



FOURTH SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

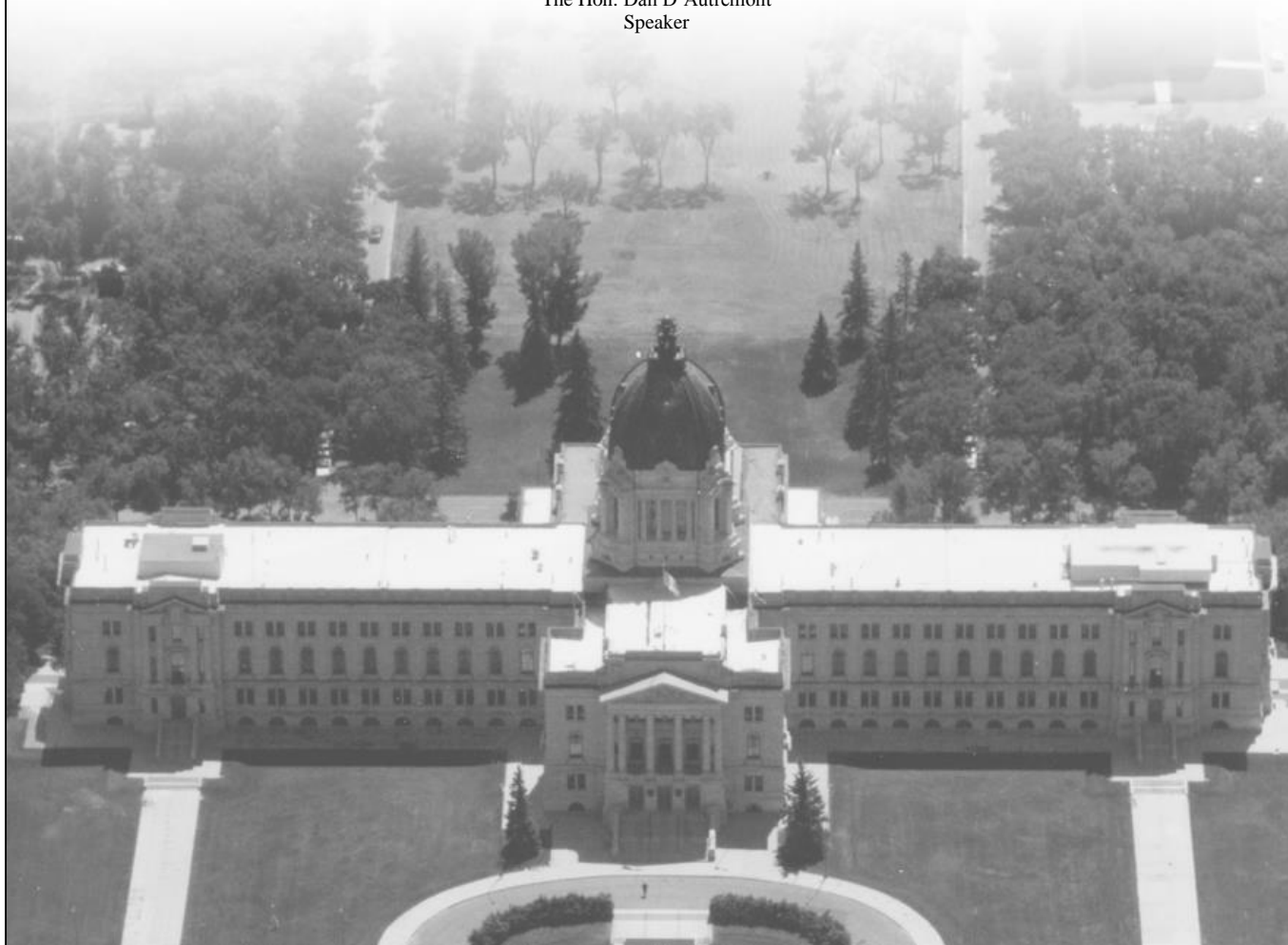
of the

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, Hon. 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, Hon. Mark	SP	Regina Coronation Park
Doherty, Hon. Kevin	SP	Regina Northeast
Doke, Larry	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
Draude, June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
Duncan, Hon. Dustin	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, 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
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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
McMorris, Hon. Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
Merriman, Paul	SP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Michelson, Warren	SP	Moose Jaw North
Moe, Hon. Scott	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Morgan, Hon. Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
Nilson, John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
Norris, Rob	SP	Saskatoon Greystone
Ottenbreit, Hon. 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, Randy	SP	Biggar
Wilson, Hon. Nadine	SP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Wotherspoon, Trent	NDP	Regina Rosemont
Wyant, Hon. Gordon	SP	Saskatoon Northwest
Vacant		Lloydminster

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I would request leave of my colleagues in the Assembly to make an extended introduction this afternoon.

The Speaker: — The Premier has requested leave for an extended introduction. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, during the last few weeks I think we have been even more mindful of the great service that is done to our country by those who are prepared to serve in the Canadian Forces and to put themselves in harm's way to help people the world over, and sometimes to be of great assistance here at home in times of struggle or calamity.

Mr. Speaker, today we had another opportunity in the Assembly to honour those who bravely protect our freedom and the freedom of others in troubled areas of the world, and who are willing to serve their fellow Canadians.

As we recognized the latest recipients of the Saskatchewan Scholarship of Honour at an awards ceremony here in the legislature, Mr. Speaker, you will know that the Scholarship of Honour was actually an idea that came from you, sir, when MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] were gathered to discuss ideas on what we could do in government. I want to acknowledge that, Mr. Speaker, as well as the work of the member for Wood River, the military liaison for the government, and the current member for Saskatoon Greystone who, as minister, developed the Scholarship of Honour.

It provides a one-time award of \$5,000 to defray the costs of post-secondary education for those who are returning from military operations as well as the spouses and the children of fallen or disabled soldiers, Mr. Speaker. We have the recipients here today, or at least a number of them, and I would just ask them to maybe wave as I read their names into the record and welcome them to their Legislative Assembly today.

We have with us today Petty Officer Linda Conarroe. We have Chief Warrant Officer Allan Rishchynski; Sergeant Justin Demenoff; Amy Gillert; Gunner Shane Smith; Britnee Mishak; Ms. Sabrina Beason, wife of Warrant Officer Daniel Beason; Ms. Katia-Angela Guzzardi, wife of Captain Nicholas Verleun; Mr. Kristopher Reynolds, son of Sergeant Shaughn and Carol Wittman.

Mr. Speaker, those receiving the award who are not able to attend today's ceremony include Captain Bryan McCulloch,

Sergeant Scott MacKay, Sergeant Mark Calow, Corporal Michael Miller, Corporal Bjorn Hunter, Captain William Lindsay, Sergeant Brianna Rhind, Corporal Brandon Landry, Major Kevin Mead, and Mr. Alexander McKenzie.

Mr. Speaker, since the program's launch, 129 scholarships have been awarded, totalling \$645,000. Ten of these recipients are family members of soldiers who died while serving our country, serving all of us. The scholarship is a small token compared to what these women and men have been prepared to sacrifice, Mr. Speaker. I just want to say to all of them, thank you. Thank you for that service. Thanks for being here today.

Mr. Speaker, we wish them well in their educational endeavours. I'd ask all members to join me in recognizing them and welcoming them as well to their Legislative Assembly.

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

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the Premier in recognizing and expressing our deep appreciation and gratitude to these recipients receiving the Scholarship of Honour Award. Mr. Speaker, when members of our Armed Forces go into the line of duty, they don't do it looking for a reward. They don't do it looking for recognition. They do it because it's a calling. They do it because they want to serve their fellow citizens. And that's the mindset they approach it, Mr. Speaker, that it is their duty.

We as Saskatchewan residents, as citizens of Canada, we have a duty as well, and that is to express our gratitude and to say thank you and to recognize the huge sacrifice that individuals have made and ultimately that families have made at the very same time, Mr. Speaker. So it's very fitting that we as a province are able to make this type of recognition. And on behalf of the official opposition, I want to express my deep gratitude to each individual, to each family represented, and to say simply thank you for all that you have done.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition that calls for greater protection for Saskatchewan citizens from developers who default on fixed-price contracts with the Saskatchewan government. And we know that in September this year this government walked away from a new 48-unit, low-income affordable housing project in Regina, allowing a private developer to instead take control and then rent the units at full market price. I'd like to read the prayer, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: cause the government to recognize that there are indeed desperate homeless people in our province, and to immediately reverse its policy of now allowing private developers with whom the government has close relationships to default on fixed-price contracts for affordable housing projects.

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

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present petitions on behalf of concerned residents as it relates to the unacceptable danger on Dewdney Avenue by heavy-haul truck traffic that's been created by that government. And they call upon that government to finally and urgently act to ensure safety on Dewdney Avenue and get those heavy-haul trucks off of Dewdney Avenue. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable Legislative Assembly call on the provincial government to immediately take action as it relates to the unacceptable danger, disturbance, and infrastructure damage caused by the heavy-haul truck traffic on Dewdney Avenue west of the city centre, to ensure the safety and well-being of communities, families, residents, and users; and that those actions and plans should include rerouting the heavy-haul truck traffic, receive provincial funding, and be developed through consultation with the city of Regina, communities, and residents.

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

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

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition condemning this government's dangerous smart meter program. The undersigned residents of the province of Saskatchewan want to bring to our attention the following:

Whereas the government knew about major safety concerns related to its smart meter project; whereas the government ignored those safety concerns and plowed ahead with its program; and whereas the safety of Saskatchewan families was put at significant risk, we, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: to cause the provincial government to take responsibility for its failure to act on readily available information about safety concerns with its smart meter program, including through the immediate resignation of the Minister Responsible for SaskPower and a fully independent inquiry into the concerning chain of events that severely compromised the safety of Saskatchewan families.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is presented by individuals from Saskatoon, Regina, and Moose Jaw. I so submit.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Western Canada Conference on American Sign Language

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On October 17th I

had the pleasure to attend the Western Canada Conference on American Sign Language (ASL) and English Bilingual Education at the University of Regina. I know the member for Regina Douglas Park was there also so I hope that he will bring back what he learned to his colleagues in the government as well.

This conference provided an opportunity for teachers, experts, and members of the deaf and hard of hearing community to come together to discuss the important issues facing bilingual ASL education in Canada and here in Saskatchewan. There were a number of engaging speakers from all over North America who spoke about some very important topics for deaf education here in our province, the importance of developing both written and sign language skills, the systematic barriers many deaf and hard of hearing students face in our schools and society, and the transfer of language skills from American Sign Language to written English.

One issue that came up over and over again at the conference was the need for ASL to be a recognized language for instruction here in our province. All of the deaf community advocacy groups all want to see ASL officially recognized as a language of instruction here in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I hope that all members will join me in supporting this very important cause. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Wood River.

Scholarship of Honour Recipients

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there's a strong history of women and men from Saskatchewan serving Canada's Armed Forces with distinction. They serve with courage in often difficult circumstances around the world. Mr. Speaker, today we want to thank them through the Scholarship of Honour.

This \$5,000 scholarship was first announced in 2009 and was created to honour the commitment our members of the Armed Forces make to our country. It gives returning servicewomen and men and family members of injured or fallen individuals a chance to pursue post-secondary studies.

This is an example of our government's commitment to the women and men that have fought and made sacrifices for our country. Saskatchewan is the only province to offer this type of scholarship.

Mr. Speaker, as mentioned previously, there have been 129 Scholarship of Honour recipients to date — 119 of them are returning servicewomen and men, and 10 are children or spouses of Armed Forces members.

Today, Mr. Speaker, we celebrate and honour 16 of the latest recipients of this scholarship. Six of these recipients are in the House with us today. This scholarship is a token of our gratitude and respect. It is because of these courageous women and men we live in a country where our freedom is preserved and we're able to pursue our dreams. For that, we are eternally grateful. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Remembering Betty Pickering

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, it is with sadness that I rise in this Chamber to commemorate a great Regina and a tireless advocate for seniors in our province, in our city. I'm speaking of Betty Pickering. Sadly, Betty passed away on October 16th. Her funeral service took place last Sunday, October 26th.

Betty was the president of the Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism and recently received that organization's Celebrating Seniors Award. Although Betty was not able to attend the awards ceremony, the folks at the Seniors Mechanism brought the award to her at Grace Hospice so she could celebrate and be recognized for all that she has contributed to the community.

Betty Pickering helped the Seniors Mechanism to address a number of issues facing families and seniors in Saskatchewan, including elder abuse, health, and fitness. She also led the way in organizing conferences, in working with governments and businesses to improve access and qualities of services for seniors, and in reaching out to those who were isolated and alone.

Betty Pickering showed true leadership through her work to make Saskatchewan better for seniors. She embodied volunteerism and community spirit. The passing of Betty Pickering is a great loss to our province, and I hope that all members will join me in expressing our condolences to the Pickering family. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

2014 Nation Builders and Community Recognition Awards

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday my colleague from Regina Dewdney and I had the pleasure of attending the annual Nation Builders and Community Recognition Awards ceremony hosted by the Ukrainian Canadian Congress.

Since 1995, the UCC [Ukrainian Canadian Congress] has recognized Saskatchewan volunteers who provide outstanding service to their communities and the Ukrainian-Canadian landscape. This year two of the Nation Builders Awards were presented to Natalie Ostryzniuk and Norbert Wasylenko. As well, seven others received recognition for their work in the community.

The third Nation Builder Award recipient was my friend Mr. Edward Lysyk who sadly passed away earlier this year. Ed was recognized for his tireless dedication to the Saskatchewan Ukrainian community.

This year was also special, Mr. Speaker, because our Premier, the member for Swift Current, received the Newsmaker of the Year award. This award was presented to recognize our government's unwavering support of the Ukrainian community of Saskatchewan and the people of Ukraine. The UCC said that our Premier and our government have been pillars of strength for the Ukrainian community and that our strong words of support, the flying of the Ukrainian Flag at the Legislative Building, and the humanitarian assistance demonstrated this

commitment.

In accepting the award, our Premier reminded us that freedom is never free and that events of late have reinforced our commitment as Canadians to this value. Mr. Speaker, our government is honoured to work in partnership with the Ukrainian community for the betterment of our province and the people of Ukraine. Thank you.

[13:45]

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

Volunteer Heritage Language Teachers Awards

Mr. Marchuk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On October the 4th, I had the opportunity to bring greetings on behalf of the Minister of Education at the Multilingual Association of Regina's Volunteer Heritage Language Teachers Award Night. The MLAR [Multilingual Association of Regina] is a non-profit registered charity committed to the retention and promotion of heritage languages. Volunteer teachers teach classes outside of regular school hours at heritage language schools which provide language instruction and celebrate cultural diversity. The MLAR has an ongoing focus of providing support for their volunteer language teachers through workshops and in-service training.

Mr. Speaker, the awards night honoured volunteer language teachers with three or more years of service. Twenty-six volunteer teachers received bronze service pins for three to four years of service, 12 received silver service pins for teaching between five and nine years, and eight teachers received gold service pins for 10 or more years of volunteer service. Honorary life membership awards were given to two recently retired long-serving MLAR board members. Mrs. Mary Kolitsas was honoured for her 25 years of continuous service and Mr. Ved Arora was honoured for his 35 years of continuous service.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in celebrating the incredible work of the Multilingual Association of Regina and the volunteer language teachers who keep heritage languages alive, and in congratulating all of the award recipients. Thank you.

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

Habitat for Humanity Build in Moose Jaw

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise in the House to talk about a new Habitat for Humanity build, the fifth that is under way in Moose Jaw. On October 31st I had the pleasure of joining Habitat and its partners to celebrate this achievement and, most importantly, celebrate Krista and her daughter Sawyer's joy in becoming homeowners.

Today in Saskatchewan there is much to be thankful for. Our government's Speech from the Throne highlighted our strong, growing province and the strength and determination of our citizens. Our government is proud to support Habitat's efforts to lift families up and change their lives through home ownership.

This is why our government is providing \$65,000 to help build this home. Mr. Speaker, this brings our commitment to Habitat for Humanity to a total of 7.85 million since March 2009. This is one of the many ways we are working to keep Saskatchewan strong.

Mr. Speaker, our province's strength is found in the compassion and generosity of its people. This is certainly true of Habitat for Humanity and their partners. These values will keep Moose Jaw and Saskatchewan moving forward as we work together to make life more affordable for everyone. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

National Down Syndrome Awareness Week

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Down Syndrome Society has proclaimed November 1 to 7th as National Down Syndrome Awareness Week. This public awareness campaign focuses on the unique strengths and abilities of people with Down syndrome. It also brings awareness to the discrimination that some people with this genetic condition face.

Celebrating National Down Syndrome Awareness Week helps to ensure equitable opportunities for all Canadians with Down syndrome. Mr. Speaker, about 1 in 800 people are born with Down syndrome. These people have many abilities and continue to make great contributions to our communities.

That is why this year's budget included 9.9 million in funding for the Ministry of the Economy employability assistance for people with disabilities program, to assist adults with disabilities to prepare, secure, and maintain employment.

This program recognizes the great contributions of people with Down syndrome in our society and encourages equitable opportunity for all. Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Down Syndrome Society continual campaign, See the Ability, promotes the abilities of those with Down syndrome and works to educate Canadians about this genetic condition and help eliminate any stigma.

I would like to ask all members to join me in celebrating National Down Syndrome Awareness Week and the See the Ability campaign. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Smart Meter Program

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is the Premier aware that it was actually senior officials at SaskPower that made the decision to remove the dangerous smart meters from the homes of 105,000 Saskatchewan families? Is he aware of that, yes or no?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware of what conclusions senior management had come to with respect to the meters, but I can tell you the conclusions the government had come to after meeting with the minister and senior advisers in my office. We made the decision to direct SaskPower to pull the meters.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, I think the Premier should take time to read the report that was provided, and you can see it's a very different story than what we've heard from this government.

Last week in the House, the Premier made a very bold claim that turns out not to be true. The Premier said:

And as soon as there was a concern with respect of safety — Mr. Speaker, on the part of the minister, not SaskPower — on the part of the minister, action was taken to remove the meters.

Well this flies in the face of what actually happened on a number of fronts, Mr. Speaker. So will the Premier stand today and correct the record?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I recall the morning when we had discussions at cabinet. Prior to the cabinet meeting, I had a discussion with the minister and senior advisers. There were no SaskPower officials present for those meetings. We made the decision, after some considerable discussion, that the action of the pulling of the meters needed to be directed to SaskPower.

Now if they had come to the same conclusion at some similar point in time, that may well be the case. But I'm telling this House, Mr. Speaker, I'm telling you for the public record, I'm telling my friend across the way, that the decision to pull the meters that the government made was made absent advice from SaskPower. It was made absent direction from SaskPower. Rather, it was the cabinet, the minister responsible, myself that made this decision, directed SaskPower to pull the meters. Mr. Speaker, that's what we said at the time. I scrummed shortly thereafter. That's exactly the case.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, the report from PricewaterhouseCoopers lays out exactly what happened, Mr. Speaker. And the PricewaterhouseCoopers version doesn't match with what the Premier and what the Minister of SaskPower have been claiming. Here's what the PricewaterhouseCoopers' report says:

SaskPower executives advised that they met with the president of Sensus on July 29th, 2014 and subsequently decided that they would recommend to the board that the installed meters be removed.

My question, Mr. Speaker, is for the Premier: why does his version of events differ so much from the facts that are stated in the PricewaterhouseCoopers report?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, cabinet made the decision without any consults, without any advice from SaskPower officials — never mind where they had been, never mind where they had been, never mind what they may have told the board or the meetings they had with Sensus. The deputy leader says that's unbelievable. It is precisely the case, Mr. Speaker. Immediately after the decision was made, we informed the media. We called a scrum. We indicated to the media exactly what was going to be happening. We directed SaskPower to remove the meters.

Now immediately, and I think publicly and privately, SaskPower indicated back to the government, and publicly, that they supported that decision. So the information that my friend's presenting isn't a surprise. Apparently they were coming to the same decision as was the elected members of the government. The fact remains our decision was made as a cabinet, and as the minister responsible, and not with respect to any advice from SaskPower.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, there's a big disconnect between what PricewaterhouseCoopers clearly reports on the actions that were taken at SaskPower and what the Premier and the minister have been claiming. On July 29th, senior officials at SaskPower met with the president of Sensus, and they weren't satisfied with what they heard in that meeting. So the senior officials at SaskPower decided to remove the dangerous smart meters from the homes of 105,000 Saskatchewan families.

We've been told, Mr. Speaker, that SaskPower officials informed the minister of their conclusion and that they were working to pull the board together for a meeting as quickly as possible, but that was proving to be a challenge. So senior officials, Mr. Speaker, told the minister that he could use his prerogative to approve the decision and avoid having to wait for a board meeting. So the minister, Mr. Speaker, hopped in front of the parade and made the announcement.

My question, Mr. Speaker, is to the Premier: was he aware of the true version of events when he was claiming, when he claimed that the minister took bold and decisive action against the will of SaskPower?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I would invite my honourable friend to look at the executive summary for PricewaterhouseCoopers' report with respect to this initiative. And just several paragraphs down, four from the bottom, it reads as follows, we considered . . . This is PwC [PricewaterhouseCoopers] now for the member opposite:

We considered SaskPower MIA procurement activities from May 29, 2009 when the SDR was approved by the board of SaskPower through to July 30, 2014, when the government ordered SaskPower to remove the smart meters that had been installed.

Keep reading, I would say to the hon. member.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the Premier to look at the facts laid out clearly by the board in the report, Mr. Speaker. It is more than passing strange, Mr. Speaker, that senior officials at SaskPower meet with the president of Sensus. They're going to pull the meters off the homes. And then suddenly, magically, Mr. Speaker, the minister pops in front of the parade and claims that they're pulling the meters off against the will, Mr. Speaker, of SaskPower.

Let's be clear what has been happening here. This is a government, Mr. Speaker, that knowingly put Saskatchewan families at risk. This is a government that has not been transparent with all the facts, a government that has been pretending to take decisive and bold action against the will of SaskPower. But PricewaterhouseCoopers' report is very clear: officials, Mr. Speaker, made the decision to remove the meters, not the minister that has been answering. So PricewaterhouseCoopers has taken away, Mr. Speaker, the Premier's only line of defence of the Minister Responsible for SaskPower.

My question to the Premier: will he fire the Minister of SaskPower? And, Mr. Speaker, will he take the minister to task for not being forthcoming about when he knew, Mr. Speaker, and what he knew?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — I didn't think my hon. friend could actually take to new heights his penchant for actually not telling the whole story in the House.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to quote from the report now. I am quoting from the report that he is referencing that was tabled:

SaskPower executives advised that they met with the president of Sensus on July 29, 2014 [this is going to be the rest of the story again] and subsequently decided that they would recommend to the board the installed meters be removed. SaskPower advised that they were in the process of holding an ad hoc board meeting when the Government of Saskatchewan ordered the removal of . . . [the] meters . . .

Mr. Speaker, which is exactly what I've said in the House. Mr. Speaker, it's exactly the answers here. It's exactly the case. Then in the subsequent page, Mr. Speaker, it indicates that the board was coming to the same conclusion.

Mr. Speaker, I think we've had just about enough of someone who is an aspirant to the highest office in the province playing fast and loose with the facts and cherry-picking reports. This government made the decision, directed SaskPower to pull the meters. Now they were, might be coming to the same conclusion, which the report verifies, a report that was secretly hidden on the Internet and released publicly, Mr. Speaker, and one that he has access to. No one is going to be asking anyone to get fired. His colleagues, though, may ask him to do a little bit more homework, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, what is offensive to the people of Saskatchewan is the story being spun by this Premier and this Minister Responsible for SaskPower. Mr. Speaker, the report is clear. The report is clear. SaskPower made the decision to remove the meters. This government, Mr. Speaker, claims that it took bold and decisive action, but it was officials from SaskPower, Mr. Speaker, that told members there that the meters were going to be pulled. And suddenly we see a meeting called, Mr. Speaker, where they claim that they pulled it.

Saskatchewan people are not stupid, Mr. Speaker. They can see the chronology of events for themselves. My question, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: when will he do the right thing and take this minister to task for not being forthcoming for what he knows and when he knew it?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, more volume from the hon. member is not going to change the fact that he's forgotten to read essential elements of the report. Mr. Speaker, I'll quote the following from the report:

SaskPower ordered by Government of Saskatchewan to remove smart meters. Announced by Hon. Bill Boyd [I'm quoting, Mr. Speaker], Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Power Corporation. SaskPower advised it was preparing a briefing to its Board to recommend the same measure when this announcement . . . [had already been made — by the minister — public in the province of Saskatchewan.]

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

[14:00]

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, last Thursday the SaskPower minister was asked whether he was concerned that Sensus meters were still being put on homes in Hanley after SaskPower was informed that those very, exact same meters were dangerous to families down in Philadelphia.

The SaskPower minister had no real answer. In fact he basically said he would need to go through the timelines in detail. It's quite shocking that the SaskPower minister still hadn't bothered to properly read the report and review the timelines, if that's the case.

My question is for the Premier: has the Premier taken the time to review the full report, and what does he have to say about the timeline in which meters that were known to be dangerous were being put on the homes of Saskatchewan families?

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

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, yes we've reviewed it, and I would advise the member opposite and the Leader of the Opposition they might want to do the same, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the meters, it was our understanding, through SaskPower officials, that the meters in question in the Philadelphia incidents, none of them caught fire as a result of the meter themselves, that there were other

installation problems and wiring problems that resulted in that. And that's why, subsequently, the SaskPower officials advised the government to continue to proceed with the meter installations.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Here's what Hanley resident Kerry Sheffield told the media:

I just don't know why it took so long to finally figure out there is problems [and] why they didn't do anything sooner . . . It concerns me, I mean, I have two children and the fact that it could have had a fire at any point just scares the . . . [unparliamentary word] out of me.

What does the Premier have to say to people like . . .

The Speaker: — The member knows that you cannot do indirectly what you can't do directly, so I would caution the member to take his words carefully. I recognize the member.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — What does the Premier have to say to people like Kerry Sheffield, and how can he stand beside the minister when that minister knew about major safety concerns related to the exact smart meters and still allowed them to be put on the homes of families here in Saskatchewan?

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

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, this information is very, very clear. SaskPower was aware of the incidents around the problems that were associated with fires in Philadelphia. They checked into it and found out the information was such that the meters were not responsible for the fires, that there were other problems associated with wiring or installation. As a result of that, SaskPower officials advised the government to continue to proceed with the installation both at the Hanley site — the test site — and further than that. After that of course that's when the problems started to develop.

What we would say to the residents of Hanley and the rest of the province of Saskatchewan, clearly there has been significant problems with this smart meter program, without a doubt. We have certainly taken a number of steps to address that, Mr. Speaker, including the removal of those meters across the province where they have been installed. In addition to that we have sought and received money back from Sensus with respect to this program. In addition to that we have conducted a review which is before all of us in this House.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, as we have seen throughout this debacle, that minister's statements just don't hold water. Kathy Menendez of the Philadelphia Electric Company, PECO, has made it abundantly clear that PECO reached out to SaskPower in August of 2012 to alert them to major safety concerns related to Sensus meters. The minister can dismiss those if he wants, but they canned their program and shelved their relationship with Sensus, Mr. Speaker. But this government just plowed ahead and it kept putting those exact same meters that were catching on fire in Philadelphia

onto homes of hundreds of Saskatchewan people more than two years ago here in Saskatchewan.

How can the Premier defend that? How can the Premier continue to stand by that minister?

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

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the appropriate steps were taken. Safety was paramount with respect to this. After the Hanley test situation was completed, all of the meters were tested to ensure their safety and none of them failed with respect to the safety issues that were later a concern with respect to smart meters here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, it's clear that the steps that were taken were the appropriate steps with respect to this. And we took the advice of officials just as the member opposite advised that he would do under similar circumstances, that he would take the advice of officials and not be the one that's put in the position to make that decision.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, that minister can try to deflect from his responsibility and his negligence all he wants, but the facts speak for themselves, when he had officials go down to Philadelphia because of the fires, Mr. Speaker, and because he was contacted by that very company, they continued to plow ahead here in Saskatchewan putting peoples' lives at risk.

When reporters asked that minister whether he was aware that officials actually went to Philadelphia in 2012 to investigate safety concerns, he said, "I learned just recently." But eight minutes later, just eight minutes later, he let it slip that he had known about the trip before it happened. He reversed his entire answer. He knew more than two years ago. And his excuse for his earlier statement was pathetic. He said, well he didn't know the names of the people that were down there at the time, and he said that's why he said he only recently learned of the trip.

It's just simply not credible, Mr. Speaker. The minister knew a whole lot more than he's been telling us every step of the way. The opposition and the media have been forced to drag it from that minister. To the Premier: how is this acceptable?

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

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, I would say on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan once again, it was a very, very unfortunate set of circumstances that resulted in the fact that the smart meter program was a failure here in Saskatchewan. Clearly that was the case.

But at the time that all of this was unfolding, Mr. Speaker, the best advice that the government was getting from the officials at SaskPower was to proceed with the program. And if you ask the question, should we have asked more questions, given what we know today? Probably yes. However, at the time the information was such, at the time the information was such that we should proceed. And that's exactly what happened, Mr. Speaker.

In the Hanley situation, there were no fires that happened in the Hanley situation. The meters were tested afterwards and proved to be adequate. In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, I would say that we've also contacted the mayor of Hanley, and the mayor of Hanley said they believed that the situation was handled correctly.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, last year I asked that SaskPower minister questions about the smart meter program in committee. The minister never once bothered to identify problems either in the testing phase here in Saskatchewan or with regard to deployment in other jurisdictions.

So my question's for the Premier: doesn't it bother him that the minister made a bold and decisive decision to not reveal any concerns about this government's smart meter program despite being asked about it in committee?

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

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, all through this situation we asked questions of the SaskPower folks when they came in to provide briefing information. They asked and we received information about the situations. They said that they were comfortable with the situations. They felt that the situations had been addressed to the best of their knowledge with respect to this.

Of course now we learn that there was definitely problems. And that's why the government moved as quickly as we did to have these meters removed from the homes of Saskatchewan people, and that's why we sought and received the money back from Sensus with respect to it as well. That's why we also conducted three reviews to see what happens. And the evidence is before all of us, and it is very clear, Mr. Speaker. There were problems. The government acted, and we make no apologies for that.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, when I asked in committee for updates on how the smart meter program was going, the answers I received included "It's going quite well actually." "The project is running according to plan."

Not once did the minister bother to reveal that he was aware of major safety concerns with Sensus smart meters. No, his story was that the project was going well and running according to plan. So again to the Premier: how is it acceptable that the minister knew about major safety concerns but chose not to reveal them?

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

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Of course, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite would know that the SaskPower officials would be sitting right there, right there advising the minister, advising myself with respect to the situation. And when asked, and when asked about the information around these things, they would be

saying, yes there were some problems associated. Those problems have been looked at very, very carefully, Mr. Speaker. Those problems have been looked at very, very carefully. We believe that the situation is such that the meters are safe. There's been some 10 million of these meters have been installed into the United States, and we have had very, very limited number of problems associated with it, Mr. Speaker.

Clearly we made the most appropriate decisions based on the information that was provided by the officials at the meetings.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, the minister's refusal to share relevant information in committee is certainly concerning, but it's especially concerning that the 2012 annual report that the SaskPower minister tabled in this Legislative Assembly is not accurate. That report says that the Hanley field test of the smart meters was successful. Well perhaps this government has a different definition of successful, but when you need to rip out 400 dangerous smart meters and replace them with the original meters, I'm not sure how that can be characterized as a successful field test.

To the Premier: how does it not concern him that the annual report tabled by SaskPower minister wrongly characterizes what really happened in Hanley?

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

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — There were no fires in the Hanley test phase of this installation, no fires whatsoever. There were problems with other parts of the meters with respect to the electronic portion of the calculations and things of that nature, Mr. Speaker, but there were no fires in the Hanley situation. All of those meters were removed, Mr. Speaker. They were all tested and found to be adequate.

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

Ms. Sproule: — This is outrageous. This government knew about smart meter fires in Philadelphia, and in fact it was so afraid it removed 400 meters from homes in Hanley in the fall of 2012. But in committee, the government characterized the field test as going well, and it characterized the project as running according to plan. In the annual report tabled by that minister, he characterized the botched Hanley smart meter experiment as successful. This isn't just a business deal gone bad, Mr. Speaker. This is a case of the government putting the safety of Saskatchewan families at risk and then refusing to be transparent about it.

So again to the Premier: how much more does he need to hear about that minister's incompetence before he will finally make a bold and decisive decision to remove him from cabinet?

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

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, I will say it again to the member opposite: in the Hanley test phase of the smart meter rollout, there were no fires. None. There were problems with

other areas of it. They checked into those problems and indicated that the meters were fine. They subsequently removed the meters and went through tests again and found that those meters were fine, Mr. Speaker.

The situation is very, very clear. The government made, the government took the appropriate steps all the way through this based on the advice that we were given by the SaskPower officials, which is in sharp contrast to what the member opposite said he would do, which was he simply would accept the advice of the SaskPower officials, which is exactly what happened.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, this government has a very strange definition of successful. When you need to rip out 400 dangerous smart meters and replace them with the original meters, I sure wouldn't call that a successful field test.

But I have another specific question for the Premier that he hasn't answered yet: does he think it's acceptable that the minister and his officials said the smart meter program was going well and running according to plan when the minister knew about major problems? Is this acceptable to the Premier, yes or no?

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

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, there were no fires in Hanley. There was no fires in Hanley. There was problems with other areas of the meters such as the actual mechanical electronics board, and those kinds of things, Mr. Speaker. That's exactly what was advised by the SaskPower officials, and that was the advice that the government took with respect to continuing with the installation program across the province which was advised by the officials of SaskPower.

And that's exactly what happened, of course, which is in sharp contrast to the members opposite when they were in government and lost money hand over fist in this province as a result of the fiascos that they were involved in.

[14:15]

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Education.

Supports for Learning

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to talk about a new direction our government is taking to respond to the needs of students in the classroom.

Last Friday we announced that the \$4.6 million previously allocated for the student achievement initiative will be redirected to where it is needed the most, to the classroom. Specifically, \$3.5 million of this funding will be distributed to school divisions based on the supports for learning component of the funding formula. The remaining \$1.1 million will also be rolled out through supports for learning but will be targeted

towards enrolment growth. Supports for learning provides school divisions with the resources to put in place supports for vulnerable students, students with intensive needs, and students whose first language is not English.

We know that teachers are in the best position to identify where this funding can have the most impact on students and teachers in the classroom. That is why we have asked school divisions to work with teachers to determine where supports are needed and ensure that this money is going to support those things, whether that be hiring additional teachers, education assistants, or speech-language pathologists, or investing in technology in the classrooms. We are supporting student success.

We also know that students in Saskatchewan schools have seen an enrolment increase again this year, the fourth consecutive year for growth in our schools. We now have 173,548 students, almost 3,000 students more, which represents an overall increase of 1.74 per cent. More people are calling Saskatchewan home, and the growth means great things for our province, but we recognize that growth can place a strain on our schools. We are listening to students, teachers, and our school divisions about the challenges facing our classrooms, and we have responded with support that will help improve educational outcomes for our students. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to see this action occur. It's something that we, the official opposition New Democrats, have been calling for from the day that that government announced almost \$5 million for standardized testing, Mr. Speaker. We stated that at budget time. We've placed that debate on the floor of the Assembly. We've pushed that government to place those dollars to where they matter, where they make a difference in the lives of students. So this is something that, you know, that we've been calling for and that we're pleased to see.

What we need to recognize though, is that the pressures within classrooms are real and significant. What we need to recognize as well is that, although these dollars are better spent here of course than on wrong-headed standardized testing pursued by that government, there's still big gaps in providing the needed funds to school divisions across Saskatchewan, many school divisions identifying their intensive need supports actually coming in with a shortfall from funding of that government well in excess of this one-time transfer.

So although we're glad to see these dollars that were going to be wasted by this government for province-wide standardized testing diverted to where they matter, we will continue to press to make sure this government finally recognizes and prioritizes education and those growth pressures across the province, recognizing the important needs of students, Mr. Speaker.

And we'll continue to watch. You know, we know that government has spent untold millions towards standardized testing to date. That's wrong-headed. That's not supported, doesn't have evidence behind it. We'll continue to watch that government moving forward to ensure that they don't waste any further dollars of Saskatchewan people's hard-earned money on province-wide standardized testing, of which I know there's a

lot of concern that this government's simply going through a rebranding exercise and that this may emerge at another point in time.

So we'll continue to work with our educational partners across Saskatchewan, the fine teachers of this province, the great school boards, and stand up for students. Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 607 — *The Buy Local Day Act*

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 607, *The Buy Local Day Act* be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Leader of the Opposition that Bill No. 607, *The Buy Local Day Act* be now introduced and read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this bill.

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

Mr. Broten: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Cox: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to order the answers to questions 1 through 25.

The Speaker: — The government has ordered the responses to questions 1 through 25. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Cox: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the answers to questions 26 through 31.

The Speaker: — The Government Whip has tabled responses to questions 26 through 31.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Mr. Tochor, seconded by Mr. Lawrence, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Mr. Wotherspoon.]

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

Mr. Hutchinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is indeed an honour to address this Assembly and a welcome opportunity to offer some comments on the 2014 Speech from the Throne.

Now I want to begin, as other members have so appropriately, with a few well-deserved thank yous. First to my wonderful wife, Jocelyn, whose constant love and support makes everything that I do here in the legislature possible. I'm sure all members feel exactly the same about their spouses and partners.

Next I want to thank Kyle Leonard, my hard-working constituency assistant who runs the Regina South office so efficiently and always with a keen awareness of serving our residents well. He also works very hard, Mr. Speaker, to keep me organized and on task, truly a thankless job if ever there was one . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . For him, absolutely. A special hello to Michelle, his lovely wife, and their beautiful young daughter Emily, one of Saskatchewan's newest, happiest, and no doubt most energetic citizens.

And next, Mr. Speaker, a very sincere thank you to the good people of Regina South, not only for their support through the years, which I deeply appreciate, but also for providing their insight and sharing their concerns on an ongoing basis. As I am fond of saying, Mr. Speaker, the most important homework we elected representatives can do is to listen and learn from the people we are elected to serve.

And finally as other members have done, I offer my heartfelt thanks to our military community and protective services personnel for all they do to keep us safe and to preserve our cherished values and freedoms. Mr. Speaker, as many have noted, these thoughts are especially appropriate at this time of national mourning for our two soldiers killed on their very own soil while carrying out their appointed duties, targets simply because they were wearing their uniforms with pride.

At times like these, Mr. Speaker, I'm reminded of an immigrant family that moved into our neighbourhood a few years ago right in the middle of the civil war in the former Yugoslavia. Over the next few months I took the time to get to know them pretty well and grew to like them a lot. The husband's name was Ennis and he explained to me that he, his wife, and young children were part of the small Muslim minority in Bosnia, caught up in a tragic and brutal war that none of them had wanted.

He told me that every day, along with the other men in his village, he would pick up his AK-47, take up a position behind the barricades, and shoot at the people determined to wipe out his entire community. He said he never knew whether he would be alive at the end of a given day. Said he never knew whether his family would be alive or whether his house would even be standing when he returned home to see them in the evening. So finally he and his wife made the difficult decision that they could no longer stay in their homeland. For their sake and for the sake of their children, they just had to get out.

I can only imagine the courage this would take, fuelled by desperation and raw determination to survive. Somehow they

slipped through enemy lines and eventually found their way to Regina, Saskatchewan. What a difference. Could there possibly be a starker contrast, Mr. Speaker?

Ennis often talked about the harrowing experience of escaping one of modern history's bloodiest and most senseless conflicts. Somehow he preserved a sense of humour throughout it all. He regularly invited me over to his place for conversation, along with roast goat straight off the barbecue and a cup of clear homebrew that could peel the paint off the side of a barn. He was a talker and always had lots to say, Mr. Speaker, but of all the things he told me, I will remember one in particular forever. Hey neighbour, he said, in an accent so thick you could cut it with a knife, maybe it's good there is someone like me to remind you Canadians how lucky you really are. Sure you have problems, he continued. Who doesn't? But no war, no crazy people killing thousands of other people just because they're not the same.

It's the times like these that I recall my Bosnian friend's wise words. He was right after all. We are lucky; indeed we are blessed. And we owe it all to our military personnel and our first responders, who work hard and with great dedication on our behalf each and every day, including of course our Sergeant-at-Arms, Pat Shaw, and his staff.

Mr. Speaker, the amazing national outpouring of shock and grief for our two most recent fallen soldiers, along with compassion and support for their families, is appropriate and it's gratifying, but there are other important ways that we can show our thanks as well. Certainly we should also attend Remembrance Day ceremonies in our own community. Here in Regina, we can do that at the Brandt Centre or outside at the cenotaph downtown in Victoria Park.

And here in Regina as well, we can attend the annual Police and Peace Officers Memorial Day Ceremony. It takes place each year at the legislature on the last Sunday of September. It's a very moving experience honouring RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] members, municipal police officers, and conservation officers as well who had given their lives and their service to us. Participation by the public is most welcome and deeply appreciated. We can show our respect in particular to the RCMP who have their own special ceremony for fallen members, which is important this year as the force struggles to overcome the recent tragedy in New Brunswick.

We can do these things and should do these things, Mr. Speaker, but with the deepest of respect, I ask that we also take time to honour the living, those who continue to serve us, the colleagues of our fallen heroes. What could we do for them, we might ask? Well, Mr. Speaker, it was a very welcome opportunity for MLAs in the House today to applaud the World War II veterans who visited their legislature. We appreciated this gesture. I suggest we say hello also to fellow citizens in uniform when we meet them on the street, and thank them for their service. Buy them a cup of coffee the next time you see them in a restaurant. Become better informed about their world, their perspective on life, and their service by reading up on the topic.

Globe and Mail columnist, Christie Blatchford's compelling book, *Fifteen Days*, about her experience embedded with

Canadian troops in Afghanistan fighting on our behalf is a perfect example. I just finished reading this book. It was a copy provided to me by Ben Walsh, one of our legislature's seasonal staff members whose own son died while serving us in Afghanistan. Mr. Speaker, that made reading the book twice as difficult, but also twice as meaningful.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, we can volunteer our time and talents in support of local military units. It's not hard to do. In Regina we have the Royal Regina Rifles who were among the first Canadian regiments on Juno Beach, June 6, 1944; the 10th Field Artillery unit; and HMCS [Her Majesty's Canadian Ship] *Queen* as well. That's the Royal Canadian Navy's establishment in the Queen City.

Just a few miles away in Moose Jaw is 15 Wing, one of Canada's most important air force bases and home to the NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] flight training program. Moose Jaw is also home to the Saskatchewan Dragoons, a deservedly proud regiment with a very distinguished record stretching back to World War I and storied places like Vimy, Somme, and Passchendaele.

This is the regiment my wife has chosen to serve and into which she will soon be inducted as Saskatchewan's newest honorary lieutenant colonel. I'm very, very proud of what she's doing.

[Applause]

Mr. Hutchinson: — Thank you, members. With those words said, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to turn my attention to the contents of the Throne Speech in itself and offer my insight.

Members of the opposition state that they can't find anything interesting, let alone exciting in this, Mr. Speaker. Well it doesn't look like they read the SaskPower report on smart meters, and it could be that they didn't even read the Throne Speech either.

[14:30]

Mr. Speaker, I happen to have brought an extra copy here today, and I'll be quoting from it. And I'd be delighted to table it if any of the members on the opposite side would actually like to read it. So it's here for them any time they need it, Mr. Speaker.

Just look at the words on the very first page, Mr. Speaker. Here's what it says:

Saskatchewan is strong.

Our province is growing.

There are more people living here than ever before.

More people are choosing to stay in Saskatchewan.

More . . . are coming from other provinces and other countries.

More people are working in Saskatchewan than ever before.

In June, employment hit a record high of 577,000 people working in our province.

In July, unemployment hit a record low of 3.2 per cent — the lowest unemployment rate ever recorded.

In September, Saskatchewan had the lowest unemployment rate and the fastest rate of job creation [also important] anywhere in Canada.

Saskatchewan people are earning more than ever before and they are keeping more of what they earn, thanks to lower taxes.

Our province has a balanced budget, according to the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, and during this session, the government, it's stated, will again demonstrate its commitment to sound financial management by delivering its eighth consecutive balanced budget. Now that's a record of achievement.

Because of the government's commitment to sound financial management, Moody's recently upgraded Saskatchewan's credit rating to AAA, the highest rating possible. Mr. Speaker, not only is that interesting, that is in fact exciting. I'm not sure why members on the opposite side don't see it that way. Maybe they don't like to see us going forward. Absolutely.

Here's an excerpt from page 2:

Saskatchewan's economic star continues to rise.

Since 2007, Saskatchewan's exports have increased by . . . [over 60] per cent, while manufacturing shipments have climbed by more than 50 per cent.

That's good news. That's interesting and it's exciting.

Surging demand for our products has created unprecedented opportunity for workers and businesses, and attracted people from across the country and around the world.

Saskatchewan's population is now at an all-time high of over 1,125,000 people.

[Applause]

Mr. Hutchinson: — That's absolutely worth applauding, no question about it.

"That represents an increase . . ." Yes, the NDP [New Democratic Party] said it was statistically impossible to expect increases like that, and they also said we'd always be a have-not province. They said those things, Mr. Speaker, and they were wrong.

That [increase in population represents] . . . more than 123,000 people in the past seven years — a far cry from the previous seven years [that was when the NDP were in government, Mr. Speaker] when Saskatchewan's population actually declined.

In fact we used to say that our greatest export was our youngest

and brightest people.

Our province remains on track to reach the population target set by . . . [the] government of 1.2 million people in the year 2020, while Statistics Canada has predicted Saskatchewan's population could surpass 1.5 million by 2038.

The NDP may not find the unprecedented growth in Saskatchewan's economy and population and opportunities for their youngsters exciting, but other Saskatchewan people do.

Here's a couple of anecdotes that underlines that, Mr. Speaker. I remember on the doorstep a couple of years ago meeting a young fellow who said, I'm married to a lab technician. She works in one of the hospitals here in Regina for the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region. The work is exciting. She's having a lot of fun, but you know, as rewarding as it is, her dream has always been to be a registered nurse. That's something that we'd love to do, but I just don't see it as possible, he said. It's going to cost a lot of money for tuition and she's going to have to quit her job, her full-time job. We have a mortgage to pay. We have car payments to look after. We have youngsters to support, food to put on the table. I don't know if we're ever going to get there, and there isn't even enough space in the nursing school. So I'm not sure why we're dreaming about this after all.

I remember talking to him a little while later and he said, wow, good things can happen in Saskatchewan. We found out that the Government of Saskatchewan has increased the number of seats available in the nursing education program, and my wife is in. And he also said, we also found out about the graduate retention program which means that she can actually have her tuition reduced by \$20,000 over the next few years if she stays and works in Saskatchewan which is exactly what we plan to do. He said, right now my wife is living the dream. Thanks for doing those things to make all of this possible. Mr. Speaker, that's what we're talking about here.

Another anecdote. Shortly after the election in 2007, I had lunch with a couple of young fellows that were insurance salesmen. The head office for their company was in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and they said, business is great; business is booming. It couldn't be better. But you know what? It wasn't always this way. Just a couple of years ago, prior to the election, they said, our Winnipeg guys phoned us up and said, you know, we've been looking at the figures. You people aren't doing particularly well there in Regina. In fact it's going so badly, we're thinking of closing our Saskatchewan operations and consolidating everything back here in Manitoba. Don't give up just yet, these kids said. Don't make a hasty decision. There is a provincial election coming. The Sask Party might form government and if that happens our fortunes will rise. We'll be doing better. Hang on and see if we aren't right.

Well everything turned out exactly as they had predicted, Mr. Speaker. The Sask Party did win the election. We did form government. And those youngsters now have a great future here in Regina, here in Saskatchewan, in the business of their choice.

Mr. Speaker, as we all know, infrastructure and investments in critical infrastructure will always remain one of the keys to

success both for our economy and for our people's quality of life. As the Throne Speech itself says, "[The] government has made significant progress tackling the province's infrastructure deficit." And what a deficit we were left by members opposite — crumbling highways, schools and hospitals in disrepair, all kinds of essential investments either ignored or deferred and deferred and deferred.

An Hon. Member: — Would that be the schools that they didn't close?

Mr. Hutchinson: — The schools that they didn't close. They closed well over 100 of them. The ones that were left weren't being attended to.

Since 2008 ministries and Crown corporations have spent close to \$16 billion on a wide range of capital projects, including hospitals and highways and schools and power plants and many other things, Mr. Speaker. This year alone the Throne Speech confirms nearly \$3 billion has been committed to renew and expand the province's infrastructure. In fact infrastructure investment is about one and a half times what it used to be. That's the improvement that a Sask Party government has been able to bring to the good people of Saskatchewan.

Now I could talk about the projects all around the province, Mr. Speaker. We don't have time for that today and other members handled that role extremely capably. I'm going to concentrate on what's going on right here in my hometown of Regina. We completed the Rawlco mother baby care centre at RGH [Regina General Hospital], and to give them credit, that was a project started by the previous administration.

A brand new facility for STARS [Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society], the emergency air ambulance service. There's the heliport at the Regina General Hospital and then there's the air base out at the airport. All of that is done. Brand new facilities for Arcola and Douglas Park schools. Structural upgrading of Campbell Collegiate, something that was talked about for years and years but never actually done, Mr. Speaker, completed by the Sask Party government.

Renovation of the former Robert Usher Collegiate for use by the French-speaking students of Monseigneur de Laval high school. Commitment to replace Scott Collegiate. Planning is well under way. Planning under way also for several joint-use schools here in Regina where they are desperately needed because of all the kids that are coming in with their parents into the new Saskatchewan.

New roads serving the Global Transportation Hub now open for business. New overpasses at Pinkie Road and Lewvan Drive where they meet Highway No. 1. We talked for years about that needed overpass to reduce accidents and tragedies at the Lewvan and No. 1 Highway. A lot of talk from members on the other side. We got it done, Mr. Speaker. Planning has also been completed for the Regina east bypass, Saskatchewan's biggest infrastructure project ever.

Hundreds and hundreds of new affordable housing units completed right in my hometown. Brand new student residence under construction at the University of Regina. Mr. Speaker, you can tour it today if you wish. Funding committed to assist

with the construction of Regina's new Mosaic Stadium.

Mr. Speaker, the list goes on and on. Those are some of the highlights.

Mr. Speaker, as many members will know, I used to be a member of the Regina City Council, and one of the things that we talked about was, how are we ever going to repair our crumbling infrastructure? Where will the money come from? What we were looking for was provincial leadership. Well we got it with the Sask Party government.

Municipal governments, as you know, are on the front lines of dealing with opportunities and challenges in our growing province. One of the priorities in government that we have is helping our municipal partners by providing them with a predictable funding source for priority projects in their communities. Mr. Speaker, that was something that we talked about on Regina City Council, as members of other city and town and village councils talked about for years and years and years. In fact a brand new provincial revenue-sharing program for municipalities was something that the folks on the other side of the aisle — may they ever stay there — talked about endlessly. But they never got around to doing it. We did. They never got around to it.

In 2011 we accomplished all of this by tying revenue sharing to our municipal friends to one point of the provincial sales tax or PST. As PST revenues increase, so too does the amount of revenue shared by the province with the municipalities. For example, the 2015-2016 revenue-sharing total will increase by over \$8 million to a record \$265 million and will represent a funding increase of over 100 per cent. That's double, more than double since 2007-2008 fiscal year. It's the envy of municipalities across Canada. Just talk to our folks at SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association]. They travel all over the place. They talk to their FCM [Federation of Canadian Municipalities] partners in other jurisdictions and they can confirm that for you.

This Saskatchewan municipal revenue-sharing program continues to provide record amounts of unconditional funding to communities across the province. Unconditional — it can be used for any priority the municipalities choose themselves. This is one way to ensure that they're stronger and more vibrant than ever. You can find current revenue-sharing totals online any time you wish.

Mr. Speaker, on that topic, in March the federal government announced a new \$53 billion Building Canada Fund, or BCF for short, to support the construction of roads and bridges, public transport, and other infrastructure projects. To help municipalities take advantage of the new BCF program, our government is going to reintroduce and expand the popular Saskatchewan infrastructure growth initiative, known by participants as SIGI. This program provides interest rate subsidies for up to five years on municipal borrowing for infrastructure development. Under the first iteration of SIGI, nearly \$200 million in borrowing was approved and 82 communities benefited from interest rate subsidies.

Here's just one example. I remember talking to the former mayor of Yorkton at this particular time. He said, you know,

we're a growing community. We have new subdivisions that are planned and ready to build, but we're not going to get there if we don't have expanded water service. We have to have treated water available in larger amounts to service all of these new homes and these new subdivisions. SIGI actually allowed them to do this, and he said, it's going to save us \$1 million in interest payments. For a smaller community like Yorkton, he said, this is a really big deal. Thanks for thinking of the program. Thanks for rolling it out. Thanks for being a friend to the good people in Yorkton.

And that is one of 82 similar examples all across this great province, Mr. Speaker.

My government also believes that Saskatchewan First Nations would also benefit from SIGI, so the program will be open to those First Nations in a position to participate. It's great to see the program expanding to include First Nations communities, Mr. Speaker.

Innovation is another topic close to my heart. As the Throne Speech itself says, and here again, Mr. Speaker, I'm simply quoting from the words in the speech itself:

Earlier this month, people from around the world gathered at Boundary Dam Power Station near Estevan [yes, in the great city of Estevan, the member says] as SaskPower opened the first commercial power plant in the world with a fully integrated [commercial-sized] post-combustion carbon capture system.

It's a long title. What it simply means is greenhouse gases that in the past escaped into the atmosphere, contributing to greenhouse gas emissions and warming, global warming, are now going to be captured and stored.

More than 90 per cent of the carbon dioxide emitted at Boundary Dam 3 will be captured and stored for use in enhanced oil recovery operations in mature oil fields. This is the equivalent [Mr. Speaker, this is so important; I hope members are listening: this is the equivalent] of taking more than 250,000 [a quarter of a million] vehicles off Saskatchewan roads each year.

Mr. Speaker, that's not only interesting; it's very, very exciting. I wish we could make the folks on the other side see it that way.

"Boundary Dam 3 strengthens Saskatchewan's reputation [the Throne Speech goes on to say] as a global leader in carbon capture and storage research." Now that's innovation.

[14:45]

"SaskPower has established a global CCS consortium [as it's known] to share knowledge and best practices with other utilities and researchers." And as I mentioned a minute ago, Mr. Speaker, they're coming from all over the world to see what we're doing. Saskatchewan is in the lead once again.

"Construction of Saskatchewan's cyclotron and radioisotope facility at the University of Saskatchewan is in the final stages," the Throne Speech notes. Another great example of innovation on a very, very important file.

The \$25.5 million laboratory is a partnership between the federal government, the province, and the university.

The laboratory will provide Saskatchewan researchers with the resources they require to develop radiopharmaceuticals — [those are] drugs containing radioactive materials.

Very, very important for medical treatments. “These drugs can be used to detect, diagnose and treat diseases such as cancer, Alzheimer’s . . .”

[Inaudible interjection] . . . And the member from Carrot River wants me to mention the Wildcats. So, Mr. Speaker, I’ll do that on his behalf. Thank you. Thank you.

Parkinson’s and multiple sclerosis will also be treated with these radioisotopes. “The laboratory will be managed and operated by the Sylvia Fedoruk Canadian Centre for Nuclear Innovation.” There’s that word again, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I’ve touched on some of the most important parts of the Throne Speech from my personal perspective: innovation, certainly; investments in infrastructure. It’s now time for me to wrap up my comments and I’d like to do that by concluding . . . Oh the members opposite are happy that I’m going to be sitting down. I guess they’re tired of hearing about progress. I guess they’re tired of hearing about Saskatchewan moving ahead. I guess they’re tired of hearing a Throne Speech that is both interesting and exciting . . . There we go. The people of Saskatchewan are indeed tired of the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, I’d like to conclude by returning, if I can for a moment, to some of my first remarks. I’m proud to be part of a government, Mr. Speaker, that honours those who serve our country, a government that introduced the Saskatchewan Scholarship of Honour for returning military personnel and spouses and children of members lost or disabled. We’ll recall that we had, just a moment ago, the great privilege of welcoming some of the most recent recipients in our Assembly. I’m proud to be part of a government that recognizes Canadian Forces cadets with their own special day of recognition, a government that has designated an official military liaison position — a role very capably filled by the MLA from Wood River, himself a distinguished veteran of the Canadian Forces — and, Mr. Speaker, a government that will be making available a special commemorative licence plate to those Canadians who have earned the Silver Cross. All of these things combine to show that Saskatchewan is indeed a province that appreciates service and sacrifice.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I’m proud to be a part of a government that focuses on so many of the things that my Bosnian friend and his family came to Saskatchewan hoping to enjoy — peace and tranquillity, of course, certainly that, but also growth of the population and growth of the provincial economy with the purpose of providing revenues to improve our quality of life. Improvements like more job opportunities for ourselves and our children, important investments in health and education, new highways and hospitals and schools as we have mentioned, more support for our most vulnerable citizens, investments in sport, recreation, and culture, and real innovation that moves our province and our society forward. With this in mind, Mr. Speaker, I think my Bosnian friend would support

this Throne Speech and on behalf of him and his family and everyone like him, I’ll be supporting it as well. Thank you so much.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition Whip.

Mr. Vermette: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, to join in, but before I get into making comments about the Throne Speech and stuff I’d like to . . . And I know we’ll be celebrating Remembrance Day, thinking about my grandfather and his brothers as war vets but, Mr. Speaker, you know, I know the Aboriginal First Nations vets and Métis vets that are out there think about the two families that laid their loved ones to rest, and I know everyone in my constituency that’s First Nations and Métis vets think about them, and I know my family. And everybody’s mentioned that about, you know, we think about the families as they deal with the loss of their loved ones and the honour that they served. So with that, I’d like to join the rest of the colleagues in acknowledging those family that . . . and the soldiers, our two soldiers.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we’re going to get into the Throne Speech response and some of the things that . . . But I’d like to acknowledge a few people in my constituency again. I’d like to take a minute and thank my CA [constituency assistant], Devin Bernatchez, who does an excellent job. He has a couple of individuals come in part-time and work with him. And he does a great job, you know, of servicing the constituency — and not just the Cumberland constituency. We get calls in from all over to deal with situations when ministries, whether it’s provincial, federal, sometimes you have to assist community members because they’re struggling, whether they’re pensioners dealing with family allowance, casework, whether it’s SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance], whether it’s SaskPower issues. There’s so many different issues that are facing — and I’m going to get into that — facing individuals and families in northern Saskatchewan and the Cumberland constituency. I will get into some of those situations.

But I want to acknowledge Devin as a CA, and the staff, for the great job that he does. He’s very dedicated. He cares about people and he wants to make sure he does, I guess, justice to their files and the casework that comes across his desk. And I want to say thank you, Devin, for the great work. And to the two individuals, Doris . . . and we have a number of them that come in and help out and assist.

With that I would like to also acknowledge my wife and family for the support. I know we couldn’t do it without support of our wives, our families, and I just want to acknowledge my wife for the great support she gives me. We also have, you know, an executive. And for the Cumberland executive, I swear that I have the best executive out there.

An Hon. Member: — Don’t swear.

Mr. Vermette: — And I won’t swear out loud. But no, in a very positive way I want to thank my executive for the great work they do in the Cumberland constituency to reach out to the individuals.

So having said that, you know, and acknowledging those individuals, I know my colleagues over here and the staff that’s

in our office in Regina here, the caucus office, they do a great job assisting us and giving us that support.

But having said that, I want to get into some of the challenges. And I'll talk a little bit about the Throne Speech. And I know the government wants to put out its goals, initiatives, legislation, and wants to talk about it, puts it out when they do their Throne Speech. For those that are listening, it's a plan and I guess a vision of where they're going over the next year and where the government's going.

Government may, and I've listened to a lot of different, I guess, stories from that side, they respond and . . . on their side.

But before I get into the meat and potatoes of it, I would like to go back and talk about . . . Some of the members, you know, talk about the NDP and the years. And I want to talk about how proud I am too, and some of our premiers that were NDP and New Democrats, whether it's, you know, Tommy Douglas, and I heard a bunch of negative stuff. I don't have a problem with talking about Tommy Douglas as our premier or, you know, our Premier Roy Romanow, Lorne Calvert. There's leaders that I can stand behind. I'm very proud to say as a party we don't hide away. So we could talk about different years where they came in and everything, right or wrong, you know.

But at the end of the day, I just want to be clear. I've heard from members opposite there are certain times they don't want to talk about certain leaders. In the '80s, they don't mention that. There's a time they just totally forget about. I've listened time and time again. Why don't they want to talk about their party in the '80s? And some of them were a part of that party, and are. And a conservative's a conservative. They're cousins. They don't want to mention about that.

So it's interesting. Just thought I would share that. The '80s, they really forget about everything under the NDP. But enough of that. I don't want to get into the situation. I just want to set the record straight that as a Saskatchewan democrat I'm proud of our leaders and will continue, having said that. You know, the job our leader's doing right now, we have the current leader of Her Majesty's opposition.

You know, but I want to talk about some of the situations back home. And people watched the Throne Speech, looking at government's direction and seeing where government's going to go. And they were hoping to hear very positive things for northern Saskatchewan, for the Cumberland constituency. You know, they wanted to hear about the good things that this government, this government was going to do. And you know, some of the issues that they have raised, and I know whether it's through petitions, whether it's through meetings from our leaders in the North, whether First Nations, Métis, municipal leaders, they share with the ministries and governments the needs, and I know that. You know, and I'm going to get into some of the challenges and some of the press releases.

That New North, I look at New North and some of their challenges and issues that they're facing in northern Saskatchewan. And you know, there's 35 mayors that represent New North and they've put out a press release, and it isn't very positive to government, to the ministry for a reason. There's many challenges that they're facing, and they do. They deal

with the situations every day in their communities, and they try to. And they're proud of the challenges that are there, that they can locally deal with, and they do a great job. You know, we have to give credit to that, to the leadership, and they do a great job taking care of situations.

But sometimes they come up with plans and ideas and challenges, and they want the government to work with them and to hear those challenges. And you know, I'm going to get into some of the quotes from a press release that was put out and some of the challenges that the Chair of New North, you know, has put out. And I'll get into that. We'll talk about that.

I was at a meeting where New North meets, they hold their annual meeting, and I heard some of the concerns from the mayors. There was no . . . I didn't see government MLAs or ministers at the meeting. I was there from 9 o'clock till 4. They didn't show up, Mr. Speaker. So I heard some of the challenges and the frustration, you know.

Government talks about . . . And when a government talks about their direction and what's going on, whether it's roads and safety and, you know, one mayor was very concerned about, you know, a bus accident that happened. And she shared that from the floor, her frustrations. And you know, when you have the safety of our roads that are taken very serious, those leaders, it's not just about travelling when you're going to sports activities, that our schools travel all over the North. It's about making sure tourists . . . You want tourists to travel on our roads. They talked about that. They want to make sure that those tourists come to visit the North. It's beautiful. They have a lot to offer. They want to talk about economics and they want to be a part of that. They talk about the goals that need to be there and they make suggestions. And they're saying, our roads have to be safe. They have to be safe for not only residents, but tourists coming in.

You talk about economics and you talk about industry, the mining area, forestry. If you're going to make sure that you want governments, local governments to be a part of the partnership and be a part of the economy, you have to make sure that our roads are safe, that they're the best roads that individuals could have. And you know, we talk about those challenges but, you know, there's many challenges. I just talk about what was in the meeting going on, and I like what they had to say. They're willing to work with government. They have a role to do and they lobby government, and they say they know that role and they will work hard and they will do what they need to do. So I give them credit for, you know, the leadership they do and the lobbying they do. And you know, some of them are frustrated. And I heard that clearly, that they're frustrated. They're not going to give up. They realize that they have a role to do. The people have asked them to come forward and, you know, raise the issues.

But you know, I look at northern Saskatchewan and I think about some of the health issues. And when I talk about travelling on the roads, a lot of residents have to travel down south for appointments, whether it's travelling for appointments like dialysis, specialists, mental health support, addictions, you know. And some of the families in northern Saskatchewan have had to deal with . . . And I'm talking about health issues. And when you're dealing with situations . . . And I have attended

funerals of the leadership, and talked about this. And this is tough. We talk about the plan, and what's this government's plan for addictions, mental health? You know, we see youth suicide in northern Saskatchewan amongst our Aboriginal people. It's so hard to watch families bury young people that, you know, had so much to offer, and for whatever reason, you know, they ended their life.

And I was listening to one of the chiefs talking and the council, that I went to a service to pay my respect to the family, and you know to hear . . . We have to talk about it. That's what the chief said to the community. They had young siblings that were there. There was about four of them and they were young, probably from 21 to 14 years old. And the community and the leadership talked about, we have to talk about it. No more can we hide it, and we should talk about it and we need to do better. And they're going to do all they can to raise those concerns with government. They're going to do all they can locally, with the communities, with the supports that are there, but it isn't enough.

Government has to do a better job when it comes to youth suicide in this province, but amongst Aboriginal people we see the numbers. They're terrible and, you know, they're alarming, and it's time that we work together in a positive way with the leadership, the government, to try to deal with the situation.

But having said that, you know there are so many issues that face northern Saskatchewan. And I'm not saying that . . . There's many success stories too — many. Good partnerships, opportunities for individuals, and some of the big corporations are doing well, but it's about everyone doing well. And I know our leader talks about that. He wants to make sure Saskatchewan families are doing well. It's not just about individuals, big corporations. It's about all of us doing well. Whether it's my grandchildren, whether it's the members' opposite grandchildren and families, we want everyone to do well. And this province needs to do that, and it has an obligation to do that, and the government has not done that.

[15:00]

And there's challenges and I realize . . . We're going to raise some of those, and my colleagues have raised many issues in this House. And as they've responded to the Throne Speech they have shared some of those challenges that they've heard from residents who ask us to bring those concerns forward. And we do that.

You look at the housing crisis in northern Saskatchewan and there are different areas where, you know, it's not just about affordability. There are those challenges. It's about the overcrowding. There are many challenges facing Saskatchewan residents, and we know that. But I think about the Cumberland constituency that I represent and what I'm hearing when I go to the doors, and you see families. Sometimes they're so overcrowded. You look at the houses and you wonder how can so many people . . . You look at, I guess, to say about the repairs that are much needed. They're so badly needed. They need programs that government can assist with, whether it's federal, provincial. And they talk about that, that they're needing help and they're not getting it.

When you have a government, we were hoping that would change the plan and, you know, maybe some of their goals would be to correct some of the errors that they have made along their way. One of them was scrapping the RPO [rental purchase option] program, rental option purchase program, for many northern residents who use that. This government stopped it.

Some of them saw a vision, when you have so much money, that maybe, you know, they would drop. Instead of charging 30 per cent, they would go down to 25, even 20 per cent for northern residents. When you're isolated and the cost of living is so much higher than anywhere else . . . and rural areas feel some of that impact too. I understand that. The bigger centres are, you know, the urban as well.

But having said that, there's so many challenges when it comes to northern Saskatchewan for some of our families who are trying to work and pay their rents, pay the utilities, utility rates that are out there. You see some of the challenges that, you know, the utility rates that some of the families are paying, the cost of living, whether it's, you know, your power, your heat, the food that you need to provide, the clothing. Everything's going up and the cost, you know, of making ends meet.

And when, you know, and what's alarming is sometimes when those citizens send letters to ministers or they raise their concern sometimes, some of the response they get back, it's pretty sad when government says, well you choose to live there in that area; you can move. Like what kind of answer is that to seniors or anyone else who wants to stay where their community, their family are, and the culture, and they want to stay there and share with their children, you know, the trap lines? So we see the cost of living being a huge issue for many northern families.

But you know, we talked about highways and, you know, the maintenance. People want to travel on safe roads. We've talked a little bit about that.

You know, we talk about our trappers and I want to, you know, I know the trappers have many concerns. I attend many of the trappers' meetings, hear the issues, and sometimes they just want to have an opportunity to make sure government hears what their concerns are and their ideas are and how they want to work with industry to make sure that their trap lines are respected, but to make sure they're moving in a positive way. They realize . . . And you know, I've heard many trappers say, we're not about . . . we don't want to stop industry; we want to work with them. We want to make sure there's jobs for our families, you know, that we can provide.

And there's different ways to do that, who live on traditional, you know, lifestyle. The knowledge, they are the knowledge keepers of the land, the herbs, the medicines that they collect, the way of life. To listen to some of the elders and those that live off the land the way they do, I mean they're so proud and they want to pass it on to their grandchildren, the next generation. They want to make sure. But they're very frustrated that a government that doesn't consult doesn't take the information when industry goes in there and doesn't consult them.

And you talk about government's process, you know, too, and how the Supreme Court has ruled. Clearly this government and all governments, the Crowns, have an obligation to make sure First Nations, Métis, traditional land users, northern individuals who live off the land are consulted and the chiefs and council are consulted and, you know, some of the challenges there. So I was hoping, you know, and I know some are hoping the vision would have been to move in that way, that the government would say, we're going to make sure that we consult with First Nations leaders, Métis leaders, with municipal leaders to make sure that we're doing the right thing.

Now you know, that hasn't happened, and I was hoping that would happen. And again we go to a government, for some reason, that's not doing a great job of that and needs to do a better job. We hope they will take note of that.

You know, and I'm going to go over their list when you talk about the let-it-burn policy. Many of the traditional land users, whether commercial fisherman, talk about the let-it-burn policy, government calls the let-it-burn policy, and that's how they refer to it. They've asked for a review. They've asked for government to sit down with them and consult and hear what they have to say and their input as trappers, as fishermen. And the government chooses to ignore them and not take the advice of them because they're worried about the land and, like I said, the wildlife.

Once you burn an area, whether it's caribou, whether . . . You look at the medicines, the fur that they trap. Once it's burnt and it's burnt out, it takes forever to get it back, and they, you know . . . I've heard story after story, whether it's their cabins, whether where they've been for five, six generations, burns.

So there's so many issues facing them, and I know they share that and they want the government to hear that. They want the government to do a better job when it comes to the let-it-burn policy, when it comes to consulting First Nations, Métis, and the traditional trappers and fishermen. And I can't . . . I have to make sure I express that from their side of it. They want the government to do that, and the government needs to do a better job.

You know, you think about I guess one of the other area, and I think the lack of . . . I was in Creighton at a meeting, and community living was the discussion. We were hoping in this budget . . . Because I've heard many challenges for community living in Creighton area, we were in a meeting. Frustration from parents who have adult children but also many young families who will need a service of, you know, community living, a group home in the Creighton area. They're asking and they're frustrated, and they're asking for help and supports. They thought they were going to get a group home years ago, and it doesn't sound like that's a priority. So that was one goal they were hoping that might be in this government's Throne Speech would be a goal to, you know, achieve that. We'll see. We'll push for that, and maybe government can deal with that.

So when I think about those individuals and residents that need a group home for, you know, individuals, we were hoping community living would work. And they can do that, and that's what they want for their loved ones. And we'll continue to work on that. I know they're not going to give up. And whether it's

more meetings, they're going to do whatever they need to lobby this government to deal with that.

When I think about education in the classroom and more supports that we need, there's so many supports. And individuals were hoping, you know, these goals, vision would have more supports in the classroom for individuals or the teachers, support our teachers. They do a great job, you know, a great job of taking care of our children and giving them a quality education.

And I know we don't . . . And I talked to some of the teachers on Friday to hear some of the . . . They want to feel respected. They want to feel that they have input. They want to feel like government's hearing what they have, and that they're valued. And they want to make sure that . . . They put a lot of time in and years into an education. They should be compensated properly. That's all they ask for sometimes. They're asking to be compensated fairly. And that's not much to ask when you've put the years that they've put in for their education and getting the degree that they get.

I think about jobs, and many jobs, First Nations, we talk about that. Our youngest population of young people under the age of 25 is our First Nations. And an opportunity at, and a fair education they want. We know that there's a problem with that, with the funding, federal-provincial. I think government, provincial government, could have an obligation there. Let's hope the government will move.

And I mean I've seen where they've put out certain photo ops, and they do very little when it comes to that. True commitment would be great to help them with the funding. And when you look at our funding for First Nations students — at 6,500 versus what the province gets — there are those issues that need to be dealt with and First Nations, through education but then post-secondary and making sure that they have opportunity to jobs. And a lot of them live on First Nations communities, so what type of jobs do they have? Well needs to be done.

You know, you think about the environment, and I think about the environment, and you look at protecting our waterways. I hear some of the elders and our community leaders, they're very concerned about protecting the waterways. And I've been to some of the . . . The First Nations have held, you know, a conference on protecting the waterways, and they've been great. And what they worry about is pollution and the way of life, the fish, whether it's commercial fishing that they do, whether they . . . for sustenance. They talk about an industry and they want it protected. The animals drink the water. We need the water to survive. And they're very concerned about it, and you hear those challenges. You know, where do we go?

So there are those issues and, you know, we see in this Throne Speech with the environment, and government has an obligation I think to meet with our First Nations and to talk to some of our elders. Elders have the knowledge. They're the keepers of the land, the trappers are. And I would advise government to do that. And government hasn't done that enough, and maybe it's time that the government does that, you know.

I think about many of the other issues that are facing northern Saskatchewan, and I talked about the mayors and infrastructure

needs. They expressed that they need more supports. Yes they're getting, you know, funding from government, but we see record revenue this government is having. Municipalities want their share.

They have challenges, infrastructure, but if they have to, you know, raise their utility rates for many of the residents that they're supposed to provide the service for . . . And I talked about whether it's telephone, whether it's power, energy. There's many challenges facing . . . you know, the cost of living. And many families are feeling the brunt of that. And they hear the government talk about how great everything is and everything's going good. And yes, you know, in some areas it probably is and that's great, but there are many that are suffering. Because of the economy, the way it is and the cost of living, they're just struggling, whether it's rents . . . And I've talked about that. But that is many Saskatchewan residents in the Cumberland constituency are having those challenges.

So you know, I think about the press release that the leadership, New North, put out. And they were just talking about a few issues that they're talking about. They talked about many of the issues, whether it's roads, whatever issues their infrastructure . . . Whatever issues they raised, they want government to take it serious, and they're going to do all they can do. And I commend them that they're going to lobby, you know. They'll work with government, and I've said that.

But you know, when I think about Mayor Jolibois, you know, from La Loche . . . And I want to say this quote from this press release from her. "We want to send a clear message to government. We will not be treated as second-class citizens on this or any other issue," she said. She wanted to make that . . . Now that's very clear. She wants the government to realize they don't want to be treated like second-class citizens in northern Saskatchewan.

We see the resources coming out, and that's good. We hope the province does well. They want everyone to do good economically, but they also want to make sure that they're treated and their issues are treated serious from government. And when they meet . . . And not just a meeting and you have a meeting and you're not taken serious. They're frustrated, some of the leaders, and they're going to do whatever they need to do to get the government's attention. I commend them on that. You know, it's time for some action, and they're going to hold the government to account.

And the government can go around and, you know, say what it is and put up the billboards and spin it the way they want. There are challenges facing northern Saskatchewan that government has an obligation to do, and I'm hoping, you know, I'm hoping that this government will take those challenges serious, will do what's needed and hear the concerns that many Saskatchewan families are facing in northern Saskatchewan. I think about the Cumberland, you know. I know that I can go on. There's many issues that they have raised. You know, we've got a short amount of time to share this.

[15:15]

But I'm going to get a little bit into a quote that I want to make sure that people understand. And when we talk about record

revenue, for years this government has enjoyed record revenue. And they talk about whether it's inherited, i.e. you hear it back and forth.

It doesn't matter, doesn't matter to families back home who are trying to put clothes on their kids, who are trying to pay the rent, seniors who are trying to cost, you know, the medications that they need. It doesn't matter about that. They don't care about the comments that we make back and forth, who did what. They're the ones struggling back home. They're the ones struggling with their families to make them eat . . . to put food on the table to provide for their loved ones. They're the ones that are really struggling.

When you look at those seniors, you look at individuals. You know, we talk about poverty and the challenges that many families face. Yes there are some families doing really good, and we're happy for them. We are. You know, good. But there are many families left behind by this government's decision not to deal with some of the situations.

It isn't that they didn't have the resources and the money. They do. I've talked about that. They have a record revenue. It's amazing. I hear people talking. What are they doing with all the money? It's amazing when you hear people saying, what are they . . . questioning government. What do they do with all the money?

Well we've seen some of the things that are going on, whether it's smart meters . . . We've seen the lean process. You look at the lean. They spent \$40 million on the lean. At the end of the day you look at those dollars and think, let's let the northern people and the people in our province spend that money. Let's give them suggestions instead of wasting it, the government wasting it. Let's get the good suggestions in so this government will do what they need to do with the peoples' dollars. It's the taxpayers' dollars, taxpayers' dollars. And they want government to do the right thing with them, not to waste them. And when they start wasting them and they . . . Trust me, the people of this province will send a message.

And the government can sit there and make all the comments they want. They can say what they want. When the people of Saskatchewan will have enough, they'll send a message. And I hear them. They always heckle about that. That's why there's only nine over here. Well you keep doing what you're doing with your lean, with your smart meters, and you will get a message by the people of this province. Trust me, you will. You will get a message.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to, for the record, you know, say this. Mr. Speaker, this government has record revenue for seven years. It is time that they govern all the province and not pick winners and losers. And this is why I mentioned all the different things, Mr. Deputy Speaker, why I will not be supporting the motion, the throne . . . And I will be supporting the amendment.

So at this time, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to share a little bit about the Throne Speech and some of the concerns that face northern Saskatchewan. Thank you.

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, it's truly an honour to stand in this House on my feet and speak to the Speech from the Throne which is called "Keeping Saskatchewan Strong" because I think it's important that we all work together to do so, and I think it's important to all members of the House that we keep our province strong and we ensure that it is a great place for the Saskatchewan people.

Before I begin, Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I didn't thank my constituency assistant Susan Dunne. She has been with me now for several years, and she does an awesome job in looking after the front back home. And she treats all constituents of every stripe with a great deal of respect and helps out everyone that she possibly can.

I also want to thank my ministerial staff, both the staff that I had at the beginning of the year which was in the office of Crown Investments Corporation, SLGA [Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority] and SGI. They were exceptional staff, as is the staff I have now that I have returned to Social Services. And without them, quite frankly we couldn't do our jobs. So I want to thank all of those individuals. They are truly . . . I'm truly a very lucky minister to have such supportive staff.

Lastly I want to thank my partner. I recently, this summer, got engaged to a very tolerant man, someone that I've known most of my life. And I want to thank him so very much for putting up with me and the scheduling and all of the lack of time, quite frankly, that we can have together because ministerial duties do take a lot of time. And sometimes you have to set your personal life aside, and he is a very, very patient man that way.

So when I look at the Speech from the Throne — one that I'm very, very proud of that was read here in this House by the Lieutenant Governor — I think we all recognize that Saskatchewan is indeed a very strong province. We have sort of shed those days of past where we were a have-not province, where basically people were apologizing they were from Saskatchewan and they didn't want to admit or come back home. We have now people coming back home. We're very, very proud to say that we're from Saskatchewan. There's no more comments of, the last person who leaves the province please turn off the lights.

We have become extremely strong. We're among the lowest in our unemployment rates. We're among the highest in our average income. We have record-high export sales. And, Mr. Speaker, we have the highest population that we have ever seen before in this province of more than 1.125 million people. Mr. Speaker, that is largely thanks to the people of our province. They are extremely diligent people. They work very hard, and there is a lot of pride within our province. So we want to thank the people of our province.

But I also want to put on record a quote of a provincial leader, one that I think everybody in this House knows. And what that leader had to say was, the acid test, and I quote, of any government: is this population growing, or is it decreasing in its population? Are we getting people to come here because there are jobs and hope and opportunity for the future, or have we

faced massive jobs lost, massive outflow and exodus of the people of Saskatchewan?

I just want to just point out the beginning of that quote, the acid test of any government, and then say the person that said that, Mr. Speaker, was Roy Romanow. And if that indeed is the NDP acid test of any government, then I think we've passed that test and they failed miserably in the years that they were in government.

From 1991 to 2007, in the 16 years that we had an NDP government, Saskatchewan population dropped by 2,500 people. Our population has been growing year over year under this government, and we are setting record highs again and again. We were bold enough to set a goal of population growth, one that the NDP mocked at the time. And now they have gone silent on that fact.

As I said, largely a lot of our success is largely due to the people of Saskatchewan and the good work that they do. But one area that is a government responsibility is fiscal management of our dollars, of the government dollars. As the member from Cumberland pointed out, these are taxpayer dollars, and fiscal management is extremely important.

And, Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to say that under our government we have now had two major credit rating agencies, both Moody's and Standard & Poor's, give us an AAA credit rating, which is the highest credit rating that you can receive and the only time in the history of this province that two major credit rating agencies have given us that AAA rating. Moody's made that announcement, Mr. Speaker, in September of this year. And in its release the agency said its AAA rating, and I quote, ". . . reflects the province's fiscal discipline and sustained low debt levels which underscores prudent financial management practices."

Now if you would have listened to the speakers previously, the members from the NDP who keep saying that, you know, there's lots and lots and lots of money. Just spend, spend, spend, spend, spend, spend because we have all these challenges. And I agree, Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of challenges and we need to set priorities. But one of our priorities, Mr. Speaker, is to continue with spending with responsibility. We need to have steps forward as we can afford to. We need to do it within a balanced budget.

Mr. Speaker, when I was the minister of CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan], I had the privilege of going to Toronto and having meetings with a number of investment bankers. And my question to them was, when you look at our province and you look at loaning money to the province for different initiatives or whatever, what is it that you look for? What kind of sets our interest rates or availability to different investment funds? And I was told by each and every bank that I went to that there was three main things that they looked for, and one of them was a diverse revenue stream. And, Mr. Speaker, we have that in our province. We have oil, gas, potash, and agriculture.

I don't whether the Leader of the Opposition, the NDP, realize that because I know although he has never ever given a plan of how he would move our province forward or even keep it

strong for that matter, he keeps talking about more eggs and more baskets. We have a number of baskets with eggs in them, Mr. Speaker. So it would be very interesting for him to actually elaborate on what other eggs and baskets he's interested in.

The second thing that they said that they were looking for is, are you paying down debt or are you accumulating further debt. And again they acknowledged that our province has written down the debt by over 40 per cent in our core operating funding. And, Mr. Speaker, people are noticing, investors are noticing, and investment creditors are noticing that that debt load is coming down. And again that hasn't happened for some time within our province.

And lastly, Mr. Speaker, what they're looking for is, are you balancing your budget. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud to say that year over year we have balanced our budget. There's been some tough decisions. There are challenges. There are always more needs out there. There's always more work that needs to be done, but we're still going forward with a number of programs, and we'll continue to prioritize. But the bottom line, Mr. Speaker, we need to balance that budget both in the core operating and in the summary financials. And we are going to continue to do so.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have a growing economy, which is a significant contrast to the years of the NDP where we had a declining economy. And what we do with those resources and the decisions that we make going forward is what will keep Saskatchewan strong. There's a lot of benefits to growth, Mr. Speaker, as opposed to the cost and the loss of decline that we had under the NDP.

You know, if we can continue to grow and to spend wisely, to spend responsibly, then we'll be able to do things such as what we've done now over the last seven years. We'll be able to build more schools instead of closing them. We'll be able to increase the funding for health care. We'll be able to have more doctors and more nurses. We'll be able to set targets. We'll be able to meet those targets, unlike what happened in the past NDP years.

We'll be able to reduce surgical wait times which was not something, again wasn't a goal that was set by the previous government. We were able to set that goal, and we were able to meet it in many cases.

A growing economy means that there's more money for spending on post-secondary institutions. There's record funding going to our universities, to our technical schools, Mr. Speaker. It means there's more money for highways which was neglected for far too long. It means that we can have more money for municipal revenue sharing. And the list goes on and on, Mr. Speaker, on where the money's gone.

I know the previous speaker from Cumberland said, you know, people are asking where's the money going. And here's the list, Mr. Speaker. He only needs to open the books and take a look and see the number of areas that our government has prioritized and where the money has gone.

In most of those areas, there is more work that needs to be done. You can always cite that case, that highway, that person, that

their needs haven't been totally met yet. But, Mr. Speaker, I'll go back again and again; we will do so within a balanced budget.

We need to prioritize. We need to be mindful of where the money is going, and we need to have money also to address catastrophic situations such as the flooding that we've had over the last couple of years. Where does the money go? Well quite frankly our government stepped up and helped a lot of communities to address their flooding challenges.

The bottom line is we're taking steps forward. We are not having the situation that the previous government had, where they were planning for a student population decline, where they basically were not spending even a fraction of the amount of money that should be spent on our highways, and they were just allowing them to crumble. We are not sitting in a situation where we just sort of hid and didn't set any goals or priorities within health care and allowed nurses and doctors to leave.

[15:30]

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to address specifics within my own ministry because I think in the Ministry of Social Services, and Housing, we have taken a number of steps forward, knowing that there is always more that needs to be done. But we're working within a balanced budget.

And I'm going to start just by talking about the housing portfolio. I remember well sitting in opposition, and we were running into basically a crisis in housing, Mr. Speaker. The vacancy rates in our major centres was becoming less and less and had fallen, quite frankly, in some of our major cities to less than 1 per cent. And it was very interesting how the NDP handled it. And the Social Services critic, the member from Saskatoon Centre was sitting at the cabinet table at that time when the housing situation was becoming more and more problematic. And so they struck a task force, Mr. Speaker. They struck a task force of cabinet ministers. There was Judy Junor, Kevin Yates, and Frank Quennell. And they went off and they had invitational consultations and they had a report, Mr. Speaker.

Now I know the NDP like to cry out of transparency and open reports, but nobody saw that report other than the NDP cabinet table. And they never made it public. They never allowed anyone else to see it, and nor did they act on it in any way until the very, very final hour before the 2007 election.

And it was kind of interesting because I remember the news article at that time, and it says, and I quote, Mr. Speaker, "The NDP cabinet awoke from its slumber this week to discover a housing crisis in Saskatoon." And it went on to say, and I quote again, "This is crisis management in the Land of Nod." And that's indeed what the NDP's priorities were at that time and how they reacted to the crisis in housing.

Well, Mr. Speaker, they lost that election. And when we formed government, we realized that housing was a priority that needed to be addressed and very, very quickly. So I'm very proud to say that our government has seen housing starts that have been more and more each and every year. We've contributed to a number of housing builds ourselves as government, as well as

we have implemented a number of programs to partner with both municipalities and the developers.

Now I know that the members opposite have some issues with working with private industry. They find that a problem. But quite frankly, private industry has stepped up to the plate in a big way. They have come forward; they are building houses, Mr. Speaker. They are building houses within the continuum of just not high-end but also moderate-income housing. And, Mr. Speaker, they're building, more than ever before, rental housing. And that has significantly changed the housing climate that we have seen in our province for quite some time.

Mr. Speaker, we have invested \$475 million since 2007 to develop over 8,300 units within our province. We have invested 114 million to repairs and upgrades to the existing housing. So that is 603 projects in 206 communities. We have seen, as I've said year over year — and 2013 alone was 41 per cent higher in our housing starts than the 10-year average— and we have seen multi-unit rental starts since 2007 increase by 560 per cent higher than the last seven years of the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, that's astounding of how well these programs that we've implemented have worked, and how industry and municipalities have partnered with us, which is hugely why they have worked, Mr. Speaker.

We introduced Headstart on a Home, which has . . . We're seeing 1,329 homes are either complete or under construction under that program. We set a goal of 1,000 new homes. We've surpassed that, and we're sure we're going to surpass 1,500 as well.

What does that mean? Well that means, Mr. Speaker, that the vacancy rates that were falling under 1 per cent when the NDP were in government are now on average across our province 3.3 per cent, which is considered a much healthier market. So the programs are working. We're working in partnership with industry and municipalities, and that has been a priority of our government. What does it mean to wait-lists quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, for our major cities? It means that since 2012, Moose Jaw's wait-list for social housing is down 81 per cent, Saskatoon's is down 63 per cent, Regina's is down 58 per cent, and Prince Albert's is down 16 per cent. Mr. Speaker, that's a priority of our government. That is where some of our money is going.

We also have, Mr. Speaker, the most vulnerable, the citizens who for whatever reason can't afford a house. They are struggling with the day-to-day . . . It may be addictions. It may be mental illness. And, Mr. Speaker, what we have done for those individuals to bridge them, to hopefully get help to them in the meantime? We have increased our shelter spaces by 101 per cent, Mr. Speaker, since the days of the NDP.

We're no longer using, massively using hotel rooms as those emergency shelters, Mr. Speaker. We are establishing with our great community-based organizations so that maybe we can initiate the community's support and help them perhaps overcome the challenges that they are facing. And, Mr. Speaker, I have no doubt when Health has completed their consultation process for a mental illness and drug addictions strategy, there will be other suggestions about what more we can do to help

those that are most vulnerable.

Mr. Speaker, since the NDP were in power, hotel use has dropped by 65 per cent. That's largely because of the initiatives that we have undertaken as a government. So the member from Cumberland should know that that is where some of our money is going.

Mr. Speaker, disabilities is another area of responsibility that I have, and when I was Social Services . . . In 2007 shortly after we formed government, I was minister of Social Services at that time, and I was absolutely appalled at how that file had been neglected over the years of the NDP. They had at the time — and I know there has been some dispute over this 440 wait-list — but it was a moment in time, there was 440 individuals who were waiting for supports, either housing supports or program supports or both, that basically were just on a wait-list and ignored. And I know one individual that I met at the time, she was a woman that was in her 80s and she was supporting her adult daughter. And she was very distressed because she knew that she . . . The whole task was becoming extremely overwhelming and she wasn't sure how many more years she could look after her daughter. So she was one of those individuals that quite frankly was helped, and there were many more, when we decided that we were going to eliminate that 440 wait-list. And we have done so for almost all of the individuals on that list.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have also increased the supports for other individuals that have emerged into the situation where they need help. Either they are families that have moved to our province that have an adult child that has disabilities or else they are individuals that have aged out of the education system.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud to be of a government, be part of that government that has decided this is a priority, that we need to make individuals with disabilities our priority and that we need to do a lot more to help support them. So, Mr. Speaker, when the NDP ask where did the money go, that's where the money's going, Mr. Speaker. It's for individuals and families with disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, we introduced the SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability] program. I was minister at the time. And the NDP had no problem, even though individuals with disabilities were asking to please be taken off the social assistance program. That was a stigma involved with it. They wanted more dignity, and that's what we did, Mr. Speaker. We set up their own income support program and we have enhanced that program so that they can maintain more of their earnings if they have a part-time job than in other programs. So, Mr. Speaker, that is where our government is spending our money.

The other area of responsibility I have, Mr. Speaker, is in child and family services. Again when I was minister the first term or when we first formed government in 2007, we had a very, very sad situation in our province. Between 2000 and 2007 the caseloads of children coming into care had grown by 53 per cent and the NDP again didn't seem to know that there was a bit of a crisis going on. And there was a report put out by the then children's advocate called *A Breach of Trust*. I remember that report. I remember it well. I had to do a lot of media interviews

on it. And it was a report of situations that was in the child welfare system while the NDP were in power.

And, Mr. Speaker, if you can believe it, there was a foster home that had 21 children in their care. Mr. Speaker, that's not acceptable and there was a lot of work that needed to be done on this file. There's a lot more work that still needs to be done, but I'm very happy to say that our government has increased funding to the child and family services by 113 million despite the fact that we are now seeing a decline of children of care — which is unheard of across our country — and that decline is due to the work that our government has put in in finding family members that can help take these children that come into care, and putting a lot more effort into that. We are putting more effort in supporting families before they go into crisis. And, Mr. Speaker, we have now established a number of supported group homes for our young teenage children so that they don't necessarily have to come in and crowd our foster homes. And quite frankly, a lot of our youth prefer that setting because they don't like the structure of a foster home. So it isn't right for all situations but it is right for many.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I'd love if the members opposite could tell me how much funding when they were government that they gave to Street Culture right here in Regina. None. And, Mr. Speaker, Egadz is an organization that is doing just yeoman's work for us in Saskatoon, and it would be interesting if the NDP would answer to how much funding they gave that organization. And it wasn't much, Mr. Speaker.

We've invested a lot more money into our child and family services. I'm quite proud of it. So when the member opposite asks where's the money going, Mr. Speaker, that's where it's going. And as the resources are available, I'm sure more money will go in that direction because that's a priority of our government.

We've been able to reduce the overcrowding in foster homes by a 45 per cent reduction, which is significant. We have fewer children in our care, which is significant. And now, quite frankly, a lot of our homes that do have more than the recommended four children, they are sibling groups. And I will defend that, Mr. Speaker, that if we can possibly keep sibling groups together, we will try to do so.

So, Mr. Speaker, the last area of responsibility that I have is income assistance, and I know the NDP were calling on a poverty reduction strategy. And I'm sure they never had one, nor did they have a plan for one but they feel our government should have one. And we agree, quite frankly. We are moving again in the right direction. There's been a number of steps that we have made as a government to help reduce dependency within our province, and some of those initiatives are working. I'm very, very proud to say that we have the second-lowest income dependency rate in Canada and as a percentage of population, since the NDP were government. They were at 5.7 per cent of population were dependent, and today we are at 4.9. So we are going in the right direction, Mr. Speaker, but we recognize that more needs to be done, and we're quite frankly ready and willing to start that work along with the individuals and groups that work in the area of poverty.

We have 23,000 less people living with low incomes than when

the NDP were in power, and we have 8,000 fewer children living in low-income families than we were under the NDP. And I think that some of those reduction in poverty incidences is due to programs. We've done some great program increases in education, both in providing child care spaces, in expanding our pre-kindergarten program. We have definitely put a more identified focus on First Nations education and graduation rates. We've greatly expanded adult basic education, and the list goes on and on.

[15:45]

We've expanded our supports for seniors. We have tripled the seniors' income plan. The NDP just allowed it to languish year over year over year, never ever increased it. We have tripled where it was during the days of the NDP. We have put in additional supports for families such as the active families benefit. We have eliminated the provincial tax on children's clothing. We introduced the reduced drug program.

Mr. Speaker, we have looked at areas where we can help the most vulnerable and introduced the COR [centre of responsibility] and Hub model, something which is being watched very carefully in other provinces in Canada because it is showing reduced rates of crime and health issues and other things that is a problem for these most vulnerable individuals.

Mr. Speaker, we have the first ever in Canada, a social impact bond called Sweet Dreams in Saskatoon which is supporting single moms to help them give them a hand up. Mr. Speaker, we have, the first time in decades, built the first transition home for women who are living with domestic violence.

Mr. Speaker, that's what we're doing with the money that we have. And we recognize more needs to be done, so I'm looking forward to working with the stakeholders and the individuals that have done a lot of work already in the area of poverty to see where there are gaps, see what more we can do. So I want to thank them for the work they've done, and I look forward to our continuing working together.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that I have identified a number of areas — and there's many, many more — where our government has prioritized, and where we're spending our money, and how we've moved this province forward with the individuals and all of the leaders that we have in our province. Because they definitely are working with us in supporting those initiatives, Mr. Speaker.

And so now we need to continue to work together and keep our province strong. With that, Mr. Speaker, I support the motion and I will not support the amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford.

Mr. Doke: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed an honour to be able to speak to the Speech from the Throne that was delivered on this, the opening fourth session of the twenty-seventh legislature. It's unfortunate we don't have more members from the opposition here to hear this riveting speech, but I'll carry on anyway.

Mr. Speaker, in light of the recent attacks, I want to offer our thoughts and prayers to those in Quebec and Ottawa that have been affected by cowardly acts of terror. It is during moments like these that we are reminded of the bravery and sacrifice to all those who serve in uniform to protect Canadians and our institutions.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to assure the people of Saskatchewan that our government, the RCMP, and the brave men and women in uniform are continuing to work in keeping Saskatchewan people safe. I would also like to thank our Sergeant-at-Arms and his security crew for the excellent job they do, along with the rest of the legislative staff in this magnificent building.

Mr. Speaker, before I get into the Throne Speech, I would like to recognize some very important people in the Cut Knife-Turtleford constituency. Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to recognize my office staff. Cheryl Hume is my constituency assistant, and Maureen Paron is our casual assistant. These people are dedicated and very sincere in their everyday duties. They keep the office very organized and, more importantly, they keep me organized.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to thank my wife, Valerie, for her support and keeping the home front intact. Without her commitment I would not be able to do this job. She is my wife, but truly my best friend.

Mr. Speaker, June employment hit a record high of 577,000 people working in our province. Saskatchewan's population is now at an all-time high of over 1.125 million people. That represents an increase of more than 123,000 people in the past seven years, a far cry from the previous seven years when Saskatchewan's population actually was declining.

Mr. Speaker, our province remains on track to reach the population target set by our government of 1.2 million by 2020, while Statistics Canada has predicted Saskatchewan's population could surpass 1.5 million by 2038.

Mr. Speaker, in July unemployment hit a record low of 3.2 per cent, the lowest unemployment ever recorded. In September Saskatchewan had the lowest unemployment rate and the fastest rate of job creation anywhere in Canada. Saskatchewan people are earning more than ever before and they are keeping more of what they earn, thanks to lower taxes.

Mr. Speaker, our province has a balanced budget. During this session our government will again demonstrate its commitment to sound financial management by delivering its eighth consecutive balanced budget because of our cabinet and treasury board's commitment to sound financial management.

Mr. Speaker, Moody's recently upgraded Saskatchewan's credit rating to a AAA, their highest possible rating. In providing the upgrade, Moody's said Saskatchewan's AAA rating "reflects the province's fiscal discipline and sustained low debt levels, which underscores prudent financial management practices." Mr. Speaker, this Finance minister knows how to stretch a buck.

Since 2007 Saskatchewan's exports have increased by 63 per cent while manufacturing shipments have climbed by more than 50 per cent. Mr. Speaker, our government will not stick its head

in the sand. To further support our exporters, our government will maintain its emphasis on international engagement, particularly in Asia, the fastest growing region in the world. Our government will continue to support STEP [Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership], which carried out 42 trade missions to 27 countries in 2013. And the comprehensive European trade agreement, CETA [Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement] will open many new markets for Saskatchewan exports.

Mr. Speaker, this unprecedented growth requires a skilled labour force. To address this situation, our government has invested heavily in adult basic education services and is working to eliminate the wait-list for adult education.

Mr. Speaker, in the upcoming fiscal year, we will increase the number of training seats by 775, eliminating the 2012 wait-list and bringing the total number of seats to 9,355, an increase of nearly 60 per cent since 2007. Also this government will boost the number of apprenticeship seats by 300, bringing the total number of seats to 7,000, an 86 per cent increase since 2007.

Mr. Speaker, I recently travelled to Minot, North Dakota, and visited Senator Randy Burckhard. He was keenly interested, like many others from around the world, on Boundary dam power station near Estevan as SaskPower opened the first commercial power plant in the world with a fully integrated post-combustion carbon capture system. More than 90 per cent of the carbon dioxide emitted at Boundary dam 3 will be captured and stored for use in enhanced oil recovery operations in mature oil fields. This is the equivalent of taking more than 250,000 vehicles off Saskatchewan roads each year, and was developed right here in Saskatchewan under this government.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take some time to talk about Cut Knife-Turtleford constituency — the constituency located between two thriving cities, The Battlefords and Lloydminster. With a cold, wet spring and a long harvest season, crops were better than average, and with prices starting to increase, it should be another successful year. Cattle prices are high and ranchers are very happy.

Mr. Speaker, almost all towns have new businesses and population growth. There is a positive attitude wherever you go. New cars and trucks, boats, RVs, [recreational vehicle], and many new pieces of farm equipment can be seen around the countryside. Almost all farmers now have a semi or a B-train for hauling grain. There are welding rigs, drilling rigs, flush-bys, service rigs, coil tubing rigs, and many other pieces of equipment needed in the oil and gas sector.

Mr. Speaker, Husky Energy is developing three new thermal oil plants in the Vawn, Edam area, Rush Lake north of Paynton, and many others in the planning stage according to President Asim Ghosh. Husky will spend over \$1 billion in the upcoming years with a 10-year plan of thermal injection plants.

Mr. Speaker, Serafina oil is also building a plant at Vawn and one on the drawing board for the Meota area. There will be over 400 workers needed at these sites. There is also a new loading dock at Lashburn developed by Altex in the RM [rural municipality] of Wilton which will ramp up and load close to 350 oil cars per day within the next year.

Mr. Speaker, a new 24-unit assisted living complex has been built in Edam. A full complement of physicians in Turtleford and the CEC [collaborative emergency centre] is operating very well in Maidstone along with a full complement of physicians.

Mr. Speaker, Meota, Edam, Turtleford, Maidstone, Lashburn, Cut Knife, and Neilburg are all developing new residential and commercial lots. Restaurants and all service type businesses are thriving. The attitude is great. There are good jobs and our kids are staying in the province.

Mr. Speaker, last week when I travelled from my home in the resort village of Metinota to Maidstone through Turtleford, I counted 17 oil rigs working, and construction of a new pipeline from Rush Lake to Maidstone which ties into the existing Husky pipeline. It is very busy in this area.

Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago I attended the official opening of the state-of-the-art RCMP detachment in Lloydminster on Wednesday, and on Thursday I was involved in a sod-turning event for a new RCMP detachment in Maidstone.

Mr. Speaker, the RCMP play a significant role in our province. The RCMP have always been an important part of the fabric of our province, and I'm happy they will continue to be our provincial police service well into the future, thanks to a renewed 20-year policing agreement that came into effect April 2012. Mr. Speaker, also in a province that has numerous small towns, RCMP officers are respected and trusted fixtures in the community. By working together with our policing partners, we will continue to ensure Saskatchewan citizens can live, work, and raise their families while feeling safe.

Mr. Speaker, in June of this year, when the Premier asked me to serve as Legislative Secretary to the Minister of Highways and Infrastructure, he specifically asked me to investigate opportunities and options for TMS [thin membrane surface] highways across the province, something that the NDP had neglected during their last term in government. Mr. Speaker, these TMS roads were built in the early '50s and '60s, and they cannot support today's heavy truck traffic. They are narrow, they aren't designed for modern safety standards, and they don't hold up well in spring or wet years like we've seen lately.

Mr. Speaker, we've made considerable progress in upgrading these roads. We've upgraded about 500 kilometres of TMS highways since 2007, but it would cost more than 4 billion to upgrade the remaining 5000 kilometres of TMS roads. Mr. Speaker, many of these highways have very low traffic despite accounting for about 20 per cent of the entire provincial highway system. TMS highways support less than 6 per cent of traffic volume. Nevertheless they still support economic activity in rural areas and play a role in supporting the quality of life that we all enjoy.

Mr. Speaker, I've been meeting with RMs, town councils, and area transportation planning committees to ensure future highway investments provide the best value possible. I know the officials at the ministry have also put in many hours investigating and analyzing this challenge. Mr. Speaker, it's my hope that the outcomes of these efforts will be a new strategy for TMS highways that provides options that address poor-condition TMS highways.

Mr. Speaker, one of our primary areas of focus for the growth plan is increasing our exports and enhancing our international competitiveness. Exports are the foundation that our economy is built on; in fact, about two-thirds of all economic activity in Saskatchewan is derived from exports. Mr. Speaker, the key sectors of our economy — agriculture, energy, mining, forestry, biotech, and manufacturing — are all export orientated. The growth plan isn't all about exports, infrastructure, or the economy. In the end, it's about Saskatchewan's people, making sure that everyone benefits from our prosperity. That's why we need to make sure we have the safest, most efficient transportation infrastructure possible for shippers, commuters, emergency services, and tourists alike. A world-class transportation system really is an important factor in the high standard of living overall.

Mr. Speaker, the 2014-15 budget is the largest highway budget in the history at 664.5 million. We have invested 4.3 billion in our first seven years, an 82 per cent increase over the last seven years of the NDP. Since 2008 we have improved over 8600 kilometres of provincial highways. We have expanded primary weights by more than 61 per cent since forming government. We've invested 41.5 million in bridge and culvert repair in this year's budget, a 274 per cent increase from the 2007-08 budget, the NDP's last budget.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to recognize some of our government's accomplishments in the Highways ministry: twinning between Saskatoon and Prince Albert on Highway 11; twinning between Saskatoon and Clavet on Highway 16; twinning between Saskatoon and Delisle on Highway 7 in progress; passing lanes between Balgonie and Fort Qu'Appelle on Highway 10; passing lanes between Rosetown and Delisle on Highway 7 in progress; the completion of the St. Louis bridge. Mr. Speaker, we're getting close to starting construction on what will be the largest transportation infrastructure project in the province's history, the Regina bypass project. All these projects truly are the vision of a strong, innovative government with a high standard of fiscal responsibility.

[16:00]

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is strong. This strength comes from our people, their hard work, their determination, their ingenuity, and their generosity. These Saskatchewan values will keep Saskatchewan strong. Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the amendment and I will be supporting the Throne Speech. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Corrections and Policing.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a pleasure for me to join with all of my colleagues here today in the debate in support of the Speech from the Throne. But first, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to take this opportunity to offer thoughts and prayers to those who have been affected by the recent acts of terror in Quebec and Ottawa. We all know, Mr. Speaker, that all Canadians have been affected and impacted. All of my colleagues have spoken on this and expressed their deepest sympathy and enduring respect. We must continue to remember, Mr. Speaker, never forget what the men and women in uniform do for our country in protecting our democracy.

In grave moments such as these throughout our history, we reflect on the institutions that make Canada a very, very special place. Our system of parliament, independent courts, and our vibrant civil society are the foundation of a very strong society founded on principles of freedom and diversity and are all underpinned by the rule of law. I also want to assure the people of Saskatchewan that our government, along with the brave men and women in uniform, are continuing to work in keeping Saskatchewan people safe. It is a priority of our government, ensuring the safety of our communities and our citizens. We are working closely with our federal, provincial, and territorial partners to monitor the situation. Our officials will continue to be in contact with policing and national security partners to monitor recent events and monitor any developments relevant to Saskatchewan.

On Wednesday, September 22nd, we had the honour of having Her Honour the Honourable Vaughn Solomon Schofield, Lieutenant Governor of the province of Saskatchewan, address us at the opening of the present session. The speech highlighted our strong growing province, the strength and determination of our people, and outlined our plan to keep Saskatchewan strong. We will be focusing on the economy because with a strong economy, our province and its people are strong. Our people have always been a source of strength and a source of great leadership. It provides a broader tax base and more resources to invest in things that are important to the people of the province like health care, housing, education, and infrastructure. We are working hard to ensure Saskatchewan remains the best place to live, work, and raise a family.

As part of our plan for 2014-15, the Ministry of Justice outlined its plan to grow neighbourhoods by promoting safe communities, reducing crime, and improving public confidence in the justice system through prevention, intervention, and suppression. While we are pleased with our accomplishments so far, we recognize more needs to be done to ensure Saskatchewan continues to benefit from the opportunities and meet the challenges of growth. The ministry will work with other ministries and community partners to achieve greater success in the delivery of programs and services.

Our success with our building partnerships to reduce crime program, or BPRC, underscores the importance of these partnerships and the necessity of a unified approach. Through our Hub and COR model, we are changing how business is being done. We are bringing together community leaders, educators, social workers, police, and community-based organizations to work together collaboratively in finding local solutions to create safer and healthier communities.

The Hub is a made-in-Saskatchewan solution that aims to assist individuals at risk by getting community agencies, health and education providers, and the police around a table to offer coordinated help to those most at risk of falling through the cracks of our system. Discussions are on a case-by-case basis, and the focus is on intervention and prevention.

Hub implementation is premised on the fact that no one agency has the necessary resources or expertise to independently respond effectively to the continuing, expanding, and complex social issues facing many Saskatchewan communities. The Hub model is a reallocation of existing government and community

resources whereby, collectively and collaboratively, immediate crisis response is offered. The goal of the Hub is to connect individuals in need to services within 24 to 48 hours.

CORs, or centres of responsibility, explore long-term solutions to social issues identified by the Hubs and increase collaboration in resource support between the Hubs in the region. The COR is a group of experienced human service professionals seconded from the police, corrections, social work, education, addictions, and mental health. These specialists provide analysis and recommendations on trends, gaps, and reoccurring issues to determine sustained and system-wide solutions.

In the Throne Speech, we committed to expanding the Hub and COR crime reduction model because it is working. Community Mobilization Prince Albert has been in operation the longest and has seen significant results. In 2011, year over year compared to crime rates in 2010, which would be prior to the Hub, overall crime rate has decreased by 18 per cent. Violent crime has decreased by 38 per cent. And I'm excited that our COR and Hub model is being emulated in other provinces throughout Canada. Several communities in Ontario have implemented a Saskatchewan-inspired Hub model along with communities in Alberta, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia.

And the NDP supports BPRC, or building partnerships to reduce crime. At an Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice Committee meeting held on April 22nd, 2013, MLA and former Justice minister John Nilson said, in reference to the Hub, "And so I appreciate what you've described and because I think that is where the solutions lie."

And communities throughout the province also agree. We have 10 active Hubs, and Meadow Lake and Melfort will become the next communities to establish their own Hub model. With the increased number of Hubs, we expect to announce the establishment of two more CORs in the near future as well.

We are working towards a full continuum of crime reduction initiatives. We are focusing on driving down the demand on our justice system through prevention and intervention by addressing the risk factors that contribute to criminal behaviour. This includes recognizing the impacts of mental health and addictions. By engaging with the police and health system, we can bring about those better outcomes and reduce the role of the criminal justice system in the lives of persons with mental illness.

We also have an untapped resource that can be accessed through jobs and literacy. By addressing the employability of persons, whether they are in our system or outside our system, while contributing much-needed production capacity from within our correctional environment, we can truly make a difference in the quality of life for many individuals, families, and communities. We are also supporting our policing partners' suppression efforts. Our government has added 173 new provincially-funded officers since we took office in 2007.

As of April 1, 2012, Saskatchewan and Canada signed a 20-year provincial service agreement for continued service of the RCMP. This year the total RCMP budget is approximately 170.9 million. Our government is providing 14.2 million in

municipal policing grants this year that support the much needed targeted policing initiatives such as SHOCAP or serious and habitual offender comprehensive action plan in Saskatoon, Regina, and P.A. [Prince Albert]; combined forces special enforcement unit that consists of three specialized teams that focus on dismantling organized crime; serious violent offender response that targets violent offenders before they reoffend; the Internet child exploitation unit.

Last year the Saskatchewan ICE [Internet child exploitation] unit opened 212 new investigations, executed 83 search warrants, and laid 156 charges of various child pornography-related offences. Three child victims were also rescued from abusive environments as well.

Our government recognizes also the challenges the province is facing due to the increasing costs of policing. That is why Saskatchewan is taking a lead role in the national effort to address the economics of public safety. We are also continuing our work with SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities], SUMA, and the RCMP and the Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police to design a model that will complement existing policing services by addressing low-risk, high-priority public safety concerns at the local level.

The joint SUMA and SARM task force on the administration of justice, which determined in the year 2000 that all residents of Saskatchewan were responsible to pay for policing, has been invited to reconvene and look at a variety of issues dealing with policing and the funding of such policing.

And I want to respond to the recent reports that highlight the conditions in our correctional facilities. Our government is investigating, when the previous government did not. We are investing 24 million for an addition at the Prince Albert Provincial Correctional Centre. This new living unit will add 144 new bed spaces. Mr. Speaker, we are looking at reducing the demand in our system, but we are well aware of the fact that we also must address the current situation in Saskatchewan.

But that's not all we did. In 2009 we added the first new bed space since the late 1980s: 5.5 million was spent on a 90-bed dormitory at the Saskatoon Provincial Correctional Centre. At Pine Grove provincial correctional centre for women, 13.4 million was invested in a 30-cell living unit that added 60 new bed spaces. It opened in October of 2013. In February of 2014, the new White Birch female holding facility opened in Regina. By investing 1.8 million, we converted a vacant unit at Regina's Paul Dojack Youth Centre. Previously the Pine Grove Correctional Centre in Prince Albert was the only women's facility in the province, and most recently our government announced the Saskatchewan Hospital North Battleford replacement project which includes a 96-bed correctional facility.

There are many, many competing issues that we as elected officials must consider in our decision-making process. So when we can present a balanced approach as laid out in this year's Throne Speech, we can feel confident that we are being accountable to our constituents.

Mr. Speaker, we are working hard to keep Saskatchewan strong. We are developing our resource sector to ensure

sustainability. We are supporting free trade by fostering existing relationships and developing those much needed new opportunities. We are investing in education and post-secondary education to build a skilled workforce.

We are building schools, hospitals, and highways to address the many years when there was no capital investment. We are looking at new, innovative ways of doing things, whether it's social impact bonds or P3s [public-private partnership]. We continue to invest in what's important to the people of Saskatchewan — health care, those less fortunate, the environment, and our parks. And we will continue to support our First Nations, municipal, and agricultural communities.

As the MLA for Regina Wascana Plains, I am delighted with the recent grand opening for the new \$22 million Emerald Ridge Elementary School in White City. As one of the fastest-growing areas of the province, this investment is much needed and very much appreciated.

Further, the commitment this government has made to the west Regina bypass that includes interchanges at Pilot Butte and White City-Emerald Park is critical to this ever-growing area. By using a P3 funding model, this project will progress in a timely fashion. We did not have and do not have in this particular area 20 years to wait. It needs to be done as soon as possible.

[16:15]

It is an honour serving the people of Regina Wascana Plains, but I have a lot of people I need to thank for their continued support — my family, Jackie and Joette in my constituency office, my constituents and constituency association, my government staff and colleagues.

This is indeed a very exciting time to be in Saskatchewan. We are laying the groundwork to successfully deal with the ongoing pressures of our growing and prosperous province. We are working hard to represent the people of our province in the legislature, and we are committed to keeping Saskatchewan strong. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I along with many others want to declare my full support for this year's Throne Speech. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is indeed an honour to rise in this Assembly and speak to the Speech from the Throne in 2014. Mr. Speaker, this has been, I believe it'll be my 19th Throne Speech that I've listened to. And as my colleagues indicate, yes that's been a few.

Mr. Speaker, 2014 has been a year of decision making for many, but it was a decision-making year for me as well. And I do want to put on the record, Mr. Speaker, because there was some confusion back in the month of April when I announced that whenever the next provincial election will be, which we know as events unfold from the federal government, from what's occurring in Ottawa, we know that the election in Ottawa may occur next fall. It seems like that's what their date will be in October, as they've stated. And as a result of that of

course, the next provincial election will be in the spring of 2016.

Mr. Speaker, I've indicated that I will not seek re-election in 2016, but unfortunately some printings occurred that said that I had resigned. And, Mr. Speaker, I had not resigned, and in fact I'm very honoured that the Premier has asked me to serve as Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance for at least till March 18th when I will be delivering the next budget. So, Mr. Speaker, I'm very thankful, I'm very thankful to the Premier showing confidence in me and wanting me to continue working on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to express my gratitude to many people because it's not only the ongoing events that occur within our constituency or within this great building. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure I'm a lot like you, very impressed to walk into this building on a daily basis. It's an honour to work here. It's an honour to serve the people of Saskatchewan, and I'm in awe of the magnificence of this building on a daily basis. So you know I believe there will be a time when there will be maybe a tear that will come from my eye as I leave this building, but it is an honour to serve the people of Saskatchewan.

I want to express my gratitude to my staff in Canora at the constituency office. As a member of the Executive Council cabinet, we don't always get back to events and to things that are occurring in our constituency. And as a result of not being able to get back to Canora-Pelly, my constituency staff has to handle many of the situations. I'd love to have a, you know, a hands-on approach but it's just not practical. So I want to thank Carol Sleeva and Michele Wiwchar for the outstanding work that they do and, you know, keep me informed on a regular basis about concerns that people bring to my office.

And I do want to stress that, Mr. Speaker, because there are a number of people who believe that when concerns are raised at the office, there's always the follow-up phone call, well did you actually inform the member? And the answer is yes, I can assure you that our staff do that on a regular basis. They want to make sure that the ministers, who are busy, are also informed on the day-to-day activities that occur back in our offices.

I also want to extend my appreciation to . . . You know, the ongoing pressures that happen with every ministry but especially in mine, as Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance, there are many, many different calls that come in. There will be calls that will come in as Deputy Premier. There will be calls that will come in regarding my responsibility for what I refer to as the Ukraine file, and there are things that will happen of course with regards to Finance. So my staff here in the legislature, led by my chief of staff of course, Dawn Popescul, and my senior administration person who's been with me for seven years since I became a cabinet minister, Jane Johnston, is just a . . . just does a phenomenal job for me in ensuring that I have a great understanding of what's going on and able to handle the day-to-day activities.

I also want to thank my two other staff members, Natalie Pepper, and Rozalia Kasleder who just joined our staff. And I know that she's experiencing a tremendous amount of . . . a steep learning curve is maybe the best way that I'll describe it,

and again I know she'll do just a phenomenal job.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to talk a little bit about some of the great things happening in Canora-Pelly because there are so many exciting activities. There are exciting activities occurring in infrastructure builds. There are exciting activities that are occurring in daycare. There are exciting things that are happening with regards to education. And I'm going to spend a few moments just highlighting some of those things that are occurring within my constituency. And I know from listening to the Throne Speech debates from ministers, every, every constituency had some very positive things.

It's surprising when you travel the constituency and listen to all the positive things, and then you listen to the opposition opposite and you sort of, well, are we really in the same province? But I guess, Mr. Speaker, that's because they were so used to planning for decline, so used to a province that was in fact going downhill, and now they're just not able to fully understand that, indeed, our province is moving forward and moving forward quickly.

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the people in my constituency, especially those around the two provincial parks. I'm very fortunate to have the Duck Mountain Provincial Park and the Good Spirit Provincial Park in my constituency. Those are of course around the two lakes, Madge Lake for Duck Mountain and Good Spirit Lake for the other provincial park. But there's been some great things that have happened there because of the initiative shown by this government and the leadership shown by ministers.

Mr. Speaker, the expansion. And I was fortunate to be involved in announcing that expansion at Duck Mountain, at Madge, where we're going to actually be investing over \$300,000 in the expansion of a boat launch. Now, Mr. Speaker, I think, you know, when you think about monies being spent on a boat launch and the building of a new road off the highway to allow tourists to come in, to allow the safety factor to be recognized, I think what you're seeing is a great example of what's occurring around the province. We have to meet that challenge.

We have to ensure that there is a second sewage disposal station, that there is a road to bring in tourists directly to the lake, because that is exactly what is happening, an increased amount of usage. An increased amount of usage over at Good Spirit Lake also necessitated the building of almost what I'd refer to as a two-lane boat launch to ensure that we can meet the growth and demand and the usage of that lake as more and more people are coming into that area.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about one initiative that really did not involve government expenditure. And it's something that's occurring right now at Madge Lake, and many might know that there has been a church camp. It's called the St. Michael's church camp on Madge Lake. It's been there for about 50 years, and they do a summer program with children from, I'll say, from even outside of this province. Many students come to the church camp on a regular basis.

Mr. Speaker, two families have spearheaded this project and have looked at the facility and indeed, Mr. Speaker, it is old and it is showing its wear. And they decided that it was time to

renovate that, to actually rebuild and create a brand new structure. So, Mr. Speaker, a \$1.5 million project has been planned, and of course because it's within a provincial park, there were the necessary approvals that had to be given by Parks, Culture and Sport. And I want to thank the Minister Responsible for Parks, Culture and Sport for leading that and making sure that, you know, nothing was overlooked but indeed government bureaucracies were not an obstacle.

And the result, Mr. Speaker, is that a new, almost 11,000 square foot church camp is being built with \$1.5 million. And, Mr. Speaker, the largest amount of financial commitment has come from the Broda family and the Hudye family. Both have donated significant dollars to ensure that this project is built, and indeed there will be even things like money in lieu of, and by that I'm meaning the actual donation of equipment. And it was interesting to see in the Kamsack paper just a couple of weeks ago, Cas Broda who has been recognized provincially with awards. His picture was taken as he was stepping out of, I think it looked like a backhoe or a track hoe. And again all volunteer work, all donations that are coming in from so many people are there to ensure that this camp is going to be ready for next year. Its first phase at least will be ready next year. Nothing to do with the financial dollars from government, but indeed government ensuring that this project can happen.

Mr. Speaker, in our Throne Speech this year on page 7, the Throne Speech announced the reintroduction of what used to be called SIGI, S-I-G-I. And that, Mr. Speaker, I want to mention it because the last initiative, the last SIGI program, the town of Canora and the town of Preeceville both took advantage of that growth initiative and accessed dollars from SIGI. And as a result of that, they have developments that have moved forward. And I dare say, Mr. Speaker, that as SIGI moves ahead again, there may be communities in my constituency that will take advantage of that program as well. Grant money at no interest is always of interest to a municipality.

Mr. Speaker, the interest that we see in the province of Saskatchewan isn't just that local interest that has been there for a while. Now we're seeing people so encouraged that have lived in Canora-Pelly for a long time. But I want to make mention of a family and, you know, there is the ThinkSask commercial that features this family. The Jeff Sznerch family from Alberta moved to Saskatchewan and they purchased an existing operation about nine miles south of Canora. And the reason that, of course, they've moved here is they wanted to expand their operation and that wasn't possible in Alberta.

But they have come here to Saskatchewan and some of the reasons why they came to Saskatchewan, to that area located within my constituency, is that the daycare in Canora is close to the family. The schools in Canora are close to their family. There are job opportunities for the lady in question, Mr. Speaker, but also they are very comfortable living here in Saskatchewan. And they've moved here to have more time with their family and their two children are of course growing very much, but enjoying the sports, enjoying the recreation. The statement made by Jeff, and I quote, "Our future in Saskatchewan is very bright. Now when people say where we are from, we say Saskatchewan," Mr. Speaker.

And I think that's a great example of people that have looked at

Saskatchewan and have determined that it's a place to be. And that's a goal of our government. That's a goal of the Throne Speech, to make Saskatchewan the best place to live, the best place to work, and of course the best place to raise a family.

Mr. Speaker, one of the exciting things happening throughout Saskatchewan but also in my constituency is, as I've been involved with the Education file in the past, involves the student enrolments across the province. Student enrolments are growing, and as the minister announced today of course we are ensuring that additional dollars will go into all school divisions, all 28 school divisions. But, Mr. Speaker, you know one of the exciting things to see as the minister noted today, I believe we have over 173,000 students.

[16:30]

That wasn't always the plan, Mr. Speaker, and again when I look back at the beginning of my teaching career back in 1972, you know, there were many more students in this province for funded enrolment. I believe the province recognized about 243,000 students in 1972-73 — 243,000 students. Keep in mind that the minister today indicated that we're now back up to 173,000. So indeed the student enrolment declined rapidly. It declined rapidly for many years and in fact, Mr. Speaker, one of the tables that I happened to find which was released by the former government back in 2003 projected the enrolments. And I'm not going to go over all of the years but, Mr. Speaker, for the year 2013-14 which was the last year of the chart, the government at that time, the NDP, projected that our enrolment would be down to 142,000 — 142,000 — whereas today the minister responded that indeed we have 173.

So let's think about that for a minute, Mr. Speaker. What if indeed we would have reached 142,000 students? Well I think that the 47 projects that we have moved forward, the huge infrastructure projects, wouldn't have happened. There wouldn't have been a need to look at developments in the city of Regina or Saskatoon or Martensville or Warman, because we indeed wouldn't need those 18 schools that we're going to build over the next few years. We wouldn't have employed the same numbers of teachers that we do today, and the same number of educational assistants and all of the professionals that do such a great job in our schools. We wouldn't need as many of them.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it's very clear — to us at least — that growth is essential, that growth is what's going to lead to more people in the province of Saskatchewan, the ability for us to meet the needs of a growing province, whether they be in the area of building more schools, employing more professionals to indeed educate all of our children, but all of the other things that are needed in a growing province.

That infrastructure, that health care that my colleague next to me speaks about on a regular basis when he talks about the health care dollar, is the services that we provide that we didn't provide years ago. The utilization factor that continues to rise — not on an annual basis, it probably rises on a weekly basis — and the Minister of Health has to be responsible and understand what kind of pressures that puts on the ministry.

Well the minister might be recognizing that there might be a need for some additional dollars but, Mr. Speaker, we've done

that. Over and over again, we've met that challenge by allocating, you know, well over \$4 billion to the Ministry of Health. And as a result of that, I think we have people that are understanding that our wait-lists are going down, that our surgery wait-list is declining. Those are all very positive things.

Mr. Speaker, one of the initiatives that we introduced when we became government just — I think it was about two or three years ago; it was after a period of time — was something called the rink affordability grant. Mr. Speaker, everyone knows that in many . . . Any member of the legislature who has rural communities would know that in many of our smaller communities, the curling rink and the skating rink are the centres of a lot of activity during the winter months. And we all were pressured, especially I know I was when I was in opposition, by many community leaders to say, please help us out, the increasing costs of operating that local community rink.

And, Mr. Speaker, again we have to recognize that for many, many years the population of Saskatchewan was declining. I spoke about the declining student enrolments, but also there was a shifting of population, more so to the urban centres but also moving, where people were moving out of the province of Saskatchewan and going elsewhere.

So it was much more difficult for those left behind to continue operating these facilities. So, Mr. Speaker, we introduced something called the community rinks affordability grant where a facility can apply for a grant of \$2,500 per facility. Mr. Speaker, I'm really pleased to indicate that every community in the Canora-Pelly constituency has taken advantage of that last year. Last year, Mr. Speaker, in fact the total number of dollars awarded to the different groups that operate the facilities in Canora-Pelly constituency was \$57,500 dollars.

And this year, Mr. Speaker, I understand that with the potential of another . . . And I say another because the first First Nations project actually made their application last year. We probably will be having a second First Nation apply this year. And, Mr. Speaker, the potential for this year is that there will be \$60,000 allocated to facilities in my constituency. So I want to say thank you to the minister. The minister who actually began that program a long time ago has of course made sure that that continues to be a priority.

Mr. Speaker, I want to spend a little bit of time talking about the initiatives in the province of Saskatchewan, some of the changes that have occurred over the last year, the very positive changes.

Mr. Speaker, I've mentioned a little bit about population and said of course we need to grow. We need to ensure that the province continues to move forward. And if you . . . I remember very clearly because it was on budget day, which was March 19th of this year, when Stats Canada indicated that Saskatchewan had grown by almost 20,000 people in the year 2013 — 20,000 people in 2013. So, Mr. Speaker, we're over 1.1 million people. That's the first time in our province's history. And of course our population has been continuing to grow at that impressive pace.

One of the key drivers of the population growth of course is international immigration. People are coming to Saskatchewan

from other countries. Mr. Speaker, we've come a long way since my first year here in this Assembly, which was 1995.

And, Mr. Speaker, I do want to put on the record that the population change from 1996 to 2000 was about 3,600. So there was a growth. It was about 3,600. So when you look at that period of time, that growth was about 700 net international migrants a year for that period. That's how many international migrants came into the province of Saskatchewan for that five-year period.

Now compare that, Mr. Speaker, to 2006 to 2010, when there were roughly 32,000 net international migrants to the province. Mr. Speaker, that's an average of about 6,400. So under the former government, 700 per year; under our government, 6,400 per year.

What does that mean? Well, Mr. Speaker, population growth means opportunities. It means more children in our schools. We have more immigrants, as I've just pointed out, but of course it also means we might have more challenges. And more challenges are always I think much more useful to a government than the challenges of decline. So I think that the government is moving in a proper direction.

Mr. Speaker, I want to spend a few minutes on employment growth because as we've increased the population, the opportunities have also increased in numbers. Mr. Speaker, we have . . . We're leading the nation. We're leading the nation with the second fastest rate of employment growth and the lowest unemployment rate in Canada. In September, Mr. Speaker, 574,800 people were employed in Saskatchewan, and our province's unemployment rate was 3.5 per cent. Mr. Speaker, that's the lowest among the provinces, and it's well below the 6.8 per cent recorded nationally. Consistently, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's unemployment rate has been the lowest for many, many years — for nearly two years, Mr. Speaker. Full-time jobs are on the rise and jobs are available in every corner of the province.

Let's again do a little comparison, Mr. Speaker — 1995, 448,000 people were employed in Saskatchewan in April of that year. So nearly 575,000 people employed today compared to 448,000 in 1995, Mr. Speaker, a growth of 28 per cent since 1995. And I think that speaks very . . . is the reason, Mr. Speaker, those numbers are the reason why our province is the envy of many of the other provinces. We continue to grow. We continue to create opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, our province is blessed. We have economic diversity. We know last year, Mr. Speaker, that a sector of our economy which is very, very important to Saskatchewan had its best year ever. And that of course, Mr. Speaker, is the agricultural sector. The agricultural sector in Saskatchewan last year produced a tremendous crop and contributed tremendously to the overall economy of the province. But one of the other areas, Mr. Speaker, of course are in the non-renewable resource sector. And we're blessed with diverse resource base. We have oil and we have natural gas, potash, uranium, forestry, and many other precious metals as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, we are a leader. We are a leader when people recognize that Saskatchewan supplies 15 per cent of the world's

uranium and about 30 per cent of the world's potash. And of course in that particular resource we hold about 50 per cent of the world's reserves. We are the second-largest conventional oil producer in Canada. So, Mr. Speaker, when we look at all of those positives, all of those growth, we understand why our economy is as diverse as it is.

I mentioned the tremendous crop in agriculture last year, Mr. Speaker, but you know, one of the statistics that people don't understand is, as our farmers have diversified and as they looked at growing other crops, our province is the world's largest exporter of mustard, flaxseed, lentils, dried peas, and canary seed — and I repeat, Mr. Speaker, the world's largest exporter of those products. In 2013 our province was the largest per capita exporter in Canada, with the value of our exports totalling \$32.2 billion. Mr. Speaker, our Premier is going to be off on a mission to India, and there he will promote Saskatchewan's strengths in energy, agri-food, and innovation, as well as profile business opportunities in the province for investors from India.

Mr. Speaker, as a government we're also committed to expanding trade within Canada, building on the success of the New West Partnership and seeking to dismantle trade barriers within the province. It's very difficult to understand why sometimes we have a greater obstacle with trade going across provincial borders than we have going across an international border, and of course by that I'm referring to the United States of America.

Mr. Speaker, one of the exciting things that happened in 2014 in Saskatchewan was around debt, Mr. Speaker. So that might have prompted maybe anyone who is listening to me to raise their eyebrows and say, well what do you mean? How can debt, how can debt have prompted a response? Well, Mr. Speaker, since our government took office, we've been very mindful of ensuring that we take control of the debt that was left, the \$6.8 billion that was part of government operational debt. And we've been very fortunate to pay down a very significant portion of that debt, and in fact \$3 billion of that has been paid off.

Mr. Speaker, what occurred not, I believe it was, about two years ago was for the first time, Standard & Poor's had given the province of Saskatchewan its very first AAA credit rating. So, Mr. Speaker, that was tremendous benefit to us because as debt matures, it has to be refinanced in many cases, and with an improved credit rating of course the interest rates are lower. The interest in different financial institutions acquiring Saskatchewan's debt, as it is referred to, was increased.

But also, Mr. Speaker, another thing happened in September of this year is that the second, one of the largest bond rating agencies in North America, Moody's, upgraded Saskatchewan's credit rating to also a AAA. So, Mr. Speaker, with now a AAA credit rating from Standard & Poor's and from Moody's, we along with Alberta, British Columbia, and of course Canada are the only jurisdictions in the country with Moody's highest credit rating.

[16:45]

Mr. Speaker, from the press release from Moody's, I want to quote a statement that was made when they indicated that

Saskatchewan had now qualified for a AAA rating. And the quote was this, “. . . reflects the province's fiscal discipline and sustained low debt levels, which underscores prudent financial management practices,” Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, our government has emphasized that we need to live within our means. We need to ensure that the budgets are balanced and that we are not spending monies that we don't have. And if we are able to, we reduce our debt.

As a result of that, Mr. Speaker, the AAA ratings, as I've already mentioned, have enabled the province of Saskatchewan to literally save hundreds of millions of dollars of interest costs. And as a result of that, we've been able to allocate those things, allocate those things to building and improving more highways, building more schools, building hospitals, building long-term care facilities. A very significant amount of growth in this province is because we have been able to pay down debt and receive that type of evaluation from the bond rating agencies.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also spend a little bit of time on lower taxes because again, Mr. Speaker, our desire has always been to lower the amount of income tax that people have paid, and we've made significant reductions in the income tax that individuals pay. We also made significant changes to the amount of property tax — the education property tax — that individuals pay. And as a result of that, Mr. Speaker, a family of four with an income of 75,000 will pay less in total provincial taxes and utilities than their counterparts in any other province in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

We need to ensure that we as a province are able to compete, are able to compete with other provinces, are able to demonstrate that the province of Saskatchewan is a great place to live and you can indeed build a future.

Mr. Speaker, I know the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education has already talked about the graduate retention program. But, Mr. Speaker, that is a very key program, and I know the more younger folk that I talk to, the more I find out that many people are indeed taking advantage of the graduate retention program. The member from Saskatoon Greystone and I were . . . I recall having a conversation with him years ago when we were talking about what program should we put in place to retain students, to encourage students to not only stay here in Saskatchewan but maybe come back. And that's when the idea I think about the graduate retention program came up. And, Mr. Speaker, I won't go into what the GRP [graduate retention program] is — you know, the amount of dollars that a student can reclaim after being employed in Saskatchewan.

But, Mr. Speaker, in those early years — I guess 2008, 2009 — we were talking about well, maybe we'll be having to have a commitment, a financial commitment of \$20 million, 30, 40. Mr. Speaker, the commitment now is over \$80 million on an annual basis. And, Mr. Speaker, I have had many people come to me and say, thank you; it is one of the reasons why I returned back to this province as I had, you know, trained and took a program in another province. And they've come here to work. And as a result of that, Mr. Speaker, about 50,000 post-secondary graduates in the period of time from 2008 to 2012, have taken advantage of that.

Mr. Speaker, I know time is passing by very quickly, but I do want to talk a little bit about the future. You know, when we look at the Throne Speech and the kinds of things that have been described there, as we look at initiatives that we're going to put forward, Mr. Speaker, we want to ensure that those initiatives are indeed going to keep Saskatchewan strong. Because I think that's critical.

There is no desire by anyone that I talk to, unless I listen to my colleagues in the opposition, to want to return back to the days when it was decline, when there were things that were moving in the opposite direction. So, Mr. Speaker, a big part of that involves careful management of the province's finances while continuing to make important investment. I think that's critical as we look at the need to ensure that we continue to spend money where it is needed, Mr. Speaker.

And that is why, you know, when you look at the public accounts that were released not too long ago, summarizing the last fiscal year, you'll see increased expenditures. You'll see increased expenditures in areas like Social Services, where indeed the SAID program and the SAP [Saskatchewan assistance plan] program and the TEA [transitional employment allowance] program, all of those programs had greater utilization which really means that we're indeed ensuring that people who are less fortunate, that we meet those challenges. We saw greater spending in health care as we looked at ensuring that we meet the needs of those people.

But, Mr. Speaker, beyond those personal services, those things that are needed for individuals, we also need to ensure that our infrastructure continues to be improved, whether it's to continue to fix or build highways. And, Mr. Speaker, we've talked about new initiatives in Highways, the twinning of additional highways. The highway out from Regina through to Weyburn, on to Estevan, that twinning is going to occur over the next number of years.

We're looking at passing-lane initiatives that need to continue to be a reality. Mr. Speaker, we did a project on Highway 10, a passing-lane project on Highway 10, where government financed the construction of eight passing lanes, four in each direction, from Balgonie to Fort Qu'Appelle. Mr. Speaker, I can honestly say I've had many, many people talk to me, but not a single person has expressed disappointment in the construction of those passing lanes.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have to recognize that we're going to be continuing to invest dollars in infrastructure. We're going to be continuing to invest dollars in building new schools. Minister of Education has talked about all of the projects that we have under way now or have already been completed in the last seven years. We're going to continue to look at those long-term care facilities that we've built from the ground up, brand new ones. But we also are going to look, ensure that we look at the maintenance program.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to express my appreciation to the Minister of Health for a couple of things that occurred, one in my constituency and one in the community where I live, and that of course is Canora, and Invermay. In Canora, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately there was a physical structure that, well, for lack of a better word, failed, and the ceiling needed to be replaced.

And, Mr. Speaker, it has been replaced, and now the dining room area is a great looking place to meet the needs of servicing many, many people who live in the Canora long-term care facility.

Mr. Speaker, even a larger project occurred out at Invermay to ensure that that facility remains a viable entity for the next, you know, 25 years probably, because of the dollars that the Ministry of Health invested into ensuring that that specific building met the challenge that of course it had faced.

Mr. Speaker, there are very specific measures that are outlined in the Throne Speech. And you know, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about the options paper and the public consultation on private liquor retailing in Saskatchewan, that was one of the initiatives that we're going to undertake. It was interesting to see, Mr. Speaker, how, you know, the members of the opposition and others reacted negatively to all of the liquor vendors that have been around for decades, that indeed the only profit that is coming into government comes from a public government liquor store. So that would mean that all of the liquor vendors — and I dare say I think there's 194, something like that — that none of them were producing any profit. Well we know, Mr. Speaker, that just simply is not true.

And while we need to ensure that we consult with the people of the province, that we move forward, we need to ensure that of course our facilities are as efficient as possible. And that is why some of the changes occurred in the last few months from the minister that is responsible for that file.

Mr. Speaker, we've also announced a new-growth tax incentive for exporting manufacturers who create new jobs, including new head office jobs here in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, that is something that we want to ensure happens on a regular basis. We want to be able to attract. We want to be able to attract businesses. We want to be able to attract head offices. And indeed, Mr. Speaker, if the new-growth tax incentive does result in a business moving here and creating jobs that currently don't exist here in the province of Saskatchewan, that will be a benefit to all because we will have the revenue sources from taxpayers, additional taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, another highlight of the Throne Speech is the continued promotion of Saskatchewan to international markets. That is critical, Mr. Speaker. And it doesn't matter whether you're talking about our agriculture-produced products, our commodities, or whether you're talking about manufactured products from the province of Saskatchewan, the world needs what we produce.

And it was interesting speaking with the heads of mission that were here — well over 50 heads of mission were here in Saskatchewan — and listening to the Ambassador from Japan talk about now canola oil and canola oil entering his country. And of course that canola oil, much of that canola oil is coming out of Saskatchewan, in fact right out of the area that the member for Yorkton represents. And it's a tremendous benefit to the area and to trade.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many more things in the Throne Speech that are so positive for the people of Saskatchewan, but I think I want to conclude by saying, the world needs what

Saskatchewan has, and whether it's food or whether it's fuel or whether it's fertilizer, those are three very, very important products.

This is a great province to raise a family, start a business, to work, to live, to ensure that people can build that life that they want. And, Mr. Speaker, I've been very pleased to be a part of this government that has moved initiatives forward to ensure that people recognize that Saskatchewan is a leader. Saskatchewan is a leader not only within Canada, but can be an entity which prepares and focuses on international trade and international co-operation. So, Mr. Speaker, there is no question that I will be supporting the Throne Speech presented in this Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

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

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand today and respond, take my turn responding to the Throne Speech. It's a document that I think has a number of elements in it that I not only can support, but I can talk about in an awful . . . in detail. But as I said, it is an honour to be here today, Mr. Speaker. And I know that my time is short running up to dinner here, but this is my first Throne Speech as the Minister for Parks, Culture and Sport, and I'm pretty proud of that.

And before I begin, I'd also like to take the opportunity to echo some of my colleagues' responses in relation to the Throne Speech. I thought they did an admirable job, and I'm proud to be a part of this government and proud to have an opportunity to speak further, and I hope I have the opportunity a little later here. But, Mr. Speaker, I don't want to necessarily thank everybody, but I can continue after dinner if that's okay? I'd like to thank my colleagues again for all of their help. It's been fantastic. Thank you.

The Speaker: — It now being after the hour of 5 o'clock, the House is recessed to 7 p.m.

[The Assembly recessed from 17:00 until 19:00.]

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