



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

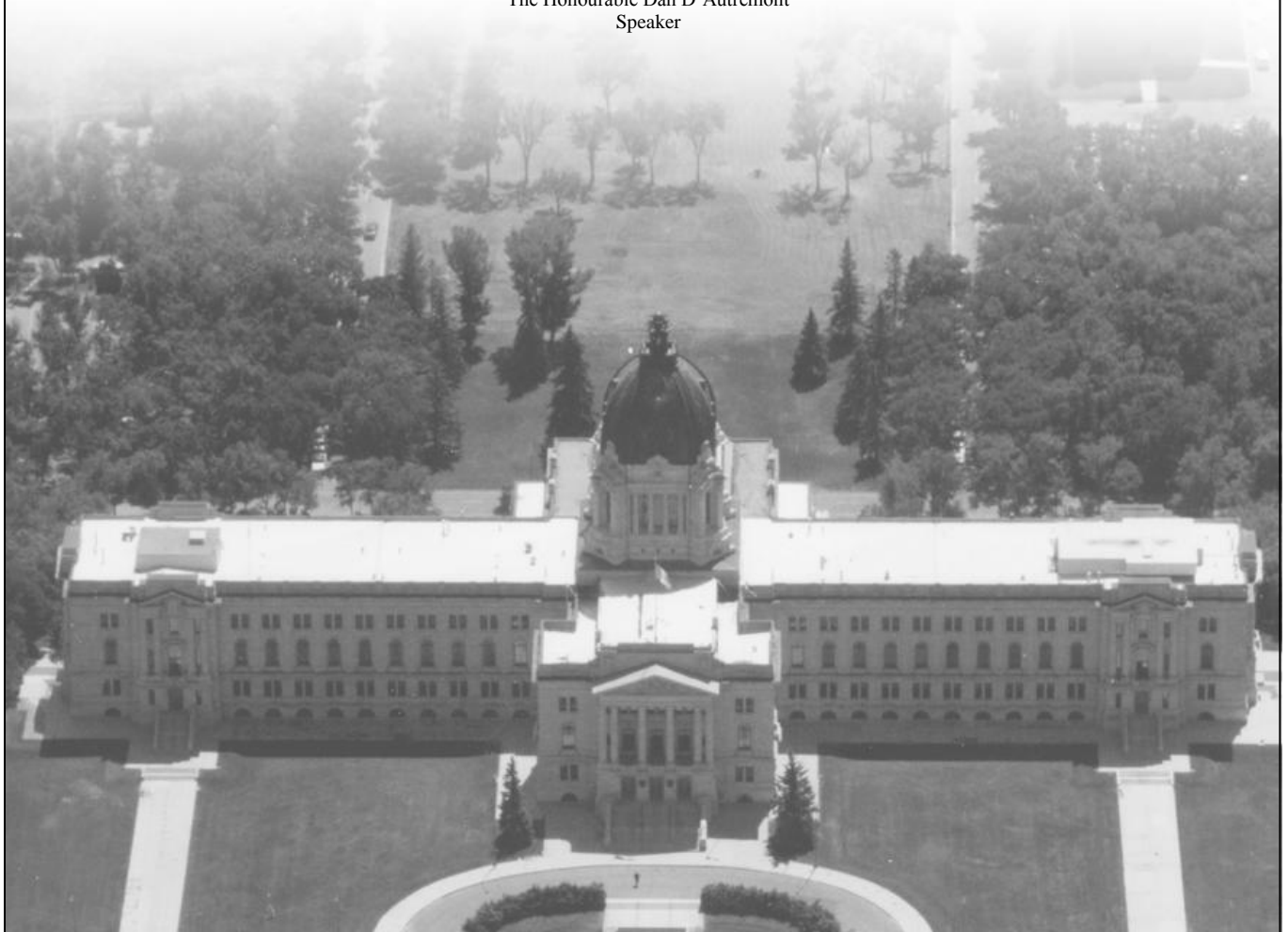
of the

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 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and to you and through you to members in the Assembly, I rise to introduce a group of very special guests in our gallery today in the gallery opposite.

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

It is my pleasure, Mr. Speaker, to introduce to you a group of 31 guests which includes members of the Ukrainian Women's Association of Yorkton along with individuals from the local Yorkton congregation and guests from Canora, of course a community in my constituency, Mr. Speaker.

I'd love to be able to introduce all 31 individuals, Mr. Speaker, but I'm going to mention three names. First of all, Reverend Father Slashinsky is in the top; Father Mel also known to many in the Ukrainian community. Father Mel does a terrific job throughout Yorkton and all of the communities surrounding Yorkton.

And I am going to also introduce a lady sitting in the front row, an aunt to my wife, Gail, June Skrepnick. June, would you wave your hand please. That's my wife's aunt, June Skrepnick. I also want to introduce in the far row, Mary-Anne Trischuk. Mary-Anne Trischuk is a resident of Yorkton. Way back in her youthful days, of course she was a student in Canora and was a resident of Canora. Mr. Speaker, Mary-Anne serves as the Vice-Chair of the Saskatchewan-Ukraine Relations Advisory Committee and is of course responsible for playing a large role in organizing this trip today.

Mr. Speaker, this group is in Regina today to visit their legislature and will be meeting with the member from Yorkton and myself later today after a tour of this building. I also understand that earlier on this morning while here in Regina they had an opportunity to visit Selo Gardens. Selo Gardens is a planned community for senior citizens sponsored by the Regina Ukrainian Orthodox Housing Corporation. Mr. Speaker, I trust that these individuals will enjoy the day in Regina, and I invite all members to join me in welcoming these very special guests to the Legislative Assembly.

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

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Yorkton.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join in with the Deputy Premier in welcoming these fine guests from the Canora and Yorkton regions to their Legislative Assembly. Again, there's so many there it's difficult to introduce all of them. I'd love to, I'd like to point out Mary-Anne. She is chaperoning, I guess you could say, this trip,

trying to keep these seniors in check. And one thing I learned today in visiting with her, she was actually a guide in this very building just a couple of years ago, apparently.

So I'm not going to try and follow the Deputy Premier in speaking Ukrainian because I'll embarrass myself, although being married to a Ukrainian woman, I have become one by osmosis. And I'd just like to ask all members to join me in welcoming them to their Legislative Assembly. And I look forward to meeting with them at 2:30.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I too want to join the Deputy Premier and the member from Yorkton to welcome our Ukrainian guests. I think it's very important that we do all we can to make sure that people travel to our capital city to feel as welcome as they can. So certainly on behalf of the opposition, I want to welcome our guests and to point out that we've travelled to many locations, Yorkton being one such beautiful city. So I've always had great memories of visiting that particular city. And, Mr. Speaker, I know the Deputy Premier speaks the language quite well, so I'm going to try it. And I've done it once before, so I hope that our guests forgive me if I make a mistake.

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Marchuk: — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you and to all members of the Assembly, I'd like to introduce a young fellow from Sheldon-Williams Collegiate who is visiting the Assembly on a work study program, grade 12 work study, Mr. Luc Desjardins in your gallery. We welcome Luc to the Assembly, and we wish him well in his studies as we go through the exercise with Work Studies 30. So welcome, Luc.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the legislature, Tom Graham and Gord Campbell from CUPE [Canadian Union of Public Employees] who are sitting in the Speaker's gallery. And they're interested in some of the proceedings today, so let's all welcome them. Thank you.

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

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — I'd like to join with the Opposition Leader in welcoming the members in your gallery to the Assembly. These are people that are very committed to the movement in our province for our organized labour. They do very good work. I've had opportunities to meet with them, and I would like to thank them for their professionalism and the respect that they've shown me. And I thank them for that and look forward to continuing to work with them as a result of the discussion paper that was released this morning. Thank you,

Mr. Speaker.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I present a petition on highways:

Therefore we, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan undertake to upgrade the section of Highway 165 between Beauval and the English River First Nation by adding proper lighting for pedestrian traffic, by adding space for pedestrians on the highway and the bridges, and to be properly surfaced with the proper material needed for a busy, heavy-haul road.

And the people that have presented this petition, Mr. Speaker, and have signed the petition are people from Beauval, Saskatchewan. I so present.

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

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

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

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

These petitions today are signed by concerned residents of Moose Jaw, Weyburn, and Humboldt. 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.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Pharmacists' Association of Saskatchewan Awards

Mr. Wyant: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had the pleasure of recently attending the 2012 Pharmacists' Association of Saskatchewan conference. This year's theme was Promoting a Healthy Mind and Body.

Pharmacists are important members of our medical teams, experts at answering your drug-related questions and determining if health issues are related to medication. As well, Mr. Speaker, pharmacists are considered some of the most highly trusted professionals.

The 2012 PAS [Pharmacists' Association of Saskatchewan] Awards recognized the professionals in six categories: Kimberly Sentes won Pharmacist of the Year, Dr. Melanie McLeod won the Takeda Magnum Opus Award, and Matt Dick won the New Horizon Award.

Loren Regier and Karen Jensen received Awards of Merit, while Kerry Mansell took home the PharmaChoice Past Chair Award and, along with Walter Peterson, received a Certificate of Recognition.

Saskatchewan's pharmacists are active partners in health care, prescribing medication, providing emergency refills, renewing and extending prescriptions, changing dosage and formulations, and educating the public on their expanding health care responsibilities.

Pharmacists are highly valued and are an essential part of any effective health care team. Our confidence in this profession is demonstrated by providing pharmacists with certain prescriptive rights in an effort to enhance health care delivery to the people of Saskatchewan. For that dedication, I ask my colleagues to join me in thanking our pharmacists for their ongoing commitment to high-quality health care. Thank you.

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

Green Ribbon of Hope Campaign

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As many of my colleagues are already aware, once a year Child Find Canada launches the Green Ribbon of Hope campaign. It begins on May 1st and continues throughout the month of May. The aim is to increase public awareness about National Missing Children's Day on May 25th and the issue of missing children

in Canada.

It's every parent's worst nightmare to imagine their child going missing. Many of us have felt that absolute moment of panic when you lose sight of a small child for even a moment. Sadly, missing children are a tragic and devastating reality for far too many families. According to the most recent data from the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police], anywhere between 50,000 and 60,000 young people are reported missing each year in Canada. These are absolutely heartbreaking statistics. We must do more to stop this, Mr. Speaker.

As the slogan for the Green Ribbon campaign so appropriately suggests, a missing child is everyone's responsibility. It takes a village. And so during the month of May, we show our support and concern about missing children by wearing a green ribbon.

I would like to say thank you to Phyllis Hallatt, president of Child Find, headquartered in Saskatoon, and everyone else involved with the organization in Saskatchewan for their amazing dedication. Because of their hard work, Child Find can continue to provide support to families during periods of incomprehensible loss and uncertainty.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Saskatchewan Residents Receive Medal of Bravery

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Courage is defined as the ability to confront fear, pain, danger and uncertainty and act rightly in spite of them.

On April 28th, 2007, Mark Janke of Elbow and Darren Bieber of Weyburn were confronted with a situation that called on them to sacrifice their own security and display courage of the highest order. On this fateful day, the two men rescued people from a submerged vehicle near Stoughton. Five passengers were in the vehicle when it lost control and flipped into a water-filled ditch. One passenger escaped the vehicle and alerted Janke who was first on the scene.

Janke pulled two passengers from the submerged car. Bieber arrived shortly thereafter, and they worked together to free the last two victims. These men then took care of two survivors. Unfortunately, three other victims did not survive the ordeal.

Both men recently received the Medal of Bravery from Governor General David Johnston at Rideau Hall in Ottawa for their brave acts. Within the Canadian system of honours, this is the third-highest award for bravery. Any person living or deceased may be a possible recipient of this honour. Established in 1972, the Medal of Bravery recognizes acts of gallantry and bravery in hazardous situations.

I would invite my colleagues to join me in applauding the sacrifice of these Saskatchewan residents and the great acts of bravery that led to them receiving these prestigious awards. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Regina Police Service Half Marathon

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This past Sunday, the Regina Police Service held its ninth annual Half Marathon. The Regina Police Service Half Marathon has been running since 2004 and originated from the belief that the Regina Police Service's employees are in a position to be positive role models and leaders in the community. Every year the RPS [Regina Police Service] puts on the Half Marathon to demonstrate their commitment to wellness and to encourage others to make good choices by pursuing physical fitness and a healthy lifestyle.

This year's 850 participants took part in the event, walking or running 21.1 kilometres around Wascana Lake and the University of Regina. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to share with my fellow members that I participated in the Half Marathon. While not anywhere near as fast as CTV's [Canadian Television Network Ltd.] own Gareth "Speed" Dillistone, I should point out that I was able to complete the course without collapsing or breaking into tears.

And so, Mr. Speaker, in addition to its 850 participants, I would like to thank the many volunteers, sponsors, and organizers who donated their time and support into making this a very great event. Special mention goes out to organizers Patti Sandison-Cattell and Elizabeth Popowich for putting on such a successful event, and to Ted Jaleta of Regina for once again placing first overall and for teaching us all how important it is to never give up. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

[13:45]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Humboldt Broncos Win Anavet Cup

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the Assembly to once again talk about the Humboldt Broncos on their successes. Today I offer my congratulations on winning the Anavet Cup for the seventh and final time in this storied tournament.

This past weekend, the Humboldt Broncos battled the Portage Terriers in game 7 of the series to become the western champions. You would think that game 7 of the Anavet Cup would be close but, Mr. Speaker, the Broncos had no problems taking the win with a score of 4 to 0. This is not to say that the game wasn't fought hard. Goalie Matt Hrynkiw played an exceptional game by putting a stop to 24 shots at the net.

The Humboldt Broncos now look to compete in the RBC [Royal Bank of Canada] Cup as the host team. As one of only eight teams to win multiple national junior A championships, the Broncos will look for national title number three on home ice when the RBC Cup returns to Saskatchewan.

The community of Humboldt has been preparing for this exciting event that will put them in the national spotlight. I know that many have had this marked on their calendar for months and are looking forward to the events that are planned for this tournament. The RBC Cup kicks off this Friday in Humboldt, and I encourage all members to cheer on the

Broncos and their quest for the national junior A championship.

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

Habitat for Humanity Key Ceremony

Mr. Steinley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise in the House to talk about a Habitat for Humanity key ceremony that I had the pleasure of attending yesterday morning in Regina. Yesterday another Habitat for Humanity partner family achieved a dream that many of us share — the dream of home ownership.

It was a day that they'll never forget and neither will the many caring partners and volunteers who came together to make this dream a reality. Mr. Speaker, like Habitat for Humanity, our government takes housing very seriously. The goal of our government is to ensure that all Saskatchewan people share in the benefits of growth to secure our province's future and most importantly to make our province the best place to live, work, and raise a family. Habitat includes people from all backgrounds coming together to help families build a brighter future for themselves, a value that Saskatchewan people are well-known for.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud that in the 2012-13 budget, we announced an additional 1 million to help Habitat construct 20 homes across the province. Since 2009 the province has dedicated a total of 4.5 million in funding for Habitat for Humanity affiliates and chapters to build 90 homes in Moose Jaw, Regina, Saskatoon, Yorkton, Prince Albert, Lloydminster, and most recently, Nipawin.

This home in Regina, another Habitat for Humanity build, is a wonderful example of the Saskatchewan advantage where people are willing to support others in need and help build a stronger community. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Osteoporosis Canada Fundraising Event

Hon. Ms. Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, April 22nd, I had the honour and privilege of attending the Osteoporosis Canada, Regina chapter's spring reception. Osteoporosis is a disease that causes bones to become thin, porous, decreasing bone strength and leading to increased risk of breaking a bone. Osteoporosis does not develop overnight. You could lose bone mass steadily for many years without experiencing any symptoms or signs of the disease until a bone fractures. That is why it is often referred to as the silent thief.

Mr. Speaker at least one in three women and one in five men will suffer from osteoporotic fracture during their lifetime. The cost to treat osteoporosis and the fractures it causes is currently estimated at 1.9 billion annually to the Canadian health care system. Mr. Speaker, this fundraising event will assist Osteoporosis Canada in raising funds to provide ongoing programs and resources for those that suffer from the silent thief.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the Osteoporosis Canada, Regina chapter for organizing the successful afternoon. And I would also like to thank Dr. Roberta McKay and Elmer Brenner for opening their home to raise awareness and funds for osteoporosis. I ask all my colleagues to join me in recognizing the commitment and dedication of Osteoporosis Canada Regina chapter, Dr. Roberta McKay, and Elmer Brenner. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Labour Legislation

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, this morning the Sask Party government announced a sweeping review of all of the labour legislation in Saskatchewan. Just like a number of key initiatives that will change the very fabric of Saskatchewan, this sweeping review wasn't in their election platform.

The Premier said this type of review wasn't top of mind for the Sask Party. Mr. Speaker, the review of 15 different pieces of legislation will take place over only 90 days. To the Premier: why is he taking less time to review this province's labour legislation than he took to review minor football?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — First of all, Mr. Speaker, in the Speech from the Throne, the government indicated an ongoing interest in terms of ensuring that the labour legislative environment in the province of Saskatchewan was fair to both sides, was competitive, and was as modern as possible. Mr. Speaker, that was in the Speech from the Throne. So it shouldn't be a surprise today that the government has indicated that the review is going to now take its next phase.

The member's wrong. The review is not over, Mr. Speaker. We have now presented . . .

An Hon. Member: — He didn't say that.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well the implication . . . He's saying he didn't say that. The implication is that it is over, referencing the minor football study that was done.

Mr. Speaker, what's going to happen now is that these ideas that have been presented to the province of Saskatchewan in a very transparent way will be the source of consultation and review and study. And we'll get feedback from all the stakeholders, Mr. Speaker, and the process of democracy will work. The government will listen to that consultation, and we will move forward to ensure that our labour legislative environment is fair to both sides, competitive with other parts of this country, so that we continue to lead the nation in economic growth.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I think the Premier confirmed that this was not in the election discussion that we had last fall. Bill 5 was the last time that the Sask Party government talked about

fair and balanced labour legislation, and the United Nations said it violated human rights. The Court of Appeal said Bill 5 was unconstitutional.

This review doesn't even appear to address the concerns of the United Nations. And it's difficult to gauge whether the views of working people will be taken into account in this rushed 90-day review. To the Premier: why is he rushing this important consultation?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, we're talking potentially — potentially only — about legislation informed by this consultation being introduced this coming fall. Then, between its introduction and its eventual passage, if there even is legislation, will be a number of months as well, because that would only happen a year from now, Mr. Speaker. That might be rushing by NDP [New Democratic Party] standards. I think it's reasonable by most other people's standards.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, we're getting a little more information about this process. But it's very clear that the feedback from the public is going to be difficult to put into this process in the next 90 days. There's not a single public hearing to be held before this July 31st deadline that the minister has set. My question to the Premier is this: when did he direct his ministry to start this sweeping review? Did the ministry commence this work prior to the 2011 election?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — In platforms of the Saskatchewan Party, we've been pretty clear. We've said we believe the labour legislation, the environment around labour legislation in this province needs to be the subject of constant stewardship. We need to make sure it's competitive with other jurisdictions. We need to make sure it's fair to both sides. We need to make sure it's updated. Mr. Speaker, I've got a news article from, well this was October 31st, another one from November 1st, Mr. Speaker, from, one from CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] news, the other one from CBC news as well. Both highlight the fact that during the campaign I was talking about some of the issues that are now the subject of the review certainly going forward, including potentially providing the option for unions to collect their own dues. Mr. Speaker, that's part of this discussion.

There are other common sense changes that actually labour leaders have asked for. Indexing minimum wage is one of the subjects of this review. The NDP have asked us to index minimum wage even though they didn't do it in 16 years of government. We need to improve the essential services process. We've recognized that. That's also part of the review, Mr. Speaker. There are a number of items here that both sides, labour and management, have asked for. Now we're going to have a review of that. We're going to have legislation possibly in the fall, more consultation, potentially passing in the spring. Mr. Speaker, that's a pretty responsible process.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people are fair and reasonable. They've always appreciated a common sense approach. Important issues on their minds today are pension security, workplace safety, income security, and the cost of living. To deal with these types of issues, labour legislation in this province has been developed over many, many years of discussion and negotiation between employers and workers. To allow 90 days to review this legislation is not adequate and, Mr. Speaker, I'm asking the Premier this very specific question: why is he disrupting the long history of relatively good labour relations at a time when all it can do is hurt our economy?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, implicit in the hon. member's question is that things never change, Mr. Speaker. Well in '07 they changed. We campaigned on some very specific commitments around secret ballot votes in the . . . secret ballot certification. We campaigned in favour of having some level of common sense prevail in the workplace where management could talk to labour. Those changes were made. Other changes were made later in terms of the construction labour environment in this province. Essential services legislation happened, Mr. Speaker. And what we saw, Mr. Speaker, what we saw in this province was collective bargaining that proceeded apace, collective bargaining that was resolved by both sides, Mr. Speaker, and relatively labour peace.

And here's what else we saw: record job creation in the workplace in the province of Saskatchewan. We saw record population growth in the province of Saskatchewan. We helped create together, and labour had a big part of that, one of the best business climates in the province of Saskatchewan. I'd say based on that activity in the past, we should continue with that kind of due diligence in the future. This is a consultation. This is a review. Legislation can't, by definition, be introduced till fall, then passed in the spring, unless the NDP wish it to because it's a co-operative process. So I think it's a reasonable process, Mr. Speaker, for us.

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

Collective Bargaining at Cancer Agency

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Health. Does he think it's fair that nurses at the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency make \$13 less per hour in their base wage than other nurses in Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we know that the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency is in the process of negotiating with their union. As I've said many times, I won't get into the process of negotiating on the floor of the House.

But what I can say is that, according to Scott Livingstone, the CEO [chief executive officer] of the Cancer Agency, who identified very well in a letter to the editor that the nurses in the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency were meeting the same wages as the base nurse wage through SUN [Saskatchewan Union of

Nurses], Mr. Speaker. So the premise of that member's question is absolutely wrong.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, for 29 months, health care professionals at Saskatchewan Cancer Agency have been without a contract. These individuals have publicly stated that they do not want to strike. What they do want, Mr. Speaker, is a fair and a properly negotiated agreement, Mr. Speaker. But negotiations require two willing partners, and it's not clear by the 29 months without a contract, Mr. Speaker, that the government is willing to negotiate in good faith, Mr. Speaker. And it's odd because, as we've seen with the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, that in that case a settlement was reached very quickly.

My question to the minister: when will he take this issue seriously, and when will he allow this issue to go to binding arbitration?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, I believe the member opposite talked about a fair and reasonable collective bargaining process and then, at the end of the question, he's asking for binding arbitration, Mr. Speaker. I think that's kind of trying to play both sides of the coin, Mr. Speaker.

We have settled with over 40,000 health care employees, Mr. Speaker, in this province. We have a tentative agreement with SUN, Mr. Speaker. Over 10,000 nurses working in this province, a far cry from when they were in power, Mr. Speaker. We've come to agreements with all of these without using binding arbitration. I would say in this process that we will get a contract. I believe we'll get a contract without using binding arbitration, Mr. Speaker. I'd encourage both parties to get to the table.

But I'd also, Mr. Speaker, encourage the member opposite, if he's going to start putting out numbers on wages, that he is at least somewhere in the ballpark because last time he wasn't.

[14:00]

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, it's been 29 months that these individuals have been without a contract. When we think of cancer care, we know, yes, oncologists are very important. Yes, Mr. Speaker, we know that medications and drugs for cancer treatment are very important. So too, Mr. Speaker, are the other health care professionals who provide care to cancer patients.

My question to the minister: does he think 29 months without a contract is an appropriate length of time?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, as I said in my previous answer, certainly the collective bargaining process is working. I

would say that it has taken too long, I wish an agreement would've been settled long before this point, Mr. Speaker. But as the member opposite said, it takes two sides. It isn't necessarily the employer or maybe the employee that's holding up the process. Between the two of them this process has been held up.

But I will say, Mr. Speaker, that cancer care . . . and patients in this province can expect excellent cancer care from the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency and all the employees within that Cancer Agency. In fact, Mr. Speaker, if you look at the increases in the Cancer Agency budget over the last four years of our government, Mr. Speaker, never had they seen more money come to that agency to reduce wait times, a full complement of oncologists, a full complement of staff, Mr. Speaker — again a far cry from when the NDP ran the Cancer Agency.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, we've seen our government's actions in the recent weeks. When they want to plow ahead with something and take decisive action, they do. We've seen them plow ahead with the addition of more politicians in this province, even though that is something no one in Saskatchewan wants. What Saskatchewan people do want in the province, Mr. Speaker, is good care for our loved ones, especially patients when they are fighting cancer.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the same zeal that we've seen them pursue the addition of more politicians in the province, they have not applied to other situations. It's certainly the 29 months without a contract is evidence of that.

The minister talked about negotiations that occur between the two sides. My question to the minister: if he believes that the final offer from SAHO [Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations] is fair and reasonable, why does he not allow this to go to binding arbitration, allow it to be settled, and surely the fair and reasonable agreement will prevail?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite talks about the actions of this government and what those actions of this government has been, Mr. Speaker, over the last four and a half years. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that there is a 65 per cent decrease in the number of days between the referral and oncologist's first appointment. That's the action of this government, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you there's a 50 per cent decrease in the number of patients waiting for oncologists' appointments, Mr. Speaker. That's the actions of this government, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that there has been a 76 per cent increase in the funding to the Cancer Agency under this government. That's the action of this government, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I believe a contract will be negotiated very, very soon. I certainly hope there will be. Both parties need to be at the bargaining table. The employees need to know that binding arbitration hasn't been used in 40,000 other employee contracts, Mr. Speaker, and it won't be used in this one.

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

Immigration Program and Foreign Workers

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the past years I've had the opportunity to meet many immigrants to this province and hear about their stories, and it's always interesting to do so. Many of the new immigrants to Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, have come from larger centres in Canada, for example Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal.

In my interactions with them the most common reason that I hear from these individuals is the existence of the family class through the Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program which was introduced in 2005 by the previous NDP government. Mr. Speaker, thousands of people have moved here because of the SINP [Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program] program, specifically the family class. These people established roots in our province, often starting businesses, and not just one business. Sometimes it's one, two, or three.

Mr. Speaker, this morning we learned from the minister that he plans on gutting the family class within the Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program. My question to the minister: why is he gutting the family class, something that's worked well for many people here in the province, and something that has brought many social and economic benefits to the province?

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

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the members opposite would have a difficult time responding to Tony Blair's recent memoirs where he says there's a very simple distinction and question to be addressed that is for a jurisdiction. Do more people move in or move out, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, between 2001 and 2006 newcomers arrived, Mr. Speaker, and they came in by about 8,000, Mr. Speaker. That compared to about 30,000 in Manitoba. Mr. Speaker, in this past year alone nearly 11,000 newcomers have come to this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, to the member's question — unfortunately he framed it as he did — what we did is take steps to sustain the family class category, Mr. Speaker, making sure that we're protecting the integrity of the family class category, making sure that family class members can still make reference and referrals, Mr. Speaker, to family members. And we're making sure, Mr. Speaker, that we're accountable to stakeholders here within the province as well as to the federal government. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, the reality is that thousands of people move to this province based on their understanding of the Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program and the family class category. They base their decisions upon that. But now we learn, Mr. Speaker, that there is only one nominee per family

and also before that nominee comes, Mr. Speaker, there has to be a job offer to that person, which is a change.

Mr. Speaker, this certainly is no longer the family stream. I think the minister could rebrand this as the low-waged worker trickle because that will have a huge effect on people here in the province. And of course, Mr. Speaker, the minister made no reference to this six months ago during the election.

My question to the minister: what does he have to say to the people who have moved here from places like Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal based on their understanding of the family class and now understanding that the minister is gutting the program?

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

Hon. Mr. Norris: — The first thing I'm going to say to them, Mr. Speaker, is watch for the members opposite when they play politics with immigration because the people of the province always lose, Mr. Speaker. That's the first thing I'm going to tell them.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to making sure that people understand the changes that we've made, Mr. Speaker, we've made about a dozen changes along the way. It's these very changes that have helped to ensure the sustainability and progress that we've made under the Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program, Mr. Speaker. These are more of these, Mr. Speaker. So what we're doing is saying, instead of seeing families nominating up to 20, Mr. Speaker — and that's not fair for others that are simply waiting for one — we're saying, let's actually make sure that there's one that they are appropriately settled here, Mr. Speaker. That works for families and it works for Saskatchewan. And as far as connecting to jobs, Mr. Speaker, there are more than 11,000 open and available today, Mr. Speaker. That's the new Saskatchewan: record employment and record populations, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, members opposite have this troubling pattern of using an outlier and then presenting that as the norm across the board. Mr. Speaker, it's growing tiresome and, not only that, it's a concerning way of making public policy.

The minister did not only announce the gutting of the family class for the SINP this morning; he also announced another 21-day consultation period on foreign worker protection legislation. Of course, Mr. Speaker, 13 months ago the minister originally announced a four-week consultation process on such legislation. While the minister keeps stretching out the consultation process to protect foreign workers, we hear troubling stories in the news and we see on the federal front the Conservatives making very troubling actions that will hurt foreign workers.

My question to the minister: does he agree with the federal government's decision to allow employers to pay high-skilled foreign workers 15 per cent less than the wage for other peers in

the area within their region? Does he support that 15 per cent lower wage?

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

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what we support is the provincial nominee program, the SINP, Mr. Speaker, being able to sustain, Mr. Speaker, the success that we've had. Mr. Speaker, today we've made a number of announcements to help enhance the program.

Mr. Speaker, we have announced a second round of consultations for foreign worker protection, Mr. Speaker. And why did we do that? Because we listened to people and last fall they said, would you please come out with a second round of consultations? We said, of course we will, Mr. Speaker. That's why we're beginning these consultations.

Are we paying attention to what Ottawa is doing? Of course we are, Mr. Speaker. Because within the Canadian Constitution, Mr. Speaker, in section 95, we know that this is a shared jurisdiction. Mr. Speaker, we're doing this to ensure that we can sustain the SINP and so that we can also make our point.

We actually want more people to come to the province, Mr. Speaker. We're actually asking the federal government to ensure that the cap that they've put on at 4,000 can go to 6,000, Mr. Speaker. In order to do that, we need to ensure the sustainability and integrity of this program, Mr. Speaker. It's something the member opposite obviously needs to study a little more.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, there was no response in the minister's answer as to whether or not he supports a 15 per cent lower wage for foreign workers. A recent *StarPhoenix* editorial had this to say: "This policy certainly makes little economic or social sense." It went on to say:

The long-term effect could well be the de-skilling of Canada's workforce, with employers increasingly relying on cheaper foreign workers and not investing as much in training, something that will be hugely detrimental to the aspirations of young Canadians, particularly aboriginals.

So in one fell swoop, Mr. Speaker, we see the federal government taking negative steps towards the treatment of foreign workers. We see this undermining training opportunities, Mr. Speaker, for all Saskatchewan people and all Canadians. Mr. Speaker, you would think this would concern the Sask Party. But instead, on the same day, we see this government adding injury to insult by gutting the family class in the Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program.

My question to the minister: why won't he stand up for Saskatchewan's interest in this case? Why won't he take a clear stand on such short-sighted decisions?

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

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan today has the lowest unemployment rate in the country of 4.8 per cent. Mr. Speaker, in the province of Saskatchewan today, there are nearly 530,000 people working. That's an all-time record for the month of March, Mr. Speaker. Today in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, we have an all-time record number of people working full-time, Mr. Speaker.

We know that there is a challenge with this red-hot labour market, Mr. Speaker. That's why we've invested \$3.5 billion, Mr. Speaker, in post-secondary education, including millions of dollars to ensure that more First Nations and Métis people have an opportunity not simply to enrol in programs but to complete them and then to move successfully to the workforce. We see that, Mr. Speaker, year over year, 4,700 new jobs. Mr. Speaker, that's an increase of 13 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, let me make it clear. We're going to stand up for Saskatchewan's people no matter where it is, no matter how, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that the economic growth that's under way offers benefits to people straight across the province, Mr. Speaker. And that message is clearly made to Ottawa.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Proposed Urban Development Project

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday we found out that the \$348 million price tag currently attached to the stadium initiative here in city of Regina, that the province was being asked for \$230 million of that amount. I guess the question to start with, Mr. Speaker, is that wasn't included in the current budget that is still being worked through this House in terms of estimates. When will that decision be made on the \$230 million and in which budget year will it fall?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Well thank you very much for the question, Mr. Speaker. To go over the chronology of the events, last week we received a proposal from the city of Regina. Yesterday I had the opportunity to tell this House that the request was for \$230 million to include not only the stadium, but the revitalization of Regina. Going forward, I asked, I wrote a letter yesterday to the mayor, asking for more information. That information will be coming in a short order of time, I hope. Then we'll have a chance to look at it and to decide on any funding decisions going forward.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I guess the answer from the minister is, you know, in due course, or we'll see, or what happens. But the thing is, Mr. Speaker, if the province is being asked for \$230 million, what is that government going to do to ask the people of Saskatchewan whether or not it's okay to proceed with that \$230 million? What is their consultation process that they're anticipating to ask the people of Saskatchewan whether or not that's a fair expenditure? One question. Second question is, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the federal money that this was contingent on previously — if there wasn't federal money they said that they

we're going to be out; that's what killed the last deal — there's \$30 million of federal money in this proposed deal, Mr. Speaker. Is this current proposal contingent on federal involvement as well, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, thank you to the member for the question. What this government will continue to do is to consult with Saskatchewan people on top priorities which are health care, education, infrastructure — something that members opposite never did. We will continue, as answers portrayed earlier in question period, we will continue to lead the way in the country in those areas.

When it comes to talking about a stadium, yes, we will ensure that Saskatchewan residents have the opportunity to look at proposals that come forward and to ensure that we have a quality, state of the art stadium for the Riders into the future.

So that is what a prudent government would do. We will look for the information. We will ask for more information when necessary. When that information comes forward, we will make a decision, all within a balanced budget, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

[14:15]

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Review of Employment and Labour Legislation

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to announce the most comprehensive review of employment and labour legislation in the province's history. Mr. Speaker, the laws that govern employment relationships in workplaces have a significant impact on all of our lives, from minimum wage to the age of employment to keeping people safe at work to ensuring people can form or join the unions of their choosing, and to enabling unions and employers to engage in free and fair collective bargaining — all of these things touch each and every one of us in some way.

Mr. Speaker, we recently consulted with business and labour stakeholders to amend *The Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1993* to improve workplace health and safety in the province. This resulted in the introduction of Bill 23 in the fall legislative session. We want to continue with this work to modernize and simplify all of our employment . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, we want to continue with this work to modernize and simplify all of our employment and labour relations legislation. Mr. Speaker, this goal is ambitious and important. We believe this goal can be achieved through, firstly, restructuring and organizing the legislation so it is easier

to use and understand; and secondly, eliminating inconsistencies between provisions that result in confusion; and thirdly, clarifying which provisions apply in particular situations.

We also wanted to ensure that new labour legislation reflects today's changing work environment while supporting flexible work arrangements to enhance productivity and work-life balance within Saskatchewan workplaces. To this end, Mr. Speaker, we are undertaking a significant consultation process with a large number of stakeholders as well as asking for the public and all interested parties to participate. To assist individuals in considering how to change the legislation, we have developed a discussion paper. This discussion paper is available on our ministry website.

Mr. Speaker, we are doing this important work to protect the health and safety of workers in Saskatchewan, to assure minimum standards of employment, and to improve compliance and ensure effective enforcement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the minister and the Government of Saskatchewan have announced a process to change legislation in Saskatchewan as it relates to the relationship between employers and workers. And any time this type of legislation is looked at, it's extremely important because so much of our economy depends on the good working together of employees and employers. And so, Mr. Speaker, we are quite concerned that this legislation or this proposal for consultation has been brought forward and that it does have some very short timelines as it relates to this consultation document.

The Premier has indicated that there are some longer timelines, but it comes down to a question of trust. Do the people of Saskatchewan trust this government to deal with these types of issues in a way that doesn't disrupt our economy, that doesn't cause us difficulties in the long term?

This is a century worth of negotiation and discussion which shows up in the legislation. And as we all know, many times the changes are brought forward in this legislature as a result of a serious injury or death to somebody that needs to be corrected. And, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to seeing what the government has to do with this particular legislation. But I know that we will be watching very carefully because there's a basic issue of trust with this government. Thank you.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the chairman of the Crown and Central Agencies Committee.

Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies to report Bill No. 6, *The Miscellaneous Business Statutes Amendment Act, 2011* without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall this Bill be considered in

Committee of the Whole? I recognize the Minister of Crown Investments Corporation.

Hon. Mr. McMillan: — I request with leave, consideration in Committee of the Whole this Bill . . . Pardon me, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill and this Bill be now read a third time.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Crown Investments Corporation has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bill No. 6, *The Miscellaneous Business Statutes Amendment Act, 2011* and that the Bill now be read the third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The minister may proceed moving third reading.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 6 — *The Miscellaneous Business Statutes Amendment Act, 2011*

Hon. Mr. McMillan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Crown Investments Corporation that Bill No. 6, *The Miscellaneous Business Statutes Amendment Act, 2011* be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the chairman of the Crown and Central Agencies Committee.

Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies to report Bill No. 7, *The Co-operatives Amendment Act, 2011* without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be considered in Committee of the Whole? I recognize the Minister for Crown Investments Corporation.

Hon. Mr. McMillan: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to waive consideration of Committee of the Whole on this Bill and this

Bill now be read a third time.

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bill No. 7, *The Co-operatives Amendment Act, 2011* and that the Bill now be read a third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The minister may proceed by moving third reading.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 7 — *The Co-operatives Amendment Act, 2011/Loi de 2011 modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur les coopératives*

Hon. Mr. McMillan: — I move this Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Crown Investments Corporation that Bill No. 7, *The Co-operatives Amendment Act, 2011* be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the chairman of the Crown and Central Agencies Committee.

Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies to report Bill No. 8, *The Land Titles Amendment Act, 2011* without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall this Bill be considered in Committee of the Whole? I recognize the Minister for Crown Investments Corporation.

Hon. Mr. McMillan: — I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill and this Bill be now read a third time.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Crown Investments Corporation has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bill No. 8, *The Land Titles Amendment Act, 2011* and that Bill be now read a third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The minister may proceed with moving third reading.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 8 — *The Land Titles Amendment Act, 2011*

Hon. Mr. McMillan: — I move that this Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Crown Investments Corporation that Bill No. 8, *The Land Titles Amendment Act, 2011* be now read the third time and passed under its title.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the chairman of the Standing Committee on the Economy.

Standing Committee on the Economy

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on the Economy to report Bill No. 34, *The Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation Act* without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall this Bill be considered in Committee of the Whole?

I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill and that the Bill be now read the third time.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Agriculture has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bill No. 34, *The Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation Act* and that the Bill now be read the third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The minister may proceed with third reading.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 34 — *The Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation Act*

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Agriculture that Bill No. 34, *The Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation Act* be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — Committee of Finance.

The Speaker: — Committee of Finance. I do now leave the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Executive Council Vote 10

Subvote (EX01)

The Chair: — I'll call the Committee of Finance to order. The business before the committee is the estimates and supplementary estimates for Executive Council. The first item of business is the main estimates for Executive Council, vote 10 found on page 63 of the Estimates book.

Before we begin, I have a couple of comments I would like to make, particularly . . . well, for all members, but particularly the newly elected members and more importantly for those citizens who may be watching us. We are in Committee of the Whole, Committee of Finance and our procedures here are different than from our standing committees. For those people who have been watching and of course for our members, they will know that in our standing committees the first difference is, although we call them standing committees, members sit while they speak, whereas in this committee members will rise when they speak.

But I think a more important difference is, in the standing committees the minister appearing before the committee brings with him or her officials, as the Premier has here today. And if

the minister wishes and asks the officials to answer a question or provide some information, the officials certainly do that. In this committee, only elected members speak. So that's one of the main differences.

And also all elected members are voting members of this committee, whereas in the standing committee only those appointed, which are seven.

So with those opening comments, what I would like to do is call upon the Premier to introduce the officials that he has with him here this afternoon.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees. I will introduce the officials that are with me here today, Mr. Chair, and then I have a few brief introductory remarks. And I'm sure my friend, the Leader of the Opposition, has some remarks as well to begin before the questioning.

Mr. Chair of Committees, it's a pleasure to have my deputy minister, the deputy minister in Executive Council, Doug Moen, to my left. To my right is Reg Downs, senior advisor in Executive Council to myself. We have the Acting Deputy Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs with us as well, Wes Jickling, immediately to Mr. Moen's left. Just behind Mr. Moen is Bonita Cairns whose official title is executive director of corporate services; and then director of House business for Executive Council, Cole Goertz is immediately behind me.

And, Mr. Chairman, I will from time to time be drawing on the expertise and the knowledge of members of Executive Council itself to provide information, should the need arise as a result of questions.

Mr. Chairman, I look forward to the questions that will come and, I'm sure, the debate that will happen. This is always a very interesting time in the life of a legislative session, and I think it can be used constructively to highlight differences that exist in Saskatchewan, differences between the two parties represented, but also ensure that the priorities of Saskatchewan people are brought to the forefront for this particular time of debate as they are throughout a legislative session.

By way of introductory comments, Mr. Chairman, you and I know, and members of this committee will know, that usually the debate strays from the specifics of the Executive Council estimates. This is called Executive Council estimates and again — so for those watching or for new members — technically, theoretically it's about the budget of Executive Council. Obviously there's a lot of latitude granted so there can be a much wider ranging discussion and debate as there should be.

But I like to offer some comments on the finances of Executive Council and executive councillors, in other words, the cabinet. I think that's an important thing. We've worked hard to lead by example in Executive Council in terms of keeping costs to taxpayers down. And so I'm going to touch on that very, very briefly before we get on with the specific questions.

For example, Mr. Chair, let's take a look at staff in Executive Council. Currently staff at Executive Council, 63.1. That's for a total cost of \$491,000 effective April 1, 2012, Mr. Chair. Just

compare that with November 2007 when we took over. So under the previous administration, 83 staff. So 63 now; 83 staff in Executive Council then and a higher cost, \$605,000 per month. In terms of ministerial assistants that serve the rest of executive councillors, under the previous administration, 96 for a total of 536,000 a month; today for this government, 74, much lower, \$429,000 per month.

Mr. Chairman, in terms of advertising, Executive Council is involved in helping to direct the advertising of the Government of Saskatchewan, not the political advertising that each party does or the caucuses do perhaps, but of the advertising of the government proper. Here again, Mr. Chair, we're working hard to keep costs down, remembering we're not spending our money. We're spending the taxpayers' money.

I could tell you that in the election year it's an interesting comparison because people think, well, governments ramp up the advertising in an election year. And it was true in '07 under the previous administration when the amount of advertising, compared to what we did in our election year 2011-12, reflected in last year's budget, was a reduction of 30 per cent. Thirty per cent less government advertising in our election year versus the previous administration. And finally the four-year comparison of advertising expenditures between our government and the previous one, down 15 per cent under our government.

[14:45]

Finally out-of-province travel and in-province travel is a major cost of Executive Council. It's a major cost for cabinet. And I obviously have a budget for travel as well, or whoever the premier happens to be at the time. Mr. Chairman, these are very interesting numbers. I think we should focus on, again in terms of leading by example, number of out-of-province trips. This year compared to 2006-07 under the previous government, down 42 per cent. Cost of out-of-province travel this year compared to the last year of the NDP government, down 43 per cent from those days. In- and out-of-province travel expenses, Mr. Chair, down 47 per cent this year versus the last year of the NDP.

Government Services executive air use, Mr. Chairman — these are the planes that the province has for travel — Government Services exec air use down 65.7 per cent over a comparable time. And this is not adjusted for inflation. These are just numbers against numbers, our administration versus the previous one.

So we can always do better, Mr. Chair. We can always find more efficiencies. We seek to do that, but we know it's important for Executive Council to lead by example. We've been working to do that over the last four years. There's an example again of that in this budget in particular, and I wanted to offer that in terms of maybe contextual remarks for the discussion we're going to have. And I want to say to my hon. friend, the Leader of the Opposition, I look forward to the questions and the answers in the debate that will ensue. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess my first

comment would be I have to look way down compared to where I'm usually looking, so this is a good spot to be.

But I want to thank you, and I want to thank the committee for this opportunity to ask some questions of the Premier and of the government. And as has been pointed out, the questions will be wide-ranging. I know that I've asked a lot of questions of the Premier, and he hasn't answered them. So maybe I'll get a chance to ask those questions again today. So we'll see whether that happens.

I also want to say a special thank you to the officials who are here in the room. They're all people that I've known and worked with in interesting ways over many years. And I also especially want to say thank you to all of the people who aren't in the room but who are watching across government because I know that people are ready to support the Premier in answering important questions.

Now this is about the budget, and everybody who runs a household knows that a budget's about choices. And, Mr. Chair, over the last three years, the Sask Party has made some choices that we don't agree with as the opposition, and I think we've pointed out that. But more importantly, we are disappointed to see that the least three budgets of this government have ended up in deficit by the end of the fiscal year. And, Mr. Speaker, this budget has a very thin positive number both on the GRF [General Revenue Fund] side and on the summary side. And we are concerned about that.

Now when this budget was, I guess, in its creation, the Premier was making comments about the budget. And I made the comment that he seemed to be talking out of both sides of his mouth, that there was an austerity side to it in a time of prosperity. And I think I will continue to say that because for the public, they've seen a lot of hype, a lot of photo ops, a lot of those kinds of things around some of the positive things that are happening.

But what we know is everyday families are getting the austerity side of the budget. Kids in the classrooms are being asked to do with less. Health care, people are asked to manage and send money back to the central budgetary fund. Students and apprentices are going to pay more for their tuition or for their other fees in apprenticeships. Seniors are paying more for medication, and everybody's going to be paying a little bit higher on their property taxes where they have the RCMP as their police.

So one area where the government seems quite interested in expanding is to add three more politicians. And it doesn't matter who you talk to in Saskatchewan, they all know that adding three more politicians is a long-term commitment to millions of dollars extra in the budget. And we'll perhaps have some better explanation about that as we go along a little later. What we do know is that when this government took over, there was a long-term budgeting strategy for the province or many plans laid out in different departments. There was clearly the start of a resource boom which we continue to enjoy. And the question we have to ask now is: has the government made the right choices over the last number of years? And what have we got to show for it?

And so, Mr. Speaker, I think there will be a number of questions about the types of things that we could have invested the money into. And clearly one of the questions becomes when you're using one-time money, resource money, you have to be especially careful because it's not continuing money. It's money that once it's used, it's gone. So what we have is a government that's making choices, and it's doing some things that we'll have a lot of questions about.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think my job is to ask some good questions and to start looking at some of the issues. And I hadn't planned on asking a question about the Executive Council itself right away. But I will ask that the Premier table the information that he read earlier about the numbers for Executive Council, April 1st. Unfortunately we don't have the global estimates because they usually come at the end of the session. But I know that because we're not at the end of the session we don't have the global estimates.

So my first question is, actually relates to the timing of the Executive Council estimates. Traditionally it's always been the last estimate to be done. Can you explain why we're doing it today?

The Chair: — Committee members, the Chair has neglected to call the appropriate vote. We are dealing with Executive Council, vote 10, subvote (EX01), central management and services.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thanks Mr. Chair. There's no particular reason why it's not the very last group of estimates we're dealing with. I think it's a product of my own schedule. If that's caused any inconvenience, I certainly apologize. I think, to the members opposite, I think it was the subject of negotiation between both sides. And I'm told by officials, by our director of House business and the House Leader, that there was no particular or significant concern, I think, expressed about them being early. And if I'm wrong about that, I stand to be corrected. But that's my understanding.

I think last year they were also not the very last estimates that were done, you know, but most of it's driven by scheduling on my part. And if the opposition feels very strongly that it needs to be the last one for whatever reason, we can certainly have a look at that in the future.

If I can though, Mr. Chair, heading towards that specific question the hon. member asked, he made some comments about the budget. And permit me please to offer my own.

He started by saying, quite rightly, that budgets are certainly about choices, and we certainly agree. He also, I think, mischaracterized, in my opinion, the last few budgets. He quite rightly pointed out the summary balanced budget in this budget, he referenced that. He said it's thin, but he affirmed that this is a balanced budget from a summary financial standpoint. He affirmed it's a balanced budget from a growth, from a GRF standpoint. What he needs to do is share that information with his Finance critic, Mr. Chair, because time and again his Finance critic has said that it's a deficit budget. And that's a member that has a lot of respect in this House, and I'm sure he'll want to be on the same page as his leader and vice versa.

I would also say, Mr. Chair, that the characterization of previous budgets as deficits is a little bit . . . It's simply not consistent with the NDP position. In fact, Mr. Chair, when the member that just asked the question that opened up the Premier's estimates, when the Leader of the Opposition was in the cabinet — he was in the Romanow cabinet; he was in the Calvert cabinet — they brought down a number of budgets. And they characterized those budgets, he would have characterized them personally as balanced, Mr. Chair, whether or not they met the summary financial test, whether or not there was the use of a rainy day fund to achieve the balance. Revenue from a rainy day fund is revenue they said, they would say, and so therefore that also constitutes a balance.

That was their position in government. I assume that's still his position because he sat on this side of the House as a member of Executive Council. He voted for budgets based on that principle. And it's interesting because they've completely changed their mind. That, now, no longer is a balanced budget.

Mr. Chair, the budget was about a number of choices. We chose to increase Health spending in a budget where we were striving for some efficiencies. Certainly in a balance, we increased Health spending by 4.9 per cent. We increased Education spending by 11.4 per cent. We chose to increase Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration by 4.1 per cent. We chose to increase Social Services — it's about choices — we chose to increase Social Services' budget by 4.7 per cent, Agriculture by 3.1 per cent.

Here's one that's down — debt servicing, that's down, Mr. Chairman, down 4.8 per cent. And of course in Highways, we have basically what ties a record budget in the Ministry of Highways. We have a balance in the Growth and Financial Security Fund. And we have a balanced budget, the only one in all of the Dominion of Canada, Mr. Chair. So those are the choices that we made, and I know we'll talk about the specific steps it took for us to get to that point where we have points of disagreement with the members opposite.

But my final comment on choices will be this. I give full marks to the Leader of the Opposition because on budget day, in fact I remember . . . Sorry, it was the day after the budget, as I was getting ready to come over to the legislature, I was watching one of the new morning programs. It's great to have those TV morning programs started up in our province. I think it was the CTV morning program, and the Leader of the Opposition was being interviewed. And he was very critical of the decisions the government made with respect to ending the FETC [film employment tax credit], which is a grant to the film industry in this province. And he was asked, well if you don't like that part of the budget, what choice would you make?

To the member's question, what choice would you make? And he said:

Well practically, [this is a quote now] there are a number of areas where they could have left money for films. And for one of the things they could have done is look at some of the initiatives around the agriculture, and they could look at some of the things they've done for municipalities.

That is a quote, Mr. Chair. And I think it's one that we'll

reference from time to time going forward because there is a choice there. The NDP and the Leader of the Opposition would choose to cut funding in agriculture, maybe not to keep the programs whole or not to make the improvements to crop insurance, and they would reduce money to municipalities.

Interesting on that point, Mr. Chair, because we have kept the promise we made to increase revenue sharing to municipalities and give them a permanent solution to that problem — something that the critic not long ago was taking credit for, taking credit for, the NDP critic, the member for Saskatoon Centre was taking credit for the fact that the government, this government, the Sask Party government had taken care of the revenue-sharing piece. It's an interesting . . . You know, I'm not sure the left hand knows what the far left hand's doing over there, Mr. Chair. Because the Leader of the Opposition, when asked where would you get the film money? We'd take it from municipalities. On the other hand, his critic is saying, taking credit for the Sask Party increase in municipal funding.

Mr. Chairman, it is about choices. There was a choice also made last fall, and I think the principles that drove that choice are the principles that are at work in the budget. And the people of the province chose balanced budgets, Mr. Chair.

[15:00]

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

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Chair, I thought I'd put in a nickel to get an answer to that question, but unfortunately I must have put in a loonie.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have a very specific question here, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chair. The global estimates for 2009-10 show that there were 65, I guess 66, 68.25 staff in Executive Council. So that was at the end of 2010. The next document, the only one we have, is at the end of 2011, March 31st, 2011, and the number is 80.1. But effectively there was a fairly dramatic increase between those two years in the numbers of people and the average wages paid to those people. You've just earlier indicated that the number is 63.1 on April 1st. And so have there been 17 people laid off within Executive Council? Or what's happened in this past year?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thanks, Mr. Chair. It's a fair question. What's happened in the intervening time is that IGA [Intergovernmental Affairs] — which previously used to have its own line in terms of staffing, and the acting deputy minister is here — and protocol have been moved into Executive Council proper.

If you compare apples to apples in terms of the Executive Council that supports the Premier and the cabinet now versus under the NDP years, the last NDP year, you will see the numbers that have been tabled reflect a significant decrease in the political staff, in the overall staffing of Executive Council, now under this government versus a much higher number under the New Democrats.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. We can work with the material that we are receiving. And if the Premier wants to provide us with more information like that, we'll be happy to look at it.

I have a question about the Executive Council and whether or not they have been looking at using the lean principles to examine what kind of work is being done in Executive Council.

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, we're happy to discuss lean right across government, Mr. Chair. It's been, I think, a great success story. We credit the front line of the professional public service of the province along with ministers who have led in this regard. We credit the senior levels of the public service, the permanent heads, who've also been drivers of change.

And you know, there are a number of examples. I'll speak to the member's question directly, to the Hon. Leader of the Opposition's question directly. But I will say that, in a general sense, these examples are ones that people need to know about. People need to know that as a result of lean, the time between the Saskatoon Cancer Agency, the time between that initial consultation and your CT [computerized tomography] is down 92 per cent, Mr. Chair. They need to know that in terms of how we manage the blood inventory of the province, as we looked at the issue of how many red blood cells were discarded, we have leaned out that process. It's now no longer a just-in-case inventory process, it's more of a just-in-time process. And it saved \$10 million, and working very well. We've leaned out the absentee management situation. Regions are leading in that. It's happened across health care in the province and saved \$18 million.

And we have lean, the benefits of lean happening in all ministries and social services in terms of the reduction of the number of forms. In Executive Council, where it's a relatively small budget but we can always do better, and so we've applied the principles of lean to the preparation of cabinet documents, to reducing the amount of . . . to streamlining the process to the better use of technology. You will know, Mr. Chair, that some time ago actually our cabinet went to, well, tablet technology to get things done. And obviously that reduced the need for a lot of the paper and served to streamline process.

We're currently implementing a lean initiative with respect to an app [application] for those tablets called DocShare so that ministers and permanent heads and officials can actually follow the development of those cabinet items, whether they're information items or memorandums to cabinet or CDIs, cabinet decision items. And so they can follow that process through, and certainly we have a number of points of access for that amongst senior civil servants and the ministers themselves.

We've also taken some lean approaches to reducing the amount of bureaucracy, I would say, around our diplomat engagement program. Mr. Chair, you will know and remember that from several days where the Speech from the Throne is read in the past, we have had a large diplomatic corps. We take that occasion, the occasion of a Speech from the Throne, to invite those diplomats and consul generals to the province for Throne Speech day. And we engage at that point. They obviously tour,

and we see them in the gallery often. They tour through the provinces, and they come to Saskatchewan outside of a Throne Speech, but we use that particular occasion to draw attention to Saskatchewan.

And we always want to be selling our province, promoting our province. We want to make sure we're highlighting the story that is Saskatchewan, and it's a great chance to do it on Throne Speech day. However, that particular day and the overall engagement between intergovernmental affairs and protocol and the diplomats, the diplomatic corp, has been leaned out. So there's less process involved and less people doing the same amount of work. And so those are a couple of examples of lean and Executive Council.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you. And I want to make a special tribute to the Health Quality Council who I know has introduced and brought in the whole concept originally to the government. And it's worked out well. Some of the original things were done about eight years ago, and I know that a lot of very positive things have come from that. So I appreciate the comment. And part of our job as opposition is to make sure government money is spent effectively, and we will continue to raise those questions.

Mr. Chair, when I asked a question of the Minister of Justice about Bill 36 adding three more MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] and not including children under age 18 in the calculation when they set up the constituency boundaries, he indicated to me the other night on the record that he hadn't heard about this until after the election was over last November and that he wasn't certain where this came from.

So my question to the Premier is, where did this idea for three more MLAs and changing how we calculate the numbers for constituency boundaries come from?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Well you know, first of all I think we need to clarify the records. Sometimes with my honourable friend there's a real effort to — and I don't blame him — to want to claim credit for a lot of the good things that are happening in the province of Saskatchewan. Certainly in opposition, we gave the NDP credit in government for the good things they've done. We still do, Mr. Chair.

The business tax changes that Premier Calvert brought into this province, called for by our party, they originally ran against them when we offered them in '03 and then adopted that policy in government and implemented them finally with our support and after we called for those things. But the credit belonged to the government because they took the decision, a difficult one, because I'm sure much of their base wasn't very thrilled about it.

I think it's important for all political parties to say, you know, sometimes the other guys get it right and you ought to acknowledge that. I sense that there's a great deal of difficulty sometimes over there. It's like the old *Happy Days* show when

Fonz just couldn't say that he was ever wrong, Mr. Chair.

The lean process came from Dan Florizone. And it's true he was working on it when he was employed when the New Democrats were in power, but he really pioneered it at Five Hills Health Region when he was the CEO there. Health Quality Council was looking at it but, Mr. Chair, let's be real. The lean expansion in health care, though it found its genesis because a CEO like Mr. Florizone led in a particular health region, happened under that man's leadership right over there, the Minister of Health. It's why others are calling in to the province as to what we're doing here. And again, we give full credit to the senior civil service of this province who've led in it.

Mr. Chair, where do the new boundaries, where does this come from? Well it comes from the fact that every census, every election after a census, the boundary map is redrawn in the province. And sometimes we see a reduction in seats and sometimes, if a province is growing, we see an increase in seats.

In 1979, under the NDP, the province was growing and it increased, I think, to 64, off the top of my head. And they may roll their eyes and say, well that's 1979. The point is, when the province is growing in population, then the census that occurs during that period of growth triggers in the, after the next election, triggers a process where maps are drawn.

And more often than not, here and everywhere else in the country where the population is growing, the representation also increases. It's happened in Alberta. They actually elected more MLAs in Alberta in this last election. That surprised a lot of people. Why? Because their population grew. Canada is adding 30-some new members of parliament, the House of Commons. Why? Because parts of the country have grown in population.

So we looked at this. We said, well we don't want to necessarily . . . We looked at it in this context, Mr. Chair. We thought, well I guess since there are more people living here than ever before, well we could go to a higher number of MLAs than we've ever had before, I guess, theoretically. That's what could have happened in the past. Maybe that would have been the logic that informed the New Democrat decision in 1979 to increase the number of seats. But that would have been, we would have had more than 66. I think the highest number we've ever had in the province was 66 seats.

Well nobody . . . We don't, we simply don't need 66 seats in the legislature. So we tried to balance the two things. We tried to balance a right-sized government with the fact that the population is growing and our system is a representation-by-population system. And so the number that we have is three additional MLAs which we think is, again, a balance.

We have committed, Mr. Chair, to ensure that . . . We hope the NDP will co-operate in terms of Board of Internal Economy. For viewers, that's the committee that runs the finances of all members here. It's a bipartisan committee, and it's done through co-operation of both sides.

We hope the NDP will co-operate in ensuring that, even with these additional MLAs, that there is no added cost to the

taxpayer because we can achieve that. We've already highlighted how government travel is down. We've already highlighted here in estimates how government advertising is down. You know, the good faith and the will of the women and men of this House can make sure that we add this, I would say, modest number of MLAs, given the population growth, and maintain the same budget for those MLAs that the people of the province have to pick up.

He asks this: where did this come from? Well I've kind of tried to highlight where it came from. There were two sources of early support for the Bill when it was introduced. The first, and I was grateful for this, the Minister of Justice supported the Bill that he was introducing. I thought that was an important point. But who was the second source of support? The second source of support for more MLAs, for more MLAs now than we used to have, was the deputy leader of the New Democratic Party.

[15:15]

The member for Athabasca was first to speak. And I assume, Mr. Chair, they're . . . You know, I don't want to be disrespectful. But there's not a large group of them over there any more, and so I assume there's a lot of coordination and a lot of co-operation. And I assume that on a major Bill like this, before the deputy leader of the New Democratic Party stands up to give a speech on a Bill, to issue, excuse me, his party's position on that Bill, I assume he's checked with the leader. I assume he's checked with his fellow members of the caucus when he says, and I quote, page 294 of *Hansard*, March 5th: "There is no question that as our population growth continues that the question has to be asked when we're getting more seats."

It goes on to say, he goes on to say, this is the deputy leader of the NDP:

And the obvious answer is yes, as the population grows. And you should have more MLAs as the population should reflect that in the number of seats that we have in the Assembly.

He goes on to say on page 296: ". . . I think the overall thrust of the Bill in terms of having more MLAs, and we think it's a great idea . . ." Not, good. Not, we can live with this. Not, we'll hold our nose and vote for it. "We think it's a great idea," said the deputy leader of the NDP, the second voice to speak out on this very Bill in this Assembly.

Finally he said: ". . . there's a growing population and we need more seats." This is the deputy leader of the NDP: "We agree with that, that there is a growing population and more seats are necessary. We would applaud that . . ." Mr. Chair, "We would applaud that."

So I hope that when the leader takes to his feet to ask his next question, he will explain this massive gap in the position of the party when the Bill was introduced, expressed by the deputy leader of the party and a veteran member of this House. Will he be able to explain the gap? Was that the position of the NDP? Or when they thought they might have a political issue, did they flip-flop? Was that what happened, Mr. Chair? And I hope I've been able to answer the question about where did this come

from. Now he needs to answer a question about the true position of the New Democratic Party.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I asked two simple questions, and I got an extremely long answer that didn't answer either one. He didn't answer whose idea this was, unless he is saying that it was his idea. Now if that's his point, that it's his idea, he's going to take responsibility for it, then I ask him to stand up and say that.

He didn't say a word about excluding all the young people in the province. This sends the wrong signal to the people of Saskatchewan and especially to those people who are under 18. Anybody who was under 18 on June 1st, 2011, will not be included in this calculation of the boundaries for the next constituencies that we're going to have in the . . . elect us here to the legislature until 2021, 2022. So he didn't answer that question at all.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would have to say that I have had more comments from people who are Sask Party supporters about how they don't understand where this came from and they don't understand why the Premier, if it's his idea, came up with this idea to add more politicians at a time when it doesn't make sense. He makes comparisons to Alberta — population's two and a half times the size of Saskatchewan. They don't have two and a half times the number of members. We have people here who represent large numbers, but we're way down on the scale as far as the numbers that we represent compared to our other provinces in Canada.

And so, Mr. Chair, I ask him again. I will accept his last, long answer as that he was the one responsible for the three extra MLAs. What about this decision about excluding young people? It doesn't make any sense. The federal government doesn't do it. Our neighbours don't do it. I'd like an answer on that one.

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I beg to differ with my hon. friend. The question was answered. In fact the question I asked of him with respect to his party's position on this and who speaks for the New Democrats, the deputy leader or the leader, was not answered. It was avoided. It was a 10-foot-pole approach that the Leader of the Opposition took to the answer to that question.

Mr. Chair, let's be very clear about the process, one that he knows very well has existed for a very long time not just here but in other jurisdictions in the country. After a census, the election after a census, there is a process that's triggered to draw a new map. The question is then the number of constituencies, how those constituencies are configured. This is a representation-by-population form, democratic form that we have, democratic form of government.

And so when the population is increased in Saskatchewan, the representation has historically increased in Saskatchewan the number of members. When the population has increased in Alberta, as it has, and they go through a redraw, then the

number of provincial MLAs increases as it did in the advance of this last election. When the numbers of representatives in the regions of the country increase, then the number of seats accorded those regions in the House of Commons increases. It's a representation-by-population system.

Theoretically we could have perhaps gone with a lot more members, as I've already said, because the most we've ever had in Saskatchewan is 66. We just thought that was unnecessary. So together as we do, and if the Leader of the Opposition is looking for that one person with the agenda who made this call, he's going to be disappointed because, you know, we have a team on this side of the House, and we make decisions together. We vet those out. We have a discussion afterwards as we have on a number of different issues going forward.

And I would just say this as well, Mr. Chair. The Leader of the Opposition keeps referencing the fact that if somehow if you don't count, for the purposes of setting up a map that decides, you know, where people will vote, that if you don't include people who aren't eligible to vote, somehow you're not representing them. Mr. Chairman, that's very informative. Is that how the New Democratic government thought for all those years in power? Is that how they thought, that that's what qualifies families and kids to be represented in terms of the government's vision and policy?

Mr. Chair, we have decided to organize the electoral map around people who are eligible to vote. And frankly, notwithstanding what he's heard from people out there, there isn't opposition to that position. There's not, other than perhaps what's been orchestrated, significant opposition to the common sense principle that those who are of an age, of voting age can vote. In fact other provinces and the territory have done it: Quebec, Nova Scotia, PEI [Prince Edward Island], and Yukon. They actually use a more restrictive process. They limit the numbers on a map to those who are registered voters.

We're certainly saying anyone of the age of majority . . . And let me just say this, Mr. Chair. This government will represent and work for all people in this province regardless of their age, regardless of where they live, regardless how long they've been in Saskatchewan, because we have a whole bunch of brand new citizens coming every single day. We will work for and work hard on behalf of all of those people. We will provide services to kids in school.

We will actually maybe even throw out ideas like this, Mr. Chair, in terms of people 18 and younger. If you're a young person and you're working part-time in a unionized shop, maybe in a large grocer, we may do something radical like say that person perhaps shouldn't pay union dues. That person under 18 kind of needs all the help they can get. They're in high school.

So, Mr. Chair, that's an interesting point. If the New Democratic Party are so concerned about 18-year-olds beyond this issue of constituency maps, I hope that they will join the consultation process we're having with respect to labour changes and support those who have said, look, if you're under 18, if you're a part-time high-school student, you ought not to pay union dues in the province of Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Well, Mr. Chair, I'm appreciating that the Premier's taking the responsibility for both of these decisions. I know that in the Justice estimates the other night it came as a bit of a surprise to the Justice minister. And I'm assuming that many of the people who were elected last November came as a bit of a surprise to them. Because I know it's come as a surprise to many members of the Sask Party who have come to me at receptions and on the street and other places and said, that's not something that we were in favour of.

And so, Mr. Chair, I think that what . . . The Premier still has a chance. He still has a chance to deal with this particular matter. It has not moved from committee back to the House yet. And we propose the ability to have this Bill hoisted for six months to give some chance for discussion in the province. And that is still a possibility. And so I suggest to the Premier that he may want to take this opportunity to do a little more consultation because, frankly, that's one of the hallmarks of this government is surprise policy without consultation.

And that's not a very good way to run a government — surprising people with different policy initiatives; doing things that you have not indicated you were going to do in an election; coming forward with a lot of changes in labour policy, as the Premier has stated, without running a campaign on that; and in fact trying to mask some of those kinds of things. That is a hallmark of this government, and it's a big problem for all of the people of the province.

One of the things that is, I think, a characteristic of Saskatchewan people is that they like to have a fair and equitable way that we deal with each other. They like to understand how the rules work. They like to know when change is going to come so that they can participate in that change. But unfortunately, Mr. Chair, we have seen in quite a number of places where, all of a sudden, something pops up.

The most, well not the most recent example, but an example that we saw just in the last, since the election, was the budgetary decision to eliminate the film tax credit. And I know that there's a letter in the paper today, in the *Regina Leader-Post*, May 2nd, 2012, from Rita Shelton Deverell. And I venture to say that the Premier, when he was younger, may have seen her participate in a Globe Theatre show as one of our best actors. She's now a filmmaker and lives in Halifax. But she wrote this letter, and she said:

I would like to provide some clarification to Tyler Willox's April 9 letter responding to my April 3 letter about the Saskatchewan government's elimination of the film tax credit.

First, the long-time Regina resident production company, producers of my proposed movie, always have, and would continue to pay taxes in Saskatchewan. The partners in the company have lived in the province from birth until the present moment. Of course they might have to move their film company if there is no tax credit or equivalent. Likely not to Arizona though. I admit that was a dash of attempted wit when I tried to think of a dry hills setting. However, as we speak, the Arizona legislature is seriously

considering reinstating its film tax credit.

But I'd be better off in Hamilton, Ont., on the Niagara escarpment. It can look like a dry hills setting, my company is resident in Ontario and Hamilton would give me a "shoot-outside-of-Toronto" bonus. Either choice cuts out the Saskatchewan industry and its workers altogether.

End of this letter from Rita Shelton Deverell, Halifax, Saskatchewan, but formerly a proud Saskatchewan person.

My question to the Premier is: where did this decision come from to eliminate the film tax credit when we know it has caused all kinds of uncertainty amongst a very talented group of people who are telling the stories of Saskatchewan? They're providing all of us in Saskatchewan with some very, very good examples of what our Saskatchewan ingenuity can produce.

So my question to the Premier is, you've said that this film tax credit wasn't benefiting Saskatchewan people. I think there's so many who have made the contrary point on that that he deserves to give a clear explanation to the people of Saskatchewan. It may also be the point today where he will tell us what the alternative is that he has proposed. Or is it just a policy on the fly that people are now scrambling to complete?

[15:30]

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well I want to answer the member's question, Mr. Chair, but I also want to touch on some of his introductory remarks to that last question where he referenced again the . . . wondering what was the origin of the new electoral map for the province. Of course the origin is growth. And he's asking would we take responsibility; would I take responsibility. Well we won't take credit certainly for the unprecedented growth in the province, but members on this side of the House, we will take responsibility, Mr. Chair, for the economic strength that we see in the province of Saskatchewan today, we'll take responsibility for ensuring that it continues.

We'll take responsibility to meeting the challenges of growth, which are a far cry from the days when the member opposite sat in a cabinet and oversaw the decline of the province of Saskatchewan — in fact where in Education, for example, they would explicitly plan for declining enrolments. Where they had effectively thrown in the towel in terms of the future of the province. Where one of their members would say, it's statistically impossible for the province's population to grow at the average rate of growth in population in the country. It was the former member for Wascana, certainly not the current member, who said that in the House, not corrected on the record by the NDP government of the time. You know actually, and I guess she was right and the NDP were right. We haven't been able to grow at the national average, Mr. Chair; we have exceeded the national average. We see historic population growth in the province.

So how do you keep the economic momentum going in Saskatchewan? Well certainly it's not all up to government. In fact you may argue, quite rightly so, that external factors are

very, very important. But there are things that governments can do to ensure they're getting out of the way of the economy and to ensure that they are facilitating the right kind of business climate, the right kind of environment. One of those things, Mr. Chair, is to ensure fiscal responsibility, to ensure that the budget is balanced. And this goes to the member's question, where did this decision come from? This was a difficult decision that came from this government's determination to table the only balanced budget in all of Canada, Mr. Chair.

This decision was informed by our desire to ensure that we have resources to invest in infrastructure, that we can sustain competitive taxes, that we continue in the future to pay down debt. To get there, Mr. Chair, we have to make difficult choices. And the film tax credit was one of those difficult choices. I would also say this if I can. There have been many, many cards and letters of support that have come in from people around Saskatchewan who have said, don't change the position because . . . that the government highlighted in the budget.

This is a grant. To make no mistake about it, I want to be very clear in debate, Mr. Chair, so we can . . . Estimates is a time when we can get all the details out. Mr. Chair, I think it was in the last year, if I'm remembering it right, in the last full year of the tax credit — and historically I think this has been about the average — 2 per cent of the film tax credit has been paid out as a credit. In other words, 2 per cent of the millions of taxpayers' dollars that have gone into the industry have actually manifested themselves in a reduction, a de facto reduction in tax paid in the province. The reason for that, Mr. Chair, is that this is a refundable tax credit. That is a pretty good accountant's way of saying grant, Mr. Chair, because companies, companies get that money regardless.

If a company comes in, maybe from Halifax, Nova Scotia — where the author of this letter has moved, by the way — maybe someone coming in from Halifax, Nova Scotia wants to shoot a film here, and that would be a welcomed activity. They would set up a shell company, a shell company for that production alone. That production would access the taxpayers' money, reach right into here and get a grant. And yes, they would employ Saskatchewan people, and that's important. But then that company would go back to wherever they came from, maybe Halifax, Nova Scotia. If it looks like a grant and it talks like a grant, it's a grant.

What we're saying, Mr. Chair — and perhaps there'll be news on this soon — we're going to be meeting with the industry very, very soon. We've said, look, we don't . . . We want to move away from these kinds of refundable tax credits, these grants. We want to move towards a non-refundable tax credit. We're happy to talk with the film industry about a tax credit. We're happy to talk to them about some other ideas we have and they have to actually, to actually bring the art industry into the digital age, not just film but the other, the other art forms that could benefit from that kind of a move. We're happy to do that.

But we've been very clear, and we remain clear: we are not going to provide grants to companies that may come in for a very short period of time. If you are a Saskatchewan company and you would like to make a film in the province and you do make that film, the tax credit we're proposing, that benefit,

would come off of taxes you pay in the province back to the province where you were employing Saskatchewan people, Mr. Chair. That is a superior policy, we would argue. We think that'll work well. Now the members opposite say yes, but everyone else is doing this grant thing. Everyone else has a deficit budget, Mr. Chair, and we have a balanced budget.

We will also want to focus our economic policy on avoiding this kind of very deliberate winner and losers analysis that some governments do with grant money. It's not our money. It is the taxpayers' money. And if there are 335 people working directly in the film industry, the subsidy works out to between 15, 16, 17, \$18,000 or so per employee. We've made the difficult decision to say that is not, that's not enough value for taxpayers.

So is there something else we can do with the film industry to move to a non-refundable tax credit offered to companies that pay taxes in the province, employing people in the province? We think it's absolutely possible. We look forward to meeting with them in the very near future, I would say, Mr. Chair, and seeing what we can work on together.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chair, I appreciate the Premier's comment but we've been hearing the same line about, we're happy to meet with these people, for two months. So I was hoping that he might have said, well we're working on this; there is something that's going to happen. There's a deadline that's about eight weeks away. And so I strongly encourage the Premier to get involved from his office, get some of his staff working on this because it's clear that it's not resolvable in the ministry that has the responsibility.

So I appreciate the Premier's explanation. I think that quite a number of people will look at this in *Hansard* or maybe listen to it and realize that he's totally forgotten about all of the people who are working, all of the income tax they pay, all the sales tax they pay, and how that actually is very important for the economy of the province.

Now the Premier kind of flips back to his standard lines on the budget. I know as somebody who was around the cabinet table many years, but also somebody who was on the Public Accounts Committee in opposition, that there were a couple of choices, if we can put it that way, that the Premier and the Finance minister made with this budget which gave them that number that, at least on the paper, looks like it's a positive number.

My question for the Premier relates to why did the Finance minister, why did the Premier choose to change how the debt involved in building the Academic Health Sciences building was treated in this particular budget so that he could end up with a positive number? Because what he's done is he's pushed out debt to both the universities, but the biggest chunk of that relates to the Academic Health Sciences building.

And this is a straight accounting solution, I guess, if you put solution in quotes, or accounting trick, other people would call it, to have the books end up the way they are. And we also know that there's been similar kinds of things done in how they've pushed debt out into a lot of related agencies. And, Mr.

Speaker, this is possibly within the rules. But any time you do this within a structure where you're making comparisons, I think that you're playing with fire because ultimately all of these kinds of debts have to be included in the total books of the province.

And so, Mr. Chair, perhaps the Premier can explain why some of the accounting decisions were made this year as it relates to the money for post-secondary education, especially for the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] and the U of R [University of Regina].

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. I'm surprised. I thought there'd be more questions from the opposition on the film tax credit. So I had some information I wanted to share with the member that I will do so now in relation to that last question.

It's interesting. In 2006 to 2009, the last four years for which we have the complete figures, the total of payments made through the FETC was \$45.3 million worth of money spent on the industry. Of that amount, \$44.7 million was paid out in the form of grants to companies who paid no income tax in Saskatchewan. Doesn't sound like a very effective economic development policy for any sector — not the film sector, not the oil sector, not the potash sector — for any sector.

We've heard members opposite say, well what about companies like, you know, the potash companies can get a . . . there's an incentive for them to locate head office jobs here in the province? It doesn't eliminate the taxes they pay and then give them a grant, Mr. Chair. It simply reduces the amount they are paying, and they earn those only when new people move to the province of Saskatchewan, stay here and then they go out and pay the highest royalty rates in all the world in terms of the potash industry. So you know, I hope we can return to the debate because there's important points that need to be clarified for members of the committee and also for those, as you've pointed out, who may be watching.

Mr. Chair, the member's question is on the Academic Health Sciences centre. And I'm glad he's asked this question. I remember in opposition, I remember I had a sense of embarrassment, as did many people in the province, not about the government, not about politics, but just for the province as a whole, for this province that we all love regardless of where we sit. Where our College of Medicine was making national news not because, not to the fault, I don't think frankly, of exclusively of anybody at any particular institution, but because of the underfunding of the NDP and the neglect of the NDP, that college was put on probation, Mr. Chair. That was a very sad day.

I remember I was sitting somewhere over there when there was questions asked in this Legislative Assembly about that particular college. And so since that and when that occurred, the NDP earnestly, and maybe for a time while that hon. member himself was a Health minister, very earnestly said, oh we're going to do something about the Academic Health Sciences building. There was the former premier said in a press release that the project has the government's unwavering support, in

2003 when it was first announced. Nothing done. December 2004 action plan for Saskatchewan health care reiterated the commitment. No action for the Academic Health Sciences centre. The Throne Speech 2005: in this session, a major investment will be made toward this project. But it was December 12 in 2005 before there was, and there was at that point, some funding announced. But as it turned out, Mr. Chair, it was a photo op. Because when we took over government in 2007, that's when action started to happen in a meaningful way. That's when the university I think understood they had a willing and aggressive partner in the Government of Saskatchewan that wanted to get that project finished.

And so now the Academic Health Sciences centre is certainly again part of this budget. We have been making investments in it year over year since our first election in 2007. We've wanted to see obviously the college itself be sustained for the professional college that it is, to be recognized nationally for exactly the institution it is. We've avoided just talking about it, Mr. Chair. We've acted on it. We've wanted to actually to see that that College of Medicine was a vehicle for promises kept by our party.

[15:45]

In the election in 2007, I think at that time there were about 60 training seats in the College of Medicine, 60 seats. We indicated we had a plan to get it to 100. We've kept that promise, Mr. Chair. There were 60 residency positions in the province. We thought they should be doubled. We were behind Manitoba. We were behind so many places. We've kept that promise, Mr. Chair. That institution is vitally important.

The member asks about, well how are we funding it for? Well it's been a combination of cash, and a lot of it, for the institution itself. And as we have done in previous projects in other areas, including in roads where you'd have government-owned capital for example, including in other infrastructure initiatives in education for schools, where you'll have capital that's shared between two partners, the government and a local agency, we've also indicated that it's reasonable, and it's happened in the past, the university itself would taken on some borrowing.

Mr. Chair, the bottom line is funding to that particular institution, the University of Saskatchewan, has gone up at historic levels under this government. It will continue to be strongly supported by the government. And most importantly, the Academic Health Sciences centre is not just being talked about; it's being completed.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Well, Mr. Chair, it's always fun to listen to revisionist historians if they know that they're revisionist historians. But what I would like to explain to the Premier is that when you're building something as complicated and as important as the Academic Health Sciences building, it's a 10-, 12-, 15-year project. And so I'm very pleased to know that it's there.

But I know that our government was supporting of that project every step of the way and that everything that the Premier indicates about the things that we did, they were based on what

the plans had come together at that point. Now I hear the Minister of Health chirping over there in his seat. I know that he knows that there's a 17-step or 21-step, depending on the project, of planning when you're building a new health care facility. And it takes a lot of time, a lot of work to make sure you get through every step.

The Premier was clearly very pleased when he represented the constituency of Swift Current when we built the hospital in Swift Current. And he knows that it was quite a number of years, quite a number of meetings, quite a lot of community activity to get the plan in place and then approximately two years or maybe a little more to actually build the building. Now that's the nature of how we do things in Saskatchewan. And the Premier likes to take credit for things that have been planned and been worked on for many years. And I know that the Health minister hasn't liked it when I go to various projects that I know I've been involved with for over many years. But when he gets in here, he creates another story about it. But when he's out there and he knows that the people in the community know who and how the planning was done that allowed for a place to be built, and they know as a government.

Now I think that the appropriate thing for the Premier to do — and he does it once in a while — once in a while he acknowledges that in government you have a trust. You have a responsibility to spend the money of the people as carefully as you can and to build on the work, to build on the work of previous governments to make sure that things are done appropriately. And, Mr. Speaker, many of the things that have been done by this government over the last five years have been building on the work that was there before. And we congratulate them for doing those things. People in local communities know that. What they don't like is when the Premier goes and tells a different story, a new story to get credit for himself or for his government.

And so, Mr. Speaker, when we are asking questions about what happens around this university, we know that as it relates to the funding for the university, they have changed the way that they've been accounting and the way that this money was to be transferred. They've done it because they're having difficulty with the balancing of the books, and they've done it for lots of the public PR [public relations] kinds of things that they want to do.

I think what the public knows at the end of the year, like over the last three years, we're probably going to end up with a deficit. But when the Premier goes and is as blatant as he often is in dismissing all of the groundwork that was done on many of the areas of this government, then the public says, well yes, we understand your hype, but we don't accept it.

So I would ask the Premier to recognize that that's what he's doing. I would ask him to explain why he's changing accounting practices in the middle of a project and why he's forcing our universities to take on more debt at a time when they actually need capital; they don't need debt. We know that the province is the place that can borrow the money the cheapest. That's where we should be doing it.

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well it's very interesting. The NDP have just admitted that it takes . . . This is NDP time now. It takes 10 years. It would take 10 years to get a building done like that — 10 years. We're celebrating the 100th anniversary of this building, Mr. Chairman, which was built in the days of a horse and buggy in seven years. From '05 to 1912 is when they opened up this place.

Mr. Chair, he says, he asks me to recognize the good work that happened before we actually started getting the work done at the Academic Health Sciences centre. Well, Mr. Chair, I can tell you this. The U of S medical school was put on probation in 2002, when those members were sitting in government. Here's what the community was saying about their planning dollars and the sign they put up and the rocks they moved around. Dr. Roger Pierson who's a medical professor said, small cash injections not enough "to recover from the decade of very serious cuts that have happened to the college," Mr. Chair. That's what the community was saying about what happened under them versus what happened under this government in terms of the Academic Health Sciences building.

Here's someone else from the community. The president of the University of Saskatchewan, who said, and I quote, "A decade ago, our College . . . faced existential issues" — there it is again to the member from Athabasca — "existential issues regarding resources, faculty, and facilities." Today those challenges have been rectified as confirmed by the — not in 2002 were they rectified, not in '03 or '04 or '05, when members opposite were putting up signs and announcing a planning dollar here and planning dollars there; meanwhile the college itself was threatened under probation — not then, but as the president of the university says, today those challenges have been rectified as confirmed by the college's accreditation site visit this spring.

The member from Massey Place ignores the facts. His leader ignores the facts. The Government of Saskatchewan, he goes on to say, "has done its part." That's a quote. Not that government, Mr. Chair, when they were government. This administration for this project the member's asking about today, with the largest and most numerous accreditation issues resolved, there remain a number of matters for the university to work on, and you have my assurance that we will deal with these issues in short order.

The vice-president of the University of Saskatchewan has also said on the record, "There's no question about the province's commitment to medical health, education, and research." That's what the community's saying. That's what they're saying about today's commitment and action, including the method of funding for the project to be completed, because obviously, Mr. Chair, that's how the project's going to get done. And this is what the community said about the New Democratic Party's style. Mr. Chair, I have said in opposition and in government that we ought to give credit where credit's due. I've already said that earlier today. And we have done that, Mr. Chair, whether it was the business tax changes, where it was an initial build-out by SaskTel in terms of cell towers, where we issued a press release. There were any number of issues where we were to say to the New Democratic Party, you did that right and we will build on that success in government.

But, Mr. Chair, let's be very clear. When it comes to building in this province, well the important infrastructure facilities we

need in health care and education, we will not give credit to the New Democratic Party if what they were doing was putting up signs. They announced the hospital in Preeceville five times. The senior adviser who's joined us for estimates lives in Preeceville. He'd go home to visit. He'd walk by the site. The only thing that changed was maybe the sign got repainted.

How many times have they announced the Humboldt Hospital?

An Hon. Member: — Seven years.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Seven years. Announcement after announcement. Guess who built the Humboldt Hospital, Mr. Chair? Who got it done? These members on this side of the House.

Mr. Chair, there was countless long-term care facilities around the province that were promised, never acted on. The school in Nutana. Nutana . . .

An Hon. Member: — Saskatoon Nutana.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — In Saskatoon Nutana, promised in 2003 by the New Democratic Party. We cut the ribbon not too long ago, right. Well obviously, the current member for Nutana. But Ms. Atkinson would have been, I'm sure, happy with the fact that a Saskatchewan Party government had finally gotten the job done, Mr. Chair.

There are certain things for which we'll give the New Democratic Party credit for their years in government, but they must be held accountable for their record in terms of highways infrastructure, in terms of the Academic Health Sciences centre, in terms of hospitals across the province, the lack of long-term care across the province, the new schools that were needed across the province, and the fact that under their leadership this province underperformed to its economic potential.

Things have changed. Those schools are being built. Those hospitals are being built. The Academic Health Sciences centre is being built and is in good hands. And this province is leading the country, Mr. Chair.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Well, Mr. Chair, I will accept with gratitude the thanks from the Finance minister when he was in Preeceville, when the hospital opened, for the good work that I did and many of the people who are with our government did to make sure that facility was built.

And, Mr. Speaker, I notice that the Premier conveniently forgets what happened in Swift Current in his constituency when he was there. And the work was done well, despite some questions. And I know eventually the Premier understood that this project was going to get built because it was important to the whole community.

And, Mr. Speaker, let's make sure that we have the Premier acknowledge that he's building on a base of careful planning that was dealing with some very difficult financial situations in this province. And I think Murray Mandryk last week reminded all of us, and especially reminded the Premier and a few others

who were working in that Devine government at that time, as to why there were so many difficulties in getting some of the projects done during the '90s. Now, Mr. Speaker, we all, every Saskatchewan citizen, every person paid extra on our income tax. We paid extra in other taxes. We did with less for a whole number of years to try to make sure that we would never be in that position again.

And our job here in this particular legislature as opposition is to make sure that the government spends money appropriately, that they budget appropriately, that they tell us what they're doing, that they don't do crazy things like add politicians when there's all kinds of other important things that are supposed to be done. And, Mr. Chair, the Premier does not do himself well, he embarrasses all of us in this province when he gets on these tracks of diminishing the base of where we're going.

And so, Mr. Chair, in this particular budget they had to do all kinds of mechanics to get to where they have this, quote, balanced budget. And so I want to ask the Premier, can you . . . I want to ask the Premier . . . We know that the budgeted revenues from potash for this year are \$705 million. That's a 56 per cent increase over the 451 million that we got last year, which was a good revenue. Now we know just in the last few weeks that potash revenues are down 19 per cent from last year. We know that the Potash Corporation profits are down 33 per cent from a year ago and that some of their forecasts have had to be readjusted. So any problem at all with the potash revenues is going to cause problems for the Finance minister and the Premier.

[16:00]

Now one of the problems that a Premier — who is big on hype, likes to sell things — gets into is that they overestimate their revenues and underestimate their costs. We've seen, we know from the Auditor's reports that that's what's happened the last number of years. And so I would be very much appreciative of hearing from the Premier what kind of plans there are to make adjustments here because it's a pretty big jump. Now it's not as high as the member for Kindersley's estimates on potash a few years ago that really got us in the soup, but it clearly is much, a fairly dramatic increase. And it's one that I think many people are nervous about.

So the job of the Finance minister, of the Premier is to set out a clear plan and then let us ask questions. This is one we have big questions about.

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. The reports the hon. member is referring to are the . . . Well he may be interested in this because I think this is germane to his question.

The reports that the hon. member was referring to are from about February, the pullback happened. I think the hon. member should know, and I think he knows, that that is the first quarter of the year for the potash companies. So we're now going into a brand new quarter. The Minister of Energy and Resources is reporting and you've heard from the companies, the same ones you were referencing, that they're pretty confident about this year. In fact April, they're thinking, might be a very, very good

year in terms of potash sales.

So I just wanted to be clear so that member understood that they were referencing their first quarter. But I think he should know that their first quarter is actually our last quarter and we're actually now in a brand new budget year. And so, well I think that's a very, very important point.

Here's one other, I think, important point in terms of the member's question on estimates. We looked at the estimates. We want to err on the side of caution for obvious reasons, not the least of which happened in 2009. We're happy to talk about that. That was an unprecedented collapse in terms of potash sales, and we had to make some pretty difficult decisions and deferrals as a result. Happy to discuss that, Mr. Chair. You learn from those things, and so you add in, you build in even more caution.

We tried to do that with respect to all the commodity prices we used, upon which we based the budget. And the Minister of Finance wanted to make that very clear to all of us. That was the case certainly with respect to oil, where we see it hovering above the number we have so far, very early on, obviously after a month only. And the same is true in terms of potash.

But we were grateful to see that the day after, I think it was . . . or the day before, I think it was the day before the budget, an actual sale of potash came in to China, a significant sale at a higher level, at a higher level — we should be clear for those watching — at a higher price than what we actually put in the budget. So it's still a commodity; it cycles up and down, there's no question. But we're reasonably confident, based on that evidence of our price in the budget actually being lower than what happened the day before that in a real sale between Canpotex — I believe it would have been Canpotex — and China in terms of Saskatchewan potash.

Mr. Chair, at the start of his comments, they may be feeling a little bit guilty, the hon. member was I think saying, well we couldn't get to all the things we wanted to, even though they were announcing these projects. The academic health sciences is one of them. They were announcing they couldn't get to all of them because they were still slaying the deficit.

Mr. Chair, there was \$1.2 billion in their rainy day fund when they left office. There was money to get these things done. There was money to invest in highways in the province of Saskatchewan. We're still digging out of the hole left behind by their lack of attention to those issues. There was money to build that Humboldt hospital. There was money to get going in Preeceville. There was money to deal with the long-term care bed needs in 13 communities. There was money to share with municipalities. Now they want to take credit for a revenue-sharing deal that they failed to do. There were resources in the budget but they never acted, Mr. Chair. Maybe because they needed to . . . Maybe there needed to be a 10-year planning process. I'm not sure what was paralyzing the then government and what paralyzes them even today.

But it's interesting though that the Hon. Leader of the Opposition wants to talk about fiscal responsibility. In fact we understand from people that were at his discussion with the Yorkton Chamber of Commerce that he's taken to calling

themselves the fiscally conservative New Democrats. Fiscally conservative New Democrats, it's very interesting.

Maybe former Premier Romanow can make that case. Maybe he can. Fair enough. Maybe Premier Calvert early on, at least, in the term can make that case. But that member and all those members there ran under a banner of the New Democratic Party led by Mr. Lingenfelter that had \$5.5 billion worth of promises over four years, and it would have resulted in a massive deficit, Mr. Chairman. If that member wants to talk about deficits, we're happy to do it because thank goodness the people of this province said, no way. And, Mr. Chair, I think if the hon. members wants to start calling themselves, saying that they're fiscally conservative New Democrats, they ought to act like fiscally conservative New Democrats.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Chair, our job here is to look at and examine the books of the government, the actions of the Premier, Finance minister, cabinet, Executive Council people to see how they do the spending for the government, the budgeting. I stand proud on the record of New Democrat governments and how carefully we worked to make sure that we got the finances of this province in order. And the Premier himself said that in 2007, we had money to go ahead with a number of the different plans that we had available. And my question now becomes, to the Premier, as we're moving forward here, is you now have the responsibility. You now have the trust of the people to spend the money appropriately. Our job, which some people argue is even greater than that of the government, is to ask the hard questions about how you're spending that money.

And so, Mr. Speaker, when we see a budget that comes forward that has these soft spots, or they've got these things that don't quite feel good or they don't smell good, then our job is to point it out. And, Mr. Chair, I don't get an answer from the Premier on some of the things that I'm asking, about why you've changed how you've done some of the expenditures. Why have you got some fairly, I guess, optimistic revenue numbers in your budget? And why are you doing things like that? Because, Mr. Chair, that's the fundamental question when you're in government is, how are you spending the money and how are you doing it?

Now unfortunately for those of us in Saskatchewan who are a little bit older, no matter what the Premier says or what he does, he has the taint of the '80s with him. And, Mr. Speaker, it relates to what Murray Mandryk said the other day is that he has to be extremely careful. Now I heard the Premier say that he had learned a lesson a couple years ago around potash projections. And so that's good. But practically, what his job is is to be more than a salesman. It's to be somebody that the people can trust with the books of the province.

Now when I was in Yorkton the other day, I was saying to those people that what happens in our province is that we all want to make sure that things are done in a fair and even-handed manner. And I was telling them that there are some of the projects and some of the things that they need for their economic development that don't seem to be on the horizon in the plans of this government. Now my question this time is,

does the Premier know about a plan within the Department of Highways and Transportation which was called TEA, the Transportation for Economic Advantage?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, I'm going to get to this specific question at the end here, but he asked another question at the beginning in his preamble. He said, quite directly, he said, we've overestimated in the budget. And so I want to be able to answer that question. He said we've overestimated some sources of revenue. He said it again. I need to know which revenue he's talking about. He needs to ask the question so I can properly answer and be accountable for the estimates that we gave in the budget, and we'll also be happy to answer the question he posed at the end of his question.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Well I think that question from the Premier shows that I didn't get the answer on the whole issue of the projections for potash. And so I would like the Premier to look at that particular issue.

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — The member in his couple of questions ago said our potash numbers were overly optimistic. That's what he said, or at least he asked a question about that. And so my response was that he had the numbers, in terms of what he had heard from the potash companies or read in the newspaper, that was their first quarter of this year and not in the current budget year, not a part of the forecast we would use. So there was a pullback then. But it has no bearing at all on the numbers.

The better indicator of the numbers in terms of this budget, that our potash estimates are pretty accurate I would say, is the fact that the day before or two days before the budget was tabled in the House there was an actual sale of potash — a large one, Saskatchewan potash to China, that was higher than the price we're using to project the budget.

So, you know, Mr. Chairman, I know this is a Q & A [question and answer] period. But I think it's important to get those facts on the record, especially when it's the issue of the integrity of the numbers in the budget. So I wanted to get that out.

And I would ask the member for clarification, this acronym that he's using, TEA, I think is what he said. If he could provide a bit more information, a bit more detail about what he's talking about, I could do a better job of answering the question.

The Chair: — The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Nilson: — Well, Mr. Chair, I'm surprised that he requires the clarification because I think the Highways minister knows what I'm talking about. Because what this relates to is a plan within the Department of Highways that was set up in conjunction with obviously the Finance and everybody else to propose a \$5 billion, 10-year financial plan to build the highways. So we'd be, I'm sure, at about year 6 of that particular highway plan. And basically the six pillars of the strategy were international gateways and corridors, urban

economic connectors, rural economic connectors, northern economic infrastructure strategy, Aboriginal connectors, and regional shortline railways and airports.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what happened in Highways when the new government came in is, like many things, they kind of took the plan but they wanted to give it a different name. And so it has some other name now that the Highways minister may know about, but it's built on the practical planning and work that was done over many years.

And, Mr. Speaker, what we do know is that the Premier and this government are spending more money on highways. What we don't know is if they're actually getting more highways and roads for our province because the cost of getting these roads has gone up quite dramatically. And so, Mr. Speaker, that's where my question is going, is on these, on this area, the minister will never say how many miles of highway he's being built compared to previous years. He'll only talk about dollars. It's actually similar in quite a number of departments that were spending a lot more.

But the practical question is, what are we getting? Are we getting the kinds of results that we should be getting? And I encourage the Premier to answer my question by telling us, well are we, you know, in 2006 did we get 350 miles worth of highways of all the different kinds? Or and what amount are we getting in 2011? What amount did we get up in '11-12? What's the plan in this budget for next year? Because practically we know that the Finance officials, working together with the Highways officials, have all of the information that will show what the cost is per kilometre for thin membrane surface restoration, for building a new highway, for a gravelled highway and, Mr. Chair, it's possible that maybe there's some money that will fix the road up in your neighbourhood.

[16:15]

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, the hon. member's caught us. We changed the name of a program that existed under the NDP. It used to be TEA, as the member has referenced. That's why we had no record of it. We chose to re-call it a, to call it the Transportation for Growth program. So it's a little bit different in terms of the wording of the program. Here's another way it's different. We actually, we're investing in highways in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Chair. Here's how . . . Well the member's asked a good question: where did the money go? Well we hid it away on the Internet in a press release on October the 4th, 2011.

A hundred per cent of the gas tax collected and committed to highways improvements, 630 million in four years — this was on the previous four. 770 kilometres of major rural highway upgrades or rebuilds to support economic development and improve safety, such as Highway 40 near Battleford; such as Highway 309 near Lloyd; Highway 368 — oh and did that ever need work, the member from Batoche will verify — worked hard on that project; Highway 47 near Stoughton; Highway 48 east of Wawota; and to the hon. member for Cypress Hills, thank goodness, Highway 32 near Lancer, so that we can end the days of people having to pose nude in a calendar to get the

attention of the NDP. Gone are those days, Mr. Chair. They don't have to make a calendar. It's not the NDP in power. They just have to phone their MLA for Cypress Hills.

1485 kilometres of major repaving; 3856 kilometres of light and medium preservation treatments on some of the province's most heavily travelled highways, such as Highway 1, Highway 11, Highway 16. Accelerated the twinning; that's what they got for the money between Saskatoon and P.A. [Prince Albert]. I mean the list goes on. This is this year's budget estimates. As for this year, 207.8 million to maintain and repair provincial highways, including 320 kilometres of repaving; 70.5 million to upgrade rural highways. And there's no question . . . He's asked about the cost per kilometre of TMS [thin membrane surface] repair. It's gone up significantly, Mr. Chair, since they were in office. There has been a great deal of inflation with respect to that. We can get you the exact numbers on the amount of increase in that.

38.5 million to repair and replace bridges and culverts. By the way, in our first four years, Mr. Chair, I could tell you that 109 bridge replacements or rehabilitations were completed. This was an area that needed a lot of attention, where there was a lot of neglect. And that includes a long-anticipated new bridge — again there's Batoche — on Highway 2, the St. Louis bridge, Mr. Chair. So going on in terms of the . . . I've gotten the member for Batoche in trouble with his colleagues. The Estevan truck route, \$10 million; 6.3 million to Highway 11 between Saskatoon and P.A. We can go through the whole long list.

But let me just say this, Mr. Chair: we need to do more. The flooding last year has taken its toll on highways. We had been working hard to try to catch up on what the CAA [Canadian Automobile Association] characterized as a billion-dollar infrastructure deficit in our highways left behind by the previous administration. When you combine that with too many budget years where they weren't even investing all of the gas tax — not all those budget years, but too many of them — where they were not investing all the gas tax back into highways, and when you combine that with the fact that, even as we were catching up a little bit on highways, we had the massive flooding that we saw last spring, we readily acknowledge that more work needs to be done, something that the chairman is very familiar with in his own area. And I would just say that we will continue to do that work.

We need to stay very focused and understand that yes, we can talk about what's happened so far. Our highways budget is 60 per cent higher in our first four years than in the last four years of the previous government. And that's all good and positive. But we have work to do, and we are determined to get that work done, Mr. Chairman. We know how important highways are in the province of Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll ask my question at the top that wasn't answered and see if the Premier can get the information. My question was, how much does it cost today to build a kilometre of highway of the different types versus a few years ago? Because all we ever hear from the Premier or from the Finance minister is about the amount of money that's spent. And we don't really know how to compare it with money that was spent previously. Because practically what the public wants

to know is, which roads are being fixed? How are they going to be fixed? I mean the example is 2007, that highway was, north of Saskatoon to P.A., was to be twinned past Hague. And so now there's obviously, in the last five years, there's some more been paved, but I don't think it's too much farther past that.

So, Mr. Chair, the question always becomes: what is the money being used for? How much product are we getting? And I encourage the Premier to ask that specific question.

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thanks, Mr. Chair. Well the costs for road construction have gone up right across the continent, certainly gone up right across Canada in . . . That'd be true in all the Western provinces. As an example, and we can get the Leader of the Opposition some specifics on all the various kinds of roads that are built, but here's an example in terms of granular pavement. 2006 the cost would've been \$350,000 a kilometre; now it's \$600,000 a kilometre.

And so I guess one could make the argument that had the . . . Well and the Opposition Leader's nodding his head. Maybe he's on to something. I think we are on to something. If the NDP government would have actually committed in all of its budget years the full amount of money it was getting off of the people from their fuel taxes to the Highways budget, given the lower price it cost to build a road just a few years ago, think of how many roads would have been built, Mr. Chair.

If the New Democratic Party government would have made a higher priority of road construction when prices were lower, we'd have much less of an infrastructure deficit in highways to deal with today. And so I think it's . . . I'm glad he's raised the point. I think this is an important issue and it's one that's frustrating I think for all governments, for all departments or ministries of Highways and Transportation because even as we invest significantly more — and the hon. member's right; we do highlight how much money we've spent on highways — even as we invest more, we're able to do less because of this inflation that is really right across the industry in terms of highway costs.

But to suggest, Mr. Chair, that we do not release . . . we just release the dollars, and we don't talk about the amount of, the number of kilometres we're doing, is just wrong, Mr. Chair, and I don't think it's a service to committee members. Because not only do we tell people; we issue press releases. One comes out on budget day. We're talking about the budget. The hon. member will know in his briefings, I'm sure, from budget that he has in front of him for estimates that we explicitly issue a press release from the Highways and Transportation ministry that says, here are the number of kilometres we can do in terms of new construction, in terms of maintenance; here are the bridges we're repairing. Again, Mr. Chair, we have more work to do but we're determined to get the work done.

The Chair: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm very pleased to join in the debate today. And certainly I want to point out one of the privileges that I've had as an MLA and certainly the time that I've been here and having the pleasure of serving in cabinet with great leaders such as Romanow and Calvert, Mr. Speaker.

I can tell you that today that, as an MLA that has sat on both sides of the Assembly, that the number of folks that have had a great amount of influence on me and the sheer intelligence of many of our former leaders to really build a great province is something that I'm always thankful for. I think it's really important that we point that out.

And, Mr. Speaker, when you sit in cabinet and you see the people of the likes of Clay Serby, of Romanow, and then later Calvert, and of course people like Eric Cline, Eldon Lautermilch, there's no question in our minds, Mr. Speaker, that as a young MLA or as a younger MLA, that you certainly are privy to a lot of great ideas, a lot of great vision, and certainly a lot of great plans and great thinking, Mr. Speaker.

So I want to make sure that people out in Saskatchewan know that there is something that is obviously very, very important that we as MLAs understand that we are privy to some great opportunity to learn off some greater people than ourselves. And that's always important to be thankful, and I want to make sure that I make that point.

Some of the comments and some of the things that I picked up over the years, Mr. Speaker, from the many people that have had greater experience than I, is that the thinking and the amount of planning and the budgetary processes attached to some of those meetings — and long meetings, I might add — Mr. Speaker, it takes a lot of time to put things into place.

Now I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, that some of the discussions, some of the points that were raised when we talk about Calvert's contribution as a good point to start is that he often spoke about the fact that we have to govern for all of Saskatchewan. That was one of the primary messages that Mr. Calvert gave us all as members of cabinet. And I can remember the amount of money that was spent in Highways on No. 1 which really is the Trans-Canada Highway. Mr. Speaker, we spent a ton of money on that particular road. Why? Yes, we weren't getting success politically in terms of getting seats in that area, but it was the proper and the right thing to do. That's one example I want to share, Mr. Speaker.

And the second thing I would also point out, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that one of our leaders spoke about the Saskatchewan that has to be fair, the Saskatchewan that has to be properly planned for, and the Saskatchewan that has to be bold. And they spoke about the economy in general, Mr. Speaker. And I'm getting to my question for the Premier. And some of the points that they raised during many of those discussions around cabinet . . . And again you were sitting there, and I'm listening to all these people make all these great, impressive points, Mr. Speaker. The plan was made. There was commitments and there was a process in place, Mr. Speaker.

And I would suggest that many of the plans and the processes, while named other things under the Saskatchewan Party, they're following those plans, Mr. Speaker. And they're following them to a T because they're designed by people that were very capable, Mr. Speaker, both the bureaucracy and of course the leaders before us. I think it's important that you respect and honour the people before us because we would hope that would be the same accord afforded to us as we leave this place.

So some of the comments that were made, Mr. Speaker, talked about balance between labour, making sure that we work with our working people, and to respect that particular aspect and the important players in building this brave new Saskatchewan. And we talk about environmental integrity, to make sure we have that balance with the environment. Then of course we also talk about the private sector and the business community to make sure that the word profit is something that we can all enjoy and embrace, Mr. Speaker. That's really important.

So the three principles of making sure we respect our working men and women and the young people were engrained in me at many of these meetings, Mr. Speaker. They also talked about respect for the environment, Mr. Speaker, the environment which is something that I think should be part of the language with the Saskatchewan Party when we talk about sustainable development. Sustainable development means taking care of the water, the air, and the land in which we live. I think people understand that concept, Mr. Speaker. And of course, engaging the private sector as well to the extent where we have to engage them and in meeting all those three criteria, Mr. Speaker. Those are some of the points that the people that I had the privilege of sitting with often spoke about as I sat in cabinet during those years.

[16:30]

So my question now to the Premier: as I look at some of the points on the environmental front — and I believe that not only his government's doing it, but it's also the federal Conservative government, where they are now compromising the value of the environment by some of their recent actions that they have undertaken to either what they call streamline but really to fast track projects that may create some significant challenge to our environment — so the question to the Premier is this: on the environmental front, do you believe that that so-called streaming by the federal government, and some of the most recent actions by his government, really compromises the whole integrity of what we think should be a sustainable development model, in that the environment is also balanced off versus many of these other projects that will add to the incredible challenge of making sure that we protect the integrity of the environment as a whole? That's my question to the Premier.

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thanks, Mr. Chair. I want to thank the deputy leader for the NDP for the question with respect to the environment. And with respect to one project, one assessment, I can tell you that we recommended the following, very specifically, to the federal government. And when the ministers of the Environment met, it would've been our position.

And when I met with the Prime Minister, I was also pretty clear in stating that this would be the position that the process would acknowledge: the provincial environmental assessment processes as equivalent to the federal environmental assessment processes for the comprehensive study level EAs [environmental assessment] for projects on provincial lands; a blanket exclusion from all CEAA [Canadian Environmental Assessment Act] screening level triggers; consider bilateral agreements on environmental co-operation negotiated by the CEAA as legally binding on all federal authorities — so that's

the one assessment — introduce proactive and efficient measures that enhance the predictability and consistency of the federal EA process, environmental assessment process.

Under our administration, we've doubled the number of FTEs [full-time equivalent] that are actually working on the environmental assessment. And that's why we feel comfortable saying to the federal government, you don't have to have two processes. One is good enough, especially when we are increasing our environmental assessment resources.

And I'm happy to say that when your Leader of the Opposition was the Environment minister, he would've been part of the ministers of the Environment, the CCME [Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment] environmental assessment task group. Saskatchewan had officials on that group and the Leader of the Opposition was the minister.

And he, that particular group now, informed by the then Environment minister, the current Leader of the Opposition said — and this doesn't surprise me, when I think the member for Nutana has said the NDP support one project, one assessment — but then they said, and they were consistent, they said that they support a process “led or conducted by the best-placed jurisdiction, and that ultimately ensures that each order of government can make its decisions on projects in a certain, predictable and timely fashion” That best-placed government we believe are the provincial governments, especially if a provincial government, as is the case with ours, has increased the resources available in terms of full-time equivalents for environmental assessment. And we have done that.

The hon. member, I think, given his long service of the North, will be also be interested to know that we took steps immediately upon forming government to hopefully make some improvements in terms of environmental stewardship in the North. Here's a few examples the member may know. He would have been in the cabinet, and he named a number of the people that he served with. He would have been in the cabinet when the government approved for the then Environment minister some mobile air quality units, specifically for the North.

But what his cabinet failed to do, including the people he would have named, is to actually place any operating resources for those vehicles. So they weren't actually able to be used in a mobile way to test air quality. The member will, I think, be supportive of this government's decision to actually make the mobile air quality control vehicles mobile by staffing them and providing operational resources.

And I hope that he is also supportive of the fact that, for the first time in forever maybe, but at least in a very long time, a government in Saskatchewan is actually investing in testing northern lakes. I think we're concerned about, I mean, this is the iconic image of our province's North, those beautiful lakes. And we want to make sure we are proper stewards of them. So we've embarked on a \$1 million per year program to test those lakes. It's interesting to note that there was testing done in the past, I should clarify, but Athabasca lake, Lake Athabasca stopped being tested in the '90s, stopped being tested completely in the '90s, just as there was all of that development ramping up on the west side of the province of Alberta.

And so we have tried to move in and remedy this. The first invested million dollars over two years . . . well I should say, invested a million dollars for year two. But so far, the sampling programs that are taken in 2011-12 include 227 northern lakes sampled for acidification; inventory of soils of 110 locations in the boreal region and a joint eastern Athabasca regional monitoring program.

In the last election, I think the former Environment minister for the NDP, Peter Prebble, ran unsuccessfully in Saskatoon Greystone. Here's what he has said about the development of the northern stewardship in terms of the lakes under our administration compared to the administration of the member that just asked the question: “Prior to the autumn of 2007, there had been very little monitoring for acid rain in northern Saskatchewan. However this has now changed for the better,” said Peter Prebble. He said, “We wish to commend the Saskatchewan Environment staff [and I'm sure he meant the various ministers as well] for the very important monitoring work that was undertaken over the past two years.”

Mr. Chairman, and to the member, we know more work needs to be done, but again we're working to get that work done to ensure that air quality and lake quality in the North, as well as our habitat right around the province, our environment right around the province, is properly protected.

The Chair: — I recognize the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I just want to point out as well, Mr. Speaker, as I talked about the environment in general, and that's one of the things I want to make sure that people out there watching this particular process that they understand, that when we talk about sustainable development on the NDP side, we're really talking about the environmental code that we have to all certainly embrace.

I think that people out there in Saskatchewan ought to know what are the challenges with operating in the province if you're a business, if there's proper processes. I'm not talking about onerous processes, Mr. Speaker. I'm speaking about the fair and full public debate on some of these major activities when it comes to the economic challenges, or meeting some of the economic challenges and opportunities in our province.

And sustainable development for the NDP really means incorporating environmental balances overall. And that's what's really important. Now as you look at how we're trying to build the process, or the future of our province, we want to talk about as well the whole notion of streamlining because the federal government's talking about streamlining on the environmental front. They're speaking of doing away with a number of processes. We're not sure what the impacts are. We're not sure how many staff are being affected. We're not sure when the province may take over. Is there going to be some financial support for the provinces that are going to assume some of these roles? These are all the questions that are really, really important.

So on one hand, when the federal and provincial governments talk about streamlining environmental approvals for some of these economic projects, I ask the people of Saskatchewan to

pay very close attention to that because there is some demands on many of our lakes and our water and so on and so forth. So it's important that we pay attention to that stuff. This is the point that we make on the NDP side, when we talk about sustainable development as a whole.

Now looking at the whole notion of streamlining the federal and provincial government like to use when it comes to protection of the environment, they say, we're streamlining. So obviously there's other factors that we have to look at when we talk about the economic building. What does streamlining mean?

So I want to shift focus just a bit from the environment to some of the players when they talk about the economy in general. Recently the chamber of commerce has asked that the whole notion of the amalgamating the RMs [rural municipality] be something that the provincial government should look at. I guess the question I would have for the Premier, are you going to listen to the chamber of commerce when they tell you the process for some of these projects are a bit onerous because we have too many RMs? We would like you to amalgamate the RMs, Mr. Premier. That was the message from the chamber of commerce. So in terms of continuing on with the theme of streamlining, is the Premier going to listen to the chamber of commerce, or is the Premier going to listen to SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] on the whole notion of amalgamating the RMs?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thanks, Mr. Chair. You know, let me deal with the preamble if I can because I'm a bit confused. The NDP, I think in committee the critic for the Environment, the member from Nutana has said that the NDP, the provincial NDP support one assessment per one project. They support the decision of the federal government. Okay, and the member is shaking his head, so I'm no longer confused. That is their position, and it's consistent with the position of the leader when he was the minister of the Environment.

And so I would just say, Mr. Chair, then, to his point about ensuring that the proper assessment is done, we completely agree with him there. We agree that one assessment, it simply cannot mean less rigor. It cannot mean a smaller process or a less effective process for environmental analysis.

And that's why we've nearly doubled the staff in the Environment ministry that are responsible for environmental assessments, why the minister has put in place a process where — they never existed before — where there was a real back-up plan so the assessments themselves didn't come to a complete halt because someone was ill or someone had to be away. There is now that flow of service and focus on the part of the environmental ministry, and we want to thank those officials and the staff in that ministry for making those common sense changes.

And we also want to acknowledge I think the improvement in this province, unique amongst the provinces, of the move towards an environmental code where we can ensure that we strike that perfect balance — well, nothing's perfect — that we strike a better balance between environmental sustainability, which has to be absolutely key and paramount in any project

approval, that we balance it though with the need to make sure that we're a welcoming place for an investment. And I think the improvements there speak well to progress along that path.

[16:45]

Interesting that in the preamble to his previous question, the member said quite modestly that when he was a part of the government, the previous government — and he named many of them — that they governed for all. Interesting that he would ask now a question on behalf of the NDP, wanting this government to force a rural amalgamation. Obviously the NDP have returned to this policy. Well people will be forgiven if that's exactly what they think that member just said. And why, Mr. Chairman? Because the best indicator of future behaviour is past behaviour.

And what did that member do when he was in the cabinet in the Government of Saskatchewan? Maybe he wasn't in the cabinet at the time. What did those members do when they were in government? They tried to force rural municipalities to amalgamate. Mr. Chairman, I remember that.

That caused a lot of difficulty in rural Saskatchewan. Rural Saskatchewan was already a little bit upset with the NDP because they had promised, every year, meaningful education tax relief and never delivered. And you had tax revolts. Now the NDP came along and said, here's what we're going to do. We're going to force you to amalgamate. And now they're talking about it again, Mr. Chair. He's saying, well, the chamber of commerce has said what they've said, and are you going to force amalgamation of the rural municipalities? Like a divide, you either do what the chamber wants or you do what SARM wants.

Mr. Chairman, actually if he's really serious about wanting to represent all, it's an interesting question. We believe that you can achieve both — that you can represent the interests of the chamber, that you can represent the interests of the working family, and that you can represent the interests of important stakeholders like SARM. It doesn't mean every particular interest groups gets everything on their list, but it means you earnestly work with all of those groups to respond to what they believe is needed in the province to keep us moving forward.

Mr. Chairman, here's the short answer. No, this government will not force the amalgamation of rural municipalities. Where it has happened in the past in the name of efficiencies and savings, including Canada's largest province, the efficiencies and savings never materialized. What happened though was division and discord.

So, Mr. Chairman, we know that SARM, through an initiative called . . . I'm going to forget the name of it, but I think it's called the way through or the pathway through. I'm looking over at the Minister of Agriculture.

Some Hon. Members: — Clearing the Path.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Clearing the Path, that's it. I have a chorus of help in the back, Mr. Chair. They've identified the need to make sure that there's not unnecessary duplication on the part of rural governments and the part of urban governments. You

can do that without the provincial government doing as the NDP would have us do, forcing, with a gun to their head, the amalgamation of municipalities which they backed off on back then. But apparently now it's back on the agenda of the Saskatchewan NDP.

The Chair: — I recognize the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to go back to the whole challenge that we have in making sure that in Saskatchewan the water supply is something that the chamber also brought up at their most recent gathering. And, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that people realize that there is a lot of demand on water in general. The chamber of commerce has quite frankly asked for an aggressive provincial strategy on water management. They have been asking for this for a number of years, Mr. Speaker. And that's something that we have to absolutely pay attention to.

Mr. Speaker, there's no question that there are warning signs. As we mentioned at the outset, in the province, people watch very carefully what happens in and around their communities. And we see evidence, like as an example, with some of the water challenges in Prince Albert, of how that went on for a number of months and how that cost the economy, threatened the safety of the local residents, and really spoke about the challenge that we have as a province to continue building for the future, that some very basic building blocks are not in place despite the rhetoric from the Saskatchewan Party that they have record revenues, and so on and so forth.

Mr. Speaker, it's not a problem just in Prince Albert. It was a problem in Yorkton. It was a problem in Weyburn. And the headlines now today in Meadow Lake — this is an older paper — but Meadow Lake, the headlines in the Progress said, "Meadow Lake still boiling water." And, Mr. Speaker, one of the points that was raised in the article, even though it's a couple of weeks old, was the fact that one of the councillors there believed that the boil-water order in Meadow Lake will stay till the fall.

And as you look throughout Saskatchewan as a whole, as you look to the province as a whole, in many of our communities, in our cities, in our towns, in our villages, that the waterworks system that they have in place are near their end of life. Now the question that I would have to the Premier is that obviously the chamber realizes not just the water management strategy is required, but infrastructure investment is also required and certainly to making sure we balance all the needs on the drawing of water within our boundaries to make sure that there's a good sensible plan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that's something that really cries for a lot of attention. And we're going to watch very carefully how the Premier answers this question because he goes back to talking about the infrastructure deficit that they often like to accuse us of leaving. We turn around and we say to them, well it was a lot worse when we had the financial deficit left to us by your predecessors. So I think it's important that we simply answer the question.

The chamber is looking for an intelligent response in terms of

water management because we're getting all the warning signs, all the warning signs, not just the flooding this year but in future years for drought. We're getting all the warning signs of infrastructure within the community failing. We're looking at all the demands by industry for that water that is needed, and especially with potash. And you look at the challenges with drainage in the agricultural sector. Every single place that you look, as the chamber has so aptly pointed out, there are challenges with water management, water supply, and the protection of water in general. And yet nobody seems to be paying attention to this particular aspect of what the chamber is trying to raise.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Premier: in terms of the water management strategy and the whole notion that we're talking about under the argument of sustainable development — environmental protection of the water source is so critically important to the future of Saskatchewan in many, many, many ways — what is your government's plan over the next several months and over the next several years to begin to address this huge deficit that we have when it comes to managing our water properly and carefully and for the future?

The Chair: — Mr. Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. The member raises a very, very important question. There isn't a resource more important in the province frankly than water. And the Government of Saskatchewan is seized of this particular issue going forward. We're developing a 10-year infrastructure plan, and a provincial water strategy focused on three pieces: quality, quantity, and location.

Mr. Chairman, we're fortunate in that, you know, there's a lot of water in the province and certainly in the river system that flows through Saskatchewan where we — and the Minister of Agriculture has made this point many times — where we have to do a better job of being stewards of that particular resource. The evaporation of those waters that move through, especially on the Saskatchewan River system, is almost as high as what we irrigate. I know the member is talking about water supply and potable water, but I think it's an interesting illustration of where we truly need to come together and develop a plan because the supply is here in many respects. Location is a problem. And then we have to be doing what we can to ensure quality and quantity.

Mr. Chairman, there is an important point to be made in terms of the first years of our government where we worked with the federal government in their various Building Canada Fund iterations. And many, many, many of those projects were about improved municipal water supply. There's the example of the village of Hepburn, which is now a growing community, but for a very, very long time would ask for grants from its provincial and federal governments because it was operating on a well system and the people were not doing very well by that particular system. Well now because of federal and provincial participation they have a water system. There are many, many other examples and much more that is needed.

And so, Mr. Chair, as I highlighted last week in Saskatoon, our government is moving towards a long-term plan for this province that is informed by our economic objectives, which

won't surprise anyone. They've been consistent since we formed government but also speak to the long-term needs we have in water, in generally in infrastructure, in health care and education, in the environment. And may I just say that essential to the infrastructure component and the water component of that particular plan is our stated desire to negotiate with the, to work with the municipal sector in developing a longer term infrastructure plan.

As you know, Mr. Chair, we dealt earlier on with revenue sharing. We have invested in infrastructure through the stimulus and in partnership with the feds. We offered a municipal economic enhancement program, MEEP, an unprecedented \$100 million to municipalities where they were no strings attached, able to deploy that, again many of them, to help at least with the costs of waterworks in their communities.

We know a longer term infrastructure plan is needed for the province. We say to our municipal partners at SARM and SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] that we're going to continue to work towards that. It will not be an inexpensive proposition, but we know the importance of infrastructure in particular to water infrastructure to the province.

The Chair: — The Deputy Opposition Leader.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to make sure we raise those points because obviously it's something the people of Saskatchewan are concerned about and it affects our everyday lives. And it's important that people know not just it affects agriculture but it affects business. It affects communities and the health of our children and our families.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's important that we pay attention to that, and that's one of the points that I want to really again point out, the fact that when you look at the land itself, people make a living off that land. We've been privy to a lot of discussions from different rural families in terms of drainage challenges that they're having. And it becomes more and more of a major issue when you see how people that derive a living off that land are impacted. So whether you're in the North or the South or the East or the West, it doesn't matter where you live, the whole notion of water quality, water quantity, and safety of that water is really, really important. And that's one of the points that we wanted to raise today.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to just shift gears a bit in terms of my particular question I have for the Premier. We always assert that as opposition members our role is to watch what the government does. We relish in that particular role and we certainly want to tell people that we're very proud to fill that role. And we encourage people to give us information because part of holding the government to account is to make sure you have full and fair information that you can challenge the government on. And it's something that we certainly view as very important to the Assembly, very important in politics in general. And certainly from our perspective, we want to do that and continue doing that for as long as the next election comes. And at that point, of course, people will have the opportunity to judge.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the Northland project in North Battleford. I guess we are all . . . have the opinion that there is an effort right now. The Crowns are doing well and there's no question in our minds that we feel that the Saskatchewan Party want to look at the whole notion of selling off our Crowns. And right now, Mr. Speaker, they're doing it in the most quiet manner. As you begin to see the process unfold, as you can see whether it's services within SaskTel or whether it's selling off certain assets, that there is the move to sell the Crowns by the Sask Party.

And I guess the most specific and the most important example that I would pick up on is the Northland Power deal in North Battleford. I guess the question I would ask the Premier is: why did you allow that process to proceed? Because I understand that SaskPower themselves could have done the project and you would have actually strengthened the Crown corporation called SaskPower, and that there was a specific deal within that Northland Power deal that really . . . Some people have phrased it as a sweetheart deal, where you're guaranteeing them a certain rate for 20 years. And a lot of people today have certainly made the point that in North Battleford, for the generation of power that the Northland Power is able to provide to the grid in general, could have easily been done by SaskPower themselves. Instead a separate sweetheart deal was established by this company out of Ontario, I believe. And I guess the question is: why would you weaken SaskPower as a Crown corporation on purpose?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, why did the NDP in '03 cut a sweetheart deal for a cogen deal, private generation of electricity at Cory? Why did the NDP cut a sweetheart deal for the cogen at Lloyd with a private company? That was in '99. Why did the NDP weaken their Crown corporation, SaskPower, and cut a sweetheart deal with SunBridge to generate electricity — private companies generating electricity in the grid?

Mr. Chairman, we've heard this line of questioning. We've seen the NDP try every way they can to make inferences on the Crowns that are simply not true. And it's interesting, Mr. Chair, that he would enter this line of questioning. I'd be happy to have him pursue it further. Under the NDP, on certain electrical generation projects, some of them renewables, not all of them, they made a decision to go with a private-sector generation of electricity. They did. The NDP. But when the NDP do it, then it's not about a sweetheart deal, I guess. When the NDP do it, it's not about some sort of backdoor privatization. Mr. Chairman, I think the people of this province have had enough of those kinds of tactics, but if he wants to ask more questions about what they did with private electrical providers, we'll be happy to answer them.

[17:00]

The Chair: — I recognize the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Belanger: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I think what's important is that the people of Saskatchewan, a lot of people in Saskatchewan, know that Saskatchewan was certainly going to experience a boom. I think people out there . . . I can remember

the headlines as far back as 2000 where the headlines in the newspapers said, "Saskatchewan's star is rising." I remember that particular headline, Mr. Speaker. And the work has been done over the years, Mr. Speaker. There's been a great opportunity, as I mentioned at the outset of my questions, of how we'd been able to learn or how I was able to learn off some very qualified people that sat around cabinet and made some of the choices that they made, Mr. Speaker.

And I can tell you one exchange I had with the former Health minister, the current leader of our party, over the whole notion of the smoking challenge. And I didn't think that was a great idea, Mr. Speaker, at the time, and I certainly expressed my views. Today now I stand corrected that the fact that some of the activity undertaken by him when he was the health champion of making sure people in Saskatchewan knew the dangers of smoking, Mr. Speaker. He won the argument based on a fair and square argument, and today now we're seeing that the health benefits of the people of Saskatchewan have been improved because of some of the leadership undertaken by the current leader of our party, Mr. Speaker.

And that's my point, is that there's a lot of folks out there that had a healthy debate. They weren't bound by philosophical positions. They took some really solid, common sense approaches to government. They put some very solid commitments in place, and today we're seeing the benefits of that, Mr. Speaker.

In fact I want to be very careful in my closing comments, Mr. Speaker, because I've only been given a few minutes. But I want to point out that in 2006, in 2006, Mr. Speaker, about a year before the last election, Mr. Speaker, there was 9,349 people that moved into Saskatchewan, 1,500 more from Alberta alone, Mr. Speaker, than left. Following that year, in the first quarter, there's 4,631 people, Mr. Speaker, that moved into Saskatchewan in the first . . . in one of the quarters of 2007. So then we start moving backwards, Mr. Speaker, in terms of how the growth of Saskatchewan was steady. It was moving forward and things were going to happen. And the people of Saskatchewan — and I want to tell the Premier that — the people of Saskatchewan knew this was going to happen. Everybody and their dog knew the boom was coming and everybody and their dog now knows that the boom will continue regardless of who's in government, Mr. Speaker. I think people have been very, very clear on that.

However in making sure that we ascertain what the people of Saskatchewan want when you know the boom is going to continue, you have to make sure that they know what values that we as a party would have versus their values, Mr. Speaker. So my point, as a member of this party, is that Saskatchewan's future is bright. The NDP will embrace that. It'll continue building. But, Mr. Speaker, there are choices that we will make that'll make sure that the people of Saskatchewan realize that we're serious about building for the future, and part of that build means sustainable development overall, Mr. Speaker, making sure we protect our Crowns and making sure we govern for all and not ignore any sectors or any people or any region, Mr. Speaker. That's the most important message I have today. Thank you very much.

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, I didn't hear a question in there but, you know, this is a good forum to have debates. This is a good forum to have debates. That member stood up and accused this government of having a plan to privatize the Crowns. His example for that, his criticism then of government policy took the form of the Northland private sector, privately built gas station, SaskPower natural gas station, SaskPower purchasing, of course, the electricity generated. This is an important opportunity for that member to stand up or his leader and be very explicit about what the NDP believe now. Because when they were in government, they entered into these arrangements. Sometimes SaskPower built their own generating facility. Sometimes under the NDP, SaskPower bought their electricity from a private generator.

We have chosen both as well. We're building out the public, the Crown-owned capacity, Mr. Chair, because we have demands to meet in terms of electricity. And yes, from time to time when it makes sense, we're engaging with the private sector as well.

What is the NDP's position? What is that member's position on 36 megawatts of power coming from a biomass generating facility at the saw mill at Meadow Lake, owned by the Meadow Lake Tribal Council? Is he in favour of that? Because it's a great economic engine for the tribal council and for the people of Meadow Lake. He says he likes that. Well the Finance critic says that they do support that. What's his position about the cogeneration facility, the private electricity, that's going to be generated to help reanimate the pulp mill that shut down under their watch, Mr. Chairman? Are they in favour of it or not? That one will also have a benefit to the Agency Chiefs Tribal Council as they're involved in that whole project.

Mr. Chairman, you can't just get up and have a little drive-by estimates question and say, you've got a plan to privatize the Crown, the SaskPower — your example is a private generator — when you sat in cabinet and you approved exactly the same deals. And when current deals like it are economic opportunities for people like the Meadow Lake Tribal Council for a saw mill, to reopen a pulp mill, when will the NDP . . . I mean I know the NDP's job is to hold the government accountable and ask questions, and fair enough, and that's what the member has stated. It's also their job to state what their policy is, especially when there seems to be massive inconsistencies, huge gaps in the policy of the NDP. So whoever's up next, stand up and say, are you in favour of partnering with the private sector or groups like the Meadow Lake Tribal Council for the generation of electricity in the province of Saskatchewan?

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

Mr. Nilson: — Well, Mr. Chair, I'm happy to enter back into this debate because the fundamental question is trust and openness and accountability. And the fundamental question we have about Northland Power is we don't know, as citizens of this province, how much we're paying for that power as it relates to our total system because the officials have not been able to give that information to us no matter how many times we've asked about it.

Now this isn't the only example of that Premier and that government doing this kind of thing which raises a lot of

questions. We raised questions about the new long-term care facility in Saskatoon which the auditor then said looks like it's costing a lot more money to do it this way because they didn't do a full assessment of what they were doing. They didn't go with the open tendering and, Mr. Speaker, that is the question. What are the contracts that they are entering into on behalf of the people of the province? And where and how do they make sense in light of all the comparisons? We don't get that information.

And so when the Premier stands up and says, are you willing to do some of the things that we did over the years, of course we are, but we did them in a way where we looked at all of the different options and got the advice of the professional people both within government and often outside of government that this was the type of thing that made the most sense to do. Now the problem we have is that the auditor has challenged the facility in Saskatoon. We don't have the details on what's happened with Northland Power and we've continued to ask for that. Maybe today is the day that the Premier will give us the information that we've asked for for a number of years.

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, it's amazing to hear what their leader just said. It's very consistent with what he said since the election. You know, in the election campaign they suffered an historic defeat. I haven't heard a note of contrition, not one admission by that Leader of the Opposition, by any of the members over there, that maybe they got something wrong, that maybe they weren't right about anything. Witness his last answer. To his credit he tried to answer my question — are you in favour of these kind of power purchase agreements or are you against them? And you know what his answer is? Well we were in favour of ours because we know we would do them right, but we don't know about anyone else.

Mr. Chairman, the disclosure for PPAs [power purchase agreement], the rules that are set around disclosing the terms for power purchase agreements, were set by the NDP — in other words that these cannot be disclosed. They set the rules. He may have been the minister. He was a minister of a lot of things. He may have set the rules back in 2005 that says we can't disclose the terms of a power purchase agreement. But that only applied apparently to them, that non-disclosure, that exemption, I guess. Everyone else would have to disclose and never mind best business practices. I can assure the member that the Crown corporation, SaskPower, is managed and led by fine women and men, excellent women and men who are dedicated to the integrity of that particular Crown, who are dedicated to the proposition that they need to continue to provide reliable electricity at the lowest possible cost to a growing province. I can also tell you that all the agreements that we've signed, in terms of power purchase agreements, are completely in line with the same agreements signed by the NDP.

But you know, Mr. Chairman, I just find it . . . It's surprising to me that given the opportunities they've had now since November the 7th, since the election, given all the opportunities he's had as a leader to stand up and say, you know, I think we made some mistakes and we didn't get things right and we were off of the agenda of the people of the province in the provincial

election campaign and we need to do better and we need to earn their support . . . Those are some of the things I remember saying in '03 when something disappointing happened to us.

It wasn't the people's fault. We didn't say, it wasn't the turnout's fault; it wasn't icy roads. It was the fact that maybe we needed to be better. Mr. Chairman, I think that every member in this House would be well served, including us, including our side of the House, by remembering that we can always do better and we're not going to get everything right. But to stand in his place and say, well we supported them then because it was us doing them and, you know, we always got things right and nobody else will, you know, I think that explains a lot frankly about what happened on the 7th of November last year.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Well, Mr. Chair, I thank the Premier for answering a question that I know a number of us have been asking for a long time is, what is the nature of the agreement at Northland Power? And he says that it follows the principles that were set out over the years that we worked in this area. And if that's in fact the case, then I appreciate that.

Now, Mr. Chair, we've given the Premier a chance to basically say, maybe I got it wrong on the three more MLAs question. And we've done that over many hours, as I think lots of people in this room have witnessed. But more importantly, we did it last week which would allow him to spend some time and go to the people and get a response on that particular issue. Because I think that's the kind of thing, when you're in government, that you need to look at and see where maybe you've made a wrong choice.

Now we know that they made some wrong choices as it relates to labour legislation which the courts have said is unconstitutional, but are they looking at it and trying to fix that? Doesn't sound like it. And so, Mr. Chair, I think that when you're governing, you keep working and providing things.

Now one of the concerns as well is related to this facility in Saskatoon where the Provincial Auditor has made some very direct statements about the process that took place. And we raised lots of questions about that which were dismissed by the minister and by the Premier, and we don't think that was appropriate. Sounds like it's going to cost a lot more money for the people of Saskatchewan, that \$20 million there. Well that could have gone to health care to pay for seniors' medications. It could have gone to a number of facilities and staff that are needed throughout the health care system. It could have gone to many of the concerns that we have about what the provincial budget is doing to the educational system across the province and how young people in classrooms are not getting everything that they should be getting because of some of the changes in the education budget.

[17:15]

But, Mr. Chair, when one goes and sets oneself out, setting a course for the province, what the public wants to know is that you've provided the information, you've let them know what kinds of things are being done. And unfortunately there's a

number of places where we've asked questions, that hasn't happened. We've also been surprised. I mean things just sort of pop out of nowhere and cause everybody a lot of concern.

Mr. Speaker, when the announcement came this morning about changes to labour law, this is no small matter. This is 100 years of legislation and accommodation. That is the nature of how we do things in Canada that's being challenged directly. And it may not be, it might not have been a big issue if there was trust around this issue. But this builds on some of the direct comments of the Premier about how he wants to make war on labour. He said that a number of times. It also builds on some legislation that was introduced and rammed through the legislature and done in a way that basically caused a lot of difficulties for many people within the province. And in fact, after a very reasoned judgment, one of our most able judges said it was done in an unconstitutional manner.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that when we look at what happens, it's about trust. It's about being open. It's about being accountable. And those are where some of the fundamental questions are rising after four and a half years of this government. So I want to say that let . . . The people are always right in elections. They make their choices at a particular time. But they also continue to work and make sure that everybody is held to account.

Our job, as I've said a number of times today, is to ask the hard questions of the government. And sometimes that's not easy for the government. I know; I've been on that side. But if people aren't asking the right questions, then you aren't doing a good job. The next part is to accept that those are the right questions and that you have to admit you're going slightly in the wrong direction, or maybe totally in the wrong direction, and change course.

But it's the government and the Premier that are leading and that are spending the money. And so he can make all kinds of comments and questions to us in opposition. But the question is, what is he doing? What is he doing with the people's money?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thanks, Mr. Chair. And I thank the member for the question. Interesting he did reference the essential services decision by the courts. And, Mr. Chairman, here is a good example of where I think . . . Shortly thereafter, I was scrummed in the rotunda about the particular announcement and said, our government made mistakes early on in the life of the government. We made mistakes in terms of the details of the legislation. The government has since indicated that we're going to certainly be abiding by that court ruling in terms of consultation. Witness where we are today, Mr. Chairman, with the Minister of Labour releasing the points for consultation on potential improvements and changes to the labour environment in the province and the creation of an employment code. We are actually doing exactly what the court said.

The other recommendations from the court, terms of essential services, we are also acting on, Mr. Chair, and they will also be the subject of this review. And so I think it is important to recognize that early in the life of the government, all the details were not got right, obviously. And I think it's important for governments — and by the way, I think it's important for

opposition parties — when they get something not quite right to admit it to the people for whom we work, the people we serve, and then to indicate the ways that we hope to address the situation.

But here's what was not got wrong, Mr. Chair, on that whole issue, the principle of essential services legislation. I think that principle is widely supported in the province. It's certainly supported unanimously on this side of the House. The NDP to their credit created a clear choice in the election campaign. Their clear choice was they would repeal that essential services piece.

And so we could face this factor again of services being withdrawn from snowplows in the middle of a blizzard as a result of seeking leverage in a workplace dispute. Mr. Chairman, maybe that's okay for the members opposite. It's not okay for members on this side of the House. So we will make the improvements that are needed to essential services that the courts have directed. We will make the essential services piece open to, subject to the labour review that's happening.

And here's the other thing we're going to continue to do, as I said on election night, and we're going to continue to admit readily mistakes and then deal with them because, you know, that's how people in this province conduct themselves in their daily lives, in their businesses, in their vocations, in their vocations. And I think that's their expectation of government. And we're going to work to limit those chances obviously, Mr. Chair. But when they occur, that's how we'll deal with them.

I think I heard the hon. member, the Leader of the Opposition, end with what have you done with the people's' money? I think that was the question. Well, Mr. Chair, I'll give the longer term answer first, and then we'll focus on the budget.

There were many things that we've done with the people's money in the first four years that we've had the honour to serve as their government. We paid off 44 per cent of the general revenue debt of the province of Saskatchewan. We lowered taxes for small businesses. We lowered taxes for property owners in historic ways. Most producers in rural Saskatchewan received an 80 per cent reduction in the property tax, in their education property tax. That's what we've done with the money. Mr. Chair, we lowered taxes for families right across this province so that a family of four can earn more here in Saskatchewan without paying any provincial tax than anywhere else in all of Canada. That's what we've done with the people's money.

Mr. Chair, we invested \$2.2 billion in highways, 60 per cent in our first four years higher than their last four years. That's what we've done with the people's money.

We've targeted surgical wait times in the province. We've invested more resources to reduce surgical wait times — those waiting longer than 18 months down now more than over 90 per cent; those waiting longer than 12 months down over 60 per cent. That's what we've done with the people's money.

We've increased funding to the cancer agency, Mr. Chair. We've added drugs, important drugs, to the formulary. We've building schools in the province of Saskatchewan. We're

building long-term care facilities in Saskatchewan. We're going to get the Moose Jaw Hospital done. That's what we're doing with the people's money.

And finally there will be a brand new provincial hospital in North Battleford. That's what we'll do with the people's money. And if we have a chance in the years ahead, in the months and years ahead, we're going to continue to do those things. We're going to continue to lower taxes for Saskatchewan families. We're going to continue to reduce the debt in the province. We're going to continue to build the infrastructure. That's what we'll do with the people's money — all within a balanced budget.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Well, Mr. Chair, I'm not sure the Premier's had a chance to rattle off that speech since last November, so he's doing a pretty good job of remembering. But I'm sure he said it enough times that he can say it in his sleep.

Now in 2010 the Sask Party government, the Premier and Sask Party government, cut the Aboriginal employment development program. And the response to that decision when we challenged it was, whoa, we're going to set up some other options, some other kinds of things. And we know that there have been increased numbers of Aboriginal people employed because the numbers in the province have gone up.

But what is there to replace that Aboriginal employment development program which was of, I think, great value to the future of this province? Because what we know is that no matter how many people we bring from other places, we have this incredible resource of young people who are wanting to be trained and want to contribute to our economy. In fact I know that professor of economics Eric Howe at the University of Saskatchewan calculated that there's a \$90 billion value to the sort of intellectual or people capacity of all of the young Aboriginal people in our province. And so it's absolutely crucial that we make sure we use this resource in the same way that we use all of the other resources in the province.

But I have to say that when some of these kinds of programs are just cut and not replaced, that's not a good sign for the province. What we also know is that there's a substantial gap between the amount of money that's available for K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] education on the First Nations schools versus what happens in the other system. And I know that the minister's identified that, but what plans does the Premier have to deal with that using provincial resources? And also what plans does he have to talk to the Prime Minister, given the great responsibility at the national level for this particular problem?

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thanks, Mr. Chair. The hon. member raises a very important question. There's a labour shortage in the province today. It's a challenge we'd rather have than out-migration, but it's a challenge nonetheless. And so our government has a three-pronged approach to dealing with the challenge.

We've greatly improved and enhanced the provincial immigration efforts, Mr. Chair. That's one source of new people to the province in terms of the labour shortage. I think there was, under the New Democrats when they were in office, I think about 8,000 immigrants between '01 and 2006. We'll do well over 10 just this year by setting some bold targets and investing increased resources on the immigration front. That's one source of help on the labour shortage. Another are expatriates from this province who moved to other parts of the country. And we've seen many of them moving home, and we're grateful for that. We welcome them back.

More important even than those other two is the third, arguably the first of those, and it goes to the member's question, and that is that we would continue to work hard to close the educational outcomes gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal citizens of this province. Mr. Chairman, you will know that on the 26th of March, there was a joint task force announced on this very issue with respect to our province's efforts building on the relationship we have with FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations] on the educational outcomes gaps initiative that we have with them.

I think more important than the actual program itself, and the member's raised a specific one, is a measure of the amount of investment in post-secondary institutions to train more of our Aboriginal citizens — First Nations and Métis. The next part is, the next part of the valuation, the measure, the matrix should be: are there more Aboriginal students enrolling in those institutions now that they have that support? And most importantly of all, are there more First Nations and Métis people working in a growing economy? So let's deal with that while we acknowledge there's more work to be done. And that's why we're engaged with our partners in trying to find even better ways to achieve the results that we all want.

Let's take a look at the first part of that equation, which is investing more in post-secondary institutions. This year our government provided 47 million in funding directly for First Nations and Métis education. There's been a 25 per cent increase in funding for the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies since 2007 — 4.7 million in 2012 versus 3.78 million in 2007. That was the budget that we took over.

Mr. Chair, that is a great institution. That is an excellent technical school by any measure, by any standard. You take a look at any across the country, and Randell Morris and his team at SIIT [Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies] continue to do a great job of not only making that education available, deploying these additional resources efficaciously, but also ensuring that at the end of that training, there's a job. They have great relationships with industry partners in Saskatoon and area and across the province. I think 200 graduates from SIIT alone are on site at Agrium helping that potash expansion under way, an expansion that may never have happened if others had their way with a royalty shock in the middle of that expansion. But the SIIT is doing a great job.

Thirty-four per cent increase in funding to GDI, to the Gabriel Dumont Institute, that's since 2007 — 10.24 million in 2012 versus 7.6 million. And then there's a long list of other initiatives.

But let's move, if we can, mindful of the time, to the results.

Well the results are in. Registrations have grown at SIIT by 23 per cent, 23 per cent more higher enrolment at SIIT between 2007 and 2011. Completions, even more important, increasing from 60 to 77 per cent in certificates and diplomas. Gabriel Dumont Institute, GDI has trained over 1,000 First Nations and Métis teachers. One of the top two training providers of practical nurses in the province of Saskatchewan.

[17:30]

So that's the middle part of that formula. The first one is advancing some resources to these institutions, beyond programs. I think that's important. Two is, are more people taking advantage of the programs and completing them? And thirdly, what happens after that? Are they employed? Well, Mr. Chairman, in the last numbers from Stats Canada, year over year, the employment stats are out. I think there were 5,200 jobs created year over year in the province. We have the lowest unemployment rate in Canada.

I'm happy to report to the House I think 4,700 of those new jobs went to Aboriginal citizens of the province of Saskatchewan — 90 per cent of the new jobs. So there is more work to be done, but we're making progress with respect to the institutions, funding them. They're making progress in terms of enrolment and completion, and more and more First Nations and Métis are working in the province. First Nations and Métis employment have 39,200 and 2011 was the highest on record. More work to be done, Mr. Chair. But we're making progress beyond specific programs to a broader strategy that seems to be working with more work needed. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Chair, we all are pleased about more people getting training, more people working. But unfortunately, Statistics Canada showed that, at the end of 2007, 13.9 per cent of First Nations people were unemployed. At the first part of 2012, the unemployment rate is 20.5 per cent. So there's work that's been done, but there's more work that needs to be done. And that's why I ask the question because it's absolutely crucial that this becomes a priority for the government.

It took an awfully long time from the collapse or cancellation of the Aboriginal employment development program to get just the committee started a few weeks ago. And so the question really comes, what priority is being placed on this? Because it's part of the fundamental nature of what the future of our province is going to be. When we look at all of the resources we have, I think the Premier agrees with me that our biggest resource is always our people. And it also then takes me back to the question about why you exclude these people under 18 from your calculations. Because we know that about a quarter of the population's about . . . is under age 18. And a very large percentage of those under 18 are First Nations and Métis people. And so it raises a bigger question about the future of our province and where we intend to take it.

Some of the changes that were announced today by the Minister of Immigration around the nominee program also raised questions around how we've welcomed people to the province.

We all know that the motto for the province is "from many peoples, strength." And we all know that when our families came to this place, they didn't come with one at a time with a job. They came with great numbers of people from Norway or from Eastern Europe or other places.

And so some of the announcements today I think have sent a cold splash of water over quite a few of our new Saskatchewan residents because one of the positive reasons that they came to the province was so that they could build a place for their family here, but also invite other members of their family here. So when we look at how we set out what we want to do in our province, we need to make sure that we include the new people that are coming. But we also make sure that those who are here and have great strength in their presence in this province get the best training possible, so they can contribute to what's happening in the province.

So I say to the Premier that, keep working on this, but I would say make it a higher priority to make sure that these numbers of twenty and a half per cent of First Nations people reporting unemployment, let's try to really work on that and bring the number down. So I would ask the Premier what emphasis he will have to accomplish that.

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thanks, Mr. Chair. Well, you know, I think we've gone through what we're doing in government in terms of increasing the participation of First Nations and Métis into a growing economy in the province. We've seen an unprecedented increase in funding for institutions like the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies and for the Gabriel Dumont Institute. We've seen them increase their completion rates and then we've seen Aboriginal employment increasing. And I've said quite clearly, there is certainly more work to be done.

Mr. Chairman, we've come a long way between 1996 . . . We all know that education is the key here; there is no question about that. I think we agree. I've heard the Finance critic speak to that eloquently in this House, and members on this side have as well. Between 1996 and 2006, the gap allowed at that time by the government between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal high school completion rate grew from 20 to 27 per cent. Between 1996 and 2006, the gap allowed to grow by the government in place of the day of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal post-secondary completion rate grew from 17 to 20 per cent. There is a lot of work to be done. This is a long-standing problem.

His question is, what are you going to do? Well we're going to continue to do what we have been doing in government. We're going to make those investments in infrastructure. We're going to be working with our partners to deliver that education. We're going to provide them the resources so they seek completion of the programs. And then we're going to encourage and provide even more incentives for institutions like SIIT that have a great track record in ensuring that those graduates are then working, whether it's at a potash mine, at Agrium, or in construction or in some other trade. In the case of those who graduate from the professions, the same is true there, or in health care as in the case of the Gabriel Dumont LPN [licensed practical nursing]

program that they have there.

And, Mr. Chair, importantly here's the best thing that we can do to ensure that that gap continues to close, to ensure that people have the opportunity to pursue education first, but then a job at the end: we're going to continue with a growth plan that's got this province in a pretty good place right now in terms of economic performance. The best thing we can do is ensure that Saskatchewan's growing, that there are opportunities here first and foremost for our own residents, then for those who have left for other places in Canada, and new citizens to the country.

And let me just close with an answer to the member's question on immigration and some of the changes announced by the minister today. You know, you've got to kind of watch our opposition. They're going to do a good job. They're the nimble nine, after all. They're going to hold us accountable. And they will; and that's their job. And certainly they've done that this session. But you've got to watch and make sure that, and make sure that they've got everything right.

Because . . . I'm going to watch my words very carefully here, Mr. Chairman. But I think we all need to make sure they've got everything right, including that minister. Because he just stood up on his . . . took to his feet in the legislature and implied that the changes we are now making in immigration will mean that only one can come in at a time. That's nonsense, Mr. Chair. This is about families continuing to be able to move to where there is opportunity, to where there are jobs. So let's be very clear about that. There are changes happening nationally in terms of extended family so that we can, all of, every province and the federal government can continue to meet the objectives and the goals of immigration.

And I want to just say this, Mr. Chair. Notwithstanding the fact that we've covered some issues that we could have done a little better in government over the first four years, I am very proud, and members on this side of the House are very proud of a complete turnaround in the immigration record for the province of Saskatchewan — a complete turnaround.

The New Democrats were afraid to set goals. When they did, they were tepid; they were small. Manitoba, NDP in Manitoba — it's not a partisan statement — NDP Manitoba was leaving us in the dust. The goals were small, if they had any at all. And they were starting to make a few improvements towards the end but, Mr. Chairman, I do think it took a change in approach. It took a little bolder strategy. It took a government that could actually maybe work with the federal government, who obviously have shared jurisdiction in immigration, to see a turnaround the numbers of which I've already touched on, the numbers that are manifest I've already touched on between 2001 and 2006 — I think about 8,000 total. And we'll do better than 10,000 this year alone, welcoming brand new citizens to the province of Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Chairman, again I would say there's more work to do, but that's a record we're proud of on this side of the House.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Well, Mr. Chair, I think the Premier will join me in thanking Pat Atkinson, the member from Nutana, for

taking this immigration issue head-on and making sure that we had a policy which would develop the way it has right now. And I know that the Premier knows that he's rewriting history when he gives the little talk he did just a few minutes ago. Because Pat worked very diligently to look and see what Manitoba was doing so that we could do a similar kind of thing here. And it took a few years to build up. And now what our concern is, as announcements are made today, that they're not somehow jeopardizing this plan.

But, Mr. Chair, it's this continual rewriting of history that is frustrating for all of the people of the province. I think . . . Let's acknowledge people who have worked hard to do things. And Pat worked very hard on this and I think that the Premier knows that.

Now I see the hour of the day, and I'm not sure what the final procedure here is, whether I get the last word or the Premier gets the last word, but I'm assuming it's the Premier. That's part of how it works.

What I want to say is that in this particular set of questions and answers, we have been able to go and talk about quite a number of issues but clearly not all of the ones that I had on my plate. And I'm sure the Premier probably had about five times as many things that he would have been happy to talk about. But I think that the fundamental question for the people of Saskatchewan as it relates to budgets, once again, is about choices.

And some of the choices that the Premier and the Sask Party government have made in this particular budget are being challenged by us because we think that wrong choices have been made. Three more MLAs, we don't think that makes sense. We don't think the Saskatchewan people, common sense Saskatchewan people, agree with that one. Not counting young people in the 21st century when you look at your democratic institutions, that one doesn't make sense. And we think that the Premier should take the opportunity we've given him to perhaps back off on that one for a while and work out some other way to deal with that. That's an area where we don't have to make the changes that the government has proposed.

Issues around pushing more costs on some of our seniors and some of these other areas are choices that we, frankly, have had a great deal of difficulty as well. We're watching very carefully what happens within the education system, both in the K to 12 system but also with the post-secondary institution, because costs are being pushed out to people and parents in the K to 12 system and then tuition, apprenticeship fees, those kinds of things in the post-secondary education system. And at a time when the province is needing all of our people to be as well trained as possible so that we can meet all of the economic needs of the province, these are some of the wrong choices that have been made.

And we appreciate the fact that in this legislature there's a place for us to talk about these things and deal with them in a way that allows for the differences of opinion to be registered and for it to be done in a relatively peaceful fashion. But we will stand with the people who are being pushed to the edges. We'll stand with the people who are being left out of what's happening with the government. We will point out where

certain things that are happening don't meet the needs of the public and also maybe are not right in the long-term future of the province because that's an important fact of what has happened.

[17:45]

I also would say that we as New Democrats are very proud of the work that we did when we were in government, and we will continue to look at some of the things that are there. Clearly there are areas where change has been made. We appreciate when the government continues with things that we had planned and proposed, and we also appreciate when there are things that they've brought forward that will benefit the people of the province.

But I think that it's time for this government to take off the training wheels, as my colleague says, and ride on two wheels and take responsibility for what's happening in the economy and in the province. And I know that that's how people are looking at this government. Look forward. Don't keep looking back. Because that's what's going to make a difference for the province. Thank you.

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Appreciate your patience with all of us today. Appreciate the questions from the Leader of the Opposition. I'll thank my officials in a moment, but just in terms of a wrap-up, I note that the Hon. Leader of the Opposition provided some advice at the end of his closing remarks. Interestingly enough, I think the very last bit of advice was don't look back. And it strikes me honestly that between himself and the deputy leader, most of these questions they've asked have been — a lot of them I should say — have been looking back, frankly.

And, you know, we've had a good debate around some issues to move forward, and I think we share a lot of the same priorities. The water infrastructure piece is one of them here recently. The piece around Aboriginal education, they're engaged in the economy. These are priorities that we all share in this Assembly. We may differ in terms of the way to deal with them most effectively.

But I will say that I appreciate his advice. We will work hard to make sure we're focused on the future, that we're not looking back. And if I may, I think that advice applies to all members in this House. It might even apply to the Leader of the Opposition himself whose article in the most recent Commonwealth was called, "The NDP must focus on the road ahead" is the headline. But he quotes a poem. It's a great poem by a Saskatchewan poet called "The Rear-view Mirror," Mr. Chair. And I would offer this advice to him. If the New Democratic Party wants to take the road ahead, they may want to avoid looking in the rear-view mirror because back home in Swift Current we call that crashing, Mr. Chairman.

It is absolutely essential that nobody in this province on either side of this House take anything for granted in terms of the current economic standing that we enjoy. It's also important that we recognize outside factors that are responsible for the economic standing we enjoy.

He also counselled myself and members on this side of the House just now to take responsibility for the economy. Well, Mr. Chairman . . . And the province and its economy. I'll tell you this. We don't take credit for what's going on in the economy, but you bet we'll take responsibility as a government that has campaigned just a few months ago on a plan to keep the economic momentum of this province moving forward not just for the sake of a growing economy but because we know what that growing economy will pay for in terms of health care and education and infrastructure.

Mr. Chairman, I could assure the member opposite that we have taken that advice. That advice has come from him today, but it actually came from the people of the province of Saskatchewan over our first four years culminating an election campaign where they very, very clearly said to, I think, both parties — and I hope both were listening — we want you to keep this province moving forward in a steady way. You ought not to be shocking the economy with royalty changes. You ought to live within your means and balance the budget. You ought to continue to do everything you can to put this province in a leadership position so that First Nations are better engaged in the economy, so that people are coming home, kids are coming home from Calgary, and so that people can come all the way from Ireland and find their hope right here in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Chairman, we hear that advice from him, and even more importantly we've heard it from the people of this province. We will take their advice. We will work earnestly not to let them down, Mr. Chairman, to keep the promises we've made and to keep the province moving forward. Thanks for your time today.

The Chair: — If there are no further questions . . . I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Just before we vote off the estimates, I want to thank again the Hon. Leader of the Opposition and the deputy leader of the NDP for their questions. I want to thank all members for attending, all members of the committee, for attending. And I especially want to thank the officials that have helped provide advice today. We're grateful not only for their work today, but they represent of course many others, all of the professional public service that we benefit from here in the province of Saskatchewan. And through the deputy to the Premier, I just want to say on record we're grateful for the work they do, thank them very much for the work they do every single day on behalf of the people of the province. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

Mr. Nilson: — I too also want to add my thank yous to Mr. Doug Moen and through him to all of the civil service for the good jobs that they do every day of the year. Sometimes they are working 365 days of the year. I know that, so I want to say a special thank you. And as I said when we started, there's a special task of preparing a Premier for estimates even though it's relatively short period of time, so thank you for that.

I also want to thank my team of staff within the caucus office. As everybody knows it's quite small, but I think we're doing very well. But most importantly, I want to thank my caucus

colleagues here who have been working with me as we hold the government to account. This forum, this place that we all honour has that ability to sometimes take us in directions in the activity that, you know, aren't maybe the best way to do it.

And I've talked, I think today we've had a relatively calm interchange of information. I've appreciated that as a person who's been asking some questions. I think maybe the Premier's appreciated it as a person answering some questions. So I want to say thank you to the caucus over there as well for all of the work that they do. But with that, Mr. Chair, I look forward to the completion of this committee.

The Chair: — We will now proceed to vote the estimates. Subvote (EX01), central management and services, in the amount of \$5,678,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Subvote (EX07), Premier's office, in the amount of \$581,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Subvote (EX04), cabinet planning, in the amount of \$1,020,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Subvote (EX05), cabinet secretariat, in the amount of \$529,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That's carried. Subvote (EX03), communications office, in the amount of \$1,696,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That's carried. House business and research, subvote (EX08), in the amount of 427,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That's carried. Subvote (EX06), members on Executive Council, 129,000, that's a statutory amount. So that does not need to be voted.

Subvote (EX10), intergovernmental affairs, in the amount of 4,783,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That's carried. Subvote (EX11), Francophone affairs in the amount of \$1,063,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That's carried. Subvote (EX12), Lieutenant Governor's office in the amount of \$666,000, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That's carried.

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2013, the following sums for Executive Council, \$16,443,000.

Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That's carried. That motion is carried.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — December
Executive Council
Vote 10**

The Chair: — The second item of business is the Supplementary Estimates — December for Executive Council, vote 10, found on page 13 of the Supplementary Estimates — December. Executive Council, vote 10, subvote (EX11), Francophone affairs in the amount of \$173,000. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That is carried.

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2012, the following sum for Executive Council, \$173,000.

Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Members, before I ask for the motion to rise and report progress, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members that participated in the Committee of Finance. I would thank you for respecting the rules of the Assembly and for conducting yourselves in a manner that is worthy of the place that we work in.

So with that I would note that there is no further business, and I would invite a member to move that the committee rise and report progress and ask for leave to sit again. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I move that the committee rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again.

The Chair: — It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the committee rise and report progress and ask for leave to sit again. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That is carried.

[18:00]

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of committees.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the committee to report progress and ask for leave to sit again.

The Speaker: — When shall the committee sit again? I recognize the Government House Leader.

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

The Speaker: — Next sitting. The hour being after the hour of adjournment, this House stands adjourned to 10 a.m. Thursday morning.

[The Assembly adjourned at 18:01.]

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GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

CABINET MINISTERS

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hon. Donna Harpauer
Minister of Education

Hon. Jeremy Harrison
Minister of Enterprise
Minister Responsible for Trade

Hon. Darryl Hickie
Minister of Municipal Affairs

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

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

Hon. Ken Krawetz
Deputy Premier
Minister of Finance

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

Hon. Don McMorris
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Hon. Don Morgan
Minister of Justice and Attorney General
Minister of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety
Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan
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Hon. Rob Norris
Minister of Advanced Education,
Employment and Immigration
Minister Responsible for Innovation
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Power Corporation
Minister Responsible for Uranium
Development Partnership

Hon. Jim Reiter
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Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Transportation Company

Hon. Laura Ross
Minister of Government Services