



FOURTH SESSION - TWENTY-SEVENTH LEGISLATURE

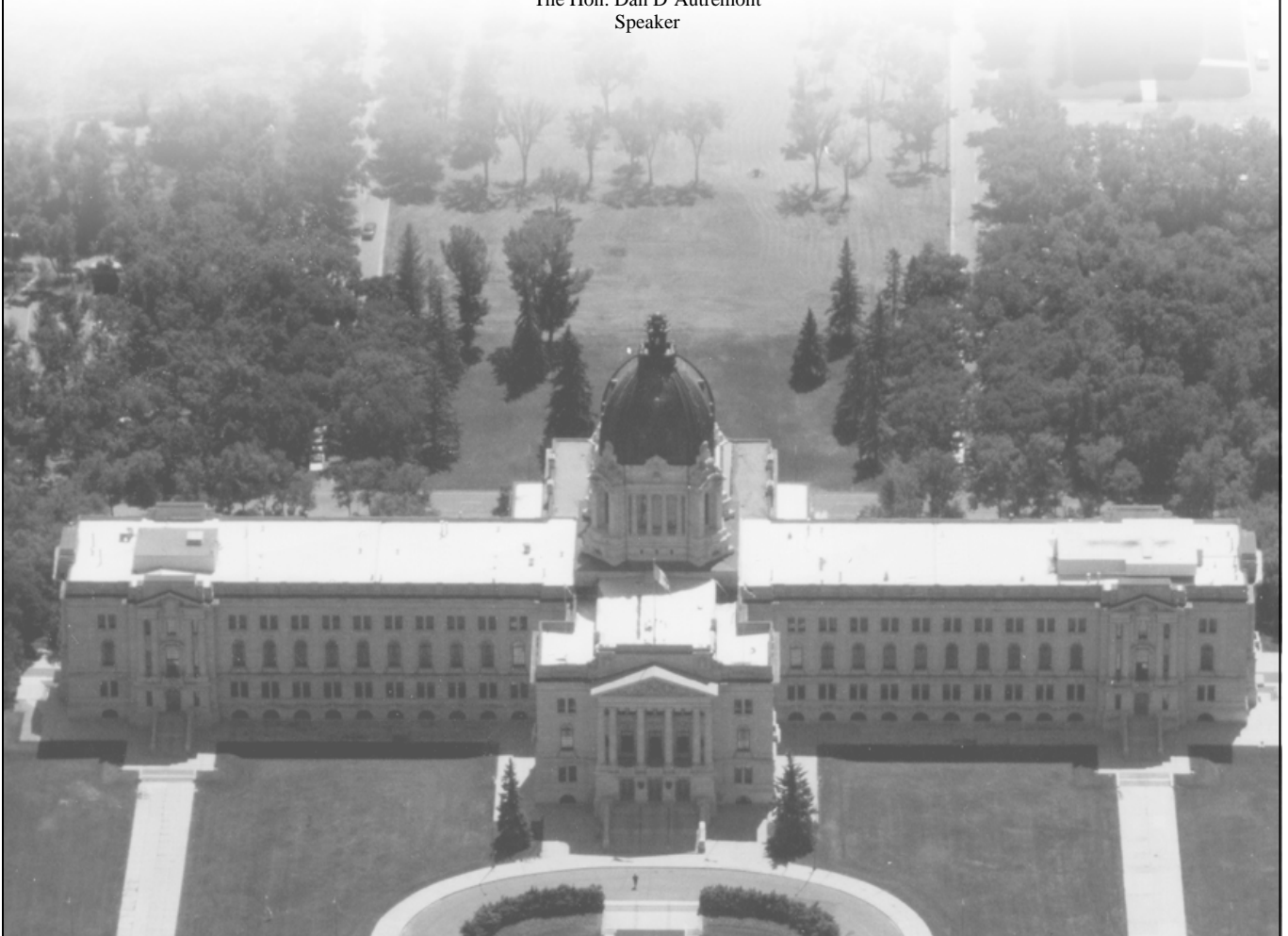
of the

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
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Doke, Larry	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
Draude, June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
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Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
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Makowsky, Gene	SP	Regina Dewdney
Marchuk, Russ	SP	Regina Douglas Park
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Nilson, John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
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Ottenbreit, Hon. Greg	SP	Yorkton
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Phillips, Kevin	SP	Melfort
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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
Young, Colleen	SP	Lloydminster
Vacant		Prince Albert Carlton

[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Advanced Education.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members of this Assembly, I would like today to introduce Ms. Dania Alkhani from the University of Saskatchewan.

Dania is a fourth-year dentistry student at the University of Saskatchewan who is using an innovative approach to fight oral cancer. Dania was raised in Ottawa, Ontario and completed her four-year undergraduate degree in biopharmaceutical sciences with honours in medicinal chemistry at the University of Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, she has combined her background in medicinal chemistry with her ongoing education in dentistry. She has focused her two-year research project at the College of Dentistry at the University of Saskatchewan on finding new, non-evasive methods to kill oral cancer cells. Her research created a compound that is 10 times more effective at killing cancer cells than the anti-cancer drug that's currently available on the market, Mr. Speaker.

We'll have much more to hear on Ms. Alkhani's research, Mr. Speaker, in a member's statement from the member from Saskatoon Eastview. But I would like all members to join me in welcoming Ms. Dania Alkhani to this Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the Minister for Advanced Education in welcoming Ms. Dania Alkhani to the Legislative Assembly, and to say thank you to Ms. Alkhani for the work that's she's done around advancing what we know and how we can better fight oral cancer.

And it again highlights the importance of institutions such as the University of Saskatchewan and what they add to our knowledge base, but the very real difference that knowledge and the pursuit of knowledge makes in the lives of citizens in Saskatchewan each and every day. So again I'd just like to join with the Minister for Advanced Education in welcoming Ms. Alkhani to the Legislative Assembly and thanking her for her work.

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

Mr. Makowsky: — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and all the members, a group of students from Victoria Campus, located in the constituency of Regina Dewdney obviously, 13 students and their teachers. Accompanying them are Ms. Karen McIver — she's very diligent in bringing

students to the legislature, and we appreciate that — Gail Kleisinger as well. And the educational assistants are Danica Ennis and Maril Moore. I look forward to having a chat with them after routine proceedings today. I ask all members to help me welcome them.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased once again to stand in my place to present a petition regarding cellphone coverage in the small northern communities. And, Mr. Speaker, the prayer reads as follows:

To cause the provincial government to improve cell service coverage for northern communities like St. George's Hill, Dillon, Michel Village, Dore Lake, Michel Point, and Sled Lake and to provide similar quality of cell coverage as southern communities. This would provide support to our northern industries as well as mitigate safety concerns associated with living in the remote North.

And, Mr. Speaker, people have signed this petition from all throughout Saskatchewan. And on this particular page the people that have signed this petition are from Lloydminster, Big River, and Saskatoon. I so present.

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise again today to present a petition in support of better seniors' care here in Saskatchewan. The petitioners point out that we are hearing an increasing number of stories about the adverse effects of chronic understaffing in seniors' care facilities, much like we heard yesterday in question period, Mr. Speaker, and the fact that the provincial government's response to the seniors' care crisis has been inadequate.

This is what the petitioners have to say, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: to cause the provincial government to immediately undertake meaningful steps to improve the quality of seniors' care in our province, including creating more spaces and more choices for seniors; ensuring higher standards of care in public facilities, private facilities, and for home care; ensuring appropriate staffing levels in seniors' care facilities; and providing more support to help seniors remain independent in their own homes for as long as they desire.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by citizens from Regina and Norquay. I so submit.

The Speaker: — I recognize the leader . . . excuse me, I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Always

good to be recognized in this Assembly. I rise to present a petition by residents in the province of Saskatchewan who are concerned with the high cost of post-secondary education, particularly as relates to the ever-rising cost of tuition, Mr. Speaker.

The petitioners point out that a report released by Statistics Canada labelled Saskatchewan as the province with the highest increase in tuition, with tuition for the 2014-15 year having increased by 4 per cent in the province for undergraduate students and over 5 per cent for graduate students. They also point out that the average Canadian student in 2014 graduated with debt of over \$27,000, not including credit card and other private debt.

In the prayer that reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

The petitioners respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: to cause the provincial government to immediately increase the funding for post-secondary education in this province, with a legislated provision that this increase in funding be used to lower tuition fees.

Mr. Speaker, this particular petition, while other petitions have been presented from around the province, this particular petition is signed by citizens from the city of Regina. I so present.

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present a petition in support of better schools. Among other things that are of concern in Saskatchewan to these petitioners is the fact that the condition of many of our schools is rundown, unsafe, or uninspected, and the government refuses to release information on the 1.5 billion of known repairs that are needed in our schools. There's a government plan to rent schools from private corporations; this is expensive and reckless. None of this is acceptable, given the record of the government as far as the amount of revenue that they've had over the last while. So the prayer reads:

We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on this government to immediately stop ignoring schools and start prioritizing students by capping classroom sizes, increasing support for students, and developing a transparent plan to build and repair our schools.

Mr. Speaker, these petitions are signed by residents of Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, Warman, Rosetown, Cudworth, and Swift Current and Cabri. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Remembering Corporal Nathan Cirillo and Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, it was one year ago today in Ottawa that an armed gunman stormed Parliament Hill in an attack that captured the attention and hearts of our entire nation.

Canadian Armed Forces member, Corporal Nathan Cirillo, was killed in this senseless act while standing guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. He was killed while doing his duty, standing on guard to protect our house of democracy and ensuring that the memory of those who have sacrificed their lives for our freedom is never forgotten.

Parliamentary security, police forces, and the Sergeant-at-Arms, Kevin Vickers, especially all deserve to be recognized for their bravery, selflessness, and heroism that day. Their actions surely saved many, many lives.

We also remember Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent who was murdered while off duty in Quebec.

Canadians from coast to coast to coast came together in this time of sorrow despite their differences and reaffirmed our commitment to Canadian values, democracy, multiculturalism, freedom, tolerance, and respect for our differences. Our great motto, "from many peoples, strength," should always serve to inform what we do inside and outside of this Assembly.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this Assembly to join with me in recognizing the service and sacrifices of Corporal Nathan Cirillo and Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent and in committing to working together to build a stronger, more inclusive democracy here in Saskatchewan and across our great nation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One year ago today we all watched on television as our nation's capital city was locked down while uncertainty gripped our hearts as we waited for details.

Mr. Speaker, we pay tribute to Corporal Nathan Cirillo and Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent. One year ago, only two days apart, we saw these two uniformed Canadian soldiers killed on our own soil simply for serving our country. The attack in Ottawa saw a gunman storm the National War Memorial where Corporal Cirillo was standing sentry. Then the gunman rushed Parliament Hill where he continued to wreak havoc, attacking not just the building but the very core of our democracy.

Mr. Speaker, in the midst of the cowardice of the attack, we saw a truly Canadian demonstration of bravery, whether the bystanders who rushed to try and save Corporal Cirillo after the attack or the security personnel and police who put themselves in harm's way or the actions of Sergeant-at-Arms Kevin Vickers.

We cannot forget that it takes courage for someone to don our nation's uniform, and it is deserving to honour all those who, past and present, have served to protect our freedom. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join with people from across our nation to honour Corporal Cirillo and Warrant Officer Vincent for their sacrifice and to thank all those security personnel who help keep us safe every day. Freedom comes with a price, and we will not forget. Thank you.

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

Fun Run Supports Student Wellness Initiative

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to bring attention to the great work done by SWITCH, the student wellness initiative toward community health in Saskatoon. SWITCH provides training for future health professionals while improving the wellness of Saskatoon's core communities. They envision Saskatoon as a city where all residents "have equal access to health care, nutrition, education, and employability skills."

This past weekend, I had the honour and enjoyment of participating along with my daughter Ophelia in SWITCH's seventh annual fun run. This is the second year the run has had an interesting twist, and we found ourselves zigzagging throughout the course to avoid being caught by zombies. My daughter and I had our work cut out for us, escaping the living dead who chased us through two of the city's nicest parks, I might add — Holiday Park and Victoria Park — which happen to be in Saskatoon Riversdale. Despite the potential trauma inflicted upon my 7-year-old and maybe some bad dreams, we did have fun.

Mr. Speaker, SWITCH provides innovative work pairing the resources students have to offer with the needs of those in our core communities. They also acknowledge the strength and the resiliency in Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods. Mr. Speaker, at times this organization has struggled to ensure they have adequate funding to continue the important work they do. I urge the members of the Assembly to learn more about the work of this student-run initiative and to continue to support their efforts in the community of Saskatoon. Thank you.

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

Record Aboriginal and International Student Enrolment at the University of Saskatchewan

Mr. Norris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the University of Saskatchewan released its enrolment numbers. There are now more than 21,000 students attending the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] and, Mr. Speaker, it's terrific news regarding Aboriginal student enrolment and international student recruitment.

Official fall enrolment numbers confirm that 2,236 students at the University of Saskatchewan are Aboriginal learners. This is a 5.5 per cent increase from last year and the highest number of Aboriginal students to ever attend the U of S. Almost 11 per cent of the total student population now identifies as Aboriginal. In addition to this, Mr. Speaker, the number of international students enrolled at the U of S has also set a record. More than 2,540 international students are attending class this autumn, up 3 per cent from last year.

Contributing to our growing population, Saskatchewan has an increasing Aboriginal population and many people are also coming to our province from around the world. It's encouraging to see the value families and communities put on post-secondary education. Numbers like these reflect and reinforce that Saskatchewan is the best place to live, to work, to raise a family, and to succeed in studies.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members to join with me in congratulating the University of Saskatchewan on its success, especially regarding its enrolment for Aboriginal students in Saskatchewan and for broadening the horizons of international students visiting our province for the first time. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

[10:15]

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

Dentistry Student Recognized for Research Project

Mr. Tochor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Along with the Minister of Advanced Education, I would like to welcome a guest in our gallery today, Dania Alkhani. She's a fourth-year dentistry student at the University of Saskatchewan who is using an innovative approach to fight oral cancer. Her research could lead to less invasive and more effective treatment, potentially helping to save countless lives from this horrible disease.

Combining her background in chemistry with her ongoing education in dentistry, she focused her two-year research project on finding a non-invasive way to kill oral cancer cells. Her research created a compound that is 10 times more effective at killing some cancer cells than the anti-cancer drug currently used.

Mr. Speaker, her research placed first provincially and then won the national competition held by the Canadian Dental Association, beating out the students from nine other dental schools in Canada. This is the second year in a row that the University of Saskatchewan has won this competition.

Dania is presenting her research at the American Dental Association conference in Washington, DC [District of Columbia] in November. I would ask all members to join with me in wishing her the best of luck moving forward with this exciting research. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cypress Hills.

Southwest Integrated Healthcare Facility Opens

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Tomorrow I, along with the ministers of Health and Rural and Remote Health, will join area residents in the community of Maple Creek to celebrate the grand opening of the Southwest Integrated Healthcare Facility. Residents in the deep southwest will now have access to acute, emergency, and long-term care services under one roof.

Mr. Speaker, the Southwest Integrated Healthcare Facility has a total of 24 acute care beds and 48 long-term care beds. It has replaced both the 21-bed Maple Creek Hospital and the 28-bed Cypress Lodge nursing home. This project wouldn't have been possible without the hard work and dedication of the steering committee members, the town of Maple Creek, surrounding rural municipalities, and the residents of the region.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to improving health

care infrastructure in this province. In 2009 we announced plans to replace 13 outdated health facilities in Saskatchewan, and our government has delivered on that commitment. The Southwest Integrated Healthcare Facility is the 11th of those 13 projects to be completed, with a project in Kelvington in the construction phase and a project in Meadow Lake in the planning phase.

Mr. Speaker, our government will continue to deliver on our promise to put patients first, and we remain committed to improving the health care system as well as health infrastructure in our province. Please join me in congratulating the community of Maple Creek on this exciting achievement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Jubilee Residences Hold Oktoberfest Fundraiser

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Assembly today to talk about an event that I attended in Saskatoon recently, sponsored by two of our wonderful long-term care facilities in Saskatoon.

Spontaneity, autonomy, and the ability to give and receive care are part of daily life at Jubilee Residences. Jubilee Residences hold a variety of special events to raise funds for projects and recreation programs that benefit the quality of life of residents.

This year they held an Oktoberfest to fundraise for the construction of sunrooms for residents of the Stensrud and Porteous lodges. Mr. Speaker, residents and guests enjoyed a traditional German Oktoberfest dinner, fantastic comedy from Saskatoon's own stand-up comedian Dez Reed, a Bavarian oompah band, beer sampling, and a silent auction. We also enjoyed a video which highlighted the many activities and projects going on at Jubilee.

Mr. Speaker, it was obvious that the staff at Jubilee care very much for those in their care. Their passion, generosity, and hard work was evident throughout the evening.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard a lot in this Assembly about long-term care for seniors in our province. It is important that we recognize the fantastic care our seniors do receive. I'd like to offer congratulations to Jubilee Residences, Stensrud and Porteous lodges for hosting such a wonderful event.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to recognize staff for their dedication and hard work in all of our senior homes across the province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Surgical Wait Times and Provision of Health Care

Mr. Broten: — Can the Premier please explain why the number of surgeries offered here in the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region is being significantly cut this year?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. The member will know that, some years ago, the Government of Saskatchewan embarked on a plan to reduce the wait times for surgery in Saskatchewan. We inherited a situation from the NDP [New Democratic Party] where we had the longest wait times in the nation, in all of Canada, for surgeries. And so, Mr. Speaker, we deployed private clinics, the use of private surgery clinics within the public system, within the single-payer system to deal with the backlog.

Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to report to the House that the object of that, the goal of that initiative has been achieved, that we have significantly reduced surgical wait times in the province of Saskatchewan. They were once the longest under the NDP, under the social democrats, and now they're the shortest in Canada. And so, Mr. Speaker, I would say to my hon. friend that as we make progress in terms of the number of surgeries, the backlog we inherited, there may well be from time to time in certain regions a reduction in the number of surgeries done, Mr. Speaker.

I can confirm for the House though that the resources for surgeries and for health care in general with respect to more nurses and more doctors, those resources are much higher than they've ever been. And they'll continue to be higher than they were under members opposite because, Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to make those long-term investments in our health care system.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region has a massive budgetary hole to fill, mostly because of Sask Party enforced so-called efficiency measures over the last several years. Of course most people would call those exactly what they are, which are deep cuts. So to help deal with this significant financial shortfall, Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region is reducing surgeries in order to cut \$8 million in costs. So to the Premier: how many fewer surgeries will be performed as a result of this \$8 million cut? What is the number?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, there are significant more resources that this side of the House, this government has put into the health care system specifically to deal with the wait times for surgery that we inherited from members opposite, the longest in the country.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, I think this is going to be a very good debate this morning. Because that member, when he was the Health critic — and he's never changed his position since becoming the Leader of the NDP — has said that if the people of this province ever elect them into office again, they will eliminate the surgical wait times initiative. They will remove all of the private clinics operating today within the public system, Mr. Speaker, from the system. And I want him to share with the House today . . . We're just a few months from an election, and it's his job to point out things that are problematic, certainly. It's now increasingly his job to say what they would do in power.

Today under this government's surgical wait times initiative,

Mr. Speaker, 91 per cent of Saskatchewan people are getting their surgery within three months — 91 per cent. They're not waiting 18 months anymore. They're not waiting 20 months for surgery. It's happening partly because we're using private clinics, partly because we've introduced more resources. And it's now time for him to stand in this place and tell the people of the province why in the world he would eliminate those private clinics within the public system that are delivering results for Saskatchewan people.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, no answer from the Premier about how many fewer surgeries would be in place because of this \$8 million cut. I asked how many, and we didn't hear it from the Premier. So either, Mr. Speaker, the Premier doesn't know the answer or he doesn't want Saskatchewan people to know the answer.

But here's what we do know, Mr. Speaker: surgeries here in our capital city are being scaled back significantly in order to cut \$8 million in costs. At the same time as the government is cutting surgeries, the need for surgeries is going up. That's what the internal documents show, Mr. Speaker. The internal documents show that the need is going up, but they're cutting back surgeries here in Regina. My question to the Premier: how can he possibly justify cutting surgeries when the need for surgeries is on the rise?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, we continue to work our way through the NDP backlog in terms of surgeries . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well that's the fact. Members opposite are laughing. The Leader of the Opposition laughs at that. Is this funny, Mr. Speaker, that in 1999 under the NDP the wait-list was 18 months for joint replacement surgery? The Leader of the Opposition laughs at this. Does he laugh at the fact that Dr. Mark Ogrady, the head of surgery of the Regina Health District, said, these numbers don't surprise me? He said, critical cases are handled quickly, but others may wait up to three years for surgery. Is that funny, Mr. Speaker?

I'll tell you, part of the reason why we're making progress in terms of surgeries in this province, part of the reason why 91 per cent of Saskatchewan people who need surgery now get it within three months is because of the surgical wait times initiative that has \$48 million dollars, more dollars, put into it in this very budget. That's the answer to the member's question. He still needs to answer the question: why in the world would he eviscerate, why would he take apart the surgical wait times plan? Why would he rule out private clinics in the public system when it's delivering results for Saskatchewan people?

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, lots of volume, but no answers there, Mr. Speaker. A clear question: an \$8 million cut in surgeries, how many fewer surgeries will that mean in the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region at a time where internal documents show that the need is going up?

They're not just cutting surgeries, Mr. Speaker. They are also

cutting a bunch of full-time health care jobs. In fact, they are cutting 152 full-time equivalent positions. 152 full-time health care jobs gone, Mr. Speaker. Those deep cuts, Mr. Speaker, to health care staffing are bound to have a major ripple effect through our entire health care system — longer waits in ERs [emergency room], longer waits for specialists, Mr. Speaker, not to mention a reduced quality of care. And this is what the internal documents show, Mr. Speaker, very clearly. After a decade of prosperity, this is where health care is at under the Sask Party, Mr. Speaker, because of Sask Party neglect and because of Sask Party cuts.

Doesn't it concern the Premier, Mr. Speaker, that he is presiding over the elimination of 152 full-time health care jobs just in Regina and area?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, those of us on this side of the House, if we're presiding over anything, we're presiding over this reality: that we have now 3,000 more nurses working in our health care system, of every designation, than were working under the system under the NDP. And when the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses told those folks opposite when they were government that we were short 1,000 nurses and they should ought to at least set a target for recruiting more nurses and hiring more, they said, well we're really not interested in targets because we probably won't hit those targets anyway.

If this side of the House has presided over anything, they presided over 500 more doctors practising in the province of Saskatchewan. These are the facts. And again to my hon. friend, my hon. friend wants to talk about the volume of surgery. The capacity is much greater now than it ever was when members opposite were in office. And when he was researcher at the SMA [Saskatchewan Medical Association], he would know from his research that we had the longest wait times for surgery in all of Canada.

You know, when members continue to heckle . . . I mean the Leader of the Opposition asks a serious question, and you'd think that the members would want to hear the answer. Because the answer is this: though we inherited the longest wait times from the social democrats, the NDP, for surgery, we now have the shortest wait times in all of Canada. 91 per cent of the people getting their surgery within three months because of private clinics in the public system, because of more public resources as well. What's his plan? What's his plan for the surgical wait initiative? Four months away from election, the people of the province deserve to know.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, when the Saskatoon Health Region asked for 450 care aids saying that's what they needed to provide proper care, do you know what this government gave them, Mr. Speaker? Nineteen. And now we have, Mr. Speaker, the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region, from their very own documents, Mr. Speaker, showing that they're eliminating 152 full-time equivalent health care workers in this region, Mr. Speaker.

So we know that surgeries are being cut significantly here in

Regina. We know, Mr. Speaker, that there are 152 health care jobs being eliminated in Regina. It's a cut of \$13 million in salaries, Mr. Speaker. These cuts are happening after a decade of unprecedented prosperity and years of record revenues that this government has had. And these cuts are also happening, Mr. Speaker, at a time when the Sask Party is still dumping untold millions into their misplaced priorities. Look at the over \$17 million each and every year just to the lean kaizen promotion offices. It's absolutely ridiculous.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people deserve to know the full extent of the cuts in health care throughout our entire province. Will the Premier release all of that information today?

[10:30]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, here are the facts. Since our party was elected to office, since we took over from the NDP, funding for the Regina Qu'Appelle Health District is up 52 per cent since 2007. There are more resources. There are more nurses of every designation. There are more doctors. There are more specialists.

Mr. Speaker, we can look back to what was the case under the NDP when Dr. Jeff McKerrell, the head of orthopedics for the Saskatoon Health District, said, "The problem is that there are not enough operating rooms and hospital resources in general." He said what they needed from the members opposite was money, foresight, and planning on behalf of the government. But they didn't have a plan then, Mr. Speaker.

We've implemented our plan and we've seen surgery wait times come down. They didn't have a plan then, and now four months away from a general election in the province of Saskatchewan, this Leader of the Opposition — who spends almost every question period moment on health care — has no plan for health care. It's his job certainly to point out challenges, but increasingly it is also his job and his duty to the people of the province to say what he would do.

And I ask today through you, Mr. Speaker, what would he do? Would he cancel the surgical wait times initiative? Would he kick out the private clinics operating in the public system that are delivering results? What is his plan for Saskatchewan health care, Mr. Speaker?

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, it is the Premier's duty to the people of Saskatchewan, the patients of Saskatchewan, the health care workers of Saskatchewan, to be transparent about the cuts that they are making and to be open and clear about this, Mr. Speaker. We see very clearly we've heard a lot of volume, a lot of bluster, Mr. Speaker, but we don't have any answers. We have no explanation, Mr. Speaker, about the number of surgeries that will be reduced because of an \$8 million cut just in Regina here alone, Mr. Speaker. No explanation, Mr. Speaker, about how this government could eliminate 152 full-time equivalent health care workers here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

We know, Mr. Speaker, this is happening in other parts of the province as well. But how bad, Mr. Speaker, are those cuts in Saskatoon, in Yorkton, Mr. Speaker, in Prince Albert, in Moose Jaw, in North Battleford? How bad are these cuts, Mr. Speaker, in northern Saskatchewan? What about the rest of the province?

Saskatchewan people deserve to know. They have a right to know, Mr. Speaker, about the cuts that are happening under this Sask Party government. My question to the Premier: why won't he be transparent about that?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, if the number of surgeries are coming down in certain districts, it's because we're making our way through the NDP backlog. They ask the same question over and over again. They should be interested in, I hope, some of the answers.

The answer is, we took over a major challenge from members opposite when they left power in 2007. That challenge was this. Now we're not talking about FTEs [full-time equivalent] or positions in health. We're talking about surgical care for Saskatchewan people.

Under the NDP . . . While the members opposite keep heckling and laughing about the issue, I would just say this to members opposite. The situation they left Saskatchewan people in in terms of surgeries, notwithstanding full-time equivalents, was that this province, the birthplace of medicare, had the longest surgical wait times in all of Canada. That's their record. The old Health, the former Health minister is sitting right behind the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, we took office. We implemented the surgical wait times initiative. We allowed private clinics to operate in the public system. And we are working our way through the backlog to the point where Saskatchewan people now wait three months, only three months — 91 per cent of them wait three months — for surgery. Part of the reason for that are more resources we've put into the system. Part of the reason for the question today is that we've seen we are making our way through the backlog.

But again, Mr. Speaker, I ask the hon. member to tell the people of Saskatchewan what he would do. Would he scrap the surgical wait times initiative of this side of the House? Would he kick out the private clinics operating in the public system delivering better health care? That was his position.

Unless he can tell us something different now, here's what we know. We know that under the Saskatchewan Party there are better results for Saskatchewan people who need surgery. Under the NDP there were not very good results at all — last in the country. And unless he's going to change his position, that contrast will not change, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Broten: — Does the Premier dispute the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region saying the demand for surgery, the need for surgeries is going up?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, apparently the members opposite think that this is funny. The member from Elphinstone thinks that this is funny.

The fact, Mr. Speaker, is that when they were the government, when they were the government, there were over 10,000 people . . . In fact, in 2010 when the surgical initiative started, there were 15,291 people waiting longer than three months for surgery. Today that number is just over 2,200, an 85 per cent reduction.

When you look at the people waiting 18 months and longer for surgery, it's down 100 per cent. In fact, we just heard a quote from the Premier that talked about, in 2001, people were waiting 18 months, as long as three months for joint replacement, in this province. A shameful record. A shameful legacy from the NDP, the members opposite.

The numbers waiting 18 months or longer, down 100 per cent. Waiting a year or longer, down 98 per cent. Waiting six months, down 95 per cent. Waiting three months, down 85 per cent. It's progress being made on this side, the best record in Canada when it comes to surgical waits. And, Mr. Speaker, we will defend that every single day.

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

Maintenance Agreement for Regina Bypass

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister in charge of the P3 [public-private partnership] rental schemes was either unable or unwilling to give a breakdown of the \$680 million that this government is giving to a Paris corporation as part of the so-called bypass deal. And remember, this \$680 million is over and above the already inflated estimated construction costs of \$1.2 billion.

I hope the minister will be able to answer the question today because certainly Saskatchewan people deserve transparency. To the minister: can he break down the \$680 million that they're sending to a Paris company?

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

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to answer that question as the Minister Responsible for SaskBuilds. Mr. Speaker, we have a very transparent process. Mr. Speaker, we follow Canadian best practices when it comes to P3s, Mr. Speaker.

The number that the member refers to deals not only with maintenance, Mr. Speaker, it deals with rehabilitation. It deals with risk transfer. It deals with all the other elements associated with this contract, Mr. Speaker, a lot of that information being commercially sensitive. And those members, when they were government, wouldn't release commercially sensitive information when it came to other contracts, Mr. Speaker.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that our auditor has said that we

have effective practices for evaluating P3s, Mr. Speaker. Our independent financial advisers, Ernst & Young, have confirmed that we'll be saving \$380 million on this project, Mr. Speaker, over a traditional bill . . . [inaudible] . . . maintenance, Mr. Speaker. And our independent fairness advisers have said that we've adhered to the principles of transparency and fairness when it comes to this particular project, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there's more than one way to skin a cat. If the opposition was to sit there and suggest to us that we shouldn't be looking at alternatives when it comes to the development of critical infrastructure in this province, Mr. Speaker, they're wrong.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, what a bunch of nonsensical bafflelegab from that minister, Mr. Speaker. Not an ounce of transparency from a government that voted against an independent audit of this deal before they signed this deal, and to pretend that the auditor is saying something. The auditor also said that when it relates to their P3 plan, "It's full of estimates. It's full of assumptions."

And there's more that she says. There was no answer in that response. We know that government's broken out some of these costs with the Swift Current long-term care facility. There's no reason that that minister can't be clear with the taxpayers of Saskatchewan as it relates to the cost of this \$680 million to this Paris company, or the over \$2 billion in total. So we have this government giving \$680 million of the hard-earned dollars of Saskatchewan people to a Paris company. And that's over and above those massive costs. My question to the minister: what is the breakdown for maintenance and all other aspects of those dollars?

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

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, as part of this process, and the opposition member knows, we will be releasing a fairness opinion. We'll be releasing the value-for-money report in accordance with the recommendations that have been made by the auditor, Mr. Speaker.

We've offered him a technical briefing with respect to the value-of-money report on the Swift Current long-term care facility, Mr. Speaker. His answer to me was, we don't need to know the details, Mr. Speaker. If he wants to sit . . . He wants to understand how this process works, Mr. Speaker. He should take us up on our offer.

And, Mr. Speaker, he doesn't need to look very far. He doesn't need to look very far to see other jurisdictions across this country that are employing P3s and are using exactly the same process that we are. He only has to talk to his cousins in Alberta, Mr. Speaker. The New Democratic government in Alberta, Mr. Speaker, has announced the construction of the south Calgary bypass using a P3, Mr. Speaker. He should talk to them to get the answers.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — You know, half of what that minister has to say just clearly isn't the case, Mr. Speaker. The rest of it doesn't make any sense. You'd expect more from your Justice minister, Mr. Speaker.

You know, it's bizarre, Mr. Speaker. We're talking about \$680 million, something that's ballooned from 400 million to over \$2 billion, with the dollars and the profits flowing back to a Paris company. Saskatchewan people deserve to know how much we're paying this Paris corporation for a bypass and for maintenance for over 30 years, for a plan that frankly defies common sense. Does the minister know the answer but is just refusing to share it, or does he actually not know what this deal will cost Saskatchewan taxpayers?

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

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, we've been very clear on what this project will cost the taxpayers of the province, Mr. Speaker. Two years ago we estimated the cost to build the bypass at \$1.2 billion, Mr. Speaker. The addition of two additional facilities, one at Hill Avenue and one at 9th Avenue, the estimated cost to build this bypass is still \$1.2 billion, Mr. Speaker. And that member knows that the additional costs associated with maintaining the facility, maintaining the facility, rehabilitating this facility over a 30-year period, is going to cost the balance of that, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we know the record of the opposition when it comes to maintenance of infrastructure in this province. We're building a facility, Mr. Speaker, that will stand the test of time. In 30 years this project will be as if it was new, Mr. Speaker, and there's value in that to the taxpayer, Mr. Speaker. All the information will be made public in the value-for-money report, which is consistent with Canadian best practices on P3s, Mr. Speaker. This information will be made available, including the contract documents, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, we're hearing from a lot of Saskatchewan people who are flabbergasted to hear about the Sask Party's maintenance plan for this so-called Regina bypass. It just defies common sense.

This plan will actually force government-owned snowplows to lift their snowplows when they reach the bypass, drive down the bypass without clearing any snow, and then allow them to start cleaning snow once again when they get to the other side. And I guess the minister texts at that time, il neige [Translation: it's snowing], to the Paris company to let them know it's snowing in Saskatchewan, all because of this secret deal with this corporation from Paris.

To the minister: why won't the Sask Party be transparent with Saskatchewan people? How much are we paying to this Paris company for this nonsensical maintenance plan for the bypass?

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

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite

refuses to listen to the answer. He's prepared to sit and make up his own facts, Mr. Speaker. That doesn't add to the discourse at all, Mr. Speaker.

As I've said, Mr. Speaker, we're following Canadian best practices, Mr. Speaker. And if he wants to make some comments about the Paris company that's involved with this, Mr. Speaker, he again needs to talk to his cousins in Alberta, Mr. Speaker, because that same company has been shortlisted as one of the proponent teams on the south Calgary bypass.

Now apparently, Mr. Speaker, that particular company isn't good enough for Saskatchewan but it's good enough for their cousins in Alberta, Mr. Speaker. And he should talk to them to see what their discussions have been with regard to that project, Mr. Speaker. We have had extensive discussions with all the opinions that we get, all the expert opinions that we get with respect to this bypass. Ernst & Young, Mr. Speaker, has confirmed that we'll be saving \$380 million on this project over the term of the contract, Mr. Speaker. If he wants to question the integrity of Ernst & Young on this, Mr. Speaker, he should go outside the House and do it.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — This coming from the government that actually voted against and are unwilling to have an independent audit of this very deal, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's clear too that the minister of rental schemes doesn't get what the auditor actually says about this government and . . .

The Speaker: — The members of the House know that you are to refer to the other member either by their title or their constituency name, not some other fabrication. So I would caution members on both sides — they're a little argy-bargy today; I know we're heading into the weekend — to choose their words carefully. I recognize the member.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — The minister seems to really not understand what the auditor has actually said. The auditor has said this about the Sask Party's P3 approach: "It's full of estimates. It's full of assumptions." She also said, "Not making information available in writing or maintaining key empirical data makes it difficult to substantiate or scrutinize decisions."

[10:45]

Now these aren't the glowing assessments that the minister claims or pretends that the auditor gave, Mr. Speaker. The fact is that Saskatchewan people deserve to know the full costs. We have a right to see how much we're paying to this Paris corporation, what we're paying them for, so that we can properly scrutinize those decisions and ensure value for money.

To the minister: what doesn't the Sask Party want Saskatchewan people to see? What are they hiding, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the minister already has highlighted that the independent fairness advisers have said of the process, "The principles of fairness, openness, consistency,

and transparency have, in our opinion, been maintained throughout the procurement process.” The Provincial Auditor says she confirms SaskBuilds has effective processes for analyzing the business case for P3s.

There’s only one ideologically hidebound group of women and men in all of the Dominion of Canada that have completely ruled out P3s, and that’s the men and women sitting on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker. The Saskatchewan NDP are opposed to P3s notwithstanding the fact that the NDP in Alberta are using them to build bypasses. We’re using them to finally build needed schools. We’re using P3s to finally build, rebuild the psychiatric hospital in North Battleford, Mr. Speaker, and health care projects right across this province. They’re the only ones that are opposed to them.

Early on we found out the Leader of the Opposition is still opposed to using private clinics in the public system, even though it delivers better results for people. The critic for Parks a couple of days ago said she was opposed, the NDP are opposed to even private investment in the parks for seasonal campgrounds, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday it was *Back to the Future* Day, Mr. Speaker. I think the members opposite have climbed into the member from Lakeview’s specially equipped Suburban and they’ve travelled back to 1944, where the people of the province are going to keep them for a very long time.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to order the answers to questions 975 through 978.

The Speaker: — Ordered?

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. I couldn’t hear what the Government House Leader had to say. And I couldn’t even hear what the Clerk-at-the-Table had to say, and he’s only 10 feet in front of me. Will the Government House Leader please repeat himself.

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to order the answers to questions 975 through 978.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has ordered questions 975 to 978. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the answer to question 979.

The Speaker: — The Government Whip has tabled response to question 979. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to order the answer to question 980.

The Speaker: — The Government Whip has ordered the

response to question 980.

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

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

Regina Bypass Project

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pleased to join in a 75-minute debate here this afternoon. Of course we just saw a lot of pomp and bluster and politics from the Premier here today, Mr. Speaker. You know, we get used to that, and I think Saskatchewan people have been used to that. You know, he’s sort of been the king of the grandstand, Mr. Speaker, but not great, Mr. Speaker, at getting the job done where it matters. And I guess, you know, it’s kind of in the . . . You know, we hear, you know, he elevates himself into large debates, Mr. Speaker, but often makes promises that he can’t keep, Mr. Speaker, but often doesn’t get the job done where it matters. And you know, it’s some of those fine details and good management and protection of public dollars, taxpayers’ dollars that actually matter, Mr. Speaker.

So I’m pleased to enter into debate here today, putting forward a motion here today as it relates to what we need from this government is a more urgent response to the tragic, unsafe conditions on Highway 1 East, Mr. Speaker, and for this government to provide some accountability on this deal before they put taxpayers into a boondoggle of a deal, Mr. Speaker, to build a bypass within the city of Regina instead of getting a bypass route that actually works. With a convoluted scheme that this government’s entering into, this rental-type scheme, Mr. Speaker, that guarantees, guarantees profits for a Paris company, Mr. Speaker, but certainly doesn’t deliver value or common sense to the people of the province.

Members can heckle all they want. They’d be wise to start listening to the communities out on Highway No. 1 East. They’d be wise to wake up to the realities and needs of taxpayers all across Saskatchewan.

Now certainly this is an interesting project, Mr. Speaker. This is a government that’s delayed action, meaningful action that’s been needed on this fatally unsafe artery, Mr. Speaker, for a long period of time. They’ve been unwilling to meet with community members for many different community meetings, Mr. Speaker. And I want to say to those members of those communities — whether they’re in Emerald Park, whether they’re in Pilot Butte, whether they’re in White City, whether they’re in Balgonie, Mr. Speaker — I want to commend so many within those communities for continuing to push and for pushing for a long period of time, Mr. Speaker, against a very stubborn government, the need for urgent action on Highway No. 1 East, Mr. Speaker. What this government has done has delayed meaningful action on this front and has now created this complex, convoluted, rent-an-infrastructure scheme choosing a bypass route that’s inside the city limits that seems to defy common sense, Mr. Speaker, with costs that are absolutely shooting through the roof.

Now what kind of government, Mr. Speaker, worth their salt would simply sign on to an overrun that’s well in excess of \$1 billion without batting an eye, Mr. Speaker? At a time where

there's many priorities in Saskatchewan, or at any time for that matter, Mr. Speaker, it's critically important that you expect your government to deliver where it matters, to get projects right; in this case, to make sure that the bypass route works, to make sure we have a bypass that actually works, and to make sure that the numbers work for taxpayers here in Saskatchewan.

Just a little bit of history over just the past couple of years, Mr. Speaker, on this file. This is a government that was saying a couple of years ago that they had studied this project to death, Mr. Speaker. They had said they studied it to death. They put that onto the record many times. And they said, oh it was going to be \$400 million, Mr. Speaker, this project. Oh, and then they said, whoops, they announced a little later they missed it. It doubled, Mr. Speaker. It went from 400 million . . . They missed that, it's actually \$800 million, Mr. Speaker. This is all in the course of the last couple of years, Mr. Speaker.

And then a few months after that, they said, oh we screwed up again. The amount isn't \$800 million, it's actually \$1.2 billion. So from 400 million to \$1.2 billion. And then, in the middle of this summer, Mr. Speaker, the government comes out and says, you know, we really had this wrong. We really missed this one. It's actually \$2 billion not including all the land costs; still not satisfying most, Mr. Speaker, that the route is the right route.

Now we've been pressing this government for urgent action when it comes to the actual safety concerns for a long period of time on Highway No. 1. We've worked with communities. We've had them in this Assembly well over a year ago, Mr. Speaker, pushing for the needs for traffic lights, the need to advance overpasses, all while this government's been delaying action and these complex and convoluted processes with this boondoggle of a contract with this Paris company, Mr. Speaker, instead of getting traffic lights up at the intersections that are needed, and instead of working in a common sense way that Saskatchewan people know quite well, rolling up their sleeves to get those overpasses built on Highway No. 1 East, Mr. Speaker.

And this is a fatally dangerous artery that causes stress and uncertainty to everyone that's getting onto it day after day — families, Mr. Speaker, that are getting in and out from work; those that are getting on and trying to connect back and forth. I know members opposite know this artery from first-hand experience. So you would think, Mr. Speaker, that this government would have taken this serious a long time ago. They've delayed action, and now they're presiding over a real mess, Mr. Speaker.

We continue to push this government to put up the traffic lights that are needed to stop or to reduce, I should say, the highly fatal right-angle and left-angle collisions that are occurring, Mr. Speaker, those that are tragically taking loved ones from families in this province, Mr. Speaker.

The statistics of this own government and the reports of this own government have pushed forward and called for the need for traffic lights. That's their own studies, Mr. Speaker, over a couple of years ago. The actual studies that are informing this government, if you look at those studies, there's actually a dramatic reduction of right-angle collisions, of left-angle collisions, Mr. Speaker, and an overall, and an overall reduction

of accidents. There's concern as well about a potential of, despite an overall reduction of accidents, that it may increase a portion of accidents, which would be rear-end collisions, Mr. Speaker.

But certainly other jurisdictions have dealt with this before. Certainly there's many measures that this government could be taking to make sure that individuals are clearly aware of these highly dangerous intersections. And I think, you know, it's past time that people's lives and the safety and security concerns facing those on this artery take precedent over the fast movement of freight, Mr. Speaker. And so we continue to push on that front.

We also call on this government, who are now caught up in these complex, convoluted, lawyered-up processes with this Paris company, Mr. Speaker, to do the common sense thing, to recognize that there's three intersections that critically need overpasses out there as soon as possible. And what they need is for this government to stop delaying that action, in having this caught up in this complex, convoluted contract, Mr. Speaker, and to advance the building of those overpasses.

Now road builders, and I think government's own documents, would suggest that each of those overpasses would be in the range potentially of 40 to 50, at the high end possibly \$60 million a year. Those overpasses are needed for communities. It's past time that this government stop delaying action and playing games with lawyers and consultants and sending money to a Paris company, and they start delivering for Saskatchewan people here in this province.

You know, the plan of this government defies common sense on this front. We need urgent actions for safety for those utilizing this artery. We need a long-term plan that actually works for taxpayers and a long-term plan that works for the bypass. We need a bypass that works. Not one, Mr. Speaker, that's built in the wrong location. Not one that doesn't effectively get truck traffic off of it. Not one, Mr. Speaker, that costs taxpayers hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars, I guess beyond \$1 billion more than it needs to. So let's get a bypass that works. Let's act urgently on safety. And the actions of this government have been deplorable on this front.

You know, I think of some of the groups I've met with on this front. You know, I've had delegations come into my office. I've heard from many. I remember being out at Greenall School in Balgonie with a packed room — and I understand that members opposite, MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] opposite, which is the area that they represent, Mr. Speaker, weren't able to get to that meeting, Mr. Speaker — but in that room well over a year ago, Mr. Speaker, listening to families that have lost loved ones, listening to students making the case about the tragic circumstances.

We have a government that's delayed action and is now forfeiting this responsibility to desks in Paris, Mr. Speaker, instead of those that are on the ground and know the realities full well every day, leaving this highly fatal, highly dangerous corridor without the action that they deserve, Mr. Speaker.

So we're calling on this government to stop delaying the meaningful action around safety. We're calling for them to

work with the community to get traffic lights and a system of proper notice of those traffic lights that are going to work for the communities on Highway No. 1 East. We're pushing this government, as we have been, to not get caught up in a convoluted, delayed process with lawyers and consultants and Paris companies, with a boondoggle that continues to grow in cost, Mr. Speaker, but to actually advance those overpasses that are needed in the common sense way we know how. And you know what? We've got a bunch of Saskatchewan road builders who would be exceptional in helping advance those actual projects as well, Mr. Speaker.

[11:00]

And we ask this government to do the right thing, to recognize that details matter when it comes to a project like this, to make sure that we get the route right, to re-evaluate why is this route, why are they so adamant in placing this within city limits? Why are they rejecting plans that, it would seem, would more effectively get truck traffic outside the city and off of this dangerous artery? Why are they not looking at routes, Mr. Speaker, that would actually get the trucks closer to where they're going? The route itself right now still heavily congests in Victoria East, Mr. Speaker, as you look at where so many of the trucks are going, if you actually look at the truck traffic statistics and the realities in Regina and area.

Trucks are going up into Ross Industrial area. This plan does not work well for Ross Industrial in Regina. Trucks are utilizing the refinery, Mr. Speaker, the refinery complex. This bypass does not work well to connect trucks to that bypass, the route that they're choosing.

You think of Evraz, Mr. Speaker, you think of all of that activity, as opposed to what this government's doing is sticking a bypass within city limits, going to keep the congestion and danger on those roads, building what I understand are going to be potentially pretty dangerous overpasses for the type of configuration that they're forced to do. Doing so in an area, I understand, that's really costly, going over utilities and pipelines and services and the requirement of service roads that wouldn't be required in those, to the same extent in those other, with the other route options, Mr. Speaker.

You know it's incumbent on us, and each and every one of us that are elected regardless of the party we represent, to stand up once in a while, Mr. Speaker, to say what's right and to make sure that we get it right for the taxpayers of this province, and to make sure we get it right on safety. We have a circumstance where this government has done nothing but delay meaningful action as it relates to safety for those utilizing this artery. That has to stop, Mr. Speaker. And those actions and those delays rightfully should be condemned by this government, Mr. Speaker. We should also make sure that when we're planning a project this big that we get it right, that the route works. What we don't need, Mr. Speaker, is to be 5 years, 8 years, 10 years down the road driving on a bypass that then becomes commonplace to be understood that was built in a place that didn't make sense, Mr. Speaker.

And then we also owe it to taxpayers who worked damned hard in this province, Mr. Speaker, for the dollars . . . [inaudible interjections] . . . Darned hard; I retract that word. Who worked

incredibly hard, Mr. Speaker, in this province, and they deserve us to do our earnest best to scrutinize and make sure that we're delivering value for those hard-earned tax dollars, Mr. Speaker.

And it is the kind of issue, Mr. Speaker, that shouldn't have members all caught up in the political lines of this party or that party. It's the kind of boondoggle, Mr. Speaker, that this government is signing them on to that members of that side should be standing up for. They should be standing up and saying enough is enough. We have to act for safety more urgently, and they should have been doing that a long time ago. You should have members on that side of the Assembly saying, you know, when it come to an overrun of over a billion dollars, if we can build a better route, a safer route, a route that works better for the long term and could save us a billion dollars, you'd expect it of every single one of those members over there to be urging that approach, Mr. Speaker.

So I call on each and every one of those members over there not just to get behind the nonsensical actions that we see of this government on this front, but to stand up as independent members of this Assembly to call for the urgent action on safety measures, traffic lights, overpasses being broken out and built as fast as possible out on Highway No. 1 East, Mr. Speaker, and to ensure a route, re-evaluate the route, and ensure a route that actually works for Saskatchewan people and actually get value for taxpayers. It makes no sense, this whole debacle with this Paris company. But, Mr. Speaker, at this point in time I will move the following motion:

That this Assembly call on the government to put up interim safety measures, including traffic lights, and build the needed overpasses along Highway 1 East immediately, using local construction firms whenever possible; and further

That the government take the necessary steps to avoid a multi-billion-dollar bypass boondoggle by re-evaluating both the route and the use of the P3 rent-a-road approach with the conglomerate from France.

I so move.

The Speaker: — The member for Regina Rosemont has moved:

That this Assembly call on the government to put up interim safety measures, including traffic lights, and build the needed overpasses along Highway 1 East immediately, using local construction firms whenever possible; and further

That the government take the necessary steps to avoid a multi-billion-dollar bypass boondoggle by re-evaluating both the route and the use of the P3 rent-a-road approach with the conglomerate from France.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Cut Knife-Turtleford.

Mr. Doke: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to enter into this debate today, and I would like to break my presentation into two parts, first the timelines on this project

and the maintenance issue. I also would like to present the facts on this side of the House and the fiction on the other side.

Mr. Speaker, this project started some 20 years ago. It was started by the NDP but, as usual, no action. In fact it was started so long ago that the member from Carrot River had hair. So it has been a long time in the making.

A Saskatchewan Party government will finish this project. It will not study it anymore. It will not engineer it anymore. They will carry on with the project. This is Saskatchewan's largest infrastructure project and will be completed by a Sask Party government. This project is backed by solid engineering, not myths like members opposite. For instance, the member from Athabasca last year went for a ride and after his ride he was convinced that that is the route that the bypass should take. But I see now that he has changed his position in life. After yesterday, he is the new self-endorsed Ag critic. And so maybe he has moved on from that, so that's good.

Mr. Speaker, the project has transparency and consultations. The member from Rosemont talked about there was no consultation. Well 24 separate open houses and consultation events; one-on-one meetings with businesses, impacted landowners, and other stakeholders; municipal governments actively involved in all steering committees; unredacted engineering studies available on Ministry of Highways website. And, Mr. Speaker, from the Provincial Auditor 2014 report volume 2, the auditor had this to say:

We found that the ministry actively sought input from the public and stakeholders throughout the process . . . We did not find evidence of undue influence or third parties (e.g., landowners) during this selection process.

So, Mr. Speaker, once again just to correct the facts, even the Provincial Auditor supports this initiative.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk a little bit about the users of this. The members opposite would have us believe that only 15 per cent of the truck traffic will be diverted on this road. From Al Rosseker, executive director of the Saskatchewan Trucking Association:

The bypass is a 20-year dream come true. The Manitoba and Saskatchewan trucking associations say that 75 per cent of trucks approaching Regina from the east will continue on the bypass rather than coming through the city. Twelve hundred trucks approach Regina from that direction every day, including 200 multi-trailer trucks. We estimate truck traffic will grow to 6,400 trucks per day on Highway 1 near Balgonie by 2040. Thirty-one hundred of these trucks are expected to use the new Regina bypass instead of travelling into the city and on to Victoria Avenue.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to just take a moment and talk about supporters of this project. A couple of quotes:

"I've been on council for 15 years and the city spent longer than that waiting. It looks like the government will move it through. We are extremely pleased with that." Mayor Michael Fougere.

"The White Butte regional partners have spent a great deal of time pushing for this development to happen as soon as possible and we unanimously support this project as a P3." Lain Lovelace, White Butte regional planning committee Chair.

Mr. Speaker, town councils in Balgonie, Pilot Butte, the village and RM [rural municipality] of Edenwold, Regina, and the RM of Sherwood and White City all support the bypass as planned.

Mr. Speaker, there has been some accusations by the members opposite that the route is dated and that it does not plan for the future. I would just like to say that the route was approved in 2014. The study was endorsed by all municipalities and a design for traffic patterns and volumes expected into 2040. The city of Regina, the towns of Pilot Butte, Balgonie, and White City, and the RMs of Edenwold and Sherwood were consulted extensively through the development plans.

Mr. Speaker, a few more quotes, Regina bypass quotes:

"We are totally satisfied with the location." Mayor Michael Fougere, *Leader-Post*, December 12, 2014.

"We support the project as designed." Bruce Evans, mayor of White City, August 21st, 2015 in a scrum.

"Putting it on pause would add further delays and likely additional costs." Bruce Evans, mayor of White City, August 21st, 2015.

So, Mr. Speaker, those are recent quotes. This is not outdated.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to just talk a moment here on maintenance. The member from Rosemont attended the highway briefing, had a few questions. All his questions were answered. When he left, then he says that he didn't get any answers. It seems to me that his main concern, as I've heard in the House again here today, is about the plowing and the grass cutting on the bypass. Does he think that that's the only place in the province where it's going to snow or the grass is going to grow? Well we can assure him that for 34 years under this contract, it'll be looked after, and our capable highway personnel can look after the rest of the province. So I would just like him to understand that. We can assure him that this is a full maintenance project, like plowing, grass cutting, patching, resurfacing, and will be turned back to the province after 34 years in like-new condition.

Mr. Speaker, maintenance is something the NDP just had no idea about. When we formed government, there was a billion-dollar pothole. And the member from Athabasca, he's smiling over there and everything, but he knows all about it because he was the Highways minister. And he left it, and he did a great job. In fact they were so aware of maintenance that they basically told residents of Saskatchewan, patch your own potholes. That was by the missing link.

Mr. Speaker, in fact the maintenance might have been the reason why members opposite closed 52 hospitals, 176 schools in our province, might be the reason why because they just didn't know anything about maintenance and they let their buildings run down. Mr. Speaker, thank goodness there was a

provincial election or they might have closed the Trans-Canada Highway too.

Mr. Speaker, I hear more and more all the time, from the member from Rosemont especially, about no local companies under P3s. Totally false again.

Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to report that on the Regina bypass, so far, five local companies. On the multi-school project, 24 local companies. On the Saskatchewan Hospital in The Battlefords, something that they talked about for years and years and years and did nothing about it except when it came to the election all of a sudden they threw out . . . I believe it was Mr. Taylor at that point threw out a number of 58 million and he was going to build a new hospital for that. But there's eight local companies involved in that project at this point. And, Mr. Speaker, in Swift Current at the long-term care facility, 26 local companies. So that kind of sets the stage for all of that.

Some of the companies on this bypass project in Regina here: Broda Construction, Clifton Associates, Urban Systems, Graham. Now these aren't companies that are from France. These are local companies, and they are doing the job and they will do it well.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Rosemont, I don't know where he's coming from sometimes when he talks about the P3s and maintenance and whatever. It's very obvious what that government did when they were in power. The first thing they cut in every budget was maintenance. They had no maintenance on highways, schools, hospitals. It was all gone. They did nothing, absolutely nothing. But we can assure you on this project alone, just this project, 34 years of full maintenance.

So, Mr. Speaker, I look forward . . . I'm sure I'll be getting lots of questions from the members opposite, and I look forward to those questions. I will gladly talk about this project any day of the week.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I would like to congratulate the Ministry of Highways and all the engineering companies that have brought this project to fruition. And I look forward to the question period. Thank you.

[11:15]

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

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I too am pleased to join in the debate around the bypass, Mr. Speaker. And it should be stated right at the front, Mr. Speaker, that one of the things that's really important to this side of the Assembly is that it is important that people out there understand, when it comes to the Regina bypass, the NDP are in full support of having the bypass built, Mr. Speaker, to ensure safety and certainly to help the economy and put the proper infrastructure in place for years and years to come, Mr. Speaker. We've said that on numerous occasions. We'll continue saying that, that the bypass must be built, Mr. Speaker, and that bypass must be built as soon as possible, Mr. Speaker, and it's got to be built with the right arguments in place, Mr. Speaker.

And this is why, this is why I say to the people that are being impacted by this, Mr. Speaker, we've had a lot of arguments and a lot of public debates on this, and I want to kind of draw a picture for the people that might be listening and not certain what the argument is. But our argument on the NDP side are twofold. One is the Regina bypass must be built. That's what we're arguing here, Mr. Speaker. The second argument is a bypass should be very clearly bypassing the city, Mr. Speaker. That's one of the biggest fundamental arguments around building a bypass.

And what we've seen from this government, Mr. Speaker, is they're doing the bypass as the NDP had originally designed. And the member is right. The NDP began the project and began the north, the north, northwest portion of the bypass, Mr. Speaker. But then as you get closer to the eastern side of the city, the Regina east area, Mr. Speaker, all of a sudden the bypass juts right back into the city. What many people in the Tower Road location, many people are argumentative about, Mr. Speaker, is they say it doesn't bypass the city; it goes back into the city.

So the basic, fundamental argument behind the Regina bypass project is that it should bypass the city. That's the bottom line that we're talking about, Mr. Speaker. So we're able to divert traffic, especially the heavy traffic, away from the city, Mr. Speaker, which really is a safety concern and a safety matter. And as well it's good for the economy that we have a vibrant global transportation system, Mr. Speaker, because moving our goods to market is something that has to be improved on a continual basis.

So, Mr. Speaker, when you hear of the quotes of the mayors of Balgonie, the Regina mayor, the White City mayor, the Emerald Park leadership, and of course the reeves and the RM leadership, Mr. Speaker, their fundamental argument is, these overpasses should be built in their communities to ensure safety, Mr. Speaker. They're not arguing the fact that . . . over the general location.

If I was the mayor of Balgonie or White City, I'd want the overpasses built as soon as possible. Why, Mr. Speaker? Because it's a good investment. Why? Because it encourages safety for the residents. And why? It also helps the regional economy of each of these cities.

Now what you're not going to do is have, I don't think, the mayors saying, well you look at the option for the bypass; we really want to make sure that the overpasses are built properly. And the NDP support that position. We think that they should have those overpasses in those three centres because of the volume of traffic and because all the No. 1 traffic coming from all parts of Canada certainly complicates the flow and the safety of the bypass or the traffic overall.

So we're not arguing the fact (a) the bypass should be built. We're not arguing with the fact that these overpasses should be constructed as the first order of business, Mr. Speaker. But we're also arguing about the point is, where is it, in common sense and logic, as to why Tower Road? That's the biggest argument they have. People of Saskatchewan, people in that area, are all basically telling the government, why Tower Road?

Now, Mr. Speaker, the other argument that they're also pointing out is, the fact of the matter is that as you look at the costs overall, they have ballooned from an original cost of 450 million when we were in government. And the government is absolutely right, Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party caucus: the NDP did start the project. But I can tell you today there'd be a lot more thought and a lot more process involved, as opposed to coming down Tower Road, because quite frankly, why Tower Road, Mr. Speaker? We'll never understand why Tower Road.

But I'll say this today to the mayor of Balgonie, the mayor of White City, and the mayor of Emerald Park, or the reeve or the RM, whatever area is being impacted, that the overpasses that are required to provide safety for your citizens should be built. We're not arguing that here. The biggest point that we're arguing is where the bypass should go. We think, on this side, that the bypass ought to bypass the city, Mr. Speaker. And there is tons of arguments and there's some very logical people, Mr. Speaker, that have explained time and time again how this is a boondoggle, how the Saskatchewan Party has made a complete mess of this. And, Mr. Speaker, people are starting to quickly realize that they are not listening, and quite frankly the bypass does not bypass the city. And that in itself is problematic.

But, Mr. Speaker, I was going to point out as well that the whole notion of \$1 billion cost overrun, Mr. Speaker, this is also problematic for many, many people. Five years from now, 10 years from now, people are going to say, we spent almost \$2 billion on this bypass that doesn't bypass the city. And I can tell the people today that is a result of some of the speakers here this afternoon that are speaking against our motion, they are the ones that are defending this particular decision to not bypass the city. And they ought to be on record. They ought to be recognized for their defence of the current location. And, Mr. Speaker, as we've heard and said time and time again in this Assembly, the Regina bypass should bypass the city.

The provincial NDP want to see the bypass built. We want to see the overpasses built, Mr. Speaker. We want to see the safe flow of traffic. We want to see the safe and quick delivery of goods and services through our transportation system. All that is logical argument. But what is totally beyond us is how the Saskatchewan Party has completely messed the process up. Why Tower Road, Mr. Speaker? And why are we all of a sudden talking about a \$1 billion cost overrun? And this is compliments of the Saskatchewan Party, and that money, by the way, is going to a company in France called Vinci, Mr. Speaker.

So we have had a lot of argument and a lot of debates on this, but I want to point out to the people of Saskatchewan one simple thing. How is it that the Saskatchewan Party could mess up a very basic principle or a very basic idea? Building a bypass is a great idea. Building the overpasses in these communities is necessary. So why didn't the Saskatchewan Party bypass the city? Why are they coming back into the city and calling it a bypass, Mr. Speaker?

So as you see the costs balloon, it's not meeting the objective that we originally identified as the reason for the importance of the bypass, and that is of course safety and that is of course to help the economy of the region. So every mayor and every reeve in this particular area is going to support investment in

highways, is going to support the creation of overpasses so the citizens can move around safely and freely, and that traffic and again the transportation of goods can happen at a safe level without impeding our economy overall. Everybody understands that. So that's why the mayors of these particular cities and communities are saying that the bypass needs to happen. It's a great idea.

But, Mr. Speaker, how many of those particular mayors are supporting Tower Road location? We're hearing a lot of concern from a lot of people in that area that the Tower Road location, it's short-sighted. It is not necessary. It's going to cost a heck of a lot more money, Mr. Speaker, than originally planned.

The other thing I would point out in my closing comments is this, and I hope they quote me in five, six, seven years from now when this whole boondoggle occurs. I would tell the Saskatchewan Party that they are being played, to be very, very careful on what the end objective here is. Because if you find out in a few years from now, you will know what we were talking about on this side of the Assembly.

When you see a \$1 billion price tag over what you originally began with, Mr. Speaker, and that the fact that it doesn't bypass the city, that all these issues and all these concerns are out there that they're completely ignoring and they're putting the Saskatchewan taxpayer on the hook for 30 years . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And the member from, wherever he's from, Mr. Speaker, he's indicated that the member from Carrot River had hair when this process began. I can tell you it won't be . . . I won't have hair by the time that the bill is being paid, Mr. Speaker, for all the rich contracts that they've given to this company from France. We will still be paying 30-plus years from now, Mr. Speaker.

And what's amazing to me is how come they couldn't give security of a long-term contract with the working men and women of this province, but they're willing to do that to a company in France. That is another fundamental argument.

So, Mr. Speaker, I stand today to argue for the motion, Mr. Speaker, and to argue for the debate and to tell the people of Regina, we support the bypass. We support the overpasses. But let's not use Tower Road. And, Mr. Speaker, I think the people of Regina are starting to realize that very quickly.

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

Mr. Steinley: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And it is a pleasure for me to rise in the Assembly today and join the debate regarding the Regina bypass project. Mr. Speaker, I sat here listening to two speeches from the members opposite, and it was absolutely embarrassing to hear them talk. I think first and foremost our first thing we need to be concerned about is the safety of families throughout the province. Safety is our first issue, and getting this project done faster and lower cost is imperative on this side of the House, to get it done for the people of White City, Emerald Park, Balgonie.

And the members opposite say, we've talked to the people. We talk to people. Well I have a letter dated September the 2nd,

2015 from Balgonie, Pilot Butte, the village and RM of Edenwold, Regina, RM of Sherwood, and White City. And, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read some of the letter we received into the record:

Our council has been working for decades towards the day when overpasses would be sited and improved along the No. 1 Highway between Balgonie and Regina. The councils of White City, the RM of Edenwold, the village of Edenwold, the town of Balgonie, the town of Pilot Butte, together with the RM of Sherwood and the city of Regina have all endorsed the approved Regina bypass project. Notwithstanding the fact that no one in the region was able to be 100 per cent satisfied of what every landowner, developer, or interested party asked for, as a whole we are satisfied that the project as designed will serve the region well for years to come.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think that's something that the other side has never taken into account. You're never going to be able to satisfy everyone 100 per cent. That's a fact of life. When you're in government, you have to make decisions. That's something those members over there never did. We'll study something. We'll go through a review process. We'll talk about it. We'll talk about it. Like the member from Athabasca said, we've talked about this since the early '90s. Well talk is cheap. It is. When you actually want to commit money to infrastructure and commit to making a priority and building a project that's going to make safer communities for everyone across the province, that's what is important.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think they can laugh on that side because really they don't have the knowledge of building. They've never built anything in their life. The member from Rosemont's never built anything better than a sandbox probably, Mr. Speaker. And what he did today, he stands up in this House, he talked about all the people he went out and he consulted with. He didn't mention one name, and he's done this before.

The member from Rosemont talked about the bypass yesterday. We had stakeholders in the galleries. When he was asking questions about lifting up your snowplow, not mowing around the bypass, they were laughing at him, laughing at the member from Rosemont asking these ridiculous questions. Because really he's taking a very important issue for people of Regina and your communities and he's making a joke of it which is . . . I like the member from Rosemont. I think he's a good guy, but he's doing himself a disservice by the ridiculous questions he's asking in question period, Mr. Speaker.

A few things I'd like to talk about and why. When I go around and I door knock in Walsh Acres, I'll talk on behalf of the Regina bypass because I think it's something that's going to serve all of Regina residents very, very well, Mr. Speaker. And the south route . . . I'm going to give you a true or false . . .

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order. If the member for Canora-Pelly and the member for Athabasca want to talk, why don't they get together and do that instead of hollering across the floor? I recognize the member for Regina Walsh Acres.

[11:30]

Mr. Steinley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's nice to hear my colleagues want to take part in this debate because it is a very important conversation to have for the citizens of Saskatchewan.

So the Regina bypass is going to be built in just four years versus 10 years of a traditional build. I think that's a good thing, built six years sooner using a P3 model — better. We'll maintain like new. So the one great thing about a P3 is the maintenance portion of it, Mr. Speaker. And the fact that the whole rent-a-scheme, basically myth that the member from Rosemont is trying to tell — oh, you're going to rent the road; oh, you're going to rent the school — well it's just fearmongering.

The government owns these projects. The government owns these assets. He's just trying to spread some misinformation. I'll choose my words carefully because generally it makes me feel very uncomfortable when he gets up and stands because sometimes the facts might get in the way of a good story, and he does enjoy a good story, Mr. Speaker.

So the lower cost to taxpayers, taxpayers are saving \$380 million over the lifetime of this contract. And like the Minister for SaskBuilds said during question period, if he wants to question the reputation of Ernest & Young who did this value-for-money. . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Ernst & Young. Sorry, sorry member from Rosemont. That's the first thing you got right in the House today. Thank you.

The project is on budget. We estimated it at \$1.2 billion and that's accurate. The member from Rosemont wants to talk about the \$400 million and the \$800 million. What he doesn't understand, because he's never been in government, is projects change. The scope of a project can change, member from Rosemont. Every now and then when you say you're going to do something, you're going to change a project to make it work better for the citizens of the province.

The project he's talking about, the 400 million project, doesn't exist. It's gone, Mr. Speaker. That project is gone. There's a new project. He has to move on, but that's something NDP members don't do very well. They generally don't move on. They're stuck in the past. And that's one of the reasons why they will never ever agree to a P3 because they're ideologically opposed to these P3s because it doesn't fit into their little box of how something should be done, and they won't do any innovative ideas to get some infrastructure for the citizens of Saskatchewan.

He's in the education sector. It's amazing that he's probably the only person in the education sector against P3 schools. It's unbelievable. They want to build more projects, more schools for the students of Saskatchewan, and he's against it. No, they don't need more schools. And then the member from Lakeview will jump and go, well we need more education infrastructure. Well if neither of them are against P3 schools, so how do you want more education infrastructure and then be diametrically opposed to P3s?

Mr. Speaker, more about the Regina bypass because I could talk

about this project all day. It's the largest infrastructure project in the history of Saskatchewan, the largest infrastructure project in the history of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, a project that's going to be able to have the citizens of White City, Balgonie travel safer back and forth to work.

And one thing, Mr. Speaker, which I find amazing is that the member from Rosemont quotes numbers all the time but never attributes them to anyone. He's like, oh it's only going to take off 15 per cent of the truck traffic. Show me that number. Show me who gave you that number, member from Rosemont, because our traffic engineers whose job it is to make sure structures are safe, to make sure that projects are safe for citizens, live out in White City, live out in Emerald Park. They want to make it as safe as possible, and it's their job to do that. And they gave us a number that it will take 60 to 70 per cent of the traffic off of that road. So I'd love to see the member from Rosemont bring forward some documents from their engineers because they use a lot of numbers but they're never backed up by a study, Mr. Speaker.

So it's interesting . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Never backed up by facts, the minister says. That's true. They never really back up any of their numbers with facts. And we went out and consulted with 21 different meetings with stakeholders all across those communities, and he says we didn't talk . . . The member from Rosemont says we didn't talk to anyone. Another myth from the member from Rosemont. You know, it's getting close to election time. It's getting close to election time. April 4th, we're going to the polls, Mr. Speaker, and this member was on his feet for 15 minutes with his gafflebag, which is a great word he had during question period. It's not really a word, so I don't really don't know the connotation, Mr. Speaker.

But not once did he mention his proposal. The NDP wrote a proposal. This is the first time that we've actually been able to have a real debate about issues in this Assembly because they actually have a proposal on the bypass in Regina. And their proposal is, scrap it all. Scrap it all and start over. It's unbelievable. They want to scrap it all. Scrap the 30-year contract, start over, which will put this project four years behind. That's what he wants to do. Four years behind where we are right now. And then he wants to say, oh well, probably you scrap a contract with a company that you had a contract for 30 years, it won't cost you any money. He's not going to put that into account.

So their project they have put forward in a press release said it will take four years longer and cost a billion dollars more, and they're worried about the money of taxpayers. He used unparliamentary language in here to talk about how hard taxpayers work for their money. Well we all know how hard taxpayers work for their money, and they want to put another billion dollars into the bypass because they want to do a traditional build because they will not even think about a new, innovative way to build infrastructure.

So, Mr. Speaker, when they stand up and spread misinformation, fearmongering, absolute garbage from that side of the House on a debate, when he doesn't have the decency to even talk about the proposal that they put forward, I will go to the streets and talk about our project over their project any day. And I'll be supporting our project, not the motion.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's always sort of interesting listening to members opposite make their case, and certainly sometimes it's also sort of groundbreaking in terms of, you know, new words for the English language. So that speech just past, Mr. Speaker, we heard gafflebag being introduced into the common usage. And I guess, you know, building on question period where the minister was referencing, you know, the ways to skin a cat, so I guess, you know, here we are now. The cat must be out of the gafflebag in terms of where they're going with this debate, Mr. Speaker.

But it's pretty interesting. I guess language also plays a lot, as I was very interested to listen to my colleague, the member from Rosemont or Deputy Leader, talking about the . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh, and you can always hear the member from Canora-Pelly clear as a bell, Mr. Speaker. There is never any sort of question about that. But it was interesting listening to the exchange earlier in question period wherein, you know, when the facts aren't working for you, Mr. Speaker, in terms of debate in this legislature, you see something else happen. So we had a fine example of that very dynamic earlier in question period where, you know, when it came to answering the question straight up, we heard some very interesting things coming from the Minister for SaskBuilds that, you know, were more than a little passing strange, Mr. Speaker.

But I just wanted to get a few things on the record in terms of this debate. You know, interestingly enough, yesterday we had the *Back to the Future* Day, and certainly 30 years ago the way that launched forward to this very day in the future. But that was of course back in 1985, Mr. Speaker, and so 30 years ago of course there was a group of men and women that had the privilege to serve as the government of Saskatchewan that made a bunch of choices at that time that we arguably went to pay on for the next 30 years. And in terms of the way that that, you know . . . I'd certainly come of age. I was able to cast my first vote in the 1991 election. And the way that we spent the '90s paying for the '80s in this province, Mr. Speaker, it's been interesting to see how this government has gone back to the future with P3s in terms of the 30 years that they want to put that load on future generations to come.

And it's interesting. When they first came to government, Mr. Speaker, they had, you know, roughly \$2 billion to burn through in terms of cash on hand. They very rapidly accomplished that, Mr. Speaker. But then and along at the same time when it came to the question of P3s, well you know at that point in time, they took a look and said no, that's not a good approach to take, Mr. Speaker. And so, you know, the time passes by. The finances tighten up. We're going to be very interested to see how the public accounts read for the current year, Mr. Speaker, because arguably the fact that they dressed up \$700 million in borrowing at the time of the last budget and said, you know, deficit . . . What deficit? Nothing to see here, and just keep on moving.

Well that was a very interesting approach and it was also again kind of back to the future in terms of what happened in this province in the 1980s in terms of the way that decisions were made and presented. And you know, finances that were

presented as rosy for one budget, later on found out, you know, to have a billion-dollar deficit attached. So how this is going to wind up, Mr. Speaker, you know, we'll see, but in some ways we've seen this movie before. We've seen *Back to the Future* here in this province before. And we see with this government moving decisions to the out years that will have a big impact on the finances of the province, and essentially kicking it down the line for, you know, the next generation to pay and the generation after that, which again is in keeping very much with the historic approach of this government.

In terms of the project itself, Mr. Speaker, let there be no mistake. We want to see a bypass built around the capital city. We want to see it built right. We want to see it in the right location, and we want to see it for the right price. And again, Mr. Speaker, that's something that's been particularly challenging in terms of keeping track of the moving target that this Sask Party government has presented as to what the real cost of the project is. And you know, that it's into a P3 and that somehow the way that they're going to enter into a bunch of undertakings for the people of Saskatchewan, but that they can't be straight-up with the people of Saskatchewan as to what the details of those are, what the dollars and cents involved are, Mr. Speaker, is troubling. And then on top of that, Mr. Speaker, where you've seen this project go by leaps and bounds up to \$1.88 billion is, I would submit, cause for great concern. And that of course doesn't even include the cost attached to land assemblage.

So why are we here with a P3? Well because it's interesting, Mr. Speaker. This of course comes out of the Build Canada Fund, and P3 was one of the conditions put in place by the federal government to get access to federal dollars for the infrastructure project. And there are other projects that, you know, have been raised in this very Chamber, Mr. Speaker, that that was certainly the condition put in place by the federal Conservative government. And you know, Mr. Speaker, it's not to dwell on the events of the week too much, but that government of course was just thrown out on its ear.

And I'll be very interested to see what sort of projects come forward from the federal government and whether or not they'll have this hold-the-partners-hostage condition as regards you've got to buy into a privatization scheme or you don't get any federal dollars. We'll be very interested to see whether or not that's the case, Mr. Speaker.

But in terms of the deal that they bought into, even in that case, Mr. Speaker, if you've got all the details on the table, if you've got all the information out there and it's somehow worth it to take up that federal involvement for the project and that makes the trade-off worthwhile, that is worth consideration. But the problem with that, Mr. Speaker, is that of course we don't have all the information on the table. And we've had further demonstration of that here today in terms of the Minister for SaskBuilds not being completely forthright with the case that this government is trying to, that this government is labouring mightily around in terms of P3s and their approach to infrastructure, following again on the way that the federal Conservative Stephen Harper government held the provincial partners and municipal partners hostage to P3-contingent programs. So whether or not it was worth that, we'll see. But in the interim, Mr. Speaker, we want to see real progress on the

bypass.

But there are some things that this government could do right away that you'd think would be relatively short order, but this government has dug in its heels and refuses to listen to the community. And we've heard reference to the community from members opposite, and I'd . . . You know, I don't know what they have to say to the families of those who have to navigate this dangerous stretch of road every day in terms of the way that they've made it very clear that they want to see traffic lights on that stretch of highway, Mr. Speaker. And you know, there's no recognition of the concerns that those folks are bringing forward, and the way that it's a matter of life and death for many of those families, Mr. Speaker. But instead you get a lot of again, you know, ideological spin in terms of the virtues of P3 approaches to public infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, there's some things that this government could and should be doing immediately to improve the situation around safety on that stretch of the highway, and they don't do it, which is a shame, Mr. Speaker.

[11:45]

There are things that this government could be doing in terms of providing the information on the full deal, to put all the facts on the table for Saskatchewan people to take a good hard look at and see whether or not this all adds up. And they don't do it, Mr. Speaker.

There's a very selective reading of the Provincial Auditor's report on the P3 approach of this government, Mr. Speaker, where they like to, they like to say, you know, one thing about . . . They like to pick and choose from what the auditor's having to say, but they don't provide the fuller quotation of what the Provincial Auditor has to say. And of course, Mr. Speaker, we've seen that dynamic at play with this government before, up to and including when the Provincial Auditor of course rejected the books in one budget, much to the embarrassment of that government and which they went in the future to fix. But certainly, Mr. Speaker, those were the lengths that the auditor had to go to to get a fair reckoning of the province's finances from that government, to fail the audit of the province's books. Again, an historic development in the history of this province's finances. So, Mr. Speaker, I'm very much in favour of this motion.

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

Mr. Makowsky: — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to join the debate about a very important issue for the people of Regina and of course the constituents that I represent on the east side of our Queen City.

It's interesting and a little bit unfortunate, I think, the NDP choose to play politics with such a serious issue. I wonder why now though. I mean this is, as the member from Cut Knife mentioned, this has been 20 years in the making. It's been talked about. It's been studied. It's been re-studied. It's been studied again. And of course they never got the job done. And but now, just to get a few headlines, I think, they're bringing it up in debate today, which is fine. That's fine. We've talked about it. It was brought up in question period as well.

I think we have to realize that none of us in this room are professionals. We're not experts. We're not masters of engineering. Somebody that's been with the Ministry of Highways for 20 or 30 years, which is what many of the folks in the ministry have, they're experts in this area, and we rely on advice from them.

And it's also important to mention that all the stakeholders involved, the only people that aren't onside are those across the way, the nine across the way. And all the cities in favour of it, all the communities in the White Butte region east of Regina are onside. They just want to get this done, Mr. Speaker. All the stakeholders are onside with the project as is.

I've heard some concerns from the members opposite about the location of the bypass. I was going to talk a little bit about that today. They say, why have it within city limits? Why not 30 kilometres outside the city to avoid the city? Well I think you still want, and we see this in other major jurisdictions across Western Canada . . . I think of Stoney Trail in Calgary. I've driven on that road before. It allows you to not have to go through No. 1 right through the city of Calgary with all the lights, similar to the situation we have on Victoria Avenue East here in Regina in my constituency. But those roads, they've been done in several stages.

And it was referenced here today as well that the NDP are onside with using a P3 approach. And it's a very similar project to what we have here in Regina, the Stoney Trail project, Anthony Henday Drive in Edmonton. Those are all perimeter roads being done by P3s. And they've been endorsed by auditors and experts in the field.

But those are within city limits, within those city limits. It allows traffic within the city to access that perimeter highway. If you have it 30, 40 kilometres outside the city, local traffic won't be able to use that.

I know at 8 o'clock in the morning, 5 o'clock in the afternoon coming back east, there's a lot of residents in southeast Regina. That area of the city is growing rapidly. I live out there, and there's new projects being considered for that area of the city, new residential housing, thousands of more commuters.

When you go at 8 in the morning as I mentioned earlier, there is a lot of traffic on Arcola Avenue. There's a lot of traffic. There's a lot of traffic on Victoria Avenue East, okay. So going into the city, going west, it is a traffic jam. In Saskatchewan we would consider it a traffic jam. Now coming back east at 5 o'clock, there is a lot of traffic on Arcola, okay.

So now with the bypass location that is chosen now, if somebody in the morning at 8 o'clock isn't going downtown, they don't have to take Arcola. They can use the bypass to go to the airport, to the west side of the city. So that will help alleviate local traffic, okay. That's done in other cities. That's one of the reasons why the location is on the east side, south of the No. 1 Highway near Tower Road. So the other reason is utility moves. You'll be able to avoid having to go over another set of railway tracks.

Now the members opposite, they want to use Highway 46. And I thought it was interesting in committee earlier this year, the

member from Athabasca, he said the day before — I think he's reasonably well versed in his portfolio — but he said he went out for a drive the day before and looked around and he said, yes, 46 is where it should be. Ignore all the experts in the ministry, all the professionals involved, the, you know, high-paid professionals that are within the ministry that have been experts for many years. He just took a drive around and said, that's the one we got to go, based on I'm not sure what. And I would ask them if the members opposite have an independent set of engineers that have looked at this, costed it out, figured that maybe that is the right route.

And I think everybody acknowledges that, of course, there's no perfect route. There's no perfect route. People are going to be not too happy with it whatever route was chosen, okay. Now 46, there's lots of roadblocks in that way if you've been out there that way. There's golf courses. There's the correctional facility, the city dump, the refinery, Evraz Place. Now, you know, how would you snake through that area? There would still be landowners not happy. There would be a lot of roadblocks that way. And he'd end up with two parallel roads that do the same thing. You'd still need overpasses on No. 1 East. You'd still need those overpasses on No. 1 East even if the NDP route, Highway 46, was considered.

Now earlier in the year we heard from the member from Rosemont that he wanted to stop the project. He wanted to pause the project but still do the overpasses on No. 1 East. So he wants to stop the project but still do the overpasses. Does that . . . I don't know if that makes sense. That's what the project is. That's what the project is. So stop the whole process. I don't know if I agree with that line of reasoning. That's their plan, or I don't know. They're not real good on plans but maybe their random thoughts on the situation . . . It would cost way more money. You'd have to build passes, overpasses on No. 1 and 46. And again let's remember, this is first and foremost a safety issue. Rip up contracts, having to retender things, as my colleague from Walsh Acres mentioned, adding more time to the project.

We have all sorts of stakeholder groups here, and I'll just mention one from Lain Lovelace, in her letter, and I'll quote here: "In our view, any delay in order to retender is not acceptable and could result in further loss of life as well as added expense to taxpayers." That's how it is. Here's the residents. Here's the experts. And on the other side we have the NDP playing politics, which is certainly unfortunate.

I know the member from Rosemont talks a lot about, he's worried about a French conglomerate. Of course we've seen in other P3 projects, over three-quarters of the contracts, the subcontracts go to local firms. So that's money going here. It's not going to Paris. It's not going wherever. It's happening right here in the province of Saskatchewan.

So again, Mr. Speaker, this project . . . There's a lot more I wish I could have talked about. Stakeholder groups have come on board that . . . This is the project; let's finally get it done. We wish the NDP would get on board. We want to get this project done for the safety of residents and those travelling on the No. 1 Highway through Saskatchewan. Let's just finally get it done, and we're doing it.

The Speaker: — Oral questions. I recognize the Opposition House Leader. Sorry, just wait . . . This should be the government side that asks first. I recognize the member from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We held a technical briefing specifically for the NDP on the safety of the bypass two weeks ago. Our most senior engineers explained fully to the NDP that traffic light installation on this area is not appropriate for this stretch of highway. After this meeting, the NDP walked out, gave a press release on the need for traffic lights on Highway 1. Mr. Speaker, to the member from Regina Rosemont: why does the NDP think they know more than the province's senior engineers, and why are they playing politics with this very important issue?

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — There were many questions that certainly I brought forward in that briefing which weren't answered. Part of it were questions around the actual part of them which weren't . . . were relating directly to the traffic studies and around accidents.

One of the studies that government's been referencing, they've been saying that there's an increase in rear end collisions. What they failed to tell Saskatchewan people is that there's an overall decrease in accidents and a massive reduction in right-angle and left-angle collisions in properly utilizing traffic lights, which are utilized frankly right across this country on Highway No. 1 and certainly right through into Alberta as well.

Those families have had delayed action to get the overpasses they deserve. They deserve safety. And as an interim measure, traffic lights are important to them.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To the member from Dewdney, the families and the communities that are up and down that stretch of highway and that have had to deal with death and some pretty serious collisions along that stretch want to see traffic safety lights installed there. So my question to the member from Regina Dewdney: why is he against installing traffic safety lights on that stretch of highway, and why is he against listening to the people that have had to deal with that danger there day in and day out?

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

Mr. Makowsky: — Well thanks, Mr. Speaker. Of course a serious issue. We listened to the engineers, the experts in the area. But what we really need is bypasses. And the NDP plan or their random thoughts on it are just to have more delays, more studies. Let's look at it longer. Let's look . . . You know, we want to get this done. They looked at it when they were in government for 16 years. Never got it done, Mr. Speaker.

We're getting it done. I think everybody agrees. All the stakeholders agree that the best solution long term is to get the overpasses done as soon as possible. The plan we've got going, the P3 plan, is the best way. The NDP wants to pause, delay.

Mr. Speaker, we're not going to go that way.

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

Mr. Tochor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Safety is our . . . Mr. Speaker, safety is the top priority for our government. We believe the bypass is a long-term solution to improve safety on Highway 1 east of Regina. After working with expert, independent engineers and a study done by AECOM in 2011, it was determined that the interchange on Highway 1 were the safest method, safer than the NDP's proposed project that would set back construction of the bypass by two years, putting safety, putting Saskatchewan lives at risk, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, to the member from Regina Elphinstone, why would you insist on your proposed bypass plan which would delay construction and put Saskatchewan lives at risk?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I guess we're bringing forward the positions that we're arguing for in this House precisely because we are listening to the communities and to the families that have been affected by collisions along this very dangerous stretch of the highway. We want to see action, you know, right darn quick in terms of bypasses and overpasses, Mr. Speaker.

[12:00]

But we also wanted to see action on the speed limit in that part of the world. That was something that that government finally listened to after being dragged there kicking and screaming. And we'd like them to see, exhibit that same spirit of listening when it comes to installing traffic lights.

Again it's not that this is any sort of particular . . . something that the opposition has pulled out of thin air, Mr. Speaker. This is coming directly from the families and the communities that are affected by this. They are calling for those traffic lights and calling for them today.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is going to be to the member from Walsh Acres. And it's really important to note, I noticed the member from Dewdney mentioned the 16 years the NDP government was in power. Mr. Speaker, for the record, it took us 14 years of the 16 years to clean up the last Tory mess because of the billion-dollar boondoggles of his provincial counterparts in the 1980s, Mr. Speaker.

So it's incumbent upon us today to tell the people of Saskatchewan, this boondoggle is now five times the original amount. And, Mr. Speaker, our basic argument is, there are certain components of the Regina bypass we can put in place immediately, Mr. Speaker. Immediately we can put them in place, Mr. Speaker. We're not arguing that. What we're arguing about, the fact that this is five times what its original cost was.

My question to the member from Walsh Acres is, what's his interpretation of a bypass?

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

Mr. Steinley: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And that's an interesting question coming from the member from Athabasca. And first and foremost, I think I want to tell him that he brings up the '80s a whole bunch and I don't really remember that that much because I was two years old.

But let's talk about the Regina bypass, and this right now is that the fact that . . . It's not a billion-dollar boondoggle, Mr. Speaker. It's a project that's going to save the lives of people all across our province and it's an important project for the safety of citizens across the province. And for him to be playing silly politics with it . . . We take the advice of the experts on what we should be doing on these projects, and we feel that the safety of the citizens is most important. And this will not be a billion-dollar boondoggle, Mr. Speaker. It's going to be a project that's going to save the lives of citizens across the province.

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

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is building the bypass faster, better, and at a lower cost. If the members opposite had it their way, the bypass would take at least an extra two years and it would not allow any opportunities to drive innovation. It would also cost an extra billion dollars, a billion dollars. Mr. Speaker, to the member from Rosemont: when will you stop playing politics and admit that your proposal would cost more in time, dollars, and especially safety?

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, the people across Saskatchewan and those within those communities would see that question for the utter nonsense that it is. We've been pushing with Saskatchewan people in those communities for meaningful action and an urgent response for a long time to make sure that that very dangerous corridor is safe. They need traffic lights. They need overpasses as quick as possible.

Instead, this government has delayed and dismissed those concerns, delayed action. And now we're caught up in a complex, convoluted boondoggle of a route that is coming in in a very, very strange location inside the city instead of delivering for Saskatchewan people, wasting money in the process and wasting a lot of time that could have been spent responding in an urgent way to the safety concerns of those communities in this province.

We need to get this right. We need a bypass that works. And it doesn't make sense to be caught up in this complex deal with this Paris outfit that's gone from \$400 million to \$2 billion. Let's get traffic lights. Let's get overpasses. And let's get a route that works.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. And again we see some highly selective quoting from members opposite when it comes to the Provincial Auditor's thoughts on the way this government is stacking up P3s onto the backs of future generations for them to pay for. But I guess a question, Mr. Speaker: the auditor, Judy Ferguson, said in June that the government's approach to P3 justification is "full of estimates. It's full of assumptions." With the minister unable to answer even the most basic questions on costing, does the member from Regina Dewdney agree with the Provincial Auditor that their estimates are full of estimates and full of assumptions, which is a polite way to say, you know, you can't count on them?

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

Mr. Makowsky: — Mr. Speaker, the minister mentioned or talked about this earlier. The value-for-money report will be released, full transparency. Mr. Speaker, I know the NDP don't like P3s. They're ideologically against it. They're used to not getting things done. It will take . . .

The Speaker: — Time has elapsed for 75-minute debate.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 2 — Social Impact Bond

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by Ms. Draude.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very excited to get up again. This is, I think, my second time to talk on social impact bonds. And more importantly, there's many aspects to the social impact bonds, but mostly about how our government is taking new and innovative ways to be able to solve problems that are existing here, current today. We're not looking backwards. We're not doing the same old thing that the NDP did. We're actually moving forward, talking to people, talking to the private sector, and finding out how we can solve these problems in a better way, a more efficient way, and involving private dollars to be able to help out with that, Mr. Speaker.

I want to be able to talk about a few things. I want to talk about what are social impact bonds, just so everybody understands that. I want to talk about who is involved, because this isn't just a government driven objective. There's lots of other people involved, from Egadz to Conexus Credit Union. I want to talk about Sweet Dreams, the project that we're specifically talking about, the first social impact bond that was brought into Canada by the former minister of Social Services, the member from Kelvington-Wadena, and carried forward by the current Minister of Social Services to be able to look at things in a different way.

I'm going to talk about the accountability of this, because this is something that the opposition is very much on, is the

accountability. And we have several checks and balances into our social impact bond agreement with Sweet Dreams, to be able to make sure that our goals are being met, the goals of the investors are being met, but most importantly that the goals of the clients and the people that are participating in the Sweet Dreams, that they are moving forward, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to talk about a few other things. I want to talk about the private sector and exactly how we as the government and as governments across Canada are engaging the private sector to be able to work with the government to achieve the goals of the government, but more importantly to achieve the goals of the community in and around that.

So I'm going to start off with, Mr. Speaker, about the history of social impact bonds and talk a little bit about that. It's been mentioned in this House before that the social impact bonds started in the United Kingdom. It expanded to Australia, the United States, and since 2010 there have been more than 20 social impact bonds used in these countries. Now these are countries that are very progressive in trying to move the people forward that are having difficult times.

The specific social impact bond is about Sweet Dreams, Mr. Speaker. That is about helping single moms to be able to achieve their goals while still maintaining a relationship and having their children with them. And the dollars that we save in not having to put these children in foster care is important, Mr. Speaker, but the most important thing is that the relationship of the family is still there and that the people who are participating in this feel comfortable, feel safe, and they feel like they are valued, that they can try to be able to move their lives forward. And I have some specific quotes about that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when we decided to do the Sweet Dreams project, this wasn't something that just came out of left field as the opposition always likes to think that these things are just created by us, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: — Their ideas come from left field.

Mr. Merriman: — Well their ideas do come from left field, but the social impact bond is a very important component to be able to move women and children, and these are vulnerable women that are very much at risk. And we want to make sure that their risk is minimized by being included in a safe environment. Everybody wants to feel safe, Mr. Speaker. Everybody wants to feel that they have an opportunity to move themselves forward.

Now moving themselves forward sometimes is slowing the movement backwards. It's not always leaps and bounds that we move forward, Mr. Speaker, but sometimes we have to slow the progression going backwards. First we deal with that; then we create an environment to be able to move people forward, Mr. Speaker. And that's exactly what we're doing. We're moving young women that are mothers forward in life to be able to complete their education, to be able to maintain a job.

And most importantly, more than the economic side of it is, Mr. Speaker, it's the family side of it. The family side is by far the most important, so those young children that are part of the Sweet Dreams project are able to know their mother and be able to live in a safe environment with their mother.

Now I'm going to talk a little bit about who's involved because again this wasn't something that the government went out and said, we have to do this. This was something that the private industry came to us and said, we want to help. We want to be able to help people that are vulnerable within our own community. We have champions out there. We have our side of it. We have the public servants. We have the ministry officials. We had the minister, the former minister all trying to move this forward, Mr. Speaker. But we had the private sector. We have champions in the community of Saskatoon like Colleen and Wally Mah.

Now Colleen and Wally Mah have built a . . . started with a very small business and have created a large housing business program that they help building houses in Saskatoon and Regina as well as Martensville and some of the bedroom communities in and around Saskatoon. They have accumulated a very great amount of respect for the community and for people that are helping. They want to be able to give back. They approached, said, how can we help out? How can we help vulnerable women and their families move forward?

We also have people like, a pillar in the community-based organization like Egadz. Egadz and Don Meikle, they are absolutely pillars of the community, respected by certainly this government, also respected by the community-based organizations in Saskatoon and across Saskatchewan, nationally as well. They are the ones that run the program.

We recognize as government that there are people that are experts in the industry. We just heard the debate earlier about the Regina bypass. We rely on experts in the industry. The experts in this industry just happen to be Egadz and their program to be able to move these vulnerable women and children into a safe environment.

We also have some private, some corporate, if you will, Mr. Speaker. We have the Conexus Credit Union. They stepped up to the plate and CEO [chief executive officer] Eric Dillon. And I have some quotes from him later on, Mr. Speaker, to be able to say why they got involved, why they thought that this was the best opportunity for them to invest their clients' money. No different than we as government. We are investing taxpayer dollars in this. We're accountable for that. The credit union is accountable to their clients and to their boards.

And I just heard this morning, Mr. Speaker, from the former minister of Social Services, how they took a video of what they were doing at Sweet Dreams, how they took what they were doing on a local level within Saskatoon and they showed it to their national board. They had a YouTube video, Mr. Speaker, on what it is exactly they're doing, why are they investing this. This was received with overwhelming support from the board and from the members of the Conexus Credit Union because they want to make sure that their money is being invested in a responsible way, no different than this government wants to see that the taxpayer dollars are being invested in a responsible way, Mr. Speaker. So when we partner with other corporate entities as well as the community-based organizations, that's the critical financial part of it. But what we're doing it for as I've said before, Mr. Speaker, is we're doing it for the families.

Now I've got a quote here from *The StarPhoenix* on May 13th,

2014 and this is by Chantal McLaren. This is why we're doing this, Mr. Speaker. This is why Conexus Credit Union is doing this. This is why Egadz is doing this. This sums it up. Chantal said, "Sweet Dreams will give other young mothers the same opportunity. They'll be able to keep their children and excel in life, have a . . . better future." I couldn't have said it better myself, Mr. Speaker. It's about the women and children making a better life for themselves, Mr. Speaker. That's what it's all about.

We can talk about the economics. We can talk about whether you philosophically agree with social impact bonds or not, but what this government is doing, Mr. Speaker, is we are finding new and innovative ways to be able to help people out. Now that just doesn't apply to social impact bonds. That goes back to what we were talking about in question period about surgical wait lists. We were talking about the Regina bypass.

[12:15]

Our government isn't afraid to look at opportunities, to also consult with the private sector to be able to find out what they think we should be doing as government and balance that off what we're hearing from the general population, Mr. Speaker, and try to find new and different ways to be able to move the whole province forward, Mr. Speaker. And the whole province moves forward starting with a young woman and her child. That's how things are moved forward, Mr. Speaker. It is on the small steps that we make as a government and as a community to be able to move people forward, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to talk a little bit about Sweet Dreams. I've talked about the participants, who's in there, who's involved — the Government of Saskatchewan, Egadz, as well as the credit union. Certainly Colleen and Wally Mah are critically important to this project, Mr. Speaker.

But what is important to me as an elected official, Mr. Speaker, is the accountability, the accountability from many levels. We're accountable to obviously the taxpayers on this side. We have the credit union that is accountable to their investors, their board members, and all of the members of the credit union. We have Colleen and Wally Mah who are accountable to their company and their stakeholders. But the important part is the accountability that is actually built into this from our perspective. This isn't just putting money in. Because we've seen what happens when you just . . . you have a different opinion of how to solve a problem. Like the opposition has, Mr. Speaker, is always throwing more money at it.

Well throwing more money at the problem hasn't fixed anything. It certainly didn't fix anything when they had the honour of sitting on this side for 16 long, dark years. They were throwing more money at the problem, not fixing anything, but just throwing money at the problem, Mr. Speaker. We are looking at how we are accountable to the taxpayers, how we are accountable, most importantly, to the clients.

I want to talk a little bit about the accountability that's built into this because there are goals, Mr. Speaker. There are goals for the participants in this to be able to move themselves forward. We have specific goals. We've agreed to this, the investors have agreed to it, and the participants have agreed to it.

Some of the goals that the participants have to hold themselves accountable for, Mr. Speaker, is all 14 mothers enrolled in education to complete grade 12 or secondary education. Because we know, Mr. Speaker, in order to be able to move yourself forward, there has to be an educational base that you have, Mr. Speaker. You just can't leap and bound through the world on a hope and a prayer. You have to have a minimum of a grade 12 education and then be able to enhance that by post-secondary, now whatever that post-secondary is. But the plan, Mr. Speaker, is to keep them moving forward in life and keep achieving new goals.

They also have to complete an early childhood development diploma program with two participants having secured employment in daycares as one of the educational assistants on reserve. Four people have successfully continued to independent living. Now this is people that have been on the program and are starting to move forward, Mr. Speaker. We're already seeing the successes of this. Why wouldn't we as a government and as a community, and as private investors want to be in support of this, Mr. Speaker? Again the accountability is not just with the Government of Saskatchewan; it is with the individuals that are participating. It is also with the investors, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to touch base on a couple of the goals that Egadz, as we consider them experts in this industry, some of the goals that they wanted to be able to see the participants move forward. They want to complete their education — number one, as I said, secure employment. Now again, Mr. Speaker, with an educational base, the employment side of it, the opportunities open up. Now we're not just looking at making sure that they're securing temporary employment, we want them to have a career, Mr. Speaker. And a career is critically important for the long-term success of the participants of the program.

They have to have some life skills. They have to have activities such as life skills training and parenting classes. As yourself, Mr. Speaker, as a father and myself as a father, we didn't get any book to tell us how to raise our kids. I got a huge, huge book on how to run my phone and how to run my television, but I didn't get anything to tell me on how to be a father. I would have loved to have had some parenting classes back then to be able to improve my skills because I think we can always be improving our skills as a parent, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about the Conexus Credit Union. Relatively new to Saskatchewan, the Conexus Credit Union, and I've had an opportunity to meet with the CEO several times, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Dillon is a class act and wants to be able to give back into his community, wants to be able to say, how can we help because they understand also if they help the people that are in the community, that enhances their community overall and enhances their clients overall, Mr. Speaker.

What I want to do is talk a little bit about how the social bond is set up, Mr. Speaker. It is based on results, and that's what I firmly believe that this government is about. We're setting our goals and we're basing our success on the results of that. So some of the results is that the bond payouts will be calculated based on degree or desired outcome is achieved from a sliding scale of 100 per cent down to 75 per cent. So for example, Mr.

Speaker, if 100 per cent of the desired outcome — 22 children — is achieved, investors will receive 100 per cent of the bond payout. They've met their goals; we meet our obligations on the financial side of things. If 75 per cent of the desired outcome — for example, 17 children — is achieved, repayment to the investors will be 75 per cent.

So there's some financial motivation in there to be able to make the . . . to help the participants, not make them, Mr. Speaker, to help the participants be successful. But I can tell you, in talking to Colleen and Wally Mah and Eric, Mr. Dillon from Conexus Credit Union, they're not doing it for the financial reasons, Mr. Speaker. That's not their goal. Obviously they have some financial impact on this, and it's good to see different people and different organizations put some skin in the game, Mr. Speaker, because their personal goal is to help women succeed and help their children succeed.

I want to talk about a couple of other things, Mr. Speaker. And I know I'm standing in between us and lunch, Mr. Speaker, which is never a good spot to be, and also an adjournment till Monday. So I promised my House Leader and the House Leader across that I wouldn't carry the debate forever, but I do want to touch base on a couple of things.

I want to talk a little bit — and this is going to be on a little bit of the political side, Mr. Speaker — I want to talk about different things, the difference between an innovative idea and just a bad idea. Now the innovative ideas that we've done as government are certainly, first and foremost, working with the people. Surgical wait times: worst when they were in government; best when we're in government, the best ones in . . . [inaudible]. We're building, these are innovative ideas: P3 schools, P3 bypasses, how we can get them built faster. We can get them built cheaper, and they're safe for the people that are using them.

Now I'm going to talk — there's some innovative ideas, Mr. Speaker — but I'm going to talk about, a little bit about bad ideas. And I know this list has been read out in the House many, many times, Mr. Speaker. But I think it's worth reminding everybody out there about what had happened in the past and what is happening now. This does not get brought up enough, Mr. Speaker, and it certainly doesn't get touched on by the media enough, what the opposition did while they had the honour of sitting inside this House. They talk about accountability in question period. They talk about how transparent things should be. I think they need to have a little look backwards, Mr. Speaker, when they had the honour of sitting on this side of the House and what they did.

Nobody knew about SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company]. SPUDCO came out of left field. And I think the last dollar amount that I have on SPUDCO was \$35 million that they lost. Idea — bad idea, not an innovative idea. Again, \$90 million lost on Navigata. That's one of those things that people just don't remember.

We want people to continue to make sure that they are always looking . . . holding their government accountable, always looking for new and innovative ideas to make sure that we are doing things right, Mr. Speaker. Certainly not throwing money away in bingos.

And I can't stress this enough. I have a total. I can go through the long list. Some of my colleagues were here, and they had . . . They were sitting in opposition at the time while the government of the day was just writing cheques and just freewheeling, Mr. Speaker. We don't do that, Mr. Speaker. We have a total that they lost of \$303 million over the . . . [inaudible].

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is why when we make an investment — back to the social impact bonds — we have partners. We're just not freewheeling government money out there, spending like a certain kind of sailor. And I won't say it, Mr. Speaker. I don't want to be unparliamentary.

We just didn't cut cheques. We are making sure that we have the experts in the industry working with us, like Egadz. We have corporate Saskatchewan with Conexus Credit Union, being able to help us out financially. And most important, Mr. Speaker, again back to my original thought of what I started this out with, this is about the families, the mothers and their children being successful, Mr. Speaker.

So I would really like to be able to talk about this for another 34 minutes, Mr. Speaker, and if my colleagues will indulge, I might just. What I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, is there's a few things: back to the innovative ideas, Mr. Speaker, back to where how we're looking at making sure that we are moving everybody in the province forward, back to our economic plan. We haven't heard a plan from the opposition, but we are able to invest in programs like social impact bonds with the taxpayer dollars by having a strong economy, Mr. Speaker. And if we don't have a strong economy, then we can't do this.

We cannot continue to just spend money and shuffle it down the road and spend it. It just doesn't make any sense whatsoever. I fundamentally don't understand how we can . . . The concept of what they're talking about on the bypass and several other projects is just wait and wait and wait. Well they waited. They talked about what they wanted to do. They talked about the health science building. They talked about the children's hospital. I'm sure at some point they talked about social impact bonds.

The difference is the rubber never ever hit the road with them over there, Mr. Speaker. The rubber never hit the road. And when we stand up, we are making sure that the rubber is hitting the road, but we're listening. We're consulting; we're moving forward with what the people of Saskatchewan want us to do. They want us to build a children's hospital. They wanted the health science building. They wanted the lowest surgical wait-lists in Canada. We didn't want to be the poor little Saskatchewan anymore. We wanted to show everybody in the country our potential. And we are leaders, Mr. Speaker, and that's why we led on social impact bonds, Mr. Speaker.

We took this back. We want to be leading the country. We don't want to have to be, as opposition did when they were here, running to Ottawa with their hand out and say, oh can you help us out? No, we want to lead. We want to take charge of what we're doing in our own province, and we want to be able to show the rest of the provinces, because this is something that we can make other provinces interested in.

We're doing this right. We're holding the investors accountable. The people are holding us, the opposition should be holding us accountable on this, because I would love for them to be able to have this discussion in a year from now when we've had more successes, when we've had more women that have gone through Sweet Dreams, and they are moving forward in life. They're holding sustainable education. They're part of our economy, and they're moving forward.

Because you know what, Mr. Speaker? The best lesson they can ever teach their children and the best lesson that any of us could teach, is try to succeed. Reach your potential. And we're helping these women and vicariously through the women down to their children, we're helping them reach their potential. We're not throwing them into the foster care system and just throwing more money at foster care, Mr. Speaker. Because we understand that the foster care system is critically important, but if we can take kids and not have them in that system, ever into that system, and they can stay with their family and have a complete family unit, Mr. Speaker, that is the most important success that we will ever have. Take out the financial side of things, the best success is that — you know what? — we have one generation that we're helping, and we're already moving on to the next generation, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that my time is getting somewhat limited, and I want to make sure that I get the motion on record. But, Mr. Speaker, I just want to emphasize to anybody who's watching this, that this government is making sure that we are successful. And the reason that we're successful is for the people of Saskatchewan, not just a certain segment of the people of Saskatchewan, but all the people in Saskatchewan.

And the only way that we can do that, Mr. Speaker, is by having a strong economy so we can invest in this program. Because having a strong economy shows a confidence to Colleen and Wally Mah to say yes, we're investing in a strong economy, and we're making sure that the government is investing in us.

[12:30]

So, Mr. Speaker, with that I will read the motion. It says, Mr. Speaker:

That this Assembly supports the use of social impact bonds to leverage private funding in order to provide specific services for our province's most vulnerable. Furthermore, this is a new type of social innovation, will break down barriers between ministries, and provide tangible benefits for human services.

I so move, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and at this point I will move adjournment.

The Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment of debate on private member's motion no. 2. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I move that this House do now adjourn.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — This House stands adjourned to 1:30 p.m. Monday.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:31.]

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Premier
President of the Executive Council
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

Hon. Bill Boyd
Minister of the Economy
Minister of Energy and Resources
Minister Responsible for The Global
Transportation Hub Authority
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Power Corporation

Hon. Jennifer Campeau
Minister of Central Services
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Transportation Company

Hon. Herb Cox
Minister of Environment
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Water
Security Agency
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