't have any oil until 1970 or '71, they set up a fund called the Oljefondet, the Oil Fund, which is now called the Statens pensjonsfond — utland, basically the Government Pension Fund — Global. This idea of taking some portion of the share of the natural resources

that we have in this province is a good idea that should be used by this government.

Will the Premier look at a long-term savings plan that will cover and deal with some of these long-term management problems?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, as we've said very publicly, Mr. Speaker, there is legitimacy in what the opposition has proposed with respect to some sort of a futures fund, Mr. Speaker, some sort of a contribution from royalty revenue to the future of the province, to future generations, to the next economy. That might take the form of a fund when the debt's paid off or, Mr. Speaker, it might take the form of maybe an investment into something transformational like a global food security institute that can help build our next economy and help deal with hunger issues around the world. There are a number of ideas that are out there. Our government's going to be listening to all of those ideas.

But in the meantime, Mr. Speaker, what we're going to do is finish paying off the debt. That's what we campaigned on in the election. The idea was proposed by the opposition, as was about \$5 billion worth of other promises that they made. They wanted to use some of the resource revenue for this fund, some of the resource revenues to be shared by one particular group. Mr. Speaker, the people of the province voted to stay the course. And the course is less debt, Mr. Speaker, a competitive tax structure, and a leading economy in the country.

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

Support for Seniors

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, last week's Throne Speech said that the government wants to ensure that seniors are treated with dignity and respect. We share that desire, Mr. Speaker, but we know there is a lot of work to do.

There are many seniors in the province, Mr. Speaker, who are not yet ready for long-term care. They want to stay in their homes but they're unable to find the bit of support they need to stay in their homes. My question to the minister: what does he have to say to these seniors who want to stay in their homes but are unable to find the help that they need to do so?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, what we are doing for our seniors is an important part of our agenda: making sure that the seniors have money in their pockets, making sure that the number of seniors on the seniors' income plan has doubled, making sure that the money available to seniors will have tripled by the time this budget is finished.

Mr. Speaker, we know that there are people that have needs across this province and our province has been built on the hard work of our seniors. I assure you they will not be neglected like they were under the previous government who did not look at things like the seniors' income plan for 13 years.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, over 18,000 people in Saskatchewan currently have Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia. One of the top priorities for this government should be providing support to the caregivers of these individuals, Mr. Speaker. We know this is an important thing because it keeps families, it keeps couples together. And it also reduces strain on the health care system, especially when we look at long-term care facilities. For this to happen, the Alzheimer Society has asked for increased funding for its First Link program.

My question to the minister: will the Sask Party government increase funding for the First Link program offered by the Alzheimer Society, recognizing that the return on this investment is very significant?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Highways and Infrastructure.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the seniors built this province and, Mr. Speaker, this government holds them in very high esteem. The member opposite mentioned long-term care facilities. Mr. Speaker, in a minute I'll elaborate on what we've been doing on that end.

But to his issue: before seniors are ready for long-term care, this government has increased home care budgets by 34 per cent, Mr. Speaker, for home care. Mr. Speaker, seniors are very important to us. As far as when seniors are ready for long-term care, 13 new long-term care facilities are ready to go and being built around the province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, on top of that, we listen to communities. We recognized when they said to us that the old funding formula, which was initiated and carried forward by the members of the opposition when they were in government, 65/35 was too onerous for communities, Mr. Speaker. We listened. We changed it to 80/20, Mr. Speaker. We're moving forward for seniors in this province.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, the minister pulled out the wrong briefing note on the topic. The question was not about long-term care facilities. It was about reducing the demand for long-term care facilities by providing supports to couples, to families, who are living in their home.

My question to the minister. While supports through the Alzheimer Society are important, they are also calling, seniors in Saskatchewan are also calling for respite care and home care. We know this is important because it allows people to stay in their homes longer. My question to the minister: if it is such a priority, why was there no mention of respite care or home care in the Throne Speech? Does the government not realize that this is a major priority for Saskatchewan people?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Highways and Infrastructure.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again home care is a priority for this government. Seniors are a priority for this government. I will say that under the guidance of the Premier, the Minister of Health has done very good work in this and in many other areas of health care, Mr. Speaker. We've been leading-edge.

Under the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, we had the worst waiting lists in the country for surgery, Mr. Speaker. That's improved dramatically. Mr. Speaker, our Minister of Health has done an amazing job in my mind in providing health care not only for seniors but for all citizens of this province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, the question wasn't how much that minister likes the Health minister. The question was about providing care to Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, a major issue, a major issue, Mr. Speaker, that seniors also care about here in the province is high-quality end-of-life care. I know one professional who works in this area, Mr. Speaker, and what this person told me, they said, "There's a lot of talk about Saskatchewan being the best place to live, but we desperately need to make Saskatchewan a better place to die."

And I know, Mr. Speaker, for many of us in this Chamber, many in the province who have journeyed with family members through that process, it's a very important issue, Mr. Speaker. We have much to do to enhance supports for Saskatchewan people, for seniors in this area. In Saskatoon specifically there are a group of individuals who are working for the development of a hospice in Saskatoon.

My question to the minister: does the Sask Party government support the establishment of a hospice? And what other plans are in place in order to improve end-of-life care for Saskatchewan people?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Highways and Infrastructure.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware of discussions that may have happened or may happen down the road between the Minister of Health and the people in Saskatoon that the member opposite's speaking to. But I will say this, Mr. Speaker, on seniors, now he is talking about long-term care, Mr. Speaker.

Our long-term care record frankly, Mr. Speaker, is amazing compared to the members opposite. They closed long-term care beds, Mr. Speaker. Our government is opening long-term care beds. Mr. Speaker, in my own community of Rosetown, Mr. Speaker, there's a long-term care facility going on as there is in 12 other communities around the province.

Mr. Speaker, we've listened to communities. They've told us of the need for long-term care beds. We're moving forward on that, Mr. Speaker. On the funding, as I mentioned earlier, 80 per cent funded by this government, Mr. Speaker, unlike the

members opposite who stuck to an old formula of 65/35 which, Mr. Speaker, was almost irrelevant because they didn't build any long-term care facilities. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[10:30]

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

Shelter Accommodation

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday in the House the Minister of Social Services said:

We know there's more work to do to ensure that people have a safe place to go in the evenings and at night. But we also know that every individual, their cases are looked at to find out why they are still in a hotel, and there's always answers and reasons behind that.

To the minister: how many of the people currently staying in hotels paid for by the government are in emergency situations? And how many are there because there's simply nowhere else to go at the shelter rate the government is currently paying?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know in this discussion yesterday we had an opportunity to say that the number of people who were staying in hotel rooms had decreased considerably March over March, and we know that it's now down to about four nights. And I know that this is not a good number but at the same time we've built 131 more shelter spaces in places like Saskatoon with the Salvation Army's Mumford House. In Regina we have My Aunt's Place. We have a new shelter in planning in Prince Albert right now.

Mr. Speaker, we know that this number is down from when the members opposite were in government. And we also know that the important part is working with CBOs [community-based organization], to work with them to not just supply a shelter for the night, but to make sure that they have the support to live in their own home.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Social Services claims to have answers for what she calls anomalies. Yesterday we spoke with an advocate about a woman who has no other option but to live in her truck in the middle of the winter, so she is not benefiting from all those shelters the minister's talked about.

This senior's fleeing a domestic violence situation. Social Services initially gave her permission to stay in a hotel starting Monday. She got moved in but was then told that they wouldn't pay for the hotel room for that night. So now she's calling her truck home once again. Apparently making \$500 per month from CPP [Canada Pension Plan] means the minister thinks this woman should be able to afford to find a place in the private market.

To the minister: how is this that a senior fleeing domestic violence, earning just \$500 per month, does not qualify for help from this government when others are being housed in hotels for up to seven months?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am sure the member opposite is aware that I don't know the individual case that they're talking about.

And our goal is to make sure that people do have a safe place to stay in the evenings. And that's why we've been working on a number of fronts right across government to make sure that the funds that we bring in from government go right across the priorities of government. We don't bring money in through revenues just to put it in individual government spending. We make sure that monies from every ministry goes towards the needs of the people of the province.

Mr. Speaker, that's why we have removed 114,000 people off the tax roll. That's why we paid down the debt, to make sure that the interest rate is lower so that we have more money to spend on people with needs. That's why we've increased funding to CBOs by over 14 per cent.

The individual that the member's talking about, I would appreciate seeing the case that she's talking about. But you know what? Individual cases have to be looked at through individual eyes, and specifically, and I'll be glad to do that.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the Sask Party is refusing to help a senior impacted by domestic violence who is forced to live in her truck — she spent the night in her truck last night outside of the YW [YWCA — Young Women's Christian Association] in Saskatoon in the winter — I think the minister is definitely right that there's a lot more work to do. We hear that quite frequently from the minister. She was very pleased with her reduced statistics yesterday and today again, but when we hear stories like this, it begs the question: is the Sask Party intentionally making it a lot more difficult to get assistance in order to drive down those numbers, including the number of hotel stays?

To the minister: how many other people like this woman are being told that there's no room in the inn because the Sask Party government wants to manipulate the statistics in their favour?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the member opposite is getting some kind of pleasure at making those kind of comments when they . . . I'm sure the member opposite knows that our goal as government is to make sure that everybody who lives in Saskatchewan calls this place the best place in the world to live.

Mr. Speaker, we have income supports. We have emergency supports. We have access to shelters. And if there is no spaces

in those shelters, then we also put people up in hotel rooms. When there's individual cases, Mr. Speaker, we have people that are hired, not just through government, but through CBOs, to make sure that they can be looked at. Part of the policy we have of Social Services is to make sure that people who do not have a shelter, we will pay for a hotel room. I don't know what the case is; I'll be glad to look into it. But I assure you that our government cares about every one of the people in the province and we're working hard to ensure they're part of our great province.

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

Timing of Assistance Payments

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am glad that the minister is saying that this government cares about poor people, and I'm sure that would extend to people on social assistance. And if that is the case, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the minister could update the House. What is the change in practice that has gone on in Social Services where before it used to be the case where social assistance payments would get in the hands of families before Christmas whereas now that is not the case? Could the minister explain that to the House?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, this is a change but it didn't happen this month. It happened a while ago to make sure that the money came in at a time when people could . . . after Christmas they had money to pay their bills; they had money for food and for their shelter. This isn't something that just came up overnight. It was something that was brought forward a number of months ago, and I assure you that our goal is to make sure that people can budget their money right across the month and that they will have the money they can do, they can have to have a great Christmas in Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, the past practice had been to ensure that social assistance payments had been in the hands of families, on their way at least five working days before Christmas, before the last working day before Christmas. That had been the past practice. That had worked relatively well in making a reasonably minor accommodation for the 25,000-plus families that count on social assistance funds to make sure that they're paying the bills and keeping the body and soul together. As we know, Mr. Speaker, those kind of concerns are all the more pressing when it comes to the Christmas season. This is something that had worked in the past for families that were receiving social assistance. It works still to this day in terms of the way that the federal government flows out certain of its funds to people receiving different federal benefits.

Will the minister change this decision? Will the minister listen to their own rhetoric when it comes to what they espouse around caring for people at Christmas? Will they ensure that these dollars get in the hands of those families before Christmas?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, there are lots of things that happened in the past that have changed, and I think the people of the province are glad about that in the majority. And when you look at the changes that are made with the way that people are sitting in the House today, you'll know that the people of the province decided that our plan as a government is what they needed to have happen. They also knew that what we are doing is based on affordability and sustainability and making sure that we care about the people — everybody in this province.

That's why, for example, Mr. Speaker, the biggest expenditure in our platform was for people with disabilities. That's why we are . . . Another big expenditure was for seniors, for tripling the amount of money they had. Mr. Speaker, the people on social services are very important to us, and that's why we're also working with Advanced Education to make sure that we can move them into employment. Mr. Speaker, the changing of . . . The money that's going to people on social services isn't changing, but what is happening is the face of the people of the province where we're going to work whenever possible.

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

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, in my constituency office we've had a lot of calls and we've had a lot of contact from people that, you know, they have a hard enough time making a go of it on social assistance. This change makes it all that much more harder to make a go of it at the Christmas season.

Would the minister reconsider this decision? Would the minister make the right choice in terms of . . . It's not a huge thing. This is something that the federal government does with various payments that it makes. But it makes a huge difference to these families that are already budgeted pretty much to the penny, Mr. Speaker. It's the Christmas season. Would the minister change the decision this government has made in terms of making sure that these funds are in the hands of families before Christmas so that they can have one less stress to worry about at this Christmas season?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — The member opposite has asked a very important question because the people that are on social assistance do, are looking forward to Christmas as well. They're also looking forward to tomorrow in Saskatchewan; that's the day after Christmas and the day after that as well. They want to make sure that they have a government that's looking, and a province that's looking forward tomorrow, not just looking backwards, looking at what we can do to ensure that there is money in their pockets at all times.

Mr. Speaker, that's why we have done things like increase the shelter rates. That's why we've done things like making sure that there's an extra \$1,200 in the pockets of seniors at the end of the year through some of our programs. That's why we have \$2,000 more in the pockets of couples because of our programs. Mr. Speaker, you know what? Things like the low-income seniors' plan and the children's prescription drug plans, that makes a difference to them as well.

Mr. Speaker, we put money into CBOs. We put money into the food banks. We put money into programs that will help our seniors and our families right across the province. Indexing the housing has made a difference to them as well.

There's work to do, Mr. Speaker, and as a government I am proud to say that we're moving forward, not just with the people in this room, but for everybody in this province who are proud to call Saskatchewan home.

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

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — What is the member's point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Mr. Speaker, during the question period the member for Saskatoon Massey Place referenced a number of quotes during his questions. I would ask him to table the documents from which he was quoting.

The Speaker: — It's been the tradition of this House that the opposition does not have to table quotes or documents, so your point of order is not well taken.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 35 — *The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Amendment Act, 2011/Loi de 2011 modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur l'Assemblée législative et le Conseil exécutif*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 35, *The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Amendment Act, 2011* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice has moved first reading of a Bill No. 35, *The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Amendment Act, 2011*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

The Speaker: — When shall this Bill be read a second time?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say, next sitting of the House.

Bill No. 36 — *The Constituency Boundaries Amendment Act, 2011*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 36, *The Constituency Boundaries Amendment Act, 2011* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice and Attorney General has moved first reading of a Bill No. 36, *The Constituency Boundaries Amendment Act, 2011*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

The Speaker: — When shall this Bill be read a second time?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Next sitting, Mr. Speaker.

Bill No. 601 — *The Jimmy's Law Act*

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

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 601, *The Jimmy's Law Act* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — The member for Saskatoon Centre has moved first reading of a Bill No. 601, *The Jimmy's Law Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

The Speaker: — When shall this Bill be read a second time?

Mr. Forbes: — Next sitting of the House.

Bill No. 602 — *The School Bus Drivers (Saskatchewan) Appreciation Day Act*

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 602, the school bus drivers appreciation day Act be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — The member for Athabasca has moved first reading of a Bill No. 602, *The School Bus Drivers (Saskatchewan) Appreciation Day Act*. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

The Speaker: — When shall this Bill be read a second time?

Mr. Belanger: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

[10:45]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the answers to questions 118 through 131.

The Speaker: — The Government Whip has tabled answers to questions 118 to 131. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to order the answers to questions 132 through 143.

The Speaker: — The Government Whip has ordered questions 132 to 143. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the answers to questions 144 through 184.

The Speaker: — The Government Whip has tabled answers to questions to 144 to 184.

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

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

Reporting of Government Finances

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to weigh in on a debate today of a matter of great importance to Saskatchewan people, the province as a whole certainly now and well into our future, Mr. Speaker.

At the end of this, my speaking here today, I'm going to be moving a motion. I'll read it into the record here at this point in time now, and that's:

That this Assembly urge the government to change how it reports to the public on its finances by focusing on summary financial statements that are prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, in keeping with the recommendation of the Provincial Auditor.

So I'll be moving that at the end of my words here today.

This is a matter of great importance to Saskatchewan people, and it's about the accountability and transparency of the government and how it reports to Saskatchewan people. It's a matter of fairness. And it certainly would be a shift that's important to Saskatchewan people, to provide the openness and even the fostering of understanding of our public finances, Mr. Speaker. That's certainly in the best interests of a government, of any government, and certainly should be the aim of this government to provide to Saskatchewan people.

Of course the current scenario right now is well known. It's been certainly discussed by financial experts for some time. And many individuals in the past few years have weighed in on this discussion as Saskatchewan has remained a holdout on this front and really dug its heels in from providing the kind of transparency that the people of our province deserve.

Right now as it stands, it's entirely inappropriate by the way, how this government accounts for our finances. And quite simply, the government does not comply with public sector accounting standards, public sector GAAP, generally accepted accounting principles. And we're the last holdout in Canada. We're out of line with the rest of this country, the federal government, and all other provinces in providing that sort of transparency to Saskatchewan people.

And it's fair to say, Mr. Speaker, that it's of great importance to provide the true and full state of our finances to Saskatchewan people. And that's what the NDP have been calling for, that's what we continue to call for, and that's why we raise this issue here today in this important debate and we're looking for action from this government.

The current scenario that's put forward allows the government to manipulate the outcomes on an annual basis and to report that in an incorrect fashion back to the public. Of course this doesn't foster anything other than misunderstanding and is a major barrier for Saskatchewan people when they're trying to analyze their finances. And I know Saskatchewan people to be a fiscally prudent, fiscally responsible lot of people, and they care for the good management and good stewardship of our finances in our province. And it's only fair that they have the information provided to them in a fashion that's fair and consistent with the rest of Canada so that they can do that analysis and engage in that discussion.

What's going on right now with this government is nothing short of manipulation, Mr. Speaker, and certainly has proved itself to be an exploitation of the fiscal tools availed to this government. And it's hugely unfortunate when we look at the actual consequences of this.

Some of the consequences of course are just that the public isn't provided the transparency and the information that it should receive in a fashion that makes it understandable and explainable. But further to that, what these tools that are availed to this government have allowed this government to do, at a time where they continue to tout record growth and prosperity, is in fact to not be moving our province forward in a fiscally responsible fashion and not to be improving our fiscal position. And quite simply, they focus on one set of books that are an inaccurate view of the whole functions of government and that certainly hide the exploitation and the draining of funds and equity that this government possesses, Mr. Speaker.

If we compare this to a household scenario that individuals across this province would be familiar with, this is nothing different than a household or an individual pretending to be balancing their budget by suggesting that their chequing account was balanced but while, at the same time, increasing their credit card debt and increasing their credit lines or their mortgages to transfer dollars over to cover off their unbalanced budget or their lack of balance in their budget, or just the same,

draining the children's university fund to fund operations of the day. Of course that's irresponsible management for a household, Mr. Speaker.

People across this province can't manage their finances in that fashion and we should expect better, and we do expect better from our government. And that's where we're calling for an improvement both by way of their stewardship and record, but also by way of how they report to the public so that the Saskatchewan people can be well aware of the state of our finances.

So when we're looking . . . I guess people might ask well, what's the difference out of these pieces? When I highlight the difference about draining the funds, whether that be a university fund or a savings fund or pensions, this is what this government's really doing in a very short-sighted fashion when they're draining huge equity out of our Crown corporations. Over the last four years of record, a shameful record of taking more than \$2 billion from our Crown sector at a time where these utilities can certainly, require those dollars to make those investments and enhancements needed to provide services at a low cost to all Saskatchewan people and to make sure that those Crown corporations are in a strong position. Something that has really deteriorated in the four years under this sort of management.

So we've seen that \$2 billion from our Crown corporations, and we've seen a significant raid on our rainy day fund at a time where, Mr. Speaker, we continue to hear that things couldn't be better. So we see this inappropriate utilization of dollars that should be bettering our fiscal position moving forward, and we've seen over \$2 billion taken from our rainy day fund over this government's short record in office. And that's a disappointing record, Mr. Speaker.

So we're calling for transparency. We're calling for accountability. And, Mr. Speaker, we're joined by financial experts across Canada and we're joined by the Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan, an independent officer of this Assembly, in making that call.

We're the last holdout in Canada. That puts us in a very weak position to defend, as the government continues to try to do so on a day-to-day basis. And members can heckle from their feet all they want on this, Mr. Speaker, but what I'd urge them to do, is instead of sitting in the backbenches and heckling from their feet, I would urge them, Mr. Speaker, to bring forward the kind of action and to bring forward the kind of changes and to provide the kind of fairness to Saskatchewan people that they deserve.

Second to that, I would urge this government to provide the kind of financial stewardship that puts Saskatchewan in a better position, not only today, but tomorrow and generations forward, Mr. Speaker, something that this government's failing miserably on, Mr. Speaker.

Whether we're looking at debt, the fact that now we're in the third consecutive year of debt being increased, Mr. Speaker, or the fact by way of the Provincial Auditor's report — it's not my word, Mr. Speaker, but that of the Provincial Auditor — the third consecutive year that we're running a deficit in

Saskatchewan. That the Sask Party government is running a deficit, Mr. Speaker, is certainly a concern to Saskatchewan people who expect better. And quite simply, at a time of prosperity, at a time of touted record revenues and growth, they expect their government to improve their financial position as a province and then of course how that impacts Saskatchewan people and services now and well into the future.

I would like to highlight just some of the comments from the Provincial Auditor's recent reports. There is significant focus in the Provincial Auditor's most recent report that came out just last week. Mr. Speaker, that makes this a very important topic here right now as well and adds that third party validation that's so significant to hopefully urging this government that's really dug their heels in and failing to provide that sort of transparency, urging this government to do better and to make those changes.

And we hear a lot about this brave new day in Saskatchewan and these record revenues. I think what Saskatchewan people deserve is a government that's going to be fair, straightforward, transparent in explaining that financial position to Saskatchewan people.

I know the auditor has said in her statement of last week, that I quote, "Simply put, the way Saskatchewan publicly reports its annual surpluses and deficits to the citizens of Saskatchewan is out of sync with the rest of Canada," all other provinces and the federal government, Mr. Speaker.

I know that if I go further on here to the quotes, to quote the Provincial Auditor's statement of last week:

The press release highlights the anticipated \$25 million pre-transfer surplus in the General Revenue Fund, but makes no mention of the fact that the Government is now forecasting a \$304 million deficit on a summary basis. This \$304 million deficit is the more comparable figure to the financial results being reported in other provinces in Canada.

So it's pretty rich and pretty insincere, Mr. Speaker, for that Premier and that government to run advertisements and to make statements and provide speeches to the Saskatchewan public about balancing the books when it's not the fact, Mr. Speaker, and the fact is validated and verified by the Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan. And as we hear this message that somehow we're the only province that's running a balanced budget, Mr. Speaker, the auditor lays it out right here in her report that that's simply not true. And comparing apples to apples and utilizing public sector accounting standards, this province, this government, is running a deficit in this fiscal year of \$304 million, Mr. Speaker, and it's about being straightforward and honest with Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker.

As we look at some of the other aspects of what's not being reported, Mr. Speaker, and it was highlighted today in question period because it's of utmost importance, is the pension debt in this province, Mr. Speaker, the unfunded liability that exists and is owed to Saskatchewan people by way of commitments, and is reflected, Mr. Speaker, in the confidence that they should have in a government to fulfill its obligations. And these are Saskatchewan people, thousands of Saskatchewan people that

have worked their lives to build the certainty of retirement income and of income security. And this is something that's been compromised by this government, Mr. Speaker.

And I think it's a fair question, Mr. Speaker, with a government that dismisses that reporting to the public and that pension debt, Mr. Speaker, how significant are those commitments that need to be rock solid to Saskatchewan people? But further than that, Mr. Speaker, taxpayers deserve to know the true state of their finances. And to have dismissed this massive growth in pension debt, Mr. Speaker, and to have no regard to putting forward a plan or actions or strategy to address it, Mr. Speaker, is simply not sustainable and it's certainly not responsible, Mr. Speaker.

When I look at some of the pension information here, over the past four years, Mr. Speaker, this government has actually increased pension debt by over 33 per cent, Mr. Speaker. They've taken it from what was \$4.7 billion in 2007, not an insignificant amount of money, Mr. Speaker, and have increased it to \$6.2 billion. That's an increase of \$1.5 billion, and again representing dollars that are owed to Saskatchewan people and representing their livelihoods, their peace of mind, their quality of life by way of their retirement incomes, Mr. Speaker.

To not be reporting this in a fashion that's consistent with accounting standards and public sector accounting standards is less than fair. And to not have a plan and a strategy to address these obligations . . . And to make sure that at a time of growth and prosperity that we're in fact advancing these circumstances in making the contributions — that quite simply they need to surpass what the obligations are to Saskatchewan people — that's not occurring, Mr. Speaker. And it represents weak financial stewardship, Mr. Speaker, and it's short-sighted and certainly doesn't have the long view for Saskatchewan people.

At this point in time, Mr. Speaker, I would like to just wrap up some of my comments here. But the fact is we're not complying with public sector accounting standards. We're out of line with the rest of Canada in our reporting. It's a matter of accountability. It's a matter of transparency. It's a matter of being fair. And from a perspective of management in government, it's a matter of not being short-sighted, which we currently see, Mr. Speaker, and taking care of needs of today but also ensuring that we're in a better position tomorrow, Mr. Speaker. The current management is unacceptable. The current reporting is unacceptable, and we need changes on both, Mr. Speaker.

[11:00]

I know that this is an issue for Saskatchewan people and for the province as a whole, certainly now and certainly it is for generations forward, Mr. Speaker. And it's time for Saskatchewan to get in line with the rest of Canada, to heed the concerns of the auditor to comply with the recommendations and with public sector accounting standards. And at this point in time, Mr. Speaker, I will highlight my motion that I'll be reading into record once again, and I'll move the following:

That this Assembly urge the government to change how it reports to the public on its finances by focusing on summary financial statements that are prepared in

accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, in keeping with the recommendation of the Provincial Auditor.

Mr. Speaker, quite simply it's a time for Saskatchewan to move forward on this front. It's time for Saskatchewan people to have the kind of transparency that's provided in the rest of Canada, to understand the whole of the operations, to not be robbed of the information that highlights the management of government. And it's time for this government to provide that. And as I've said, over that past four years this record has not been a strong one. At a time where we've seen our Crowns weakened by trying to cover off inadequate budgeting, in a time where we've seen our rainy day funds being drained, Mr. Speaker, we should expect better by way of management, and certainly we need to expect better by way of accounting to the people of this province, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much for having this debate, and I'll move the motion at this point in time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — You have to move it.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — I did read it in just a moment ago. I'll read it in again.

The Speaker: — Do it again.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — I move at this point in time:

That this Assembly urge the government to change how it reports to the public on its finances by focusing on summary financial statements that are prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, in keeping with the recommendation of the Provincial Auditor.

I so move. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Regina Rosemont:

That this Assembly urge the government to change how it reports to the public on its finances by focusing on summary financial statements that are prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, in keeping with the recommendations of the Provincial Auditor.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion? I recognize the member for Yorkton.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to join in this debate. You know, if I'm not mistaken, I think that's the second gimme that the House Leader's given the opposition in the last two weeks. So you know, a lot of credit to the House Leader for being so fair.

First off I'd really truly like to thank the Provincial Auditor for her hard work, her commitment, her expertise. She's a very capable woman, and this government has the utmost respect for her and gratitude for her and her work. I found something a bit odd. The member across stated just a few moments ago that the

current practices aren't understandable, they're hard to explain, which I find odd in the fact that it's the same practices used by his party when they were in government only a few short years ago. In fact he used both the summary statement and the general statement.

Mr. Speaker, to move just to a summary statement would really not be fair in comparisons with past years. If we moved to strictly a summary statement, it would be just not really comparing apples to apples. This method of using both the general statement and the summary statement in fact gives the public and the government to truly compare what has been and what currently is happening to make plans as we move ahead into the future.

Just to begin with, we'll go through a little bit of background on the current practices. In Saskatchewan truly we are focused on an annual budget that is based on the GRF [General Revenue Fund]. And this has been the practice — that plus the adding in of the summary financial statement as I mentioned — since 2004, 2005, which does in fact . . . The summary financial statements add in the Crown Investments Corporation's results, Crown investment . . . Crown corporations, Treasury Board Crowns, not-for-profit organizations, Mr. Speaker.

As the member across seems to allude to they are somehow hidden, hidden somewhere, well, Mr. Speaker, they are hidden in clear sight and are a matter of public record, accessible to anyone should they wish to look at those documents. We are a government that is fully committed to transparent and transparency with the public and with the opposition and all those concerned, Mr. Speaker. And again the financial reporting of this nature to the public is in accordance what has happened . . . which is what has happened in the past, and again both methods are available to the public.

The General Revenue Fund is where all public monies are collected and disbursed and allows people to see how their money is allocated. So, Mr. Speaker, in this regard it doesn't add in the — as the member spoke about and the Finance minister spoke about earlier today — the unfunded liabilities. And I'll touch on some of those in a bit longer on in my remarks. But this is a true reflection of what the actual government operations are entailing, not going as far as with the Crown corporations, Crown Investments Corporation, but again that information is all readily available.

The GRF statements provide a report on the annual budget assemblies prepared by the Legislative Assembly, and they are also a significant public accountability document. And they do provide a report against the annual budget estimates approved by the Legislative Assembly. So in accordance with the budgets that do get passed in this building, they do in fact line up with what would be expected in reporting those.

The summary financial statement does provide information on the results and financial position of the government as a whole, and this is true, and that's why they are available. We can compare what the government is doing, and when rolled into the facts of Crown investments and the Crown corporations, not-for-profit organizations that do get funding from the government, it does give the whole picture. And again that's totally accessible to the public.

We do, we continue to, and we will continue to do two sets of financial statements: produce a General Revenue Fund statement that does provide a clear picture of government expenditures and revenues as well as a summary statement which does come out twice a year, which does include Crown corporations and other government bodies, which is in line with other provinces. And this is consistent with previous practices of previous governments — I believe the Conservatives in the '80s, the New Democrats through the '90s. And now we are carrying on with that same practice now, Mr. Speaker.

Again we do appreciate the auditor's views. In this case, however, we do take the position that it's important for the government to budget and to report according to the way it's organized and operates, as I've stated, what happens in the Legislative Assembly and through committee work, and in fact the way it does get reported.

The summary financial statement does provide a look at all the government operations. It does provide two sets of books, provides people with a better look at the state of the province's finances, and again totally accessible to the public. Showing only the summary statements, we think that would have . . . is not necessarily in the best interest of the people of the province to not truly show an example of what is now and what the practices were in the past and do a direct comparison and a fair comparison. We are actually doing what many other, if not all other, provinces do, producing the financial statements in the same way as most other provinces.

The difference is that we also produce the General Revenue Fund statements, Mr. Speaker, which other provinces as a whole don't. So by providing both, we do carry on with practices of the past but do in fact provide the documents that any other province does.

I know the auditor would prefer that we focus only on the summary financial statements, but we do think that General Revenue Fund statements help people understand where their actual tax dollars are going. And again that's been the focus for many decades of this Assembly and governments in the past.

When you look at all the money we raise from taxes and resources and then subtract all of our spending from programs like emergency flood relief, we still do expect to balance the budget — and some of those comments shortly. And when you include all the government in summary statements, you will see the effects of the global volatility on investment returns of the Auto Fund, Workers' Compensation Board, and higher crop insurance payouts.

But, Mr. Speaker, one thing I'd like to touch on in my final minutes of this debate, the members across, and it's been brought up in debate today, is the platforms that were presented by the now governing Sask Party and the New Democrats in opposition and the exorbitant spending that they were planning on carrying through with. And it begs the question, how would you get that money? We know there's not a money tree. We know there isn't that much accessibility even increasing the royalty rates as they were speaking of through the election. There just isn't enough there. So it begs the question, where would that money come from? And I would argue, as in their past practices, raising taxes which is not acceptable to this

government or this party. That lends to a bit of hypocrisy, from my view.

I would have to ask the question as, I think, brought up by the Premier earlier today: where would they cut? Would they cut funding to a children's hospital? Would they cut funding to some of the housing programs that we've laid out that are starting to show dividends? Would they make cuts to disaster relief? I know Yorkton and surrounding area, the South, the Southwest, the North experienced all these flooding disasters. Would they cut funding to PDAP [provincial disaster assistance program]?

Would they cut funding to the crop support and our agricultural support for our farmers? Would they cut some of the increases of support we've done for the seniors' income plan? Would they cut maybe some of the disability support that have been brought out by our government and expanded on in the Throne Speech and going to be increased over the number of years to come? Would they in fact cut the tax relief that we've given to the people of the province in our four years in government, Mr. Speaker? As it was touched on by the Minister of Social Services earlier, 114,000 of the lowest income earners in the province no longer pay any provincial income tax. Would they cut, as was mentioned by the Minister of Highways earlier, would they cut and roll back to that 35/65 split for health care facilities when we move forward with the 20/80 split, Mr. Speaker?

Would they cut the record investment of their Crowns? The member from Rosemont touched on the Crown investment and Crown debt expanding. And all the years I had in business, Mr. Speaker, I knew I had to invest from time to time in equipment that wouldn't pay dividends in that year or the year after, but that equipment, that infrastructure was very important in having a successful business for many years to come, providing service to the people of Yorkton and making sure I had a viable business that also provided employment and helped to fuel the economy in my home riding of Yorkton.

So I would argue . . . I know the member from Riversdale mentioned something about power issues in the west part of Saskatoon. Would they in fact want to cut SaskPower investments so those problems couldn't be addressed? Mr. Speaker, I really have a lot of questions about that.

The member across also spoke of financial experts across Canada. Well, Mr. Speaker, financial experts such as Standard & Poor's recently gave Saskatchewan the highest credit rating it has ever seen — a AAA. So I think those financial experts have spoken. Again I would question, would they raise taxes to pay for some of these promises?

I would also like to point out that this budget also, past budget also includes a \$700 million balance of the Growth and Financial Security Fund.

So, Mr. Speaker, I see my time is rolling to a close, so just to say that obviously we aren't in line with the motion of this opposition. And I am believing that most of my colleagues on this side of the House will not be speaking in favour of this motion brought forward by the member from Regina Rosemont but will be in fact speaking against it, and I will be doing so as

well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just witnessed an incredibly baffling speech by the member from Yorkton, talking about what the, what the . . . What was he talking about? We're currently talking about reporting on summary, we're currently talking about reporting on a summary financial basis, Mr. Speaker, and not about . . . That member from Yorkton was asking what, what the opposition would cut. That has absolutely nothing to do with . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . We do not support cutting a single thing, Mr. Speaker. But what we do support is moving to reporting on summary financial reporting.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to enter the debate urging the government to change how it reports its finances to the public. It's not the first time the NDP has been talking about this. In fact our current Finance critic, the member from Regina Rosemont, introduced last spring a private member's Bill requiring government to use generally accepted accounting principles for the public sector and report on a summary focus, bringing Saskatchewan in line with the rest of Canada. So this is most certainly not the first time we've been speaking about this, Mr. Speaker.

But we're very pleased that the auditor continues to press the things that we're talking about as well. I don't believe either, Mr. Speaker, that in my first two years in the legislature that the member from Regina Rosemont missed a day presenting petitions pointing out that this government was in fact running a deficit and increasing — not decreasing — our debt load, contrary to Sask Party literature stating otherwise.

But the reality is we're not here today to debate, to discuss specifically this government's consecutive deficits and rising debt in this province. That said, I do think it's worth noting that even though we have record revenues in this province, thanks to our abundance of natural resources, the government is still managing to run deficits and rack up debt and hasn't been clear with the people of Saskatchewan about this.

But we are talking today, Mr. Speaker, about the Provincial Auditor's report last week and our motion for the government to become more transparent in the way it reports its finances. The auditor, Bonnie Lysyk, too called on the government to adopt summary financial statements or an entire government perspective, not just the GRF or General Revenue Fund, as its basis for reporting its finances to the public.

So the one thing the auditor points out is that we are out of step with most provinces and the federal government in how we report our finances to the public. So just to quote the auditor, she says, "Simply put, the way that Saskatchewan publicly reports its annual surpluses and deficits to the citizens of Saskatchewan is out of sync with the rest of Canada." So we're not. We are doing our own thing, Mr. Speaker, here, and it doesn't benefit the people of Saskatchewan. So yes, perhaps they think that the auditor is wrong.

[11:15]

So . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And I hear the member opposite from Martensville heckling about what the governments did in the past or what previous administrations did. It's 2011, Mr. Speaker, and I am . . . quite frankly, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, it's time. Standards and principles change. And you know what? Standards and principles change, and it's the responsibility of the government to evolve and change with the times, Mr. Speaker. It's no excuse, it is a poor excuse, Mr. Speaker, to say, it is a poor excuse, Mr. Speaker, to say that just because a previous government didn't do something that it's acceptable not to evolve and change with the times.

While that's . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . oh I hear over there some heckles about the government has a big mandate so they can do whatever the heck they want and report how they want. That's not, that is not good practice, Mr. Speaker. So when the Sask Party government boasted in the past about being the only province not running a deficit, this just isn't the case. It's about being able to compare apples to apples, or in this case summary financial statements to summary financial statements, which the government is not using to report numbers clearly to the public.

Mr. Speaker, we heard from the member from Yorkton saying that, oh the summary financial statements are hidden in clear sight. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's certainly was not well reported on any of the Sask Party literature that we've seen from this government in the time that I've been around, Mr. Speaker. And the member from Yorkton says that summary financial statements are hidden in clear sight.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not an accountant, but I also know that most citizens of Saskatchewan are not accountants either. And in terms of transparency and accountability and pure citizen engagement, Mr. Speaker, citizens need to be able to easily access and understand the books of the government. This is about being able to help people understand what is going on in their government. We need to know so we can, as citizens, we can make our case for certain policies as well.

So this is about engagement of citizens. Citizens need to know what is going on in their government. And quite frankly, it's brutally unfair to citizens when they hear the opposition or the auditor talking about one thing and the government saying, oh no, this is the case; this is the case. And it's very confusing for people.

We see low voter turnouts, and we see people disengaging from the political process, Mr. Speaker. We see people disengaging from the political process. And part of it is because people don't know what to think when they hear from government members and they get conflicting information. So people start to tune out. That's the last thing we want, Mr. Speaker. We want citizens to be engaged and to be involved and to know what's going on in their governments.

So again . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, you know what? So I would challenge, I would challenge the member. I would challenge the member from Martensville to talk to her constituents about this and find out if in fact they're going to the website. Most people are getting their information, Mr. Speaker, from news releases and from reporting in the media. The average citizen is not going to know or take the time to go

to a government website saying, I think that I want to know if the government is reporting on a summary financial basis. They hear that surplus deficit, this is what they hear, Mr. Speaker, and they accept that as gospel. That is not fair or not right, Mr. Speaker.

If I as a citizen, Mr. Speaker, if I go to my bank or to my credit union, the Affinity Credit Union's in Saskatoon, and I say to my lender, I say, you know what? I'm doing pretty good here. Look. Just take a look at my chequebook. I'm doing well. And they say, well Danielle, you know what? You're drawing down on Hennessey and Ophelia's education account, or you've racked up a couple thousand dollars on your credit card. You really aren't balancing the books. And this is the fact of the matter, is this government is not balancing its books and not being transparent and clear. And this will have long-term impact, Mr. Speaker, on government's ability to serve and support citizens going down the roads.

And I still, Mr. Speaker, I'm a bit dumbfounded that we talk about the summary financial statements being hidden in clear sight. Again, the average citizen, Mr. Speaker, is not going to a website to find out what government finances are like. They are getting information from news releases. Complex information is being oversimplified and not being made clear for the people of Saskatchewan.

And at the bare minimum, Mr. Speaker, we deserve to know what's going on with our public finances, just like other provinces, Mr. Speaker. We're not asking to do anything new and radical here. We're simply asking that Saskatchewan get in line, get in step with what other provinces are doing and what the auditor is calling for, Mr. Speaker. As I said, the NDP has been talking about this for quite some time and believe it's time to move on, Mr. Speaker, time to start reporting on a summary financial basis, Mr. Speaker.

So just when we talk about the government debt, as this government has bragged about running surpluses or not racking up debt, the auditor points out that the government has recently been talking about a \$25 million surplus when it should be focusing on a \$304 million deficit which corresponds to the summary accounts — \$304 million deficit, Mr. Speaker, not a \$25 million surplus. But the average citizen doesn't know that and doesn't know where to look for it, Mr. Speaker.

I think the auditor also points out, she points out many things actually, Mr. Speaker, that this is about drawing down . . . She points out very well that it's very easy, that the General Revenue Fund finances look way prettier, much prettier, when money comes in from the province's rainy day fund, although it's essentially a case of the government taking money from one pocket and putting it into the other, Mr. Speaker. One pocket, the other pocket, doesn't mean I have more money or less money, it just means I've shifted it around, Mr. Speaker. This is a complete shell game.

So, all the opposition is doing, Mr. Speaker, is calling for the government to get in line with the rest of Canada. We're not asking for something new and outrageous. This is what other provinces are doing everywhere, Mr. Speaker. 2011, it's not . . . It is time, Mr. Speaker, for this government to start reporting on a summary financial basis to the general public so people have

an opportunity to understand and engage with the process. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Cox: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to rise today to discuss the value of the Office of the Provincial Auditor. The history of the Office of the Provincial Auditor in providing accountability and direction for government dates back to 1878. The office was established under section 65 of *The Treasury Department Act* in the 1878 Acts and Ordinances of the North-West Territories. These are the same North-West Territories that I spoke of in my inaugural speech, a North-West Territories that stretched from Alberta all the way across to what is now part of Quebec and included 34 per cent of Canada's land mass at that time. What tremendous energy and foresight our forefathers had in developing this country.

Mr. Speaker, this office then became known as the territorial auditor and was not independent of the government of the day. It wasn't until 1965 when a special committee on public accounts appointed by the Legislative Assembly recommended changes to the legislation governing the provincial auditor. Mr. Speaker, these changes created an independent legislated auditor who audited the accounts of the government on behalf of the Legislative Assembly after the expenditures were made. The provincial auditor then reported findings and conclusions to the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, in 1983 separate legislation was enacted for the Provincial Auditor known as *The Provincial Auditor Act*. This Act once again improved the independence of the office through two significant changes. Firstly, the Provincial Auditor began submitting reports directly to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly for tabling. Formerly this had been done by the minister of Finance who tabled the annual report. Secondly, employees of the Provincial Auditor's office became employees of the Legislative Assembly. These changes better enabled the Provincial Auditor to manage the office. Further changes have been made to improve the auditing capabilities of this office and ensure the efficient and effective delivery of auditing reports.

Mr. Speaker, the Office of the Provincial Auditor performs an important public service for the people of Saskatchewan. We need only examine the mission statement of the Provincial Auditor's office to understand the importance of this office. And I quote, "We serve the people of Saskatchewan through the Legislative Assembly by fostering excellence in public sector management and accountability."

Mr. Speaker, it is of the utmost importance that this House recognizes the function of the Provincial Auditor. Thankfully this debate affords us the opportunity to acknowledge their efforts.

Mr. Speaker, as employees of the Legislative Assembly, the Office of the Provincial Auditor employs nearly 60 people, most of which are professional accountants or training to become professional accountants. The Office of the Provincial Auditor supports all three recognized accounting designations — certified general accountants, certified management

accountants, and chartered accountants.

As the parent of a chartered accountant, I can attest to the training and knowledge and attention to detail that members of this profession bring to their work each and every day. And they ensure that all reports are accurate, and hopefully can assist non-accountants such as myself to better understand these important documents.

Mr. Speaker, the Office of the Provincial Auditor also employs other professionals such as a health professional, a lawyer, certified information systems auditors, whose skills, experience, and perspectives continue to be particularly valuable as they continue to examine broader and more in-depth issues.

The Office of the Provincial Auditor is organized into five main divisions — gaming and insurance, education, health, finance and Crown corporations, and their support services.

Firstly, the gaming and insurance division's responsibilities include examining the government's gaming, insurance, pension, and resource management programs. These are complex areas of expertise and the Office of the Provincial Auditor possesses the skills to ensure accountability and transparency in each area.

Mr. Speaker, pension and insurance liabilities require the office's staff to acquire knowledge to understand the methods used by actuaries and the accounting practices in these industries so that they can examine these methods and make concise reports to the people of Saskatchewan. Gaming operations such as casinos and resource management also require their staff to understand the unique risk relating to each of these industries.

Number two, the education division's responsibilities include examining our government's education, training, labour, telecommunications, and the infrastructure programs.

Thirdly, the Provincial Auditor's health division's responsibilities include examining the government's programs relating to health, which include regional health authorities, justice, welfare — including child and family services — and distribution of natural gas for home heating.

Fourthly the finance and Crown corporations division's responsibilities include examining the government's provincial taxation, cash flow, and debt management, transportation, agricultural, and power production and transmission programs. This division also leads the audits of our government's summary financial statements and Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan.

Finally the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the support services of this Office of the Provincial Auditor have important consequences for the public. Mr. Speaker, throughout their service to this province, they maintain a high standard of objectivity which is essential for an independent office.

They also possess thorough knowledge of the following: (a) the complex structure and systems that government uses to manage public resources, (b) the knowledge of the structure of the legislative authorities governing activities of the government

agencies related to financial reporting, safeguarding assets, revenue raising, spending, borrowing, and investing, and (c) knowledge of the audit of information systems, and (d) accounting and assurance standards recommended by the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants. Mr. Speaker, their working knowledge of a variety of issues facing government agencies are absolutely critical to providing Saskatchewan taxpayers with transparency and accountability that they deserve.

[11:30]

Mr. Speaker, to fulfill this mission, the Office of the Provincial Auditor provides independent assurance — that's audit reports — and advice on our government's management of and accountability practices for the public resources entrusted to it. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, this office informs the Legislative Assembly about number one, the reliability of the government's financial and operational information; number two, the government's compliance with legislative authorities; three, the adequacy of the government's management of public resource. Furthermore the Office of the Provincial Auditor encourages discussion and debate about public sector management and accountability issues. They are also valuable in their assistance to the standing committees on Public Accounts and Crown and Central Agencies in their duties.

The important role and mandate of the Office of the Provincial Auditor begs the question: who watches the watchman? Mr. Speaker, the Lieutenant Governor in Council appoints an auditor to audit the Office of the Provincial Auditor. This auditor must be an accountant who is a member in good standing of a recognized accounting profession that is regulated by an Act. Furthermore the auditor cannot be employed by a government department, a Crown agency, a Crown-controlled corporation, or by the Office of the Provincial Auditor.

Each year this independent audit of the Provincial Auditor reports the following to the Legislative Assembly: that their financial statements are reliable; that they have adequate management systems and practices; that they have complied with the laws that govern their office; that the reported costs of auditing government organizations are reliable; that the reported actual time spent by employees on tasks are reliable; that the assumptions underlying the requests for . . . [inaudible] . . . are suitably supported and consistent with their goals, objectives, strategies, and action plans.

The role of the Office of the Provincial Auditor is absolutely crucial to the successful functioning of our democracy. We thank the office for their annual reports and will continue to work with them on ensuring best practices and protocols throughout all aspects.

In closing I would like to quote the last page of the auditor's report, and I quote:

The Auditor notes that her office did not find significant issues for most of the 145 government agencies it examined. The auditor also found that many agencies had made progress in implementing past audit recommendations.

For that reason I cannot support this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to enter into this debate. I think we need to get down to some simple points here. What we know if one is a lawyer or an accountant or somebody's who's involved in looking at buying stocks on the stock exchange, and you look at the books of a company or an organization, the more complex the accounting is, the more challenging the operation of that particular business is.

And, Mr. Speaker, what our auditor is saying to us on this particular issue is that let's move on. The old ways of reporting how the operation of the provincial government works are no longer the national standard, and it's time for Saskatchewan to get on board with what's happening in virtually every other province and territory in the country, which is to report the full amount of the books.

And what's happening now, the auditor says quite clearly in her news release, is that it's allowing the provincial government to move money in and out of funds to create a desired result in the main budget that they report on which is the General Revenue Fund. And, Mr. Speaker, that may have been something that was developed in all provincial governments over many years. But in this decade and as we move forward, the standard has changed, and it's time for Saskatchewan to catch up and report things in a more accurate fashion.

Now one of the things that concerns all Saskatchewan residents is what was identified by a group of very able financial people back in 1992. It's called the Gass report. And one of the things that they identified as causing all kinds of difficulties for the province, for its credit rating, for the people of the province who ended up having to pay extra tax to try to get us out of the jam that we were in was some of this same kind of issue that we're talking about now, which is that the accounting was so complex people couldn't understand. And even the accountants couldn't understand what was going on. But the net effect was that way more money had been borrowed but, more importantly, way more loans to various organizations or businesses that were established were guaranteed by the government without knowing the full consequences of what those guarantees are.

Now as opposition, over the last four years, we have raised questions in a few areas where these concerns are there. One of them clearly continues to be in SaskPower, the Northland's power project. The public does not know what the long-term cost of that property is and what's going to happen there. We know that there's a commitment to pay substantial amounts of money to a company from Ontario to operate a chunk of what's happening in the SaskPower supply in northwest Saskatchewan. But we don't know what the long-term costs are for the province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly the kind of thing that . . . It was identified 20 years ago when the province was in such financial difficulty. What the auditor is saying here is the standards have changed about how we need to report what's happening in the province. And, Mr. Speaker, we will continue

to ask many, many questions in this area because we know that there is a propensity of members who were involved in the government 25 years ago, and the new people who are here, to make a lot of big promises and make a lot of commitments where they haven't looked at how they're going to make sure that the things are done. And, Mr. Speaker, what happens is that you end up in a situation where you've made commitments in various places that are not fully accounted for. Northland Power is one that we know has already been entered into.

What we don't know about are the other projects, the other guarantees that have been discussed and are being dealt with right now. But we will continue to watch very carefully what is happening in that area. We know in the legislative agenda that's been set forth in this particular session already, and I think it's numbering up around 33 Bills, that there are a number of places where the change in the structure of some of the organizations we have will allow for once again shifting of the full accountability of expenditures into some other place. And so we're looking forward to the spring as we get more information, as we have others from outside of this legislature look at the financial planning that is or may be lacking for this government.

Now I thought it quite telling that our new Provincial Auditor on the day that she released her report set out simply the fact that the government was only reporting one debt and not both debts, and her simple example of somebody in a household who had gone to the bank to borrow money. And they said, well I owe \$10,000 so therefore I have sufficient income to pay down that debt, but you know, you don't worry about this other debt I have over here because it's not going to affect my ability to pay the money back. Any banker worth his salt is going to say, well you have to tell me the whole story before I lend you any money.

Simply that's the point here in this report that we're talking about. And that's why the government needs to come up to the present standards and make sure that the reporting is there. If that reporting is done in a way that is acknowledged, we'll see a situation where some of the newly elected people who come from the business world, who are on your side of the House, will say, you can't run a business like this. You can't run a business where you're borrowing more money than is coming in to your operation. You can't, you can't not tell all of your investors, you can't tell your partners, if you in a business as a partnership, you can't tell your partners, well don't worry about that debt we're committed to over there because it doesn't really count. That's not acceptable at all.

So when the government sets up their books, when they set up their report, when they bring forward the budget in the spring, we hope that they will have made a decision to get into this decade, get into this century around how you report the finances so that our books are comparable to Alberta and Manitoba and Ontario and British Columbia, and that we can say with security and safety that we understand what the government is doing. And we know that the capacity is there because we end up having that information in our system. But let's be straightforward about how we do this so that the public actually knows what's going on. So it's a question of transparency. It's a question of not hiding behind complicated accounting to basically obscure what the public sees on public finances.

Now as I've said a number of times in this House, that the role of the opposition is to ask those kinds of questions. It's not dissimilar to the role of the journalist to look at, well, where are the things that don't make quite sense, that don't fit together. The role is to ask questions in those areas to make sure that we get clarity. All I ask the opposition, I ask the Premier, the legacy of a good government should be one that's open, that should be one that follows the generally accepted rules of how you account to the public, and it should be one where people can say, well, there's exactly what's happening on.

The really sad part, Mr. Speaker, is that we in Saskatchewan are living in times where we've had more revenues and more resources than we've ever had in the province. And the Provincial Auditor has to report that we're in a deficit situation but that we're hiding that by old accounting rules, old complexities which are of no longer any use to the people of Saskatchewan. So I say to the Premier, I say to the Minister of Finance, get the work done now, between now and March, and let's make sure we're on the page with all the other provinces and territories by the year 2012. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well it's an honour to stand in the Assembly today and participate in this debate regarding our government's accounting practices. And after listening to the member from Regina Rosemont and Regina Lakeview, I beg to differ. Our government is committed to full and transparent financial reporting to the public. GRF and summary-based information each have a role to play in providing important accountability.

Now the General Revenue Fund, the GRF, is where all public monies are collected and disbursed and allows people to see how their money is allocated. The GRF statement provides a report on the annual budget estimates prepared by the Legislative Assembly. And these statements are a very significant public accountability document as they provide a report against the annual budget estimates approved by the Legislative Assembly. The SFS [summary financial statement] provides information on the results and financial position of the government as a whole.

We continue to put out two sets of financial statements. We produce a General Revenue Fund statement that provides a clear picture of government expenditures and revenues. Mr. Speaker, we also produce summary statements twice a year which include the activities of Crown corporations and other government bodies, that are in line with those of other provinces. This is consistent with the practice of previous governments, and we think it works. We appreciate the auditor's views, but in this case we still take the position that it's important for government to budget and report according to the way it's organized and operates.

[11:45]

The summary financial statement provides a look at all of government's operations, providing both sets of . . . [inaudible] . . . people with a better look at the state of the province's finances than showing only the summary statements. We think

that what we have is the best of both worlds. We actually are doing what every other province does. We produce summary financial statements in the same way as every other province. Contrary to what the member from Saskatoon Riversdale commented on, apples to apples . . . [inaudible] . . . the difference is that we also produce General Revenue Fund statements. The auditor would prefer that we focus only on the SFS statements, but we think that GRF statements help people understand where their tax dollars are going. Mr. Speaker, that has been the focus here for decades.

When you look at all the money we raise from taxes and resources and then subtract all of our spending for programs and emergencies like flood relief, we still expect to balance the budget. You can see the budgets for the various Crowns and see their activities reflected there. Mr. Speaker, it's actually a good budget tool which allows people to access our activity in the way that government is organized.

That said, we're interested in how we can improve our accountability to the public, and we appreciate the auditor's recommendations. We'll be looking at all of her suggestions.

The Provincial Auditor said:

My responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on my audit. I conducted my audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Those standards require that I comply with ethical requirements and plan and . . . [reform] the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free from material misstatement.

In my opinion, the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Government of Saskatchewan as at March 31st, 2011 and the results of its operations, the changes in its net debt and its cash flows from the year then ended in accordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards.

Mr. Speaker, this form of accounting has been in practise even when the members opposite were in government.

The following is an excerpt from the 1996 Public Accounts:

The government's summary financial statements are first class. The information they include is very useful for identifying, analyzing, and monitoring trends in the state of the government's finances. For this purpose, we show the total revenue and expense of the government's general programs together with the totals for the government's enterprises.

So, Mr. Speaker, providing both sets of books provides people with a better look at the state of the province's finances than showing only the summary statements. Our government has delivered four consecutive balanced budgets, but you don't have to take our word for it, for here are a few budget 2010 third party quotes.

From the post-budget editorial in *The Globe and Mail* dated March 25, 2010:

. . . Saskatchewan stands a beacon of light, tabling another balanced budget yesterday . . . what is encouraging about this budget is that the government has taken a . . . stab at spending cuts, although times there are relatively good. Other jurisdictions could stand to learn from . . . [Saskatchewan's] example.

. . . poised to be among Canada's leaders in economic growth . . . It is to Saskatchewan's credit that it is using these circumstances to make some tough choices.

From the *Times Colonist*, British Columbia, April 4th, 2010:

Anyone interested in the difference between good management and bad should take a look at Saskatchewan. There, the provincial government just brought down a balanced budget. It's the only one in Canada.

And why is Saskatchewan not broke? The answer is simple. BC [British Columbia] and Ontario spent freely while Saskatchewan put money aside for a rainy day. When you include all of government in the summary statements, you see the effects of global . . . on the investment returns of the Auto Fund and the Workers' Compensation Board and higher crop insurance payouts. None of these have any effect on our day-to-day operations, but it's all there for people to see.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it is true that in opposition our party has called for a move to summary financial reporting. But it's also true that the NDP government of the day made the same arguments in favour of maintaining the GRF that we are making now. Mr. Speaker, this is just a different perspective between being in opposition and being in government. Mr. Speaker, we think that the summary budget we prepare is a good one.

And, Mr. Speaker, I listened to all the comments today from Regina Rosemont, Saskatoon Riversdale, Regina Lakeview, and I am very proud of our fiscal record in government. Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to stand behind our accounting practices that are in accordance with Canadian auditing practices. And, Mr. Speaker, I will be voting against the motion. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: — Is this continuing in the debate? The time for debate is expiring. We will move on to oral questions. I recognize the member for Regina Walsh Acres.

Mr. Steinley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that the member will not answer this question directly, but I've heard this on the doorstep a lot during the campaign for the good people of Regina Walsh Acres, so I'll put it to the member from Saskatoon Riversdale.

I assume, since he is the NDP Finance critic, the member from Rosemont was one of the chief architects of the NDP's most recent budget for their election platform. So how can the good people of Saskatchewan take him seriously about any financial issues when his first major budget, with his stamp of approval, would've plunged our province into \$5.5 billion of debt?

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this motion is about the need to report to the public in a more transparent and accountable way. The government needs to do the right thing and join the rest of Canada — and 2011 — in reporting to the public on a summary financial basis.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Following in with the member from Riversdale here, this government is out of line with the rest of Canada. It's non-compliant with public sector accounting standards and it's hiding the true state of our finances from Saskatchewan people. I ask the member from Yorkton: how does he explain this, and how does he believe this to be fair, to hide the true state of our finances from his constituents?

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Yorkton.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, before I answer that question, before I answer that question, I've got just a small piece of advice, and I mean this in all sincerity to the member from Rosemont. I noticed in introductions today he actually referred to his wife I think as grumpy. So I would suggest you buy flowers on your way home when you pick her up for your event tonight.

Mr. Speaker, in fact you know, we've been found out. This information is hidden in plain sight in the summary financial statement as is acceptable in many other provinces. In fact, we do have the same practices as many other provinces with the summary statement. The thing is we go above and beyond by providing the general revenue as well.

I will point out as well, you know, Mr. Speaker, in 2003 I believe it was, the NDP using the same examples that we do, the GRF and the summary statements. But they did omit one thing. They didn't include in that response or that information the unfunded liabilities. So I think we have gone above and beyond the NDP, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Lots of interest in this debate on this side of the House, of course; I'm sure over there as well. I noted with interest at the start, the member from Saskatchewan Rivers that she talked with some pride about how it is that this government keeps two sets of financial statements. In other spheres, Mr. Speaker, that would be regarded as keeping two sets of books. I ask the member from Saskatchewan Rivers: what do they call it when you keep two sets of books in anything else?

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

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this form of accounting has been in practise even when the members opposite were in government. This is consistent with the practice of previous governments and we think it works.

We also produce summary statements twice a year, which includes the activities of Crown corporations and other

government bodies, that are in line with those of other provinces. The summary financial statements provide a look at all of the government's operations. And providing both sets of books provides people with a better look at the state of the province's finances. So, Mr. Speaker, I believe our government is doing an excellent job and I'm proud of moving forward.

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

Mr. Makowsky: — Mr. Speaker, our government has been following the conventional accounting principles of previous NDP governments. In fact, the accounting practices used by our government are in fact the same principles used by the NDP for 16 years. To the member from Regina Lakeview: the former NDP government never adopted generally accepted accounting principles while in government. Why does your party champion these principles while in opposition?

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's exactly the point, is that as the accounting practices changed, the books were improved in every province and territory across the country. Unfortunately it stopped four years ago and they're not up to where we're going and where the people of the province need the information.

[Interjections]

I'm now going to ask you questions . . .

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

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to welcome the member from The Battlefords to the Chamber. And we understand that he's a businessman from that community, and I want to ask him if he's feeling uneasy about a government that still continues with old accounting methods, complex methods, with two sets of the books, which would be contrary to any business operating in this province?

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

Mr. Cox: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In response to that, I'm not uncomfortable at all to our methods, what we're using. We're actually doing what every other province does. We do produce summary financial statements, which we've started doing in 1992. They have been available since then. The difference, that we also produce a General Revenue Fund statement. The auditor would prefer that we focus on the summary financial statements, but we think the general revenue statements help people understand where their tax dollars are going.

I have been asked . . . I can reference here today a publication from November 28th, 2011. I have been approached by numerous constituents from my constituency asking how these financial statements are reported. When you take the time . . . We've heard words here today, Mr. Speaker, like: can't understand, hidden, no transparency. It takes about 30 seconds to compare the GF statements down to the summary statements. My constituents have been happy with that, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Tochor: — Mr. Speaker, our government produces summary financial statements, just like every other government in Canada. We also produce General Revenue Fund statements. Both provide sets of books providing comprehensive overview of the provincial finances.

To the member from Riversdale, the Provincial Auditor has said, “The financial statements presented present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Government of Saskatchewan.” To the member from Riversdale: why do you want to change this system?

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well the member opposite should listen fully to what the auditor is saying. I’d like to quote:

It’s time for public reporting to focus on the Summary Financial Statements. Focusing public reporting on the Summary Financial Statements will provide citizens with the deficit or surplus result that fairly reflects Government’s management of all public monies and resources under its control.

So I think we need to be looking at the whole picture, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I’m failing to hear the answers to the questions that have been posed by this side, and I’d like to put this question to the member from Battleford. Once again, you went at great lengths to explain to us how accounting works. Thank you for the explanation. The question is, the auditor has said, “This is an issue where Saskatchewan is not keeping up with other provinces.” Do you agree with that quote from the auditor? And if not, why not?

[12:00]

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

Mr. Cox: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have great respect for the auditor and the auditor’s reports, Mr. Speaker. But in fact we are actually doing what every other province is doing. We produce summary financial statements in the same way as other provinces. The difference is that we also produce General Revenue Fund statements. The auditor would prefer that we focus only on the summary financial statements. But we think the General Revenue Fund statements help people understand where their tax dollars are going, and that has been the focus here for decades, as I mentioned before. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In this year’s Public Accounts, the Provincial Auditor clearly wrote, and I quote:

In my opinion, the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Government of Saskatchewan as at March 31, 2011, and the results of its operations, the changes in its net debt, and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian public sector accounting standards.

To the member from Nutana: why is it that your party believes itself to know more about Canadian standards than the Provincial Auditor?

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Nutana . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh she didn’t? Not in the debate. I recognize the member for Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — The member from Saskatoon Nutana would love to take this question. She would probably highlight that we’ve . . . As the auditor . . .

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ MOTIONS

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

Motion No. 1 — Support for the Keystone XL Pipeline

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s my privilege and honour to rise today in support of this motion calling upon all parties to support the Keystone XL pipeline without any further delay.

The US [United States] government’s decision to sideline this project until at least 2013 is jeopardizing a \$7 billion project that will create thousands of jobs on both sides of the border and billions more in additional spinoffs. The problem, Mr. Speaker, is that not all Canadian federal parties are united in support of this project, particularly the federal NDP, Mr. Speaker. If their opposition is rooted in ignorance of the facts, I would like to use this opportunity to inform them of the state of energy in Canada and Saskatchewan and how much it means, not only to Western Canada, but to the country as a whole.

Saskatchewan is Canada’s second-largest producer of oil, home to a large part of the Bakken play, a formation the US Geological Survey says is the largest conventional play in North America, and one we share with both Montana and North Dakota. Our province is the third-largest producer of natural gas. We produce 20 per cent of the world’s uranium; 5 per cent of the lights in the US are lit by Saskatchewan’s uranium every single night, Mr. Speaker. We have 45.6 billion barrels of oil in place, and more than 38 billion barrels of that cannot be recovered using existing technology.

If we could increase our recovery rates even marginally by 5 per cent, it would triple our recoverable reserves of oil. Increasing our recovery rate by 10 per cent would obviously increase our recoverable reserves sixfold.

Today’s motion is about energy security in North America in

general, but it is also specifically about the Keystone XL pipeline. Here are the facts around the Keystone XL pipeline. There will be 20,000 new North American jobs in construction and related manufacturing created by this project. There will be more than 118,000 spinoff jobs generated during the two years of construction. Without Canada's oil, America's dependence on oil from Venezuela and the Middle East will continue to increase.

A life cycle comparison of North American and imported crude prepared by Jacobs consulting shows that oil from Venezuela and Iraq has about the same carbon dioxide footprint as Canadian oil sands oil and less than California heavy oil and Nigerian crude. These findings were confirmed by the United States Department of Energy. Also, Mr. Speaker, it's worthy of note that the XL pipeline will take up to 100,000 barrels a day of light, sweet crude out of the Bakken plate, partly situated in southeastern Saskatchewan, some of which crude is currently trucked, Mr. Speaker.

The Keystone pipeline will enter Saskatchewan near McNeill, Alberta and continue southeast to Monchy, Saskatchewan. The total length of the pipe in Saskatchewan, approximately 259 kilometres, Mr. Speaker. The Keystone XL pipeline is a National Energy Board regulated pipeline with all of the regulatory scrutiny that that implies, Mr. Speaker. The majority of the route follows the existing foothills pipeline constructed in 1981, and within the Great Sand Hills region, the same route will be followed.

Routing through the sand hills includes crossing through approximately only 3.1 kilometres on the extreme southwest edge of the Great Sand Hills. Environmentally sensitive areas within the sand hills are zoned as either environmentally sensitive 1, which allows no development; or environmentally sensitive 2, which allows development following submission of an environmental protection plan and adherence to strict development conditions. The portion of the pipeline that crosses the Great Sand Hills fall entirely within the ES2 [environmentally sensitive 2] area. The crossing of the pipeline is not within the proposed biodiversity conservation area identified within the Great Sand Hills environmental study.

The sand hills advisory committee and rural municipalities affected have been consulted over a considerable period of time and no concerns have been raised to date, Mr. Speaker. Some of the special development conditions include all main water courses must be directionally bored, mainline valves must be installed on both sides of major water courses, specific mitigation for identified species of concern and minimization of impacts on native prairie. In addition, a specific reclamation planned for the Great Sand Hills area has been developed and submitted as requested by the National Energy Board.

Mr. Speaker, we now know that the state of Nebraska voiced concerns in the past about this pipeline being routed through environmentally sensitive areas and TransCanada has agreed to direct the pipe around those areas and away from the sensitive Nebraska sand hills region and more importantly, the Ogallala Aquifer that lies beneath it.

I think in the constraints of time, I'm going to shorten this, Mr. Speaker. The American Federation of Labour and Congress of

Industrial Organizations, the AFL-CIO [American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations] has voiced their support for the Keystone XL pipeline in very emphatic terms, Mr. Speaker.

On November 17th, the building construction and trades department of the AFL-CIO announced that it "unreservedly supports the Keystone XL pipeline." They also said, and I quote:

Keystone XL will create longer term employment in both Canada and the United States in refinery conversion projects, operation, and maintenance. Moreover these jobs will keep an enormous amount of money circulating within North America. Energy security for North America comes from developing the oil sands and other Canadian energy projects.

That same news release went on to quote Joseph Maloney, chairman of the CBDT, Canadian Executive Board and international vice-president for the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers stated that:

Jobs in Canada's oil sands are vital to North America. They support our standard of living and to be blunt, what is better for the North American economy, to support the United States and Canada or to support unfriendly foreign regimes?

The NDP has apparently turned its back on this country's labour movement by effectively ignoring the concerns of an organization that represents over a dozen labour organizations including the United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting industry of the United States and Canada; International Union of Operating Engineers; Sheet Metal Workers' International Association; the International Association of Heat and Frost Allied Workers, International Union of Elevator Constructors; Operative Plasterers and Cement Masons' International Association; Teamsters Canada; International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers; International Union of Painters and Allied Trades; Laborers' International Union of North America; International Association of Bridge, Structural and Ornamental Iron Workers; United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America; and the International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers.

Pipelines, Mr. Speaker, are essential to ensuring the safe and efficient transportation of oil in various states of production. If Canada only produced as much oil as it consumed, the national economy would be decimated. Exporting oil from Saskatchewan and Canada is vital to national interest of this country. The Canadian dollar is seen in money markets of the world as a petro currency which simply means, Mr. Speaker, that more than any other single factor, the interests of oil and gas production and sales around the world affect the dollar more than any other factor, Mr. Speaker. For the US, importing oil from Canada is better than the alternative of importing oil from countries that do not aspire to the democratic values of Canadians.

So in a sense, Mr. Speaker, this is not just about energy and food security, nor is it simply about creating new jobs for

Canadians and Americans, although these are worthy goals in and of themselves. Mr. Speaker, this is about providing our neighbours to the south with a product that is recovered and transported from a country that is ethical. And oil sands are without a doubt ethical when you compare our nation's policies to that of other major oil-producing nations.

On all fronts, this Keystone XL project has been shown to benefit all stakeholders, notwithstanding the whining and bleeding of a few ill-informed NDP MPs [Member of Parliament] and celebrities. It will be interesting to see where those members opposite will be on this issue, Mr. Speaker — on the side of ethical oil safely piped from Saskatchewan and Alberta, or on the side of unethical and conflict oil from undemocratic regimes, refined in countries with little or no environmental safeguards and transported around the globe in supertankers. These are quite simply the choices that North America is facing, Mr. Speaker. I wonder which side those members opposite will be on.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like at this time to read the motion into the record:

That this Assembly calls upon all parties in the federal Parliament of Canada to unite in support of the Keystone XL pipeline project without further delay.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member from Thunder Creek:

That this Assembly calls upon all parties in the federal Parliament of Canada to unite in support of the Keystone XL pipeline project without further delay.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion? I recognize the member for Cypress Hills.

Hon. Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to enter the debate on this motion since this is a project that is so vitally important to the province of Saskatchewan, to the country as a whole, to our American friends.

But I can speak most specifically about the importance of this pipeline to the constituency of Cypress Hills. I was just looking at the map on Google a few minutes ago and the pipeline originates in the community of Hardisty in Alberta, works its way east to the Saskatchewan-Alberta border, parallels that border for a while, and enters the province of Saskatchewan just northwest of the community of Burstall. And anybody who's ever travelled in the Burstall area knows that that area is well known for petrochemical production, natural gas production, and is a very important player. And the pipeline, the Keystone XL pipeline enters the province in that particular region and works its way in a very straight line to the southeast, right through the constituency of the Cypress Hills, and eventually exits the country at the port of Monchy, which is in the constituency of Wood River.

I've seen the impact of that pipeline already. Even without the permission of US federal authorities, we've seen a tremendous amount of work undertaken to prepare for the construction of the pipeline. Literally hundreds and hundreds of trucks each week are stockpiling pipe south of Shaunavon and in another

area to the northwest of the community of Maple Creek. And so preparations are being undertaken for the construction of this \$7 billion megaproject which is just pending approval of US authorities. But not only has this created a lot of employment in the southwest part of this province; it's created a lot of excitement for the potential and the economic opportunities this pipeline will create for a broader part of the province and obviously for the construction projects south of the border.

Mr. Speaker, this pipeline has found itself embroiled in unnecessary controversy. The entire project has been developed and worked on and exquisitely proven itself in terms of environmental responsibility over a long period of time. This isn't the kind of project you would pull out of thin air and decide to construct in a couple of days or even a couple of months. This project has been thoroughly designed and developed over an extensive period of time, and it is done in the spirit of co-operation and mutual benefit with our American neighbours.

[12:15]

There is some frustration, I understand, among the proponents and people who support the pipeline with the kind of radical and unfounded arguments that are being made against this pipeline for environmental and other economic reasons. And I'd have to say, Mr. Speaker, having heard a lot of these arguments and knowing some of the details of the project proponents, the disparity, the conflict of intellectual and scientific opinion on the validity of this project is quite amazing, Mr. Speaker.

You know, I really thought our society had gotten to the point where it had enough faith in science, solid science, that we could put aside some of the more silly kinds of arguments that we're hearing, but apparently that's not the case. And our country and the American national economy, the people of the United States are going to be severely harmed by the kinds of rhetoric we're hearing about this project if in fact that rhetoric takes hold in the political people in the US that are going to be making the final decision on this project. But you know, I could go on at some length as to why this project is of value to the American economy.

But what really surprises me, Mr. Speaker, is that there is a group of individuals in our own country that, rather than support this project and look at it with a clear set of unjaundiced eyes, who are now prepared to argue against the project — which is in our national best interest, which is in our economic and our job creation best interest — which is in, in many ways, against our international interests as well.

And so, Mr. Speaker, when I hear that there are members of the federal NDP who have actually gone to the United States and asked for a hearing where they have argued severely and aggressively against this project, it is absolutely not just a disappointment; it's worse than that, Mr. Speaker. Now I would suspect that the opposition members in this House today would want to distance themselves from the silliness that some of their federal counterparts are espousing on this particular project. I think that they would want to put the interests of Saskatchewan ahead of the political interests of their friends in Ottawa.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we're going to be calling on all members

of this House to support this resolution when time comes to vote on it. In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, I would move that we adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — The member for Cypress Hills has moved adjournment on debate on the motion:

That this Assembly calls upon all parties in the federal Parliament of Canada to unite in support of the Keystone XL pipeline project without further delay.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

MOTIONS

House Adjournment

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to move adjournment, but before I do that, I would ask leave to make a brief statement to the House regarding a recess.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has asked for leave to make a statement regarding adjournment. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to members. I would like to take this opportunity to wish all members of the Assembly a very Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year going forward. Also I'd like to recognize all of the families of members in the Assembly who make it possible for us to be here, who sacrifice a great deal for us to be here, and I want to acknowledge their contribution to us being able to serve.

I want to thank all of our staff, whether that be in the building, our constituency assistants who do such a great job in all of our ridings to make this province a better place and to serve our respective constituencies and our respective ministries as the case may be.

I'd like to thank all the staff here in the legislature: the Clerks, your staff. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank you for the job you've done and your staff as well. Sergeant-at-Arms and his staff, you really do, all do a fantastic job here in making it possible for all of us to do our jobs representing our constituents.

I'd like to thank our constituents who make it possible for us to be here, who provide advice and guidance in making us better members of the Legislative Assembly and make it possible for us to be here.

And I think this a wonderful time of the year to reflect on just how blessed our province is and has been. How lucky we are to live in the best province, in the best country, in the entire planet,

Mr. Speaker, and just how lucky we are to be here and be able to serve. So with that, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to wish again all members a Merry Christmas, a Happy New Year, and a safe number of months before we reconvene.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to join with the Government House Leader in terms of saying thank you and Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to everyone.

Certainly the list that the Government House Leader had enumerated of all the people that we have to thank in helping us do this important work on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, we certainly agree with that — the people inside the building, the people in the constituency office, but most importantly the people of Saskatchewan who entrust us with this important work to be done.

I guess the folks I'd like to add within the building, Mr. Speaker, from the Clerk's Table through to the folks that keep this building looking good. It's been a particularly busy time for them, certainly with the start of a new legislature and the great amount of moving around. So they did that with their usual dispatch and, you know, made us, kept us all well equipped to do the work that we have on behalf of the people — let alone the folks in the cafeteria that keep us all well fed, some better fed than others apparently, Mr. Speaker.

But certainly, this being the start of a new legislature, Mr. Speaker, yourself, this being your first legislature in the Chair, thank you to you and your staff. You as the head of this institution, but certainly everyone from the Clerk's Table on through to the Journals branch to the folks that keep us well fed and keep us organized and on the go. The Pages, who have had this as their first session — we haven't scared any of them away yet, Mr. Speaker — but thank you very much for the good service and help in the House here.

And as well, I'd like to thank not just the members on our side of the House and the folks that we work with to help us do this work, but I'd like to say thank you to the members opposite and particularly the Government House Leader. We're on the start of a new relationship here and it's . . . I don't want to, I don't want to get misty, Mr. Speaker, and nor should his, you know . . . Obviously there's nothing untoward going on here other than frank and honest communication. But the work that we have to do in terms of making sure that this House stays on the tracks and that if we're going to have fights, Mr. Speaker, may they be about issues and policy and not about the process and procedural wrangling.

Because again, to come back around to where I'd started, Mr. Speaker, we're here to do the people's business. And at this, the Christmas season, we've got a lot to be thankful for, and we've got a lot to be mindful of as we set about doing that business. So again to all members of the Assembly at this, the start of a new session of a new legislature, and to everyone that helps us to do the job and to everyone that we seek to serve in this Assembly, on behalf of the official opposition, we wish a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

The Speaker: — I'd like to take this opportunity to join with the two House leaders in wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. As the members return to your families and friends, may you enjoy the holiday seasons. We need to give thanks for the benefits that we all received during the past year. As well I would like to wish everyone a healthy and prosperous, joyous coming year.

I would like to thank our families, the staff of my office, and the Clerks and Pages for greatly supporting a newly minted Speaker. And thank you as well to both caucuses for making the job interesting, and to the staff of the legislature, all of the staff, for their support throughout the year and on an ongoing basis. May everyone have a Merry Christmas and a joyous new year, and please drive safely.

I'd also like to remind members to please be back in their seats prior to 1:15 p.m. for the Lieutenant Governor's appreciation.

The Government House Leader has moved adjournment of debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. This House now stands adjourned to the call of the Chair.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:25.]

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

| | |
|-------------------|-----|
| Nilson | 235 |
| Makowsky | 235 |
| Wotherspoon | 235 |
| McCall | 235 |

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Best Wishes for the Holidays

| | |
|--------------|-----|
| Nilson | 235 |
|--------------|-----|

Lloydminster Seniors' Winter Gala

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| McMillan | 235 |
|----------------|-----|

Jimmy's Law

| | |
|--------------|-----|
| Forbes | 236 |
|--------------|-----|

Blaine Lake Community Cash Lotto

| | |
|-----------|-----|
| Moe | 236 |
|-----------|-----|

Moose Jaw Rotary Carol Festival

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| Lawrence | 236 |
|----------------|-----|

Musical in Moosomin

| | |
|------------|-----|
| Toth | 237 |
|------------|-----|

The Meaning of Christmas

| | |
|------------------|-----|
| Ottenbreit | 237 |
|------------------|-----|

QUESTION PERIOD

Pension Plan Funding

| | |
|-------------------|-----|
| Wotherspoon | 237 |
|-------------------|-----|

| | |
|---------------|-----|
| Krawetz | 237 |
|---------------|-----|

Plans for the Future

| | |
|--------------|-----|
| Nilson | 238 |
|--------------|-----|

| | |
|------------|-----|
| Wall | 238 |
|------------|-----|

Support for Seniors

| | |
|---------------|-----|
| Brotten | 238 |
|---------------|-----|

| | |
|--------------|-----|
| Draude | 238 |
|--------------|-----|

| | |
|--------------|-----|
| Reiter | 239 |
|--------------|-----|

Shelter Accommodation

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| Chartier | 240 |
|----------------|-----|

| | |
|--------------|-----|
| Draude | 240 |
|--------------|-----|

Timing of Assistance Payments

| | |
|--------------|-----|
| McCall | 241 |
|--------------|-----|

| | |
|--------------|-----|
| Draude | 241 |
|--------------|-----|

POINT OF ORDER

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| Harrison | 242 |
|----------------|-----|

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 35 — *The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Amendment Act, 2011*

Loi de 2011 modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur l'Assemblée législative et le Conseil exécutif

| | |
|--------------|-----|
| Morgan | 242 |
|--------------|-----|

Bill No. 36 — *The Constituency Boundaries Amendment Act, 2011*

| | |
|--------------|-----|
| Morgan | 242 |
|--------------|-----|

Bill No. 601 — *The Jimmy's Law Act*

| | |
|--------------|-----|
| Forbes | 242 |
|--------------|-----|

Bill No. 602 — *The School Bus Drivers (Saskatchewan) Appreciation Day Act*

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| Belanger | 242 |
|----------------|-----|

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

| | |
|--------------|-----|
| Weekes | 243 |
|--------------|-----|

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

Reporting of Government Finances

| | |
|-------------------|----------|
| Wotherspoon | 243, 253 |
|-------------------|----------|

| | |
|------------------|----------|
| Ottenbreit | 245, 253 |
|------------------|----------|

| | |
|----------------|----------|
| Chartier | 247, 253 |
|----------------|----------|

| | |
|-----------|-----|
| Cox | 249 |
|-----------|-----|

| | |
|--------------|----------|
| Nilson | 250, 253 |
|--------------|----------|

| | |
|--------------|----------|
| Wilson | 251, 253 |
|--------------|----------|

| | |
|----------------|-----|
| Steinley | 252 |
|----------------|-----|

| | |
|--------------|-----|
| McCall | 253 |
|--------------|-----|

| | |
|---|-----|
| Makowsky..... | 253 |
| Cox..... | 253 |
| Tochor..... | 254 |
| Sproule..... | 254 |
| Weekes..... | 254 |
| PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS | |
| Motion No. 1 — Support for the Keystone XL Pipeline | |
| Stewart..... | 254 |
| Elhard..... | 256 |
| MOTIONS | |
| House Adjournment | |
| Harrison..... | 257 |
| McCall..... | 257 |
| The Speaker..... | 258 |

GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

CABINET MINISTERS

Hon. Brad Wall
Premier of Saskatchewan
President of the Executive Council
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

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

Hon. Bill Boyd
Minister of Energy and Resources
Minister Responsible for SaskTel
Minister Responsible for The Global
Transportation Hub Authority

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

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

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

Hon. Donna Harpauer
Minister of Education

Hon. Jeremy Harrison
Minister of Enterprise
Minister Responsible for Trade

Hon. Darryl Hickie
Minister of Municipal Affairs

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

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

Hon. Ken Krawetz
Deputy Premier
Minister of Finance

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

Hon. Don McMorris
Minister of Health

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

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

Hon. Jim Reiter
Minister of Highways and Infrastructure
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Transportation Company

Hon. Laura Ross
Minister of Government Services