



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

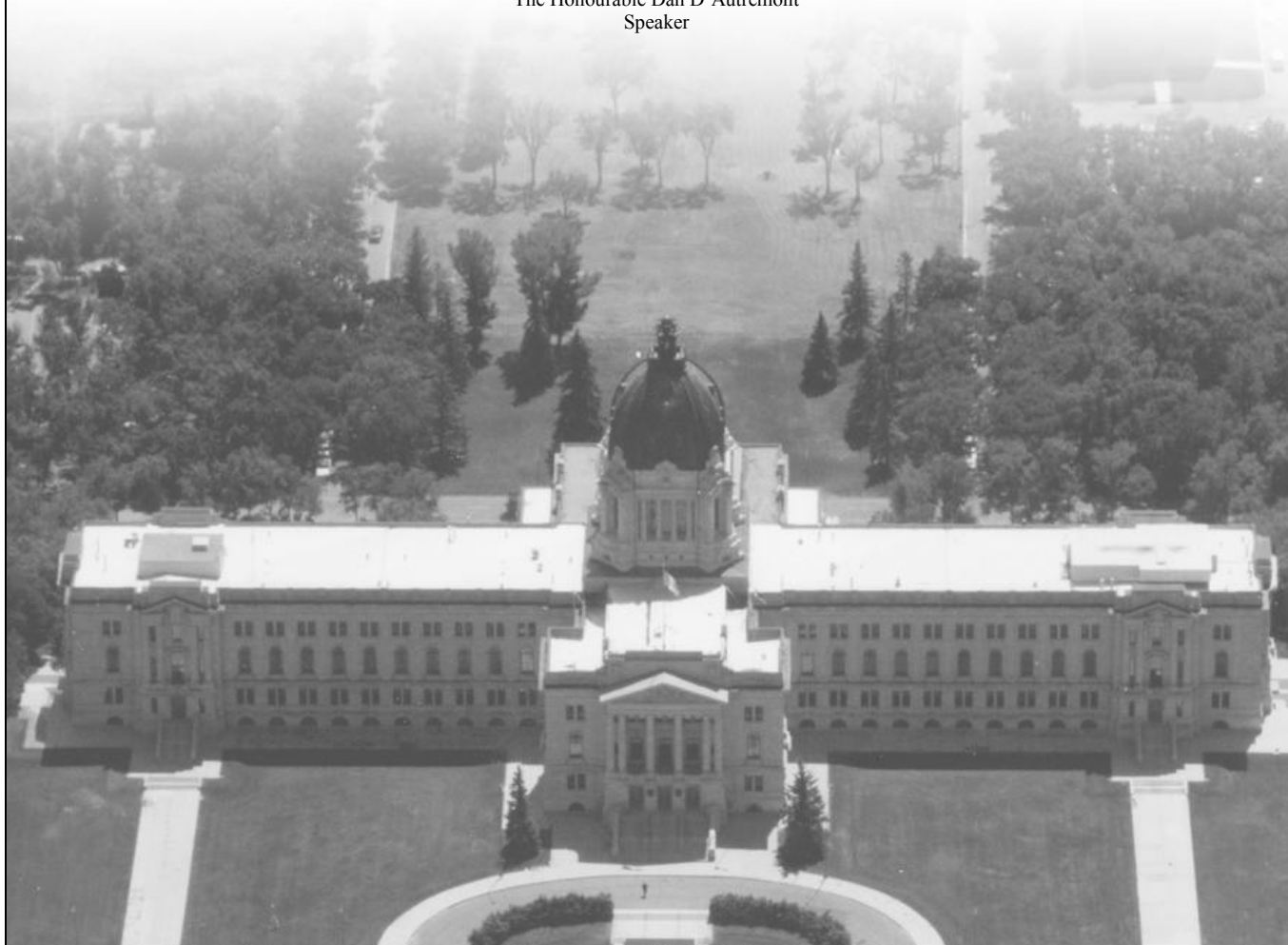
of the

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
Makowsky, Gene	SP	Regina Dewdney
Marchuk, Russ	SP	Regina Douglas Park
McCall, Warren	NDP	Regina Elphinstone-Centre
McMillan, Hon. Tim	SP	Lloydminster
McMorris, Hon. Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
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 Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We have some very special guests with us today seated in your gallery, here to talk a little bit about trade and commerce, Mr. Speaker. It's a delegation from Kazakhstan.

In the mid-1980s, former Premier Grant Devine executed a memorandum of understanding with the then governor of Kazakhstan who is now the president, President Nazarbayev. And since that agreement was signed, Saskatchewan and Kazakhstan have been working together to develop mutually beneficial trading opportunities and relationships.

The effort has been led on our part, Mr. Speaker, in terms of our partnership with Kazakhstan, by Lionel LaBelle and the team at STEP [Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership] of late. But STEP's long-term interest has been to further this particular relationship, Mr. Speaker. The profiles of our respective jurisdictions in Saskatchewan and Kazakhstan are very, very similar in terms of the mineral resources we offer, in terms of agriculture, and in terms of energy as well.

Today from Kazakhstan we have the Minister of Agriculture, Minister Mamytbekov, as well as His Excellency Mr. Zhigalov, who's the ambassador of Kazakhstan to Canada. And I want to invite all members to welcome these very special guests to their Assembly. They have a busy program over the rest of this day with representatives of industry in our province and representatives of the government. Would all members please join with me in welcoming our delegation, our guests from Kazakhstan here today.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to welcome the guests from Kazakhstan on behalf of the official opposition. As the Premier has indicated, Kazakhstan has developed a long friendship with Saskatchewan, and we're very pleased about that. I know a couple of years ago, I had a chance to meet with some of your representatives on a previous visit hosted by STEP, and one of the most amazing stories that I heard from talking to a number of the people who have worked with Saskatchewan people was about the size of the farms that you have in Kazakhstan. And there are farms there that are 250 000 hectares to even greater, and they come to Saskatchewan to buy our machinery because we're one of the few places in the world that has been able to develop machinery that can serve a country like Kazakhstan.

And there are many, many other places where our economies intermesh. But I think it's really important that what they value about Saskatchewan is our people and our ingenuity. And I would say we as well value the people and ingenuity of

Kazakhstan because many of their ideas, I think, we can use here as well. So welcome on behalf of the official opposition.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling for greater protection for late-night retail workers by passing Jimmy's law. And we know in the early morning hours of June 20th, 2011, Jimmy Ray Wiebe was shot two times and died from his injuries. He was working at a gas station in Yorkton alone and unprotected from intruders. We know, however, that such armed robberies are not isolated. We know that we've seen them take place in Regina in late January this year and also in Saskatoon in mid-March. This shows that Jimmy's law is needed to give workers adequate protection in the workplace.

I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: cause the Government of Saskatchewan to immediately enact Bill 601, Jimmy's law, to ensure greater safety for retail workers who work late-night hours.

Mr. Speaker, the people signing this petition come from Humboldt, Wadena, Lanigan, and Wynyard. I do so present. Thank you.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to present petitions on behalf of concerned residents from across Saskatchewan as it relates to the management and accounting of our provincial finances. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly call on the Sask Party government to provide Saskatchewan people with the fair, true state of our finances by providing appropriate summary financial accounting and reporting that is in line with the rest of Canada in compliance with public sector accounting standards and following the independent Provincial Auditor's recommendations; and also to begin to provide responsible, sustainable, and trustworthy financial management as deserved by Saskatchewan people, organizations, municipalities, institutions, taxpayers, and businesses.

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

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

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Whip.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a

petition on behalf of trappers of Saskatchewan. The current regulations being enforced are creating challenges that are a concern for our traditional trappers. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to recognize that the experience gained through practical experience be valued; and in so doing to cause the government to review the current legislation and regulations with respect to trapping regulations and firearm use in consultation with the traditional resource users.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

It is signed by many good people and trappers of northern Saskatchewan. I so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Leader.

A Time of Hope and Renewal

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, millions of people across the globe consider this coming weekend to be the most significant, the most contemplative, and the most joyous weekend of the year. Whether celebrated in a religious or secular fashion, each of us will take part in our own unique way, emphasizing for us the need for reflection, the urgency of peace, and the promise of renewal.

Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, and many other religions all celebrate in the spring. Jewish Passover celebrates the beginning of the liberation of the children of Israel from bondage and the preparation for their migration home. For people of any religious persuasion, the desire for a homeland expressed in the Passover ceremony and the anguished but hopeful cry of next year in Jerusalem should lift our spirits.

For Christians the desolation of death leading to the promise of rebirth and rejuvenation embodied in the central story reminds us that no defeat is final and that hope will triumph.

Mr. Speaker, it is on this note that I would like to wish members of this Assembly, the staff of the legislature, and all the citizens of Saskatchewan a very relaxing weekend filled with hope and renewal. Let us take this opportunity to consider how fortunate we are to enjoy a holiday with our loved ones in relative safety and security.

Mr. Speaker, Happy Easter to you and all members of this Assembly.

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

Support for Habitat for Humanity

Mr. Makowsky: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise in the House to talk about a Habitat for Humanity key ceremony that I had the privilege of attending, along with the member from Regina Douglas Park, in Regina on April 4th. The celebration was about making dreams come true and about

what can be achieved when our people work together to achieve a common goal.

Our government is pleased to have contributed \$50,000 to the build and to see another Saskatchewan family have a safe place to call home. Since March 2011, our government has committed 344 million in new initiatives, including the affordable home ownership program, the rental construction incentive, the Summit Action Fund, Headstart on a Home, and the corporate income tax rebate. I am pleased that in 2012-13 we will be able to provide an additional \$1 million to help Habitat construct 20 more homes across the province.

We are very proud that Saskatchewan Housing Corporation has assisted Habitat for Humanity chapters and affiliates since 2009 by dedicating a total of 4.5 million in funding to help build 90 homes across the province. Mr. Speaker, this commitment has taken us another step down the road to overcoming our challenges in housing availability and affordability.

In closing, I would like to thank Habitat's staff, volunteers, and partners for their commitment to this vision. They work tirelessly throughout the year to bring hope and homeownership opportunities to Saskatchewan families in housing need. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Sexual Assault Awareness Week

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity today to draw our attention to a very serious issue — sexual assault and abuse. According to Statistics Canada, 29 per cent of children will be sexually assaulted before they turn 18 years of age. That's almost a third of our population, Mr. Speaker. Of all these cases, only a small number, 8 per cent, are reported to police. It is also estimated that 1 in 4 North American women will be sexually assaulted during their lifetime.

This week and running through to Sunday is Sexual Assault Awareness Week. It is an opportunity for us all to recognize those whose lives have been drastically affected by horrific and unacceptable acts of violence and abuse and to stand with them to say, this must stop.

Raising awareness and educating the public are key to continuing the conversations and actions needed to build a society that will ensure everyone is safe from horrible acts of abuse. The reality is, if one person in our community is harmed, we are all affected. It is incredibly important to remind ourselves during Sexual Assault Awareness Week that we all have a role to play in demanding that violence in any form is stopped.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I would ask my colleagues to join with me in applauding the efforts of the many organizations and individuals working hard to prevent acts of sexual violence and abuse while providing necessary support and care to victims. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Team Wins Provincial Championship

Mr. Weekes: — Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to congratulate the recent accomplishments of the Delisle Prairie Wild female hockey team winning the 2011-12 Provincial Female Midget AA Championship.

The Prairie Wild team is located within the constituency of Biggar, playing out of Delisle, and consists of players from Martensville, Conquest, Vanscoy, Asquith, Rosetown, and Biggar. The team competes in the North Sask Female Hockey League and faces against teams from Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Canwood, Melfort-Tisdale, The Battlefords, Canora-Hudson Bay, Waldheim, and west central Saskatchewan.

The girls finished the season with a record of 15 wins, 3 losses, and 2 ties. Throughout the 20 league games — 6 league playoff games, 8 provincial games, and 10 tournament games — the talented Prairie Wild team played with heart and drive, finishing the season with the big prize, a provincial title. Coach Ron Dobchuk, along with assistants Bill Wylie and Rob Thorpe, did a fantastic job preparing the girls for the gruelling season and great playoff run.

On March 24th, the final game of the provincial final best-of-two series was played in Weyburn, with the game going into sudden-death overtime to decide the championship. Summer Roberts scored with 54.3 seconds left in the first overtime period, handing the Prairie Wild the win.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like all members to join me in congratulating the Prairie Wild female midget AA hockey team on a successful season, and wish them all the best next season. Thank you.

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

Optimism for Provincial Economy

Mr. Doherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to speak to the strength and optimism of our provincial economy. Optimism for the year ahead among Saskatchewan small-business owners is high, with an index of 72 in March, 4.3 points ahead of the national index of 67.7. Fifty-nine per cent of Saskatchewan small-business owners rated their overall state of business as good — the highest in Canada and well ahead of the national average.

Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan there were 522,000 people employed in the month of March, an increase of 5,200 jobs compared to March 2011. Off-reserve Aboriginal employment was also up by 4,700, or 13 per cent, for 10 consecutive months of year-over-year increases. Aboriginal youth employment was also up by 800, or 9.2 per cent, to 9,500 for five consecutive months of year-over-year increases. Unemployment in the province is the lowest in the country at 4.8 per cent, down from 5 per cent last month, with Regina having the lowest unemployment rate at 3.9 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, saskjobs.ca experienced more than 1 million hits in March, the highest ever number of visits in one month since the site went live. Following our province's recent labour recruitment mission, Ireland ranked as the country with the

most international traffic on saskjobs.ca in the month of March, with 13,706 visits, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, these are just some of the indicators showing our province's prosperity. And our government is focused on keeping this province on track, keeping the Saskatchewan advantage. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[10:15]

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

Prince Albert Resident Celebrates 90th Birthday

Ms. Jurgens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in this House to speak about one of Prince Albert's first ladies, Phyllis MacKay. Phyl will be celebrating her 90th birthday on April 9th. She is the last living granddaughter of William Miller who, in 1873, helped Reverend James Nesbit to build a Presbyterian church for what is now known as Prince Albert.

Phyl attended U of S [University of Saskatchewan] to obtain her teaching certificate. Her baptism by fire into teaching began in 1942 at the age of 20 at Buckland School. For \$700 a year, she taught 15 pupils from grades 1 to 10. Phyl's teaching career took her to the schools of Hagen, Prince Charles, Prince Edward, and then John Diefenbaker School where in 1983 she retired after a continuous 41-year career teaching over 1,200 students.

Phyl's extracurricular activities are extensive. She was a ladies fastball pitcher and helped the Saskatoon Pats win the Saskatchewan championship several times and the Western Canada Cup in 1944. She is one of only two lady whistlers in all of Canada and was a member of the Watsonairs, a well-known ladies choral group. She has over 60 years of perfect attendance in Beta Sigma Phi and was recently inducted into the P.A. [Prince Albert] Council women's hall of fame.

Mr. Speaker, I would like all members in this Assembly to join me in congratulating Phyllis MacKay for all she has done for the people of Prince Albert and surrounding area. Phyl has had an extraordinary 90 first years, and I wish her many more fruitful ones to come. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Moosomin.

Easter Celebrations

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, this weekend we will celebrate Easter. Students will be happy that they have a break from school. Families and friends will gather together to enjoy a meal and each other's company. There will be squeals of delight as children search for hidden Easter eggs. This is the commercial side of the Easter weekend.

There is another side. Tomorrow morning at Good Friday services held in our province, across our country, and worldwide, millions of people will gather to remember the reason we celebrate Easter. At these services, we will be reminded again of the tremendous love of a heavenly Father for mankind, as we remember the death of his son, Jesus Christ, on

the cross. We hear the words of Jesus on the cross, "It is finished," and the response of the Roman centurion, "Truly this was the son of God."

The story didn't end there. Three days later, a group of women went to Christ's burial place and found an empty tomb guarded by heavenly beings who said to the women, "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here. He is risen."

Mr. Speaker, the Easter story is a message of love, joy, peace, and hope. To you, Mr. Speaker, members of this Legislative Assembly, staff who work in this building, and the people of the province of Saskatchewan, Happy Easter and safe travels.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Electoral Representation

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the public's had a lot to say to this government about their priorities, but I haven't heard them say that they wanted three more politicians. Not only does the Sask Party want to exclude all those young people under the age of 18 when they're drafting the new constituency boundaries; it wants to add three more politicians to this Legislative Assembly.

Yesterday we gave the Sask Party government a new option. So my question is to the Premier: will he and his government support our amendment to stop his legislation that spends money on politicians instead of people?

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the province's past, we have had 61 MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] for the 1975 and 1978 elections. In 1982 it was increased to 64. In the 1986 election, it was increased to 66 MLAs. Mr. Speaker, we are following along with a pattern that will ensure that the citizens of our province are well represented.

We know that we have made a special provision for the Far North to ensure that the geographic obstacles out of the North are able to be served by the two MLAs that are up there, and we want to ensure that similar accommodations are made for the rest of the province so that people do not have to travel excessive distances. We have constituencies such as Cypress Hills that have over 10 000 square kilometres. We have constituencies such as Arm River where you have to travel in excess of 160 kilometres from one end of the constituency to the other. In some situations, it is as much as two and a half hours driving time.

We want to ensure that the people of our province are able to access their MLAs in a fair and reasonable manner, and that's the direction we are going to continue to go, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party had lots

to say to the people of Saskatchewan in the last election but we heard nothing about this plan for more politicians. It wasn't in the Premier's comments during the election. It wasn't in the Sask Party platform. It didn't even make it into their Throne Speech in the fall. Will the Premier admit that he hasn't talked to the people of Saskatchewan about spending millions on three more politicians? Will he admit that he has no mandate from the people to make this change?

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, the additional costs for a member of the Legislative Assembly is \$225,000 per year; total costs of the additional MLAs will be \$675,000 per year. There will be no cost to the Legislative Assembly during this term because none of this will happen until after the next election.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier has made a commitment to the people of this province that that will be absorbed elsewhere at executive government. Mr. Speaker, that is a commitment that's taken seriously. And not only that, Mr. Speaker. I can advise the members that we have already reduced travel by executive government by some three and a half million dollars per year and communications by an additional \$5 million per year. That is an eight and a half million dollar reduction of what happened when those members were in government.

Mr. Speaker, some of the excesses that took in place in there were far out of line. And we will be careful and prudent with the taxpayers' money. We wish to be very responsible, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier and the Sask Party have a choice to make today. They can admit that they've made a mistake and pull this legislation. Then, Mr. Speaker, we can have a discussion across the province. We can have consultation about this proposal in an appropriate fashion like has been done in other provinces.

Saskatchewan people have priorities about health care. They want to know why seniors have to pay more when there's more money being spent on politicians. They want to know why our universities aren't properly being funded. These should be the priorities for our government, not spending millions of dollars on more politicians. So, Mr. Speaker, will the Premier admit his mistake and pull this legislation?

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This legislation must be completed so that the work of the Boundaries Commission can be undertaken. Mr. Speaker, we have huge disparities in the size of our constituencies and we want to see those rectified as soon as possible.

Mr. Speaker, the member for Saskatoon Centre has approximately 7,000 voting members in his constituency. In my constituency I have over 16,000. I want to be able to look the voters of my constituency in the eye next time and tell them,

your vote counts just as much as somebody from Saskatoon Centre. We want to have something fair and equitable. We will look at the processes carefully and ensure that the electoral commission, or the Boundaries Commission, does their work in an appropriate manner, and we want to ensure that they have adequate time to do that before the next election, Mr. Speaker. I want to be able to look my voters in the eye and tell them that their vote counts just as much as somebody else's.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I've asked these questions of the Premier today and on previous days. I think it's entirely appropriate that the Premier should get up and tell us where this idea comes from. He did not raise this during the election. It was not in the Throne Speech. There has not been consultation with the people of Saskatchewan. So, Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier to clarify for the public where this idea comes from and why he's not the one speaking to the public about why he has done this.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the redrawing of electoral maps in the province of Saskatchewan ought not to be a surprise to that member and ought not to be a surprise to anybody in the province of Saskatchewan. It happens every 10 years. It happens after the census, Mr. Speaker. In a representation by population system, sometimes the number of MLAs in this place are adjusted for population.

It happens today, Mr. Speaker, that this province is growing like it never has before, Mr. Speaker. It's growing even faster than it did in 1979 when the then NDP [New Democratic Party], without campaigning on it, increased the number of seats and reduced the category of voters to the people of the age of majority.

Mr. Speaker, the people in this province did talk about a lot of things this fall. They analyzed the options presented to them in that general election. They analyzed \$5.5 billion with unsustainable promises that would have left this province in deficit and destroyed the Saskatchewan advantage. They rejected those ideas. They chose to move Saskatchewan forward and that's exactly what we'll do, Mr. Speaker.

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

Funding for the University of Saskatchewan

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've discussed in recent days that the Saskatchewan Party has shifted \$100 million of debt to the University of Saskatchewan. Yesterday the University of Saskatchewan administration raised additional concerns with the media that the Sask Party also provided absolutely no funding for the operating of the Health Sciences project. To the minister: does he agree with the university administration that the Sask Party is providing no funding for the operation of the Health Sciences? Yes or no?

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

Hon. Mr. McMillan: — Mr. Speaker, the commitment that this government has made to our universities, our post-secondary education, Mr. Speaker, is without question. The member responsible, Mr. Speaker, for the universities has spoken with the administration at the university as recently as this morning. And they are comfortable that the building will continue, that the operations will take place, Mr. Speaker, and that the Health Sciences centre will be functioning and producing doctors, hopefully very quickly, Mr. Speaker, and that operational funding is not a problem.

This year's funding was over \$300 million to the university, Mr. Speaker. There was an increase in funding to the university, and our government, Mr. Speaker, stands behind that commitment, the long-term commitment we've had to our universities over the last four years. And we will continue to look forward to those universities and the doctors that will be produced out of this facility.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Just to be clear, Mr. Speaker, is the minister saying that the university got it wrong?

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

Hon. Mr. McMillan: — No.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The University of Saskatchewan administration says that because the Sask Party has provided no operating funding, the Health Sciences facility could very well remain empty and dormant until there is actually funding available. To the minister: does he agree with the university administration's assessment that the Health Sciences building will remain empty because of the government's failure to provide operating funding? Yes or no?

The Speaker: — I would like to remind the member that the Saskatchewan Party does not provide funding to executive government and its operations. It's the government.

I recognize the member for . . . excuse me, the Minister for Crown Investments Corporation.

Hon. Mr. McMillan: — Mr. Speaker, the vice-president of finance yesterday, Mr. Speaker, said, "There's no question about the province's commitment to medical health, education, and research." And, Mr. Speaker, there is also no question about this government's commitment to the post-secondary sector. In the last four years, three and a half billion dollars to post-secondary, Mr. Speaker; one and a half billion to the University of Saskatchewan alone.

Mr. Speaker, the questions were, for the members opposite, when they announced that there would be a Health Sciences centre in 2003 and did nothing. That is, Mr. Speaker, an example of a government that talks with their mouth but does not follow through with actions.

On this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we've been consistent and deliberate. We've made commitments to the people of Saskatchewan about doctors, doctors in rural Saskatchewan, about health care professionals beyond doctors. And this facility, Mr. Speaker, we have been very committed to, we'll continue to be committed to, and we look forward to the results once it is open.

[10:30]

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's interesting that Health Sciences is not the only facility for which the University of Saskatchewan has been short funded. We also know that the U of S is planning on staging the opening of the InterVac [international vaccine centre] facility because of short funding as well, so the minister's rhetoric rings quite hollow.

The University of Saskatchewan is not only being forced to max out their debt; they're also being forced to find ways to fund these two vital facilities because the government failed to provide any funding. To the minister: why didn't the Sask Party government provide operating funding?

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

Hon. Mr. McMillan: — Mr. Speaker, I don't know if the members opposite don't recognize that three and a half billion dollars over four years is a commitment to the sector, that one and a half billion to this facility, the University of Saskatchewan alone, is a large commitment and acknowledgment of the great work they do, Mr. Speaker, to educate the people that we need to be our researchers, our physicians, our nurses, Mr. Speaker. We have seen consistently over the last four years increasing the number of nursing spaces, Mr. Speaker, from a time where the NDP looked at that as easy cuts. We have increased, Mr. Speaker, the funding this year by over 2 per cent to the university just in general.

The university, Mr. Speaker, works very hard to give value for money and provide a very broad range of services and opportunities for the students here in Saskatchewan. And they are a partner with our government. Our minister has talked to their VP [vice-president] of finance this morning, Mr. Speaker. There is a great understanding and appreciation of the work that they do and it's going to continue.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, earlier this month the medical school at the University of Saskatchewan was warned that it's on the brink of probation. On Monday the Minister of Advanced Education admitted that one of the concerns impeding the medical school was, and I quote, "the actual state and fate of the Health Sciences facility." So it begs the question how the latest news from the University of Saskatchewan is going to affect the prospective probation of the medical school.

So my question to the minister is this: if the university

administration is saying that it's entirely possible that the Health Sciences building will end up sitting empty because they can't afford to operate it, how will that affect the status of the College of Medicine?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, when the NDP were in power, Mr. Speaker, we were in danger of losing our College of Medicine. It was put on probation under the NDP, Mr. Speaker. Since that time, we've worked diligently with the university, with the College of Medicine to make sure that that doesn't happen again, Mr. Speaker. There was a letter of warning which just talks about some of the issues that were outstanding from the former government that are being addressed. Mr. Speaker, the new Academic Health Sciences centre will be a big asset to that university and the College of Medicine as we move forward, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it would have been a shame to lose the College of Medicine, even under the NDP when they only had 60 seats for doctors, Mr. Speaker. Our government will not lose that College of Medicine, and we've increased the number of seats to 100 and 120 residency positions, Mr. Speaker. Heaven help us if we ever go back to the days under . . . probational College of Medicine under the NDP.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Whip.

Tourism Saskatchewan

Mr. Vermette: — Well that's interesting, Mr. Speaker. Seeing that it's Easter weekend and the Sask Party has been so good, and the minister, at hiding things from the Saskatchewan Tourism sector, maybe it's good you can help the Easter bunny hide the eggs.

But anyway, Mr. Speaker, the tourism industry was completely caught off guard with the plans to add politics to Tourism Saskatchewan. The Sask Party ignored their own report that recommended keeping Tourism Saskatchewan an arm's-length organization. Following the budget, the Saskatchewan Bed and Breakfast Association wrote to the minister and said, "[Now] It seems that we and all the industry partners of Tourism Saskatchewan are being evicted so [our government] your government can take full control."

To the minister: why is this government taking full control of Tourism Saskatchewan with no consultation with the tourism industry?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm reminded of a wonderful old quote that bears repeating today. I believe it was Mark Twain who said, "Everybody wants progress; it's change that they don't like."

Mr. Speaker, we're fully aware that the transition of Tourism Saskatchewan from an independent organization into a Crown corporation represents change, but we are also confident that the transition represents real progress for Saskatchewan's

tourism industry, and well worth the effort. Mr. Speaker, we know that a single point of entry for tourism within government, a long-term plan, and a strategy for events will strengthen the industry. And we know that better alignment with our government's other economic development initiatives will lead to more consistency and more effectiveness. Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is it's all about results and an even brighter future for tourism in our province.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Whip.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, tourism is about marketing our province and celebrating our strengths as a vacation destination. It's no wonder the Sask Party wants to take over Tourism Saskatchewan, as they love to market themselves through spin and PR [public relations].

Members of the industry say the minister has failed to provide answers. In a letter one member said, "Despite what the minister has stated, there has been little to no consultation with the actual industry." Why is the minister more worried about marketing his government's image than working with the tourism sector?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you mentioned yesterday, we acknowledge that change always causes some concern and hesitation. It's a perfectly understandable human reaction. But as we reminded the member yesterday, it also inspires people who are looking forward to the positive changes that it can bring.

Here's what some of the visionary leaders in Saskatchewan's tourism industry have to say about the creation of a new tourism Crown. Chris Brewer, president and CEO [chief executive officer] of the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association, wrote to say:

I would like to pass along congratulations for the development of the new Crown corporation that will host Saskatchewan's tourism industry. This is a very positive move forward for Saskatchewan and it's been a long time coming. Keep up the good work [he concludes].

And this one from Mr. Greg Dionne, chairman of the northern tourism Saskatchewan region:

I would like to pledge my support to the Government of Saskatchewan for the bold step they have taken and to help make tourism in Saskatchewan what it should be, a leader in economic growth.

Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what we're doing.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Whip.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party has an opportunity to listen to the public and listen to the tourism industry. In a survey by its members, Tourism Saskatchewan found only 7 per cent think this change is good for their industry. The minister has an opportunity to take a second look

at his plans. He can admit his mistakes and work in co-operation with members of the tourism community. Will the minister today commit to pulling this proposed legislation and consult with the industry about how best to ensure growth in our province's tourism sector?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Mr. Speaker, as we reminded the member the other day, there will of course be further consultation with key industry stakeholders and others. But you know, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting. The NDP are trying very, very hard to present themselves as friends of the industry and of Tourism Saskatchewan. But you know, Mr. Speaker, history tells a different story. They ignored Tourism Saskatchewan, underfunded our beautiful provincial parks, and absolutely turned their back on our beautiful regional parks as well.

It was the Saskatchewan Party that promised to double the province's investment in the industry. And as we have in many, many other cases — more than 100 — we kept that promise, Mr. Speaker. Part of that commitment was increasing Tourism Saskatchewan's budget by a full 50 per cent, something the NDP would never have done.

Obviously the dramatically increased funding has been a game changer for that organization and now we're about to take another bold step by turning it into a Crown corporation that will ensure our province's tourism industry gets to the next level of performance.

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

Property Taxes

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, municipalities were surprised to find out in this year's budget that the discount for early payment for education property tax is being eliminated. This was an incentive that many municipalities offered to help them collect property taxes in a timely and efficient manner. Did the minister consult with the municipalities before the decision to eliminate the discount was made?

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

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Mr. Speaker, thank you, and thank the member for his question. In 2009 a dramatic shift in how the population pays for taxes regarding education took place in this province under the leadership of this government. There's less of a burden on the sectors right now, Mr. Speaker, than there was when the NDP were in government to be sure, to the point that, Mr. Speaker, municipalities have the opportunity to still discount municipal tax portion on residential properties.

This government saw though that over the last couple of years, there was a \$16 million shortfall to the provincial treasury because the education property tax also had discounts applied to it, Mr. Speaker. Simply put, municipalities can still have the power to discount their taxes on the municipal portion from zero to 15 per cent. This way, Mr. Speaker, on the education

property tax, we will not see a shortfall to the school systems and have to be backfilled by the Ministry of Education. Again, Mr. Speaker, this government listened to the ratepayers in this province. Education property taxes are reduced across the board, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Well, Mr. Speaker, not a word about who they consulted, but we know one group for sure they didn't consult with — that was the property owners and the homeowners — before they eliminated this discount. It wasn't in their election platform and it wasn't in their Throne Speech. And you know, Mr. Speaker, while the discount was in place homeowners, for example in Warman, could save as much as 6 per cent. Indian Head could save as much as 5 per cent of their property taxes depending on when they paid them. Why did the government wait until after the election to tell Saskatchewan homeowners, families, it was taking away their chance to save money on their property taxes?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Mr. Speaker, under this government we've seen \$165.7 million in reduction of property taxes across the province, Mr. Speaker. In the context of the fifth balanced budget, Mr. Speaker, we saw revenue sharing go up by \$110 million, property taxes reduced. The burden on the people of this province has been reduced for education, Mr. Speaker. We believe that it's our responsibility to take that burden off of them. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, the municipalities can still do their own discounts on what's their portion of property tax. On our portion, Mr. Speaker, the shortfall will not be a backfill on the ratepayers in this province. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, municipalities still have the power to be autonomous in that decision making.

What happened after the budget, Mr. Speaker? The city of Weyburn actually changed their stance on discounts. They will not be doing any discounts because they saw that as a shortfall to their actual revenue stream as well, Mr. Speaker. Again, Mr. Speaker, balanced budgets across this province mean for five years ratepayers see a reduction in taxes.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, Mr. Speaker, at a time when this government is boasting about economic growth, they present a budget that has people paying more. Seniors are paying more for prescription drugs and ambulance charges. Students are paying more for tuition. School divisions are receiving less money, resulting in less educational services for children. And families, homeowners, the middle class will no longer be able to save money by paying their property tax early.

When the government has millions of dollars for three more politicians, why is it punishing homeowners by taking away their ability to save a bit of money on their property taxes?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as

the entire province looks forward to another Easter weekend, it's interesting that we would end on a bit of a wrap-up here in this particular legislative session that members talked a little bit about the budget in the province of Saskatchewan, not just municipal tax, Mr. Speaker. It's interesting what he didn't mention. And what we think is very unique is that, as a result of this budget tabled by the Minister of Finance with record revenue sharing for the municipalities as the minister has mentioned, it is, in terms of the provinces and the federal government, the only balanced budget in the country. It's the only one. It's the only one.

Within that balanced budget, we continue to keep the 140 promises we made for the first term. We've kept all the promises we made to the people of Saskatchewan in the last election, including delivering real education tax relief, something that members opposite have the gall to talk about year after year and not deliver. I think as we head into Easter, the people of this province are pretty happy that they've got a government that keeps its promises and keeps this province moving forward.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Ask for leave to introduce a guest.

The Speaker: — The Leader of the Opposition has asked leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

[10:45]

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to recognize, behind the bar, Mr. Rick Swenson who is the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party of Saskatchewan. And we know that he has served our province over many years in many different capacities, including in this legislature, and I ask all members to welcome him here. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, with leave to introduce a guest.

The Speaker: — The Premier has asked leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I noted that during question period a friend of mine and the member for Cypress Hills has joined us in the galleries. His name is Phillip Entz, and he is from the Abbey Hutterite Colony, Mr. Speaker. We've developed a friendship over the years. Phillip is very keenly interested in politics, follows it very, very closely and carefully,

and is a source of great counsel for those who are prepared to sit down and listen to his advice, Mr. Speaker. And I'm not sure I've had this opportunity to introduce him in the past, so I do so now. I'd ask all members to help me welcome Phillip to his Legislative Assembly.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 37 — *The Tourism Saskatchewan Act*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 37, *The Tourism Saskatchewan Act* now be introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport that Bill No. 37, *The Tourism Saskatchewan Act* be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

The Speaker: — When shall this Bill be read a second time? I recognize the Minister of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Mr. Speaker, next sitting of the House.

Bill No. 38 — *The Active Families Benefit Amendment Act, 2012*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 38, *The Active Families Benefit Amendment Act, 2012* be now introduced and read for a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport that Bill No. 38, *The Active Families Benefit Amendment Act, 2012* be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

The Speaker: — When shall this Bill be read a second time? I recognize the Minister of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 39 — *The Financial and Consumer Affairs Authority of Saskatchewan Act*

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 39, *The Financial and Consumer Affairs Authority of Saskatchewan Act* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General that Bill No. 39, *The Financial and Consumer Affairs Authority of Saskatchewan Act* be introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 40 — *The Financial and Consumer Affairs Authority of Saskatchewan Consequential Amendment Act, 2012/Loi de 2012 portant modification corrélative à la loi intitulée The Financial and Consumer Affairs Authority of Saskatchewan Act*

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 40, *The Financial and Consumer Affairs Authority of Saskatchewan Consequential Amendment Act, 2012* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General that Bill No. 40, *The Financial and Consumer Affairs Authority of Saskatchewan Consequential Amendment Act, 2012* be introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 41 — *The Miscellaneous Statutes (Municipal Affairs — Municipal Taxation) Amendment Act, 2012*

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 41, *The Miscellaneous Statutes (Municipal Affairs — Municipal Taxation) Amendment Act, 2012* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs that Bill No. 41, *The Miscellaneous Statutes (Municipal Affairs — Municipal Taxation) Amendment Act, 2012* be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

The Speaker: — When shall this Bill be read a second time? I recognize the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Next sitting of the House.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

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 295 to 297.

The Speaker: — The Government Whip has tabled answers to questions 295 to 297.

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

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

Saskatchewan Provincial Budget

Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you for allowing me some time to enter today's debate. In light of worldwide economic conditions and a few other provincial budgets that were released recently, it is incumbent of us to appreciate our Saskatchewan provincial budget for what it is — balanced.

Visiting municipalities these past months, I have heard appreciation for their sustainable funding model. This was exactly the type of stable, predictable funding model that was requested by these and other municipalities, and it was this government that delivered the municipal revenue-sharing formula. It was last year's budget that provided over \$216 million, or one full percentage point of the PST [provincial

sales tax] collected, to the municipal governments. This year's budget builds on this with an increase of nine and a half per cent or over \$20 million. This will bring the total revenue sharing in the coming year to over \$237 million for municipalities. This amount is 87 per cent higher than it ever was under the New Democratic Party.

Through municipal revenue sharing, we are placing one full point of the PST collected directly into the hands of our local municipal governments. In our constituency, this results in tangible increases in funding to communities such as Hafford with a 111 per cent increase, a community such as Spiritwood with a 96 per cent increase, a community such as Rosthern with a 114 per cent increase, or Blaine Lake at a 108 per cent increase, and Shellbrook with a 130 per cent increase. This in turn improves these communities' financial ability to respond quickly and appropriately to local concerns and challenges that we know they face each year.

This budget introduced by the Finance minister laid the foundation that will repair over 1200 kilometres of highway to keep our commitment to invest \$2.2 billion in Saskatchewan highways over the next four years. This includes over \$70 million in upgrades through the rural highway strategy. This will bring 150 kilometres of rural highway to primary weight.

There's also been \$63 million invested in the gateway corridor projects that improve the safety and efficiency of highway traffic. A project of significance to Rosthern is the twinning of Highway 11 from Saskatoon to Prince Albert which is funded in part through this program.

The introduction of the passing lane initiative will add another economical option to improve the efficiency and safety of many highways that are now experiencing an increase in traffic flow. Al Rosseker from the Saskatchewan Trucking Association has stated, during the last five years, this government has viewed highways as a road to economic prosperity. This government's investment of over \$581 million in highways in this budget will sustain the Saskatchewan advantage for Saskatchewan people.

As I travel through the 30-plus municipalities in Rosthern-Shellbrook, it's abundantly obvious that agriculture is a primary industry and part of the backbone of the economy in this province.

I have previously spoken of the importance of funding such programs as the AgriInvest, AgriStability, and crop insurance at the outset each year to ensure their availability that season. It should also be noted that with the introduction of this year's budget, crop insurance investment at \$177 million is record provincial investment. Crop insurance coverage averaging \$174 an acre is almost double what it ever reached under the previous NDP government. With continued investment and productivity by Saskatchewan producers, it's prudent to provide an insurance program that meets the changing needs of this industry.

The changing needs, Mr. Speaker, that I'm referring to are our provincial agricultural exports. In 2007 ag exports totalled \$6 billion. In 2011 our Saskatchewan agricultural exports increased by over 60 per cent to over \$10 billion. This places Saskatchewan at the top of the agri-food exporting provinces in

the Dominion of Canada. Canola, or the flower of power, has overtaken wheat as the top export in the province of Saskatchewan. In the past five years, canola exports have increased by over 250 per cent to over 2.1 billion this past year. Much of this increase in production and value must be attributed to our province's producers. The producers that we have in Saskatchewan today, Mr. Speaker, are educated in all aspects of agronomics, business management, and marketing.

In past decades, limiting crop quality and production factors have often been overcome by successful research. Research and development of improved agronomic traits with respect to crop varieties and best practices have added not only higher production but better quality products to sell at the farm gate. This government feels it's prudent to invest over \$20 million in agricultural research. This represents record investment again and includes \$2 million for wheat genomic research. Mr. Speaker, it is imperative with agriculture being such a significant component of our economy that we invest in its research and development to ensure continued success of our world-class Saskatchewan agricultural products. The importance of agriculture to our economy is part of what will sustain the Saskatchewan advantage that our producers have helped create.

Since 2007 we have increased operating funding to school divisions in Saskatchewan by approximately 21 per cent. Since 2007, Mr. Speaker, we invested approximately \$500 million in pre-K [pre-kindergarten] to 12 and child care infrastructure. This includes 41 major school capital projects throughout the province. Over half of the schools in the province have received funding for much-needed upgrades or improvements.

As a government we have made a record investment in this area since 2007, including 42 per cent increase in the total number of child care spaces, and we have allocated funding for 13,240 licensed child care spaces. The total number of pre-kindergarten programs has increased by 85 per cent. We have added 131 pre-K programs and an additional 2,096 for vulnerable three- and four-year-olds.

Today over 4,500 children are benefiting from this invaluable learning program. The 2012-13 education budget fulfills the Government of Saskatchewan's commitment to a fair balance in funding for school divisions across the province, as well as heightened commitment to student achievement with a focus on ensuring more equitable outcomes of our First Nation and Métis students, a continued commitment to child care spaces, as well as pre-kindergarten. Library and literacy programs are also included.

This year the increased investment in education will provide more equitable support through our province's educational system and an increased commitment to ensuring success for all students from early childhood to high school graduation. The launch of the new education funding distribution model provides a long anticipated and fairer balance in funding for school divisions across Saskatchewan. Government's overall funding the school divisions is \$1.74 billion, an increase of 5 per cent, which includes an increase in the operating funding of \$59 million.

Included in the support this year is a \$10 million transition

funding which is being allocated to mitigate the impact on those school divisions who will see notable shifts in funding due to the new distribution model. Five hundred thousand dollars is also committed to summer literacy camps held in 20 communities across the province. These camps work to reduce summer reading loss by engaging children age 5 to 14 in camp activities rooted in literacy and numeracy, an increase of 1.6 per cent in funding of libraries and community-based organizations.

Principled, sustainable spending is another way the Ministry of Education is committed to ensuring Saskatchewan remains a great place to live, grow, and learn. The ministry will focus its efforts this year on engaging its partners, initially school divisions, in learning and implementing new efficiency practices such as shared services and group purchasing.

Well-maintained, efficient school environments are the foundation for supporting the achievement and successes of all the students. This is also critical to sustaining growth and prosperity in our province of Saskatchewan. By keeping the Saskatchewan advantage, we will ensure our young people are prepared for continued success in their work and in their lives.

[11:00]

Mr. Speaker, health investment by the people of Saskatchewan will be greater than it has ever been, and more importantly, this investment will come with a patient-focused system. Health care investment will increase 4.9 per cent to improve access for all Saskatchewan residents. This includes investment in areas such as infrastructure, professional recruitment and retention, as well as continuing the approach to the reduction of surgery wait times.

Improving access, Mr. Speaker, is moving forward with design and construction of health care facilities in this province. This includes funding to continue with the design and construction of 13 long-term care facilities as well as continuing funding to a completed pilot project with a non-profit organization. The Amicus facility is now a place that many Saskatchewan citizens call home. Maintaining the Saskatchewan advantage is advancing the design and construction phases of the children's hospital in Saskatoon, the Saskatchewan Hospital in North Battleford, and the replacement of the Moose Jaw Union Hospital in Moose Jaw.

Improving access, Mr. Speaker, is providing \$60 million to move forward with the Saskatchewan surgical initiative. We are continuing with the four-year plan to provide by 2014 all Saskatchewan residents with the ability to have necessary surgery performed within three months. The Saskatchewan surgical initiative is proudly supported again in this budget and is producing positive results for patients and their families in our province.

Improving access in rural areas continues to be addressed in this budget. This budget supports the increase of training seats for nurse practitioners and physicians. It continues to support the doubling of the residency positions, and available to this province as medical grads, as well as creating opportunities for placements of medical graduates from other areas of the world. Combined with the increase in training opportunities is the forgiveness of Saskatchewan student loans of up to \$120,000

for physicians and \$20,000 for nurses and nurse practitioners that choose to work in identified underserved rural locations. Mr. Speaker, this incentive will encourage new health care professionals to practise in our province. This is yet another example of improving access in health care in Saskatchewan.

\$1.5 million of this budget will go directly to fund the rural locum physician pool. The formation of this locum pool is crucial to the continuity of service in rural areas. This was a campaign commitment by this party, and now it will be funded and implemented by this government.

Improving access, Mr. Speaker, includes five and a half million dollars, an increase of five and a half million dollars to the Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society, as well as an increase of \$16 million to the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency to support access to cancer services. Five and a half million dollars is available to introduce an innovative, team-based approach to access sustainable and stable primary health care and thereby improving the patient experience.

Four million dollars, Mr. Speaker, has been provided to expand the colorectal screening program province wide to increase early detection and thereby improve patient outcomes. There's been an increase of \$98 million to regional health authorities to continue to deliver services to the people of this province.

These are some of the initiatives that will improve access for all Saskatchewan residents to their health care system, and this in turn contributes to sustaining the Saskatchewan advantage.

Today, Mr. Speaker, more people call Saskatchewan home than ever before. This past January, there was 1,067,612 people living in Saskatchewan. This is up year over year by over 17,000 people and the largest increase since 1953.

This budget, this balanced budget, Mr. Speaker, is for municipalities. This balanced budget, Mr. Speaker, is for the students of Saskatchewan. It's for people living with disabilities. This budget is for people in need of surgery and health care. Mr. Speaker, this balanced budget is for Saskatchewan highways and is for Saskatchewan agriculture. And, Mr. Speaker, this balanced budget is for the sustainability and the quality of life of Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, with that I would like to make a motion. I would like to make the motion:

That this Assembly commend the Saskatchewan Party government for passing the only balanced provincial budget in the Dominion of Canada for the 2012-2013 fiscal year.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Rosthern-Shellbrook:

That this Assembly commend the Saskatchewan Party government for passing the only balanced provincial budget in the Dominion of Canada for the 2012-13 fiscal year.

I recognize the member for Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to enter debate and discussion here today. The motion put forward by the member suggesting that they've somehow put forward a balanced budget and doing a lot of patting on the back is certainly premature, Mr. Speaker. We know that each year this is sort of the same song that we hear from this government at budget time. They get up and they speak of budgetary balance, and then of course, Mr. Speaker, their record is something very much different, Mr. Speaker.

You know, Saskatchewan people are tuning in to this aspect with respect to this government, Mr. Speaker, and they're asking more and more questions on this front. And to be frank, Mr. Speaker, I'm hearing in fact a lot more of these questions and concerns since the previous election. There was certainly question and concern around the management, financial management of this government prior to the election, but I'm certainly hearing more voices in more communities all across Saskatchewan casting question, doubt, and concern as to this government's ability to follow through with what it's suggesting and to balance the books, Mr. Speaker.

It's, as I say, you're not judged in Saskatchewan by what you say; you're judged by what you do, Mr. Speaker. And that's where the problem is, Mr. Speaker, is that each year at budget time, this government, Sask Party government comes before the people and suggest and say they have a balanced budget. They've done that in fact, Mr. Speaker, the last . . . Well every one of the budgets, they've suggested that it was balanced on budget day and in the budget day public relations spin, sort of in that period of time around that. And then things start to change, Mr. Speaker, and the numbers come in, although we don't hear the members speak about the results and the record that they have.

But we have other independent groups, Mr. Speaker, to point to that record. We have individuals and offices like the independent Provincial Auditor's office, Mr. Speaker, that's pointed out that over the past three years in fact, Mr. Speaker, that this government has in fact run deficits. So on budget day, this government comes out and sings a song of budgetary balance that's nothing more than public relations spin, and then their record suggests something different, Mr. Speaker. And in 2009 and '10, that deficit was \$173 million. That's the record of this government, Mr. Speaker.

In 2010 and 2011, Mr. Speaker, this government also suggested their budget was balanced. And their actual record, their actual performance assessed not by myself and the opposition, Mr. Speaker, but by chartered accountants and the independent provincial — non-partisan — Provincial Auditor, Mr. Speaker, verifies a deficit of \$145 million. Members can laugh at their inconsistency in what they say and what they do, Mr. Speaker, but Saskatchewan people aren't laughing on this front. In fact this speaks to the very core of what's important to Saskatchewan people — being straightforward. Mr. Speaker, sharing the full and fair and true picture of their finances is something Saskatchewan people deserve.

But it goes on, Mr. Speaker. In 2011-2012, the Finance minister and members opposite got up and sang a song of budgetary balance, suggesting somehow that this year they would balance the budget, Mr. Speaker. And of course this past year they're

running a deficit that's exceeding \$300 million, Mr. Speaker.

So we hear again this year that somehow that this year this budget will be different, and this one will be balanced, Mr. Speaker. And fingers crossed, Mr. Speaker, I hope that it is. But we won't be holding our breath on this front because we've seen the record, we've seen the outcome, and we've seen the results of this government, Mr. Speaker.

And we know as well that even in how this government reports its finances is out of line with the rest of Canada. And this just presents a picture that's less than fair, less than accurate to Saskatchewan people. And quite frankly, Saskatchewan people deserve the fair, full, true state of their finances reported to them. It's about being straightforward. It's about being accountable. It's about being transparent, Mr. Speaker. It's about being able to compare to other jurisdictions in an apples to apples sort of fashion, Mr. Speaker. And certainly what we see from this government is something less than that, Mr. Speaker.

I was reading recently *The Globe and Mail*, and I had . . . The title of the article jumped out at me because it described so well the circumstance here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. On March 17th, 2012, of *The Globe and Mail*, Jeffrey Simpson's article title is "Conservatives preach the gospel but forget the chapters." Mr. Speaker, "Conservatives preach the gospel but forget the chapters." The byline, Mr. Speaker, they say they want smaller government, lower taxes, and balanced budgets. And then they don't deliver. And it's sort of that notion, Mr. Speaker, that Saskatchewan people are starting to identify.

This is a government that went before the people in the fall, and they put forward election promises, Mr. Speaker, none of which included what we're seeing from this government at this point in time. They suggested they were going to pay down debt, Mr. Speaker. Well not the case, Mr. Speaker. Debt's going up by over \$1 billion this year alone. And if you look at the charts in their own budget summary, debt's going up by well over 25 per cent over the next four years, Mr. Speaker. Not what this government ran on. Not what this party ran on, Mr. Speaker.

Just the same, what we do see coming from this government are increases to costs in areas which are certainly not a priority to Saskatchewan people. And everyone knows, Mr. Speaker, that budgets are about choices. And this government's choosing to spend millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker, if you can imagine, to increase the number of politicians — something they weren't straight with Saskatchewan people on, something they didn't run on in the election, and certainly something that wasn't included in their Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker. And that's the choices that this government's making, Mr. Speaker, and doing so on the backs of seniors and families all across this province.

It's an interesting set of priorities and choices in this budget and by this government, Mr. Speaker. They're choosing in fact to ask Saskatchewan families and seniors to dig deeper, Mr. Speaker, into their pockets at a time where this government touts prosperity and record growth, and does so by spending millions of dollars on politicians, but at the same it asks seniors to ante up some extra expenditure, Mr. Speaker, to the tune of hundreds of dollars a year by way of increases to prescription drug costs, you know.

And I know the Premier and others over there they suggest, well it's only a \$5 increase, Mr. Speaker. Well they're failing to understand the reality of Saskatchewan seniors, Mr. Speaker. That \$5 increase, when you put that together, Mr. Speaker, for seniors across Saskatchewan, is hundreds of dollars a year in increases, Mr. Speaker. And these are the pioneers of our province, Mr. Speaker, many of them on fixed incomes and certainly shouldn't be having their costs being increased at a time of purported prosperity in their province, Mr. Speaker.

Just the same, we see property taxes going up for many who have accessed the early payment discount, Mr. Speaker, an increase for those all across this province that counted on the savings from that early payment. We see increases in care home fees. We see increases to students, Mr. Speaker, trying to afford post-secondary.

And then we see the sad reality, Mr. Speaker, of a time of record growth within Saskatchewan that we in fact . . . When I say record growth, we see population growth, Mr. Speaker, that brings forward challenges and opportunities. And instead what we see from this government is a government focused on increasing the number of politicians to spend millions of dollars there but then to deny the dollars needed to make those investments in the classrooms across Saskatchewan, to make those improvements in health services in communities all across our province, Mr. Speaker. And this is certainly not in the best interests of Saskatchewan people.

And it's left a significant anxiety for Saskatchewan people as they look at the health budget and what the education budget means for their own community. They know that there's cuts coming, and those decisions are going to be rolled out in the days, weeks, and months to come, Mr. Speaker. So sadly we have this anxiety that Saskatchewan people have as they're looking across their own neighbourhood and wondering what the impact will be in their child's classroom or as it relates to their own job or as it relates to the health services they depend on, Mr. Speaker.

So we see a government with misplaced priorities that's making choices that certainly aren't in the best interests of Saskatchewan people. And, Mr. Speaker, the celebration, I would say, of some sort of a budgetary balance that's suggested by the hon. member is very premature, Mr. Speaker.

Because judging by the record of this government, what we've seen time and time again is that despite the fact on budget day they control the public relations lines and have lots of spin and pretend somehow that their budget's going to be balanced, Mr. Speaker, of course their record is something different, verified by the Provincial Auditor. Three consecutive deficit budgets, Mr. Speaker. Debt on the rise by over a billion dollars this year alone, debt on the rise by over 25 per cent over the next four years despite the fact that this government suggested that they were going to pay down debt in their last election, Mr. Speaker. And of course, of course making choices that are costing millions of dollars to Saskatchewan people by choosing politicians and doing so over people, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's fair for me to say, I certainly don't support the motion of the budget. I crossed my fingers, hold my breath that this year they may in fact balance the budget, Mr. Speaker.

But we know certainly they're not balancing to meet the priorities of Saskatchewan people and their record, as far as meeting a budgetary balance, would suggest something different, Mr. Speaker. So I don't support the motion put forward today. It's been my pleasure to weigh in on debate.

[11:15]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Yorkton.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to join in the debate on this motion put forward by the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook commending the Saskatchewan Party government for passing the only provincial balanced budget in the Dominion of Canada this year, 2012 and '13. And, Mr. Speaker, before I go on with my remarks, I just want to maybe expand on that a little bit.

The member opposite, the member from Rosemont, talked about us patting ourselves on the back. And although, Mr. Speaker, I mean that's his perception, my take on this whole motion, this whole budget is it's something for the people of the province. It's not our budget. It's the budget of the people of the province. And contrary to what I've heard from the members opposite, I've heard nothing but positive feedback, save for a few instances, on this provincial budget.

He also touched on somehow it's a balanced budget, and I can tell you how somehow. It's by the hard work of the member from Canora-Pelly — the Finance minister, Deputy Premier. It's by the hard work of our Treasury Board. It's by the hard work of cabinet and the input of all members on this side of the House — our caucus, Mr. Speaker — on how this budget was balanced.

He questions if it was really balanced. Well you know, Mr. Speaker, as I've said before and I'll say again, I will take the guidance and the input from the people around the province, the third party input from around the province, on whether it's a balanced budget. Hopefully I'll get to some of those comments, those quotes by the end of my remarks. But time and time again, we've heard third party quotes speaking of the balanced budget and the optimism of this budget for the people of the province and the province as a whole.

This budget term keeping the Saskatchewan advantage is truly that, Mr. Speaker, a budget of somewhat . . . of measures that are difficult sometimes, in order to keep the balanced budget but also to keep the Saskatchewan advantage moving forward.

We campaigned, Mr. Speaker, on an election platform that was one of sustainability. And I believe this budget reflects those responsibilities, those campaign promises, and fulfills them, including keeping that economy growing, balancing the budgets. Of course we all know that's dependent on provincial income. In fact this budget completes or begins a process for most of our platform — responsible spending within our means, and not following suit with what some of the other provinces have attempted to do in spending their way into an attempted balance or an attempt to get out of some of their issues, but effectively have spent their way into chaos.

And I know during the budget day, Mr. Speaker, listening to

some of the comments in the House after the budget address by the Deputy Premier, Finance minister, many I talked to were quite surprised by the member from Rosemont, the Finance critic's response, and not only his response, but the length of his response. And admittedly there's no budget that anyone would claim is perfect. We don't claim that this budget is perfect. You can't be all things to all people. You have to make difficult decisions sometimes.

And admittedly it's the opposition's job to point out some of these shortcomings. However, many I spoke to on that budget day were quite, again quite shocked and taken aback. In fact they reflected to me they wondered if that member was actually at the same budget speech. It was something I was sort of wondering myself. Was he listening to the same budget speech? Did he review the same budget?

Or possibly some actually shared with me, Mr. Speaker, did he write it or did a staffer write it for him prior to seeing the document, prior to hearing the budget speech, and then he just didn't choose to change it to something that might be a little more pertinent? Either way it was actually shared by one elderly gentleman, to me, out in the lobby in the foyer of this fine building that, you know, if the member from Rosemont, the Finance critic ever decides to get out of politics into writing, he should become a fiction writer because he said he's got a promising career as a fiction writer. And no, I can't say as I disagree with him either.

The NDP promises, Mr. Speaker, from the last election: I want to touch on some of those in reflecting on the motion by the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook. As many have talked about before, our budget commitments, our platform commitments were \$83 million, which we fulfilled. Our budget platform, our platform commitments in the election was 11.25 billion, I believe. This budget came in at \$11.2 billion, Mr. Speaker, so well within the promises and lining right up with the promises that were made by our leader, our Premier, and the members of this side of the House.

When we look at some of the numbers, we look at their game-breaker calculator. The game-changer calculator the NDP used, I tell you, Mr. Speaker, could really rack up the numbers. Estimates I've heard, even independent assessment and that these numbers added up to currently \$5.5 billion over a four-year period, possibly more. And, Mr. Speaker, that's astronomical.

So what they're talking about now, they're upset with the cuts we've made. They're upset with some of the choices we've made — although I haven't heard that from many people around the province — yet they would've spent more, possibly one and a half, \$2 billion per year to fulfill the commitments that they were making, spending above and beyond our means. And that's not something that we want to do. And I encourage anybody to check it. As of yesterday, I think their platform document was still on the website. So that's something for everybody to inform themselves on, Mr. Speaker.

Our economy remains one of, if not the strongest in the country, partly due to the financial leadership of our government. We continue to try and create an environment for investment, encouraging private investment and, with it, job creation in the

province. And we've seen some releases as late as today as to those numbers. I think 4,000 private sector jobs and high averages of First Nations employment, Mr. Speaker, which is something very promising. Our growth this year is expected to hit 3.1 per cent, which is again leading the country, and that's something that we're all proud of and not just us as a government, Mr. Speaker. We're proud of our private partners that are doing the hard work in creating those jobs as well.

I've been asked by some, like you know, it's kind of an oxymoron, you're . . . They hear that we have a strong economy; yes, the government is cutting money. And they somehow have a hard time understanding that, Mr. Speaker. Well one thing I can point to, the money coming into the province does not always line up with the private sector. Many things that we've undertaken have been tax incentives, tax cuts, and many different measures to help encourage people to invest in the province, create jobs. And they're reaping the benefits, Mr. Speaker. That's real time investment creating real time dividends.

What we see on the provincial government side, we have many different measures for, say, the potash industry where they can write off some of their investment against their capital investment, creates jobs and with it creates a lot of investment in the province. We're seeing some of those writedowns on the resource revenue rates and their income tax. We're in the final years of that. We're going to be seeing more and more of that investment paying off big time.

We see things like the corporate income tax. It has a two-year lag before it's paid back to the provincial government at tax time. So what we're seeing right now on the corporate income tax side is a bit of a lag that happens admittedly. That's something that we can't really do a whole lot about.

But what we're seeing now is the results of the slower economy that we were seeing a couple years ago. The next couple of years we'll be seeing an increase as well as some of the payments that get paid back to the Government of Saskatchewan in regards to disaster assistance. PDAP [provincial disaster assistance program] historically has a 12-, 18-month, maybe a 24-month window before it comes back from the federal government. And we're well aware of that, and we know that money is coming.

This budget again forecasts a 15 million surplus in the summary surplus, Mr. Speaker, but a 95 million in the general statement, and over \$750 million at the end of this budget year in the Growth and Financial Security Fund, which is the savings account of the people of the province.

The member opposite again, talking about some of the doubt as to whether this is a balanced budget and doubting the government's measures in creating a strong economy and keeping a healthy economy. I will take the advice and the assessment by people, third party people outside of our province. And one thing I would point to, Mr. Speaker, is Saskatchewan now has a AAA credit rating, something we have never seen, if ever, I think, in the history of this province. And that is a guide that I would go by to look at how we are doing, how the province is doing in addressing, addressing issues in the province and also delivering budgets, Mr. Speaker.

Again, we have increased spending in some key areas. I'll quickly run through some of those. The members from Rosemont, Massey Place, you know, during their budget addresses did question our priorities. And, Mr. Speaker, I'll point to some of our priorities: capital investments in highways, schools, and hospitals, \$788 million. We see increases to Health of 4.9 per cent; 11.4 per cent in Education including the new funding model for schools; 4.1 per cent in Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration; 4.7 per cent in Social Services, Mr. Speaker; 4.5 per cent in Highways; 9.5 per cent in municipal revenue sharing. That's 20 per cent of our provincial PST, Mr. Speaker, goes right to those municipalities to help them with some of the costs of their infrastructure and other additional costs, and keeping their taxes low . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Thank you, Minister of Municipal Affairs. He's always very helpful.

On budget surpluses, will continue to go towards debt reduction and investment and growth in our growth and financial security Act, as is pointed out there, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, my time is running short here. The member previous did touch on a lot of our investments outside of my comments. And I'd just like to say that I will be supporting his motion put forward by the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well I'd like to start off with a word of thanks. I'd like to thank the members opposite for clearing something up for us, and that is that the members opposite support their own budget. Thank you for clearing that up for us and for the people of Saskatchewan.

I'd also like to thank them, I guess, for . . . You know, whenever there's a lag in the sort of self-congratulations or the kind of adulation that the members like opposite, they're always quite happy to supply it themselves, Mr. Speaker. So again, I see this motion in that vein. So you know, they saw a deficit; they addressed that in terms of the self-congratulations they feel their actions require.

I guess the one thing I wouldn't thank them for, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that when we see this government throwing itself the self-congratulation parade, when we see themselves going off to the pat themselves on the back festival, it usually means that there's something bad about to happen to the province's finances, Mr. Speaker. I hope that's not the case. I hope that's not the case, Mr. Speaker, but I've been here long enough to see budgets put forward by members opposite that were described in . . . Oh, I think one year it was about it wasn't just the best budget in Canada. It wasn't just the best budget in North American. I think the term that was used, it was the best budget in the universe, was what was used to describe.

And then of course the bottom fell out on their potash projections, Mr. Speaker. So when members opposite get into this business of patting themselves on the back, of self-congratulation, of puffing their chests out and shining themselves around to the expense of the real finances of the province and to the work that's done by the people of the province, we on this side of the House get very worried, Mr.

Speaker. We get concerned. Because we've seen enough of the movies played by the members opposite to know that the pride cometh before the fall. And when members opposite get into such flights of fancy and rhetorical flights around how great things are in the province and what a great job they're doing, we see where that winds up.

And again, Mr. Speaker, we saw not just a couple of years ago from the member, I believe, from Carrot River Valley describing the budget, not just as the best in Canada — which is sort of an alliance of the hubris involved in this piece of debate here today, Mr. Speaker — it wasn't just the best in Canada. It wasn't just the best in North America. It wasn't just the best in the world, but I think he said that it was the best in the universe. And of course the bottom then fell out.

So the fact that they're already into the self-congratulation celebration over there, Mr. Speaker, that they're probably going to have to spend some time at the chiropractor, at the massage therapist to help themselves out after all that back patting that's gone on. The patting themselves on the back, you know, we wish them well in terms of the medical attention that I'm sure they'll require after this week, Mr. Speaker. But again it's par for the course. And that wouldn't be such a problem if it didn't usually wind up poorly for the people of Saskatchewan.

Last year's budget alone, we saw the way that the budget was launched and then the way it wound up. And again the distance between the way the budget is presented, and what happens actually come the final accounting, is often quite stark, Mr. Speaker. So last year you saw the situation where, you know, at the front end of the budget, pledging that it'd be balanced and this, that, and the other thing, that the rainy day fund would be going up, and that they wouldn't take a dividend from SaskPower. It was really interesting, Mr. Speaker, the way all those things came together at the end of the budget year where they had to actually take a dividend from SaskPower to help pay for flooding because they didn't feel adequate enough with the rainy day fund. Like how the heck does that work, Mr. Speaker?

[11:30]

And again we've seen this from this side of the House. And any time they get throwing the self-congratulation parade and any time they get, you know, veering over into the arrogant side of the equation, there's usually a way that the people of Saskatchewan will end up paying the price for that. And last year's budget was proof positive in terms of that pattern when it comes to the actions of members opposite as relates to the finances of this province.

So we're very hopeful that this is a balanced budget, but history would suggest otherwise, Mr. Speaker. We've seen other budgets come forward in this House. The last three, what happened with them at the end of the day? And again it's not just our observations, but the member from Yorkton talked about the importance of those external validators. And when it comes to the finances of the province, Mr. Speaker, we don't have a legislative budgetary officer, as they do federally with the parliamentary budget officer, or they do with different sort of mechanisms they have in the United States, but we do have a Provincial Auditor. And the auditor has a lot of interesting

things to say about where they're at with the finances of this province.

And again in 2009-10, what was the actual deficit come the end of the day? \$173 million. 2010-11, there was a deficit of \$145 million. And 2011-12, we'll see where the deficit really winds up, but we think it's about \$300 million. And again these are numbers that are all from the Provincial Auditor.

So it's one thing to hear the hosanna chorus over there, Mr. Speaker, about how well they're doing and their sort of camaraderie they like to build saying — with their mutual admiration society — and it's like, you've got the best budget; no, you've got the best budget. And on it goes into, you know, sort of the wild party they like to throw for themselves, Mr. Speaker. But the problem is, at the end of the day, is that the bills come due. And the spin at the front of the thing doesn't add up to the reality at the back end. And we've seen that in budget after budget after budget from these members.

And I guess again, Mr. Speaker, that we've got this motion before us here today — here on a red-letter day in the history of irony in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker — the bringing forward of the Bill to nationalize the Tourism Saskatchewan agency. You know, that's kind of ironic. And why are they doing that, Mr. Speaker? Well it's because they want to get control of the advertising budget for that province, so again they can better calibrate the spin that goes on. Or you know, we've seen the actions with the film employment tax credit that wasn't campaigned on, that they went forward with and then tried to foist on the people of Saskatchewan the notion that the balance of the budget hinged upon that one, relatively small expenditure in the context of an \$11 billion-plus budget, Mr. Speaker. That one's interesting.

But what also is interesting, Mr. Speaker, is that they didn't campaign on the fact that, yes, grandma and grandpa, to balance the budget, we're going to be coming to you to make you pay more for prescription drugs. For those medicines that you need on a monthly basis, you're going to be paying more. They didn't say that, Mr. Speaker. They didn't come forward and say, oh and by the way, we're going to change how we construct the constituencies in this province, and what that does to messing around with the electoral system in this province. They didn't say that, Mr. Speaker. And they didn't say, guess what, help is on the way; we've got three more politicians coming for you down at the legislature.

So when they talk about balance, Mr. Speaker, it's kind of hard to take on this side of the House, because we see how that balance actually plays out. It's not just about the finances. There's a balance you have to strike in terms of leadership. There's a balance you have to strike in terms of humility. There's a balance you have to strike in terms of being square with the people of Saskatchewan when you go and ask for their support.

And on so many fronts, Mr. Speaker, with the more MLAs and the millions that's going to be involved in that expenditure, Mr. Speaker; with the more money that they're going to be asking for seniors to pay for prescription drugs, for children to pay for prescription drugs, that was nowhere in those members' election campaign. Again, Mr. Speaker, the record doesn't

square with the rhetoric.

And we heard the members in the campaign talk about, the leader from the members opposite talking about, the only day better in Saskatchewan was tomorrow in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And again and again, you know, they're very quick to throw themselves the self-congratulation parade, Mr. Speaker. But I think they should listen to what they're saying. I think they should listen. They should take a good, hard look at what they're actually doing.

And if the only day better in Saskatchewan than today was tomorrow, why didn't they tell people that tomorrow, well grandma and grandpa are going to be paying more for your prescription drugs, and tomorrow we're going to have three more politicians in the Legislative Assembly, and tomorrow we're going to take measures that will effectively result in the death of the film and television industry in the province of Saskatchewan, and tomorrow we're going to — you know, irony of ironies — nationalize the Tourism Saskatchewan agency, a successful industry-led organization, Mr. Speaker.

So again, in terms of all the balances that need to be struck in this, we see some glaring deficits when it comes to this budget, not just in terms of what we're worried around summary financial statements and how that will add up at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker. We see deficits when it comes to the leadership that should be provided. We see deficits when it comes to being straightforward with the people of Saskatchewan. And the people of Saskatchewan can do better. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to enter into the debate on this balanced budget. Mr. Speaker, the people of Coronation Park and the province wanted to see themselves reflected in this budget. They want to know that they have been heard and that there's recognition that they've been heard. This balanced budget is recognition of those opinions being heard.

As part of our government's election platform, a priority was to ensure that the quality of life for people with disabilities improves in this province. I'm always cognizant of the struggles that people are facing with disabilities, and I am extremely hopeful that there would be recognition of disability enhancements in this budget.

Mr. Speaker, the 2012-13 budget makes an investment of \$26.4 million for new or enhanced programming and increased program utilization. Not only that, but since 2007 the government funding for disabilities program has increased \$308.8 million; an increase of \$17.8 million is provided to expand the Saskatchewan assured income for disability program, the SAID program. Total program will cost \$113 million, 2012-13, and will expand the number of clients from 7,000 adults. Mr. Speaker, these enhancements are proof of this government's commitment to people with disabilities.

I had the opportunity to talk to and visit constituents in special care homes and assisted living residences. They are residences

for adults with physical disabilities who are living independently. They are complaining . . . They are phoning to clarify, not to complain. They're very excited by this budget, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the residents anxiously looked on and awaited the budget in hopes that they would see recognition of their monthly struggles to make ends meet. They described in great detail their struggles to make ends meet and were truly struggling month to month.

I still look back fondly when they received the news of enhancements to the SAID program. I continue to be proud to be able to provide news that there would be enhancements to the program, and they thank us as government for this initiative. Mr. Speaker, there were tears of joy in that room, and now their lives are just a little bit more hopeful. Some of the specifics of this budget for people in residential care say they receive an additional \$40, increasing to \$100 per month over the next four years. A single individual who's living independently will receive an increase of \$200 a month, expanding to an average of \$350 a month over the next four years. Couples living independently will receive a \$230 a month increase, expanding to an average of \$400 a month over four years.

As further evidence of disability enhancements, Saskatchewan Aids to Independent Living, SAIL, will receive an increase of \$1.5 million: \$39.4 million in total to maintain these benefits for people with long-term disabilities or illnesses. This program provides supports such as orthotics, prosthetics, rehab mobility equipment, oxygen, and insulin pumps for children. Mr. Speaker, these announcements resonated with my constituents and the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, the child and youth agenda was launched in the '11-12 budget and brought together a number of programs from across the government under one umbrella. The intention is to find new and innovative ways to approach the key social determinants of health and well-being at a very early age. Starting with an initial investment of \$34 million in '11-12, it's been further enhanced in this budget with another \$6 million. Mr. Speaker, some of these initiatives include: \$1 million enhancement for autism spectrum disorder therapies, \$47.6 million in 2012-13; \$600,000 increase for fetal alcohol spectrum disorder prevention services, bringing the provincial total to \$3.6 million; \$500,000 to continue 20 literacy camps for underprivileged youth; \$3 million for a new risk assessment tool for child protection workers.

Mr. Speaker, the introduction of the child and youth agenda has greatly improved relationships with not only CBOs, but there's a recent announcement of a 1.6 per cent lift for CBOs delivering services and First Nations agencies, and it's built new partnerships to improve services to families and children. First Nations agencies are provided \$3.9 million annually to support case management and service delivery for First Nations child welfare authorities. Efforts are being taken to find placements for children with extended family and with First Nations agencies on reserve so that children can remain in their community. This approach has contributed to an increase in the number of children placed in extended family both on and off reserve. The result is a steady decline in the number of children that are coming into care in the ministry.

I'd like to reiterate, I was honoured to be in attendance at the

ribbon cutting ceremony of the FoxValley Counseling Services. And FoxValley Counseling provides services to assist individuals and families based on need. Programs are tailored and therefore more meaningful and personal to the individuals they're serving. These services are in response to needs identified by First Nation members, and this partnership will truly enhance family systems within Regina and the region. Mr. Speaker, there are other initiatives and enhancements to the child and youth agenda and these include: \$1.15 million for 20 out-of-home residential care spaces and an infant care centre; \$41 million increase for intensive family supports; \$750,000 increase for home assessments and treatment foster care delivered by CBOs [community-based organizations]; \$500,000 increase for visitation and supervision for children delivered by CBOs.

Continuing on the subject of youth, Mr. Speaker, and I'm talking . . . I'd like to talk about another agency, Street Culture Kidz . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Completely close to my heart. In particular, the funds that have been provided by the Ministry of Social Services to Street Culture Kidz project, these funds provided are for the operation of the province's first voluntary emergency youth shelter. This 15-bed coed facility provides a first stop for youth without an immediate housing option and will provide a safe, respectful environment while ensuring basic needs for up to 30 days and providing a follow-up plan for these services. It's indeed unfortunate that youth find themselves in unsafe and uncertain circumstances, but there is a need for such service and Street Culture will help to fill this need.

Mr. Speaker, the 2012-13 budget is about keeping the Saskatchewan advantage — balanced budgets, growing economy, and government services that are affordable and sustainable in the long run. Around the world we are seeing the chaos caused by governments that do not live within their means. Saskatchewan's economy and our finances are in much better shape. That's the Saskatchewan advantage. This budget is keeping the Saskatchewan advantage by keeping our balanced budget, by keeping our spending sustainable, by keeping our economy strong and growing, and keeping the promises we made in the election campaign.

Mr. Speaker, this budget goes a long way to ensuring that the province's most vulnerable are further assisted. It's often said that a society is measured by how it treats its most vulnerable. With that in mind, our government is continuing to take action to better meet the needs of people with intellectual disabilities. Starting April 1st of this year we changed the way we fund day programs to one based on actual needs of each individual. This will also allow us to devote more resources to support people that have more complex needs. Implementation will cost approximately \$6.3 million in 2012-13 which includes \$4.6 million for regular day programs and \$1.7 million for day programs with clients that have complex needs. Through these and other programs, we're working to ensure that Saskatchewan is the best place to live in Canada for people with intellectual disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, the enhanced commitment to education in this province is indeed applauded. These enhancements including the new funding formula and recognition of the importance of education is truly welcomed by my constituents. When asked if

this government believes in education, now the answer is a resounding yes.

Mr. Speaker, one of the government's principles is a strong safety net which protects those truly in need of support while encouraging individuals to become self-sufficient. I've already touched on that principle and cited examples that are embedded in the budget.

[11:45]

I'd also like to talk about the rental incentive that's in place and encouraging the construction of new multi-unit rental housing projects the government is introducing as an incentive to encourage private sector investment. The incentive has a corporate income tax rebate equal to 10 per cent of the rental income generated from newly constructed multi-unit rental projects for a period of up to 10 years. This rebate, when combined with other initiatives, is expected to encourage the construction of 10,000 new rental units in the province, 10,000.

In addition, Sask Housing Corp. will provide \$1 million to Habitat for Humanity to help with the additional 20 low-income families achieve home ownership. I've talked about this before, Mr. Speaker, but all of these components are . . .

The Speaker: — Time has elapsed for debate. Oral questions . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Sorry. I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to arise to speak on this matter, and I assume you'll give me a little extra time since you intervened. Mr. Speaker, when I looked at this motion from the government, it was a pleasure to actually have a chance to talk a little bit about part of my life that not a lot of people know about.

Mr. Speaker, when I was practising law in Regina, I would spend a lot of time working with bankrupt and insolvent companies, but especially with companies that were under stress. And, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that you recognized when you worked with companies that were under financial stress is that they were very optimistic, that they were very certain in how they organized their budgets for each year.

And so, Mr. Speaker, when this budget came forward this year with the statement that it had a balance to it, I know that my reaction and the reaction of quite a number of chartered accountants, certified management accountants, others, and probably other lawyers like me, was to look at, how did they get to that balance? Because, Mr. Speaker, this reminds me of a farm machinery sales business, where they start off the year with goals of selling lots of machinery and getting lots of revenue so that they can do all of the things that they want to do in their business. And they know that they have the regular expenses of doing business as well as certain capital costs that relate to building the business. And, Mr. Speaker, you can't take those steps of capital expansion unless you've got a clear statement of accounts that shows that you're paying for your day-to-day expenses — that's your salaries, your utilities, your local taxes, and things like that. And, Mr. Speaker, the government here did not want to be in a position where they were somehow showing that they were still running a deficit

number, even though the province is doing very well.

Now we know from the record over the last three years that at the end of the year, the auditor says, in '09-10 there's a deficit of 173 million; '10-11 there's a deficit of 145 million; and as of March 31, 2012, we don't have the final number, but it appears that it'll be in excess of 300 million.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that's not dissimilar from our local farm machinery business where they have anticipated that they're going to make lots of sales of machinery, but at the end of the year, they tally everything up and it's a negative number. And so what does that do? Well that eats away at their ability to do some of the expansionary things that they want to do.

Now, Mr. Speaker, accountants know that businesses can fool themselves by setting up budgets that have little tricks in them, little ways of moving actual costs farther out so that maybe the next generation in that business, if it's a family business, will end up having to pay for it. And, Mr. Speaker, that's what we've seen in this budget is a situation where they went and said, to have a budgetary surplus of \$16 million, we need to work our way back and get out some of these expenses from this year's budget into next year's budget.

We know that they've done that with the universities, both the U of S and the U of R [University of Regina], where traditional payments of funds for capital expenditures are not there this year. These institutions are being told to borrow the money. Well that's not dissimilar to the, you know, the farm machinery owner going and saying, well this year I'm not going to buy the new cash register system. I'm going to lease it over a longer term because I can't afford to pay for it anymore. And so what we end up with in this budget is a number of those kinds of moves. We see it by them pushing debt out into other places that basically they try to not show on what they're doing.

They've also made some choices in this budget that are going to cost us in the long-term. We know from the auditor's report that the Amicus deal, which the Minister of Health is so pleased with, is actually going to cost the taxpayers \$20 million more than if they had actually funded this in the traditional, appropriate way. We know that they're looking at other arrangements like that, that once again defer the costs because what they can show in the books for this year and next year is just the interest or carrying costs and maybe a small portion of the capital. They've done the same thing with SaskPower in their Northland Power deal up in North Battleford, where we still don't know exactly how much that's going to cost us as citizens of the province, as customers of Sask Power. And we know that eventually that information is going to be available, and we will then see what the government has done.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it's quite curious that they do not appear to have learned that that's exactly how we got into the financial trouble before in this province. We took a big hit on our credit rating. We took a big hit on our reputation. And it took some very, very diligent care as managers of the finances of the province to get everything back to a balanced budget.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I think that the signals that are here in this budget around making some changes to accounting policy, setting up some new funds for doing certain things, and making

sure that you spread those expenses out over the long term are ones that are going to cause difficulty for the province as we move forward.

Now one of the challenges for this government is the fact that they increased the expenses of the province or the ongoing expenditures of the province by 30, 35 per cent almost immediately after they came into government. And that cost over, now going on five years, means that their flexibility to do a lot of things that they've planned to do is limited. As so we have a budget here which still is expending lots of money, but it also then has to include some of these accounting manoeuvres to get them to a balanced line.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people are practical people. They know that what they can do is to look at how this government spends money, how they look at the revenues. They also know that we've got a record of three deficits that have not been acknowledged by the government. And we also know that the changes that they seem to make each year to somehow adjust or deal with these things are not bypassing common sense Saskatchewan people. They know if you spend more money than you have coming in, year after year after year, that eventually you're going to have to pay the bills.

And, Mr. Speaker, that's what this budget is about. They've set out a plan which is going to be similar to the last three. It'll end up in deficit. And, Mr. Speaker, that's not good for the province of Saskatchewan. More importantly, they have added three more MLAs, expenditures that people don't want at the same time as . . .

The Speaker: — Time for debate has elapsed. Okay. I recognize the member for Prince Albert Northcote.

Ms. Jurgens: — Mr. Speaker, this year's budget contains \$1.74 billion in total school operating funding as well as \$38.6 million to begin construction of six new school projects. The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, and I quote, "welcomed the provincial government's pledge that pre-K to 12 education is a priority in this provincial budget."

Yet, Mr. Speaker, those members voted against these investments in our children's education. To the member from Regina Rosemont: why did you vote against making pre-K to 12 [pre-kindergarten to grade 12] education a priority?

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to take this important question about education on this topic. What we know is that the funding that's been put forward by this government, and the funding formula is in fact inadequate, and what this means is that many classrooms and many boards all across Saskatchewan are faced with cuts right now. And there is a real anxiety right now, Mr. Speaker, as to where those cuts will be. And I know people are looking across their own neighbourhood, wondering about what that cut will be in their own classroom.

And I know the member who asked the question was from Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker, and I would advise that member to

go and consult with her own boards on this front, Mr. Speaker, because there's many concerns in Prince Albert itself, specifically how this funding formula really doesn't fit one of her local schools — being Carlton, a great big comprehensive that is not well served by the new formula put forward.

So we stand opposed to this budget in part because of its inadequate education funding, which means cuts in the classroom, Mr. Speaker, all at the same time this government chooses to spend millions on more politicians.

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

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A question for the member from Yorkton. Certainly there's a lot of great tourism activity takes place in east central. Yorkton itself knows a lot of this to be true. Part of this budget though was the bringing forward of means to turn Tourism Saskatchewan, which has been very successful, from an industry-led organization into a Crown corporation. Can the member from Yorkton tell us, in the preparations for this budget, did he consult with a single member from Tourism Saskatchewan in this plan that they totally disagree with?

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Yorkton.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for the question. As has been quite often answered by the Minister of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport in this Assembly, there was the 2009 consultations that went on that told the government the direction that was needed to go.

There was basically two entities in this province that are handling tourism. We were asked, are you in or are you out? Definitely the government is in. When you look at best practices across this fine country, it's aptly pointed out that the governments across this country do handle tourism through either a Crown corporation — a Treasury Board Crown — or through the ministry. And it was a direction that was pointed out we should go.

Much of the information we've heard since, post this announcement this budget, from very important stakeholders in the tourism industry in this province, our biggest tourism draw in the province is snowmobiling in the wintertime, Mr. Speaker. They're onside. Fishing, fishing camps, and the fishing groups . . .

[12:00]

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

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This year's balanced budget takes responsible action to ensure that life is more affordable for the soon-to-be homeowners and renters. The rental housing construction initiative and the Saskatoon first-time homebuyers tax credit contained in this balanced budget represents responsible measures to address the housing challenges in this province. In fact the mayors of both Regina and Saskatoon applauded the efforts in no uncertain terms.

To the member from Regina Lakeview: given the near unanimous support of our housing measures contained in this balanced budget, how could you and your fellow opposition members vote against this balanced budget?

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

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, this government does things, as it relates to the residential issues, piecemeal. This program in and of itself has some good features, but there's no comprehensive housing plan for this province. There's no recognition of dealing with the rental issues that are atop of mind for people across the province. And, Mr. Speaker, there isn't a housing strategy that sets out where we're going on this particular issue. The suggestion that's come around changes to *The Residential Tenancies Act* are once again piecemeal. So, Mr. Speaker, let's have something that's got a comprehensiveness to it and let's make sure that people understand what we're doing.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Well, Mr. Speaker, we have a very important industry in this province — the film industry — that's been attacked and damaged by this government. It's sent investment, jobs, and entrepreneurs packing outside the province, Mr. Speaker. It leaves big questions around the sound stage in Regina and all the employment for those families all across Saskatchewan and the drive it has within the economy. It also represents a cultural loss.

None of this, Mr. Speaker, was in the election platform of this government or the Throne Speech. None of it was in the member from Coronation Park's election material as he went door to door in the fall, Mr. Speaker. And I guess my question to the member from Coronation Park as it relates to the damaging cut to the film industry, the tax credit, Mr. Speaker: does the member from Coronation Park support that cut?

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

Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member from Rosemont for the question. Number one, this is in reflection of a balanced budget and this is a reflection to sustainability. And both of these concepts are absolutely embedded in the budget.

Now there was a response, there was a response from this government to the film tax credit, and that was an extension. A three-month extension was added in. We are supportive of the film industry. And we are going to, we are going to sit and sit with the film industry and discuss options and the future. And so I absolutely am in support of this and I believe that we've done a very good job. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melfort.

Mr. Phillips: — Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party government just passed a balanced budget for a growing economy, which includes better access to health care, provides an improved quality of life, and makes life more affordable for the people of this province. In fact BMO's [Bank of Montreal]

analysis of our budget concluded with, and I quote, “With strong growth, a rare surplus and low debt levels, all remains well on the economic and fiscal fronts in Saskatchewan.”

Now with that situation where we have improved quality of life or where we have better access to health care, can the member of Regina Elphinstone-Centre answer why doesn't the opposition support a budget that provides better access to health care and makes life more affordable for the people of Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — I'll tell you what we don't support, Mr. Speaker. We don't support shining around during an election campaign, talking to the seniors and saying, you know everything's going to be better; the only day better than today in Saskatchewan is going to be tomorrow. And then when tomorrow arrives, Mr. Speaker, they tell those same seniors that you're going to pay more for prescription drugs. You know, I talked about hubris earlier on, Mr. Speaker. I talked about arrogance. There's no better display of that arrogance than what we've seen just now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Leader.

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the member from Rosthern. And the question is this: did that member know that the Premier would be coming forward with the proposal to add three more MLAs when he was asked to run for the Sask Party, or is this a surprise to the members of the caucus as well?

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

Mr. Moe: — I'd like to thank, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the member opposite for the question. I would also like to remind the member opposite that at the time of the election, the census was not out yet.

I would like to talk a little bit about what I do support in this budget, Mr. Speaker. And I do support municipalities and the municipal funding in this budget, Mr. Speaker. This is a model that was requested . . .

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 601 — *The Jimmy's Law Act*

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise today and enter into the debate on Bill 601, Jimmy's law, a Bill that will ensure greater protection for late-night retail workers who work by themselves in unprotected areas.

And at the end of my remarks I'll be moving the second reading of Bill 601, Jimmy's law, but first I'd like to give some reasons

on this Bill because it is very, very important for the workers who find themselves in these unfortunate circumstances of either working alone or having no protection when they do work alone at late-night hours, in early morning hours.

I first introduced this Bill on December 15th last year but, Mr. Speaker, this story goes back to June of 2011 and, for many others, years before. But this initiative really is dedicated to Jimmy Ray Wiebe, who we know, in June of last year, Jimmy was shot and killed while working the late-night shift alone at a Yorkton Shell station.

Aaron Nagy, a close friend of Jimmy's, began a campaign to promise better safety and security for those working late at night. And the NDP, the opposition, is very proud to give Aaron our support and to do whatever we can do to see that there is greater protection for retail workers who find themselves alone at night. And if there is a way that we can expand this out to any other worker who's working alone at night, that would be also a very good by-product of this.

And I know, for many who are watching this develop in the legislature this spring, people are wondering what about others, whether they be home care workers coming home, leaving people's homes late at night because of their duties, or taxi drivers or other people who find themselves where their shift ends at midnight and they cannot, they do not feel safe waiting for a bus or waiting for the ride home. So this Bill is really quite important and I am very delighted to be part of this, and I hope that we can reach some good understandings of how we can move this Bill forward.

Of course the long title of the Bill, *An Act to amend The Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1993 to ensure greater safety for retail workers who work late night hours*. Now, Mr. Speaker, if this Bill becomes law, it will amend *The Occupational Health and Safety Act* to require that employers schedule at least two workers for shifts between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. or — and I underline or — provide a secure barrier or locked doors between a worker and the public.

I just want to take a minute to review the context in which we have brought this forward because it's very important that we understand this is a story about people. This is not some obscure, abstract idea. These are real people that we're talking about, real issues. And quite often we fail to recognize that. And here is a story that has captured the support, the imagination, the goodwill of many who say, we should do more, we should do more. And the reason is because many of us know people like Jimmy. Many of us know the circumstances in which this kind of thing happens, and we should be able to do better. We should be able to do better.

So I'd like to read into the record the story of what happened in Yorkton last year, and I quote. This is from the *Leader-Post*, December 9th, 2011, “Push for Jimmy's Law gains traction”:

While the criminal case is over in the shooting death of a Yorkton gas station attendant, the fight continues to get legislation that his supporters hope will spare other lives in similar situations.

“(Jimmy Ray Wiebe) was one of the best friends I ever

had . . .” Aaron Nagy said Thursday, a day after Wiebe’s killer was sent for prison for murder.

Nagy is pushing for “Jimmy’s Law,” — ensuring [that] there’s always two workers on duty, or failing that, other safety precautions, such as protective glass barriers or pre-pay systems. He’s left to wonder if such measures, which now have the support of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, might have saved his longtime friend.

Wiebe died after he was shot twice in the head during his night shift at a Shell gas station in Yorkton, a community of about 17,700.

His killer Kyle Braeden Furness was given a life sentence when he appeared this week in Court of Queen’s Bench. Furness was originally charged with first-degree murder but pleaded guilty last month to the lesser offence of second-degree murder, which carries a mandatory minimum life sentence with no parole eligibility before 10 years. In Furness’s case, Justice Janet McMurtry set eligibility at 12 years.

And I go on. I’ll end that one. I just want to read the next couple of paragraphs.

Wiebe was working alone around 5 a.m. on June 20 when Furness entered the store.

The 50-year-old worker was shot in the head as he reached for the phone, according to court coverage by Yorkton This Week. The Crown prosecutor was unavailable for comment Thursday. [But] a second shot was fired by Furness, a then 20-year-old morphine addict in need of cash, as Wiebe lay on the floor. After slaying Wiebe, Furness fled with cash and cigarettes. He was arrested four days later, after RCMP went public with a photograph taken from the business’s video surveillance.

I go on:

The friendship between Wiebe and Nagy, who had met the older man through his father, was cemented about nine years ago when they both worked the night shift. Nagy, then employed at a Yorkton radio station, often met Wiebe, working at the gas station, for breakfast after they both finished their shifts. Nagy remembered how his jokester buddy, who had a knack for impersonating voices, called him one night, and in a pretty convincing falsetto voice pretended to be a female fan, who wanted to meet Nagy for breakfast. They both had a good laugh when “Tina” turned out to be a no-show that morning — and Nagy finally realized he’d been pranked by Wiebe.

It was that close friendship which spurred Nagy to start his petition. It’s [gathered] . . . about 4,000 signatures on paper, and about 920 on the online version . . . In addition, [there’s] the Facebook group for Jimmy’s Law [which] has about 1,350 supporters.

And so, Mr. Speaker, it’s in this context that we move forward with this Bill because it’s a real story about a real situation that

happens in Saskatchewan. And unfortunately when this does happen, we do have the power, we do have the power to do something about it. And I think that it’s critical that we do take the opportunity to do something.

And I’ve said this when I’ve stood on my feet and presented petitions every day, that we know this happened in Regina. There was a string of four robberies at gas stations in January. And then there was one in my own riding in March, March 13th, where someone walked in after midnight with a shotgun into a service station on Avenue H. And so this is not an isolated situation. This is a real situation.

And we do have the real tools to do something about it. And so I really do want to encourage us all to give some thought to this because it is an important piece of legislation and a lot of people are watching what we do with Jimmy’s law.

[12:15]

Now, Mr. Speaker, as I said, you know, there has been circumstances here in Saskatchewan since that time. And this was reported in *The StarPhoenix*, and I’ve talked about it at length about a suspect. And I quote the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix*, March 14th, 2012, “Station robbed at gunpoint”:

A suspect wielding a shotgun robbed a gas station just after midnight Tuesday, Saskatoon police say.

The lone man, masked and carrying a gun, demanded money and merchandise from a store employee at a gas station on the 300 block of Avenue H . . .

The suspect fled on foot and due to the involvement of a gun, police conducted a “high risk” canine track. They didn’t find the suspect . . . [but they’re asking for information].

So this is out there. And of course, as I said earlier, the police hunt armed robbers after four incidents here in Regina in January.

[12:15]

So it really is something that we need to do, we need to address. And, Mr. Speaker, just this morning, we saw the release of the Workers’ Compensation Board. And as I was reading it, I was caught by the title. It’s about believe in Mission: Zero. And I support this mission. I think we should all do whatever we can to get it down. The accident rate, the death, mortality rate when people are working in their workplace, we need to get that down to zero, and we need to do all we can.

And I just read the front page of this. And I’m struck by the comments from the Workers’ Compensation Board and the folks there who say the key is to be on preventative side, not on the reactive side: do whatever we can do to make sure no one is hurt at work. And this page is pretty impressive, I have to say. It caught my eye. And I’ll just read the quotes into the record. Workers’ Compensation Board says:

Even one workplace injury is too many. If someone gets hurt, it hurts everybody. My job is to make sure our

people go home safe every day. Safety is not optional. I believe in Mission: Zero. There's no such thing as an accident. Zero is the only number that makes sense. I take nothing for granted. I'm committed to doing everything I can. This is a cultural change.

I think this speaks volumes, this speaks volumes about the commitment we should have and this government seems to have in terms of workplace injuries and deaths that occur at the workplace. And we can do something, we can do something.

And Jimmy's law is urging us to take a look at the tools that we have to make a difference for people like Jimmy. We just hope that Jimmy's death is not in vain but in fact that we can learn from it and say, this is not an isolated situation. This happens, happens too much in our community. What can we do about? And I think the Workers' Compensation Board, when they say this is a cultural change, it is. But it starts for everyone including those who work late night in retail stores or gas stations, who we often don't see. Many of us are not up at that time of night to see what happens in these stores. And I'll talk a little bit about that in a minute.

But, Mr. Speaker, where did the idea of Jimmy's law come from, and where did Aaron get the information about what to do here? Well Aaron talks about Grant's law. Grant's law is a law that was passed, a series of regulations I understand, under the *Workers Compensation Act* in BC [British Columbia], where it talks about a fellow, a young person, Grant DePatie, was killed in 2005 while trying to stop someone from stealing \$12 worth of gas. He was working alone late at night at a Maple Ridge gas station. And clearly, clearly that's . . .

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

Mr. Lawrence: — Mr. Speaker, I'd ask leave to introduce a guest.

The Speaker: — The member for Moose Jaw Wakamow has asked for leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Lawrence: — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you and to the members of the legislature, I'd like to introduce my better half, Marjorie. She has come to the legislature today to watch the proceedings. And I'd like all members here to welcome her to her legislature.

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

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 601 — *The Jimmy's Law Act* (continued)

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So I just want to take a minute to review the Bill that is before us right

now. It's a relatively straightforward Bill. It has four sections, and the fifth of course is coming into assent.

But the idea is that what do we mean by late-night hours? This is an amendment to *The Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1993* and how we amend it. Section 3 talks about what does late night hours mean. It "means any time between 11:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m." That's what we're talking about. And what does late-night retail premises mean? It "means a gas station or other retail fueling outlet, convenience store or any other retail store where goods are sold directly to consumers that is open to the public during late night hours."

And, Mr. Speaker, I'll talk a little bit about this because when we did our midnight tour we had . . . It's interesting when you get out and about after midnight. And this is the new section that we want to add after section 14:

Late night retail premises safety requirements

14.1(1) If a worker is assigned to work alone or in isolation in late night retail premises, then, in addition to any other obligations the employer has under this and other Acts, regulations or collective agreements the employer must also do either or both of the following when an individual worker is assigned to work late night hours.

So there's an option there to do one or the other, but the key thing is if they're assigned to work . . . [inaudible] . . . that shift between 11 and 6. So here's the two options:

(a) assign one or more other workers to work with the individual worker during any late night hours;

(b) ensure the individual worker is physically separated from the public by a locked door or barrier that prevents physical contact with or direct access to the individual worker.

Now it goes on:

(2) An employer operating a late night retail premises must develop and implement a written procedure to ensure a worker's safety in handling money.

So we have a section talking about money:

(3) A worker described in subsection (1) must be trained in the written procedure referred to in subsection(2).

So that's straightforward. And:

(4) An employer of a gas station or retail fueling outlet must require that customers prepay for fuel sold at those facilities during late night hours."

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will know that many, many late-night retail outlets already have this kind of thing happening, and so it's straightforward. So that's what the Bill is, and I may get an opportunity to talk more specifically about that Bill.

But I do want to talk a little bit about these midnight tours that I've been on that I have found very interesting. And I want to share with the House some of the results. And I just want to share . . . It's interesting, you never know where the media comes from in terms of interest in this story. In fact last Friday afternoon when I was in my office, we got a call from somebody from Toronto. Somebody from Toronto had been following this, and actually it had been printed in the *Toronto Star* paper that . . . And the headline is, "Saskatchewan pair lobby for safety on midnight shift." And it goes on:

A New Democrat MLA and the best friend of a murdered gas station clerk are travelling across Saskatchewan to meet with workers on the graveyard shift.

And so this is what was happening, and people in Toronto even called us which was very, very interesting.

But I want to say that, you know, this is not an isolated situation, so we want to get out and about and see first-hand what's happening in our communities, what's happening after midnight, after 11 p.m., and what do the workers have to say?

So I put together the results, and I'd like to share that with the House right now. Of course our first stop was in Yorkton on February 22nd. We visited six stores. We started after midnight. There were three gas stations, a couple of doughnut shops, and one convenience store actually, and we also . . . The Shell service station also serves as a Mac's, so essentially that was a combination store. So we saw six sites. Four of the six were working in pairs. Two were working alone, but the two that were working alone had the locked door system or the protective glass or the protective barrier system.

So what we saw, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in Yorkton was in fact a very good situation. We would give all the stores that night a passing grade. They were all there, and in fact we had a chance to visit with 10 workers that night to talk about what they felt about what was really important to give them a sense of protection. Now we had to do this in a very sensitive way because we are not . . . We told everybody, we are not inspectors. We're not going in there to . . . And we tried not to get into passing judgment on businesses because we don't know the full story. This is just a snapshot of what was happening in that store after midnight.

But it was very interesting to talk to some of the people. And some were very concerned. One right beside the casino, they had two people there. And they talked about sometimes it's challenging after the casino closes down, but they're ready for it, and they felt secure because they had two people in place. One had . . . Well they, as I said, two had the locked doors, protective barriers, and they felt okay about it. But it was interesting for me because I think it's been a long time since I've been in for example a 7-Eleven store at 1:30 in the morning. I actually can't remember the last time I was in a 7-Eleven store at 1:30 in the morning. But this is where I've been finding myself, Aaron and myself, visiting these places to find out, so what's it like to be there?

Now I do have to share one emotional moment. We did get back to the store, the gas station where Jimmy was shot. And it was interesting that we ended up there about 1:30 in the

morning, and Aaron had not been back to that gas station. And as we know, the gas station has changed hands and a lot more work has been done in terms of protection. We know the video camera photos resulted in a conviction. But now they've done much more work in terms of barriers and locked doors. And we had a good discussion with the person who was in the Shell service station, and he was very well aware that there had been a murder just some seven, eight months earlier. And the fellow was actually from Toronto, and we had a good discussion about how things are done there, how it's done there. They've got that locked drop box, and it's working very well. And so that was very, very interesting, and so it was really worthwhile to do that.

And we went over to Moose Jaw last week on Wednesday night. We visited eight sites, started out with Tim Hortons. It seems that we were getting into a habit that we started out at Tim Hortons in every city. And there again, this Tim Horton's is open 24 hours and they of course have many people working there . . . [inaudible] . . . But there's several people that work there. And for a short period of time on Sunday, there's only one, but for a very short period of time.

So out of the eight stores or eight places we visited, four had two people working in it. Actually two closed at midnight. We stopped in because we started at 11, and we talked to the people, but their shifts were ending at midnight so wouldn't fall into this category. But it was interesting to talk to one of the . . . It was a woman at one of the gas stations that was closing at midnight, and her concern was not so much what was happening inside the store. But when she left the service station at midnight and walking to her car or to the bus, was there some way that we could get better protection there because she felt very vulnerable in those few minutes leaving the gas station to go to her car or whatever.

In the end, when we talked about eight stores, we actually ended up talking to about 12 workers. And I have to tell you that again, two were working alone. And the two that were working alone, one had all the precautions in place, and it was doing quite well. The other one, I wouldn't know. I couldn't give you a definitive answer whether they had issues or not. The person wasn't very sharing. And they may have had. And I would suspect that actually they were well-prepared, but I can't say yea or nay because, as I said, I can't really push this. We don't want to be pretending like we're casing the joint or anything too. That's not what we meant to do. So I can't ask where are all the protective things was. If they're outgoing, then that's a good thing. But if they're not, then what can you do?

So one question mark in Moose Jaw, but generally . . . But I do have to say this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was very impressed by the business sense that many business owners have in terms of combining different things together. So if you're open late-night hours . . . And I think of Mac's, for example, in Moose Jaw. I was so impressed. They had somebody working the counter but they also had somebody working the Subway, you know, Subway sandwich. So you had two people in there both doing things that they would be doing over, it was a full shift, and they were working very hard.

[12:30]

And in fact people talked about not only is it better in terms of safety against violence, but it's also better for all those medical reasons, whether you have a heart attack or asthma attack, but also in terms of productivity. You can get a lot done when you have a couple people working together. But if you have one person, sometimes that stretch between 1 or 2 in the morning to 4 or 5 in the morning can be a long time. And if you don't really have work for the employees to do, it can be really a problem.

So there again, Moose Jaw we had eight people, eight stores we visited.

In Saskatoon, now Saskatoon of course we didn't get to every place because there's actually quite a few. You know, you can imagine. I would suspect there's probably 20 to 30 stores that are open after midnight, and of course the ones I visited were the ones . . . We were downtown. There was actually a group of five of us who were travelling around together, and we saw some really interesting places.

So of the eight situations we saw, six had at least two people working. One of them actually had three. And one had, I have to say there was a question mark about, because clearly there are some questions. And there was another one, the first one we went to was one by themselves, but they had all the safety precautions. They had the drop box. They had the locked doors. They had everything, and so the fellow felt really safe. He was quite happy. He had no concerns, and that was good to hear.

And then we visited six places where there was two people working. Again the convenience stores that seemed to match up food and gas, very good planning because it made the place busy, made the place busy. A lot of stuff happening, and so that was very good.

I did happen to visit the gas station where the holdup was in March. And in fact the guy working there, and some of you may have actually seen him on CTV [Canadian Television Network Ltd.] — we have a video of him — because he really wanted to talk about this. He said, what do you do when somebody walks through the front door with a shotgun, you know? And he was very open about it. He was very open about the circumstance. And now there's two people working there.

But you should see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the protection they have. It's not good. In terms of the gate that they have to protect themselves from anybody coming in, it's like a cheap garden gate. Anybody who can kick anything over, that would be down in a second. And it would not stop any bullets at all. I mean that would be . . . It's crazy. And so I have to say, we had some serious concerns about that. And as I said, I presented a petition earlier this week where he was very happy to sign it. And at least the employer brought another person in, but he was working by himself that night earlier in March where a fellow walked in off 20th Street with a shotgun. And so, Mr. Speaker, that's an issue.

But the other, there was some that I just want to say take full marks, that take full marks for being prepared. Fire Creek Gas station at the corner of Avenue P and 20th Street is owned by One Arrow First Nations — great work, great work. They actually had three people working. They use a drop box. They

have people lining up, people accept that, you know. People are buying cigarettes. People working there are very firm about how they take safety very seriously. They take it very seriously. And so I have to give them full marks.

And the one that I had the question mark about, I have to say I have some real question marks about it because, you know, it's in my riding, and I have a sense of how much traffic goes through that part of town. And why that gas station is open between 1 and 5 in the morning, I have no idea. I have no idea, you know, and I really have to say that because it's out of the . . . It's not on one of the main streets. It's way back in a corner. And why it's open, I don't know. And apparently it was held up just a couple weeks ago with somebody brandishing a machete. Now I didn't see that in the news, but again, a serious question.

And again the business people have to make their minds up about their business case, why they want it open. But as Workers' Comp said so eloquently, we have to have a cultural, a cultural change here about workers' safety. I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I were to predict today where the next holdup or injury might be, that gas station would be right up there. There's a lot of issues, and I'll talk a little bit more about some of the issues.

But we went on to Prince Albert, three stores . . . They have four stores that are open between midnight and 6. And we only stopped at three because the other one was very similar to one of the three. We didn't need to check it because I had to get to North Battleford that night still. And everything was good. Everything was good. There was one person working alone, but it had all the protective barriers. And the other three had 2's working in pairs. So thumbs up to that community.

And I said that in the paper, that clearly they've done their homework and they value their employees. And you know what's really good to see? The businesses were thriving. They were not dying businesses. Clearly there's a need in Prince Albert to have late-night retails, and this was very good. So we saw five workers there.

North Battleford, we got to North Battleford about 1:30 in the morning as we did the swing. I don't usually do that. Usually when we're out campaigning, we do this during the day, but this time we did it at night. We got into North Battleford about 1:30 in the morning. There were only two retail outlets that were open. One had a pair and one didn't. And again I have some question marks about that, and he felt . . . he asked some very good questions, the worker. He doesn't get a lunch break. He doesn't get a coffee break. The bathroom's open. There's no locked doors. But I have to tell you, the business was very brisk there. When I was there, just for about 20 minutes, he probably sold \$100 worth of gas. Five or six people walked in, bought some coffee or stuff to take home. So it's not a slow store. So I don't know. And I also have to say that if you go into that bathroom, they could probably use another person working there. And I wouldn't want to see that bathroom come 5 or 6 in the morning.

So I think, well, another person working and they . . . You know, sort of the opposite of what was happening in Saskatoon where you had one person, no business here; one person, lots of business, lots of business. So I have some question marks about

that.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I had found is we had visited 25 stores, so I think that gives us a good indication, in five different communities. Seventeen of them had two people working. Eight were alone but they were okay, you know. And three, I had some question marks. And I can't really say convincingly because there might be other information I'm missing. But I can tell you that I felt pretty good about 22 of the situations where I walked in. I felt comfortable as a customer. The service rep was very good with us. You know, you could talk with them. They weren't nervous. They weren't, you know, what are you going to do to me, type of thing. It was very, very good.

So in the end, Aaron and I had talked with 45 workers so far and these are the things, by far, most businesses are doing the right thing. So I think by adapting Bill 601 we're not hurting anybody. We're bringing some people who should be brought along, and there's always those outliers who should be brought along, but it's by far not going to be a huge deal. This is not going to revolutionize the late-night retail in Saskatchewan. Late-night retail Saskatchewan is way out there already. We're in fact playing catch-up to them. But we don't want to slide back. We do not want to slide back.

So we have a few more places to go. We have not checked out Regina, Estevan or Weyburn or Swift Current. And of course there may be smaller stations. For example, I don't know what's happening in Meadow Lake or Glaslyn. But I don't think I'm going to be driving up to Meadow Lake for 2 o'clock in the morning and driving home. But I just want to say that we've learned a lot, and I think as MLAs we don't get out an awful lot to actually see what happens during the night. And it was a real eye-opener for me and I'm really glad that I did it. It's a very important thing that we do get out. And when there are issues like this, it was really an eye-opener for me. You know, it's funny just talking to some of the clerks. They have people who they expect to see about two or three in the morning for a cup of coffee or to come in and buy their lottery ticket. It's just, that's their lifestyle. They're night owls and this is what they do.

But, Mr. Speaker, what I want to do is just take a moment, and I have said that in Saskatchewan this is not an isolated situation, and clearly across Canada this has been a topic of debate about what do you do about this issue. What do you do? I talked a while ago about the situation in BC where they created Grant's law. And there is now some debate about that they may in fact weaken it. We're concerned about what signal that means, especially when we see the good work that's done by workers' comp here on their *Mission: Zero*, and we should be as strong as we can be in making sure we bring people along with us.

But I want to just read into the record some of the issues from across Canada. And here's one from the *Calgary Herald* from Saturday, February 19th, 2000. And the headline is, "The coward must have attacked her from behind: Dad mourns as manhunt is launched."

A 25-year-old Calgary woman beaten to death during a late-night robbery at a southeast Subway restaurant had dreamed of protecting the city in which she was killed.

And I quote:

"She was kind, loving, giving and forgiving," Bob McDonald said Friday after learning of the savage murder of his daughter Tara Ann McDonald. "(Being a police officer) was one of her dreams, but circumstances prevented her from doing so."

So it's just a tragic situation in that circumstance.

And here's one from Antigonish, Nova Scotia, Friday, March 18th, 2001, "The stabbing death of young store clerk here this week has people once again questioning the wisdom of having staff work alone overnight." And the mayor is quoted as saying:

"People should not have their stores open from midnight until 6 a.m." . . . he believes that the community in northern Nova Scotia should bring in a bylaw to force store owners to close their stores during the late [night] hour, or have two people on staff.

And what was . . . This again, tragic. The fellow's name was Yancy Meyer, 19 years old, was working on his fifth shift at Needs convenience store on James Street when someone entered the store and tried to get money out of the cash register. I quote:

The young man tried to defend himself but the robber, who wore a disguise, stabbed him in the abdomen and chest and then fled.

RCMP spokesman, Sgt. Wayne Noonan confirmed Meyer managed to stagger to his own nearby apartment and his roommate called for assistance.

He died late Tuesday night in a Halifax hospital.

So again, somebody's son.

Mr. Speaker, here is one from the *Vancouver Sun*, Saturday, March 12th, 2005. I quote, "It's just after 2 a.m. and Sebit Dada is not even halfway through his regular shift at a Whalley gas station and convenience store." And it goes on to talk about the death that happened at that gas station and that's the experience that this person had in terms of working there. And it's just not easy doing that.

And, Mr. Speaker, here's one from *The Telegram*, St. John's, January 26th, 2006. Again and I quote, "Teen cashier slain on first night shift." And I quote:

A teenage girl found murdered in a back room of a gas station early Wednesday was working her first solo overnight shift.

This 17-year-old's death has renewed concerns about the safety of employees working late- and all-night shifts, particularly young people.

And so here we go. And then they talk about:

Last fall an Ottawa teen was found murdered after she disappeared on her way home from a late night shift at a

Wendy's restaurant.

The body of Jennifer Teague, 18, was found along a hiking trail 11 days after she went missing.

So this is something else, again another example. So, Mr. Speaker, the examples are just really something else here.

Here we have one talking about the murder of Grant DePatie and what happened to him. Again and the issue of a . . . Here's one from, actually the incident, it's from the *Montreal Gazette*:

Teenage clerk killed working late-night shift: Manitoba death [because it's something that happened in Montreal, I understand] Manitoba death is echo of Quebec case. Several provinces . . . grappled with how to ensure safety of employees working alone.

And here this is one that I believe that happened in Winnipeg, and I quote:

A 19-year-old convenience store clerk was shot and killed in a struggle with an armed gunman late Monday.

[And] the incident marks the second time in a month that a teenage late-night worker has died on the job.

Winnipeg Police say the incident occurred just after 10 p.m. at a Main St. food store.

And so this and the one that they were referring to, the one in Montreal, was when, and I quote, "Last month 17-year-old Brigitte Serre was stabbed to death at a suburban Montreal gas station while she was working her first overnight shift alone." And a former worker at the gas station was apparently the one charged with it.

[12:45]

But again these just go on. And yet this is not an isolated situation. We've had two, well, four robberies in Regina in January. And then the one that I know of for sure in Saskatoon, and we haven't talked about the machete incident yet.

And so this is really . . . And this one here is a tragic one that happened. From *The Daily Gleaner*, and it talks about a gas station in Halifax, and this is September 1st, 2007: "On Aug. 21, 44-year-old Delores Reynolds had her throat slashed from ear to ear and was raped during a robbery while working the graveyard shift at a Halifax gas station." And so this is really . . . you know, the list goes on and on.

And here we have the one about Hanley again. And so, Mr. Speaker, these are significant issues and significant people to their families. And we should be learning from what happens here because this kind of thing should not happen, should not happen. And if we're taking to heart what Workers' Compensation is saying about Mission: Zero, then I think that we should learn from this. We should learn from this. And I have some real, real concerns that we need to act as quickly as we can.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I've been reading from newspapers, but I

want to take a minute to talk about some of the research that's been going on in this area. And probably what we're really talking about, in many ways, is what they call CPTED, another acronym, but what it is is the crime prevention through environmental design. And I read this with a lot of interest because, you know, there is no system that's completely foolproof. There's always issues with whatever solution you come up with. But it's, I think, our responsibility to do the very best that we can, the very best we can, knowing what's happening out in the world — i.e., these press stories that I have raised — but also the research that a lot of people have put into this.

So I want to read some sections of this for the House because I think that it really does speak volumes about the kind of work that has been done. And you think about what we're talking about here in Saskatchewan and especially the challenges. We see this economic boom, and we know people generally are doing better. But there's people who are feeling disconnected and for whatever reasons. The situation in Yorkton where I just read into the record that the fellow was dealing with an addiction, serious issues here. So I think we can learn a lot from our research.

So I want to read into the record some, I think some key points from the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, and this is from the year 2000. And I would hope, and maybe, you know, if I had the staff of Minister of Labour, maybe I could get some more current research. But I think this stuff is very relevant, and so I'll read it. And the title of the article is "Effectiveness of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design in Reducing Robberies." And in the introduction he says:

In the last several years, much has been learned about the incidence, risk factors, and industries and occupations at risk for workplace violence. Workplace violence accounts for approximately 20% of workplace deaths and ranks second after transportation as the leading cause of workplace death each year.

Now I'm not sure if that applies specifically to Canada, but this is an American study.

The annual number of nonfatal assaults in the workplace has been estimated by the National Crime Victimization Survey to be as high as 2 million workers. The highest rates of workplace homicide are in the industries of transportation, retail, services, and security, and in the workplaces of taxicabs, liquor stores, gas stations, protective agencies, and restaurants/bars. Industries at high risk of nonfatal events include health care, social service, law enforcement, and education.

It's interesting that law enforcement has a high risk of nonfatal events. But you know, and actually I just want to flip back to when I was doing my midnight work. We didn't do the pizza joints. We didn't do the taxicab people because how far do you extend this out, and we wanted to focus solely on the retail . . . [inaudible].

But to continue on:

Approximately 80% of workplace homicides and as many

as 60% of nonfatal assaults occur in the course of a robbery or other criminal act. These events are concentrated in the service and retail industries, and research addressing these events has been primarily focused on convenience stores. Prevention efforts began in the 1970s in response to a rising number of robberies. Although the primary goal of these programs was to reduce the risk of robbery, they also included approaches that focused on preventing injury to workers, such as training employees in how to respond . . . [to] a robbery.

So this is, you know, it's interesting how we see that kind of trend happening in Saskatchewan. But I need to say though, as I've been saying every day or many days, we've seen a reduction in robberies in Saskatchewan actually because many of the places are already doing this kind of thing through environmental design and having two people. They're looking at this. So business is ahead of us on this.

A basic tenet for robbery prevention programs is Jeffrey's Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design . . . [and] recognizes that much of the risk for robbery can be modified through controlling the business environment.

And it goes on and talks about that. So there's a whole host of different things that you can do to ensure that your workplace is in fact safe.

And it goes through . . . And it's quite a thorough, very academic report. I won't read it all. I just want to talk about some of the findings that they did, and it may be of interest to people in the House and people reading this. But they did talk about . . . Now a lot of this was based on Florida. And in 1988, they passed a two-clerk ordinance. It was adopted December 1989. And it talks about how they cut the number of robberies by 60 per cent and in fact, in one year there were no robberies, if I read this right.

And in Citrus County, the local ordinance included the two-clerk provision and the rate went down by 82 per cent. In Ohio, a city convenience store ordinances provision for employee training, cash handling, visibility, lighting, further includes two-clerk requirements. The effectiveness results were a decrease of 74 per cent. So clearly there is some impact here, and so I found this very interesting. And overall, one thing you must do, if you do only one thing and you have the two-clerk, you can see a reduction of some 65 per cent.

So, Mr. Speaker, clearly I think we should be looking at this crime prevention through environmental design. I think there is actually a lot there to look at, and I think that's a very important piece that we need to have.

Now I know, and the minister has raised, what happens if you have two people; you can still have murders happening. And the minister has talked about the circumstance in Kyle. And I do want to address that just briefly because I think the circumstance in Kyle was tragic. And in fact that case, when the Esso was held up, it was during the afternoon and two women were killed. And the town was just reeling from that. And I probably would think that many members here know the situation even better than I do. But that happened in May of 1997, and two middle-aged women were killed. And of course

it just left the town just reeling because of what had happened here.

And what happened, even more so, was the fact that one of the suspects had the murder charges dropped. He wasn't aware, understand what was going on. And the town of Kyle really felt in many ways very confused about how justice was served. And in fact I understand there was a significant petition raised about that, asking that the government take another look at how do we best serve justice in this kind of circumstance. And of course when you read the more recent newspapers, articles about how the fallout in Kyle, it just speaks volumes to the type of, what impact this kind of thing has on a town. So I think that this is a huge, huge issue, and we need to address it.

I just want to take a minute and say also that I did meet the family, Jimmy Ray Wiebe's family, in Yorkton. They were the first to sign the new legislative petition, and we look forward to presenting that at a very special time. I met Jimmy's mom. She's a great woman. And she and Jimmy's sister were both there, and his niece. And they felt very committed that Jimmy's tragic death would not be in vain and that this government would look to or this legislature would look to doing the very best, the very most they could do to make sure that nobody, nobody would be in that circumstance again where they had so little protection, so little protection and being in such a vulnerable circumstance.

We don't know when this'll happen again, and we don't want to have it happen again. And if we think about the workplace, Workers' Compensation, Mission: Zero, I don't think we have to see that happen again.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do want to just say to the family that we're working as hard as we can to make sure it's a reality that there are new rules, new laws, whatever it takes to make sure late-night retail workers are protected when they work that graveyard shift, that late shift from 11 to 6 in the morning, that we really take to heart what Workers' Compensation Board says about their Mission: Zero. And I believe in Mission: Zero. I know people on this side believe in Mission: Zero, and I believe many of the folks over there do as well.

I know this Legislative Assembly has a history of working in a bipartisan manner. We've done it on both sides. In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you and I have worked on a bipartisan issue around reservists legislation. And I was very proud of the fact that we could work together on that. We know that happened with the service animals, and I worked with the Minister of Agriculture with on. I'm very proud to be part of that, be part of that. Because we want to say the intent, and so I think this will be a very, very good opportunity for us to show yet again.

I was very happy, around the respectful languages piece, to see that we could make a difference together as a legislature. I think that was very good. And as well, we've done it with firefighters when we know the kind of toxins they deal with, and the member from Fairview brought together a private member's Bill a couple of years ago. The Minister of Labour did that and took that under his wing, and we were very, very happy to see that go. Because what's really important, what I've said in the media, it's not about getting the Bill passed; it's about getting the intent passed. It's the intent that's really important, that

retail workers have greater protection when they go to work, not because they're coming home at the end of the night; they're coming home in the morning and people know that they'll be coming home.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that this is the right thing to do. And when I've talked to the 45 workers and to the family and many others, people are looking to us for real leadership in this area, real leadership. And I think we can do the right thing. It's an issue right across the world. We've talked, I've talked about situations in the United States, situations across Canada, situations here in Saskatchewan. And we can do the right thing. And so I would urge us to do all we can to make sure Bill 601 is passed. And I would urge that the minister do all that he can to make sure the Bill is passed or that the intent is passed, the intent. Because we don't want to see anyone get hurt. We don't want to see anyone die at work. We want to do all that we can to make sure that safety is not an option, but it's a real thing.

Mr. Speaker, I think this is a very important issue, and in a few seconds I'll be wrapping . . . And so I just want to say that, let's do the right thing. Let's make sure that we all put Mission: Zero into reality for everyone, including late-night retail workers. So, Mr. Speaker, at this time now, I now move Bill 601, Jimmy's law be read a second time.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Centre has moved second reading of Bill No. 601, *The Jimmy's Law Act*.

Members, we have now reached the normal time of adjournment, but before this House adjourns I would simply wish members a restful and happy Easter and the week that we have off, and that we all return rested and refreshed to do the good work of the people of this province.

So members, this House stands adjourned till Monday, April 16th at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 13:00.]

CORRIGENDUM

On page 652 of *Hansard*, No. 17B Monday, March 19, 2012, in the right column, first paragraph spoken by Mr. McCall, the paragraph should read:

Moving further on in the page, Mr. Speaker, page 370, “the Ministry should undertake more complete analysis of non-compliance and its causes” and “the ministry should require more consistent use of Ministry policies and better follow up of non-compliant workplaces.”

The online transcript for March 19, 2012, has been corrected.

We apologize for this error.

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