



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

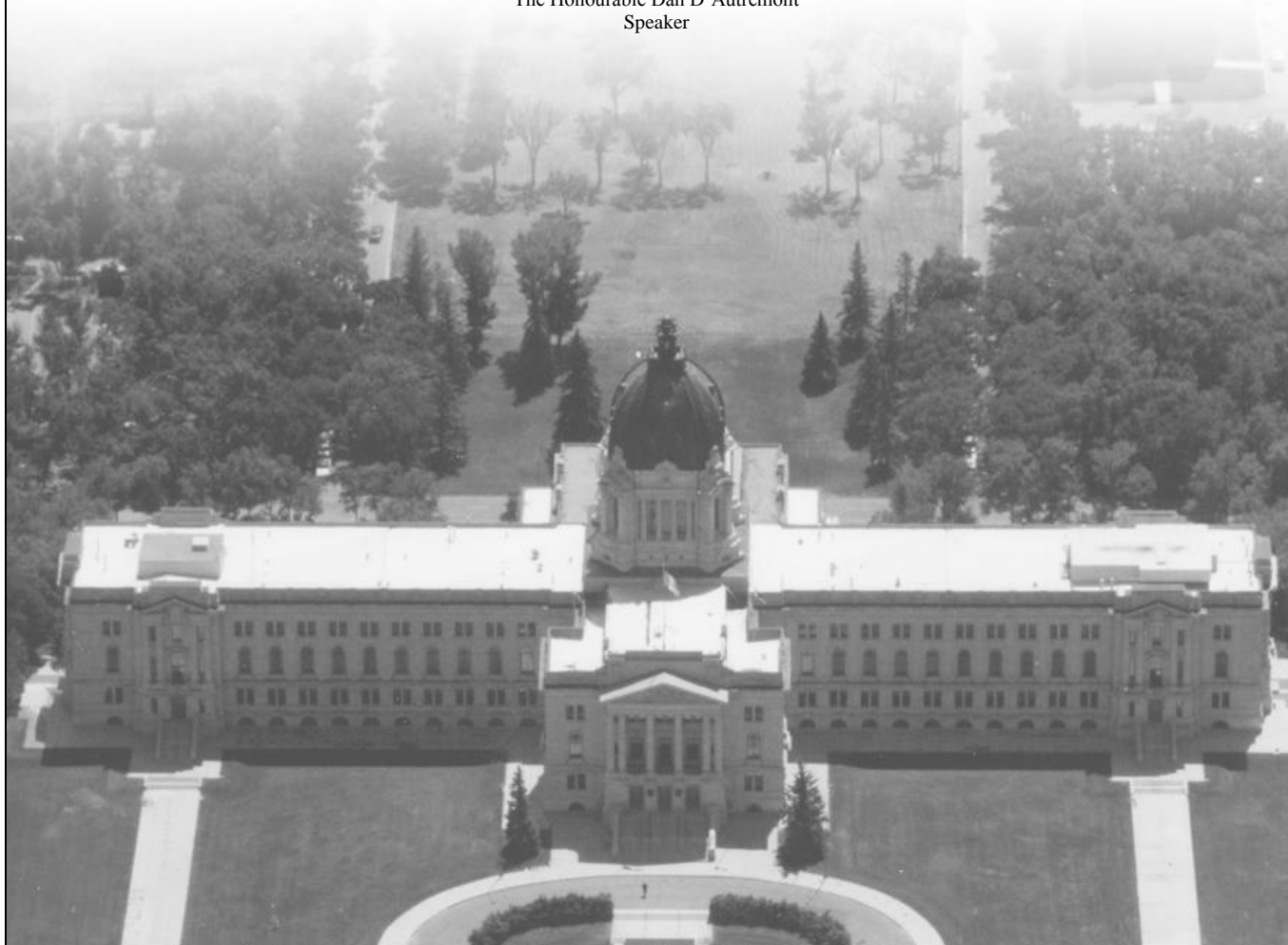
of the

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, very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour for me to be able to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly, some very special guests who have joined us in your gallery. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce His Excellency Andrea Meloni, the ambassador of Italy to Canada, as well as Mr. Fabrizio Inserra who is the consul general of Italy in Vancouver.

Mr. Speaker, our province has a long and very beneficial, mutually beneficial relationship with the people of Italy. In fact Italy is one of Saskatchewan's top 10 trading partners. In the last five years, on average, our province exports to Italy have surpassed \$225 million. Sixteen per cent of Saskatchewan's — no surprises here, Mr. Speaker — 16 per cent of Saskatchewan's durum wheat exports go to Italy.

And, Mr. Speaker, we're honoured to have these gentlemen here with us today in our capital city. I have a chance to meet with the ambassador and the consul general just a little bit later this morning. We do seek to improve the relationship we have, the already very positive relationship we have with the people of Italy in terms of commerce and other opportunities that we can explore together, Mr. Speaker.

I would also point out a bit of a warning for His Excellency, if I may today here in the legislature: in about two weeks from now, my wife and my mother-in-law are going to take a two and a half week tour of Italy, and I fear the country will never be the same. Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming these very distinguished guests to the Legislative Assembly today.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I too, on behalf of the official opposition, would like to welcome His Excellency, the ambassador from Italy. I hope your stay in Saskatchewan is great. And obviously you have a very beautiful country and certainly, from our perspective, we're very glad that you've chosen the province to visit. And of course we always want to encourage investment and opportunity and partnership. So I too want to join the Premier in making sure that your visit here is great and that you feel very welcome. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I take great pride in being able to introduce to you and through you and to the rest of the members of the Assembly, a group of 23 grade 7 and 8 students from MacNeill Elementary

School in the constituency of Regina Qu'Appelle Valley. They are here today with their teacher Mr. Scott Bansley.

MacNeill School is a wonderful school with great students and staff. I will be meeting with the students after question period to answer any questions they may have. And I hope they enjoy the proceedings today and will be enlightened by them. So thank you very much, and please everyone join with me in welcoming this group of very smart, very intelligent, good-looking students from MacNeill Elementary School in Regina Qu'Appelle Valley. Thank you.

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

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to members of the Assembly, I'm very pleased to introduce in your gallery somebody that is, I think, no stranger to this Chamber or to the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, we're joined by the president of SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities], David Marit. Mr. Marit is also a councillor of the RM [rural municipality] of Willow Bunch, which the member for Wood River and I have the honour of representing. It takes two of us I guess, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to specifically acknowledge the work that Dave Marit and the SARM board does on issues that are of interest to the province right now. Specifically, Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge SARM for the work that they're doing in conjunction with the government on issues of illegal drainage, which I know is a great concern for the SARM board, and we're doing some good work together.

As well, Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the work that the SARM board has done on an issue that I think is of great importance to this province, and that is the changes that we're seeing from the federal government when it comes to the role of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in the province of Saskatchewan. I know that this has been a great concern for a number of years to the municipalities that SARM represents. And we're very pleased to see some movement on this issue, and we look forward to working on these issues further in the future.

So I'd ask all members to join with me in welcoming Dave Marit to his Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to join the minister in welcoming the president of SARM, Dave Marit, to the legislature. It's always great to see him in the House, and we appreciate his leadership from rural Saskatchewan. He does such a great job and we value that. So welcome to your legislature. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, to the rest of the Assembly, I want to introduce two very powerful women, Donna Pasiechnik and Donna Ziegler. They are with the Canadian Cancer Society. Tomorrow

is Daffodil Day, and we're going to hear a little bit more about that in a member's statement. But we had the opportunity, for those that got up early yesterday morning, for a breakfast here in the legislature to hear more of the concerns from certainly the Cancer Society on some of the changes that they think we should pursue.

I can tell you in the four and a half years that I've had the pleasure of being the Health minister, I've had a number of meetings with both of them. And they are very, very strong lobbyists and, Mr. Speaker, when they speak about an issue, you can tell the passion in their voice. So I want all members to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly and through that welcoming, thank them for all the great work that they do to save lives here in Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with the minister in welcoming Donna and Donna to the Assembly. Certainly they are not strangers to those of us in the Assembly because of the strong advocacy work that their agency does throughout the year on an ongoing basis. So thank you so much for the good work that you do.

And with it being Daffodil Month, I know many of us have been recognizing this for the last period of time here in the Assembly. And we do know it's an important day, an important time of the year for the work of the volunteers and the supporters throughout the province. So thank you so much for being here today.

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker: — It's my pleasure to table the 2011 annual report of the Children's Advocate.

Why is the member on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, with leave to make a statement regarding the National Day of Mourning for workers killed or injured on the job.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice and Attorney General has asked for leave to make a statement. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to agree?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

STATEMENT BY A MEMBER

National Day of Mourning

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. April 28th marks the National Day of Mourning for workers killed or injured on the job. This day of remembrance commemorates those who have been injured or killed as a result of their job and the families and friends left behind.

This annual event marks the day the Canadian Labour Congress first declared the National Day of Mourning in 1984. April 28th was chosen because it was on that day in 1914, the first comprehensive workers' compensation act in Canada received its third reading.

The Day of Mourning gives each of us the opportunity to renew our commitment to promoting, creating, and maintaining safe and healthy workplaces. On March 26th, 2012, I expressed our commitment by writing to over 5,600 occupational health committees and imploring them to redouble their efforts in creating safe workplaces. I also sent all members of the legislature National Day of Mourning pins at the beginning of April.

On Saturday we will join with more than 100 other countries around the world to grieve the loss of sons, daughters, mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, and spouses. Although we will not be here in the legislature, I ask my colleagues to take a moment to pause and think about the lives lost in Saskatchewan and to attend the various vigils being held by labour councils across the province. To remember and honour these workers, the Canadian flag on Parliament Hill and the flags at the Saskatchewan Legislative Building will be flown at half-mast.

Mr. Speaker, too many people die each year from work-related incidents and illnesses. This year the Workers Compensation Board accepted 37 claims for people who lost their lives to work in Saskatchewan. The names of those we honour today are being read into the official record and will be inscribed in the national registry at the Canadian Labour Congress in Ottawa. I would ask that all members please rise while I read the names of those who lost their lives.

Ray Behnke	Lyle Krueger
Denis Huet	Ronald Kessler
Brian Schafer	Robert Berrns
Bill Calcutt	Paul Cruse
Robert Ediger	Dale Waithman
Andre Gagnon	Jim Wiebe
Clinton Walker	Patrick Charles
Richard Wyatt	Philip Rondeau
Robert Traill	Gerhard Vogt
Donald McGonigal	Richard Chudyk
Orville Thiesen	Brian Lewis
William McDonald	Stephen Butler
Carl Lucyshyn	Joshua Crooks
Ward Wallaker	John Woodhouse
Dennis Lucier	Sophia Petroutsakos
Meryl Brissaw	Frank Sabo
Robert Mills	Velma Jewsbury
Vittorio Varaschin	John Stadnyk
Giovanni Marchiori	

On behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan, I express my deepest sympathy to the workers' families and loved ones.

Today we also remember those who have lost their lives due to farming and ranching incidents. On average each year, 14 people die as a result of incidents on farms and ranches. These individuals are not included in the Day of Mourning statistics; however, it's imperative that we remember them as farm fatalities account for nearly one-third of all workplace deaths in

the province.

Mr. Speaker, to commemorate this day I ask that when all members' statements for the Day of Mourning are done, we observe a moment of silence in this House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Forbes: — I ask leave to make a statement regarding National Day of Mourning.

The Speaker: — The member has asked leave to make a statement regarding National Day of Mourning. Is the Assembly in agreement?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition caucus, I want to join with the minister in expressing our deepest sympathies to the families and friends of those who were lost to senseless workplace injuries in 2011. When we hear that list of names, we are filled with a deep sense of regret. We regret that people have lost their lives at work in service to a job, and most of these deaths need not have happened.

The Day of Mourning is a painful day and an important one. This year, 37 families will hear their name of their lost loved one read out aloud. The echo of those names should be a toll, a reminder that we need to keep striving to make workplaces safer, a reminder that failing to prevent a preventable workplace death is unacceptable, a reminder that one is one too many.

Sadly I take note of one name on that list. Jimmy Ray Wiebe was killed on a job when he was working alone. Jimmy was shot during a robbery. The shock and pain and sorrow his family and friends have suffered is incomprehensible but shared by 37 families this year. From that sorrow, Jimmy's best friend found purpose. Aaron Nagy began the call for Jimmy's law. And we have introduced Jimmy's law Bill because it would be a real tangible step to protect lives at work because the cost of small safety improvements are nothing compared to the cost of a life.

The 37 lives we are mourning today are a reminder that workplace accidents and deaths come from varied threats. Workers have contracted cancer from working with asbestos, have been victims of industrial accidents, or have died during the commission of crimes in their workplace. None of these deaths are acceptable. Many of them are preventable. Unfortunately, some of them predictable.

The goal of zero deaths is not a political one, nor is it too far away to reach. Let us not go away from this Day of Mourning events only to return a year from now and do it again. Let's see that there's light and opportunity for change, and let's do better. Let's build a safer Saskatchewan in every workplace. And let's agree that our work will not be done here until there's not a

single name read on the Day of Mourning.

In the memory of 37 workers who've lost their lives at work in our province this year, I join my colleagues in a moment of silence, reflection, and renewed resolve to address occupational health and safety in their memory. Thank you.

The Speaker: — Please rise for a minute of silence.

[The Assembly observed a moment of silence.]

The Speaker: — Please be seated.

[10:15]

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to present a petition calling for greater protection for late-night retail workers by passing Jimmy's law. We know that 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 workers.

We know that positive statistics show that convenience store and gas station robberies are down by one-third since 1999 largely due to increased safety practices including two people working together on late-night shifts. Mr. Speaker, 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.

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

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to present petitions on behalf of concerned residents from across Saskatchewan as it relates to the reporting and accounting of our provincial finances. The prayer of that petition 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 concerned residents of Saskatoon. I so submit.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to present a petition calling on the Sask Party government to support the Saskatchewan seniors' bill of rights:

We, the undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan, wish to bring to your attention the following: that many Saskatchewan seniors live on fixed incomes and are victims of physical, emotional, and financial abuse; that Saskatchewan seniors have a right to social and economic security and a right to live free from poverty; that Saskatchewan seniors have a right to protection from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

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

Mr. Speaker, I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Whip.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present the petition on behalf of trappers of Saskatchewan. The current regulations being enforced are creating a challenge 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.

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

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

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Day of Mourning

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Soon the flags at the Assembly will be flying at half-mast to commemorate Saskatchewan workers injured or killed on the job. As this year the Day of Mourning takes place when the House is not sitting on April 28th, I am rising in this Assembly today to honour the workers and families who have suffered the

anguish of workplace injury or even death.

It saddens me, Mr. Speaker, to report that since last April 28th, 37 people have died on the job in Saskatchewan. Furthermore, this province continues to have the second-highest injury rates in the country. These stats are staggering and simply unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, as MLAs, it is crucial that on this day we commit to acts and the notion in support of good occupational health and safety practices. It is the responsibility of everyone involved in the workplace to control health and safety hazards on the job. It is our responsibilities as members of this Assembly to support workers' rights and safety using the tools at our disposal.

One death is too many. We can and must do better not only to ensure that our workers and loved ones are safe, but to honour those whose lives have ended far too soon.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I encourage my fellow members and residents to light candles, don ribbons, and observe moments of silence to remember lives lost due to work injuries and deaths. But more importantly, Mr. Speaker, I would ask that my colleagues consider and reflect upon how we can all work together to prevent workplace illnesses, injuries, and deaths in order to establish safe workplaces for all. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Yorkton.

Daffodil Day

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to speak today about the Canadian Cancer Society's annual daffodil campaign. On April 27th people wear a daffodil pin representing support of the fight against cancer. Donations fund research, inform and support Canadians living with cancer, and prevent cancer through advocating strong health policy. April 27th is the day most Canadians wear their pin to recognize those fighting this terrible disease and reflect on those who have passed away as a result. Because the House does not sit tomorrow, we show our recognition today.

In 2011 more than 173,000 Canadians and approximately 5,200 people in Saskatchewan were expected to be diagnosed with cancer, and it may claim the lives of almost half of that number. Our government has taken action to strengthen cancer care for Saskatchewan people and support screening programs for prevention and early detection of cancer.

In our four and a half years in government, Mr. Speaker, we have increased the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency's budget by 76 per cent. And this year we have invested nearly 140 million to meet the needs of cancer patients. These important investments offer access to new drugs, the latest treatments, and more timely access to our dedicated health professionals. More importantly, they save lives.

I ask all members to join me in recognizing cancer patients and victims, including those we have lost as well as all those who support those fighting cancer in Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Grocery's Grand Opening

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise with some happy news in the House today with a very good-news story about the opening of the Ngoy Hoa Asian Foods outlet on the corner of Albert Street and 9th Avenue. Yes, Mr. Speaker, the Cau family of Regina is opening its doors to a larger location. The family business has been serving local customers at their first location on 11th Avenue for over two decades now. It's a mainstay of that particular neighbourhood, Mr. Speaker.

The store will provide western groceries as well as a wide variety of ethnic foods such as Japanese, Korean, Philippine, Burmese, Thai, and western dishes to name a few. This is a reflection of an increasingly diverse immigrant population in the heart of Regina.

On this occasion, Mr. Speaker, I wish to draw attention to the compelling story of the Cau family. The family came to Canada after fleeing the deadly Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia during the 1970s. The family and their eight children made their way to Canada after escaping the refugee camp and walking to the Thai border, losing a family member along the way. Theirs is an extraordinary tale, and it's quite inspiring.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I am delighted for the Cau family and the residents of north central Regina who will now have easier access to a wider variety of groceries. And I think we can all draw encouragement from the Caus' story of hope. I would ask my colleagues to join with me in congratulating the Caus on the opening their new store and for their contributions to the city of Regina. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Students Win at Regional Science Fair

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Wilkie's McLurg High School is proud today of three very talented students who competed and won at the recent northwest Regional Science Fair held in Macklin. The competing schools included Jonas Samson Junior High School from Meadow Lake, Macklin School, Maymont Central School, Wilkie's McLurg High School, and North West Central School from Plenty.

In total, 30 projects were presented, with McLurg students Chelsea Gruber, Allison Cey, and Rachel Mamer winning the top awards. Chelsea and Allison won with Stack 'em Up, a psychology-based project testing participants' mirror neurons and their ability to imitate other peoples' actions. Their results showed that watching a skill being performed prior to attempted imitation of the skill was a major advantage compared to those who were only given basic descriptions.

Rachel won with her project Have We Been Doing it Wrong All Along? She did extensive testing to determine whether it is more advantageous to turn on grain aeration fans at night than during the day. Her hypothesis was that night aeration was more effective because there is less humidity in the air at night than during the day. These young ladies should be very proud of their achievements and have stated that they intend to refine

their experiments prior to the next competition.

I invite all members to join me in applauding these bright minds. They have made us all very proud. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Seed Sorter a Technological Breakthrough

Mr. Cox: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in the House today to highlight an exciting new technological development in agriculture for the province of Saskatchewan: a new state-of-the-art seed sorter imported from Sweden and installed at the Feed Research Centre in North Battleford.

The BoMill TriQ computerized seed sorter, now located at the University of Saskatchewan Feed Research Centre in North Battleford, is the first of its kind in all of North America. It uses infrared light to analyze individual seeds to determine protein, starch, and hardness far more accurately than the human eye or by weight measurement. It can sort up to 3 tonnes per hour, so it has great potential for commercial use. Another advantage is that it can identify fusarium, and those fusarium seeds can be removed before the farmers seed, thus potentially reducing infestation of crops and spread of disease.

The total cost of this machine and related infrastructure is approximately \$506,000, and it was funded through the Western Economic Diversification, the Alberta Crop Industry Development Fund, and the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture research development fund. This order will enable producers to recapture up to 70 per cent of product that is now downgraded to feed. Because of this, Western Canadian grain producers may increase the value of their grain by as much as \$320 million per year.

Mr. Speaker, this is truly a great breakthrough in providing value-added processing right here in Saskatchewan, and especially exciting in my own constituency of The Battlefords. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Pie in the Eye Fundraiser

Mr. Moe: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on April 14th the Spiritwood arena committee organized an event called the Pie in the Eye to raise money for the new arena in their town of Spiritwood.

In the weeks leading up to the event, people could purchase votes at 5 cents each to select their candidate to be on the receiving end of a pie. Fifteen people with the most votes were the lucky recipients guaranteed to receive a pie in the eye. Not being selected in the voting process did not remove the possibility of your involvement.

Throughout the evening there were wild card pies auctioned off to the highest bidder who was then able to select from the crowd who they would give their purchase. In the name of good

fundraising, these pies quickly rose in value with one topping out at \$1,100. I did hear a rumour that a certain campaign manager from this last year's provincial election was on the receiving end of not one, but two pies throughout the course of the evening. Aside from one very expensive husband and wife pie feud, the most tense moment was when one bidder chose to pie his mother-in-law. A final tally of the evening displayed that in the span of only four hours, the community of Spiritwood raised just shy of \$34,000 for their new arena.

Mr. Speaker, with very low overhead, a little ingenuity, and a lot of community spirit the Spiritwood arena committee turned this evening into another very successful rural Saskatchewan event. Thank you.

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

Students Heading to Canada-Wide Science Fair

Hon. Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to congratulate students from the city of Regina that have won the opportunity to represent our city and our province at the Canada-Wide Science Fair in Prince Edward Island this May from the 12th to the 19th. These students have advanced from their local school competition in Regina to the regional fair, and now are on to the competition at the national level.

There are students from Campbell Collegiate, Regina Huda School, and two students from my constituency of Regina Qu'Appelle Valley — Kaylee Hayko of Winston Knoll and Jason Pasetka from Winston Knoll. These students will be competing against approximately 500 students from across Canada.

I had the opportunity to speak with Jason, and he's pretty excited about participating in this science fair. He will be participating in the innovative technology category. His project is titled Free Energy. It uses a small circuit to collect energy from the air. This project uses only an antenna and a circuit that he has constructed. Using this he was able to prove it works and it charges batteries.

I would like to ask all members to join me in congratulating all of our students that will be travelling to Prince Edward Island and wish them the best of luck at the national competition. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

[10:30]

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Support for Children in Care

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Children's Advocate report has revealed some alarming statistics about foster children in Saskatchewan. The number of foster families is declining and the number of children in care is still higher than in 2007. Under the Sask Party government, we've seen a 20 per cent drop in the number of families who are opening

their homes to foster children. With the high numbers of children in care and fewer families to help them, existing foster families can be overburdened.

To the minister: what supports is the minister putting in place for foster families to ensure they have the capacity to care safely for children and youth?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question because it's a very important one. I think the member opposite should also know that the decline in the number of foster families isn't something that's happening just in Saskatchewan but it is happening nationally.

But I can tell you that the number of foster homes with children with more than four have decreased by 51 per cent in the last five years, and the number of children that are living in foster homes with more than four children has also decreased by 57 per cent. We've made sure that our foster families have, the Foster Families Association has been given funding to increase or look for more foster families. We've also made sure that we can provide more training to our foster families, like the CPR [cardiopulmonary resuscitation] first aid training that's necessary. Mr. Speaker, we have also ensured that we have as many homes as possible by increasing the number of beds for youth — 397 more beds since we became government. And, Mr. Speaker, an exciting stat is there's a lot more families, extended families are taking children than before.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Children's Advocate says in his report, "We remain deeply concerned about children and youth living in foster homes that may not have the capacity to care for them safely." The Children's Advocate acknowledges the child welfare system is in transformation and welcomes it. But in this time of change, he says we will still need to ensure children are moving to homes where we can be certain the standard of care is better, not worse. In light of these concerns of the Children's Advocate, what extra measures is the minister putting in place for monitoring and supervision of children and youth in care?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Again I thank the member for the question because it is a very important one, and it's one that we recognized early.

In December of 2010, the Premier put together the committee that deals with children and youth. So we have all the ministries of people, human services ministries working together, and we made sure that there was funding available for issues outside of the ministries by supporting, investing another \$74 million in the last two years for the child and youth agenda.

We've increased funding to child and family services by 133 per cent since we became government, and we signed agreements with First Nations and Métis organizations to ensure that there's input from them as we go forward in our

transformation.

We also are looking at the Act and we've asked social workers, as early as last night at a conference I was at, to make sure that we have their voice in doing the transformational change that's important. Our goal is to not apprehend children, but to support families. And that's our goal, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Children's Advocate states, "We believe that the standards for investigating reports of abuse or neglect in foster homes should be no less than the standards for biological homes, and preferably higher." The reality is this is not the case. There is a difference in how rigorous the investigations are when it comes to allegations of abuse in a biological home versus a foster home. The Children's Advocate says these standards should be, again, at the very least equal.

Will the minister commit today to implement the recommendation of the Children's Advocate when there are allegations of abuse in a foster home?

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

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, we do have a very thorough review of what happens with our children when they're in the care of government. And of course we are always open to more suggestions in what we can do. But, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that we have to do is make sure that children in our care is not just seen as an issue for the people in Social Services, but across government. And that's why my colleagues that sit around the table with the child and youth committee know that we must be dealing with it in a comprehensive way.

I'm looking forward to the . . . I know that the Foster Families Association was very happy with our announcement last year for a mandatory training and mandatory CPR. They also know that they have our ear when it comes to changes.

Mr. Speaker, I assure you we'll work harder, but as the child advocate says, we are doing great work, and I understand there's more work to do.

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

Human Rights Commission

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In a recent opinion article from the *Leader-Post*, three experts in human rights law, namely Ken Norman, professor of law at the University of Saskatchewan, Mary Eberts who's the Ariel F. Sallows Chair of Human Rights at the University of Saskatchewan, and Alex Neve who is secretary general of Amnesty International Canada raised several questions regarding "ominous developments" in the Saskatchewan human rights system.

They are concerned that the disenfranchised and downtrodden will be further marginalized due to lessened access to basic human rights. In their view the actions of this government have

"seriously eroded" a well-respected model. To the minister: will you heed the expert opinion and revisit the direction you have set the commission on?

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Mr. Speaker, our Human Rights Commission in Saskatchewan is one of the leading entities in Canada in this area. We are proud of the work that they do. Under the direction of Chief Commissioner Arnot, we have introduced new legislation which has been passed, which introduces four pillars that will underpin the work that's being done — mediation, referral to the Court of Queen's Bench for matters that would be heard previously at tribunals, systemic advocacy, and public civics programming.

Mr. Speaker, we support those initiatives. We will work with the commission as they implement those changes. We believe that those are progressive and that they will serve not only our province but will move our province as a model for other provinces, and we think we will do very well with this model, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is these pillars that these authorities have described as concerns. There are three major concerns that they identified. One is that this government abolished the Human Rights Tribunal and that complaints must now be heard in court, which is a much more costly approach. Secondly, the gatekeeper, the Chief Commissioner, now has absolute discretion as to which complaints will be taken forward. They say this step backwards will stifle marginalized victims of discrimination. And thirdly, complainants are being channelled toward mediation without an adequate framework to back them up.

To the minister: does he agree with these authorities and will he heed their concerns?

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, under the NDP [New Democratic Party] government, the average time for a hearing to take place was, in 1996, 49 months; in 2007 the average time for a complaint to be heard by a tribunal was 20.5 months. The goal was to have it down to six months. The goal was never met, Mr. Speaker. It's absolutely essential that something be done to restore the credibility of the human rights process. We have taken that step under the direction of Commissioner Arnot. We will work with the Court of Queen's Bench to ensure that that happens.

We also believe in mediation, Mr. Speaker. Our government has introduced legislation to require mediation to take place in matrimonial matters. We think it is an appropriate way for early resolution of human rights matters as well. We are supportive of mediation and alternate resolution, and we will continue to advocate those things. And under the direction of the Human

Rights Commission, we think we are moving forward.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, it's not mediation that's the issue. It's the fact that there is no proper framework to back it up. These experts point out that the United Nations has called upon governments to not only promote human rights, but to protect them. Commissions are expected to engage with marginalized groups. This should have been done three years ago. To the minister: will you now properly engage marginalized groups, re-establish the independent tribunal, and fund it adequately so that victims and minorities are protected from human rights abuses?

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite wants us to go back to a system that had some issues with public credibility and go back to wait times of 20.5 months and 49 months, the answer is simply not. Mr. Speaker, we will move forward in a manner that has a great deal of public respect and credibility. The Court of Queen's Bench is well recognized and will be very capable of dealing with these matters.

With regard to impoverished or marginalized people, Mr. Speaker, we will have systemic advocacy, the things that the commissioner has undertaken and is working well in that area. We are reaching out to people in a manner that was never done before. We have a great deal of confidence and respect for Commissioner Arnot and the direction that he is taking the commission.

We think we are well received and that our province is a leader in Canada, and we will support that. And we will never go back to the days of having a complaint take 49 or 20 months to be heard. It is simply unacceptable. That is the legacy that was left by those members opposite and we don't support it.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We will closely watch the amount of time it takes for these to proceed through the court process and keep track of those. So we'll see how it goes on that line.

The authorities further point out that leadership in human rights enforcement in Saskatchewan seems to have moved from the commission itself to the office of the Chief Commissioner alone. Some commissioners have left because of this disturbing trend. Further there are no longer any in-house legal experts at the commission. The commission paid six times more in legal fees in last year than that of 2010. They're paying outside counsel at the rate of \$375 an hour despite fewer cases going forward under the new court regime.

Will the minister take steps to ensure the commission gets proper in-house legal expertise, saving taxpayers' money and ensuring victims of human rights abuses have access to in-depth

expertise to advance their cause?

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I understand the in-house counsel that worked at the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission has chosen to retire. We accept that decision. Mr. Speaker, in the interim, I understand that a number of files were turned over to the private bar, including some that were going to the Supreme Court of Canada so outside expertise was needed in any event. Mr. Speaker, the commissioner advises us they will be rehiring and ensuring that they've got adequate in-house counsel so that they can deal with things in the most cost-effective and efficient manner, Mr. Speaker. That is good management and that is what the Human Rights Commission will do.

We support the work that they do. They have minimized and reduced the timeline that it takes. They are using mediation, and we are strongly supportive of mediation. It is controlled and directed by the commissioner. We have a great deal of confidence in the commissioner, and we do not feel that there is any issues that are there. We will be monitoring it closely, as we would any new program in our province, Mr. Speaker.

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

Accommodation for Ministry and Support for Post-Secondary Education

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night in the Human Services Committee, the Minister of Advanced Education refused to provide transparency to the people of Saskatchewan when it comes to the additional dollars his ministry will be shelling out to move into the posh Hill Tower III offices in Regina.

In this fiscal year compared to last, his ministry will be paying nearly \$1.2 million more to lease the exact same office spaces, with one exception, Mr. Speaker. For six months of this fiscal year, ministry offices in Regina will be moving from their Hamilton Street location to the new Hill Tower III. My question to the minister: why has he signed off on spending 21 per cent more for lease expenses to move into these posh offices?

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

Hon. Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Government Services has made a commitment to lease approximately 56,000 square feet of the new office space downtown. Now that's less than 26 per cent of the building. The new tower will also mitigate office space shortages that are within the city of Regina. We have less than 2 per cent vacancy rate for commercial real estate. With that, that really does cause a squeeze on renewing of leases and the cost of leases.

The member opposite seems to think that if a person stays within the space and their lease comes due, it would be renegotiated at the same price. He's incorrect. We have knowledge and have been renewing leases in other facilities

that in fact are over 50 per cent more. Mr. Speaker, that is the real issue here — 50 per cent more for the same space. So thank you very much for the question.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Advanced Ed can duck these questions all he wants, but it doesn't change the fact that he is signing off in his budget for his ministry, Mr. Speaker, paying through the nose for premium office space.

Last night we learned that the Minister of Advanced Education will be paying millions more per year in order to move from the Hamilton Street location to the Hill Tower III location. On an annual basis, Mr. Speaker, this could amount to more than \$2 million and, Mr. Speaker, despite millions of dollars more being spent per year, Mr. Speaker, they're actually moving to a space that has less square footage than currently used in the existing space on Hamilton. Mr. Speaker, he sat silently last night to these questions, but how does it make sense, Mr. Speaker, to pay so much more for office space when it's actually less space than the ministry is currently using?

[10:45]

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

Hon. Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member opposite for asking the question, but he was referring to the wrong ministry. Government Services is responsible for the leasing of the office facilities.

Mr. Speaker, we are seeing, as I said in my previous answer, an increase of over 50 per cent in our lease renewals. So are other larger tenants throughout the city. In reality, today Regina has a very tight commercial marketplace. So if AEEI [Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration] were to remain at Grenfell, they would be seeing a substantial increase. So we have a mandate to reduce the footprint of office space. Previously that government opposite thought nothing of having 300 or 350 square feet per FTE [full-time equivalent]. Our mandate is 200 square feet, and we are meeting that. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, the extravagance doesn't stop with the huge amounts more that the minister is paying for Advanced Ed offices to move to the new spot. Last night, Mr. Speaker, the minister could not confirm whether or not his ministry would be paying for the leasehold improvements on the building. And, Mr. Speaker, the minister could not confirm whether or not his ministry would be paying the moving expenses to move 160 employees from the Hamilton location to the new, posh office space.

Mr. Speaker, this is the same minister who just short-changed the universities in their operating grants. This is the same minister, Mr. Speaker, who put \$100 million of debt onto the University of Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, last night he

confirmed it was a long-term lease in the new spot, but would not state how long.

My question to the minister: for how many years will the Ministry of Advanced Education be located in the new, posh office buildings?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to speak about our track record for supporting post-secondary institutions and our students. Mr. Speaker, it's been \$3.5 billion invested in our post-secondary system under the leadership of our Premier and under this government. Mr. Speaker, with specific reference . . . He just made reference to our universities. Mr. Speaker, with specific reference to the University of Saskatchewan, this year, Mr. Speaker, the University of Saskatchewan is receiving a \$304 million investment, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that's a 47 per cent increase over 2007, Mr. Speaker, the last year that the members opposite were in power.

And, Mr. Speaker, this year we see that the operating increase and dollars overall for the University of Regina, there has been a 7.3 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker. What we see is that there's more than \$100 million invested at the University of Regina. These are record investments for our post-secondary institutions and for our post-secondary students, Mr. Speaker, so that they can succeed in their studies right here in Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, the secrecy and the extravagance is counter to everything the Sask Party promised that they'd be. Not only, Mr. Speaker, are they willing and happy to spend millions more on more politicians, Mr. Speaker, but they're also happy to shell out millions. They run to the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to shell out millions on more expensive office space.

Last night the minister refused to provide details around the moving expenses associated with moving 160 of his employees from the one location to the other. My question to the minister: in addition to the lease expenses, what's being budgeted to move his 160 employees from one location to the other?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to talk about the \$890 million that we're investing to help support and sustain the post-secondary students and system that we have. I'm delighted to speak about the Saskatchewan advantage scholarship, Mr. Speaker, that's going to be moving forward. Mr. Speaker, I'm also happy to talk about the Saskatchewan innovation and opportunity scholarship that's already rolling out and benefiting students, Mr. Speaker.

I'm delighted to talk about how new dollars are being invested in student financial assistance, delighted to talk about the support that more than 30,000 of our graduates are getting from the graduate retention program, Mr. Speaker. That's making

and ensuring, to help ensure that our students aren't simply studying in Saskatchewan but staying in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. We see that because they're helping to ensure that we're at a record population — more people working in Saskatchewan, more people working full-time in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And we know how important our young people is and will continue to be for the Saskatchewan advantage, Mr. Speaker. Those are the kind of investments that we're going to continue to make in our post-secondary system.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, the minister has not explained why he's spending \$1.2 million to move into office space that's smaller than what's currently being used. The minister did not just answer the question about those moving costs associated with the move. The minister did not answer the question as to whether or not he will be paying the leasehold improvement expenses, his ministry will be paying. The minister is ducking these questions, Mr. Speaker.

This is the same minister who just hiked tuition on university campuses. This is the same minister who just passed on \$100 million of debt to the University of Saskatchewan. This is the same minister that has shortchanged our Saskatchewan universities in their operating grants. Mr. Speaker, this is the same minister that just reduced the number of civil servants in his ministry. He has millions for posh offices in Regina, Mr. Speaker, but he doesn't have money for the things that really matter.

My question to the minister: how can he plead poverty when it comes to the issues facing Saskatchewan students, Saskatchewan post-secondary institutions, but he has millions to burn on posh office spaces?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have a terrible track record when it comes to post-secondary education, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on tuition alone at the University of Saskatchewan under the members opposite, tuition went up 99 per cent, Mr. Speaker. At the University of Regina, tuition went up 88 per cent, Mr. Speaker. And at SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology], Mr. Speaker, it went up more than 250 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, we are hearing voices from students across the province. In fact from Lakeland College, we've received some thank you notes, Mr. Speaker. I quote one, Mr. Speaker: "I'm very honoured and touched to have been selected and I cannot express my deep appreciation for your generosity in supporting me on reaching my dream of becoming a nurse." Or, Mr. Speaker, "It's always nice to hear that there are people out there willing to contribute to a stronger education."

Mr. Speaker, our track record, Mr. Speaker, whether it's in new scholarship dollars, whether it's in graduate retention dollars, Mr. Speaker, we're investing in young people because this is investment in the Saskatchewan advantage.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Cellphone Coverage in Northern Saskatchewan

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. For most of this province, people have the convenience of being able to use cellphones. Cellphones now are a regular part of life in Saskatchewan, but there are thousands of people in my riding — in the Canoe Lake area; the Buffalo River area, also known as Dillon; English River, also known as Patuanak; and Birch Narrows, also known as Dillon — that just don't have any cellphone coverage at all. Cell service is very important in this day and age for a variety of reasons.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the minister: why is the Sask Party ignoring the people in this region who just want the same service as the rest of the province?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Energy and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. SaskTel is moving, I would say very aggressively, to expand the area of services across Saskatchewan. Approximately 98 per cent of the people of Saskatchewan have very good cell service. Of course in the North where there is less population base, it's a little more challenging.

However, SaskTel is moving to increase the number of cellular towers in the North as well through a very aggressive build-out program that they are working on. We have to look at, in terms of these types of things, a business case, so it is a little more difficult when you have less population base. But nevertheless there is more cell towers being installed in northern Saskatchewan than there's ever been.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, there's always the concern that the cellphone coverage issue is not just a safety issue. But it's great for travel. It's also important to point out to people that it's also great for business. Mr. Speaker, we have spoken about the safety aspect. We have spoken about the isolation factor. And it's also, cellphones are also a very valuable business tool. In this modern age, cellphones are a key factor at being successful in many businesses, Mr. Speaker.

Will the minister please ensure, in terms of a hard date, as to when cell coverage will be improved soon in the northern part of our province so that the business community and the people that can travel in safety could have the same level of service that the rest of the province takes for granted, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Energy and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated, SaskTel is moving aggressively to provide a level of service to Saskatchewan residents. It frankly is the envy of Western Canada and perhaps even Canada. There was an article out recently that indicated the services that SaskTel provides in Saskatchewan are much greater than any other province in Western Canada to rural residents. It is something that we're

quite proud of with respect to SaskTel. They're increasing their spend in northern Saskatchewan. A number of locations have been added to the cellular tower build-out for this year, and we will certainly be doing that.

One thing we will not be doing through SaskTel is something that your government did in the past, which was lost money hand over fist in outside-of-the-province investments. All you had to do is look at the money that you lost: in Nashville, \$6.7 million on that little venture; Clickabid, \$3 million there; another \$5.6 million lost in Soft Tracks entertainment; \$90.8 million lost in Navigata. Just think, Mr. Speaker, if we had those resources . . .

The Speaker: — Time has elapsed for question period.

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 351 through 379.

The Speaker: — The Government Whip has tabled answers to questions 351 to 379.

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

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

Balanced Budget

Mr. Steinley: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'm very pleased to join in this debate today. And later on, at the end of my speech, I'll be moving a motion that says:

This Assembly commends the Saskatchewan Party government for passing the only balanced budget in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to start off by giving kind of an overview of Canadian budgets that have been tabled throughout the last past couple of months. I'd like to start by speaking about the Canadian budget deficit situation most jurisdictions are facing, themselves, right now. For the 2012-13 budget year, all Canadian provinces except for Saskatchewan are running deficits, as well as the federal budget. The federal budget estimate is a deficit of \$21.1 billion.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to go through a list of the Canadian provinces right now. Ontario's budget estimate is a deficit of \$15.2 billion. Quebec's budget estimate is a deficit of \$1.5 billion. Alberta's budget estimate is a deficit of \$900 million. BC's [British Columbia] budget estimate is a deficit of \$968 million. Manitoba's budget estimate is a deficit of \$460 million. Prince Edward Island's budget estimate is a deficit of \$74.9 million. New Brunswick's budget estimate is a deficit of \$182.9 million. Nova Scotia's budget estimate is a deficit of \$211.2 million. And last but not least, the budget most recently tabled, Newfoundland and Labrador's budget estimate is a deficit of

\$258 million.

Mr. Speaker, that's a lot of numbers, but to narrow it, to put it in perspective, the collective combined federal and jurisdictional Canadian deficit for 2012-13 is \$40.5 billion. Except for one province, Mr. Speaker. The standout is Saskatchewan.

[11:00]

The Saskatchewan government tabled a budget with a \$15 million surplus, and the only provincial balanced budget in Confederation. Mr. Speaker, there is 70 million that will be transferred to our Growth and Financial Security Fund, which will bring us up to \$750 million by the end of the year. And this is important, government spending was, on the operational side, was below a 4 per cent increase.

Mr. Speaker, since the Saskatchewan Party was first elected in 2007, debt paydown was totalled to \$3 billion indicating that we have a strong plan for the future. We're understanding the world financial situation, and we have a solid fiscal preparation for today and to encourage future growth, Mr. Speaker. And that's a big part of our Saskatchewan advantage budget — encourage future growth and ensure that we can have investments in our province going forward.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk a little bit about international debt crisis. We know we do not live in a bubble, Mr. Speaker. There obviously are jurisdictions near to us that can affect our financial situation. We could absolutely be influenced by global financial pressures and the fiscal mismanagement of other countries.

Mr. Speaker, what we can do is put our province in the best financial situation possible and looking forward to a future, ensure that we have sustainable spending, ensure that we can weather any storms that may come on the horizon. What we can do is improve our province's competitiveness, improve our province's credit rating, which we were the only jurisdiction, I think, in the country had improved credit rating in the last couple years, Mr. Speaker, to a AAA credit rating. That was never done before. That's the first time our Saskatchewan province has ever had a AAA grading.

Mr. Speaker, the governments of the world do not see things this way regarding finances. Some have allowed their finances to be spun so far out of control; they are no longer in a position to correct their own financial mess. And this can be seen in the situation that we see in Greece right now. Mr. Speaker, the OECD [Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development] has records of each government's current deficits and debts. Mr. Speaker, the situation is not encouraging. Most jurisdictions are running deficits, including Canada. Some of the countries of the highest debt to GDP [gross domestic product] ratios are Greece, Ireland, the UK [United Kingdom], the US [United States], and Italy. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, *The Economist* global debt clock is tracking world debt that is changing constantly. Currently over \$39 trillion, Mr. Speaker, moving constantly upwards, more and more debt, further crisis, Mr. Speaker.

And while we're on the topic of debt, Mr. Speaker, and

unsustainable funding, maybe we should take a look back at what happened on November 7th, 2011. Mr. Speaker, apparently the NDP and especially their Finance critic didn't get the message that deficit spending needs to become a relic of the past. Once again in last year's election, the NDP promised what they could not deliver — a promise, a platform that's architected by the Regina Rosemont member that said, do you know what? We can deliver whatever you want. We promise to increase debt in our province. We promise to carry on the worldwide trend of budget deficits and fiscal carnage, Mr. Speaker.

In the fall of 2011, the NDP made over \$5 billion of promises to the people of Saskatchewan — \$5 billion worth of promises. And you know what this promise would have made? This platform that was created by the member from Regina Rosemont promising \$5 billion worth of spending, it would have created — you know what, Mr. Speaker? — this massive debt would have resulted in a massive deficit.

And, Mr. Speaker, if the NDP would have been elected and if they would have tabled their first budget, like we tabled our first budget, with their spending promises, they would have tabled a budget with the distinction of being the second largest deficit in the country, Mr. Speaker. Their budget would have been the second largest deficit in the country with all the promises they made, and the people that they tried to convince that deficit budgeting and promises, that unfulfilled . . . would have put our province with the second highest deficit in the country. And that is worth . . .

An Hon. Member: — Is that bad?

Mr. Steinley: — Yes. For the member from Regina Elphinstone, that's a bad thing. That's a bad thing.

Mr. Speaker, and the people of Saskatchewan realize this. And he said, you know what? I'm not going to go back to a time when our province is having deficit, when our credit rating is being decreased. We do not want our vote bought with our own money, Mr. Speaker. That's what the people of Saskatchewan said on November 11th.

Mr. Speaker, I know, being in this Chamber, I try to listen to as many of the speeches that I can, and you know, the member from Regina Rosemont went on quite a little rant there a couple of days ago. And I thought I heard a couple of things that I wasn't too sure about, and I don't want to speak on something I don't know, so I went back and took a look into *Hansard* on what the member from Regina Rosemont said. And it was a little confusing to me at the time, but I'm going to read it out loud so we can have a little conversation about it, when he was talking about, on April 24th, he's talking, "What do they have against . . ." I quote, Mr. Speaker: "What do they have against investment, Mr. Speaker? What do they have about diversifying our economy, Mr. Speaker? Why can't we choose to be more than less." And this is a statement the member from Regina Rosemont made about our government wanting to . . . why can't we be more than less.

And it's a statement that really got me thinking about 16 years ago and the NDP, the NDP's promises of trying to do things better in 2011, 1999. And I remember I graduated around that

time. A lot of people were leaving the province, were leaving the province. And it was interesting . . . And I'll go on to one more quote from the Regina member from Rosemont. And he said:

And I think it's careless. I think it's reckless. I think it's disrespectful for any member of this Assembly to dismiss the hurt and challenge that is being caused to so many in this province that are looking at being displaced from their own province, that are looking . . . How are they going to earn the dollars they need to provide for their family and where are they going to do so? And sadly many of those individuals are having to choose outside Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is coming from an NDP member? Coming from an NDP member, why are we driving people . . . our province? And this was probably the most unbelievable statement I've heard in the Assembly so far by the member from Regina Rosemont. Why are we driving people . . . when our province has the highest population ever? Really? You're driving people out of our province when our population is growing, and you're trying to figure out how people are going to make ends meet when we're making, on our weekly average, is making more money in this province than anywhere before, any time before?

And I think about driving people out of our province. Well I think about my sisters, my brothers, all my friends in high school that had to leave this province because they couldn't make any money under an NDP government because they had no idea how to create investment opportunities in our province. The member said, why don't we want investment in Saskatchewan on this side of the House, when we've created an investment climate so people are coming from all over not only North America but the world to come to Saskatchewan now because they think it's the best economic climate for investment right now in the world. And the member says, why don't we want investment?

Mr. Speaker, I think I'd have to ask that same question is, where was their investment in agriculture for 16 years? Growing up in rural Saskatchewan, what did they do to help farmers? What did they do to help municipalities, Mr. Speaker? Claw back \$600 million from them so that they had to . . . and off-load all their responsibilities, so they could . . . tax revolts all over the province and . . . [inaudible] . . . this group of members from across the floor, this nimble nine now across the floor, who I don't think they understand that, Mr. Speaker, people do actually remember stuff after November the . . . after 2007. They never want to talk about anything when they were in power because they don't want to take responsibility for their record, basically, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, reading a book called *The Unfinished Canadian*, I ran across a statement called the tall poppy syndrome. And I was wondering . . .

An Hon. Member: — What's that?

Mr. Steinley: — It's one of the first times I heard it, the tall poppy syndrome. And it's a case where, Mr. Speaker, many people who . . . You look over a field, and you see a couple of the taller poppies, and you say, you know what? That just

doesn't look right. We like it to be more even. And it says that people, instead of having the opportunity to grow and reach and become the best you can, it's basically a statement about resentment and jealousy, Mr. Speaker.

Anybody that's doing well, anybody that is doing well and isn't mediocre, mediocre, Mr. Speaker, they instead of trying to grow our province, instead of trying to allow people the opportunity to become the best that they can, they cut off the tall poppies, Mr. Speaker. They cut off the people that are doing the best and they say, you know what? If we want everyone to be equal, instead of giving the opportunity for you to grow, become the best you can be, we're actually going to cut the feet out of the people who are doing well so that they come back down to everyone else. It's unbelievable.

And I think it was a race. And for 16 years, Mr. Speaker, it was a race to the bottom. It was a race to be mediocre. And then you would say, why can't we be more than less? They are the actual architects of being less, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan has never had an opportunity to grow under the NDP and right now people are . . . Instead of cutting the legs out of people, the tall poppies in our province, Mr. Speaker, we are allowing a framework, a climate for people to become more than they can be, Mr. Speaker, becoming the best that they can be, rising to the occasion, giving an opportunity to be the tall poppies . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Thank you very much, Nancy, sorry, the member from Martensville.

Mr. Speaker, and I'd just like to clear the air. I know the member from Regina Rosemont, he spins . . . he talks about our spin. But then he goes on diatribes about completely things that are legitimate in his world, his world. And, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to clear the air and bring the member from Regina Rosemont a little bit back to reality. I'd like to kind of welcome him to the new Saskatchewan . . . [inaudible] . . . and show him some of the Saskatchewan advantages, with our budget did come, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, I will compare apples to apples right now, and I will compare one administration to another. And I think that's fair, you know, people have records. Administrations have records. Some don't want to talk about them, but you know, they have the 1990s records. And we have our records from going on from '07 to today, which I think we're pretty proud of, and things have been going pretty all right in Saskatchewan. And the 53,000 people that moved back home and moved here, I think, think things are going pretty well as well.

Mr. Speaker, in the 1990s . . . We'll go about a 10-year frame because we're going to be able to say, Mr. Speaker, and per capita in the 1990s Saskatchewan's income, disposable income per capita was \$2,500 below the national average, Mr. Speaker. And the member from Rosemont talks about, why can't people make money now? And I guess, well we don't got to go on that record I guess.

And right now, Mr. Speaker, today the per capita disposable income is the second highest in Canada, second highest in Canada. And, Mr. Speaker, and I think job creation records, job creation records have a lot to do with if people want to move to your jurisdiction and lots of things have . . . People, if you can't

find a job, you're basically not going to stay here. That's what happened with my friends, Mr. Speaker.

And right now . . . In the 1990s, job creation, second worst ahead of Newfoundland in the 1990s, second worst record in job creation. And, Mr. Speaker, right now and today in Saskatchewan we're at 5.1 per cent, the lowest unemployment rate in Canada. And I think that speaks to the hard work of the people of Saskatchewan and their entrepreneurial spirit, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the population growth which . . . Throughout the 1990s, I know many, many people left. Many, many, many young people left because they didn't have the opportunity here because they got their feet cut out from under them by the former NDP government, but below the national record on the Prairies, Mr. Speaker — their population growth. And, Mr. Speaker, our population has an all-time high.

Mr. Speaker, I wish I had more time to speak on the balanced budget, the only balanced budget in Saskatchewan, but right now I'd like to move the motion, Mr. Speaker:

That this Assembly commends the Saskatchewan Party government for passing the only balanced budget in Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The member for Regina Walsh Acres has moved the motion:

That this Assembly commends the Saskatchewan Party government for passing the only balanced budget in Canada.

I recognize the member for Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to enter into debate here today, Mr. Speaker. That was an interesting speech that was written by the Premier's office here today that, you know, the member, a new member, he's probably going to learn but maybe that's the last speech he'll read here that's been written to him, written for him by the Premier's office. But pretty interesting because I don't think that's the approach that member would normally take.

What I find rather interesting here today is, of course, a speech like that that's been put together, the message that's been put together from the Premier's office, is an awfully interesting choice by this Premier, to basically boast and to poke fingers in other partners in Confederation, to do so on grounds that are not correct. It's an interesting sort of attitudinal shift that we see in this government and certainly doesn't represent that of Saskatchewan people. This boastful approach that attacks its neighbours and partners in Confederation puts together a case that doesn't compare things in an apple-to-apples comparison. It's rather interesting.

You know, and members talk about the new Saskatchewan. Well I would hope that in the new Saskatchewan where we should all be proud, we should all be proud as in Saskatchewan people, in the hard work, the sacrifice and the work to build out

a strong economy, to build up some strength in our revenues.

[11:15]

I believe it's our time to stand up with a sense of humility and confidence to both Canada, but the rest of the world. Instead we see sort of this immature, silly, sort of reckless, boastful approach of government, and it doesn't represent the place of Saskatchewan people, the mindset of Saskatchewan people.

Saskatchewan people are a proud lot, and it's a time for us to have a humble pride as to the record of our province and our place in the world. And what we see instead is a very . . . a government that's out of step with Saskatchewan people, that in fact is taking an arrogant approach to how they go about things. What the time here is in Saskatchewan . . . I hear a member shouting across, "It's finally our turn."

Well you know, it is our turn here in Saskatchewan to be able to make improvements. It is our turn to take a humble pride as to our place. It is our time to take some confidence, and to make decisions in a deliberate fashion that improve people's lives and improve the lives of communities. And it is our time to certainly continue to be who we are as Saskatchewan people with a sense of humility, a care for one another, and to stand up to the rest of the world, certainly with pride. But that kind of boastful, silly, immature arrogance that we're seeing from the government opposite doesn't represent, doesn't represent who Saskatchewan people are.

And you know, it's an interesting approach that, you know, that they heckle across, say, well it was finally our time. It's not our time to poke neighbours, neighbouring provinces, partners in Confederation in the eye. It's not our time to be silly and reckless with what we're putting forward. It's our time to work towards the best interests of Saskatchewan people, and certainly not our time to play these sorts of silly games and that sort of approach.

The fact that that speech came out of what I would suspect is the Premier's office and given to that new young member to provide here today is too bad. And anyways it seems to me that it's probably a bit of a set-up, and certainly it's reflective of what we're hearing from government. We've seen members on a daily basis jump up and poke different provinces in the eye, Mr. Speaker, as opposed to standing up with a sense of pride, a sense of place, and to say, yes, we have some things in Saskatchewan that are going well. And this is how we're working towards our goals that matter to Saskatchewan people. And you know, and I guess what this gets to is the arrogance we see from the government and that disconnect from what everyday families across Saskatchewan are talking about and what they care about.

You know, we see a government boast, when they don't even report their finances the same way as the rest of Canada, and do so in a way to manufacture some sort of story that they'd like to tell. And we can only I guess point to the fact that every year at budget time the Finance minister and the Premier and members opposite jump up and talk about budgetary balance, and then the record of course is something entirely different. In fact three years running, Mr. Speaker, we've had a government that their record has been of deficits: in 2009-10, a deficit of \$173

million; in 2010-11, a deficit of 145 million; and in 2011-12, a deficit of well over \$300 million.

The member from Moose Jaw North who we know struggles with these matters should be corrected by the Minister of Finance who admitted the other night in estimates that, yes, last year he said he had a balanced budget. And yes, by the end of the year it was well over \$300 million in deficit. And he had raided the Crown corporation, hiking up rates for Saskatchewan people to pay for his budget.

It gets to the point that, of an article here in *The Globe and Mail* on March 17th with the title, "Conservatives preach the gospel but forget the chapters," Mr. Speaker. "They say they want smaller government, lower taxes and balanced budgets, and then they don't deliver," Mr. Speaker.

And this is what we see here again. They talk about budgetary balance. It doesn't happen, Mr. Speaker. In fact, you know, even when we, as I talk about recording our finances, of course they're done in an inappropriate fashion. We have auditor's report after auditor's report. The independent Provincial Auditor, non-partisan auditor, highlights the lack of budgetary balance, Mr. Speaker.

And then we see this sort of, these boastful, silly, immature antics from the government opposite instead of taking a proud place in Canada, in the world, at a time where in the new Saskatchewan we should have some self-assuredness, where we should have some confidence, but we should continue to carry ourselves forward with a level of humility.

And what we should be doing in the new Saskatchewan is utilizing that confidence and that assuredness to make decisions that make a difference in people's lives. Whether you're up in that region up around Humboldt where there's decisions being made around mining operations, what we need to move forward up there with is a deliberate plan that makes sure we're meeting the needs of the region and residents, not these silly antics in here of being boastful and poking other provinces in the eye. That's not the approach Saskatchewan people appreciate.

Just the same, Mr. Speaker, this is the same government that, you know, in the last election went before Saskatchewan people with glossy, slick brochures and messages of positivity and are delivering something very different. They never talked in that election about spending millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker, to increase the number of politicians here in Saskatchewan at the same time as hiking costs for seniors and everyday families across this province. That wasn't contained in the information at all.

And Saskatchewan people, just the same as, they want to be proud of where we've arrived as a province not because of the back-patting that we hear from government somehow trying to say that this was the doing of that government that put Saskatchewan into a stronger position from an economic and fiscal position. That's silly, taking credit for things when it's been hard-working community leaders, organizations, and certainly hard-working Saskatchewan people and entrepreneurs who have built out the success that we see in Saskatchewan. Now it's a question of how do we build on that success. How do we take that success and make sure it's manifested into

positive improvements in people's lives and communities' lives, in the lives of communities?

Instead we see a government that wants to have this perpetual back-patting. And the decisions they're actually making, the focus of their debate in this Assembly, the push of their Bill, is all about them, Mr. Speaker. All about them, and adding politicians to manipulate boundaries in a fashion that secures their, what they believe, electoral fortunes in a more secure way. Or to eliminate the voices of youth all across this province, discounting the voice of so many across this province, Mr. Speaker. And that's all about them and their own political, partisan interests, Mr. Speaker, instead of being a humble government that earned a mandate, Mr. Speaker.

And I respect the fact that they won an election. But what the point, Mr. Speaker, should be is they should have rolled up their sleeves at that point, taken that mandate, worked towards those goals. And what we see is something very different. We see a government that's departed from what they promised, doing things that are entirely different, doing things that are in their own best interests. It's all about them, certainly not about Saskatchewan people. And we see this arrogance that's permeated the benches opposite, and that's something that has really grown quickly and it's evidenced again here today. It's evidenced in members' statements. It's evidenced by the approach of the Premier and government.

Saskatchewan people should be proud of our place in Confederation, but we should do so with a humble confidence and we should do so at home, making sure we're making decisions that make the important improvements, the meaningful improvements in the lives of Saskatchewan people and communities, Mr. Speaker. That's what Saskatchewan people expect from all of us, and that's the least we can deliver, Mr. Speaker. So certainly, you know, the fact that they're talking about budgetary balance, we've seen it before, Mr. Speaker. Three times running we've seen deficits as their record, Mr. Speaker. Should this one be different? Well, Mr. Speaker, I think there's lots of evidence to suggest otherwise, Mr. Speaker. At this point in time, I've been pleased to counter the motion put forward.

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

Mr. Parent: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to be able to stand in this Legislative Assembly today and speak to today's budget debate. I may also add the provincial ... This is the only provincial budget that is balanced in Canada. Mr. Speaker, this budget is about keeping the Saskatchewan advantage, keeping the budget balanced, keeping spending sustainable, keeping our economy growing, and keeping our election promises, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to begin with some third party support for our balanced budget, TD Economics, 2012 Saskatchewan budget:

This year's Saskatchewan budget features another surplus, but it is still quite distinct from last year's. In contrast to Budget 2011, which included a string of tax cuts, this year's new initiatives are mainly focused on improvements

to government efficiency. Overall, the tone being struck this year is of careful management of public finances notwithstanding the province's enviable prosperity.

CIBC [Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce], Saskatchewan budget 2012, provincial budget briefs:

Saskatchewan continues to compare very favourably to its provincial peers, boasting a relatively strong economic expansion, a healthy budget balance, a declining debt burden and negligible net funding requirements.

Mr. Speaker, education priorities include First Nation and Métis education, assessment of new immigrants, students entering into the province's education system, and child care spaces. Mr. Speaker, funding includes 21 approved major capital projects and three new school capital projects. Mr. Speaker, our government has invested approximately 500 million in pre-kindergarten to 12 and child care infrastructure since 2007, including 38 major capital, school capital projects throughout the province.

Mr. Speaker, the new education funding distribution model provides a fair balance in funding for school divisions across Saskatchewan. It includes transition funding to moderate the impact on school divisions most affected by this shift due to the new model. Mr. Speaker, our government provides the largest reduction in education portion of property taxes in Saskatchewan history in 2009. As a result, we needed a new way of distributing funding to school divisions. Mr. Speaker, we have spent the past three years consulting with school divisions and other members of the education sector to ensure funding is provided in an equitable manner — all this and keeping a balanced budget, the only province in Canada, I may add, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, post-secondary education and labour force development. Our government has invested a record amount into post-secondary education and skills training in 2007, with a significant support for the First Nation and Métis students.

Mr. Speaker, this is near and dear to me as I have spent years helping to get Aboriginals educated. The most wonderful program I was part of developing, after years of working with Supreme Steel to develop an ironworkers' training program and with the help from the Minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration, the program's first course was completed last week. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies started with 14 First Nations students, and 13 completed the SIIT [Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies] ironworkers' certification program. Mr. Speaker, the graduate students started their two-week practicum on Monday this week at the zoo, erecting a pavilion in Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, thanks to the generosity of PCS [Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan Inc.] potash who donated over \$52,000 worth of raw steel material for the building. Mr. Speaker, thanks to Supreme Steel for organizing and arranging this project. Mr. Speaker, Supreme Steel donated over \$55,000 in labour to fabricate the steel trusses, beams, etc., for the pavilion. Mr. Speaker, thanks to Q-Line Trucking who donated flatbed trailers for moving the material from various locations and storing the material for the start of this two-week practicum

this week.

Mr. Speaker, thanks to the following companies who donated their time and equipment as well as labour: International Paints, Litz Crane, Hertz Equipment, ModSpace, Construction Fasteners, and Prairie Maintenance who supplied and will install the roof cladding. This was all for the zoo pavilion which is presently being erected. And I intend to go there this week and see how the project is going. It was just fantastic.

Mr. Speaker, the best part of this whole program is that Supreme Steel has offered jobs to each of the 13 students to work at the Rocanville potash expansion. SIIT is looking forward to running another ironworkers' certification course in the near future. Mr. Speaker, the following is a quote from Supreme Steel:

We started erection this past Monday employing SIIT Iron Worker Certificate course students for their two-week practicum. We also have offered continued employment to all the graduates. The program was developed through the efforts of the Ironworker Union and Supreme Steel, brought to SIIT to deliver. Without the assistance of the Hon. Rob Norris, Advanced Education, Immigration, the program would not have moved forward [Mr. Speaker].

The program has received assistance from the construction industry — Supreme Steel, International Paints, Litz Crane, Hertz Equipment, ModSpace, Construction Fasteners and Prairie Maintenance (Roof Cladding) among others — as well as Potash Corporation who donated the raw steel for the zoo pavilion project. We have industry support. We have work and we need trained workers. And the Aboriginal community have a potential workforce. The government helped us deliver the program we needed. SIIT is looking forward to holding a second and possibly third program. We have a good start.

Ross Fraser, General Manager, Supreme Steel, Saskatoon

[11:30]

Mr. Speaker, I spent several years . . . Mr. Speaker, we will continue with the programs like rental construction incentive and affordable homeownership program and rental development program, support for the Habitat for Humanity, and we are introducing the Saskatchewan first-time homebuyers, all under a balanced budget. Mr. Speaker, since 2007 housing starts have averaged 5,908 per year, more than double the number of annual housing starts in the previous 16 years.

Mr. Speaker, I have spent years developing an affordable housing program for a local Saskatoon Métis community, sitting on various boards representing Métis with the five level government homelessness initiative: Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership, SHIP; RIC, regional intersectoral committee, etc., Mr. Speaker. This Métis group was given the opportunity to purchase a 16-apartment building on Avenue Q and completed renovating and building with funding from the federal homelessness dollars and the city of Saskatoon giving

tax incentive breaks.

Mr. Speaker, when the building was completed, 15 single mothers were moved into the facility to get them off the street trade. And they received counselling, education that they required, and help to the next stage they wanted to go, whether that be a job or more education, and also helping their kids get off the streets, Mr. Speaker. The 16th one-bedroom unit was used for the counsellors and entrance security 24 hours a day to protect the single mothers and their kids.

Mr. Speaker, this was a very touching moment when we introduced this facility. Shortly after the building was in operation — it was about a year later — I was in a store shopping, and a lady came up to me and asked me if I was a part of the start of the facility, and I said yes, and she thanked me.

Mr. Speaker, the Métis community group now owns about 120 affordable housing units, using the homelessness initiative dollars to create affordable housing in Saskatoon. These buildings, as you will see as you drive around Saskatoon, there's three on 22nd Street that wave the Métis flag proudly and also have a Métis card out front. There's also one just off the street, off 22nd, and they are now earning enough to continue. And I don't even know how many more units they're going to get, but as they go, Mr. Speaker, it's great to see this initiative happen. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member's time has expired. I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise in the debate today to talk about a so-called balanced budget that this government has tabled last month. Certainly as you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's not exactly correct. We won't see this as a balanced budget at all, and certainly neither do a number of authorities on the issue.

First off we know that the auditor herself has raised some questions about the bookkeeping that has been done. And I just want to quote from remarks that she provided on December 8th, 2011. This is in her auditor's report, and she said this is an “. . . issue that has been raised by my predecessors — two previous Provincial Auditors [have raised this as well.]” And her statement here is, I quote:

It is generally accepted that the annual reported surplus or deficit of the entire government is the benchmark by which the public measures how good a job a government is doing in managing the public purse. Simply put, the way that Saskatchewan publicly reports its annual surpluses and deficits to the citizens of Saskatchewan is “out of sync” with the rest of Canada.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's a sad thing that our auditor has to point this out to this government, and yet they take no heed and continue on with a reporting system that is out of sync with the rest of Canada. And how do you think that makes the public feel when they see that this is something that our government continuously refuses to do, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

So that's right off the hop. Before the budget was even released,

we had these comments coming from the Provincial Auditor in December. And yet the budget that was tabled in March continues to use the same reporting method that the auditor is critical of. I don't know what kind of message that sends to the auditor, but I think it's a bad message to send to the people of Saskatchewan.

There were a number of other comments that were provided about this budget. And before I get into those, I think first of all I just want to make a few points. The bottom line here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is this is not a balanced budget. So when we start at that point — and I'm just laying that as a basis for my comments today — this is not a balanced budget. And the way the government chooses to present the financial statements is misleading.

And given that I've made that point, I just want to go on to make a few more points about the content of this particular budget, this unbalanced budget, despite the fact that there's continuous rhetoric from there saying how it is actually balanced. And certainly we'll know more about how balanced it is at the end of the year when we see some of the sales coming in on lands that are lower, and potash's prices are lower in this quarter. So we're certainly watching very carefully, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what the projections are and how accurate they are, that the Minister of Finance and his staff have put together.

So it's fine and dandy to say it's balanced. It's not. And certainly even if we take it on faith that it is balanced, we will see at the end of the year how accurate and able the Minister of Finance was to accurately project the revenues for this year.

Budgets are about choices, and we see in this budget that the Sask Party government has chosen more politicians than everyday families' needs. We see a 33 per cent increase on seniors' and children's drug plan. And we see \$240 a year will be taken from seniors for hygiene supplies in seniors' care homes. This seems to be a really low blow to people that are already suffering financially, and it seems to target people on fixed incomes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that simply is unfair and unnecessary. It is about a choice that this government has made.

We see that post-secondary tuition will increase by at least 4 per cent, as much as 9 per cent for some students. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we heard the Minister of Advanced Education get up this morning and crow about all the things that he has done personally for advanced education, and yet we hear from university students that they simply cannot afford these increases that are ongoing and that they're hurting. We've heard other areas where the universities are being challenged financially, and indeed there's \$100 million of debt that should be on this government's books, that are now being pushed on to the universities. And we can't get clear answers from the minister on any of that.

It doesn't have to be this way, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If we had proper fiscal management and smart growth choices, we could afford more schools, more improvements in health care, and much more.

This is an austerity budget for school divisions as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The funding formula is broke, and the kids in

classrooms will still suffer. They say they're increasing new child care spaces, but when it comes to funding for early learning and child care, there's actually a decrease of over \$1 million in the budget. Fifteen positions have been eliminated from the ministry, cutting back on valuable civil servants who provide the backbone of the work of this government. And simply picking a number out of the air, 16 per cent over four years, we see the impact on programs. We see the impact on the public service, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We see that tens of millions have been cut from the school divisions, and we know from school divisions that the budget's one-time \$10 million backfill fund will not cover those classroom losses. It leaves students, parents, educators, workers wondering what's going to happen next year. It's not a positive thing for them to be anticipating. This government has also instructed school boards to find yet more cuts throughout this year to save more cash, and this is on the backs of our children, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We see, in terms of justice, that the party . . . the pro-justice talk is all slick PR [public relations]. The Sask Party government still refuses to estimate a budget for the costs of the Harper government's omnibus crime Bill changes. And that is something that I think both the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Corrections and the Minister of Government Services has to grapple with soon. We know there's some time before the Bill takes effect, but building jails takes a long time and certainly longer than it will be for this new Bill to take effect. There have been projections made by other agencies. And to just say we don't know, isn't enough, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

These ministers need to step up to the plate and take a serious look and if they're able to budget for the upcoming year, they should be able to make a reasonable estimate as to the costs of the new crime Bill, in terms of what the types of mandatory sentences will be, how many crimes are occurring on those levels right now, and what the impact of the mandatory minimum sentence will be. It's a simple matter of projection. There are actuaries that can do that kind of work, and their refusal to do so at this point in time is irresponsible.

In terms of seniors, as I mentioned earlier, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we see seniors taking a real hit in this budget. And certainly those who have serious medical issues and multiple prescriptions, it's exacerbated for them, and as we know many, many seniors are on fixed and limited incomes. Food is going up. Their rents are going up astronomically. They are making choices about medication, shelter, and food every day that seriously impacts the quality of their life. And we don't see any movement from this government to assist them. In fact we see it going the other way. They're being punished with additional costs for prescriptions that simply won't help them at all.

We're talking about, for the average senior, pharmacists are estimating it's an additional 180 to \$240 per year. We haven't talked about, for a while, the senior citizens' ambulance assistance plan; there are increases there. We see \$240 per year being clawed back from seniors living in care for hygienic products. That includes soap, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And then of course if we look at the North, there's concerns

there as well. We have the Sask Party government making choices that hurt the North. They choose expensive recruitment trips over to Ireland at the expense of training and opportunity for northern people. They've cut the treaty land entitlement program by 500,000. They've cut the First Nations and Métis Consultation Participation Fund by 43 per cent. Strategic initiatives are cut. The total cuts in northern and Aboriginal affairs is 1.8 million. It's a 20 per cent cut. What message does that send to the First Nations people of this province?

And finally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think one of the most egregious cuts in this budget, with a very ideological approach that absolutely makes no sense, is the cuts to the film employment tax credit. We see people packing up and leaving now as a result of that decision. There's been a three-month reprieve, but we see no active way yet from either the minister responsible for film employment tax credit or the Premier in terms of how this is going to move forward and how we're going to keep a healthy film employment tax credit, or film industry in the province.

And you know, we see all kinds of business risk management plans for other ministries. We see all kinds of supports for other industries. But for some reason this particular industry's singled out, and I think it's a shame. And it's a really unfortunate message from this government that they refuse to accept the way this industry is managed and are indeed destroying it in this province. And it's destroying part of our culture. It's destroying part of who we are. And it's ruining a lot of young people's lives, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I think it's shameful. And this is something this government should be embarrassed about and should reverse.

So at that point, I think I'm very happy to have pointed out a few of my views on this budget. And if time permitted, I would have a lot more to say. Thank you.

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

Ms. Jurgens: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is an absolute pleasure to participate in today's debate on the only balanced provincial budget in the Dominion of Canada. Our Saskatchewan advantage budget is all about being fiscally responsible so that our Saskatchewan Party government can continue to support and sustain programs Saskatchewan people value — programs such as health, education, and support for those needing a hand up — all the while creating a strong business-friendly climate so that entrepreneurs and corporations can create jobs, jobs that help people enjoy life and raise a family, jobs that provide an income so we can contribute to our communities.

[11:45]

Mr. Speaker, allow me to read an excerpt from BMO's [Bank of Montreal] Saskatchewan budget analysis: "Overall, Saskatchewan continues to exhibit responsible spending behaviour despite boasting one of the more favourable fiscal and economic backdrops in Canada." Our government has delivered a balanced budget. It is balanced in the General Revenue Fund; it is balanced in the summary financial statements; plus the Growth and Financial Security Fund will

maintain a balance of \$756 million.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please tell the people of the province that they are the reason we have a combo of balanced budgets, reduced debts, lower taxes, a growing economy, and a tremendous quality of life. Saskatchewan people share our vision that Saskatchewan is the best place in Canada to live, to work, to start a business, to get an education, to raise a family, and to build a life. To do this, our Saskatchewan Party government identified four goals: (1) sustaining growth and opportunities for Saskatchewan people, (2) improving quality of life, (3) making life more affordable, and (4) delivering responsive and responsible government.

Sustaining growth and opportunities is supported when our municipalities are provided with a full percentage point of the PST [provincial sales tax] as promised. We have heard how the NDP want us to go back, back to the guessing games of the past when municipalities never quite knew what their budgets would be.

Education is another tenet for sustaining growth and opportunities. This budget introduces a new education funding formula and increases K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] funding to help with the transition to the new formula. As a result all school divisions will see a funding increase ranging anywhere from 1.7 to 14.4 per cent. Under our new funding formula, the component that supports community schools has increased by over 4 per cent and now stands at more than \$258 million. The vulnerability portion of this funding formula will use the same kind of socio-economic indicators as before, such as low income, single parent families, and now immigration to estimate the level of student vulnerability within each school division. The model provides this funding in an unconditional way.

Sustaining growth and opportunities will continue via our graduate retention program that provides a combination of non-refundable and refundable tax credits to post-secondary graduates. There is \$172.4 million of targeted funding for First Nations and Métis peoples. This is a \$4.7 million increase from last year's budget.

Our Saskatchewan advantage budget is committed to improving quality of life. The patient-first initiative will continue. This budget provides 98.2 million more dollars to the regional health authorities, an increase equal to 3.5 per cent more than last year. Those that need to deal with cancer will be supported via \$138.8 million to the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency. This includes an increase of \$16.9 million in funding so that the Cancer Agency can continue to provide a high-quality service that includes drugs, operational, and medical costs. In addition, \$4 million has been committed to expand the colorectal screening program province-wide.

Quality of life has increased for 123 First Nations and Métis journeypersons. This is double the number of First Nations and Métis journeypersons from '06-07. Since last year there are 5,900 more First Nations and Métis peoples with an increased quality of life because they are employed in family-sustaining jobs. This provincial balanced budget increased funding for disabilities program by another \$26.4 million. This is part of the 308.8 million more dollars that this government has provided

since taking office in '07.

The Saskatchewan assured income for disability program will receive an increase of \$17.8 million so that up to 10,000 adults with disabilities will have an improved quality of life through access to this program. Many people have shared with me how this program has improved the dignity and quality of life for their loved ones.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, last fall if I heard it once, I heard it a thousand times: the people of Northcote want a safer community. Well we have the Community Mobilization partnership, the first of its kind in Canada. This innovative, multi-agency partnership of community agencies, schools, health care, and social service agencies, First Nations workers, and police is creating a new way to make our community safer. This Community Mobilization partnership is getting at the root causes of crime and helping to prevent so many young people from going down that dangerous path. It is helping our youth to be a part of the thriving, safe community we all so much want. Our Saskatchewan Party government's election platform committed to supporting the expansion of this Community Mobilization partnership.

Our government is delivering on its commitment to improve quality of life in Saskatchewan through significant increases in programs and services for the province's most vulnerable people. Making life more affordable is another goal that this Saskatchewan advantage budget addresses. Mr. Deputy Speaker, with the tax changes from past budgets that the Saskatchewan Party government delivered, a family of four with \$50,000 in annual income pays less than a quarter of the taxes that the NDP charged them. That means this family of four now has a tax savings of \$2,638 each year.

Child care spaces in Saskatchewan will increase in this next term of office. There are \$46 million for child care operating which includes a \$2 million increase and a \$4 million child care capital to create 500 new child care spaces. We are committed to making life more affordable for low-income seniors. To help seniors keep pace with the cost of living, this budget provides \$3.3 million, 24.2 million total to increase the senior income plan for singles and couples.

Let's compare the first four years of Saskatchewan Party government to the last 16 of the NDP. The seniors' income plan benefit was doubled in our first term of office. In 16 years under the NDP, there was no change to the \$90 per month seniors received. This year under the Saskatchewan Party government, the senior income plan benefit will increase to \$240 per month. That's \$2,880 per year. It will triple by the end of this term to \$270 per month, compared to the \$90 per month the NDP provided to seniors.

In a growing economy, Mr. Speaker, and with the largest increase in population since 1956, there are 65,000 more people now than in '06. Rental housing continues to be in demand. The Saskatchewan Party recognizes this need and introduced the Saskatchewan advantage housing plan in the '11-12 budget. This budget supports that plan with a further \$3.7 million for the rental construction incentive and affordable home ownership programs. With these programs and other initiatives, the province could add up to 10,000 rentals to the market, 2,200

new entry-level homes, and 650 student residences.

To help people with the cost of a new home, this Saskatchewan advantage budget is introducing the first-time homebuyers tax credit which will provide up to \$1,100 in non-refundable tax credit. In addition the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation will provide \$1 million to Habitat For Humanity to help an additional 20 low-income families achieve home ownership.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let's support the only provincial balanced budget in all of the Dominion of Canada.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm also very pleased to stand and respond in this particular debate. I want to first of all recognize the fact that . . . You know, I want to pay tribute to our Finance critic who's done a remarkable job, Mr. Speaker, in making sure that he's able to wade through all the rhetoric and wade through all the information, Mr. Speaker, to bring the true state of Saskatchewan's finances to the forefront. And, Mr. Speaker, it was an amazing job as I watched on budget day as the Minister of Finance presented his budget, and our Finance critic, Mr. Speaker, stole the show.

The tone in which the Finance critic brought forward the information, the tone in which he had the entire room very, very quiet, Mr. Speaker, and the hard messages that he delivered to the people of Saskatchewan with a packed House I think resonated with every person that was in the Assembly that day and those that may have been paying attention to the proceedings of the budget speech, Mr. Speaker. So that's why it's important that people out there know that the Finance critic has done a remarkable job to bring forward the actual truth about what is happening with our finances. And that's something that people ought to be very, very wary of in terms of what is being presented by the government and certainly what the critic has to say.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to assist in this regard as I watched some of the rookie MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] bring forward some of the information that they had. And I'm going to help, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party backbenchers. They're not getting any help from their front bench, so I'm going to explain how this works. Okay. First of all under their budget book, which is the '12-13 budget summary, 2012 to 2013, now I'm going to ask all the three members that spoke, the member from Prince Albert and from Regina and from Saskatoon, I think . . . Now what you want to do is take this book — it's called budget summary — and as you go through the different pages, it really explains what's going on, Mr. Speaker.

But I want them to particularly pay attention to the budget summary book, page 60. They go to that, they get that book and go to page 60. And for all those three members, once you're at that page 60, what it does, it shows you a very good graph. It shows you a very good graph, and the graph talks about . . . The headline of the graph says, public debt of the General Revenue Fund as of March 31. Now in that particular General Revenue Fund, the public debt, for those three members that spoke about their so-called budget or balanced budget, go to that particular

page, Mr. Speaker, and in that page it shows the debt of Saskatchewan increasing, Mr. Speaker. Like you don't have to follow your notes. Follow your own book that was presented by your own Finance minister, Mr. Speaker.

So once you're on page 60, it shows a graph. And I'm just going to show this to the people that are listening. And here's the graph, Mr. Speaker, and it shows that debt is gradually increasing. These are their own documents. So once they're on page 60 of this book, their own book, then go to where it says public debt of the General Revenue Fund. And then it shows, Mr. Speaker, you look at 2012, what's happening with the debt? It's going up, Mr. Speaker. Look at 2013, the overall debt's going up. Look at 2014, their net debt is also going up. 2015, the net debt's also going up. And of course, Mr. Speaker, 2016, the debt is still climbing.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important for those members that want to sing from their song sheet, perhaps you should park that song sheet that you're given to read from. And don't deviate from the words, I understand is what they're being told, and like a good backbench, they'll do that. But what you got to do is you got to kind of shift through all the information, shift through all the information, and don't take the New Democrat's word for it, Mr. Speaker.

I'm suggesting today that you take your own budget book. It says, budget '12-13 budget summary, and this is on page 60. So once you go to page 60, Mr. Speaker, the rookie MLAs, they can have a look at the debt and you can see the debt is gradually rising under the Saskatchewan Party. So where do they get these balanced budgets and all the different issues that they raise today, Mr. Speaker, is totally beyond us as caucus, and totally beyond a lot of people out there, especially the Provincial Auditor who says, we need to reflect properly what the debt of Saskatchewan is overall. And, Mr. Speaker, they're simply not doing that.

So for the rookie MLAs that spoke about this particular Bill, I would suggest . . . or this particular motion, I would suggest they go to their own budget document, page 60, which clearly shows that the deficit and the debt's actually increasing over their watch, Mr. Speaker.

Now I think it's important that people out there realize that there is a problem with debt, Mr. Speaker. And our critic from Finance done a remarkable job, not only on budget day but with the media, and with a number of different organizations out there that spoke about and know about and are aware about the debt challenge that the province has.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what's important is that the one thing I would say, the one thing I would say that's very, very important, is that people have to be aware of what's going on. And you don't have to take the New Democrat's word for it, you don't have to take the Saskatchewan word for it. All you've got to do is go into two different areas, Mr. Speaker, their own budget finance book which clearly shows that the debt is rising. And the second point you can ask — and this is the really qualifying point that I want to make — the second person that you could ask is the Provincial Auditor. And the Provincial Auditor has not looked at this budget in any way, shape or form as a balanced budget, Mr. Speaker. In no way, shape or form

does he characterize this budget as balanced.

[12:00]

And it's unfair, Mr. Speaker, it's absolutely unfair that you have rookie MLAs that don't look at their own book, they're explaining to people what is going on. Their job is to make sure that they change the channel from the reality of our increasing debt as opposed to telling the people out in the province exactly what is going on with the debt. They try and gloss over it, as they're being told, gloss over it with all these other announcements, Mr. Speaker, that's been going on for years.

Now I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that no matter what happens, no matter what happens, as I mentioned, this information is in their own document. It's not an NDP document, Mr. Speaker. This information is within their own document. And the challenge that they have, Mr. Speaker, is they have to report correctly in their own documents what exactly is happening. They can't control the Provincial Auditor, and they can't control the facts. So what they try and do is they try and control rookie MLAs that are sitting in the backbench, that really don't have much influence as to how things operate and how things work.

And, Mr. Speaker, to make a long story short, you know, I wanted to make sure that I take the time as an opposition MLA to coach and to encourage the backbench MLAs from the Saskatchewan Party to get factual information. Don't just simply read what is handed to you. If you want to be able to be an effective MLA, even as a rookie MLA, research your facts. And the first place I would suggest they look is on page 60 of their own budget document, Mr. Speaker, of their own budget document that clearly shows that the debt is increasing under their watch, Mr. Speaker.

And for them to say that they have a balanced budget is absolutely ludicrous, Mr. Speaker. And many people outside the NDP ranks certainly have qualified what we've been saying all along, and that includes the Provincial Auditor, that this is not a balanced budget, Mr. Speaker. No way, shape, or form is this a balanced budget. And that's what the important lesson I would want to explain to the new rookie MLAs.

And it's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that they keep saying this. Because as you say this more and more to people, then you begin to realize that (a) that the information is not factual; and (b) there's people out there that you're explaining all this thing to, they're going to have expectations of you. So if all this money is out there and you're on a balanced budget, then we want more things like the Prince Albert bridge or perhaps money for the Métis Nation to properly run their election in a timely fashion, Mr. Speaker. All these issues that are out there, it doesn't seem to have any positive effect when it comes to this particular government supporting those issues or addressing those needs, Mr. Speaker.

So again I would encourage those members that spoke about their balanced budget, speaking from their song sheet, to take their own document that they have presented to the public and simply look at page 60 of the budget summary book which clearly shows in that graph of how the deficit is actually increasing year after year after year under the Sask Party watch,

Mr. Speaker. And that's a shame because it took a lot of work to bring our budgets under control and to make sure that we have proper finances for the future, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — The time for debate has expired. Questions? I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'd like to pose a question to the member for Prince Albert Northcote and that is this: does she believe that adding three more politicians to the Legislative Assembly fits in with the needs of the seniors and the young families in her constituency?

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

Ms. Jurgens: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, thank you to the member opposite for the question on how our Saskatchewan budget cares. Let's talk about it for a second: caring about a balanced budget, a budget that balances the need for infrastructure, infrastructure that cares about our people. Our Saskatchewan advantage budget cares about seniors and the senior income plan: 24.2 million in total to increase the senior income plan for singles and couples. A balanced budget that cares about students and school funding: \$1.74 billion in total school operating funding, a 5 per cent increase.

Let's talk about a balanced budget that cares about our health: a \$16.9 million increase to the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency for drug, medical, and operating costs, new patient referrals, chemotherapy treatments, and mammograms. Let's talk about a balanced budget that cares about our highway system, investing \$2.2 billion over four years.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member's time has expired. I recognize the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook.

Mr. Moe: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Saskatchewan is the only province with a balanced budget this year. That means that we are able to provide needed services to the people of this province while ensuring that our fiscal house is in order.

To the member from Athabasca: which budget do you prefer? The balanced budget the Saskatchewan Party delivered on March 21st, or would he have preferred the massive deficit budget based on \$5 billion worth of NDP election giveaways?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, let me reiterate that their budget is not balanced. And this is information that we got from the Provincial Auditor, Mr. Speaker. The document shows, their document clearly shows that the deficit under that Sask Party is increasing year after year after year, Mr. Speaker.

So the point is the premise of the question is based on their perception that their budget is balanced. And I would advise the member from Shellbrook that your budget ain't balanced, sir.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the back-patting motion that was put forward here today of course is silly. We've seen this each year, and then of course something entirely different occurs. When they say they're going to balance the budget, it's been deficits the last three years. But in that budget we have seen increases to prescription drugs. We've seen the takeover of Tourism Saskatchewan which was led by industry. We've seen the elimination of the film economy, driving away individuals living and working in each of our constituencies, and investment. And we've seen on the floor of this Assembly the continued push to spend millions to increase the number of politicians.

I guess my question to the member from Walsh Acres: does he seriously think that this is in the best interests of his constituents?

The Deputy Speaker: — Regina Walsh Acres.

Mr. Steinley: — I'd like to thank the person across the way for the question. I appreciate it. And any time I can stand up and talk about balanced budget, the only balanced budget in the country of Canada, I am very proud to do so.

And you know what? I'll say that the people of Walsh Acres, you know what they voted for on November 7th? They voted for a balanced budget, sustainable spending, and they voted against the architect of a \$5 billion deficit that the member for Regina Rosemont would have put forward. They voted against a budget that if those members would have won, a budget that would have caused us to have the second-highest deficit in this country. And the people of Walsh Acres voted to have a forward-looking government that created growth, created jobs, and created a chance for people to succeed right here in the province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the member from Rosemont, why did the member from Rosemont state on April 24th that we are "driving away investment and workers"?

Saskatchewan has strong growth prospects and is leading the nation on employment and has the only Canadian provincial balanced budget. Why does the NDP heap doom and gloom predictions while the major economic indicators point to growth and prosperity for our Saskatchewan?

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — And I'm pleased to respond to that question. And I would highlight certainly in Moose Jaw and Regina and all across Saskatchewan, the decision to kill the film economy in Saskatchewan, to drive away investment in this province, entrepreneurs in this province, workers in this province, has been a sad decision by this government.

It's choosing, this government's choosing to be less instead of choosing to be more, and this has impacted the lives of individuals in Moose Jaw and Regina and all across

Saskatchewan. And it's impacted our economy because certainly the member opposite should know that Moose Jaw, that certainly car sales and retail sales and hotels and restaurants have boomed in many ways in part from that film economy. To drive away that economy at a time where we have some strength in our resource economy and to choose to kill that sort of investment, drive away that investment, those workers, is purely ideological, doesn't reflect common sense. It's certainly not in the best interests of constituents of Moose Jaw or the people of this province.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the member from Saskatoon Meewasin. And I want to quote here, Mr. Speaker. Quote:

Those changes that have, I think, set the table for the feast that we're grateful for today, those changes were made by the government of Mr. Calvert, the hon. member that we salute today.

Mr. Speaker, does that member agree with that statement?

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

Mr. Parent: — I'm not sure I understood that statement you made, but as far as this government goes, we have a balanced budget. And there's not much I can say to that question because I don't remember hearing that statement. I personally know that we do have a balanced budget, and I think if you look at those charts and read them a little bit better, you'll understand what they're actually saying.

We are the only province in Canada to have a balanced budget. And if you watched channels like the SUN, you'll understand that they talk about Saskatchewan as being the place to be now, not in other provinces, but Saskatchewan is the place to be because we have a balanced budget and we have created numerous, numerous, thousands of jobs. We have over 60,000 people have moved to this province. Why? Because it's the place to be. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Tochor: — Thank you, Deputy Speaker. To the member from Saskatoon Nutana: for 16 years the NDP clawed back millions from towns, villages, and RMs. And they cancelled the GRIP [gross revenue insurance program] program. The member from Lakeview stated on March 22nd, quote: "One of the things they could have done is look at some of the initiatives around agriculture and municipalities." Why does the NDP not support adequate funding for municipalities and agriculture especially after 16 years of neglect and underfunding by the former NDP government?

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think

what we're talking about here is whether or not this is a balanced budget. That's the motion that's before us. And of course my colleague from Athabasca showed how the debt is projected to increase over the next few years, and my colleague from Regina Rosemont has indicated numerous times that this is not a balanced budget at all. And certainly our Provincial Auditor is suggesting that the accounting method that's being used is flawed and we're not in sync with the rest of Canada.

So until we get that straight, I don't think there's any point listening to much more from that side until they get their finances in order.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess I want to be more specific to the member and a good, young, new member from Walsh Acres. But again it goes directly to this point of driving the expenditure of millions of dollars to increase the number of politicians in this province. How does this serve the best interest of his constituents?

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

Mr. Steinley: — Mr. Speaker, I appreciate getting to ask, having another question asked of me by the member opposite. And I thank you; he's a good, young member too. He has a few things to learn as well, and one might be to how to get a campaign platform in place that doesn't drive a province into debt by \$5 billion.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I think he's a nice, young guy. And I think that if he does a little more work and does a little more work on his financial background, I think he'll realize that people don't want to have to be paying debt off into the future because of unsustainable promises and trying to get votes with their own money. And I think that the longer that he is able to be in this Chamber, I think with a little more experience, he'll get . . . And I'm learning as well, Mr. Speaker. And I think I look forward to us being in this Chamber together for a long, long time — me on this side, him on that side.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible] . . . answer that question, and it was very nice of him to ask it to me.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 601

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by Mr. Forbes that **Bill No. 601** — *The Jimmy's Law Act* be now read a second time.]

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House

Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's with a certain sense of solemnity that I rise to talk about this private members' Bill here today. I don't know if you want to weigh in on this conversation that's going back and forth across the floor, Mr. . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. Order, order. There are conversations taking place across the way, and I am having difficulty hearing the member from Regina Elphinstone. I recognize the member from Regina Elphinstone.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am rising today to talk about Jimmy's Law, and the private members' Bill that has been brought forward by the member from Saskatoon Centre. But this of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker . . .

[Interjections]

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

[12:15]

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Perhaps if members want to participate in the debate, they could, you know, there are turns for folks to get up and participate in this debate.

But what I want to say, Mr. Speaker, is that in terms of *The Occupational Health and Safety Act*, in terms of why this Bill was brought forward, is a situation that faces too many people throughout this province in terms of dangerous working conditions. And this particular Bill is named for Jimmy Ray Wiebe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who was working alone at a gas station in Yorkton on June 20th, 2011 when he was murdered.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in terms of what we see as the regulatory regime, the law in other jurisdictions in Canada, there is a friend of Jimmy Ray Wiebe who in fact discovered the body of Mr. Wiebe when he came by to visit him that morning, and that individual was moved to action. And that individual is a fellow by the name of Aaron Nagy. Now Aaron looked across the country, Mr. Speaker, and had seen legislation regulation had been brought forward in British Columbia in response to a similar circumstance where an individual named Grant was murdered working the late shift, working what is commonly referred to as the graveyard shift, Mr. Speaker. And that the British Columbia government was able to come forward at that time with changes to the legislation and to take steps to ensure better safety for those individuals that it's up to them to be working that shift.

And again, Mr. Speaker, in a lot of ways we pay attention to occupational health and safety, and I think the fundamental lesson at the base of efforts around occupational health and safety is that nobody should have to do a job where it's a potential for loss of life or limb. And again no law is fail-safe, no law is completely . . . It won't result in 100 per cent elimination of the risk factors that are experienced, but there are changes that can be made that make for the situation to be more or less dangerous.

And certainly there are examples brought forward where if there are two individuals on the job . . . There's a very tragic circumstance in the community of Kyle in the not-too-distant past, Mr. Speaker, where two people being on the job, that wasn't a deterrent. But that, I don't think is a reason not to proceed with this in terms of (a) either calling for barriers or the ability of workers to control entry and exit from the building; or (b) having that additional staffer alongside during that late-night shift.

So I want to talk about what is specifically called for in the Bill. And I want to talk a bit about the work that has been done by the member from Saskatoon Centre — he's very passionate about this issue, Mr. Speaker — and who has done a lot to advance this cause and has done a lot to advance the concerns of people that normally aren't centre stage of the public affairs in this province and the people who are in that circumstance where they've got to work the late shift at various places throughout this province and gas stations and convenience stores.

And I know that, you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm sure you can think of a number of places in your constituency where this would apply. And I can certainly think of places in the constituency of Regina Elphinstone-Centre where this applies as well, be it stores on Dewdney or 5th Avenue or downtown or Albert or Broad Street, places where late at night, if you're alone on that job, it can make for that 11 to 6 in the morning shift, make those seven hours feel like an awfully long time, Mr. Speaker.

And again we're here today to talk about occupational health and safety and putting those safeguards in place for workers to ensure that risk factors such as this are mitigated, that we're taking as many steps as possible to improve the chances of things going right in the workplace as opposed to things going horribly wrong, as was the case with Jimmy Ray Wiebe.

So in the preamble it states that:

WHEREAS Jimmy Ray Wiebe of Yorkton was working alone at a gas station on June 20, 2011 when he was murdered;

WHEREAS in memory of Jimmy Ray Wiebe, all gas station, convenience store and other retail store workers working overnight need some form of protection other via a fellow co-worker or protected barrier:

THEREFORE HER MAJESTY, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows:

Now it goes through the different sort of short title sections, Mr. Speaker, but first section, of course, in terms of the amendments being proposed to *The Occupational Health and Safety Act* is that they add in section 2, amending:

3 The following clauses are added after clause 2(gg):

“(hh) ‘late night hours’ means anytime between 11:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.; [and that clause]

(ii) **'late night retail premises'** 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 again, Mr. Speaker, for myself, you know it depends on the night, but there are different places in my constituency I know that have taken the steps to put up the barriers, to provide those controls. There are also situations where that second employee is on staff or is on the shift. And I know, talking to different people that have this circumstance, there is a real concern. And you know, I thank, I'm very thankful, Mr. Speaker, that I have never been held up at the end of a knife or at the end of a gun. But I've talked to people who have had that experience, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And the kind of trauma that is involved in that for people that have got through it is concern enough, Mr. Speaker, let alone the kind of ultimately tragic way that the life of Jimmy Ray Wiebe was ended.

So I know that again these are people that are often as not first and foremost in terms of the concern of public affairs in this province. But they matter, Mr. Speaker. Their concerns matter. The unsafe circumstances in which they are doing their job should be a concern for this House.

And I'm not saying that it isn't, but I'm saying that this is one set of proposals that is worth consideration, that has been brought in for other jurisdictions. And is this the final word on making the employment circumstances safe 100 per cent of the time and completely foolproof for employees across Saskatchewan? It's not. But is this something that has had a beneficial effect and has increased the odds for things to go right in workplaces on that late night shift? It definitely is, Mr. Speaker.

And I think when you've had the chance to talk to people that have been in this circumstance . . . And I know that my colleague, the member from Saskatoon Centre, not just being passionate about this issue but having gone to talk to people in the communities of Moose Jaw, in North Battleford, I believe, Prince Albert, Saskatoon, and with plans . . . and having started in Yorkton, Mr. Speaker, the concerns that he has given voice to for those individuals I think is admirable. And I think that we would do well to listen to the concerns that are being given voice to by the member from Saskatoon Centre.

And I think we'd also do well to know that when many of us . . . Session is a busy time, and, you know, there's all the demands on the day and the night that we experience. That when many of us were, you know, tucking into bed and looking to get a full night's sleep before we got back to the legislature and did this all again — I'm sure that the Deputy Speaker, his day probably starts about 5:30 when he goes for a run around the lake or something like that and getting ready for the day — but when many of us were tucking into sleep to get ready to get the sleep for the, get the rest for day to come, the member from Saskatoon Centre has been out talking to those late-night workers and those people who are out there on the graveyard shift.

And again the word that he comes back with is one of appreciation for this issue being raised in the legislature, in the

people's legislature, Mr. Speaker. He comes back with the interest that they have on the progress of measures that can improve their circumstance. And it comes back with the concern that they have, not just for themselves but for others.

And he comes back with some pretty, pretty, in some cases, shocking stories, Mr. Speaker, about . . . I know one place, one establishment in particular in Saskatoon Centre, which is not dissimilar to Regina Elphinstone-Centre, Mr. Speaker, in terms of places where there's a fair amount of late-night traffic and people working that late-night shift, talking to individuals where having been through the store after a robbery has occurred late at night and again not . . . This isn't some kid sticking a bag of chips in their jacket, Mr. Speaker. It's people pointing various sorts of firearms, various sorts of shotguns.

I've never had a gun pulled on me, Mr. Speaker. I've been very fortunate in that regard. But again I've talked to people who have had that experience and how traumatic that is. And I think of those people when I talk to my friend and colleague from Saskatoon Centre about just how traumatic that is for people that have been put through that. And then in one circumstance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where just very recently people that the member from Saskatoon Centre had been talking with and giving attention to their situation had not just been held up the one time but were held up again. And if you can imagine the kind of frustration and trauma and fear and anger that is visited upon a person that is held up at the point of a gun or a knife, Mr. Speaker, it's pretty frustrating for those individuals.

And again one thing that comes back in a uniform way, Mr. Speaker, is appreciation for this issue being given voice in the legislature and definite interest in the progress of this Bill and support for the fact that this is something that we can do to make those odds just a bit better for people across this province that have to work the late-night shift to pay their bills and to keep bread on the table, Mr. Speaker, and a roof over their head.

So the other thing that comes back, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the interesting detail that in many workplaces they're ahead of the legislature. They have already taken steps that resonate with the measures prescribed in this suggested piece of legislation. Again, Mr. Speaker, this is common sense in so many different ways. And it's not being put in place because it's a 100 per cent guarantee that nothing will happen, but it's something that improves the safety and security of people working the late-night shift.

The problem is, Mr. Speaker, if it was 100 per cent coverage, that would be one thing, but that is not the case. And again, Mr. Speaker, I think what we do as legislators in this place, there are things where we can point the way forward to where there are best practices or better practices to be brought to bear. I think it's incumbent upon us as legislators to give those proposals fair hearing. And if it's worked in other jurisdictions, and if it's working in situations right here in the province, Mr. Speaker, then why wouldn't we proceed with those measures, Mr. Speaker?

And again there's so many people I know that work that late-night shift. You know, I think their level of engagement with the political process or with places like the legislature . . . I

think one other thing that the member from Saskatoon Centre has encountered, talking to people on the late-night shift, is surprise — surprise that somebody is taking the time and is there to say that this is something that should be cared about; this is something that should be looked after.

And again, Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of different reasons why people do things in public life, but I know the kind of commitment and the kind of passion that the member from Saskatoon Centre has brought to this is very much reflective of the concerns of his constituents and people that he's talked to that have been brought forward, that have been subjected to the kind of things that this legislation seeks to prevent, but also responding again to the work of a friend trying to memorialize a friend and the way that Aaron Nagy is trying to take the tragic circumstance of Jimmy Ray Wiebe's death on the night of the early hours of June 20th, 2011, trying to take that circumstance and make something good come from it for people right across this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, we've yet to hear a convincing argument why this doesn't have merit in terms of improving the safety and security of people working the late-night shift. If the argument is that this doesn't work in 100 per cent of the circumstances, then if that is the bar with which we'll be evaluating legislation across the piece, Mr. Speaker, then I think we could close the doors on the legislature and go on our way because that kind of a guarantee, Mr. Speaker, is virtually impossible to ensure.

But what we can derive from this, Mr. Speaker, is, does this improve or does it make worse the safety and security circumstance of individuals working that late-night shift? And we think that the record and we think that the common sense of it shows that the barrier or the controlled access to the exit or entry of a building, and that having two people on the shift late at night, makes a pretty compelling case, Mr. Speaker. So that's on the reasoned, sort of policy side of this initiative.

But I think we do well again today to remember that when people die in the workplace, we should learn what is the lesson from that. And we should think about the kind of trauma that rolls through friends and the family and the community involved when a tragic death like this occurs.

And again, Mr. Speaker, what we should be doing is looking to the example set for us by Aaron Nagy living up to, you know, taking the tragedy of his friend's death and trying to make something good come from it for others. We think that that's an example that's something we should pay close attention to and that should inspire us to action.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know that others will want to participate in this debate and that there has been other commentary provided on it but I realize that there are other activities in the House to be prepared for, and at this time I would move to adjourn debate on Bill No. 601.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member has moved to adjourn debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In order to facilitate the work of committees this afternoon, I move that this House do now adjourn.

The Deputy Speaker: — The Government House Leader has moved that this House adjourns. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried. This House stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:34.]

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