



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

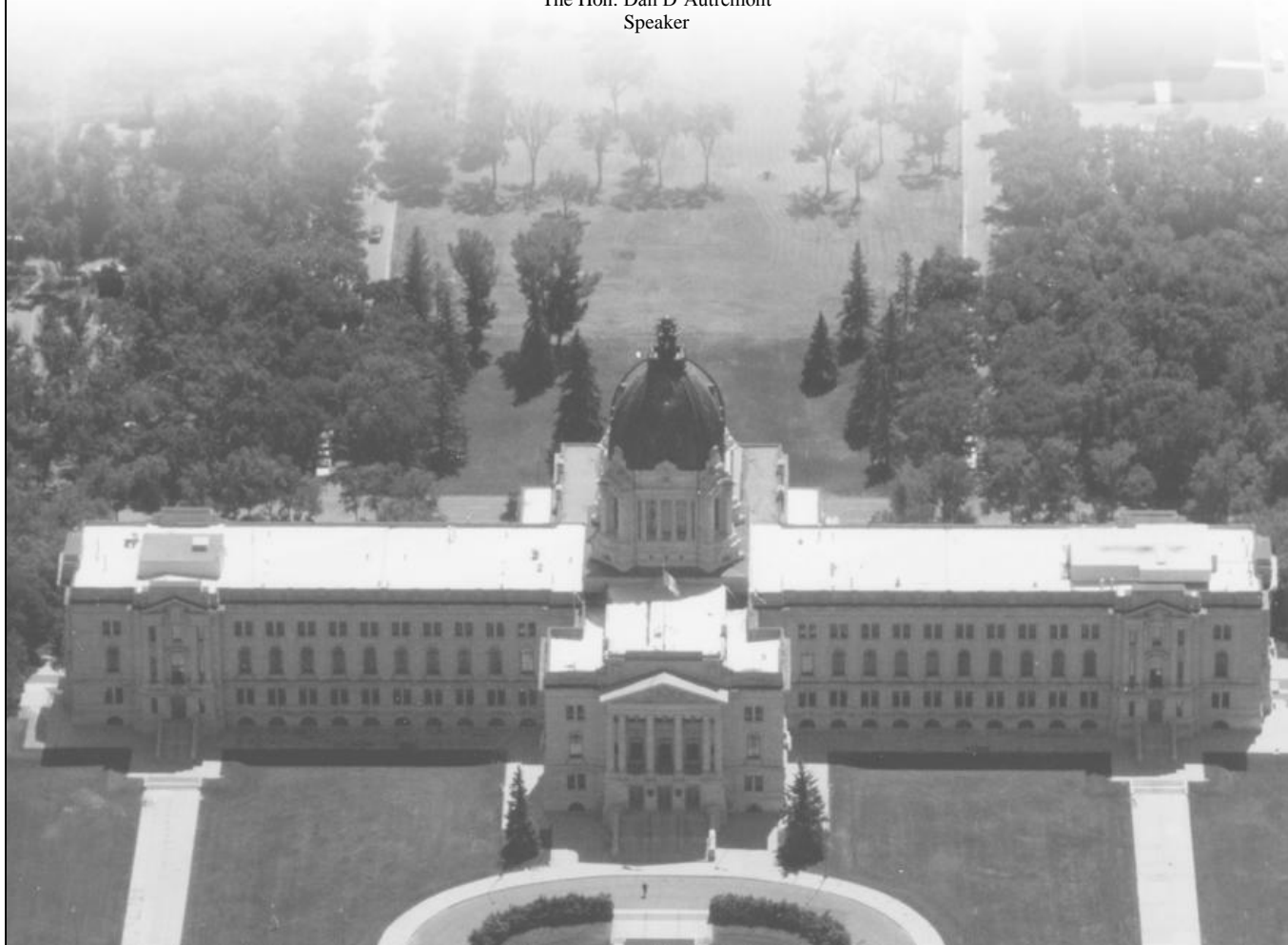
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**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

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(HANSARD)

Published under the  
authority of  
The Hon. Dan D'Autremont  
Speaker



**MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN**

Speaker — Hon. Dan D’Autremont  
 Premier — Hon. Brad Wall  
 Leader of the Opposition — Cam Broten

<b>Name of Member</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>	<b>Constituency</b>
Belanger, Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornerud, 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, Hon. 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, Hon. Nancy	SP	Martensville
Hickie, Darryl	SP	Prince Albert Carlton
Hutchinson, Bill	SP	Regina South
Huyghebaert, 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, Hon. 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, Rob	SP	Saskatoon Greystone
Ottenbreit, Greg	SP	Yorkton
Parent, Roger	SP	Saskatoon Meewasin
Phillips, Kevin	SP	Melfort
Reiter, Hon. Jim	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Ross, Laura	SP	Regina Qu’Appelle Valley
Sproule, Cathy	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Steinley, Warren	SP	Regina Walsh Acres
Stewart, Hon. Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Tell, Hon. 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, Hon. Randy	SP	Biggar
Wilson, Nadine	SP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Wotherspoon, Trent	NDP	Regina Rosemont
Wyant, Hon. Gordon	SP	Saskatoon Northwest

[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Provincial Secretary.

**Hon. Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Speaker, with leave for an extended introduction.

**The Speaker:** — The Provincial Secretary has requested leave for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried. I recognize the Provincial Secretary.

**Hon. Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce and to welcome a very special guest, His Excellency Thordur Aegir Oskarsson, the ambassador of Iceland to Canada. He's here in the province of Saskatchewan and at our Legislative Building today on official business. We'll discuss that a little bit later.

Joining him today is Mr. Jón Jónsson, the honorary consul of Iceland in Saskatchewan who we've had the pleasure of meeting on several previous occasions. These gentlemen are accompanied today by Laurie Hutton, the international affairs officer, and by Caitlin Lane, a protocol officer with the protocol office.

These gentlemen are going to meet with representatives from government members. They've already had a meeting with the Minister of the Environment. They're going to meet members of the Icelandic community in this province. They're going to be travelling to Wynyard to celebrate the annual Thorrablot Icelandic Heritage Celebration.

Wynyard, incidentally, is the largest geographic Icelandic settlement outside of Iceland. In fact, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan, like Alberta and Manitoba, is home to a number of communities with distinct and proud Icelandic heritage, including the communities of Quill Lake, Wadena, and Foam Lake, just to mention a few in our province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as you know, our provincial motto is "from many peoples, strength," and it is very clear that our province would not enjoy many of the advantages that we do today if not for the hard work and sacrifice of those first settlers like those who came from Iceland to call Saskatchewan home. And to this day, Mr. Speaker, thousands of Saskatchewan residents celebrate their Icelandic heritage. I'd like all members of the legislature to welcome our guests, the ambassador and the honorary consul, to Saskatchewan's legislature.

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the Provincial Secretary in welcoming Ambassador Oskarsson

and Mr. Jónsson. We hope that your time here is a good one as you're visiting and having the celebrations going on this weekend. I hope it's a good time connecting with the Icelandic community here in Saskatchewan, and it's a true pleasure to have you here today. So, velkomin.

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

**Mr. Docherty:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sitting in the west gallery, it gives me great pleasure to introduce a group of 29 students from the Huda School in Regina Coronation Park. Along with them, three teachers: Melissa Mah, Sandy Jost, and Diane Sabo.

Mr. Speaker, the Huda School has a mission of gaining the best of the Canadian culture while preserving the Islamic identity, and they should be proud of the high academic standards that they have set.

I look forward to every time I go to the Huda School. I'll be there for their graduations. And I look forward to speaking with the students a little later, I think it's room 218. But I'm looking forward to it, and please don't stump me like you did in the rotunda with your questions. But I'd like all members to join with me in welcoming the Huda School, staff, and students to their Legislative Assembly.

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to join with colleagues in the legislature in some welcomes and introductions that have already been made, specifically to the ambassador from Iceland. We want to welcome him here. And while that is of course the name of his country, we're trying to earn that title just in terms of weather, it seems here lately, in the province.

We want to welcome him here. He's the latest in a series of ambassadors who have come to our province, and we're always grateful to be able to share with them Saskatchewan's story and to explore opportunities for our mutual benefit.

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, if I may also — because I have not yet to say a welcome and an introduction to our friends — I understand the CPA [Commonwealth Parliamentary Association] event was a good one last night. And we certainly have enjoyed the company and the presence of those who have joined us from Africa. Mr. Speaker. I want to welcome them, and to the kids from the Huda School. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to join with the Premier in once again welcoming our South African guests who are, most of them are seated behind the bar today. I will attempt to introduce them by name, and I must stress that it'll be an attempt.

The leader of their delegation is Peter Maloka. Also these are

the members. We have six members and two members from the Clerk's office. The members seated behind the bar are, as I mentioned, Peter, Sibongile Makae — and please forgive me if I mispronounce your names — Jonas Ramokhoase, Sindiswa Magwandana, Casca Mokitlane. Roy Jankielsohn is up in the gallery. Roy, will you give us a wave. Also they are joined by their deputy secretary, Leonard, who's way up there in the Speaker's gallery. And Hein Viljoen is a researcher.

I must say, Mr. Speaker, I've had an opportunity to have several meetings with our guests. They've been wonderful guests. We've had some fruitful discussions. I certainly hope that they learned as much from us we have learned from them. And once again I would ask all members to join with me in welcoming them. Today is their last full day. Tomorrow we put them on the plane and they leave the snow. As one of the members said, when is it all going to leave? And we are wondering the same thing. So I would ask you to welcome them.

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to join with the Premier and the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood to welcome the South African delegation once again. But I guess, I suppose not just to welcome but to thank them for their presence here in the Assembly over the past days.

And yesterday, when members of the opposition had a chance to sit down and discuss with the delegation, yes we talked about the weather. But more importantly, we talked about differences and similarities in our electoral systems and how our legislatures operate. And we also had a very good discussion about how governments can work to improve the lot of life for all people in a society and how we can come together. So I enjoyed the conversation yesterday, as did my colleagues in the opposition.

I hope they have a good time for the remainder of their time here in Saskatchewan and I wish them a very safe trip home. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### PRESENTING PETITIONS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

**Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased and honoured to stand today to present another petition in reference to cell service to northwestern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And the prayer reads as follows:

Undertake, as soon as possible, to ensure that SaskTel delivers cell service to the Canoe Lake First Nations along with the adjoining communities of Cole Bay and Jans Bay; and Buffalo River First Nations, also known as Dillon, and the neighbouring communities of Michel Village and St. George's Hill; English River First Nations, also known as Patuanak, and the hamlet of Patuanak; and Birch Narrows First Nations along with the community of Turnor Lake, including all the neighbouring communities in each of their areas.

And, Mr. Speaker, as I say time and time again each day, that

the petition that we have presented here has been signed by people from all throughout Saskatchewan, and this particular page, Mr. Speaker, are people that have signed are primarily from Patuanak. And I so present.

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

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present another petition calling for the reconsideration of passing Bill 85, *The Saskatchewan Employment Act*. And we know it's a consolidation of 12 labour laws in our province here. And there's been hundreds of hours of study and comparison done in the interests of due diligence. But we worry that stable labour relations in all sectors will run the risk of being thrown into turmoil as the result of Bill 85's sweeping changes. Thousands of represented workers stand to lose their rights to bargain collectively and be represented by the union of their choice. I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: cause the Government of Saskatchewan to not pass Bill 85, *The Saskatchewan Employment Act* in this current session before the end of May and to place it on a much longer legislative track to ensure greater understanding and support for the new labour law.

I do so present. Thank you.

### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

#### Seniors' Housing in Saskatoon

**Ms. Chartier:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I brought spring greetings to three seniors' residences in Saskatoon Riversdale. One of my favourite parts of this job as an MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] is connecting with communities I represent. I value the opportunity to sit down with folks and listen to their thoughts and concerns.

Over the course of the two days, I visited McAskill Manor, Arbor Green, and Columbian Place. The residents were eager to chat and of course, Mr. Speaker, I tried not to overstay my welcome, especially at Columbian Place as they were keen to watch curling and were avidly keeping up with the men's world championships.

Two of these residences are managed by Saskatoon Housing Authority and Columbian Place, which was recently built, is managed by the Knights of Columbus. Although the residents are incredibly appreciative of their housing, they couldn't help but express concern for the individuals on the wait-list for seniors' affordable housing. Each residence has long wait-lists, Mr. Speaker. Columbian Place was just built last year and, as I understand it, it has a wait-list already of over 70.

Appropriate and affordable housing is vital for the growing population of seniors in Saskatoon. Affordable housing provides seniors with the opportunity to stay in their

communities near their family and friends, and to be able to pay their bills on a fixed income. We've all heard stories about seniors making choices between paying rent and buying necessary medications and food. Our seniors have paved the way for future generations and deserve the highest quality of care and support that we can provide.

Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed my three spring teas with some of the seniors in Saskatoon Riversdale, and I look forward to the chance to visit my senior constituents and others when session is out. Thank you.

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

#### **Resort Recognized by *Reader's Digest***

**Ms. Wilson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House today to speak about a popular destination in my constituency. *Reader's Digest* magazine recently listed Elk Ridge Resort as one of "9 Must-Visit Canadian Winter Resorts."

It is the only resort from Saskatchewan mentioned. Located just outside of Prince Albert National Park and the townsite of Waskesiu, Elk Ridge Resort was founded in 1993 by my friend and neighbour, legendary entrepreneur Arne Petersen. It started out as a nine-hole golf course and has since flourished to a four-season resort.

During the winter months, guests can take advantage of a variety of amenities including a skating pond, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, a toboggan hill, and over 400 kilometres of freshly groomed snowmobile trails. In addition the resort boasts luxurious cabins and suites, a 27-hole championship golf course, indoor pool, spa, excellent cuisine, conference facilities, and year-round activities.

Elk Ridge Resort is very popular with our locals and attracts tours from across Canada as well as internationally. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this Assembly to join me in congratulating Elk Ridge Resort on this special recognition, and invite my colleagues to spread the word about this Saskatchewan gem.

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

#### **Aboriginal Artist and Activist's Lecture and Biography**

**Mr. McCall:** — Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, March 26th, myself and the member for Regina Lakeview and hundreds of other citizens had the opportunity to attend the latest edition of the Forward Together lecture series at the First Nations University of Canada. The speaker was internationally acclaimed Aboriginal artist and activist, Buffy Sainte-Marie. Sainte-Marie's lecture was entitled "Detoxifying Aboriginal Self-Identity," and touched upon a wide and compelling range of issues such as the environment, Idle No More, Aboriginal rights, inclusiveness, and social justice. After the lecture there was a reception to celebrate the release of her biography titled *Buffy Sainte-Marie: It's My Way*.

The biography was written by a First Nations University of

Canada indigenous studies professor, Blair Stonechild. And Stonechild brings a historical perspective to Sainte-Marie's life story, including not only her music but her life as a philanthropist, activist, educator, and artist. Stonechild tells the story of a multi-faceted woman behind the music and does justice to her roots and ongoing connection to Saskatchewan, especially to Piapot Cree Nation.

I would like to congratulate the University of Saskatchewan and First Nations University of Canada on yet another great instalment of the Forward Together lecture series. I'd like to congratulate Blair Stonechild on his great new biography. And I want to thank Buffy Sainte-Marie for being Buffy Sainte-Marie.

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

[10:15]

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Government Whip.

#### **Yorkton Kids Expo**

**Mr. Ottenbreit:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The weekend of March 22nd to 24th, an interesting event was held in Yorkton at the Ukrainian Orthodox Auditorium. The Kids Expo was a trade show targeted at mothers, babies, and young children.

This trade show, the idea of Joelle Bohn, owner of Joey Children's Apparel, had an amazing number of displays and activities for those attending. The dozens of trade booths held the attention of the parents and some of the children, but the other activities kept the youngsters entertained and busy for hours. Mr. Speaker, they had an inflatable play structure, face painting, and even a Dora the Explorer photo booth, courtesy of Lori Trost Photography. And I'm proud to say even the member from Yorkton got his picture taken with Dora.

I heard talk at the event that Sunday that they will need to find a larger venue for next year. What is truly amazing about this trade show, Mr. Speaker, is that the proceeds from the Kids Expo will be going toward making one of Yorkton's many children's play parks wheelchair-accessible.

Additional funds to the worthy cause are also coming from a portion of Dairy Queen sales during the event. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in thanking Joelle Bohn and the organizers and the participants of Kids Expo, along with Mark and Lori Butchko of Dairy Queen, Yorkton, for their hard work, contribution to making life a little more fun for children with physical challenges in our area. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### **Saskatchewan Athlete in National Biathlon Competitions**

**Mr. Cox:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, about this time last year — well I guess it was actually March 1st but this just seems like March 1st right now — I stood in this Assembly to recognize and congratulate a young constituent of mine, Flight Corporal Jason Reimer of the No. 43 The Battlefords Royal Canadian Air Cadet Squadron. Corporal Reimer, who is now Sergeant Reimer, had just competed in the Cadet National Biathlon competition in Martock, Nova Scotia. Jason

represented our province very well with his sixth- and seventh-place finishes in two divisions.

Mr. Speaker, biathlon is a sport that requires great physical fitness for the skiing segment and great marksmanship for target shooting. I am pleased to report that over the past year, this young cadet has continued to hone his skills and his conditioning. This year at the National Cadet Biathlon Championship, which was held in Valcartier, Quebec, our young representative won gold in the mass start, he won silver in pursuit, and he helped our provincial team win top spot in the patrol race.

Jason's accomplishments were recognized when he was presented with the Jean-Philippe Le Guellec Award which is presented to the senior competitor with the highest accumulative aggregates at the national competition. This is a very prestigious award indeed, Mr. Speaker.

Later this month, Jason is turning his attention to competing in the national biathlon competition on the civilian side. I would ask all members of this Assembly to join me in congratulating this young athlete and wishing him continued success in future competition. Thank you.

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

#### Student Housing

**Mr. Steinley:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise in the House to share some exciting news regarding the city of Regina and our province. In our government's plan for growth, we reaffirmed our commitment to the success of Saskatchewan students. We want to ensure our students can focus on their studies, not finding housing or worrying about how they'll pay the rent.

Mr. Speaker, that is why our government is investing \$10 million to help build a new residence at the University of Regina. This investment will give more students the opportunity to focus on their educational goals and allow the University of Regina to continue to attract students from beyond our borders. Further, Mr. Speaker, this new residence, like the one we supported at the University of Saskatchewan, will help reduce some of the rental pressures in the city of Regina.

Once again our government has shown with action that we are committed to housing throughout our province. Since 2007 we've invested in over 500 student housing units at the University of Saskatchewan, SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] in Prince Albert, North West Regional College in Meadow Lake, and the northern teacher education program in La Ronge.

Mr. Speaker, this new commitment at the U of R [University of Regina] brings a total investment to housing of 1,100 housing units at post-secondary institutions across our province. In addition this year's budget provides significant support for students, higher operating and capital funds for post-secondary education, and further investment in research and innovation.

Mr. Speaker, this new residence will help contribute to the

success of our future leaders of Saskatchewan and assist in easing some of the housing eases in Regina. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Public-Private Partnerships

**Mr. Hickie:** — Well, well, well, Mr. Speaker. The NDP [New Democratic Party] seem to be deeply confused about P3s [public-private partnership], and rightfully so. The confusion seems to stem from the contradictory positions from other New Democrats.

First it was the revelation that the NDP government opened a P3 office at CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan] in 2000 headed by Pat Atkinson. Then we found out about NDP officials who were meeting with Partnerships BC [British Columbia] as late as 2000 to discuss P3 opportunities. That must have been quite shocking for the members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

Then in May of last year, Manitoban NDP Finance Minister Stan Struthers said, "Public-private partnerships can provide an opportunity for the public sector to build projects more efficiently." But wait, there's more. Mr. Speaker, just this last January, former Saskatchewan NDP Finance minister, Janice MacKinnon, authored a report supporting the use of P3s to increase the supply of long-term care beds.

Then just this March, the ever helpful federal NDP released a report, and I quote, "The P3 model can enable greater value for money for some infrastructure projects." Then to top it all off, the member from Lakeview took Mayor Fougere out of context on March 7th, suggesting the mayor didn't fully support P3s. We now know that the mayor supports the P3 process for not only the waste water treatment plant but also the Regina bypass.

Mr. Speaker, why don't the members opposite join with us in supporting P3s by endorsing the position that we've taken, Janice MacKinnon has taken, the mayor of Regina has taken, and more importantly, the position of the Manitoba NDP and the federal NDP, Mr. Speaker? Thank you.

#### QUESTION PERIOD

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

#### Combatting Discrimination and Bullying

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday in question period I raised some very basic questions about the promotion of gay-straight alliances as a common sense way, Mr. Speaker, of ensuring that our schools are safe and ensuring that our schools are welcoming places. I asked the Premier, Mr. Speaker, if he would consider putting information, simply information, about GSAs [gay-straight alliance] on the Ministry of Education's website. And I think this was a constructive suggestion, Mr. Speaker, and I think it's a common sense approach.

The response that we had, Mr. Speaker, though was surprising

to me. Because instead of looking at the merit of that proposal, Mr. Speaker, we saw the Premier talk about the issue of religious freedom, Mr. Speaker, suggesting that simply providing information on the website would infringe on religious freedom. Mr. Speaker, this isn't about forcing schools to do anything. This is about providing a safe and welcoming environment for children here in Saskatchewan.

My question to the Premier: how exactly does putting some basic information on the government's website about the benefits of GSAs equate to lost religious freedom?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, we were having a wide-ranging discussion. Included in that was the suggestion from the hon. member with respect to the website. There is a discussion across the country about GSAs in particular and anti-bullying initiatives that I think is a discussion that we want to have in the province.

More than that, we've asked an MLA to focus on this particular issue, working with the ministries involved. And I remember when I did say, rhetorically I think, we wanted to strike a balance in all things that we do in terms of rights that are protected in the Charter and in our own Human Rights Code here in the province, rights to freedom of religion, and rights around sexual orientation and the issue of gender. When I indicated in the House that I thought a balance was important, I thought I saw the Leader of the Opposition nodding his head in agreement.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to continue with the initiative of the member for Fairview. She is going to work with the ministers involved. We'll take suggestions such as has been put forward by the opposition and, Mr. Speaker, we look forward to working together with the opposition and the rest of the people of the province on an anti-bullying initiative here in Saskatchewan.

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear. The suggestion of putting more information on the website, Mr. Speaker, has nothing to do with infringing on religious freedom. I'm not talking about legislative measures, Mr. Speaker. That is not where the discussion is at.

What I'm talking about, Mr. Speaker, is the leadership role that the Ministry of Education could play in putting information about the benefits of GSAs, how gay-straight alliances are established, how they operate, on the ministry website. To me, Mr. Speaker, this is a no-brainer. To me, Mr. Speaker, this is about providing information to youth who may be bullied, youth who may be feeling ostracized, and providing to allies who want to support those individuals.

By ramping up the discussion, Mr. Speaker, taking it to the approach of losing religious freedom, Mr. Speaker, I'm worried about the tone that that sets. And I'm worried about the message that that sends to gay youth in our schools, Mr. Speaker, who are struggling with this and who have been bullied, Mr. Speaker.

My question to the Premier: when discussing this issue, why did he choose to go to the place about losing religious freedom, wrapping up the discussion in that way, in a divisive way, Mr. Speaker, in a way that I think clouds the issue, Mr. Speaker? Why did the Premier not simply agree that providing this information on the ministry's website is a smart thing to do and would help youth here in the province?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, I've already answered the question. The question was asked twice; the answer remains the same. The debate that we had in the legislature yesterday is an important one, more than just the debate, the discussion. We're going to take action with respect to anti-bullying over and above what already exists with respect to the ministry and in school divisions.

As you have this discussion across the country today around GSAs in particular, there is the debate from the religious community about its implication for certain schools. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the fact that the NDP and the Leader of the Opposition is not calling specifically for legislation in this regard, and maybe he should . . . If that's the position of the NDP, they may want to clarify that because we do want to look at all the options. Legislation actually might be one of them, and if he has suggestions around it we'd be interested in those.

But, Mr. Speaker, I just want to be very, very clear. The debate was broad yesterday. It wasn't just about a suggestion around the website for the Ministry of Education. And I think in all matters, we want to make sure we're balancing all the rights that are protected in Canada's Constitution and the Human Rights Code, all the rights. We can find that balance. That would be the priority of this side of the House. I expect it would also be the priority of members opposite.

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Mr. Speaker, my questions yesterday were very specific. They were about the steps that the government could take on adding some information to their website. My questions were not about forcing school divisions, forcing schools to do things through legislation. It was about leadership that the government could take in providing information to students, to parents, to teachers, to allies here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, on the day that the Premier was on his feet in this Chamber saying that providing some of this information raises questions of losing religious freedom, Mr. Speaker, it was the same day as we know as Day of Pink, and that the government ministry had a news release posted on their website about the Day of Pink. The Day of Pink is actually the international day against bullying, discrimination, homophobia, and transphobia in schools and communities. So by the Premier's own logic, by providing this type of information on the website, Mr. Speaker, that post about the Day of Pink would have been in violation, would have been overstepping, in his view, issues of religious freedom.

My question to the Premier: why is he threatened, Mr. Speaker, about putting this issue on the website? Why is he concerned about providing this information to Saskatchewan people, Mr.

Speaker? And why did the government's news release on the Day of Pink not even mention homophobia or transphobia?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, what an incredible stretch, Mr. Speaker. What an incredible stretch from the Leader of the Opposition to suggest that in the course of answering a question in a general discussion on GSA when we referenced the importance of, well the existence frankly, of a debate today in Manitoba and in Ontario where legislation exists around the issue of freedom of religion — also protected in the Charter, also part of this province's Human Rights Code — that that member, that that Leader of the Opposition would stretch that to the extent he just did, Mr. Speaker. That is frankly politicizing the issue in a very partisan way, maybe to try to score some sort of points.

I said yesterday, Mr. Speaker, that we were interested in ideas from that member and that party. Mr. Speaker, his suggestion with respect to the website for Education may well be part of the recommendations that come from the efforts of the member for Fairview. We're taking an open mind to all of those suggestions. There are other issues around cyberbullying that have real concern, I hope to members on all sides of the House. They're a concern to parents. She's going to be looking at that. She's going to be looking at all aspects of anti-bullying.

The suggestion the member mentioned yesterday and today may well be included in that final initiative that the government enacts. But, Mr. Speaker, we're going to approach it as a total package. We're going to do all of the homework, led by the member for Fairview in conjunction with the Attorney General and Minister of Education. That's precisely how it should be done, Mr. Speaker.

[10:30]

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Mr. Speaker, if they're approaching this issue as the total package, looking at how individuals can be bullied, you would think that the government's news release on the Day of Pink would talk about homophobia and transphobia. That would be taking it as the whole package, Mr. Speaker, looking at all of the issues of bullying that young people in our schools face.

Mr. Speaker, what I'm concerned about is when we're talking about a serious issue about bullying, we're talking about an issue where many LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender] youth in our schools are facing bullying, are feeling like they're ostracized, Mr. Speaker, I don't know why the discussion in yesterday and in question period, Mr. Speaker, had to go to the topic of losing religious freedom because that clearly wasn't what the discussion was about. And that's not what people are concerned about here in the province, Mr. Speaker. What people want in Saskatchewan is to ensure that there is a safe and supportive and a secure place for every young person in our school systems, Mr. Speaker. That is what is important.

My question to the Premier: if the approach is a holistic one,

looking at all areas of bullying, Mr. Speaker, once again why did the government's news release on the Day of Pink not talk about homophobia?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, I just want to be very clear about this again because the member continues to try to make this stretch with respect to a comment I made in one of the answers with respect to the overall context of a discussion on this matter and others, including the discussion we had in this country around marriage, Mr. Speaker, where freedom of religion for those churches, for those organizations that did not want to, for religious reasons, marry gay couples, Mr. Speaker, that there was an accommodation for that. It is part of the discussion. It is happening around this issue in other provinces, whether that member likes it or not.

I know the Archbishops in Catholic have put forward an alternative that accommodates the concerns that have been referenced in this House — quite reasonable concerns, and the concerns we should be focused on — but also focuses on all areas of differences. I think rather than GSAs, they're talking about committees that would be called respecting differences, Mr. Speaker. This is something that, this is another idea that's been proposed that would help accommodate certain religious institutions that are involved in education.

Mr. Speaker, the government takes this issue seriously. We've appointed a Legislative Secretary to work with the ministers involved. We've told members opposite earnestly that we want their input and their advice. We hope that they will continue to be involved. We'll look at all suggestions, including what is in government press releases, Mr. Speaker, in the future, and also including what might be on the Education ministry's website.

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

**Mr. Broten:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm a person of faith, as is the Premier. I think that's important to recognize. But I'm not afraid, Mr. Speaker, about having gay-straight alliances in our schools. Because this isn't about forcing things on school divisions, Mr. Speaker, this is about ensuring that children are safe, Mr. Speaker. A gay-straight alliance in a school is not about putting posters in the hallways saying that students should be gay or that something should be a certain way. But what it is about, Mr. Speaker, is providing a safe space for students who are being bullied and for teachers and allies who want to support those students.

And it's important to look at the context as well. For example in Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker, five out of seven of the Catholic high schools, the Catholic high schools in Saskatoon, have a gay-straight alliance or a club very similar, Mr. Speaker. These have existence in some schools. It's not about forcing a school division to do something, but it's about creating the space, Mr. Speaker, that is safe for students.

So my question to the Premier: I'm encouraged and I appreciate his willingness to work together on this issue to find areas where we can agree and where we can advance the promotion of safety and inclusion for all students. A concrete and a no-brainer approach, Mr. Speaker, is to provide information on



the ministry's website. Will the Premier commit today that they will improve the ministry's website to provide more information on gay-straight alliances?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, in part at least, the hon. member's question is answered in its preamble, Mr. Speaker, because we have GSAs being formed or groups that are accomplishing the objectives of GSAs. Perhaps the nomenclature is different, as the Leader of the Opposition has pointed out. They're happening today. They absolutely can happen in the province of Saskatchewan today. We encourage their creation whenever students want to come together with teachers, with allies to make them happen.

With respect to resources that can come from this government or any other source related to government, funded by government, this is going to part of what is going to be considered in terms of the work of the member for Fairview, the Legislative Secretary for the anti-bullying initiative.

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

#### Support for Post-Secondary Institutions

**Mr. McCall:** — Mr. Speaker, yesterday the University of Saskatchewan president gave the state of the university address. The president highlighted a number of tough decisions that the University of Saskatchewan has to make in the year to come, including continued layoffs, ongoing questions around programming, and concerns about a structural deficit. All this took place against the backdrop of Sask Party government billboards and TV ads boasting of the supposedly great job they're doing in post-secondary education.

Mr. Speaker, there is a jarring disconnect between the reality on campus, the tough decisions that are being confronted there, and the political spin using public money on the part of this government. To the minister: why the disconnect?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Advanced Education.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for his question. During the last six months of the NDP's time in office — and I think during that period of time the member opposite was the minister — there was an expenditure on advertising by Advanced Education of some \$748,897.42. Not that I want to get too precise, but that's . . .

Mr. Speaker, there's been a lot of misinformation about the government's support for post-secondary education. We think it's important we set the record straight. In our time in government, we have never cut operating funding to universities. We have in fact, Mr. Speaker, increased operating funding by 52.8 per cent over the last six years. The NDP increased operating funding by only 37 per cent during their last six years of government. Under our government, tuition has increased by an average of 3.5 per cent per year. Under the NDP, tuition increases averaged 10 per cent per year.

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

**Mr. McCall:** — [Inaudible] . . . Mr. Speaker, the period that the minister references of course, the operational increase for that year was 7 per cent for the sector. And in terms of the structural deficit problems that the University of Saskatchewan is wrestling with now, that of course was not the situation.

Further evidence of the tough decisions needing to be made on campus at the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] around the future of the school of medicine: program offerings are in question. And the school itself currently ranks dead last among other medical schools for certain categories, and the problem of probation still looms large.

Mr. Speaker, what is the government doing to help with these problems, or do they think that their self-serving, self-congratulatory PR [public relations] and spin campaign is helping the situation?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Advanced Education.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Mr. Speaker, the university president has made it clear that the issues around the College of Medicine and the Academic Health Sciences Building are not a matter of resources. They're a matter of internal governance, and they are dealing with those issues. And we are supportive in their efforts to do that.

Mr. Speaker, what is not productive is what the members opposite are doing. The member from Massey Place, now the leader, on January 17th, 2013 said about the Academic Health Sciences Building:

The building — intended to house the medical, nursing and other colleges — is sitting unfinished as a result of the Sask Party's government's surprise abandonment of the project and the university.

Something, Mr. Speaker, he ought to have known that was absolutely wrong. December 17, 2012 the U of S website on capital projects said:

The Council of Health Sciences Deans' office has moved to the new location in office suite 5D30. The Biomedical Sciences office, College of Medicine, has moved into their new location on the 2nd floor of D wing . . . The majority of faculty have moved into or are in the process of moving into their new D wing . . . The main entrance to D wing is open during normal business hours. New meeting rooms are available . . . Elevators are . . . functional.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite ought to apologize and ought to take some pride in the university.

**The Speaker:** — Next question. Recognize the member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

**Mr. McCall:** — The spin's not just on the billboards or on the TV screens, Mr. Speaker. But one of the key indicators of the success or failure of Saskatchewan's post-secondary institutions

is Aboriginal enrolment. Yesterday we heard that Aboriginal enrolment was back up to the year, to the level it was two years previous, after having dropped by 10 per cent the year before, the year last, Mr. Speaker. That kind of instability and that kind of inconsistency in terms of what should be a straight upward trajectory, Mr. Speaker, for Aboriginal enrolment is alarming.

So again, in terms of the problems that are being confronted in the post-secondary education sector, Mr. Speaker, as particularly relates to Aboriginal enrolment, what is that government doing to help the problem instead of giving themselves a big old pat on the back?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Advanced Education.

**Hon. Mr. Morgan:** — Mr. Speaker, we continue to fund institutions such as SIIT [Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies], FNU [First Nations University] and the U of R and the U of S which have got a growing number of students enrolled from the Aboriginal community. We encourage the initiatives that are taken by those institutions, and we're pleased that we're seeing some significant success.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to mention briefly the member from Regina Rosemont. And I have a quote from him: "It is very troubling to see the treatment of education at prosperous times when we see cuts within programs where we see skyrocketing tuition."

Mr. Speaker, I can say there have been no cuts to the universities from this government. Operating costs up 52 per cent and the tuition has increased only 3.5 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, we have taken a great deal of steps to ensure that our universities and our post-secondary educations are well-funded and, Mr. Speaker, are able to service the needs of our students. We look forward to taking more steps to ensure Aboriginal involvement, and we will continue to do that, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Response to Job Loss

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, The Battlefords region is reeling following the closure of the Maple Leaf Foods processing plant and with it, 300 jobs. For a community of this size, this is a major blow.

And, Mr. Speaker, it follows a string of other job losses for The Battlefords and area. Vanguard trailer manufacturing, Mifab welding have also left the community. Mr. Speaker, when these types of industries leave a community, they take with them more than jobs; they can uproot families.

It's clear the region needs a focus from the province for economic development. Currently 160 employees are left without jobs to replace the money, the income they were earning from Maple Leaf. Mr. Speaker, to the minister: with a big employer leaving The Battlefords, what's the Sask Party government's plan for jobs in the area?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for the Economy.

**Hon. Mr. Boyd:** — Mr. Speaker, any time there is a loss of jobs in our province in any community across Saskatchewan, we are obviously very concerned about it. We have a rapid response team that immediately goes in and has discussions with the employees and employers. We try to relocate people to jobs as quickly as possible here in Saskatchewan.

The good news is, in our province though, we have an extremely buoyant economy here in our province right now. We have the lowest unemployment rate in Canada, or thereabouts, the lowest at 3.8 per cent. So there is opportunity for people in our province to take up employment in the various opportunities across the province. So there is some good news in those situations because we have an extremely buoyant economy and there are other opportunities for people to go to.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that the minister's answer seems to be that those families can simply move to other areas of the province. It seems that it's clear that this government doesn't have a plan whatsoever for economic development in The Battlefords and area.

They announced the northwest enterprise region in 2009 when they took over local economic development committees. Then they appointed Wally Lorenz, a former Sask Party MLA, as the Chair. But that community saw the enterprise region fold after the Sask Party pulled funding. Now the region is without local economic development support — not helpful for a community that's dealing with the loss of jobs.

Mr. Speaker, the province was supposed to participate in a committee to help find jobs for those out-of-work former employees of Maple Leaf. What steps did that committee take? And what did the province bring to that table to find real employment opportunities for the people of The Battlefords?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister for the Economy.

**Hon. Mr. Boyd:** — Mr. Speaker, I indicated earlier that obviously any time there's a loss of employment, we are very concerned about it. We send in a rapid response team to talk to the people and see if we can't move them into another opportunity as quickly as possible. Saskatchewan, though, has now the largest population that we've ever had. We're the second fastest growing economy in Canada right now.

We have a very enviable record in many areas, and that's why, frankly, the Conference Board of Canada has indicated Saskatchewan will boast the fastest economic growth in all of Canada over the next two years. Clearly, Mr. Speaker, there is opportunity here in Saskatchewan. Any time there's a loss of jobs, we are very, very quickly to move to help encourage and relocate if necessary, but also create opportunities for people in the job market.

[10:45]

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, the question was about those very actions of which we didn't hear of any from that minister, and they were promised to have been involved in a committee, something that there's no evidence of, Mr. Speaker. And the latest employment woes in The Battlefords are not helped by a budget that is simply not delivered for the community. The Prairie North Health Region told the local paper the provincial budget will be very troubling for the community. CEO [chief executive officer] David Fan said, "It is a very difficult budget for us . . ."

Mr. Speaker, our Education critic raised just yesterday that various members of the local school board have said that the Sask Party government just simply isn't listening and that there's cuts that are being forced all throughout the classrooms of those communities. And of course there's the broken promise as it relates to the Saskatchewan Hospital.

Mr. Speaker, a government should serve all of Saskatchewan, all communities in the entire province, but the Sask Party government's record in The Battlefords is one of neglect where health and education, economic development — the basics — simply aren't being supported. Why has the Sask Party government turned its back on Battlefords and area?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister for the Economy.

**Hon. Mr. Boyd:** — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, one of the tools that are available to people when they're seeking jobs in Saskatchewan is saskatchewanjobs.ca. And if you look at that website today, in North Battleford you'll see that there are 337 jobs currently available in North Battleford, where there's employers that are looking for people, where there's employers that are looking for people to take up the jobs that they have available in North Battleford right now that are available to them. And if you look at that same situation all across Saskatchewan, you'll see a very similar trend, where there are over 13,000 jobs available in Saskatchewan as a whole for people that are unemployed currently. And that is precisely the reason why, Mr. Speaker, that we have the lowest unemployment rate in all of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, the member's assertions are incorrect when it comes to the markets that he is referring to: in North Battleford, 337 jobs currently available on saskjobs.ca.

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

### Leadership

**Mr. Broten:** — Mr. Speaker, what we've seen today on these topics in question period, Mr. Speaker, is the Premier on the issue of bullying, the issue of gay-straight alliances in the school, Mr. Speaker, not showing the leadership that is needed on this issue to ensure all children are safe. We've seen the Advanced Education minister clearly not showing the leadership that is needed when it comes to the post-secondary sector, preferring billboards as opposed to actually providing supports for students and for our institutions, Mr. Speaker. And we see the Minister of the Economy, as opposed to addressing the issues in The Battlefords, actually recognizing the concern, Mr. Speaker, and taking action, we see simply a spin saying that everything is fine.

My question to the Premier: will he recognize, will he recognize the need to actually admit some mistakes, recognize that they need to do better when it comes to inclusion of students, need to do better when it comes to provisions for our students, need to do better when it comes to the people of North Battleford?

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

**Hon. Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, it's an interesting question because the gentleman opposite, the Leader of the Opposition has been leader of the NDP for a very short time. His question is about admitting mistakes. His question is about leadership. Mr. Speaker, in the course of just those four weeks as the brand new, newly minted leader of the NDP, he's had trouble on the Keystone issue. He now says he's in favour of Keystone, but last May he voted against Keystone.

Mr. Speaker, he campaigned for the leadership of the NDP by saying we need more efficiencies in the health system. And then when those efficiencies are identified by the Minister of Health, he says he opposes those very efficiencies, Mr. Speaker. He says he wants a new style of politics, but what do we see coming out of his office? Anonymous Tumblr sites, anonymous Twitter sites, and on the day that he apologizes for that, the deputy leader's got to stand up and apologize for the language in this place, Mr. Speaker.

This province is moving forward in health care and education. It has Canada's leading economy, Mr. Speaker. And I would point this out: if the hon. member is asking about lessons in leadership, he should probably start with his side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### WRITTEN QUESTIONS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Government Whip.

[Interjections]

**The Speaker:** — Order on both sides.

**Mr. Ottenbreit:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table answers to questions 302 to 314.

**The Speaker:** — The Government Whip has tabled questions 302 to 314 inclusive.

## PRIVATE BILLS

### SECOND READINGS

#### Bill No. 901 — *The Orange Benevolent Society Repeal Act*

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to move second reading of a bill on behalf of the Orange Benevolent Society. But before I make the motion, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to just make a few brief

comments.

In 2010 the Orange Benevolent Society asked me if I would sponsor a bill to amend their Act so that they could have provisions in their Act that would deal with distribution of assets if they decided that they would discontinue their operation. At that time they didn't feel that they would be discontinuing, but they realized that the world had changed, that their function in society had changed.

Originally when they were set up back in the early . . . in 1927 I believe it was, they dealt with orphan children, with children from families who couldn't look after them. And they have a long and rich history of doing a lot of good work in the province caring for children. They did that through soliciting and fundraising. They didn't rely on public dollars, Mr. Speaker, to carry out their good work and so on. But the world has changed and they have recognized that, Mr. Speaker.

And so therefore earlier this year they asked me to sponsor Bill 901 which repeals their Act; which in effect, Mr. Speaker, they cease to exist. But because of the amendments that took place in 2010, their Act set out how they were to distribute their assets, Mr. Speaker. And at that time, in the 2010 amendment, it set out that upon dissolution they would distribute their assets to . . .

[Interjections]

**The Speaker:** — If the member for Athabasca wants to carry on a discussion with a member from the opposite side, please contact him and leave the floor to do so. I recognize the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I said, the amendment in 2010 has set out the mechanisms for the distribution of the assets upon dissolution. And the assets are to go to organizations that deal with youth and families. So I am very pleased to be able to tell you today, Mr. Speaker, that in the last few months the Orange Benevolent Society has distributed \$5.3 million to a number of organizations, and I will list some of them, Mr. Speaker.

And I don't have amounts for each organization, but some of the organizations and institutions that have received funding from them is the Melfort Hospital, the Tisdale Hospital, the Nipawin Hospital, Ronald McDonald House in Saskatoon, the pediatric ward of the University Hospital Foundation at the U of S, the seniors' home in Rosetown, the Noble Irwin Foundation in Swift Current, CHAB Children's Fund in Moose Jaw, Casey Foundation in Regina, Hospitals of Regina Foundation. And I believe there was a few dollars left which they have used for the Hayes Haven Personal Care Home which in fact the Orange Benevolent Society has built in 2000, Mr. Speaker.

So I'm very pleased to represent these people and, Mr. Speaker, at this time I would move that Bill No. 901, the Orange Benevolent Society of Saskatchewan repeal Act, 2013 be now read a second time.

**The Speaker:** — The member for Last Mountain-Touchwood has moved that Bill No. 901, the Orange Benevolent Society of Saskatchewan repeal Act, 2013 now be read a second time. Is it

the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried.

**Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel:** — Second reading of this bill.

**The Speaker:** — Pursuant to rule 100, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills.

**Bill No. 902 — *The Lutheran Sunset Home of Saskatoon Amendment Act, 2013***

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Batoche.

**Mr. Kirsch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is indeed an honour and a privilege to stand and bring forward this bill. The Lutheran Sunset Home is trying to update, modernize, and being able to make themselves more efficient for the future. So this is one of the steps that they needed to be made, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to do this.

So I move that Bill No. 902, *The Lutheran Sunset Home of Saskatoon Amendment Act, 2013* now be read a second time.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member from Batoche that Bill No. 902, *The Lutheran Sunset Home of Saskatoon Amendment Act, 2013* now be read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Carried.

**Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel:** — Second reading of this bill.

**The Speaker:** — Pursuant to rule 100, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Private Bills.

**SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE**

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

**Standardized Testing in Saskatchewan Schools**

**Ms. Sproule:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to rise to introduce a motion on this private members' day regarding the actions we've seen on the part of the government here where they're introducing standardized testing in Saskatchewan schools, and coming at a time I think where it's probably the worst time to introduce this type of program for a number of reasons which I will comment on today.

We know that schools are strapped. We're hearing that continuously. We just heard from the school division in North Battleford about the impact of this budget on their operations. And these stories keep coming, particularly in those stressed areas where there's a huge population growth and numbers are flowing into the urban centres at incredible rates, and school

boards simply aren't able to keep up.

So there's a number of pressures in terms of crowding — children learning in hallways and large numbers of students being taught in closets and cloakrooms throughout schools in those areas where there's pressures on numbers, certainly students being transported lengthy distances to get to spaces where there are available chairs and desks for students to learn, and of course the obvious attendant pressures that the educators face when it comes to these kinds of growth issues, issues that are related to the incredible growth that the urban centres are facing.

So it's just beyond us, Mr. Speaker, why this is a time that this government saw it appropriate to increase expenditures on something called standardized testing. We know that schools have in place, over the many years that schools have been operating in Saskatchewan, adequate testing procedures to ensure whether students are doing well, and if not, then measures are taken to assist those students in reaching their ultimate goals.

I think I just want to reflect for a couple minutes on my time as a teacher. I was a teacher in the 1980s, Mr. Speaker, and it was a rewarding experience for me. It was a very challenging experience. One thing I learned is that as a teacher in a classroom, there's a lot of discretion and responsibility for that individual instructor to look after the needs of the students that are in the classroom. And that's a very personal relationship, Mr. Speaker, with those individual students. It's one that's creative. It's one that's a wonderful opportunity to connect with some amazing young human beings and an opportunity to help them find their own potential. And every one of those students is wonderfully different. They all bring different attributes to the world. They all bring different experiences and interests.

And I even think of my own children when they are learning. And my oldest son, Zachary, who I speak about from time to time, when he was a young student, he was incredibly curious. And he still remains that to this day. He's 19 now, but he's the most curious person I think I've ever met. And his teachers often commented on that. And so he had this insatiable desire to learn. And his teachers were able to provide him . . . He had some great teachers that gave him that extra depth that he needed to stay curious, to stay interested. He was able to participate in a program in Saskatoon called AcTal, which is a program for academically talented children, and he was able to spend four years in a classroom with other academically talented children. And the support and the stimulation that he received as a part of that program went a long way to keep him engaged and learning and to keep him curious. So I'm very thankful for those opportunities.

And more than anything I'm thankful for his teachers, and in particular his one teacher Mr. Flaherty, who is one of my constituents, who was always, always allowing the kids to be curious, allowing them to explore their own interests and follow their dreams and follow their nose basically when it came to learning. And I can tell you learning happened. These kids were successful, and we didn't need standardized tests to tell them that.

[11:00]

One of the things I want to go through a little bit as I make my comments today in relation to this motion, Mr. Speaker, is a study that came from the British Columbia Teachers' Federation. And it's a position paper from 2009 with some interesting comments on the effect of standardization and standardized testing. And yes, we know that there are certain points in students' learning where evaluation needs to take place.

As an educator and as someone who went through the College of Education and studied how proper evaluation needs to happen, multiple-choice exams are not the preferred choice for truly evaluating. You have to write essays. If you're learning English, a series of multiple-choice questions is not the most effective way to determine whether a student has acquired the learning goals of that particular unit. And so you wouldn't always have a standard test. You would allow students to write paragraphs and full sentences, which require a different form of evaluation than that you'd see from standardized testing which is an attempt to sort of widgetize the learning of the students and try and measure a small bit of the learning so that we can get a measure across the board.

Now I understand that that is one form of evaluation, Mr. Speaker, but there's just so much more that has to happen in our schools. And with a focus on learning rather than on testing, I think our students will continue to thrive and succeed.

One of the things that the paper says — and in this case they're talking about an assessment in British Columbia called the foundation skills assessment tests — and the comment that they made, I'd like to quote this. It's an extensive quote, but it says:

Classroom instruction and assessment practices must be congruent with a belief that learning happens when the individual child is central to, engaged in, and excited by learning. With this focus, and through a series of finely tuned and complex decisions, the teacher's responsibility is to make curricular, instructional, and assessment choices to foster the growth of the whole child. Learning is the exciting process of constructing meaning. Teachers are committed to making education a dynamic and joyous process because we know that such engagement produces lifelong learners.

And that was certainly the experience that I saw my son go through when he was able to participate in the AcTal program in Saskatoon.

Now the paper goes on to say why these standardized tests are not working in British Columbia, and here's the quote:

The overreliance on the Foundation Skills Assessment tests as measures of achievement, coupled with the requirement that districts set ever higher rates of achievement on these tests, has resulted in the proliferation of both district- and school-wide assessments. These assessments are not always connected to the daily curriculum of the classroom and therefore often result in changes to instructional practice. Outcomes are narrowly focused, and not centred around the learning needs of the child.

That's the end of the quote. What we see, Mr. Speaker, here is that if you start over-relying on these tests, they begin driving the learning experience of the child, and that is simply a backwards way, and a way that will not allow our children to thrive and prosper. They go on to say:

The proliferation of mandated, district-wide, and provincial testing has taken time away from teaching and learning and has had an effect on the "taught" curriculum, by both narrowing it and making it shallower. The workload on teachers has increased dramatically, adding stress to the job, and forcing some to choose to teach part-time in order to be able to comply with the requirements imposed on this system.

Mr. Speaker, is that what this minister is trying to do? Is he trying to make teachers work harder and work part-time so that they can do their job? Is he trying to narrow the curriculum and make it shallower? Because if he does, he's going to succeed in that effort, Mr. Speaker.

Another quote I'd like to share from this paper is one from David Weinberger in a quote from his paper in 2007. And what he says here is, "Accountability has gone horribly wrong. It has become accountabilism, the practice of eating sacrificial victims in an attempt to magically ward off evil."

So the paper goes on to say that:

Accountabilism suggests that there is a right and wrong answer to every question and flourishes where results can be measured exactly. Having spread to the education system, accountabilism is forcing students, and the schools they attend, to become things that can be measured precisely. Creativity, critical thinking, love of learning, safety, and sense of place do not lend themselves to precise measurement, therefore, they are not central goals of district accountability or achievement contracts.

Mr. Speaker, again this is a very clear description of what can happen when the focus is on testing rather than teaching. It's a clear indication of when you focus too much on the results, learning itself is stifled. It's warped. It becomes a system of objectivity rather than subjectivity where thinking is not happening anymore and where learning is simply memorizing the answer to the question.

It forces changes in teaching and it forces changes in learning. And I don't think this is something that the people of Saskatchewan want for their children, and I don't think it's something that the teachers of Saskatchewan support. And they are the professionals, Mr. Speaker. Having been a teacher, I know the great sense of professionalism that teachers place upon their jobs and the duty, the sense of self and duty that they have to those children, and you cannot underestimate that.

But this type of approach, this type of standardized approach, which requires objectifying the learning that's going on in the schools, is not respectful of the great work that the teachers do, that the students . . . and the curiosity of these students and their ability to venture into learning with enthusiasm and to engage in lifelong learning. These types of tests simply reverse that. They stifle it, and they're going to force children to become

widgetized. And I think that's a true shame about this approach that this government is bringing to this subject.

Another quote from this paper when referring to these tests, it reads as follows:

Unfortunately, students and their parents pay the price. Students are forced to learn according to processes that can be easily measured, instead of ways that suit their individual learning needs. Schools resort to implementing standardized practices, and attempt to identify uniform "best practices" and scripted programs to prescribe and control instructional and assessment methods.

Again, Mr. Speaker, this kind of approach as described in this sentence is one that will control learning, and that's one I think that people should be worried about. If you're going to control learning, if you're going to prescribe learning, if you're going to require uniformity throughout the schools, it simply doesn't fit what's really going on in schools.

Walk into any school in this province right now and you're going to see an incredible diversity. You're going to see diversity according to race. You're going to see diversity according to physical health. You're going to see diversity according to socio-economic circumstances, Mr. Speaker. There's no school in this province that is homogeneous enough to be exactly compared student to student, nor compared school to school.

And it's disappointing, Mr. Speaker, that the minister himself isn't even interested in this type of commentary. He's busy chatting with his colleagues rather than listening to the wonderful information that comes from organizations like this that have good advice for this minister, when we haven't seen a whole lot of listening going by this minister or any kind of real answers when he's been questioned on why he feels and why his ministry feels and why this government feels that this is an important issue. He simply doesn't seem to be interested, and that's rather disappointing.

There's a quote in the paper that refers to a comment on a school, a school in British Columbia, one of the schools I'm talking about that has a lot of diversity, that has a wide range of people that are in the school, a wide range of students come with a wide range of experiences. It was an ESL [English as a second language] classroom, and they received an email from a teacher in Wales. And the Wales teacher had glowing comments about the students in this school who were ESL, how they were engaged in their learning, how the teachers had developed inclusive structures and were enabling children to succeed. And this teacher was very excited in what was going on in that school.

Now here's another quote from the paper. It says:

Yet this school was publicly ranked at the bottom by the Fraser Institute. The effect on the students and parents was devastating. One parent told the principal that she didn't want to leave the school. [She said] "I love my son's teacher. I love the school. I feel so much a part of the community. But we are ranked at the bottom now. My family in China tells me we have to move. Our pride is

now in question.”

And that’s what’s happening to the people that are being forced into these types of objective evaluations being forced upon the schools. And the paper goes on to say that:

All partners in education in BC, teachers, administrators, parents, and ministers of education have condemned the way in which the FSA results are used by the Fraser Institute to rank schools — the current census administration of the FSA ensures that the Fraser Institute will be able to continue to use these results inappropriately. It will only be stopped by moving to another structure of administration of the test such as a random sample.

And that’s what we’ve been calling for, Mr. Speaker. The quote goes on:

A random sample would provide the ministry with sufficient analysis of the system and prevent the misuse of data to create harmful ranking tables.

And so, Mr. Speaker, these are just some of the comments I wanted to bring to the floor today for the Assembly. And before I make the motion, I just want to thank the Assembly for the opportunity to be able to comment today. And I would like to make a motion at this point, and the motion will read as follows:

That this Assembly oppose the implementation of unnecessary standardized testing in Saskatchewan’s schools.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member for Saskatoon Nutana:

That this Assembly oppose the implementation of unnecessary standardized testing in Saskatchewan’s schools.

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

**Mr. Phillips:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to enter into the debate today on the standards-based testing. My experience has been to spend nine years on the local school board, on the Melfort School Division board. I served as finance chairman. I served as facilities chairman. And I spent three years, Mr. Speaker, as board chairman.

Over those nine years I got to see a lot of the challenges and a lot of the successes that teachers have, and both the teachers and the students of the Melfort School Division. And I gained a very, very high respect for the teachers and the teaching profession. I also want to mention, Mr. Speaker, that the director of education at that time was a gentleman named Bob Kroeker, who was a fountain of knowledge. And I learned so much from him.

And when I talk about people I’ve learned a lot from in

education, I’m going to talk about my brother, Warren, who has his doctorate in education. He retired a couple of years ago from superintendent of the Battle River School Division, the largest rural school division in Alberta. He spent his life in education. Yes, unfortunately he was one of those ones that moved to Alberta . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, yes, another one of those.

But during the summer both Warren and I have cabins up at Emma Lake, and we’ll sit around and we’ll talk about a lot of things. And because we’re brothers, it ends up as a debate. Sometimes maybe even an argument might come out. We’ll talk about . . . Both Rider fans, so we can’t argue about that, but we might argue about who’s going to start on Sunday, that type of thing. I have to say we do agree on certain things, like the amazement at that O-lineman we used to have, number 60, when we would see him 35, 40 yards downfield blocking . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I can’t think of his name right now, but it’ll come to me.

But when I was on the school board, we had two main problems. We had two main problems that happened to all school divisions at that time. And the first problem we had was we were underfunded by the government. At that time, at that time the historic standard was 60 per cent. We had dropped below 40 per cent. And all that did was took the cost of education and threw it onto the local taxpayers. So it frustrates me to no end when I sit here and I listen to the member from Athabasca talking about how they fought the deficit. They didn’t fight the deficit. They put it on our backs.

The second thing that we used to talk about an awful lot was enrolment declining, you know, and an example of that was in 1997, we had 194,000 students in Saskatchewan. By 2006, under the opposition’s government, we were down to 163. That 31,000 students we had lost in those years. That was a problem with education. And you know, you talk about that, but I remember sitting in the Centennial Auditorium, as it was called, and this would be in the early ’90s, and they showed us this chart, Mr. Speaker, where the enrolment was here last year, and it’s going to be here this year, and it’s going to be here next year, and here, and here. And that was the department. It was just straight line down.

[11:15]

I’m pleased and proud to say that right now we’ve changed. We’re up to 168,000 students. We’ve rounded the corner, and now we’re going to have a straight line up.

You know, but I wanted to talk about a recent . . . And I’ve heard the opposition member speak about the BC Teachers’ Federation study. I want to talk about a University of Saskatchewan study which I think might be pretty good in Saskatchewan. What they did, they studied Alberta students versus Saskatchewan students or, in Alberta’s case, standards-based testing versus Saskatchewan students. They found that the Saskatchewan students had a 3.5 per cent higher average coming out of high school — 3.5 per cent. I don’t know what that means, but, you know, it can’t be bad.

So the kids go to university, and 12,000 kids over three years go to university. At the end of the first year, they look at the marks.

The marks from the Alberta students had dropped 6.4 per cent from their high school average to the first-year average. The marks of the Saskatchewan students dropped 19.6 per cent — 19.6 per cent. And that's from the U of S. That's Saskatchewan. That's something that . . . You know, why is that? . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . No, that's right now. That's a recent study. And you know, why is that?

I was telling you before, I have a really high respect for teachers. I think our kids are wonderful. I think our teachers are wonderful. Could it be there is something in the system that is stopping them from doing a good job? You know, and this is . . . And instead what I hear is that all we have to do if we want better education, just roll in another truckload of money and that'll give you a better education. That's what we keep hearing. You know? It's just like there's no end of money from their part, even though they've never been able to build an economy.

I have a friend . . . I have a friend. I have a friend. I have a friend who was a wise man. He unfortunately passed away, Dale Frier, but he did have a line that I used to just love. And he said, if you don't know where you're going, how are you going to know when you get there? And I think that's true. And I think that's very, very true in all of our lives, that you have to have goals. You have to have someplace to aim for and to look for. And you know, I believe that's what we've done. We want more information. We want . . .

**An Hon. Member:** — The best for our students.

**Mr. Phillips:** — Absolutely. We do want, we want information going home and we want some level of accountability. But I'll tell you what this isn't. This is not part of ranking teachers. This is not part of ranking schools. This is not part of funding. What the achievement initiative is, is it gives you a level of accountability. It does show where you have to improve. It shows a path — how to get to educational excellence.

You know, too long our students have ended up in national studies in fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth spots. And that may be good enough for some people, but times have changed and it's not good enough for Saskatchewan people.

You know, we are so pleased to be able to bring in things like this that will help our students. And you know, if you help the students even at grade 4 and make sure that they're caught up at grade 4 and grade 5 and grade 9 and grade 12, you help them for the rest of their lives. You know, and what the goal of the student achievement initiative is to develop a single, unified program that provides students and teachers and the parents with a uniform feedback, and that has got to do nothing but help in the future.

You know, it's something that I just don't understand how we can go year in and year out, and I hear many things coming from the opposition about, you know, the teachers' initiative on an individual base, but even teachers have to have goals. And the goal of this government is to ensure that Saskatchewan leads the country, leads the country in graduation rates. Like that is a goal.

I want to wrap up, Mr. Speaker, and I want to wrap up by saying I'm very proud of all the things that we have

accomplished on this government. We have done many, many good things, and I'm pleased and proud of that. But if I had to be nailed down to one thing that I am most proud of is that I feel we have unleashed the province. We have unleashed the people of Saskatchewan and, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Absolutely. And, Mr. Speaker, I do today believe very strongly that we have to unleash the students and we have to unleash the teachers, and this bill will be harmful to that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, a pleasure to enter into discussion here today as it relates to the health of our classrooms, the support that they can provide, the learning of our students, the support for the next generation. And it's something that certainly is a passion of mine.

I get a kick out of the member opposite in closing off his speech in sort of a nonsensical fashion talking about unleashing education when really this is everything about constraining education. This is what this is all about. If you look at all of the evidence, this is a plan to constrain education, to constrain students' learning, to constrain the profession of high-quality teachers throughout this province, to constrain our classrooms. It certainly isn't to unleash learning. That would be something that we'd be excited about supporting, and it's the kind of plan that we'll be speaking to here today.

We know that on this notion of constraint that's placed with this sort of right wing standardized testing agenda that's being pushed forward is stifling for learning. We know the evidence is on the side of suggesting that this isn't the way to go for our classrooms, and we need to be empowering learning, empowering our students, and supporting our teachers and respecting those teachers.

I also have heard members opposite somehow pretend that they maybe now respect teachers, Mr. Speaker, which is a tad odd when certainly they haven't listened to the voice of teachers on this matter. But this isn't new to this government. This is a government that's denied listening to teachers on matter after matter and has had no interest in listening to those voices. And this is the same government, Mr. Speaker, that actually took it to an unprecedented low by actually running ads against teachers in a very tenuous bargaining process that disrespected, demeaned the profession and the important role of those professional educators all across our province.

Quite simply, the plan that's put forward — and it's not even a plan; it hasn't been explained by the minister opposite — but the expenditure put forward to push towards a right wing standardized testing agenda of this government is without common sense, and is certainly without the evidence. And we haven't heard from the Premier. We haven't heard from the minister. We haven't heard from members opposite any evidence that they're pointing to that suggests that this is the right steps to be taking. What we see is it's a matter of misplaced priorities and in fact will take us in the wrong direction.

We need to look at the context of education right now. And when they're making this choice to spend \$6 million on



standardized testing, they're doing this against a landscape where educational assistants have been cut by the hundreds all across this province, causing impacts on learning and in classrooms for all students, placing great strain on those classrooms, strain on learning, and certainly strain on our teachers.

We see growing class size, in many ways unmitigated by this government, causing strain. And we see complex and diverse classrooms that our students and our teachers are doing all they can to meet the needs of . . . to meet those challenges. And spending \$6 million on this foolhardy plan does not serve the learning of those students and does not support the challenges that we need to step up to the plate for.

We see that, in many ways we see failure to support the English as an additional language students. And failure to do that, and creation of complex classrooms impacts all students just the same way as it has to see this government peeling away supports and pulling away educational assistants for students with special needs, Mr. Speaker.

So this is the context that we see. And we also need to fit this into the bigger picture, the bigger picture that is those factors that are external to the classroom, that have a direct influence on learning. And if this government really cared about improving educational outcomes, they'd focus on those factors that are so significant to a student's learning: the context within our communities, within homes; the pressures that so many families are faced by way of housing pressures; the lack of security and the instability that so many families, so many students are facing, the growing inequality for far too many in this province, the lack of access to basic nutrition.

And, Mr. Speaker, I guess it comes down to, I come down to a pretty simple place in looking at this as a big picture. If a student doesn't have the stability of a roof over their head, if they don't have food in their belly, then learning itself is going to be a non-starter. And the minister can push forward with an expensive foolhardy right wing agenda of standardized testing all he wants, but the results aren't going to be where we need them to be.

We need to be supporting the big picture, all those factors that support student achievement that are external to the classroom. That's where the focus of government needs to be. It needs to be towards a more equitable, more equal society in extending opportunity to all. We've seen opposite steps of this government.

And then back into the classroom, we need to make sure that we're supporting the classroom. And at a time where population's growing, at a time where diverse needs of students, diversity of our classrooms is growing, we need to make sure that those supports are in place in those classrooms. And certainly the approach of not listening to parents, not listening to students, not listening to teachers, and then cutting the very supports that are going to enable success in those classrooms is the wrong approach to go.

There's been some good opinions that have been placed out into the public dialogue, opinions that should be listened to by this government in reconsidering this plan. I think of the work that's

been done by Professor Marc Spooner and Paul Orłowski who put a letter to the editor titled "Reconsider mandatory tests in Saskatchewan." And this is a strong letter. It states research and study after study after study that opposes this direction of government, that proves and has analyzed where other right wing governments have pursued this foolhardy agenda, what those results have been.

And they ask the Saskatchewan government to reconsider this \$6 million expense, an expense that they very rightly point out is just the start, is just the beginning. And at a time when we have precious resources, Mr. Speaker, we need to make sure we're allocating those dollars in a way that makes sense, that returns value for dollar, that gives us the best bang for our buck. And this is a wasteful exercise, one that constrains education and constrains our classroom.

The evidence they've put forward cites study after study. And I'll highlight just a little bit, quoting from their letter to the editor:

The effectiveness of standardized testing as a means of improving education has been widely questioned and critiqued in the relevant research literature. Standardized assessments have not been demonstrated to improve teaching or learning in any significant manner [and that's] (Hout & Elliott, 2011).

I'll just repeat that last part:

. . . have not been demonstrated to improve teaching or learning in any significant manner.

It goes on here:

Standardized assessments provide onetime snapshots that do not accurately measure how a student performs day after day and they are, by their very nature, summative, rather than formative; teachers who perform regular assessments . . . daily . . . are best positioned to evaluate how a student is performing vis-à-vis curricular outcomes.

And that study was Davies, Herbst, and Reynolds, 2008; and as well, Harris, Smith, & Harris, 2011; and WNCP, 2006.

The evidence continues to cite, "Standardized testing diverts teaching time and monetary resources away from . . . [students], teachable moments, and direct teacher-student contact time." And that's by Kohn of 2011, 2011; and Sahlberg of 2011.

The work of Pasi Sahlberg is something that we certainly can reference and use as a guide as some desirable directions for a system. This government is moving in the opposite direction. The evidence isn't there, Mr. Speaker. This government hasn't listened to parents, hasn't listened to teachers, and it's failing to step up to the plate in a meaningful way that they must for students.

We've seen graduation rates declining in a dramatic fashion under this government, and that's a massive failure — taking the tremendous opportunity that we've been presented and failing to manifest that in meaningful improvements in the lives of students and the next generation and in the realities of our

classrooms.

[11:30]

This is a government that has disrespected teachers time and time again with the failure to listen, with the circumstance, if you can imagine, of running ads against the profession in a demeaning way at a time where they were negotiating, Mr. Speaker. And it's pretty clear where they stand as it relates to teachers, the importance of education in society, and they're on a track that's certainly not supported, as I say, by evidence, not supported by common sense, and not in the best interests of our students.

What a government needs to do is to keep its mind to the big picture of working towards a more equitable, more equal society, dealing with issues of poverty, making sure that we have security of housing, making sure we're building strong families. That's going to make the biggest difference in education. And as we allocate our resources, we shouldn't be putting it into high-priced schemes that are failed to be wrong. We should be putting them into the direct supports and needs that make a difference in the lives of students, teachers in the classroom, Mr. Speaker.

So I'll be supporting the motion put forward by the member from Nutana here today:

That this Assembly opposes the implementation of unnecessary standardized testing in Saskatchewan's schools.

Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook.

**Mr. Moe:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That was a rather pessimistic view of where we're going here. But I appreciate the opportunity to have a few moments to enter into the debate here, Mr. Speaker, on the motion made by the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to just mention that under the first six years of the Saskatchewan Party government we've increased our total operating funding to our school divisions by a total of twenty three and a half per cent. Mr. Speaker, this equates into \$338 million since 2007-2008.

Mr. Speaker, operational funding this year has increased 2.3 per cent. That's in this year's budget, a balanced budget, Mr. Speaker, which equates to \$40.6 million more for our Saskatchewan school divisions. Mr. Speaker, this funding increase increases the budget to help the growing school divisions, such as Saskatoon Public and Saskatoon Catholic, with a 5.2 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker. Regina Catholic is at 5 per cent and Regina Public at 3.9 per cent increase over last year.

This also includes \$17 million to pay for enrolment increases. And, Mr. Speaker, I might add that this is the first time ever that current year enrolments have been used . . . or funded, pardon me. Capital spending is up \$7.2 million to a total of \$119

million, Mr. Speaker. This will help provide 40 new relocatables that will be available for Saskatchewan's fastest-growing communities. This will accommodate in total up to 800 students.

Supports for learning funding which go to classroom supports, such as English as an additional language and educational assistants, is increased by \$10 million, Mr. Speaker. This will be to a total of \$268 million.

Money is going to planning for two new schools, one in Langenburg and one in Gravelbourg. Money is also being provided for the projects that are already under way. Mr. Speaker, total school infrastructure allocation has increased by 264 per cent over the NDP. In the last six years since the Sask Party has been in government, Mr. Speaker, they've committed \$600 million to school infrastructure. The previous six years, when the NDP were in government, Mr. Speaker, that same spending was \$165 million.

All in all, our government has allocated funding for 43 major capital projects, over 900 additional smaller projects across the province. Mr. Speaker, when the NDP were in government they closed 176 schools.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to improving the educational outcomes for all our students. We have some of the most dedicated professional educators working in our sector. And unfortunately, too many of our students still are not graduating from high school. Mr. Speaker, about 72 per cent of our students graduate high school, and even more concerning, is only about a third of our First Nations and Métis students graduate. The status quo is not working. That is why we have looked for some new initiatives, Mr. Speaker, and we are introducing the student achievement initiative. Let me be clear, Mr. Speaker, this is not just about assessment; it's about a balance between instruction, curriculum, and assessment.

Mr. Speaker, standardized-based assessments are already a part of our education system. While the province currently administers some standardized tests to Saskatchewan students, it does only every other year. In addition, students write each test in only two to three grades. So while the current system provides a sample of student achievement, it's too limited in scope to have much of an impact.

A more comprehensive approach to standardized-based assessment will benefit students in a number of ways. These tests will provide the provincial government with a more accurate understanding of academic achievements throughout the province. With this information, we'll be able to target additional supports and intervention to schools with low results and also we'll be able to learn from those schools that obtain better results.

Mr. Speaker, there's school divisions that are already using this standard-based assessments and early year evaluations, the same types of successful programs that we intend to use at the provincial level. For example, the Chinook School Division have their own standardized literacy tests, and the division has seen a 21 per cent increase in students meeting or exceeding their literacy standards over a four-year term. In 2008, Mr. Speaker, 63 per cent of the students met or exceeded

grade-level reading. In 2012, four years later, 84 per cent of those students met those grade-level readings.

Mr. Speaker, Regina public school division uses an early years evaluation or an EYE to support their pre-K [pre-kindergarten] and kindergarten students with tests in June and then again in February. Mr. Speaker, in the interim between the EY [early years] tests, the EYE data is used to give teachers and staff training to support these very students in the pre-K and kindergarten classes.

Prairie school division uses an achievement program that has seen year-over-year improvements in 23 of the 26 student achievement areas. And, Mr. Speaker, these include areas such as reading, mathematics, and treaty education. My question would be, why does the opposition dismiss these types of programs that are done by our school boards across this province and why are they prejudging the same approach that will be used at the provincial level?

I would also like to speak just a little bit about how the student achievement initiative came about, Mr. Speaker, and some of the consultations that have happened and that are happening. To help our students be the best that they can be, we need to move forward with this student achievement initiative. In order to get it right, we need to hear from front-line educators, Mr. Speaker. And that is exactly why we have 13 teachers contracted to work on the tools and the resources for this initiative.

The ministry is engaged with all sector partners regarding our student achievement initiative. The ministry has met four times with the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation since Christmas regarding a consultation process with the teachers and the students. And just last week, Minister . . . Just last week, Mr. Speaker, the ministry met with the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation regarding a schedule and a process to do just precisely this work.

We have looked at what other jurisdictions are doing, and we know that other provinces like Alberta and Ontario have implemented this in their new approach and have seen improvements with their student success. We are the last province in the country to implement an assessment model that reports out at the individual student level.

Research says that assessment with regular feedback has the strongest positive impact on student achievement. That's something we're missing with the assessment model we currently have — the assessment for learning or AFL.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to speak a little bit about a personal consultation that I had. And it happened a little while ago, and it was in the upcoming to the plan for growth that was released by our Premier here about last fall.

As we went through that summer, Mr. Speaker, the Premier asked MLAs, government MLAs, to go out and consult with people on what makes Saskatchewan just the great place it is to live. Well, Mr. Speaker, I spoke with many educators that summer about specifically the education system and what would make it better, and there's teachers that I spoke with that asked for an assessment model, Mr. Speaker.

And I've spoken with them since we've talked about the student achievement model that is here now, and they're quite excited to implement it in a classroom, not only to measure students and schools and across school divisions but also, Mr. Speaker, they want to look at it to enhance their teaching ability with students as they go through the years and improve their teaching methods with these particular kids, Mr. Speaker. So this was consulted. It was part of the growth plan, Mr. Speaker.

And I would like to say that this is not an American high-stakes model of assessment. This is not about ranking individual schools or teachers, and it's certainly not about tying funding to performance. This is about our students in Saskatchewan. We're able to track library books in this province, but we're not able to track a student's learning. That needs to change.

Student achievement, Mr. Speaker, will be a Saskatchewan program that is developed by Saskatchewan people for our Saskatchewan students. We're going to capitalize on the good work that is happening across this province already in our school divisions that I mentioned. This is about developing a provincial standard so that there's consistency from school division to school division. And this is working in some school divisions already, Mr. Speaker. This is just another tool in the tool box to improve the outcomes for Saskatchewan's most valuable resource, our children and our students. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to get into this debate. It's a very important one, and it's clear that we have a lot of work to do in education. And we hear about it. We read about it in the newspaper daily about the challenges students are facing in their classrooms. And parents are seeing this. And they come to us and they say, really? Unnecessary standardized testing?

Everyone is for assessment. Assessment is necessary — absolutely, absolutely. And these folks talk about four school divisions, and I'd like to know more about it. But we think it's great that school divisions are doing innovative local work where they're improving results, and that's a good thing. But when we're talking about the unnecessary kind of things this government is doing, \$6 million for computers . . . And that's just the start. That's just the tip of the iceberg. We don't know where this will end over the next five, ten years. This is just the beginning. And so we have a lot of concerns.

We have a lot of concerns that this seems really, really unnecessary. And I want to talk a little bit. You know, we know that the minister is having a difficult time getting a handle on what is this really about, and that's what we're hearing now. The speaker just before me talked about, this actually came out of the Premier's growth plan, that that's a direction for the standardized testing initiative. That's where it's coming from.

I was really disappointed. I want to quote from March 26th, the *Hansard* there where the minister said, we're introducing the student achievement initiative, Mr. Speaker, because for the first time we'll be able to tell parents, tell students, tell teachers the rationale of how we can move children forward and how we

can continue in that direction.

The first time? I'm a teacher. I think I've been able to tell parents when they come for parent-teacher interviews the rationale for how we evaluate, assess students. I can't believe on one hand they're saying we trust teachers, but we'd rather have them testing than teaching. I think teachers have been doing both very well.

But they really feel that the emphasis are on the challenges in the classroom. And whether it's overcrowding, whether it's achievement rates in terms of all the groups in our schools . . . And we have to do more for vulnerable groups, and we have to do more particularly to support First Nations and Métis students in our classrooms. And we have to do more when English is a second language. But the answer, to say the answer is more testing, not more teaching; more testing, not more classrooms; more testing, not more educational assistants, that's just wrong-headed. That's wrong-headed, and it's completely unnecessary.

Now the minister goes on, and this is what he said on March 20th when asked about this. He says, you know:

The student achievement initiative, Mr. Speaker, didn't just come out of the blue. As my colleague said it, [and that I think he'd probably be referring to me] we didn't find it in a garage sale [I didn't say that]. This student achievement initiative is the product, is the result of the provincial panel on student achievement . . .

And so let's look at that panel that sat on the shelf. It was commissioned by this government in 2008 by the current Finance minister, then the Minister of Education. The previous minister from Humboldt sat on it, and now all of a sudden we're seeing parts of it resurface. Isn't that interesting? Isn't that interesting? And so the minister accurately . . . And I assume this is the recommendation he's talking about, is number 9:

The Panel concludes that student assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning, and that assessment provides valuable data to improve instruction and educational programming. The Panel recognizes that student assessment takes place in many ways, at many levels, and for many purposes throughout the education system. Therefore, the Panel recommends:

[11:45]

And then there are three, but the one I think he's referring to is number (ii): "Establishing a comprehensive assessment program that focuses on collecting data to inform instruction and improve student learning." So there it is in the report. Fair enough.

But what we didn't hear from the minister — and this is key, and this is what I'm hearing from all sorts of stakeholders in our education system — is right on page 2, page 2. So you don't have to go very long to read it, and it says:

The recommendations in this report have two important features:

The recommendations are interconnected and interdependent. Each builds upon and strengthens the others and together they will significantly improve student learning. The recommendations are designed to be implemented as a whole, not as independent pieces.

And so we see now a ministry that is cherry-picking recommendations that fit their agenda but not implementing the whole. Here they had a whole report, and it sat on the shelf, continues to sit on a shelf except for when the minister decides he's going to pull out page 38 and section 9(ii) to back his initiative, this government's initiative. That's not how we work together. That's not how we work with our partners.

And Mr. Speaker, we have real concerns about this kind of approach to education when we see our graduation rates falling. They are falling, and that's not a good thing. There is a way, and this panel report as a whole is the way to move. And this is the government that commissioned it but then decided to ignore it except for one part of it. And I think that's a real problem.

So, Mr. Speaker, as we debate here today, what are the priorities in our schools? They are real. They are real. We see them. And we've talked about Living Sky School Division up in The Battlefords, the challenges that they're facing in having to dip into their reserves to make difficult choices. Their kids are in hallways. They're having to wear coats apparently because the heating infrastructure is not working as well as it should because they're not getting the funding. They call it status quo.

The School Boards Association doesn't call it status quo. They consider it a cut. It may be above zero, but essentially in reality it's a cut. And the STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation] considers it a cut because it's a real problem. It's not meeting the needs of the classrooms that we see in our schools.

And I just have to . . . I think even today in question period we talked about Battlefords and the challenges that are happening up there. We have so many challenges in our schools, so many good things, so many good things, and teachers working as hard as they can and administrations working as hard as they can. But the fact is this kind of thing is unnecessary when the reality of what's happening in our schools and our communities are not being addressed.

And today we talked about the challenges in North Battleford and The Battlefords region where we see economic difficulties, hardships because of jobs being lost. Those things not only just come home, but they come to school when kids are facing uncertainty about what's happening in their homes. And these are the realities that show up in our classrooms.

So we have many, many challenges that we have to deal with, but instead this government decides to spend \$6 million on a start-up on computers. And we don't know where that will end, and we don't know who asked for it.

But we can say that there is a plan — there is a way to move forward — that this government had commissioned. And why are they ignoring it? Why are they ignoring the whole report and instead cherry-picking?

So I think this is an important discussion and an important debate that we're having here. And the resolution, I think the key word in it is unnecessary standardized testing. It's unnecessary because we do a lot of assessment already, and there has to be a balance between testing and teaching. There has to be an appropriate way that we recognize that assessment is a key part in terms of planning for teaching, evaluating as you are teaching, and then at the end, to make sure that students have achieved the objectives of their learning. That's key. That's really important.

But to overlay more on an already overcrowded agenda in schools, whether it be the size of their classrooms . . . Making sure everyone achieves their full potential, that's key. That's key. And I really think especially when we have some unique opportunities in Saskatchewan when it comes to First Nations and Métis, that we want to make sure that they recognize their full potential, and the same with new Canadians when the challenge is English as an additional language. That's really important. Students who are living with disabilities, we have to make sure their needs are met.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a lot of challenges, a lot of pressures in our education system. And I really think it's important that we think about, what are our priorities? And this government has choices about how it spends its money, and this is simply wrong-headed, wrong-headed, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think it's unnecessary, and therefore I think that the resolution put forward from the member of Saskatoon Nutana hits the mark completely when she says, "This Assembly opposes the implementation of unnecessary standardized testing in Saskatchewan schools."

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

**Mr. Makowsky:** — Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. It's a real pleasure to join this debate this morning, Mr. Speaker. I'm a former teacher, and I have three students, three sons that are students in the Regina Catholic system, so this is a pretty pressing issue for myself. I was only a substitute teacher, Mr. Speaker, so I didn't do a lot of assessment of students. I certainly handed out tests on days I happened to be there in the past. But certainly I was able to have some experience in this area when I had been in government with some math consultations we did, I did with the then member from Douglas Park, now the minister, Mr. Speaker. And we looked at the math curriculum. We listened to teachers.

And two things come to mind when it comes to this debate, Mr. Speaker. Number one, we have very passionate, very, very passionate teachers in this province, Mr. Speaker. They care so much about their students, Mr. Speaker, and I know with my sons, their teachers are passionate. They'd do just about anything to see their students achieve. We had teachers travelling far distances in not great weather just to come and have their passionate views put out there, Mr. Speaker. So definitely we have a bunch of teachers in Saskatchewan that care, as I mentioned.

And as it comes to this issue, Mr. Speaker, we talked a little bit about assessments, and we talked about the AFL, assessment for learning. Some teachers expressed problems that you get

late feedback. Sometimes when you take in a grade 5 or grade 8, you know, the board doesn't get it till much later. Sometimes the students . . . It's gone on to the next level. So it's not immediate assessment, Mr. Speaker. It just looks at the grade level, not drilled down to that individual student and see what they need and what they need to do better.

We talked to very passionate administrators: for example Liam Choo-Foo in the Chinook region of the province, Mr. Speaker; talked to Julie MacRae right here in Regina. And they told us about some very exciting initiatives they had, and great results that they had right here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to highlight one of the projects or one of the pilot projects they had, early years evaluation. I believe the member from Shellbrook mentioned that real quickly. I'd like to dig down a little bit into that, Mr. Speaker.

It was a kindergarten class in a few categories from earlier in the year to later in the year we're looking here. The students in this cohort that had appropriate development went from 16 per cent, 16 per cent all the way up to 64 per cent, Mr. Speaker, through this pilot project. Those experiencing some difficulty decreased from 64 per cent to 36 per cent, Mr. Speaker. Those experiencing significant difficulty decreased from 20 per cent all the way down to zero. There are no more kids in this particular study. Now this is certainly a small study, Mr. Speaker, but it shows, I think, there's great work being done in the field. There's lots of experts out there, Mr. Speaker. And this is something that can certainly be used and looked at in other areas of the province, Mr. Speaker.

When I think of my own son, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, he's in kindergarten, and most parents know that there is assessment and evaluation going on in each reporting period. And well most recently, Mr. Speaker, between reporting periods they had an evaluation of his ability . . . or the number of letters he recognized in the alphabet. So number X out of 26 that he recognizes. The sounds that they make — X out of 26. The numbers up to 10, he was evaluated on that. And based on that, we'd like to get that number up just a little bit. So here's where he was just recently, where do we need to get him to by the end of the year, and here's some strategies we can implement to try and get him there, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that's good work. That is a very elementary model, a very basic model, but that's the heart of the student achievement initiative, Mr. Speaker. We want our students doing better, and we measure how they are doing in those particular areas, Mr. Speaker.

So can we look at those kind of scenarios, those best practices in certain areas of the province that we saw here in Regina, we saw in Chinook, we saw in Cornerstone, and that we heard in our . . . that I see with my sons and in other parts with our math consultations, Mr. Speaker? Can we look at the best practices and try to have it in other parts of the province, Mr. Speaker? I think I would, me as a parent, if I knew something good was happening in Saskatoon, if something good was happening in Melfort, if something really positive was happening in Martensville, I would think that I'd want to have the chance to have that happen with my students in my area or in my constituency, Mr. Speaker. And that's what this does.

So you know, Mr. Speaker, when I mention those statistics, those hard numbers, those facts, I challenge . . . What would the NDP do if they saw these numbers? Would they just completely ignore them? Would they just sweep it under the rug? Who cares? We won't do anything with them.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's an obligation within a balanced budget and in all reasonable measures, if we want to improve student achievement in the province, Mr. Speaker, we want to look at what works in other parts of the province and try and replicate it, Mr. Speaker. And that's what the ministry is doing with this motion.

They mention — the member from Nutana — unnecessary. Well what is unnecessary? They acknowledge that assessment has to happen; evaluation has to happen. But are we going to leave it to the members opposite, the nimble nine, or are we going to listen to the experts in the field, Mr. Speaker? Are we going to listen to the Liam Choo-Foos, Julie MacRae, Ben Grebinski, Don Rempel, those members that were here earlier in the year up in the Speaker's gallery, Mr. Speaker? Are we going to listen to them, those folks that are in the system and know what's happening within their divisions, or are we going to listen to the NDP, Mr. Speaker?

You know, there's a lot of fearmongering I think in this area going on, and certainly I guess that's what oppositions do. That's what they're part of. That's their modus operandi, I guess. It's certainly not a high-stakes model like in the US [United States], Mr. Speaker. We're not ranking schools. We're not ranking teachers. The teachers aren't going to stay up all night wondering what the results of the tests are in case they keep their job. Nothing could be further from the truth, Mr. Speaker. They're trying to paint the picture that we're going to have students chained to their desks, hours upon end, days upon days, filling out bubble sheets, Mr. Speaker. That's completely false, Mr. Speaker. That's just misinformation.

And it's certainly not an either-or, Mr. Speaker. It's a continuation of the curriculum. One part of it's curriculum, the other part's instruction, and the other part's assessment, Mr. Speaker.

So you know, it's not a massive part of the budget either, Mr. Speaker. When you look at the numbers, we saw from Chinook, we saw from Cornerstone, we saw from Regina Public, Mr. Speaker, this is new money over and on top of from before. It comes to point three, 3 per cent of this budget. And again this is new money.

So we're not cutting teachers. We're not cutting everything like we hear from the members opposite, Mr. Speaker. We're fully funding this, Mr. Speaker. And we think it's a good initiative. Again it's just a tool. It's just a part, it's just a part of what we're doing, Mr. Speaker. It's another tool for the teachers, the great teachers we have out there. Give them another tool to use to help their students achieve. Which is exactly what they want, and that's what I as a parent and what we all want here in the province, Mr. Speaker.

So we have great schools in our province. We have great teachers in our province. But can we do just a little bit better, Mr. Speaker? Can we do just a little bit better? Now I know the

NDP, the members opposite, they're all about status quo. Keep people, keep things the same. Don't set goals; just keep things the same, Mr. Speaker. Not in this area necessarily but certainly when it comes to nurses, when it comes to wait times, population, the economy, the employment rate in the province, Mr. Speaker, they like the status quo. That's fine. They're okay. They like stagnation. So can we try something that's proven in the province that we can try? Can we just try that, Mr. Speaker?

[12:00]

And I wonder that the member from Nutana, she mentioned that I believe it's her son or daughter went into the AcTal program, and that's a great program from what I understand, in Saskatoon. How would the administrators or the teachers know if her son qualified in the first place? How would they know? Would they just . . . Do they just pick the students that go to that accelerated program? Would they just pick it out of a hat like the lottery system, just guess, just — I don't know, you know — just randomly based on whimsy?

They would probably do some sort of evaluation on that student. That student's really achieving, maybe we can move them, give them extra work to do. We can move them on to the AcTal program, in fact, Mr. Speaker. So that would be an evaluation or an assessment of that particular student.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Time for debate has expired. I recognize the member from The Battlefords. I recognize the member from The Battlefords.

**Mr. Cox:** — Standards-based assessment has proven to be effective, and the positive results are very evident. The success of standards-based assessment can be seen in Chinook School Division which utilizes a standardized literacy assessment.

In 2008 the division had 63 per cent of students meeting or exceeding grade-level reading. In 2012, Mr. Speaker, 84 per cent of students are meeting or exceeding grade-level reading. That's a 21 per cent increase in students meeting or exceeding literacy standards over four years. Mr. Speaker, an impressive statistic.

Chinook School Division is not alone in realizing successful results from standards-based testing. To the member from Regina Rosemont: why does the NDP continue to ignore the positive results of standards-based assessment in our education system?

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question from the hon. member. The reason we oppose it is because it's been proven wrong. It's been proven a wasteful expense, and it's been proven not to be in the best interest of this standardized-testing approach pursued by governments all around the world.

What I also don't support from the member from The Battlefords is a government that's spending \$6 million on something that has no evidence, that's been proven wrong, at the same time they're cutting Living Sky School Division by

\$2.4 million, Mr. Speaker — a division that supports a very diverse population and a government that's failing to support the needs of the classroom, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Wotherspoon:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We see a context where we see cuts to educational assistants by that government, cuts to supports in the classroom, growing class size, and a lot of strain on students and on learning. And they're pursuing this foolhardy approach of spending \$6 million more at a time where we need real supports in the classroom. I think of the Living Sky School Division up in the region of the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook, and my question to that member is: how does he support this expensive \$6 million plan without any evidence, that's been proven wrong in other jurisdictions, at the same time as they're cutting \$2.4 million from that local school division that's working hard to meet the needs of students?

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook.

**Mr. Moe:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member opposite for the question. I take issue with the members opposite talking about North Battleford and the economy in North Battleford in such a dreary manner.

Mr. Speaker, the building permits in North Battleford just in the last number of years include building permits from companies such as NorSask, John Deere, Kramer. Mifab has been replaced with a garbage tank builder in there. There's been two power plants built in the region, Mr. Speaker, as well as numerous oil projects, car dealerships, equipment farm dealerships, Mr. Speaker. North Battleford is a vibrant community that is moving forward in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, with regards to assessment, this is only one piece of the student initiative. Mr. Speaker, this is about balance. It's about balance with curriculum, instruction, and assessment. In fact, Mr. Speaker, many school divisions are already doing this type of work, and we want to build on that by expanding these models to the provincial level. Again, Mr. Speaker, it's this government investing in Saskatchewan's most valuable resource, and that is our children and our students.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Batoche.

**Mr. Kirsch:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Our government is committed to first-class K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] education in this province. Under the first six years of our government, we have increased total operating funding to school divisions by 23.5 per cent. Total school infrastructure allocation has increased by 264 per cent. And we have increased spending on new schools and major school renovations by 228 per cent over the NDP. Our government has allocated funding for 43 major capital projects and over 900 additional small projects across the province while the NDP shamefully closed 176 schools when they were in power.

To the member from Saskatoon Centre: will that member agree

that the NDP's record on education is below standards that the people of Saskatchewan deserve?

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

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I am proud to stand up and talk about our record, but one thing I want that member and all those members over there to think about, about their good friends in the Devine era that left this province broke, left this province broke. In the first year of the Romanow administration, we had to spend more on interest on the debt left by their friends, left by their friends, than on education. How can that be? And he has the nerve to stand up and ask a question like that, ask a question like that. They forced us to spend more on interest than on education.

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

**Ms. Sproule:** — Just waiting. There we go. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. One of the things that's been raised is concern by the academics that have been commenting on this decision by this government to implement standardized testing in the form they're proposing, which we say is unnecessary, is that there was absolutely no consultation with the professional educators at our universities. This government just went ahead and come up with the idea — who knows at coffee somewhere or whatever — but they did not consult with the academics. And my question for the member from Melfort is: why did this government ignore the recommendations and not consult with academics on this program?

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Melfort.

**Mr. Phillips:** — Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I really thank the member for her question. You know, I look at this, and I see from the opposition that the opposition were up on Monday, they were talking about Texas, and that's a fact. They were talking about the BC Teachers' Federation, and that's a fact. When they talk about the U of S study that shows our students aren't doing as well in the first year, they ignore it. And that's what I get from them so often, is that they ignore things that happen, like the Chinook School Division and the Melfort North East School Division. And all the good things that are happening here, they ignore. And I just don't know where they're coming from.

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

**Mr. Michelson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's astounding how that side is always against growth. They're against advancement. They're against progress in every aspect. Two weeks ago our government voted and passed a budget. We voted on it; they voted against it.

In that budget there was financing for students in the education sector. Overall funding has been increased in the budget for operational fundings increasing by over \$40 million. There was \$17 million for enrolment increases and \$119 million for capital funding and \$268 million to support learning, the support

learning program. Sadly every member on that side voted against that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, to the member for Saskatoon Nutana, I'd like to ask that member why the NDP has voted against Saskatchewan students and ensuring the Saskatchewan students get the best education?

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

**Ms. Sproule:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As always with the member opposite, I just sometimes wonder what he's talking about because I'm not sure where that question's coming from.

In this case, the motion that's being debated at this point is about the unnecessary additional costs for standardized testing when we have students who are learning in the hallways, we have students who are wearing their coats because the schools are too cold, we have students who are suffering as additional language students, EAL [English as an additional language] students because there aren't enough supports in the classroom. Ten minutes a week for learning when these students need all the support they can get, and we see \$6 million in computers to do additional unnecessary testing. It's ridiculous.

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

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you very much. You know this government takes a lot of pride in patting itself on the back for all the things it's done in the last five and a half, six years. One of the things they did is, they did this report on *Provincial Panel on Student Achievement*, released February 12th, 2010. It has sat on the shelf since then. So to the member from Regina Dewdney, will he make sure that this panel, all its recommendations will be implemented?

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

**Mr. Makowsky:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the NDP wrote the book on leaving studies in the drawer, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well it's nice to have that member not ask a question while shouting it, like he is right now, Mr. Speaker. But we're fully behind student achievement in schools, Mr. Speaker. We want them to do better. This is for students. This is to help teachers as well when it's possibly needed, Mr. Speaker. We've spent a lot of money on education — \$1.775 billion this year alone, Mr. Speaker, \$268 million specifically . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Time for the 75-minute debate has expired. Why is the member on his feet?

**Mr. Toth:** — Mr. Speaker, with leave to make a personal statement.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The member from Moosomin has asked for leave to make a personal statement. Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Moosomin.

## STATEMENT BY A MEMBER

### Apology

**Mr. Toth:** — Mr. Speaker, earlier this morning I let my emotions get the best of me and I made a comment directed at the Leader of the Opposition about what would his dad say. Mr. Speaker, unfortunately that comment does not reflect my views, that I believe all people from the youngest to the oldest in this province — regardless of race, religion, nationality — should be able to live without the fear of being bullied. We all agreed that bullying is an atrocious form of treating people, and my statement doesn't reflect my views on that. And I regret having made that statement, and I apologize to the Legislative Assembly and to the Leader of the Opposition.

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

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

### Motion No. 2 — Support for Uranium Mining Development

**Ms. Campeau:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at the conclusion of my comments I would like to move the following motion:

That this Assembly support further uranium mining development and expansion in northern Saskatchewan, especially given the positive track record of Saskatchewan's uranium industry in creating opportunity and employment in the North, particularly for First Nations and Métis people.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would first like to start off by discussing the recent royalty review on uranium and how it will affect the development and expansion in northern Saskatchewan. So these changes were implemented on April 1st, 2013 and recognizes actual costs incurred by industry. And the modernization of the provincial uranium royalty regime will enhance Saskatchewan's competitiveness and is essential to continue attracting new investment and encouraging expansion in the industry in the North.

The previous royalty system was implemented on January 1st, 2001 and was designed to exist for 10 years. So we're a couple of years past that, and the government held extensive consultations with industry and stakeholders.

This new system, the new stepped rate royalty system will accurately recognize industry investments and improve the competitiveness of the province in attracting new investment. And it leaves in place the base royalty rates and moves to a system with two royalty rate tiers from three. And initially the implementation will see revenues unchanged for the province, but the long-term uranium royalty review in Saskatchewan is forecast to triple in the next 15 years.

So a number of mine projects totalling approximately 2 billion in investments would not proceed without this change. And



construction associated with the three proposed mines would be about 3,200 person-years, which is quite extensive.

I wanted to talk a little bit about the initiatives that are going on in Saskatchewan in respect to First Nations and Métis employment and people who are out there working, you know, in the front lines and doing the work and laying the foundation that needs to be laid in terms of, you know, trying to close that gap, the economic gap of First Nations and Métis people in Saskatchewan. And that's across . . . from all industry and government as well as well as our institutions. So there's a lot of good work out there that's going on.

[12:15]

And a couple of years ago prior to my, you know, my life, in my public life, I was part of some of these tables, so I realize how passionate these people are.

And I just want to talk about some conversations that I've had at the grassroots level, you know, in the last little while. Last summer I went back home to one of my Saulteaux communities. I claim three. So I was in Fishing Lake at the time and I was able to actually sit and, you know, listen to the discussion that was going on between quite a few lady elders in the area, which as a young woman can be quite intimidating. And I was just happy to be sitting there and listening, and I didn't want to call too much attention to myself because primarily I just like to go sit there and listen to what they have to say.

So I caught the attention of one of them. So there was a little bit of fear in my heart when that happened. And then they, you know, they start to ask about my job and how I enjoy it and, you know, basically started discussing that we need more people to step up and participate in other levels of government and politics.

And so that conversation led to how our province was doing as a whole in terms of what they've seen in the last while. And these ladies have been around. You know, there was a couple of them in their late 80s and early 90s, and so they've seen a lot. And they've seen the transition from, you know, when they were young and what they had to go through and what their great-grandchildren, you know, what kind of world they live in now. And they started talking about in the last few years they haven't seen as many of their family members working as they have before. So that was, you know, it was really nice feedback especially to hear it from these women. And it was very powerful, and it was very profound. And at that point I knew that, you know, I had made the right decision to be here.

So that kind of brings me back to what the uranium industry is in the North and the effect that it's had in the North in the last, you know, 30 years and the changes of the North in terms of the infrastructure and just the employment. And a couple of years ago I was able to go to a conference, a CAMA [Canadian Aboriginal Minerals Association] conference which they have every year. And they have . . . It's the Canadian Aboriginal mining association, and because I was doing a little bit of research in that area in economic development and, you know, basically trying to figure out what we need to do to close the gap.

So I found myself at this conference and I found myself as one of the attendees with a few, well actually quite a few people from the North, from Saskatchewan. So it was kind of nice to see fellow Saskatchewanians there. There was a few people from Cameco who were Dene. And I'm always a big proponent of graduate school and encouraging people to, you know, if they already have a degree to go on and get a master's degree. And you know, I was doing that and they had already informed me we all have master's degrees. There was about five of them sitting there, which was pretty neat. They're all, you know, kind of speaking Dene and throwing in English, so sometimes I'd catch what they were saying.

But, yes, and they all informed me, you know, while they were working — they've been working for Cameco for a while — that Cameco had supported them through their graduate school education. So I was actually quite pleased to hear that. And a few of their other employees had come to sit with us as well, and they kind of had a similar story to tell. And these are people who live in the Far North; one gentleman was from Black Lake. And you know, just hearing what their stories were, what their life has been like and how being employed in these jobs and how it's affecting their families, and who are working in the uranium mines as well and how positive it has been on their . . . in terms of economically and how they can support their family.

And in the Aboriginal community, you know, a lot of the old teachings have come back and are being re-taught. And one of them is, you know, I've talked about it before in the legislature about what we Saulteaux people call the [The hon. member spoke for a time in Saulteaux.] which is similar quite to the Cree term, and it's got still the same meaning which is quality of life. And you know, how one of our main values should be looking after our families and being self-sufficient, and what that brings with it is the confidence.

And I see that in a lot of Aboriginal people who are working and who have been able to, you know, look after their families. And I see what the initiatives of Cameco have done in terms of the leadership of Gary Merasty at Cameco, and how other resource companies are looking at their model and adopting it. So I find, you know, the work he's done quite commendable. And I'm a big fan of Gary anyway, even before he worked at Cameco. So you know, and also the initiatives that Areva and what they've been able to do in the North. So this is one of the main reasons why I'm, you know, very happy to speak to this, you know, to the uranium mining in the North. And also not only employment, you know, and education. I'm also thinking in terms of procurement and how people can tap into the procurement of the different mines. There's a lot of economic spinoff as well, and we talk a lot about economic spinoff in this legislature.

And I fully support the expansion of the North. I've had my own family members, and I've spoken about this before, who have made their careers in the resource industry whether it be working on the pipeline or, you know, oil extraction. Or you know, for lack of a better of word, I call one of my brothers a rig pig man. And that's exactly what he is, you know, but he's been able to look after his family, you know, doing that.

**Some Hon. Member:** — It's good work.

**Ms. Campeau:** — Yes. And it's hard work so, you know, he always tells me he doesn't need to go to the gym because, you know, he works for a living. So, you know, seeing how people can basically regain their confidence from, you know, in terms of the past and then the effects of colonization, you know, that have gone on in the last 125 years or so.

So I also, you know, had a friend. My friend Jason Wilson, who's got his own company now, he used to be the, you know . . . worked for the Prospectors and Development Association of Canada. They, you know, are a national organization and they're quite respected, and they are based in Toronto as he always, you know, used to remind me.

So Cameco, you know, they were the recipient of this year's Environmental and Social Responsibility Award for its outstanding accomplishments in establishing good community relations in its exploration and mining operations. And what I talked about there, you know, their model that they're using and other companies are adopting it, they have a five pillar corporate social responsibility model designed to ensure local community support and proactive environmental stewardship.

The five pillars are: community engagement. They engage communities through project development phases to ensure local people are aware and understand the company's activities and have opportunities to provide input. And environmental stewardship, they create proactive plans wherever it operates to minimize its impact on the environment. And workforce development. It focuses on training, education, and recruiting in northern communities and seeks to employ as many northern people as it can for its Saskatchewan mining operations. And business development, they prefer northern-owned businesses in procuring goods and services for its Saskatchewan operations as part of a strategy to build sustainable local enterprises that will continue to generate opportunity for local people after mining ends. And community investment, and they invest in key areas that will assist in community development, education for literacy, youth health and wellness initiative, and they're recognized an industry leader in CSR [corporate social responsibility] by Aboriginal association and industry rankings.

And you know, there was a few events that I had put on, you know, while I was working at the university, and Cameco was very responsive and willing to, you know, to help out at these events for sure.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just maybe should maybe go into a little bit of, you know, the history. I always love to look back at the history. So you know, Saskatchewan has been the site of all major Canadian uranium discoveries in the last four years. And earlier today I looked at a map at all the uranium deposits in the world. And in 1968 the Rabbit Lake deposit was discovered in Northern Saskatchewan by Gulf Minerals and the German-owned Uranerz Exploration and Mining Limited in 1975. And the mine and the mill were in operation. And I always hear, you know, many people speaking about, you know, and when they have to go fly up to Rabbit Lake. And I even had a friend whose wife would teach up there, so she would go up there as well and support some of their education initiatives. So it's not just miners who were going up there to work.

So you know, when we talk about the mine expansions . . . And you know, I guess I should talk about our customers, right? Our target market, which are China and India because, you know, in terms of population and always thinking from a marketing aspect in terms of looking at their populations. And you know, China has a little over 1.3 billion people and India has a little over 1.2 billion. And in 2009 I had the opportunity to go to India for two weeks on a trade mission with the Edwards School of Business, so I was able to tour and meet with a lot of people from many different industries. So they're quite progressive and moving forward and, you know, they are in need of energy. So forecasted by 2050, we'll have 9.1 billion people on Earth so, you know, as our potential customers.

So I want to talk a little bit about regulation because, you know, there are people out there who fearmonger in terms of uranium, and they, you know, make sure that their voices are heard, that's for sure. And when I hear the fearmongering that's going on, I always think about, you know, are you the same people who are complaining about Aboriginal unemployment? And how are, you know, what are we going to do about the problem? And meanwhile you're working to shut down, you know, what their bread and butter comes from basically. And in terms of jobs and the resources that are in the North, you know, what alternatives would they have?

[12:30]

And when I ask these questions directly to those people who ask me, they don't have an answer. An answer is usually government. But you know, we've had, in terms of the policies in the last 125-plus years which has created a cycle of dependency, that's not the answer. You know, more government definitely is not the answer, and being self-sufficient and economic development certainly is.

So the expansion of these mines is welcome news to me and, you know, I directly, I correlate it to the amount of jobs that we could have and the training and in terms of contributions, economic contributions to the province.

So, you know, the people who are fearmongering really have to think about that, you know. And those who are fearmongering, I often wonder how many Aboriginal people have you had at your supper table? So, you know, and have you actually heard the stories? And have you seen the poverty of some of the communities? You know, at one point growing up I, you know . . . and I discussed with some of my colleagues who kind of were in the same boat, when I'd go live with my grandparents we didn't have running water. So that's a reality to some people still today.

So you know . . . And those who are working now for Cameco which are pretty decent paying jobs, they don't have to go through that. And they don't have to . . . You know, their children don't have to see what their realities were when they were growing up. And I certainly worked hard to make sure my child didn't see the realities I had when I was growing up.

So in terms of . . . You know, I go back to history and to policy and . . . I'm still trying to find my paper. So I always go back. And you know, and it's just in my academic training and going to the root causes and trying to figure out why and where, you

know, why some of our economic conditions are the way they are, because I grew up . . . My dad grew up in a trapping family, you know. He grew up by Hudson Bay in a cabin. And a lot of people are aware that I'm from a big Métis family and, you know, they . . . His family basically looked after their family through trapping and they were self-sufficient.

In some policies, you know, past policies which date back to 1948 . . . When you come back to, you know, the reality is, which wasn't that long ago, and basically the North was a testing ground for the party's most — the CCF [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation] party — most controversial assimilation programs, which was called the ultimate solution. This was very disruptive in, you know, the economy. So you know, this is, you know, a few years have gone by, but we still see the effects of that policy and definitely see a lot of change in the North in terms of, you know, coming back and people, you know, being able to, you know, secure employment through mining employment.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to . . . I look forward to continuing this discussion, however I would like to move the motion to adjourn debate. And that is:

That this Assembly support further uranium mining development and expansion in northern Saskatchewan, especially given the positive track record of Saskatchewan's uranium industry in creating opportunity and employment in the North, and particularly for First Nations and Métis people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The member from Saskatoon Fairview has moved a motion:

That this Assembly support further uranium mining development and expansion in northern Saskatchewan, especially given the positive track record of Saskatchewan's uranium industry in creating opportunities and employment in the North, particularly for First Nations and Métis people.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the Deputy Government House Leader.

**Hon. Mr. Wyant:** — Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

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

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:36.]

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