



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

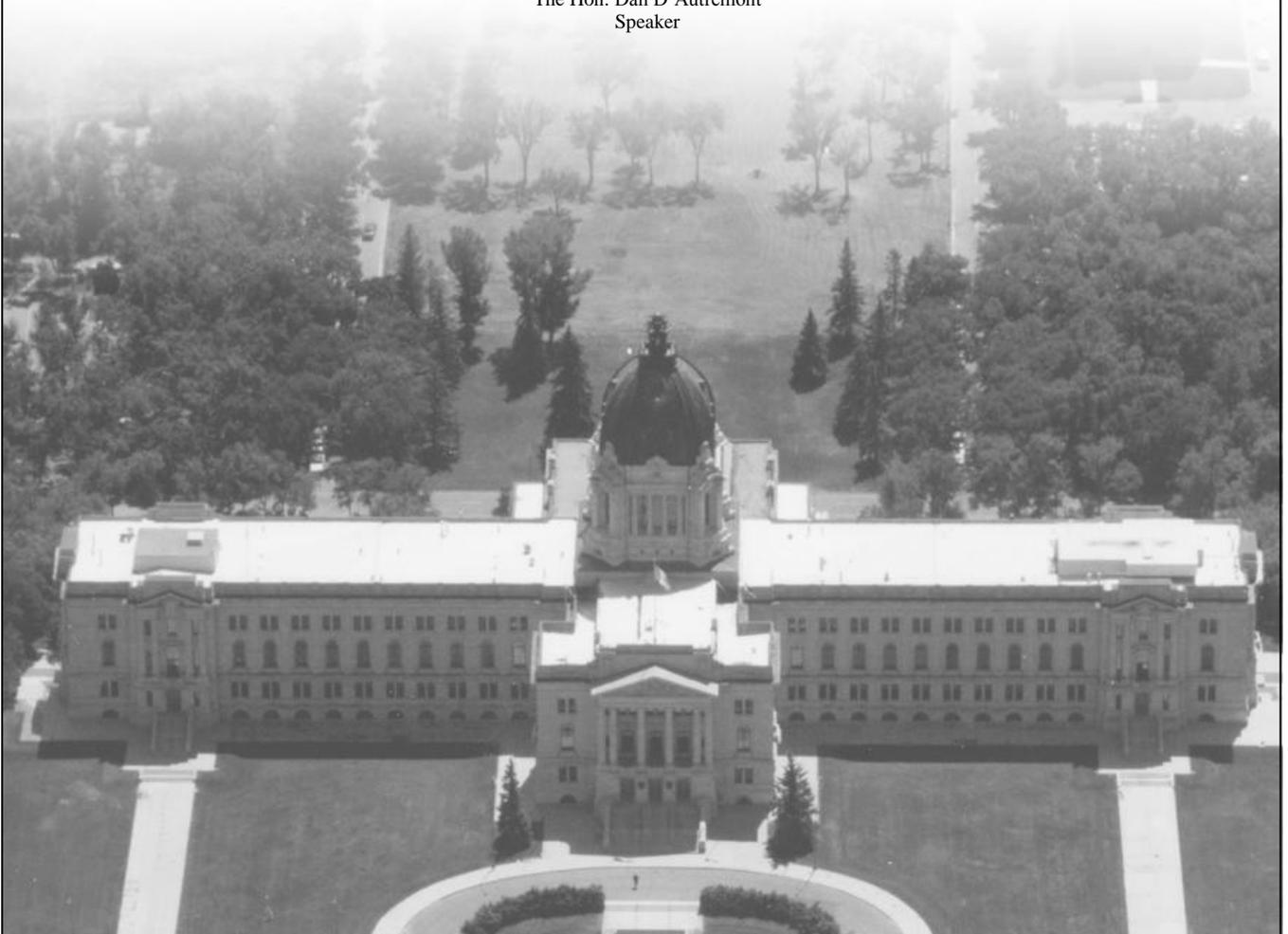
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(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

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
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, Russ	SP	Regina Douglas Park
McCall, Warren	NDP	Regina Elphinstone-Centre
McMillan, Hon. Tim	SP	Lloydminster
McMorris, Hon. Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
Merriman, Paul	SP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Michelson, Warren	SP	Moose Jaw North
Moe, Scott	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Morgan, Hon. Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
Nilson, John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
Norris, Hon. Rob	SP	Saskatoon Greystone
Ottenbreit, Greg	SP	Yorkton
Parent, Roger	SP	Saskatoon Meewasin
Phillips, Kevin	SP	Melfort
Reiter, Hon. Jim	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Ross, 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 Minister of Rural Health.

Hon. Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to, to you and through you, introduce a couple of constituents in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce my constituency assistant, Janet Hanson, and her daughter, Jade. Please welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly, I feel very privileged and honoured to introduce two guests that are in the west gallery. One is a friend of mine that I've known now for well over 40 years, even though I'm only 41 years of age, and he lives in Saskatoon. It's Thomas Wilderman. And the second is my constituency assistant, Susan Dunne, who is also a very good friend of mine and a great asset to the Humboldt constituency.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Whip.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you I'd like to introduce a group of students that are here from Rhoda Hardlotte Memorial Keethanow High School in Stanley Mission. The grade 7 students are here. And I just want to welcome their teacher, Isabelle Hardlotte. Welcome to your Legislative Assembly. Kiefer as a chaperone, Preston is here, as well as Cheyenne is here as chaperone with a number of students in grade 7 from the community.

I just want to make sure that they understand this Assembly is yours. Be proud when you come here. This is your Assembly. We are here working on your behalf so that you have a good future, a fair future. And we honour you that you are here to come and visit us and learn what the proceedings happen here, how we're supposed to all work together to honour every student, every child in our province. So I welcome you to your Legislative Assembly and say thank you, tēniki for coming.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today presenting a petition calling for reasonable funding so that all Saskatchewan students can do well. And we know classes in Saskatchewan schools are growing so fast that many classes have well over 30 students in them, and many classes are now being taught in hallways and boot rooms. And we know in a time of economic boom, it's only common sense that schools receive appropriate funding so that all students, including First Nations and Métis students, can achieve their

full potential. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: cause the government to immediately increase the financial support for all Saskatchewan students, including resources to limit class sizes, provide resources for students with special needs, support English as an additional language, and to provide more support for Aboriginal education.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I do so present. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise today to present a petition in support of fixing up Highway 123, which is the highway that serves the people of Cumberland House along with the Cumberland House Cree Nation. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to recognize that upgrades, repairs, and total maintenance on Highway 123 is important to northern residents and must be undertaken immediately.

And, Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed the petition are all from throughout Saskatchewan, not just Cumberland House and the Cumberland House Cree Nation. The people that have the petition here today are from Cupar, Strasbourg, and Saskatoon.

And, Mr. Speaker, we'll be presenting petitions on cellphone coverage and highways from northern Saskatchewan over the course of this fall sitting. And, Mr. Speaker, I so present the petition.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition in support of replacing the gymnasium at Sacred Heart Community School. Yesterday we had a group of students here from their school. They were wearing their brilliant yellow shirts, Mr. Speaker. It's because Sacred Heart is the school that takes literacy very seriously, and all those students get those shirts as part of the commitment they have to the accelerated reading program there.

Last year the gymnasium at the Sacred Heart Community School quite literally started falling apart, has been closed indefinitely, and is no longer safe for students. Sacred Heart's a school where it's the largest school in North Central with 450 students, 75 per cent of whom are First Nations and Métis. Enrolment at that school has increased by 100 students over the past four years, and attendance and learning outcomes are steadily improving. It's a matter of basic fairness and common sense, Mr. Speaker, that Sacred Heart Community School should have a gym just like any other school. In the prayer that

reads as follows:

Respectfully requesting that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan takes the following action: to cause the Sask Party provincial government to immediately commit to the replacement of the gymnasium of Sacred Heart Community School.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by citizens from the city of Regina. I so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

Combined Lab and X-ray Technicians' Day

Ms. Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today and recognize the work of the combined lab and X-ray technicians because tomorrow, October 25th, is Combined Lab and X-ray Technicians Day.

Mr. Speaker, these highly skilled, dedicated professionals are a vital part of our health care system. You'll find them in clinics, laboratories, hospitals both big and small. Combined lab and X-ray technicians work alongside other health care providers and perform a variety of essential tests for the benefits of our patients. They collect and analyze patient samples. They operate sophisticated diagnostic imaging equipment and they make sure the equipment is properly maintained and functions properly.

Mr. Speaker, combined lab and X-ray technicians also need to be sensitive to the needs of people who may be sick or hurt or may be just a little bit nervous. Mr. Speaker, at some point in our lives, nearly everyone has had to give a blood sample. We know the caring nature of our lab techs make these experiences all that much easier.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all members of this Assembly and all the Saskatchewan residents, I would like to thank the members of this important medical profession for the work they do today and every day. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Travels in Saskatchewan

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure all of us, those over on the government side and those of us on the opposition side, are pleased to kick off the third session of the twenty-seventh legislature. And I'm sure we all feel a deep sense of responsibility. And I know, Mr. Speaker, I sure do.

I travelled the province extensively over the last few months, and I met a whole lot of Saskatchewan families. And I'm grateful that they welcomed me into their homes, workplaces, businesses, and communities. I'm grateful that they shared their hopes and dreams with me. And I'm grateful they opened up and shared their struggles, challenges, and fears because, though there is a lot going well in Saskatchewan thanks to our hard-working people, innovative businesses, and abundance of

natural resources, there's a whole lot that needs to be so much better.

So throughout this session, I'll be thinking of everyone I've met over the last few months. I'll be thinking of their stories and I'll be focusing on what matters to them and to all Saskatchewan families today because politics should never just be about the province doing well but it should be about people doing well. And for that to happen, in this Assembly, we must focus on what really matters to Saskatchewan families today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Foster Families Week

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise in the House today to recognize the dedicated foster families across this province during Foster Families Week, which runs from October 20 to 27. This year's theme is creating memories.

Mr. Speaker, foster families make a big difference in the lives of children and the families they serve. In addition to meeting the everyday needs of children in their care, they also provide the most important thing of all, a place to call home. As a foster parent myself, I can say being a foster parent isn't easy, Mr. Speaker. It is challenging to care for children whose lives have been disrupted by abuse, neglect, or abandonment. This is why it is so important to recognize the great work that foster parents do each and every day.

As we celebrate Foster Families Week this year, we want to express our most sincere appreciation to foster families for taking on this crucial role. Through your hard work and dedication, you're creating lifelong memories for this province's most vulnerable citizens.

In closing, I ask that all members of this Assembly join me in recognizing and thanking all foster parents across the province for the hard work and compassion that they show to the Saskatchewan children, youth, and their families. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Whip.

Amachewispimawin River Gathering in Stanley Mission

Mr. Vermette: — Amachewispimawin River Gathering in Stanley Mission. I rise today to acknowledge the community of Stanley Mission who hosted a great cultural event from July 23rd to the 25th.

During this event I was privileged to take part in many of the cultural activities, including basket weaving and traditional moosehide preparation. I was pleased to enjoy many of the traditional foods offered.

I also took part in a voyageur canoe race. Our team consisted of PAGC [Prince Albert Grand Council] Vice-chief Brian Hardlotte, FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations] Vice-chief Simon Bird, Lac La Ronge Indian Band Chief

Tammy Cook-Se arson, and two other community members. Our team did very well, as we finished second overall.

Afterwards we listened to great local musicians and watched many of our great jiggers and square dancers.

I would like to thank the organizers, the many volunteers, and the council of Stanley Mission for hosting this event on the shores of the mighty Churchill River, home of the oldest building in Saskatchewan, the Holy Trinity Anglican Church.

I ask all members of this Assembly to join me in congratulating the community of Stanley Mission.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Arm River-Watrous.

Ranchers Win Environmental Stewardship Awards

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I proudly rise in the House today to talk about the remarkable achievements of two of my constituents, Allen and Lillian Patkau of Hanley. Allen and Lillian were recently awarded the Environmental Stewardship Award at a ceremony on June 10th in Moose Jaw at the Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association's 100th annual general meeting.

The Environmental Stewardship Award is presented each year by SSGA [Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association] in partnership with Ducks Unlimited and Meyers Norris Penny. It is presented annually to a Saskatchewan rancher who demonstrates excellence in innovation and environmental stewardship in the ranching industry.

The recognition did not stop there, Mr. Speaker. After taking the provincial title, the Patkaus were awarded the Canadian Cattlemen's Association top environmental honour at a ceremony held in London, Ontario this past August. They were chosen out of other environmental stewardship award winners from British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario.

The Patkaus own and operate the Sandy Arrow Ranch located west of Hanley. When they first acquired the land, there was an abundance of saline areas. When the Patkaus started working the land back in the late 1970s, the priority was to find out why the salinity was there and then figure out a solution as to how they could deal with it. The land had been seeded to annual grain crops and was not well-suited for that purpose. They seeded the farm land to grasses and improved the saline and wind erosion. With proper management, Al and Lillian developed a productive, sustainable, award-winning operation.

Allen and Lillian are celebrated for focusing on protecting and nurturing the land on their ranch as they went about making their living. They state they wanted to make sure their land survives and thrives for years to come. I also know Mr. Patkau very well, and I know that he was actually speechless, which was very rare for him.

So on behalf of the constituents of Arm River-Watrous, I would like to personally congratulate Allen and Lillian Patkau on their earning of the environmental stewardship awards.

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

Nine New Schools for Province

Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House today to commend the government on the nine new joint-use schools in our province . . .

[Applause]

Mr. Docherty: — There's more . . . that were announced by the Premier and the Minister of Education on Tuesday.

Mr. Speaker, in the last several years we've seen remarkable growth across this province, and our government has acted to support families by building these schools in our highest growth communities . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Thank you.

Since 2007 we've seen elementary school enrolment in Regina increase by 18 per cent, in Saskatoon by 20 per cent, in Martensville by 52 per cent, and in Warman by 90 per cent. That is why, Mr. Speaker, our government announced these nine new joint-use schools to be built within these communities. These schools will also be constructed through a P3 [public-private partnership] model which will allow our government to build more schools in less time than the typical funding and procurement approach would allow.

Our government's announcement has already received positive reviews from stakeholders such as Saskatoon Public School Board Chair Ray Morrison, who said, "To say that I'm pleased to be here today for this announcement would be a serious, serious understatement."

Mr. Speaker, these nine schools are just another example of how our government is working hard to support growth in communities across the province so we can keep Saskatchewan moving forward. Thank you.

[10:15]

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

Opposition Ideology

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we've been down this road before with the NDP [New Democratic Party]. When we said we could reduce surgical wait times by starting to do private surgeries, the NDP were against it. They wanted ideology. Saskatchewan people wanted more surgeries. Our government delivered more surgeries. Now the NDP want ideology. Saskatchewan people want more schools. Our government will build more schools.

Mr. Speaker, they may have a different leader, but it's the same old NDP. Mr. Speaker, the NDP can remain chained to their outdated ideology as long as they want. They want ideology. Saskatchewan people want to keep Saskatchewan moving forward. Our government will keep Saskatchewan moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, on 51 occasions the Leader of the Opposition stood in this House and called for new schools, a new school in Hampton Village — 51 times, Mr. Speaker. Two days ago our Premier, two days ago our Premier went to the NDP leader's constituency. And what did he announce? Nine new joint-use schools. You'd think the NDP leader would be happy about this great news in his constituency, but he's not. In fact, the NDP leader opposes a new school in Hampton Village. Why? Because it's a P3, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Special Care Standards and Staffing

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Premier. Why did this government choose to scrap the minimum care standard in the special care home regulations?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I want to welcome all members back to the legislative session. Mr. Speaker, it's an important forum we'll have today and in the days ahead to debate not just the contents of the Speech from the Throne but the specific legislative initiatives we're going to bring forward.

A big priority for the government, as signalled in the Speech from the Throne, is long-term care, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure we'll be hearing more about that here throughout the rest of the morning.

Mr. Speaker, our government has taken unprecedented investments in opening new long-term care homes after a decade of NDP bed closures, Mr. Speaker. We were just in Shellbrook where we opened up a new integrated facility there, brand new long-term care beds, Mr. Speaker. Eleven others currently under construction, and significant response in the Speech from the Throne with respect to long-term care issues, both short-term, mid-term, and long-term.

We want to continue to work on this. We know there is work to do, Mr. Speaker, and we welcome the input of members opposite to make further achievements in this particular area.

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

Mr. Broten: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure all members appreciate the welcome back to the Assembly by the Premier. But what members of the Assembly would appreciate, as well as the public watching, Mr. Speaker, are some answers to the questions that are asked. And the question was very simple, Mr. Speaker. The special care home regulations used to require a minimum of two hours per day of nursing and personal care for residents. For some reason, Mr. Speaker, this government chose to quietly get rid of that minimum care standard. My question to the Premier: why?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what we need to recognize is that for seniors living

within care, this is in fact their home, Mr. Speaker. What we have chosen to do, Mr. Speaker, is change the regulations to ensure that each resident is provided with adequate care at all times to meet the individual's total care needs.

Mr. Speaker, the new guidelines refer to the fact that encompassed in the provision of adequate care is the promotion of health, safety, and comfort for each resident. This will include evidence of good personal hygiene such as clean, healthy-appearing skin, Mr. Speaker, clean, trimmed fingernails, toenails, and other hygiene, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we want to treat these individuals as individuals within their own home, Mr. Speaker, as if this was their own home, Mr. Speaker. And that's why these changes were made — to put in place guidelines that were more personalized to every individual.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, what the changes did was remove a minimum care standard for residents. Let's be clear. Other provinces have minimum care standards of 3.6 or 3.8 hours per resident per day. But instead of increasing Saskatchewan's minimum care standard and ensuring we have appropriate staff in place to actually fulfill that standard, this government chose to completely remove the minimum care standard.

My question to the Premier: why do seniors in other provinces deserve a guarantee of 3.6 hours per day, yet Saskatchewan seniors don't even have a guarantee of two hours any more?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, as I said, at a provincial level we are not specifying the number of times, the number of hours that would be mandated by the provincial government. Mr. Speaker, we believe that it is more proper to tailor the individual care around the individual's need, Mr. Speaker.

I can speak of an example from this summer, Mr. Speaker. I toured a long-term care facility, as I know other members have done. Mr. Speaker, one resident that I met who is afflicted with a severe form of dementia, Mr. Speaker, the workers in that facility told me that should there be a standard, a minimum standard in terms of baths, Mr. Speaker, that they are not able to get that individual, because of her condition, in a bathtub maybe once every three months, Mr. Speaker. They've made other arrangements such as showers which they have much more easy ability to provide that type of hygiene, Mr. Speaker. We think that that's a better way to provide care which is more individualized to the person's individual need. This is not about forcing care on people, Mr. Speaker. It's about the proper care for an individual.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, these questions are to the Premier about changes that his government has made that has reduced the level of care for seniors here in the province. This government not only removed the two-hour-per-day minimum care standard from the special care home regulations; it also very quietly removed any reference to sufficient staffing. My

question to the Premier is simple. Why did his government remove the reference to sufficient staffing? To the Premier, please.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, as the member will know, we undertook a comprehensive review of our long-term care facilities in this province, Mr. Speaker — the first time to our knowledge that has ever been done in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, there were a few people I think in this province, led by the Leader of the Opposition, who thought this was a bit of a fool's errand. Mr. Speaker, at the end of the process, what we came up with, what the CEOs [chief executive officer] in the health regions came up with, was over 300 pages of detailed reports of every facility within our province, Mr. Speaker.

We know that in some cases that staffing issues are a challenge in terms of the level of staffing, Mr. Speaker, and we're putting together plans to have health regions submit plans to address some of those issues, whether it be staffing, whether it be on equipment, whether it be on some small maintenance repairs, Mr. Speaker. We look forward to seeing those proposals in providing \$10 million in an Urgent Issues Action Fund, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, what we're doing is, while we are increasing the number of staff in long-term care, Mr. Speaker, we're doing it in a way that is within the needs of the residents of each individual facility.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, it was this government that quietly amended the special care home regulations to remove the minimum care standard of at least two hours per day of nursing and personal care for residents. And it was this government, Mr. Speaker, that removed any reference to sufficient staffing within special care homes from the regulations. So it's no wonder, Mr. Speaker, that seniors' care under this government's watch has been getting worse in the province. By watering down, Mr. Speaker, the standards for seniors' care, seniors have been paying the price, seniors who are in care.

But the watering down doesn't simply stop there, Mr. Speaker. Health regions have now thrown up their hands and are actually listing several important functions as discretionary. My question to the Premier: is he aware now what front-line health workers are told are discretionary duties for caring for seniors in this province?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, in terms of the care that's provided to seniors, the changes that we made earlier this year actually, the Leader of the Opposition apparently missed that, Mr. Speaker, but it's in line with what other provinces are doing.

BC [British Columbia] has no requirement that stipulates the number of baths per week. What they've done is the *Residential Care Regulation*, section 81, includes skilled care with professional supervision consistent with the needs of the client, Mr. Speaker. It's the same in Manitoba. It's important to note

the practice across Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, that does not have a policy that states the number of . . . in terms of personal hygiene, Mr. Speaker. I could go on about other provinces that have moved towards tailoring the care around the needs of the individual, Mr. Speaker, and moving away from a mandate across the province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we are increasing the number of workers within long-term care. That has been the record of this government over the first six years of this government, Mr. Speaker, unlike the members opposite who cut 1,200 long-term care beds, Mr. Speaker, in 16 years of government. Sixteen long-term care facilities were closed — one a year, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, it's concerning that the Premier does not know what front-line health workers are now being told is discretionary in terms of caring for seniors in this province. Well, Mr. Speaker, I can tell the Premier what is considered discretionary now.

Here's what memos to staff in several care facilities say: "The following table has been developed to identify priority and discretionary work functions by department as guidelines for staff in the event that they are working short-staffed due to an inability to replace." Right at the top of the list of the discretionary duties, Mr. Speaker, of the discretionary functions, is bathing.

My question to the Premier: when did he learn that bathing is now considered a discretionary duty?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, I'll continue to explain to the member opposite the model of care that is changing, and it's not just changing within Saskatchewan but other provinces. Manitoba's *Personal Care Homes Standards Regulation* now say that individual bathing schedules to be determined as part of a resident's individual care plan, which is developed with the resident's interdisciplinary care team along with the resident and the family, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we know that we have work to do when it comes to long-term care. We know that the CEOs and the senior administration, when they did their tours, Mr. Speaker, pointed out what's working well and what needs to be changed, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, in terms of staffing, we know that we have work to do in particular facilities.

Considering that the number of long-term care beds have really not changed in the six years that this government has been in power, Mr. Speaker — so we have the same number of long-term care beds, roughly, Mr. Speaker — and we have the same resident mix today that we did six years ago, yet today we have 10 per cent more LTC [long-term care] staff working in the system, Mr. Speaker, and broken down further, 14 per cent more nurses and LPNs [licensed practical nurse] working in long-term care. Mr. Speaker, I can't imagine what care and long-term care was like when the members opposite were totally understaffing long-term care.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, these questions have been directed to the Premier. This is about guidelines now given, Mr. Speaker, to workers in health regions who are told that bathing is now discretionary. This is not about what the minister would suggest about customizing a bathing schedule for someone who can't get into a tub. This is about the daily work that should be occurring in care facilities, and it's about health care workers now being told that they don't have to give baths if they're short-staffed, Mr. Speaker. And residents will be suffering, are suffering the consequences of that.

Here's what else is listed as discretionary — washing and ironing of residents' laundry, changing bed linen, routine cleaning duties, sweeping or mopping dining room and kitchen floors, and the list goes on. How routine cleaning is considered discretionary, Mr. Speaker, when we have things like Norwalk, when we have things like bedbugs that are a threat to facilities, I don't quite understand. I don't think Saskatchewan people understand either.

They've reduced references to sufficient staffing. They've eliminated, Mr. Speaker, the standards put in place in order to ensure a minimum standard of care, and now they're forcing health region managers to list important things like bathing as discretionary.

My question to the Premier: how does this make any sense? Why aren't there simply enough staff to care for seniors in our care facilities?

[10:30]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Well as I said before, Mr. Speaker, well we do know that in some facilities that we do have to address some of the staffing issues that were identified. And we've put together \$10 million as an Urgent Issues Action Fund, Mr. Speaker, to try to address some of those issues, knowing that it's not going to solve all of the issues that have been identified within long-term care, Mr. Speaker.

But I can tell members opposite, for special care aids within long-term care facilities, knowing that we're dealing with roughly the same number of beds, Mr. Speaker, there are nearly 600 more special care aids than there were under the NDP. Mr. Speaker, there are nearly 150 more LPNs working in special care homes, Mr. Speaker, than there were under the NDP, and there are nearly 150 more RNs [registered nurse] working in long-term care, with the same number of residents, roughly speaking, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have moved, as other provinces have, to tailoring the needs of care around the individual, Mr. Speaker, whether that be on hygiene, whether that be on bathing, Mr. Speaker, and other hygiene issues, Mr. Speaker. We think that's a more appropriate care because for these seniors, this is in fact their home and we're going to treat them in an appropriate manner in their own home, Mr. Speaker.

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

Combatting Bullying

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we've been calling for a long time for this government to release an action plan on bullying, and we've heard a lot of words and references to it, but no action. Will the government today release its report on anti-bullying?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite raises an important issue of concern for all citizens of the province not just MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly], and I thank him for raising the issue.

We have had one of our members travelling across the province, particularly into the North, having had discussions with students, with educators, with parents. And I can advise the House, Mr. Speaker, that there will be a report and a specific action plan that will be introduced in the next number of days. And we look forward to having some more discussion at that point in time, Mr. Speaker. It's an important issue, not just for government but I think for educators, for parents. I can imagine no worse tragedy for a parent than the suicide of a child.

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

Provision of New Schools

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we've been calling for new schools to be built for many years. We want those new schools to be built cost-effectively and quickly. But the evidence shows that P3s are not the best way to achieve that. P3s hike the overall cost to taxpayers through higher private borrowing rates, massive fees to develop contracts, and higher costs to maintain those contracts.

New Brunswick's auditor found that P3s, instead of saving the millions that were promised, actually cost millions more. And Nova Scotia scrapped its bundled P3 contracts because of cost overruns and, by reverting back to the traditional method, they saved about \$2 million per school.

My question to the minister: why is this government pretending it found a shiny, new approach to building the schools we need, when auditors and even conservative governments recognize it costs way more?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question. Mr. Speaker, I contacted the Leader of the Opposition a few days ago and asked him whether he wished to attend the announcement in Hampton Village regarding the announcement of this school. On 51 separate occasions, the Leader of the Opposition mentioned the need for a new school in Hampton Village. Now he's against the school because he is against the process.

Mr. Speaker, I can imagine nothing better for the community of

Hampton Village and the area surrounding than to have an announcement of a significant number of new schools. Mr. Speaker, one of the members earlier quoted the Saskatoon Public School Board Chair, "To say that I am pleased to be here today for this announcement would be a serious, serious understatement." Mr. Speaker, that's Ray Morrison, Chair of the Saskatoon Public School Board. Janet Foord, president of the Saskatchewan School Boards Association: "We are really quite excited about this announcement because it is going to relieve some pressure and it is going to create schools within the community." Mr. Speaker, we are moving forward with schools.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, despite the government's rhetoric, the truth about P3s is that they often take longer to complete. Saskatchewan needed new schools yesterday. We need shovels in the ground, not delays. But P3 schools involve extremely complex processes that are notoriously slow to get off the ground. According to the Columbia Institute, P3s "... often suffer from both cost and time overruns." This sure doesn't sound like the smartest way to build the schools that our students and that our teachers need.

My question to the minister: is that why the government was unwilling to provide clearer timelines as to when these schools will actually be opened?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member opposite that we want these schools in place and operating for our students as soon as we possibly can. We believe that using a P3 model will be the most effective and cost-effective way of doing this and should be able to deliver them in a very timely manner.

Mr. Speaker, we are looking closely at what took place in Alberta. They used a bundling process to procure schools. They have in fact over the last number of years delivered 40 schools with savings of some \$245 million. Phase 1 of that process delivered 18 schools in a bundle — savings of \$97 million, or 13 per cent. Phase 2, the second round, was 10 schools in a bundle with savings of \$105 million, or 29 per cent less. Phase 3 of the bundle: 12 schools, savings of \$43 million, or 13 per cent. Mr. Speaker, that's an enormous amount of money, money that could be spent in classrooms, hiring teachers, and giving service to our students. And that's what we intend to do.

The Speaker: — While question period is winding down, there is time for members on both sides to stand and ask questions if they want. Otherwise, please listen to the questions and the answers.

I recognize the member for Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, conveniently the minister forgot to mention the Alberta experience of limited access and control issues where they wouldn't allow portables to be added on to the private sector schools.

But we have a recent example. This government recently took over buying portable classrooms, and bought them in bulk, claiming they'd be cheaper. The result wasn't good, Mr. Speaker. When the classrooms finally arrived, late, they were the wrong product and, I'm told, more expensive than what could have been built had school boards still had control. Today's *StarPhoenix* editorial, titled "Detailed speech offers no vision," pointed this out, saying that the government "got burned this year by using a bulk procurement process to obtain all of its portable classrooms, but a similar setback with the new P3 schools could cause long-term and more serious pain."

Mr. Speaker, with this government's bungling of portable classroom bulk buying, how the heck can Saskatchewan people trust them to bulk buy and bundle the schools we need for our children?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this year's budget included \$120 million for the most relocatables ever purchased in the history of the province. Mr. Speaker, a number of those portables were diverted to go to assist with the flood damage in Alberta and, Mr. Speaker, we are always ready to stand and support somebody that has had a crisis. We know it's been an inconvenience for our schools, and we want to remedy that as quickly as we possibly can. We're working to have more of the portables brought in. We intend to do that, Mr. Speaker.

I certainly take strong exception to the member opposite raising the idea that the portables should have been procured on a one-by-one basis. There is a great deal of savings to be done by having economies of scale, and that's how we intend to acquire portables.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite also raises the fact of P3s and the issue of access to schools out of school hours. I have done a large amount of media in the last days, and I've indicated that is something that must and will be addressed as we go forward here.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, as I've said, we've, on this side of the House, we've been calling for new schools for many years. But we want those new schools to be built in the most cost-effective and quick way. And the evidence shows that P3 schools aren't the best approach to do just that.

It's pretty plain why this government is choosing this route. It's all about not showing the people of Saskatchewan the true state of our province's finances and debt. When the Conservative government in Nova Scotia scrapped the costly P3 plan, the Finance minister had this to say:

The former government tried to use accounting to push the costs of new schools off-book, but they didn't fool our lenders or taxpayers. Debt is debt is debt, and we must account for it.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: how is this any different?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I'll be glad to tell you what's different. Under the 16 years when the people opposite were in government, they closed 176 schools. That was how they handled schools in our province.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand in the House and talk about P3s and how we intend to deliver schools to our students. Ontario, Quebec, Alberta, British Columbia, and New Brunswick all have P3 programs. There are over 204 projects built or under way in Canada since the early 1990s. From 2009 to 2011, deals worth \$21.7 billion were finalized in Canada. There are municipal P3 projects in Calgary, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, and Regina that are either planned or under way. The new federal P3 Canada project will oversee \$1.25 billion just as it did before. Details are being worked out.

The Conference Board of Canada analyzed 19 P3 projects and found that Canadian P3s have so far delivered savings ranging from a few million dollars to \$750 million compared to traditional procurement. I can also advise, Mr. Speaker, that nearly all of those projects were done ahead of schedule.

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

Traffic Safety

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This summer the Traffic Safety Committee studied why Saskatchewan continues to hold the dubious distinction of the highest number of impaired driving fatalities per capita of all the provinces.

Today after question period, the government will table the committee's report which contains many good recommendations to make our roads safer. It doesn't contain, however, one particular recommendation that has been proven to save lives, which was the goal of the committee.

Mr. Speaker, in BC and Alberta almost immediately after those governments implemented short-term vehicle impoundments, impaired driving fatalities declined sharply. Implementing tougher penalties should include short-term vehicle impoundments on first offence, the policy that's worked in other provinces.

Will the minister commit today to implement this effective first-time offence policy?

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, our government takes our traffic safety record very, very seriously. That's why the Premier assigned an all-party committee to do consultations with stakeholders and with the public on what can be done to address the very serious issue within our province.

I want to thank the member opposite as well as our members that did a lot of work on that committee. I think it was very, very good work. We're looking forward to the report and we

will have a response to it very soon.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

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

Special Committee on Traffic Safety

Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The final report of the Special Committee on Traffic Safety was tabled with the Clerk on August 30th, 2013. Pursuant to rule 135(6), I now table the final report.

Mr. Speaker, it was a pleasure to be the Chair of the all-party Traffic Safety Committee this past summer. I want to take this time to thank all the members who took part, on both sides of the House. We all recognized over the last few years that, as Saskatchewan was growing, we saw the statistics, alarming in nature to be sure, were still climbing, Mr. Speaker. The committee took this to heart.

In preparing for these meetings, we opened up the entire province for consultation. We asked every major centre if they wished the committee to come to their communities to talk, listen to stakeholders. A vast majority chose not to. However they presented through written submissions, Mr. Speaker, and those were given to the committee members to look at and use as we got towards the end of our consultation process to come to these 26 recommendations in the end.

It seemed on a daily basis we were hearing from many stakeholders, individuals and professionals as well as academics, that the traffic fatality statistics in this province needed to be addressed through various means.

[10:45]

From the personal stories — after listening and hearing about the tragic death of the conservation officer, Justin Knackstedt, out of Watson on June 8th — the committee was very much directed in purpose, Mr. Speaker. The stakeholders that showed up after that, and even before that, all said that this province has the potential to make change — whether it be through large measures or interim measures, Mr. Speaker, which could immediately be addressed through maybe more efficient traffic and law enforcement activities which we saw take place through this fall with additional STEP [selective traffic enforcement program] programs with members of RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] and city police officers jointly working.

I can say in Prince Albert, I had an RCMP officer in front of my house stopping vehicles through the school zone. And I talked to this young member who said that this was a great initiative. He had just come from the northern part of the province down. He said this was one of those things where they couldn't do much of up north because of the fact that it was difficult to get members out.

So it's good to see SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] and I commend the minister of SGI for allocating more funds

towards these measures. And I'm sure she'll continue doing that to ensure we in fact see these kinds of programs, deal with issues of speeding and intersection safety. And again driver awareness is all part of this, Mr. Speaker.

The common goal of the committee truly was, although partisan in some nature, to be non-partisan in how we came to our recommendations. We took in data from various means; we never agreed on one particular section of a recommendation. The majority decided to go with a different measure and on that, the committee members that voted that way felt that the documentation presented clearly indicated to take a different path.

But having said that, I thank the members of the opposition for their dissenting opinion, and we will now see what the minister and the cabinet decide moving forward. I do know and I've said before, this is a suite of recommendations, as the Chair, Mr. Speaker. These recommendations can be taken at face value as provided or they can be augmented by cabinet. They can be considered interim measures and then for further study as well, Mr. Speaker. And I'm sure that the minister and the cabinet members and government-elect will do that.

One thing we do have in this province are committed officials in various ministries who want to see these statistics change. There are many people from the Ministry of Corrections and Policing and Justice, and officials from SGI who presented, they have ideas. We took those ideas to heart and even today, Mr. Speaker, after the recommendations are tabled and the report's tabled officially, those officials and others will still have input moving forward.

As I said, the recommendations were formed from various means, from academics, and from personal stories. Whether or not those take place today or in the next number of months, I feel as the Chair, I believe that the recommendations will be actioned by cabinet and by officials. This is a living, breathing document, Mr. Speaker, not to be actioned and dealt with one day. It's my hope that cabinet ministers and officials will have this at their desktop at all times to review to make this province safer.

Now having said that, we have dedicated law enforcement officials as we have SGI officials, officials who work in the justice system, who do everything possible, at their means today, to ensure that the messages are out about drinking and driving, use of cellphones while driving, speeding, and the effects of intersection safety. People need to be more aware of their surroundings, Mr. Speaker. And I believe that with this report tabled today and the recommendations, we'll see a lot more of public awareness, more public awareness campaigns arising from our recommendations.

We know that that's one interim measure that can be taken. We know the police officers in this province are definitely committed to working towards solving this issue. I know that there's lots of opportunity for additional resources to be implemented at some point, doesn't have to be today, Mr. Speaker.

But we do know that we have seen evidence in other provinces where when they augmented police officers with additional

resources for traffic safety divisions and changed legislation to cover speeding, road racing, impaired driving, intersection safety, cellphone use, and they've put a lot of dollars into public awareness — that's probably the most important part — we believe that the statistics showed a decline in two specific provinces because the public was more aware of the punitive measures and punishment that could be taken against them if they in fact broke the law.

So in that case, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to hearing from SGI, SaskTel as well, because they are a stakeholder in this as well, to see their input and their future plans on public awareness in relation to texting and driving, cellphone use, distracted driving, speeding, and the like.

One thing that we heard from a few individuals, and we were surprised possibly that we didn't have more personal stories come out, but there was a lot of individuals who felt that the system, the system let them down. But having said that, the system can only deal with what the system is provided in relation to punitive measures, laws, and enforcement initiatives, Mr. Speaker. So again with the recommendations put forth, I feel very confident that the minister and the cabinet and our government and the officials will take all those to heart and move forward in a timely manner. And I believe we'll see some immediate changes very soon, especially when we look at . . . The focus of the committee was to look at changing overall behaviour of drivers.

The most important future in this province are our young people. And if we can change the behaviour at that particular level — whether it be under the graduated driver's licence program up to the age of 19 or even possibly up to 21, which could be a factor considered as well by the cabinet and the government — the most important thing is that the young people in this province realize that they have a future. And we don't want to see their future chances stopped, hindered, hampered by a run-in with the law because of impaired driving.

And there may be some measures that seem to be harsh to some people for first-time offenders, Mr. Speaker. But I believe, I know I believe all members of the committee believe that once the message is out and there are personal stories about how the system actually saves lives because of these punitive measures, that will see behaviour changing. And we'll see the young people today, under the graduated driver's licensing program, change their overall perception of drinking and driving and their actions toward it, Mr. Speaker.

In the end the goal of the committee and the goal of all people in this province is to be able to drive to work every day, go on vacation, drive to a friend's house, go shopping, and feel safe that when you start your vehicle you will arrive at your destination safely and return, Mr. Speaker. Those are the kind of factors that the committee took into consideration when looking at the recommendations as well.

I would be remiss if I didn't thank the members of the Legislative Assembly Service who took time out of their busy schedules to help us as well.

I also want to thank the families of other members who took part in this work because we were in Regina and Saskatoon and

La Ronge and Pelican Narrows and Prince Albert and other communities in this province, like Weyburn. We had to stay away from our families to get this work done. None of us complained. We all looked forward to this work, and our family members supported us. I want to thank them as well.

I want to thank colleagues on both sides of the House who have opinions on this matter who provided to the committee members. I'm sure, I know on our side we talked to some individuals who believed there needed to be change happening. And on that, Mr. Speaker, we took their advice as well. This was a team effort. Both political parties took part in this. But more importantly the public took part in this, and stakeholders. That was the most critical piece to us, Mr. Speaker.

So moving forward, we may have some people complain, we've done too much. Some will say, we haven't done enough. This is the starting point, Mr. Speaker. This is a jump-off point for our province to change, for people's behaviours, of all ages, to change. When you put your key in the ignition of your vehicle, you are responsible for every action that comes of your driving behaviour, whether you drink before you drive, which is a mistake, whether you use your cellphone during your driving is a mistake. If you . . . Speed's a mistake. Not paying attention at intersections, Mr. Speaker, is also a mistake. The bottom line here or the goal is to affect behaviour and change behaviour so that, in a perfect world, we see not one more fatality on our highways attributed to those factors. It's wishful thinking, but maybe it's a start now, Mr. Speaker.

So on that note, Mr. Speaker, I move:

That the final report on the Special Committee on Traffic Safety be now concurred in.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Prince Albert Carlton:

That the final report of the Special Committee on Traffic Safety now be concurred in.

I recognize the member for Saskatoon Riversdale.

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to enter the discussion on the traffic safety report. I want to start by saying, I am a mom. I think everybody here in this legislature has heard me talk about my two daughters. They are the reason I'm here. Saskatchewan is a great place to call home, but when I chose to seek this position, it was because through my experience as a mom I was seeing things that this government could do better. I knew things could be better for Ophelia and for Hennessey and for all children and families. Almost everything I do, I see it through the lens of a mother, a mother who is in the throes of parenting young children. I can't help it; that is my perspective. I think that that's a big part of what I bring to this legislature.

And there is no doubt there is no shortage of interesting and important areas on which we can put our focus as MLAs. And last year for me as the critic for SGI, it became apparent that we needed to put our focus on impaired driving. If this government wasn't going to, the opposition would because it was very clear this government was falling short on having the necessary tools

in place to help keep our roads safe. On our highways last year, almost 200 people lost their lives, many of these deaths caused by impaired driving. According to SGI, between 2000 and 2012 impaired driving was responsible for 41 per cent of the traffic fatalities in Saskatchewan — 41 per cent — and 12 per cent of the injuries. This is just not acceptable and is totally preventable.

We talk about the high number of fatalities, but the reality is these are people. These are children. These are mothers. They're fathers. They're sisters. They're brothers. They are people who are loved and whose deaths undoubtedly have left gaping wounds in the hearts of those they have left behind. Having lost a dear family member this summer tragically and unexpectedly, I would not wish this pain on anybody. For me, hearing about the loss of life on roads and highways makes me think about those families. But it also makes me think about my own family, particularly my oldest daughter Hennessey, who is almost 16, God help me. She is learning how to drive and, as she grows up, she is spending less time with me and more time with her friends.

Impaired driving is top of mind for me, especially now knowing what I do know about our abysmal impaired driving death rate. For more than a decade, our province has had a lousy track record with the highest impairment-related crash death rate per capita among all the provinces. In fact death rates have been going down in Canada over the past decade by almost 17 per cent but have gone up in this province by almost 23 per cent. That is not acceptable.

So you know, Mr. Speaker, my daughter Hennessey is a great kid, and I do trust her judgment. However as she does get older and goes out in the world on her own more and more, I do worry, as all parents do, about everyone else she might encounter. I can tell you I don't look forward to those days of her driving home at night and worrying about her meeting someone coming the other direction who may have had a few drinks. I don't think any of us like that idea. And there are things we can do as members of this legislature, things people are counting on us to do to keep them and their families safe. To that end, last fall the opposition started pushing the government to do something about this. We said we needed to start talking about impaired driving and that we'd be glad to work together on this important issue.

Following the fall session, the opposition embarked upon a consultation process of our own. If the government wasn't going to do it, we would. We wanted to connect with those who understood this issue well — people like the police, traffic safety experts, those whose lives have been impacted by impaired driving, organizations like MADD [Mothers Against Drunk Driving] Canada who make it their business to understand this issue well. In fact, it was shortly after the CEO of MADD Canada was in Regina to meet with the opposition, and after we said we'd be offering solutions in the spring session, that the Premier announced the all-party Traffic Safety Committee.

[11:00]

The mandate of this committee was broader than impaired driving, which is good, and was struck to consult and come up

with solutions to reduce fatalities on our roads. I was pleased to be one of the two opposition members on this committee and thoroughly enjoyed our work. It was a great opportunity to put partisanship aside, to hear from people who had lived experience, and who are policy experts, academics — all kinds of people. It was a good opportunity to read literature and tabled submissions and come up with the best possible solutions to meet our mandate to save lives.

We heard testimony on many issues, but one theme emerged from almost all those who talked about impaired driving. Short-term vehicle impoundments for those caught for the first time drinking and driving in the .04 to .08 blood alcohol concentration range is a must. These are people who are not criminally impaired but whose driving is impacted by alcohol. This recommendation came from those who have worked in traffic safety for decades, those who work with directly impaired drivers here in Saskatchewan, those who know this issue well. Three-day vehicle impoundments have been implemented in BC and Alberta, and in a short time they have totally changed the landscape. This deterrent has the ability to be a culture changer.

There were good in camera discussions — sometimes heated, as the member from P.A. [Prince Albert] Carlton could attest to — but in the end we had genuine consensus on most of these recommendations. But when it comes to impaired driving, government members stubbornly refuse to ignore the evidence before us. They fail to use common sense on this recommendation. That is why the member from Cumberland and I felt compelled to write a minority opinion.

It is our hope for the people of Saskatchewan that the minister gets serious about impaired driving. We are so far behind other provinces on dealing with this issue. And undoubtedly the measures recommended by this committee will have some impact if implemented, but we have so far to go and we are so far behind. We need to be a leader on this issue.

With all due respect, I would respectfully disagree with the member from P.A. Carlton when he says this is a starting point. This should not be a starting point. We have had, for more than a decade, the most notorious rate. This is not time for incrementalism. This is time to look at what other jurisdictions have done that have worked, and follow suit — do the same or do things stronger.

What happened in BC? So in BC in 2010, they had both low blood alcohol concentration recommendations for those in the warning range, it's called, and high blood alcohol concentration recommendations for those over .08. It was a combination of factors that they contribute to their success. So in 2010 when they implemented the three-day impoundments, their fatality rates involving alcohol dropped by 50 per cent in two years.

When I was doing my consultations back in February, I spoke with someone who has worked in traffic safety for 30 years. He says he has never in his time in traffic safety seen such a sharp decline in such a short period of time, and he mostly attributes it . . . The experts believe that it is the three-day, short-term vehicle impoundment on first offence that has changed the culture there.

The early results in Alberta under a Conservative government, in 2012 they implemented a three-day vehicle impoundment on first offence in that warning range as well, and fatal crashes where alcohol was involved dropped by 46 per cent between July and December 2012, compared to the five-year average for the same months.

So again it is . . . The member talked about a suite of measures but the one thing that the stakeholders who presented to us — we had traffic safety experts, we had an individual who worked directly with impaired drivers, we had MADD Canada, we had someone from MADD Saskatchewan — they all agreed that this three-day vehicle or short-term vehicle impoundments on first offence is a great deterrent.

One of the recommendations that this committee made was on licence suspensions, which we currently have. And the committee agreed, with the member from Cumberland and I's dissenting opinion, that the three-day vehicle licence suspension — pardon me, the three-day licence suspension — was effective. But there's two problems with this. We heard that as many as 70 per cent of suspended drivers violate suspensions. They're easy things to get around. So you lose your car on a Friday night and you have . . . Or you lose your licence on Friday nights and a lot of people get away with driving while suspended. But the reason a vehicle impoundment is effective, it's pretty hard to hide the fact that you don't have your vehicle when you go home and tell your spouse or your parents why you haven't brought the vehicle home. It does have a real impact, and that's why vehicle impoundments have been a deterrent.

We also had evidence presented to us that those who get short-term licence suspensions . . . So this is the recommendation of the committee that licence suspension should be the way to go on first-time offences. But we had evidence that those who get a short-term licence suspension are eight times more likely than the average person to end up with a .08 within two years. So you don't start out as a .08 driver. You don't get there usually your first time out. You have practice as an impaired driver. You drink a few drinks. You don't get caught. Things are okay. Eventually you tend to increase your drinking and driving. These drivers who get licence suspensions are high-risk drivers.

And I need to point out too that there's a one-drink difference between a recommendation that we made. So at five drinks, you're in the warning range if you're a 200-pound male. You're at .06 and in the warning range, and we are not willing to give that person a three-day impoundment. But if you have six drinks as a 200-pound male, you're at .08. You know what we've decided to do there, which I support, we're willing to take your car away for 30 days with one more drink. I would argue that it's probably more effective to give the person who's had five drinks and blows .06 a three-day vehicle impoundment so hopefully they learn their lesson and they don't get to .08 where they will have much more severe consequences and may end up injuring or killing someone.

So the opposition does not believe this is time for incrementalism. We supported the work of the committee. We were pleased to be part of it and thought it was a great process, but we respectfully disagree with the fact that this government

was not willing to agree to three-day vehicle impoundments, evidence-based policy that has worked in other jurisdictions. I have to point out that when John Gormley and the NDP agree, that perhaps we found a middle ground somehow.

So I think in this case the government, as it goes forward and has received this report and makes its decisions on what they're going to implement, that they seriously consider the minority opinion. It will save lives and as a mom, I am imploring the government to do this for my family and for all families. Thank you.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Prince Albert Carlton:

That the final report of the Special Committee on Traffic Safety be now concurred in.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

TABLING OF COMMUNICATION

The Speaker: — At this time, I would like to present a note from the Lieutenant Governor, and it reads:

October 15, 2013

Dear Mr. Speaker:

Pursuant to section 67 of *The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act, 2007*, I hereby inform the Assembly of the membership of the Board of Internal Economy effective October 10, 2013:

Hon. Dan D'Autremont, Chair
 Hon. Nancy Heppner (executive committee nominee)
 Hon. June Draude (executive committee nominee)
 Jeremy Harrison, MLA (government caucus nominee)
 Doreen Eagles, MLA (government caucus nominee)
 David Forbes, MLA (opposition caucus nominee)
 Warren McCall, MLA (opposition caucus nominee)

Yours sincerely,

Vaughn Solomon Schofield
 Lieutenant Governor
 Province of Saskatchewan.

TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

The Speaker: — I would also like to table the caucus disclosure statements from the government party, the Saskatchewan Party; and from the opposition party, the New Democratic Party. I lay them on the table now.

And I also wish to table the members' disclosure statements that were provided for the past year.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADDRESS IN REPLY

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

Mr. Makowsky: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always a pleasure to rise in the House to kick off, being the lead batter here for the Speech from the Throne debate, 2013, the third session of the twenty-seventh legislature here in the province of Saskatchewan of course, Mr. Speaker.

So a few thanks. I know that with such a large caucus, Mr. Speaker, we sometimes don't get a chance to speak as often as we'd like sometimes maybe. But just again a chance to say a few thank yous to all the people that allow us to be here. First of all, of course my family. My wife, Tami, has always been very supportive. My kids, they miss dad once in a while, but that might be okay in their opinion. So I thank my family. I thank the people that work closest to me, the Government Whip, all the House leaders, and certainly members of the caucus, but also our CAs [constituency assistant] in our office, Mr. Speaker. I share an office with the member from Northeast and Douglas Park to use the taxpayers' dollars as judiciously as possible. And so Brittany is my constituency assistant. We have Becky and Ron as well that do a great job for the people here in Regina.

And I'd certainly like to thank the constituents of Regina Dewdney, the people that put me here in the first place, and I'll always consider it a privilege to represent them. And every time I get a chance to rise in the House, I'll remember to say my thank yous to them. I'm really enjoying what I'm doing and being able to represent them.

So just a quick update as well on Regina Dewdney, Mr. Speaker. Just like everywhere else in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, we continue to see great growth here in Regina and specifically in Dewdney, Mr. Speaker. There's a lot of condo development in our area in the area along Heseltine Road. It's called the Riverbend Development, and there's beautiful condos being put up. There's still more coming and we see road graders there. We see forklifts and people working all the time. The streets are kind of muddy at this time of year because of that, but it's great to see so many housing units being built in our community.

There's a new retirement home just recently opened, Brightwater, in the same area, and I was able to be at the opening along with the member from Wascana Plains. And so that's great to see movement from the private sector in care homes in that area.

I know in Regina with the tough winter that of course we had here in Saskatchewan, the Ring Road was in pretty bad shape, Mr. Speaker. I heard that a fair amount from my constituents that we needed some work done on Ring Road, and certainly a major thoroughfare in our city and our province. And so the government stepped forward with that, with funding for that in partnering with the city of Regina, and that work is almost done. I think there's still portions in north Regina that are done,

but the part of it that goes in the east part of town is done. And that's a great improvement that we've seen there, so the minister and this government responding in year to pressures and concerns that we see from our constituents once again.

There's a project going on. It's not necessarily a government project; it's more municipal. But a lot of my constituents when I was out door knocking this summer were wondering, and so for the folks watching on TV that might be watching from our constituency or from Regina, there's a project on the southeast corner of Victoria and Ring Road. And so a lot of people are actually a little bit excited that it's going to be, oh, a new big box store or a new restaurant or something. But actually it's a storm detention centre, Mr. Speaker. So that's what that's going in there. A lot of earth was moved for that.

So we see a lot of exciting things happening in our province. Earlier in the year, the Throne Speech referenced the Juno Awards that occurred here in Regina. That was a great event for southern Saskatchewan, all of Saskatchewan really.

And of course, Mr. Speaker, an event that's very close to my heart personally is the Grey Cup is coming one month from today, Mr. Speaker. One month from today, the Grey Cup championship, the CFL [Canadian Football League] championship is going to be held here, right in the heart of Rider nation. So, Mr. Speaker, it's great to see.

It's certainly a unique event in Canada, I believe. I've been very fortunate as a player playing in a game, and that's certainly a great experience. But nothing quite brings our country together, coast to coast to coast, like the Grey Cup. It's our national event. It's Canadian rules football, the only place in the world that it's played. And the championship again is happening right here in Regina.

And boy, again I was able to go to a few Grey Cups not playing in it, and it was just a great, great atmosphere. You know, there's some ribbing going on certainly between opposing teams but everywhere wears their gear. And certainly there'll be tons of green and white in the streets of Regina in the fall. And boy, Mr. Speaker, certainly personally looking forward to it. And I'm sure I can speak on behalf of Rider nation: everybody's looking forward to that great event, Mr. Speaker.

[11:15]

And I encourage all people . . . I don't have tell the members of . . . Rider fans what a great event it'll be. But particularly to new members, we have a lot of new people here in Saskatchewan and that's great to see, and we hope that they sort of get involved. There's a lot of free events that'll be happening downtown Regina all Grey Cup week. And we encourage folks that are new to Saskatchewan and haven't been here before. Boy it's a lot of fun and it's a great event. And it's really a part of what Saskatchewan is all about. And we certainly love our football here. So I'm looking forward to that.

I mentioned earlier about housing here in our province, specifically Regina Dewdney and about the vacancy rates we've heard about. Now I know there's been a lot of programs brought forward by the government, referenced in the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, about the dollars we have flowing

towards partnering with the private sector, Mr. Speaker. And we've seen great progress in this from 2011, 2012 — more than, there was more starts, more housing starts in this province than its 16 years combined. That's right from the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker.

So as a result, our provincial vacancy rate is around 3 per cent. Here in Regina though, we're at 1.9 per cent. We're at 1.9 per cent. Three is considered a balanced market, so we've still got some work to do there, Mr. Speaker, but we're well on our way. It was at one point at point six, 0.6 vacancy rate, so it was very difficult to find a place to stay and live here in Regina. Again, this government's responded to get it up to 1.9 per cent, Mr. Speaker, \$344 million in the next few years up to 2016, for 12,600 units province-wide. And so that's great. And those are the numbers, those are the things you see on the spreadsheets and in the Throne Speech.

And, Mr. Speaker, I know my colleagues have been to many events here in the province. We've been to many events where we've had a chance to introduce new people to have a new house right here in our province, Mr. Speaker, and that's certainly a great event. And I do get to do those as much as you can because it's great to see families doing well, having a safe place to live. And that happens very often here in our city, and that's great to see.

So I've been to quite a few Habitat for Humanity builds, Mr. Speaker. Actually in the spring and the summer I was able to swing a few hammers myself at a few of the builds. One day they actually even gave me an air nailer, so that — nobody got hurt, I'm proud to report — but it's a lot of fun. It's great to see how the community comes together. They do a great job. They're passionate about what they do, the people at Habitat. But the people that come on site, they work hard. They really do work hard. They have an end in mind, and that's wonderful to see.

And I know other programs are working very well. The Headstart on a Home, the Summit Action Fund, those have been great to increase and improve the housing stock here in the Queen City. I was able to go on a tour of Chip and Dale Homes; it's a CBO [community-based organization] in my area, Mr. Speaker. They do great work for truly the most vulnerable people in our province, Mr. Speaker, and it was great to see the nice facilities they have and the great work, the dedicated, passionate people that do the hard work on the ground. And they take their job seriously, and they're really involved in the people's lives that they help look after. So it's wonderful to see they're growing.

And they were very, very complimentary — I don't want to get too political on this point, Mr. Speaker — but they are very, very happy with the increase of wages we were able to give to all of the great people that work in that area because in a competitive job market, they were moving on to other jobs quite frequently. This allows them more stability in their organizations. And there's many organizations I should mention, but this was seen as a great thing by those people. And it was great to see; it was a great learning experience for myself.

And so I think in general, the few things I've mentioned, I

know we've done a lot of work on the home care areas, retirement communities, the Urgent Issues Action Fund, Mr. Speaker. Certainly there's pressures to growth. That's what this Throne Speech is all about — how to deal with the pressures of growth, Mr. Speaker. And certainly I think we have responded. More to do, no doubt, Mr. Speaker.

But I think these ministers, the ministers I've mentioned, when we talk about the Ring Road, when we talk about home care, when we talk about nursing care, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about social housing, when we talk about affordable housing, Mr. Speaker — and I want to mention the city of Regina has really come on board and done a good job in increasing the housing stock, Mr. Speaker, so we're on our way — but important to note that these ministers and this government has really responded in a timely fashion to what they're hearing from their MLAs, from their community. And they're doing a good job, Mr. Speaker.

I was wondering, as I mentioned earlier, I'd talk about the Grey Cup that's coming here this year, Mr. Speaker. It was, the last time Regina, Saskatchewan has held the Grey Cup, the first time in 1995 and again in 2003, Mr. Speaker, so it's been 10 years, probably a little overdue that the Grey Cup would come back here to the heart of the CFL, Mr. Speaker. So I was wondering what . . . There's a group of dedicated people throughout the CFL that they come to every Grey Cup. There's still people from Baltimore, Maryland, from when the US [United States] team was, US teams were still involved in the CFL, there's still a group that comes up to all the Grey Cups. There's people from all over the nation, as I mentioned, congregate in the Grey Cup city. And it's been 10 long years that Regina's hosted it, Mr. Speaker.

So I often wondered what those people, that they haven't been back in Saskatchewan, they haven't been in Regina, would think about what they see here now, Mr. Speaker. What would they think how much it's grown? I'm sure if they're arriving by air, they'll see basically a brand new airport. They'll see, if they're flying over Regina, they'll see all new subdivisions, hundreds of houses everywhere, particularly Harbour Landing out by our constituency in the southeast, Mr. Speaker — all kinds of houses, Mr. Speaker, brand new houses, very beautiful houses, apartment buildings, new businesses, strip malls. They'll see new areas that have sprung up. If they're coming into the northwest, on that flight plan, Mr. Speaker, they'll just look out their left window, they'll see again hundreds of houses. They'll see growth. Mr. Speaker, they'll see new hotels. There's several hotels on the east part of Victoria, new ones happening in downtown Regina, Mr. Speaker. There's lots of things happening.

If you're driving in, Mr. Speaker, there's probably a lot of people from, in 2003 a lot of people from Edmonton that came down because unfortunately we lost the West final in 2003 and missed an opportunity to play here at home. Hopefully that's not the case this year, we have a home team in the Grey Cup for sure. That would be great.

But also I think those people that do drive in — it won't be Edmonton this year, by the way — but I'm sure they'll see all the new overpasses we have, Mr. Speaker. How this government's responded to growth. So I'm sure they'd be very

surprised and say, wow things are really happening in Regina. They'll probably notice a little bit of traffic, Mr. Speaker. They'll notice quite a bit of new traffic. And again that's one of the pressures that come with growth.

But they'll also, they might notice that there, since that — around that area, I didn't do the exact numbers — but there's 130,000 new people that live in Saskatchewan the last time the Grey Cup was played here on Saskatchewan soil. Mr. Speaker — 130,000 people, Mr. Speaker, from that last Grey Cup. You know that's pretty impressive numbers.

Now, Mr. Speaker, a lot of people said that couldn't be done. You know, it was a fantasy. It just wouldn't be able to happen. I'll get to that in a second. But I thought I'd look back, just briefly from my own sort of education. I certainly listened to politics in those days, not intently, mostly around the, mostly centred around the budget, Mr. Speaker, mostly around the budget. I'd pay attention and look into it, but sort of the broad trends I'd pay attention to, Mr. Speaker.

But I decided I'd look back at *Hansard* to see what was happening in this very House the last time the Grey Cup happened here in Saskatchewan. And it was . . . I read quite a bit through *Hansard* from about 10 years ago to get some context, get perspective of how things were then and how they're different now and why they're different, Mr. Speaker.

And certainly it was interesting that the Throne Speech happened in March, for instance. It's just a difference from now to then, Mr. Speaker. And certainly there was some great debate back and forth. They didn't pull any punches in '02-03 in that area. There were many members on this side of the House that were part of the opposition at that time, sat over where the members opposite sit now. And certainly there was very heated debate, although it looks like they had a good time.

So I was combing through that, and by the way, Mr. Speaker, my wife, she mentioned that I might be a bit of a nerd for looking at, for looking through *Hansard* from 10 years ago, spending my weekends combing over that stuff, Mr. Speaker. So I guess I'd have to agree; I would call myself guilty as charged in that respect, Mr. Speaker. But what was the debate about? What was going on?

Well unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the province economically wasn't doing that great. It wasn't doing that great back in 2003, in that last Grey Cup, Mr. Speaker. There was talk in *Hansard* about how the province had recently lost another 12,000 jobs. Mr. Speaker, 12,000 jobs. There was more young people leaving our province all the time. We remember those days, Mr. Speaker. Again, it's a good reminder.

I remember the member from Cypress Hills, he mentioned to me, certainly when they were talking about four-laning, finally four-laning the TransCanada Highway west of Swift Current, and that's his constituency, and there was talk in his community about whether there would be three lanes west and one lane coming back east because there was so many people flocking to Alberta at that time, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately. So we were down to 978,000 Saskatchewanians at that time, around that time, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately. We're down 1,000 nurses, longest wait times in Canada unfortunately, and we were a

have-not province at that time. We were a have-not.

And certainly I read the then government, the NDP government's Throne Speech at the time, Mr. Speaker. And it was an interesting topic, mostly platitudes — nothing specific that you'll see like in our Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker. There was no targets, Mr. Speaker. Of course there was no targets. We know the NDP don't set targets because they know they won't meet them anyway when they were in government, Mr. Speaker. That's unfortunate.

I know some of the rural members will be interested or not really want to remember, they had a thing called ACRE, the action committee on the rural economy. So that's an interesting . . . I don't really have to look back and see how that worked out, based on what we see here in the Legislative Assembly, the numbers here, Mr. Speaker.

There was debate about NDP investments through SaskTel and dot-coms in Australia, Atlanta. They were still defending SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company], Mr. Speaker, they were still . . . That was the debate in our province of Saskatchewan.

The most telling and most interesting to me, Mr. Speaker, was the attitude of the members opposite at the time, the attitude of the members opposite in 2002-2003.

And certainly there was a member who, during the Throne Speech debate in 2002, Mr. Speaker, his thesis or what he was talking about in sort of a wide-ranging account, but he mentioned that in agrarian economies there were other . . . And of course the members on the government side or opposition side were railing on that government about why we're losing our young people all the time. Why are we losing population when we have such great potential in our province, Mr. Speaker, when we have the, you know, great natural resources, the envy of Canada? We have great, hard-working people, Mr. Speaker.

Well his reason: well every other agrarian region in the Midwest was also losing population as well. They were losing population as well. And he also had this to say — a member of the then government on the NDP side — here is what was said by a member and one of the excuses as to how, why things were happening in terms of population loss, Mr. Speaker. And I quote:

. . . it's very important that we all understand what it is that is affecting the economy in Saskatchewan and what it is we can do something about, but also what it is that we cannot do anything about, because if you try . . . or you make the decision to take substantial government resources . . . to try and counteract trends that are irreversible, you'd be spending your money . . . very foolishly.

[11:30]

Well, Mr. Speaker, those are very disappointing things that you'd want to say about your home province, Mr. Speaker. And certainly it sounds like they just threw up their hands at that point. They had no answer. And I saw two things wrong, at least two things wrong with that. And so the thoughts then

were, we'll just settle. We'll just be fine the way we are. There's not much we can do about it.

Now I often wonder in my previous business if a general manager of the Roughriders for example in his postings and press conference, if he came up in front of the media and he said to the reporters present, well you know, we had a tough year. It was a four-win year. It was tough but you know what? Ottawa had a four-win season as well, so we're okay. It's okay. That's not going to be a problem. No problem. And on top of that though, guys, on top of that we got a little bad news for our team, for our team, the team I'm the GM [general manager] of. There's no chance we're going to win next year either. It's irreversible. It's irreversible. The four-win season, somebody else did it so we're okay. But you know what? We can't counteract it. We have no way of counteracting it.

So what do you think would happen with the season ticket base once they heard that? I would think that GM would be, he would probably be punted before he even got back to his office, I would hope. I would hope anyway, Mr. Speaker. But that's a sentiment we saw from the members opposite while they were in government.

And the interesting part also, Mr. Speaker, he also went on, this member went on to talk about how it's dangerous and reckless because you'd have to spend millions and billions of dollars at risk. Well I think that's an interesting way, and that's the way the NDP thinks, I think. They think that in order to grow an economy you have pour billions of dollars into it, and that's the only way to grow an economy, to grow our population, to make this place a great place to be.

So certainly it's interesting. And at that time, I should mention as well — and this is important to the current situation, Mr. Speaker — the opposition at the time, the Saskatchewan Party opposition at the time, they had a plan. They had a concrete plan that was very well talked about in throne speeches in '02 and '03. It was called Grow Saskatchewan. And they had the audacious, the ridiculous plan, as they were told. They were mocked pretty mercilessly. They were panned by the government NDP at the time of growing this province of so much wealth, so many great entrepreneurs, that it would be impossible to grow 100,000 people in 10 years. And we've surpassed that, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: — It couldn't be done, they said.

Mr. Makowsky: — It couldn't be done. Well in fact the economic . . . It was panned. So that's sort of the idea we saw from the . . . And I saw a quote that kind of could sum up what the NDP thought of our province and what they were about. Abraham Maslow said once, "If you plan on being anything less than you are capable of being, you'll probably be unhappy all the days of your life." And I think that talks about we had a lot of unhappy people I think in the province, and we have a lot of unhappy people on the opposition now, Mr. Speaker.

And certainly I think the NDP's had a tough time with this growth. They're not sure how it goes or how it should be or if that's something good for our province, Mr. Speaker. But I think they're gradually, grudgingly they're being pulled to realize that, I think, growth is a good thing for our province.

Certainly it's bad for them politically I believe. I think it's bad for them politically.

I think one anecdote is when I was door knocking in the last election, Mr. Speaker. I came upon a door, a nice, young family, and I was talking to the person. They had just moved back from Alberta. I'm sure that's a familiar refrain from people on this side, Mr. Speaker. They had just moved back from Alberta, and I was talking to them. I asked them, well what do you think? Are you leaning one way or the other? And the gentleman said to me, well we didn't move back to Saskatchewan to vote for the NDP. I think that says it all right there, Mr. Speaker. I think that says it all.

So it's interesting that . . . Okay, I think they're grudgingly coming around to this idea of, they call it smart growth now. They're calling it smart growth. And certainly I think that tells us a little bit of hubris on that side, Mr. Speaker, that . . . Well what are they going to do? Growth's okay, but we're going to do . . . It's going to be smart growth. We're going to bring apart smart growth, that they're so smart that they're the anointed ones, Mr. Speaker, that will lead us to the promised land, Mr. Speaker. That sounds a lot like, to me — and it's a sort of a subtle difference, Mr. Speaker — it sounds like more government to me, Mr. Speaker, more big government. You know, it's up to them to do it.

Where I think on this side of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, we think that growth happens by getting out of the way a lot of times, Mr. Speaker. We want to get out of the way of the entrepreneurs, the business people, the hardworking people of our province. I think that's an important difference. So we let growth happen.

We partner of course with the private sector, where I think members opposite, they want to overtake the private sector. They want to substitute themselves in for the private sector, Mr. Speaker, a top-down approach, Mr. Speaker. So I think that takes a bit of a step, and I think this government was able to do that. It takes a little humility to say, you know, we can get out of the way of this sector. We can let other people grow this province, Mr. Speaker. We don't have to dump billions and billions of dollars into the economy in order to make it go, to attract people, to create opportunities right here in the great province of Saskatchewan. And I think humility is something that's been lacking over there over time, Mr. Speaker.

So you know, I spend a fair amount of time, you know, I guess talking about the opposition, Mr. Speaker. And you know, I don't know if that encourages debate or moves, advances the debate. But I think it's very important to look back where we came from, from the time to that last Grey Cup that was here in our province, Mr. Speaker, and to see where we've come. Because this is a big story. It's a big story.

You know, I'm so proud of our province, how we've grown, not the government, but the entrepreneurs out there, the people out there who go to work every day and grow our province, risk their money, and they just do a great job for our province.

So, Mr. Speaker, I should have spent more time on the Throne Speech. I know that we have lots — well sorry — lots of members over here. I'm losing my voice. I usually don't talk

this long, Mr. Speaker. But we have lots of members on this side that will go over in a little more detail, Mr. Speaker. But there's a lot of good things. There's detail in it, Mr. Speaker. There's a lot of great initiatives that will help keep moving this province forward, Mr. Speaker.

I was going to talk a little bit about P3s, but again other members will I'm sure join the debate and talk a lot about that, Mr. Speaker. We recently had a referendum here in Regina on a wastewater treatment plant. Certainly that's a city-led initiative, Mr. Speaker.

But you know, I'm so happy for the way this province is going. I took the time and, despite what my wife said, I'm glad I did. It really cemented my reason for running for this side — the party of growth, the party of moving forward, and the party that I think is best suited to move this economy forward, Mr. Speaker. So you know, again, it's the reason I ran.

And you know, and I brought it up too because the members opposite, they were wrong about my province. They were wrong about our province. They said it couldn't grow. They said we couldn't have more people in this great, great province. We couldn't grow this economy by any reasonable measure, Mr. Speaker. So they were wrong. And I think that needs to be said, and so that's why I spent my time today talking about it.

And again we have a great plan going forward. The growth plan, Mr. Speaker, is a great document, and it sort of puts our priorities in order, Mr. Speaker. This is a . . . I would call the Speech from the Throne a bit of an addendum.

I was also going to talk quickly about what . . . You know what? I won't get to that. Maybe in another speech. I want to give my colleagues a lot of extra time to do a great job of talking about our great province and how this province will be moving forward under this government.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am charged and have the great honour of saying I move, seconded by the member from Saskatoon Sutherland, the motion that reads as follows:

That an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To Her Honour the Honourable Vaughn Solomon Schofield, Lieutenant Governor of the province of Saskatchewan.

May it please Your Honour:

We, Her Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Saskatchewan in session assembled, humbly thank Your Honour for the gracious speech which Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

I so move.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Regina Dewdney, seconded by the member for Saskatoon Sutherland:

That an humble address be presented to Her Honour the

Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To Her Honour the Honourable Vaughn Solomon Schofield, Lieutenant Governor of the province of Saskatchewan.

May it please Your Honour:

We, Her Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Saskatchewan in session assembled, humbly thank Your Honour for the gracious speech which Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

I recognize the member for Saskatoon Sutherland.

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'd like to start out with saying that I wholeheartedly support the motion made, brought forward by my colleague from Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to get up and second the motion for the speech throne. It's hard to figure out where you want to start with this huge task that we've undertaken for this legislative session.

We're talking about growth. We're talking about how we're going to grow the province in many aspects. We're also talking about most importantly what are we going to do with that growth. How are we going to handle some of the challenges of growth?

But before I get into that, I'd certainly like to thank my wife at home, Leane, and my kids for again being able to support me while I'm down here in Regina working on behalf of Saskatoon Sutherland. I'd also like to thank my mother, Marie, and my father, Ted, who I think are at home watching right now and have been very supportive as far as counsel and helping me out with my family duties while I'm out of town. So I wanted to say thank you very much to them.

Today I'm going to talk about the benefits of growth and again the challenges of growth and what growth allows us to do. Mr. Speaker, I have to say throughout question period it was a little disappointing that the opposition, all they talked about is how things have been done, how things were done, and how things in their opinion should be done. And I'm not quite sure if they've evolved past what has been done.

Things are changing very rapidly in our world, Mr. Speaker, and very rapidly in Saskatchewan. Just in the last six years, we've increased our population by 10 per cent to 1.1 million. I think that's a huge accomplishment for a government to undertake, especially when the members opposite said that that was next to near impossible.

I'm going to get a couple of quotes here. Quote from *Hansard* of March 24, 2003:

... they propose to increase the population of Saskatchewan by 100,000 people over [ten years] ... I

forget what number of years, Mr. Speaker.

Well it is [well] ... over the top, it is so farcical, Mr. Speaker, that it flies in the face of reality.

That was NDP MLA Harry Van Mulligen on March 24th, Mr. Speaker. I don't understand how they can not conceive the aspect of growth. And I sit and I think about it, as well as my colleagues. We can't figure out why this is ... It's a fear factor.

And I think Minister Boyd when he was up in Saskatoon speaking, the MLA from Rosetown or MLA from Kindersley — somewhere southwest of Saskatoon, also known as God's country, thank you — said they're fearful of what is the growth because there is 100,000 more people in Saskatchewan who have never been under the government of the NDP. They fear that. They have their core base, but they're just fearful of anything growing in this province. They're fearful of growth in our schools. They're fearful of growth in the health care system. They're fearful of population. Everything is a fear factor for them.

[11:45]

And I think what it comes down to, Mr. Speaker, as we saw in the 2011 election when they promised \$5 billion worth of spending, they can't evolve. They can't evolve past their roots of 30 to 40 years ago when they believed government should run everything. They're not moving forward with the rest of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and it is very disappointing.

They can't understand the concept of P3s, Mr. Speaker. Why? Because in 2004 there were some P3s that had some troubles just when P3s were getting started. Mr. Speaker, I don't know if the opposition has noticed, but a lot of things have changed since 2004. Who thought in 2004 that we would all have mobile devices with the Internet and our email and absolutely every app that we could possibly have? They're still living in things ten years ago. They can't evolve, Mr. Speaker, and it's very, very disappointing.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to get on some of the aspects of growth. But our north star within this government is fiscal responsibility, Mr. Speaker. It is the cornerstone. Since 2007 the Saskatchewan Party government has reduced our debt by \$3 billion absolutely overnight, absolutely overnight. That debt was cut down in half ...

An Hon. Member: — Overnight, right on.

Mr. Merriman: — Absolutely. By wise investments on this party. We didn't debt finance. We didn't do anything. We didn't promise \$5 billion.

During the election, Mr. Speaker, all they would do was go around and promise another town another little prize, Mr. Speaker. They would say, we're going to give you this, and we're going to give you that, and we're going to spend, spend, spend. Obviously they don't know what they're doing over there, Mr. Speaker, because the Saskatchewan people said, we don't want to spend. Nobody in Saskatchewan wants to have a third and fourth mortgage on their house. But the NDP were

prepared to put a third and fourth mortgage on this province, Mr. Speaker.

I want to talk about some of the expansion that's happened in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. In 2012 Saskatchewan companies exported a record \$32.6 billion worth of product out of this province. That's a 10.3 per cent increase from a year and triple the amount a decade ago, where the NDP are still stuck. Saskatchewan is now the largest per capita exporter, and as our Premier has said many times, that's not too bad for a province without a port.

Our government has worked hard to ensure that international uranium markets are available for Saskatchewan uranium. We have just ventured in to be able to put uranium into the private sector reactors in China. This is a huge step for Saskatchewan. And I have to say, I have to give credit to our federal counterparts for enabling to make this happen for Saskatchewan to continue to allow us growth.

Mr. Speaker, some of the competitiveness things that we would like to talk about is how Saskatchewan is evolving. We have recently evolved over the last six years to be number one in Canada in so many areas — number one in growth, certainly the lowest unemployment rate in Canada. The growth that is going on is absolutely unbelievable. There are lots of people that are coming back to Saskatchewan because of the growth. People are coming here, starting up businesses, returning home. Expatriates are coming back. People are coming from around the world, Mr. Speaker, because they want to be a part of the new Saskatchewan.

We have the fastest growing economy in the country and the lowest unemployment rate. Our government is working with the educational institution and employers to create 1,000 new training seats this year because we understand, Mr. Speaker, that there is a labour shortage in our province. Now I guess stepping back we would have to ask ourselves, why is there a labour shortage in the province? Maybe it was because 16 years of people for graduation gifts getting suitcases, packing up, and leaving Saskatchewan. We have almost an entire generation of people that left Saskatchewan for greener pastures.

Now we have an entire generation of people coming back and choosing to stay here in Saskatchewan. We had almost 40,000 people access our grad retention. That means our students aren't graduating and leaving, Mr. Speaker. They can claim up to \$20,000 for their grad retention. That shows that we're not just actually pulling people in from around the country. We're developing with our First Nations. We're certainly developing our graduates to be able to keep Saskatchewan going because we see the long term.

We see past the next election, Mr. Speaker. That's why we created a growth plan, 2020 and beyond. We want to ensure that the province has a vision. That is our new north star. The throne from the speech, Mr. Speaker, is what is exactly going to build into that growth plan. We need to make sure that every speech, every budget is tying into that growth plan, Mr. Speaker, because that is where Saskatchewan is going. And frankly, Mr. Speaker, as you can see in the representation in here, Saskatchewan people want to go that direction. They want to grow, Mr. Speaker. They want to make sure that they can

have a great future for their children.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to touch on education. As a parent of four, I think it's very important. What I want to talk about is how we're investing in our education. Our Premier just this week announced new schools throughout Saskatchewan because we are responding quickly to the pressures of growth.

We know there's going to be pressures of growth, Mr. Speaker, but we want to be able to respond quickly, and we don't want to have a knee-jerk reaction. We want to look at other models that are happening across the country, and we want to make sure that we are making the right choices. Instead of just throwing up a school here or throwing up a school there, we're bundling the packages to make sure that we can save money, Mr. Speaker.

We're also making sure that those schools are put in the exact locations of where the population is growing. Now understandably that's mostly in Regina and Saskatchewan, but we also want to make sure that the schools throughout the province . . . that everybody is receiving the same quality of education throughout the province.

Mr. Speaker, it was again disappointing as a Saskatoon MLA that when the school was announced in Hampton Village . . . As we sit here, our members of the government, and had to listen to the Leader of the Opposition 51 times — up every day, talking in petitions, mentioning it in his speech — we need a school in Hampton Village. So how do we respond, Mr. Speaker? They get a school in Hampton Village. Well now they don't like it, Mr. Speaker, because they don't like the process that it's going on, Mr. Speaker. They need to understand this. They want to slow it all down, government pay for everything.

Well you know what, Mr. Speaker? I think as a Saskatchewan person who's been living here since I've been 15, Mr. Speaker, I have heard the stories on how there have been public-private partnerships going on in Saskatchewan since day one. They weren't called P3s, but I'm pretty sure when they were building a rink in Kindersley or they were building a rink in Willow Bunch, I'm pretty sure that the people that own the farms — their private businesses — were there with their tractors, were there with their tools. They were helping out. They were investing some of their private money into a public facility, Mr. Speaker. And I don't understand why, this province was built on this type of mentality, and exactly why the NDP keep saying that this is not a good thing for Saskatchewan.

They're coming up with some magical terms and some funny financing thing, and again they reference things that happened 10 years ago, Mr. Speaker. Well things have changed, but one thing that hasn't changed is the NDP. It is the same old NDP that just wants to control everything within the government and kill the private sector. We want to partner with the private sector, help them out, support them, and let them grow, Mr. Speaker. All they want to do is stifle them.

I can recall during the 2011 election when their leader at the time, Dwain Lingenfelter at the time, he said, you know what? If the private industries can't do potash, we'll step in. We ran potash once before; we can do it again. Everybody in Saskatchewan just clinched up, Mr. Speaker. Didn't they realize

that the only time potash was really developed is when the private industry stepped in? It was very, very scary times. They just wanted to nationalize everything. Mr. Speaker, that is just the old way of doing things, and they just — I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker — they can't move forward. It's very depressing. Certainly that's why I want to make sure that we as a Saskatchewan government talk to businesses, talk to all the stakeholders, find out what is it that they need, how can we support. Because that's our role as government is to provide support, not to control everything.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about the highways. It's coming up to that time of year where everybody's going to be travelling. And again with the MLA from P.A. Carlton was talking about the new highway traffic Act, we want to make sure that the roads are safe. So how are we doing that, Mr. Speaker? We're spending more than \$500 million on highways, bringing the total investment — and again this is a huge number, Mr. Speaker, and I don't think the NDP quite grasp this — \$3.7 billion into our highway infrastructure. That's a 76 per cent increase than the last six years that the NDP were in government.

In recent weeks, certainly in Saskatoon, it's exciting times. We opened the Circle Drive South bridge, Mr. Speaker. Very exciting for Saskatchewan. Very exciting for Saskatoon. This is the new gateway from the south part of the province up. Now the traffic can move around the city. It's creating less bottlenecks. It's freeing up transportation.

We need to make sure that out of that \$30 billion of product that we're shipping around the world, we've got to get it out of the province. And we've got to do that through our highways, our rail system, to make sure . . . And of course the other aspect of it is through the pipelines. We want to make sure that we can get our product to market, Mr. Speaker. So it is very, very important that we are making sure that the highways are safe.

Mr. Speaker, just in touching base on what the member from P.A. Carlton was talking about, we have seen increases in the number of fatalities in Saskatchewan. He was just referencing the young man, the conservation officer just outside of Saskatoon that was struck by a vehicle. We need to make sure that we are reacting to any emergent needs that are coming out through the province. This is an emergent need, Mr. Speaker, and we want to make sure that we get this. And I thank the member opposite from Saskatoon Riversdale for sitting on the committee, as well as all the committee members, to make sure that we had a good cross section of what we needed throughout Saskatchewan to make sure that our highways are safe, that our families are safe, and that people that are habitual breakers of the law in their motor vehicle, that they are dealt with in a more severe and swift way.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about the health care. As a parent and as a citizen of Saskatchewan, this is critical. Everybody that I talk to, one way or another, it comes around to health care. We had the Saskatchewan surgical initiative. We said we can reduce the wait times that were the worst in the country that we inherited by the members over there. The member from Regina Lakeview who was the minister just kept letting the list get longer and longer and longer.

It was very, very upsetting to get . . . to be able to have a surgery put off and put off. And, Mr. Speaker, I had this first hand. When my daughter needed an MRI [magnetic resonance imaging] in 2001, we had to wait 18 months to be able to get an MRI. Well when a child's suffering from epilepsy and having massive seizures every day, it is very disconcerting.

And I think that's why back in 2001 that my father started to get into politics because he knew we that we couldn't rely on the government to change things. We have to make sure that the people understand that the government is responsible or is responsive to what their needs are. We can't wait that long. The seniors are going through. The baby boomers are pushing through. We cannot have 18 months to wait for surgeries. It is just unbelievable. It's absolutely deplorable that the NDP let things get like that. All they did, Mr. Speaker — and you'll see this throughout education, health care, highways — all they did, Mr. Speaker, was put band-aids on everything. They just put a little band-aid here and a little band-aid there, just enough to keep it okay, and very cheap band-aids, the no-name band-aids.

Now what we're doing is once we start peeling back these band-aids since we got elected in 2007, well we can't believe all the wounds underneath are festering, Mr. Speaker. The highways are falling apart. The schools are falling apart. The hospitals are falling apart. All of the infrastructure that we thought had some stable footing is now gone, Mr. Speaker. So we have to invest billions and billions of dollars. But what we're doing, Mr. Speaker, is we're making sure that we don't debt finance that. We're just not throwing money at the problem. We're finding innovating ways, we're finding lean ways to be able to make sure that we can fix these problems that are out there, Mr. Speaker. But we can't do it overnight. This is not going to happen overnight. And as the Premier has said and our ministers have said and everybody on this side of the House, we've got more work to do because frankly, Mr. Speaker, we inherited an absolute disaster.

[12:00]

Well I guess the member who sits opposite is laughing about the deplorable schools, and it's very depressing that he doesn't take this serious because this government certainly does take it serious. Lots of laughing on the other side of the House, Mr. Speaker, because they didn't take anything serious. They had 16 years to solve all of these problems, Mr. Speaker, and now they laugh. Well it wasn't so funny when people had to wait 18 months for health care. They couldn't get into the schools. And what did they plan? They just planned on a status quo, Mr. Speaker — no growth, no nothing, let's just keep putting band-aids on.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, that they were really good at was making announcements. We're going to announce this. For a prime example the Health Sciences Building in Saskatoon at the University of Saskatchewan. We're going to announce it. Well then they announced it again, and then they announced it a third time. But did they ever put a shovel into the ground, Mr. Speaker? No, no, no. They just announced it because they were trying to appease voters. We're not trying to appease voters over here, Mr. Speaker. We're just trying to get things done.

Mr. Speaker, something that certainly, as my executive director

time at the Food Bank, social services is something near and dear to my heart. And I am so proud of the Minister and the former minister of Social Services for setting up the SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability] program. This . . .

[Applause]

Mr. Merriman: — Absolutely. This program is set up, when you boil everything down, it's set up to give people with disabilities some dignity, to make sure that they have the option, that they aren't treated like everybody else who is on social assistance. This is a special, unique group. We are making sure that they are taken care of. We are increasing the funding. We have more than 11,000 people on the SAID program right now, Mr. Speaker, and it just absolutely warms my heart. And I mean, we talk to people out on the street. That is something that they are very proud of that this government.

Now this is a government that they said — that the opposition said — they don't care about the people; they just care about the business. Well I'd certainly like to them to go out and talk about the SAID program to the people and say, are they only worried about the businesses, Mr. Speaker, or are we worried about everybody in Saskatchewan?

Yesterday I had the honour of attending and speaking at the partners for workplace inclusion program. This program, Mr. Speaker, talks . . . It is taking people with disabilities and putting them right into employment — sit down with the manager, sit down with the business, have follow-up after placement, make sure up to five years of following up the individual to make sure that they're still a fit in that program. And again this program is setting up for people to be able to have some dignity and to find some meaningful work in their life.

We do have a labour shortage, and I've talked to the Minister of Social Services about this. We have a labour shortage within Saskatchewan, so we're trying to tap into every possible potential that we can: people with disabilities. We're tapping into the international community. We're tapping into the national community. We're tapping into the Aboriginal community. We're trying to fill this labour gap any way we possibly can. And I commend the people at partners for workplace inclusion in Saskatoon for them doing their efforts to be able to make sure that people are having some meaningful jobs and that they have their dignity about them, Mr. Speaker.

I guess I should probably wrap up, Mr. Speaker. My . . .

An Hon. Member: — No. No.

Mr. Merriman: — I see that as a sign of encouragement from my colleagues. Either that or they're just busy working on their work right now and don't want . . .

An Hon. Member: — Or maybe you're getting better at this.

Mr. Merriman: — And maybe I'm just getting better at this. I appreciate that.

The NDP, Mr. Speaker, as I've said before, they can't move forward. It's very, very depressing that they're still stuck in the

2004 P3 model. They're still stuck with government control over everything. They are still stuck in the past. Why? Because the people . . . They might have a couple of different members elected there from the previous government, but guess what? The puppet masters are in behind them holding the strings, Mr. Speaker, and they're making sure that they're doing that.

And when the puppet masters in Saskatchewan aren't doing that, Mr. Speaker, guess what? We have Mr. Mulcair out in Ottawa dictating what the NDP are doing here in Saskatchewan. We have Mr. Mulcair saying that we have a disease out here. Still haven't heard the Leader of the Opposition, still haven't heard anybody on the opposition stand up publicly to Mulcair, Mr. Mulcair, and say, no we don't have a disease. We have a growing economy, Mr. Speaker.

I don't understand why they don't do that. So I guess where we could see where the provincial NDP are: they're really controlled out of Ottawa because they're not allowed to step out of line or Mr. Mulcair will be here, and I guess he'll be reading them the riot act, Mr. Speaker.

It's very, very different. It's very different. We just want to make sure that Saskatchewan is looked after, Mr. Speaker, or now, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We want to make sure Saskatchewan's interests are met first and foremost — certainly not Ottawa's. We want to make sure that we answer to the people of Saskatchewan, while the members over there are answering to their leader in Ottawa, Mr. Speaker. Maybe that's why they've lost touch with what's going on with the people in Saskatchewan.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I am going to wrap up, and I couldn't cover off all of the things. My colleague from Regina Dewdney absolutely covered off many things, had a great sports analogy, and I very much appreciate him talking about everything. All of the initiatives, if I was to stand here and talk about all of the initiatives within our speech, I would be here forever, Mr. Speaker. And as it is the last day of the week in session, I would like some of my other colleagues to be able to speak, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: — Like Buckley. We want to hear Buckley.

Mr. Merriman: — Well we would like to hear somebody, maybe from the member from Athabasca. He's usually good for a couple of laughs on what's going on in his world. Mr. Speaker, I want to close by saying this. I want to close by saying this, Mr. Speaker: this province bleeds green. We are going to see that in Grey Cup week. And if everything goes according to plan, we're going to see the green and white run out of that tunnel on Grey Cup day. We bleed green in this province, but you know what? I don't think that we just bleed green for the Riders.

The colour green, Mr. Speaker, I think we bleed green for growth. I think growth is some other type of green that we are being able to bleed out, Mr. Speaker, because the people in Saskatchewan know what growth is now. They understand the benefits of growth: the growth of our crops, the growth of our population, the growth of our tax base, the growth of our resource sector. And what is that growth? That growth allows us to have growth in our investment in health care, growth of

our investments in social services, growth in our investments of the infrastructure within our province, growth in investments for education — K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] as well as post-secondary education — and most importantly, Mr. Speaker, growth in the dream of Saskatchewan and its full potential. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly my pleasure to take to my feet and enter the annual Throne Speech debate here today, Mr. Speaker, and do so on behalf of our constituency, my constituents, Mr. Speaker.

You know, before I guess I get into the actual Throne Speech itself, it's rather interesting just to observe the tone and tenor of members opposite. We've only heard two speeches so far, I think the member there from Saskatoon Sutherland and Regina Dewdney. But a tone, Mr. Speaker, certainly that's hyperpartisan, in a very sort of a strange or weird way, Mr. Speaker — hyperpartisan, negative, very much focused on, you know, sort of their own political interests, Mr. Speaker, and certainly not focused on what matters to Saskatchewan people.

And I think that most Saskatchewan people would find it passing strange to listen to a speech like we just heard, which forayed heavily into this hyperpartisanship, deviations from reality, Mr. Speaker, when Saskatchewan people are a pretty sensible lot. When Saskatchewan people are willing to celebrate good efforts that are going on, they're proud of the exciting things that are going on in the province, but they also recognize good work at different times and they also recognize areas that could have been done better at a different point in time in this province and that could be done better right now, Mr. Speaker.

So I just, I don't think the hyperpartisan, negative, attack-like, inside baseball sort of tone that I'm hearing from members opposite reflects where Saskatchewan people are at, Mr. Speaker. And I guess that's where we'll cut down on this Throne Speech, is that we've been out there listening, working in our own constituencies and all across the province. Our leader's been in every corner of this province listening to people and bringing from that the issues that matter to this Assembly. And that will be the focus of our opposition as New Democrats.

Maybe just a little bit as it relates to the local aspect before I focus in on a Throne Speech that is rather disappointing for Saskatchewan people. As I say, we have a time right now in our province of such tremendous opportunity. We have some really special things happening in our province by way of economic activity, by way of population growth, by way of job growth, Mr. Speaker, for which we believe we should be building the next opportunity upon, building strength from that opportunity and building stable long-term prosperity, Mr. Speaker.

So the Throne Speech disappoints on that front and many others as it relates to education, long-term care and seniors' care, Mr. Speaker. And then I guess when I hear members get up to provide speeches here today — and maybe there'll be members stand up and speak today with more humility than what we've heard thus far, and maybe with a greater reflection of the reality

in Saskatchewan communities — but to date it very much looks like this Throne Speech is very much, sort of a focus, a rear-view mirror type focus, Mr. Speaker, looking to the past, and a lot of sort of back-patting of oneself, Mr. Speaker.

And that's not what Saskatchewan people deserve. Saskatchewan people deserve certainly a rightful pride in our place right now within Saskatchewan where successes are occurring. But then they deserve more than that. They deserve a government that's going to provide their attention on the issues that matter and ensure that there's progress in their daily lives, Mr. Speaker: in the classroom where it impacts our students, in our seniors' care system, in home care where it impacts our parents and grandparents, and about ensuring that we can build on the economic opportunity we've been presented to build a diversified, stable, prosperous economy for the long term, Mr. Speaker.

Now just a couple of things, you know certainly I will bring the lens of my critic portfolios and meetings from across the province, but most importantly I'll be bringing my perspective forward on behalf of the constituents of Regina Rosemont and the things that matter to the people in the communities of Regina Rosemont, whether McNab, or Normanview West, or Dieppe, or Prairie View, or Mount Royal, Mr. Speaker. Those are the perspectives that I'll be bringing forward.

I'd also, given the chance to enter the annual Throne Speech, I am thankful of the opportunity to thank family who each and every one of us know are such a big part of our ability to contribute and provide our voices here in this Assembly. And I certainly thank my loving, smart, intelligent wife, Stephanie. And she's a strong voice within the community herself; she's fully involved in all of our community activities and events and many know her very well. And she's a fantastic teacher, Mr. Speaker, who cares deeply about her students, a grade 5-6 group this year, Mr. Speaker, in George Lee up in Walsh Acres, Mr. Speaker.

And I'd also like to recognize, in my own case, a broader family. We've got such wonderful sisters and brother-in-laws and nephews and mom and dad on my side, mom and dad on Stephanie's side, that are sort of the broader family that are so important to allowing us to serve. And certainly those are the individuals for whom provide us the supports that we need.

When I look at the ability to serve our constituency as best as a person would want to, I am so thankful for Gloria Patrick, who's the constituency assistant in Regina Rosemont. She serves the constituents of Regina Rosemont with a sense of compassion, with a . . . comes from a perspective of caring. But she's also incredibly efficient and effective in advocating and bringing forward the concerns of constituents, directly linking and communicating with myself, where we come together and sit down and hear about the circumstances that are causing stress in someone's life, and then figuring out how we can best advocate and advance the challenges that constituents are facing.

And you know, I think of the meetings after meetings. I'm going to some here this afternoon in the constituency office as soon as we close down the House here today, Mr. Speaker. But we're not sitting down with people that want to be brushed off,

Mr. Speaker. They're coming to us, often because they've exhausted many other avenues, Mr. Speaker. And there's a high level of stress and strain, often that they're facing within their life, that's impacting a loved one or a family member or them themselves. And we have a very important role, Mr. Speaker, to tend to our constituents, to listen to those needs, and then to best advocate for them. And certainly Gloria in our office is just truly essential in assisting both myself and those constituents in being that liaison and that connection to meaningful progress.

[12:15]

It's from those meetings as well and those challenges that I reflect on the Throne Speech. But it's also, in many of those items that you're dealing with, you just deal with in a very direct way with a minister's office from time to time. And on that front, Mr. Speaker, from time to time I'm quite pleased when we're able to resolve a matter directly with a minister's office. And certainly I'm thankful to staff when they're there to work through a challenge.

But we'll speak to some of the broader pieces here today, what either should be in the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, and then a couple of the pieces for which we certainly support as well. And I'll do so thinking about all those leaders within our constituency that make a difference.

You know, and I think of our schools. And I think just, you know, a few of them, whether it's McLurg or St. Francis or St. Josaphat or Joan of Arc, Rosemont itself, the meaningful work that's done in those schools every day, Mr. Speaker — certainly by teachers but not just by teachers, by an entire community, by students, and by volunteers, and by educational assistants, by fantastic administrators, by a community that partners to deliver really meaningful programs and to support student learning — and I know the passion of those in our schools, and I know the difference that it makes in the lives of our families. And I want to thank every one of those educators, students, parents, community members, and administrators for their leadership in our community.

I think as well of those that invest themselves into bettering our communities that assist with Meals on Wheels. Guys like Kurt Holstein, Mr. Speaker. Individuals who invest themselves into Seniors Mechanism or into some of the housing and daycare co-operatives, Mr. Speaker, or who coach sports and run activities for youth and for the entire community, Mr. Speaker, even for programming for those seniors, our grandparents, Mr. Speaker, providing a quality of life that's so important.

And I think of one young community leader, Mr. Speaker, a gentleman by the name of Curtis Adams who has recently contributed his impressive talents as a rapper, Mr. Speaker, to the campaign to work against and to prevent bullying, Mr. Speaker. And Curtis is an impressive musical talent himself. And I know he'll go far on those, on his skills.

But he's impressive in that he's willing to use those skills for a greater good of society. And I'm enjoying sitting and chatting with Curtis and knowing how sincere his motivations are. And I'm so pleased he's a part of the I am Stronger campaign. And I commend him for his work, his passion, and all that he's providing, not just to our community — and he provides a lot in

our community — but the province as a whole.

I also think of our churches. We have many in Rosemont but I think of the important role that our churches play. And I think of St. James Anglican and how they bring together community by way of barbecues, by way of fall suppers, and how they reach out and in a non-denominational way many times as well, Mr. Speaker.

I think of St. Cecilia's who has done some really impressive and supportive work for refugees, Mr. Speaker, taking their faith and putting it to action for the greater good of those around the world, Mr. Speaker. And it's those sort of efforts that I'm so pleased to support, and it's that sort of leadership that provide strength within the community.

I think of those in our community associations, which are really active, just fantastic groups of people that are either working on improvements to park projects or bringing about community programming, Mr. Speaker, working to save their school, Mr. Speaker, to see it reopen or to address some of the challenges within a community. And I thank those community associations for their leadership, whether it's Dieppe, whether it's McNab, whether it's Rosemont, Mount Royal, whether it's Prairie View, or whether it's Normanview West.

And the beautiful new network of trails that connect to the Devonian pathways, Mr. Speaker, that certainly allow an outlet for all families to get out and to be outdoors in an urban environment but also to lead a healthy lifestyle. And for me, I often find that those trails are sometimes where Stephanie and I have our best conversations and probably most sincere exchanges with constituents who are so pleased to share about their own families but also to talk about what matters in their lives.

So it's fair to say, Mr. Speaker, that I work with really good people, the good people that I sit with right here — our leader, the member from Massey Place, each and every one of the members of our opposition, the members just down the hallway, the staff in the caucus office. But I work with really good people in the community — Gloria Patrick in our constituency office, our family who supports us, and the network of community leaders, whether they be church leaders, community association leaders, leaders in sport, leaders in recreation, leaders in education who are vital to providing quality of life and opportunity for many, and vital for me as well to make sure I'm understanding what matters, Mr. Speaker.

So we have a time with a lot of opportunity in the province, as I've mentioned. We have a lot of good going on by way of population growth and economic strength, but we need to make sure we're building on that opportunity for the long term.

We have exciting things within the community. I mean Regina's just such an exciting place. When you think of the activities, there's almost every weekend if you think of the enriching activities that go on in this city, whether it be the Junos or the Folk Fest or the Queen City Marathon or the breast cancer run or the Grey Cup, which is coming up, which is just going to paint this whole city green. It's going to be such an exciting time for Rider nation and that pride we have in our

province. Or whether it's India night and all the cultural celebrations that we have in this city, Mr. Speaker — I could go on and on and on — the market gardens or the farmers' market, Mr. Speaker, and the place for people to connect there but also a place to access local food.

We have really good people that are leaders within this province. We have really a rich array of cultural opportunities, arts opportunities, and sporting opportunities that enrich the lives of certainly my family but also my constituents and our city and province as a whole.

But being reminded of the good things in the province isn't enough. And to speak to those, we need to also be focused on where the challenges are, where the gaps are. It's about being real with Saskatchewan people. It's about being straight with our constituents and making sure we're standing up on the matters that are of interest to them.

And I think of the challenge of the shortage of pediatric neurologists, Mr. Speaker, across this province. And I think of how that's impacted my constituent Jacqui Cameron directly, Mr. Speaker. And now Jacqui's son Rylan — impressive, impressive young man, 12 years old — has a rare form of epilepsy, Mr. Speaker. And he was diagnosed quite a few years ago at a very young age, Mr. Speaker. Chatting with Jacqui Cameron and hearing about her life and Rylan's life and the supports that she's had from a team of pediatric neurologists in this province, Mr. Speaker, is something that speaks to the importance of making sure that team and complement is in place. This is a time of huge stress for a parent, uncertainty for a family, watching a child go through all the hurt and pain and to have their health degrade over time, Mr. Speaker. And the reliance and support that those pediatric neurologists have provided or provided Jacqui for the better part of a decade, Mr. Speaker, is pretty incredible. She speaks to me about when first having Rylan diagnosed, what it meant to have a team of pediatric neurologists close on hand who got to have a full understanding of Rylan, to review his files, and who were always available for her when she needed answers, when she was in great stress.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's sad that we're . . . Right now in this province, we've lost that. And right now Jacqui's under . . . Jacqui recognizes an issue that impacts many others. And it's a matter that brings risk for a child, risk for a family, and certainly insurmountable stress and loss of peace of mind that I can only imagine, Mr. Speaker.

And I have a small window into this in a more personal way, Mr. Speaker, in watching my own sister and watching her young, I guess her middle boy growing here who all of a sudden was . . . It was recognized that he was experiencing seizures. And I watched that stress and strain for my own sister, Mr. Speaker, and then watching, not unlike Jacqui Cameron, Mr. Speaker, watching her then try to reach out to receive services. And in her case, Mr. Speaker, she was told that it would be over 14 months to receive access to a pediatric neurologist at a time where her son needed immediate attention to provide some answers, and in the end was forced out of province at her own cost, Mr. Speaker.

So now these issues don't happen overnight, but they deserve

and they need the full attention of government. And that team of pediatric neurologists that had served the province is something that's really important to families and to families and children that are in vulnerable circumstances, Mr. Speaker. And as I say, I've learned this in a very direct way through Jacqui Cameron, my constituent, and I've learned it in a very personal way through the circumstances of my sister and her family.

I also recognize the challenges in home care. Home care provides an area that we should be really supporting as a province, and this government, Mr. Speaker, just isn't doing enough on that front.

I have my constituent Michael Lilley, Mr. Speaker, who we heard about last year when we had the Leader of the Opposition raising the cuts to his home care services, Mr. Speaker, where he was asked in essence to go to the phone book to procure private supports to ensure that he had the independence and quality of life, Mr. Speaker, that he deserves. Well Michael Lilley deserves better than that, Mr. Speaker, and so do so many others, our parents and grandparents. And certainly, Mr. Speaker, it's important to us from a social perspective, it's important to us to make sure that our parents and grandparents have the supports they deserve. But also, Mr. Speaker, from an economic perspective it makes huge sense to make sure we're supporting our seniors with proper and the full supports they need by way of home care, as well as making the investments that we need to in really I guess the crisis that we see in long-term care right now, Mr. Speaker, or the crisis that we see right now in our hospitals, Mr. Speaker. So those are important areas.

We have spoken a lot about education. We've heard from across the province the failures of this government to deliver education, and I see it right in Regina Rosemont most specifically, Mr. Speaker. I know the good work that goes on in St. Josaphat and St. Joan of Arc and McLurg and Dieppe — well, did go on in Dieppe, Mr. Speaker — and in Rosemont, Mr. Speaker, St. Francis. Such hard work that those that have taken on this task of teaching the next generation, Mr. Speaker. They're delivering all they can, Mr. Speaker, working harder every day, being asked to do more, and doing so in an environment where this government is cutting the supports that they need, where this government is increasing the class size. So they have a more complex, more challenging classroom, Mr. Speaker.

They're committed to making a difference. They're working every day to do just that. But it's past time that that government stepped up to the plate and delivered in education. And their record of failure in education is something that comes with great consequences, not just in the life of a young person today but in the life of a province generations forward, Mr. Speaker, economically and socially. So these are important areas that need to be addressed.

I think as well of the lack of action, no action that we've seen from this government, and I've raised it repeatedly. I've gone through times in committees where I'm hearing that there's going to be action on this front. But no action with the unacceptable inundation of heavy-haul traffic up and down Dewdney Avenue. And this is something that I've raised with this government repeatedly, Mr. Speaker, in that they suggested

to me in committee that was going to be resolved.

But there's no resolution, Mr. Speaker. And the inundation of heavy-haul traffic that's been directed on to Dewdney Avenue has impacted those on Dewdney Avenue, those families — any of which have been there for years, Mr. Speaker — in a major way. Peace of mind, Mr. Speaker, if you can imagine, really eliminated for so many that live right along this artery. And you know, I've experienced; I've been at the doorsteps. I've been in the houses. I've experienced the noise. I've felt and seen the shaking of the cupboards and the dishes in the cupboards, Mr. Speaker. I've had individuals go and show me structural issues that they attribute to the shaking of their home by way of foundational cracking, Mr. Speaker. And this is more than a disturbance, Mr. Speaker. It could be costing them real dollars by way of taking away the integrity of their foundations or damaging infrastructure.

But likely the biggest issue out of this should be simply the safety concerns. And Dewdney Avenue, I mean it was never intended to be this focused with this heavy-haul traffic, Mr. Speaker. It's not the route these great big rigs should be on, Mr. Speaker, moving way too quickly far too often. And what you have is this interface of young families and children and workers who are trying to get to work and come back to their family up and down Dewdney. You have circumstances where families are of course out onto Dewdney to access sports and school and activities, particularly so in Dieppe where, because of inadequate funding of this government, Mr. Speaker, the school has been closed, Mr. Speaker. So you have families that are out and interfacing with this heavy-haul traffic. And thank goodness we haven't had a crisis in place yet, Mr. Speaker. But we need to see some action on this front, and it can't be continued a time sitting with a minister and saying that it's going to be resolved, all for naught, Mr. Speaker. There needs to be meaningful progress on this front, and I'll continue to push towards a solution that's acceptable to the community, that provides safety, peace of mind, and ensures that their investment is protected.

[12:30]

I think of Pioneer Village, Mr. Speaker. I think of the residents of Pioneer Village, such an incredible group, Mr. Speaker. They come together from all over the province to reside, often in their senior years, in Pioneer Village. And the support that that facility provides to families across this province is immense and to vulnerable seniors and to many seniors is so important. And these are seniors that come out of every corner of the province, whether it's Swift Current or Estevan or the north or the south or the central region, Mr. Speaker, and it's a facility that serves the province. And the degradation and continued degradation of the facility without maintenance, support for maintenance and rehabilitation, or what I hear from many is the need for a rebuild, Mr. Speaker — we just don't hear anything about that.

And these are our seniors, our parents, our grandparents from every corner of the province that make their home in Regina Rosemont and Pioneer Village that we need to do better for, Mr. Speaker. And I think that if many were to walk through and talk with staff and meet with seniors, they'd find many that had come from their own constituencies, Mr. Speaker. They would see the urgent need to provide the rebuild that's needed for

Pioneer Village.

It would be wrong for me to not bring up an issue that's shared with me day in and day out, and that's middle-class, hard-working families struggling with the affordability of life in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And it's on many fronts. They see it through certainly the cranked-up costs in their utility bills, Mr. Speaker, covering off for decisions of this government. They see it in their housing. They see it on so many fronts, and they see it in other fronts where their wages have been relatively flat, Mr. Speaker.

We need to do better for these hard-working families, middle-class families that are working harder and harder and feeling as though they just can't progress the way that they should be. They feel that they're falling a little further behind. And you know, in a province that we're so proud of the prosperity, Mr. Speaker, we just have to have more meaningful actions to ensure that that prosperity is felt by the families and households through the neighbourhoods and communities of our province, Mr. Speaker.

I spoke about housing as being a critical piece there. We need to make sure that the full range of housing is a priority for this government. We continue to see the government focus just sort of on tinkering around with the edges of market affordability, and we really do need to see a focus on the full range — social housing, co-operatives — of real affordable housing, not affordable housing as these guys, as that government characterizes it, Mr. Speaker. But there's a real lack of affordability for many, and we need to do better. And I hear it, I hear it particularly so for many . . . conveyed through many in their 20s and 30s, but I also hear it from a lot of parents talking about their children in their 20s and 30s and the challenges that they're facing.

And those same parents are often talking to me about the issue that we've been speaking about, and that's the cost of senior care and the lack of access to quality, affordable senior care, which takes me to a matter that's been front and centre for our opposition, front and centre by the Leader of the Opposition, and that's that simply the seniors of this province, our parents and grandparents, deserve better than they're getting as it relates to the options for senior care.

We need to be doing more in home care. We need to be doing more to make sure that our seniors aren't being forced to be put up in overcrowded hospitals. We need to do more to make sure that our seniors can actually afford and have the dignity and quality of life that they have. And we need to make sure that quite simply there's more spaces and more choices for our seniors. And when we hear about the absolutely undignified and devastating examples of having seniors that have spent and built their life, the pioneers of this province, spending their life in this province, investing in this province, now spending their senior years in a care facility that doesn't have the staff it requires to meet their needs, isn't getting the bath they require, horrendous stories of being left on toilets unattended for hours, Mr. Speaker, stories about laundry now that's not being done when we know all the pressing concerns around viruses and bedbugs — Mr. Speaker, this isn't the prosperous Saskatchewan I envision, Mr. Speaker, and it's certainly not the sort of treatment that our seniors deserve. And this is an area

that we certainly need to do a better job on.

I see we have many new people moving to Saskatchewan. It's an exciting time on this front, but we need to do a better job of making sure that these new Canadians, these newcomers, these immigrants are supported, Mr. Speaker. And I see the cuts actually quite often that we're . . . The cut of the office by the federal government in Regina is having a very direct impact on those that are interfacing with the immigration system, Mr. Speaker, and they're kind of left to their own devices. And often they're working hard to build their life here. They're working hard in a real literal sense in their places of employment. And we need to do a better job of making sure that they understand their rights, that they understand the provisions within the immigration system and the supports that are there. And that cut, along with attention that's not always provided by this provincial government, needs to be improved.

I think of child care. Certainly we need to be making progress. What people are getting frustrated with is throne speeches that announce new spaces, but spaces, Mr. Speaker, that aren't realized back into communities. And I understand that there's been many child care spaces that have been announced by this government. And then members of government get up and back-pat themselves on them, but then they fail to make sure that they get the work done to get the doors open to those child care facilities and making sure that we provide that important need to families.

And I think of our hospitals. You know, our hospitals, Mr. Speaker, we have an example here in Regina that's a real crisis right now which is the emergency room overcrowding.

You know, it's funny, Mr. Speaker. You know, one member in the back, he gets worked up and he shouts loudly from his seat, but he sounds like he's done. But now the Premier seems like he wants to offer some words.

But the point that I'd like to make, Mr. Speaker, is we have a real challenge in our hospitals right now, Mr. Speaker. We have emergency room overcrowding with lack of supports for health professionals, inadequate support to ensure that the staffing components are in place for the health professionals that the residents of Regina and all throughout the province need, and that crisis is real in the emergency rooms of Regina. And we need to make sure the sustainability of those hospitals, those emergency rooms, and we need to make sure that those that are accessing those services can count on having the health professionals there when they need them.

I think as well of the challenge that so many are facing as it relates to access to a family doctor, to a general practitioner, to a GP. And I know, I'll just share, I mean I know this is an issue that goes right across the province, but I'll focus on northwest Regina. If you look at the current circumstance for family doctors, and so many constituents can't get access to a family doctor, and then you go chat with the family doctors, and they're all sharing with me that they're at a stage where they're all quite close to retirement if not, you know, if it's not looming right now. This is a potential crisis, Mr. Speaker, that we have the opportunity to be ahead of, but we don't see any actions or plans to ensure succession on that front and ensure that families have the access to a family doctor that they deserve. Of course

we know how important that is.

We see our important role of our university, Mr. Speaker, the University of Regina. We think of SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology], our college, Mr. Speaker. These are important facilities. As it relates to our university, we have to do a better job, or this government quite frankly has to do a better job, of making sure they receive the capital dollars they require, Mr. Speaker. The University of Regina is an exceptional university that needs some critical investment, and certainly we'll play a role in advocating for those needed capital dollars.

I was privileged to join the College Avenue Campus announcement last week along with the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre. And you know, this is a historic facility. It's a beautiful facility right there on the south side of downtown and on the shores of Wascana Lake. And this is a facility that's served our province for a century, Mr. Speaker. But it's critical as well that that infrastructure be renewed, rehabilitated to serve us well into the future. And that facility could be a place of vibrant learning that connects community, that provides and provides such an incredible place to do so. It should be a real, a real gem, Mr. Speaker, for our province and for our city. But to do that, it needs the capital commitment of this government, something it hasn't yet received, Mr. Speaker.

So we've looked a little bit on sort of the very local and constituency-based perspective. And I'm drawn back to the very focus of our opposition where we're focused simply on what matters. And certainly it reflects what's going on within my constituency and our community as well. And you know, I know as the leader and as I and others have been out working with stakeholders, listening province-wide, Mr. Speaker, we know that the priorities we're working towards are important for communities. It's the very communities that have told us that that's where they need our top priorities to be focused. And I think of seniors' care; we need to certainly do so much more on this front.

We look at the failures of this government in education, Mr. Speaker. It's a shame. We need to make sure that we're supporting our teachers, supporting our classrooms, supporting students, Mr. Speaker, to ensure they can fulfill the opportunities that they should have. And we need to be doing more, Mr. Speaker, to diversify our economy to ensure long-term, stable prosperity, Mr. Speaker.

And we have a pretty special time going on within Saskatchewan, as I've said, by way of the resource activity and economic strength in many areas. But we need to do a better job of building on that opportunity. And I think as I talk a bit about the economy and that diversification I've, you know, I'm really reminded of the really poor record of this government on this front. A government, that government really has failed to be focused towards a plan that will diversify for the long term. They certainly haven't had anything that's reflected the sort of smart growth agenda that Saskatchewan people deserve.

You know, I think of a very fresh example that's just occurred, which is the closure of SpringBoard West, Mr. Speaker, an incubator with a lot of potential and working in an important way and closed by that government, Mr. Speaker. And you

know, it's that sort of a program, Mr. Speaker, SpringBoard West and the closure of it by that government, Mr. Speaker, that isn't helpful to the economy over the long term.

It's these sorts of programs that we can refine and work with to build a multiplier effect within our economy moving forward and making sure that we're not just amplifying the highs and the lows of a resource-driven economy, but in fact that we're filling those troughs, that we're building on strength, that we're providing stable, long-term prosperity for Saskatchewan people.

We also see that same wrong-headed approach with the cut of Communities of Tomorrow here in Regina. Communities of Tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, was driving innovation in this province, bringing together entrepreneurs and working directly with municipalities to deal with the infrastructure deficit that we have as a province, and looking for creative, innovative but as well the most efficient, effective ways possible to build the infrastructure we need. That's the kind of approach that returns value for dollar to taxpayers but also provides opportunity to drive the economy that we should be building, Mr. Speaker, and that was cut by this government.

Then we think of the cut to the film industry, Mr. Speaker, driving away investment of millions of dollars from this province, driving away families that had built and invested their life in this province, Mr. Speaker, and a loss, a cultural loss, Mr. Speaker, for us as a province as well.

I think of the cuts to the Aboriginal employment development program and really the fact that, you know, on this one it certainly is sort of one step forward by way of the fact a few years ago we had all this economic opportunity, and then a couple steps back, a deliberate cut that prevented the sort of gains that we should be making for all Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker, extending that opportunity, but certainly for First Nations and Métis people, Mr. Speaker.

And when we're talking about the economy, I mean these aren't . . . or you know, the economy isn't in a silo all of itself, Mr. Speaker. We need to think of what's going on in education. And that government's failure is in the classroom, that government's disrespect for teachers. That government's failure for students, Mr. Speaker, has direct consequences on the learning of students, has direct consequences. And those consequences aren't just felt this year, Mr. Speaker. They'll manifest themselves in negative ways into the economy, into our community, socially, economically, many years forward. And I believe that the foundation of a strong economic plan is an education system of excellence, and that's a top priority, that supporting student learning . . . And this government's failure in education is certainly a move, steps in the wrong direction.

[12:45]

We see, you know, the important, balanced economy that's been built out in Saskatchewan at different times by way of the role of our Crown corporations. And we certainly know it's so unhelpful to Saskatchewan's economy, let alone for Saskatchewan families and workers who no longer are having opportunities extended to them or the benefits of a strong Crown sector extended to them, to see the weakening and

erosion, piecemealing of our privatization within our Crown sector, Mr. Speaker. These are real issues that impact our economy. They're real issues that impact workers, and it's something that we have a lot of concern about, Mr. Speaker.

I think of the fact that we can't get a commitment from the provincial government as to whether or not they're going to follow their federal cousins and hike taxes on the credit unions, Mr. Speaker, something that would be devastating to the credit unions in this province. And if you think of the credit unions, they serve over, you know, 500,000 members or have over 500,000 members. They provide over 55 per cent of the lending to small- and medium-sized business, the drivers of the economy, Mr. Speaker. And if this government follows suit with their federal cousins to hike taxes on credit unions, it'll have a direct impact on that lending, direct impact on their ability to service an entire province with their rural branches and otherwise, and a direct impact on their ability to make community investments.

So that's why we've . . . some of the areas that we've been focused on. The leader's also been focused on, and we have, on ensuring that we have an aggressive labour force agenda, Mr. Speaker. It's a critical challenge to our province, and we need to do a better job of extending opportunity to all to make sure we're providing those training opportunities, to getting rid of adult basic education wait-lists, to ensuring aggressive action on apprenticeship, Mr. Speaker. We saw some of those mentions in the Throne Speech, and if we now see progress from those words, that's a good thing. But certainly we've seen a lack of focus on diversifying, diversifying our economy for the long term. And we certainly need a smart growth strategy.

Mr. Speaker, I look at some of the other challenges that we have as a province. And we've been calling for schools to be built for a long time, as an opposition. You know, we recognize that many communities are without schools. But we also recognize that many schools need to be repaired. And these aren't just, you know, cosmetic repairs, Mr. Speaker, the repairs as it relates to asbestos and electrical challenges. And from that government, Mr. Speaker, we haven't seen the support that those schools, that those students, that those teachers require.

So we've been calling for new schools to be built in communities that don't have them. We've been calling for gyms — like that of Sacred Heart which is crumbling, Mr. Speaker — to be built, not the temporary solution that's in place right now. We called for schools like Pleasant Hill with asbestos and electrical issues to be addressed. But we didn't see much of that in this Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker.

What we did have sort of popped on Saskatchewan people is this P3 school scheme that government brought forward. And you know, we've done a lot of research on P3s and certainly done our homework. And I certainly don't oppose P3s on ideological grounds. We do so on the evidence, Mr. Speaker. We do so from a perspective of common sense, do so from learning from other jurisdictions like Nova Scotia, like New Brunswick, like Alberta, Mr. Speaker, like the United Kingdom, Mr. Speaker. And what we see in the experience of these P3 schemes, Mr. Speaker, far more often than not, is excess costs, dollars that are simply costing, these facilities simply costing taxpayers more than they should. And if you

think about cost, any dollar that's going to this private sector scheme, Mr. Speaker, that's not going directly into the classroom is wrong-headed, Mr. Speaker.

So these excess costs are certainly a concern. We see that by way of the fact that the private sector consortia is often international or certainly borrowing at a much higher rate. We see so as well in the fact that the ability to put together these complex contracts jack up costs, costs for putting together these structures, Mr. Speaker. And then we know as well, we know as well that these are expensive to monitor.

So you know, it's kind of, you know, it's disappointing, Mr. Speaker. We've been calling for schools to be built, to be built in the communities that need them like Hampton Village, like northwest Regina, like southeast Regina, Mr. Speaker. But people don't want privatized schools, Mr. Speaker. They want schools that are affordable, that meet the needs of their community, that reflect their community.

You know, and I think when you talk about even the reflection of a community, I think of Arcola School or Douglas Park School. I think of Arcola School, Mr. Speaker, that was built in concert and with discussion with a community to reflect community needs. Well that's all lost in this sort of rent-a-school approach that we see from government; this buy now, pay it later scheme; and this sort of bulk buy that they're going to do for schools across the province.

And, you know, what I get a kick out of, Mr. Speaker, and I think what most people get a kick out of is this government last year took over the purchasing of portables for all the school divisions. Of course the school divisions have had a great history in getting the portables that they needed built and in place to meet the needs of their divisions. And they did so at a very affordable rate. But this government decided that it would take that over, that they would bulk buy them, that they'd actually contract out of province. Actually quite a few contractors that had been doing this in Saskatchewan lost out in that piece as well. And they promised, oh it's going to be cheaper. It's going to be better. Kind of the same kind of language and rhetoric we hear around P3s.

But, Mr. Speaker, I think we have to look to the recent record on this. The school year came along. We had classrooms with over 50 students inside them, Mr. Speaker — 50 students in a classroom, if you can imagine. And we had portables that were nowhere to be seen. And when they came, Mr. Speaker, late, a couple of months late, Mr. Speaker, what we found with those portables — hearing from school divisions — is they sent them the wrong product. They sent them the wrong classroom. So you know, I get a kick, Mr. Speaker, for a government that can't even procure portables, can't even buy a few relocatable classrooms, Mr. Speaker, in a bulk buying process, to think that it can now go out and deal with international private sector consortiums to build private sector schools for tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, as I say, we oppose the plan they put forward on common-sense grounds. We know the delays that are in place to get a P3 school up are significant. We know that we can get those schools built faster and quicker dealing with them in a traditional way. We know the experience of Nova Scotia, that when they went out and built these — and it was a Liberal

government that built the schools, P3s — that that scheme was then cancelled or scrapped by the Conservative government who said it was far too elaborate, far too costly. And the Conservatives and then the auditor weighed in afterwards and said that the new schools built through a traditional perspective were saving them \$2 million a school, Mr. Speaker. Those \$2 million, Mr. Speaker, are \$2 million that can be placed directly into the classroom where it directly impacts student learning, Mr. Speaker.

So we don't need costly, expensive private schemes of this government. We need real solutions that matter to students, and we need the schools that they need to be in the shape that they deserve. And we need the schools that are needed in communities that don't have them. We needed them yesterday. We needed them last year. But in this case, no more delays are acceptable, Mr. Speaker.

We look at some of the other areas as well, Mr. Speaker. You know, my wife was here observing the Throne Speech, and she's a teacher. And she was looking at the education piece, and she opened it up and listened and walked out afterward. And I said, well what did you think, hon? What was your perspective on the Throne Speech? And she went right to education, and she says, what's this? She knows the challenge that teachers are facing. She's a teacher herself. She's in the classroom. More challenging, more complex classrooms than ever before, increased class size, cut supports by this government, Mr. Speaker, and not a mention of anything to alleviate those pressures, to support student learning, Mr. Speaker.

Some mention of further consultation, Mr. Speaker. Well the fact that consultation with the education sector and with teachers has become a novel concept with this government is a sad statement in itself. That's how it's supposed to work. That's how we've built the province that we have. That's how the education sectors work. It's not always worked out perfectly, but it's a collaborative. It's about working with educational partners.

And the fact that this government I thought had recognized their failures in education, I thought had gone out and apparently had listened — I know the Premier listened to a few teachers in a few different cities, Mr. Speaker — what I thought was we'd see a vision and a plan to support students' learning, to address the challenges in the classroom, to address the class size pressures that are in place, to scrap the wrong-headed, costly standardized testing agenda that this government continues to push without any evidence or support, Mr. Speaker. But we didn't see any of that. What we saw is that they're going to talk some more, Mr. Speaker. Well I think teachers and students and parents are getting tired of the talk, Mr. Speaker. They're looking for some action and they're looking for some support, and our students deserve nothing less.

When I go across to my critic areas meeting with municipalities, Mr. Speaker, our municipalities are feeling the direct pressures of growth. They're on the front lines of growth. They need to be supported. And this government has failed to support municipalities with the infrastructure dollars they require. And without doing so, it's compromising the infrastructure that's in place within our municipalities, but it's

also coming with a big added cost to property tax payers, Mr. Speaker. It's adding debt to our municipalities.

So when we're talking about whether it's transportation networks in Lloydminster, whether we're talking about bridges in Prince Albert, whether we're talking about waste water and sewers in almost every community in this province, the communities of this province, the municipalities, our cities, our towns, they need a dedicated infrastructure funding mechanism — something that's not in place. And I didn't see that in the budget, Mr. Speaker.

On that same file we need to make sure that we're not just responding to crisis by way of weather-related crisis. We need to make sure that we're allowing municipalities, rural and urban, to be making the investments they require to bring about flood prevention projects. Something that right now there's dollars for crisis and cleanup, but there's nothing for front-end, proactive, preventative work, Mr. Speaker. So these are all areas that matter.

You know, we know our finances. We don't see the progress that Saskatchewan people deserve there. This government continues to push forward with its outdated set of books, its two sets of books, reporting, Mr. Speaker, that's been called wrong and misleading by the Provincial Auditor. And Saskatchewan people deserve better than that. They deserve the whole picture. They deserve better than special reports from the auditor, investigations that have to expose that the government's hiding billions of dollars of debt from Saskatchewan people only to . . . you know, for political games I guess or trickery. But Saskatchewan people are smart people, and they see through that sort of behaviour.

You know, we see nothing significant yet as it relates to the Senate. We've heard some squawking from the newly converted, but we haven't yet seen any meaningful action to provide leadership on behalf of this province to provide the voice to abolish our Senate, Mr. Speaker, our unelected, unaccountable Senate. So we'll be waiting for that, Mr. Speaker.

But as I say, when I look at this Throne Speech and as we look at this Throne Speech, we look at it through the lens of our constituents' needs from a regional perspective and then a provincial perspective, and we're focused on what matters. And this government's speech was certainly a disappointing tone. This government doesn't have a plan to hold up its end of the bargain to Saskatchewan people. And we see it in our municipalities. We see it in our schools. We see it with everyday families. People, communities, school boards, teachers, students are working harder than ever to hold up their end of the bargain, and they're delivering good news. You think of the businesses and the entrepreneurs. But this government, Mr. Speaker, isn't holding up its end of the bargain.

And you know, I thought the Throne Speech itself was disappointing, that at this time of special opportunity in Saskatchewan that it was so backward looking, so focused on the past, so focused on back-pattery that Saskatchewan people, they don't care about the political partisan interests of that government. They care about the interests of their family. They care about the interests of their province. And I find that the

tone and sort of . . . It's like these . . . It just reflects a government that's maybe seeming to fall out of touch with Saskatchewan people.

And I guess I, on that front, I'm sure proud I stand with the people I stand with to be able to focus on what matters for Saskatchewan families, to give credit where credit is due, Mr. Speaker, to the hard-working families, to the entrepreneurs, to the universities, to the school boards, to the teachers, to the students that are making a difference, Mr. Speaker, and then to focus on where we can make some improvements.

And so as I say, Mr. Speaker, we expected more from this Throne Speech. I know Saskatchewan people expected more than a look through the rear-view mirror and a government to pat itself on the back. And I know most Saskatchewan people would feel, you know, that the headline of *The StarPhoenix* editorial today that the speech offers no vision would reflect how they would feel about the speech if they read it.

And I know that many that understand the cuts of this government would understand Bruce Johnstone's article a few weeks ago where he critiqued the economic agenda of this government with the article, "Saskies' growth plan adrift," talking about the cut after cut, Mr. Speaker. But I'll have more time to enter into this Throne Speech debate and its . . .

The Speaker: — It now being after the hour of adjournment, this House stands adjourned to 1:30 p.m., October 28th, Monday.

[The Assembly adjourned at 13:00.]

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Minister Responsible for Tourism Saskatchewan
Minister Responsible for Trade
Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy Incorporated

Hon. Don McMorris

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Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Telecommunications
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Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
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