



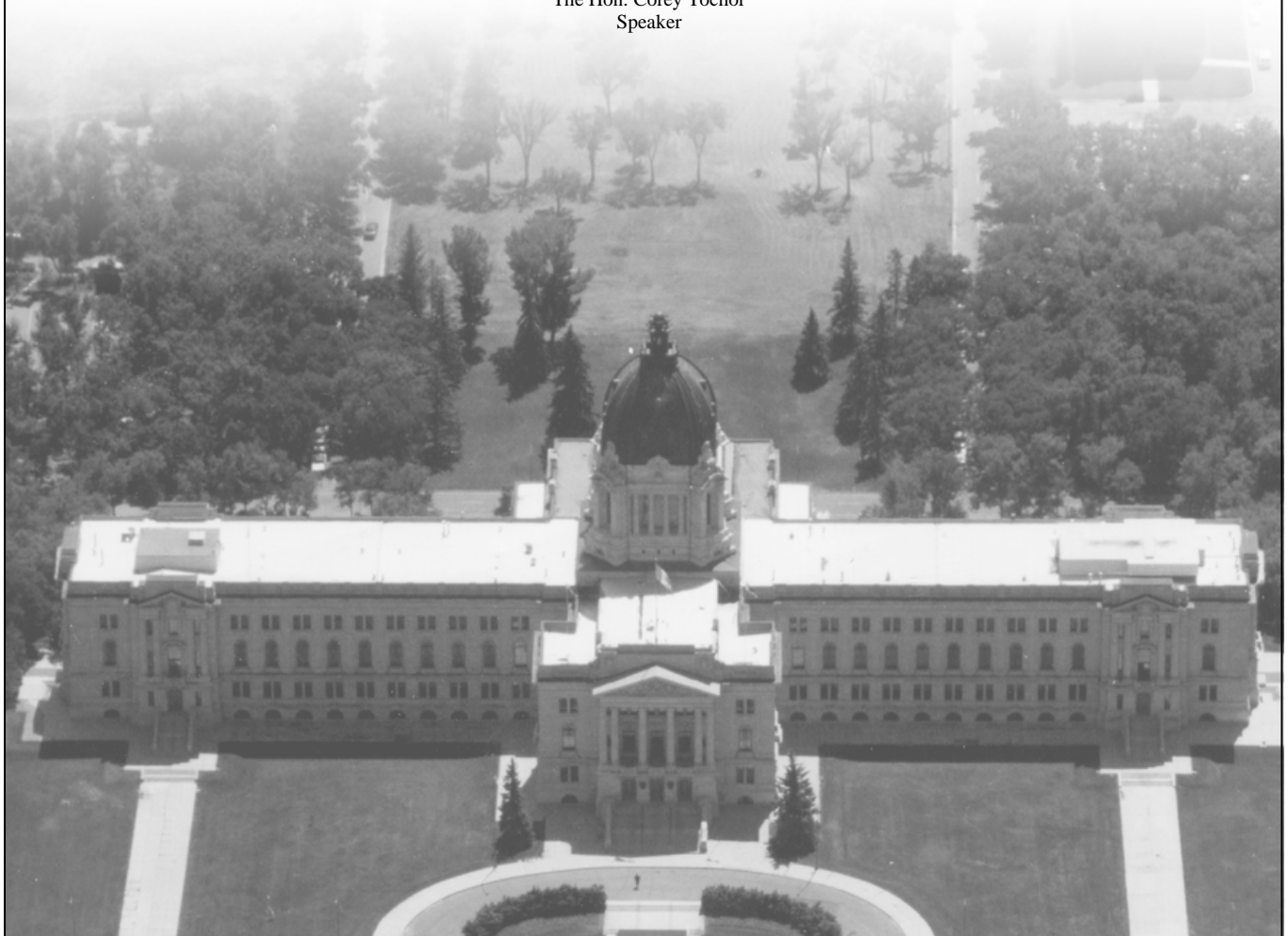
FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)
Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Corey Tochor
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
1st Session — 28th Legislature

Speaker — Hon. Corey Tochor

Premier — Hon. Brad Wall

Leader of the Opposition — Trent Wotherspoon

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Party Standings: Saskatchewan Party (SP) — 50; New Democratic Party (NDP) — 10; Independent (Ind.) — 1

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[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to welcome some guests in the House today. They're sitting in your gallery.

Here on behalf of the Government of India, secretary to the Government of India and the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Dr. Shyam Agarwal; chairman and managing director at the National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation, Ramesh Kumar; consul general in India, Mr. Linghichetty; and Mr. G.V. Shankar of Global Connect.

Representing the Government of India, Mr. Speaker, the delegation is in Saskatchewan this week to learn about some of the best practices being utilized in Canada for the empowerment of indigenous communities, Mr. Speaker.

They've had a busy schedule upon arriving in Saskatchewan, visiting Prince Albert, Saskatoon, and today in Regina. While in Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker, they visited the Forest Centre. Then they travelled to Saskatoon where they had the opportunity to meet with the Saskatchewan Research Council to tour their hybrid energy container power system. They've also met with representatives of Saskatchewan's First Nations and will be touring a wind energy initiative later today.

Mr. Speaker, we're pleased to see our already strong relationship with India, Saskatchewan's third-largest trading partner, expanding into new areas of co-operation. So, Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all members of the Assembly to join me today in welcoming Secretary Agarwal and his delegation to Saskatchewan's legislature.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, it's my honour to join with the minister opposite and welcome this delegation from India here today to the Saskatchewan Assembly. It's an honour to have you here. Included in this delegation we welcome Dr. Shyam Agarwal, the secretary to the Government of India. Thank you so very much for your presence. Mr. Ramesh Kumar, Mr. Linghichetty, and also a friend to many in Saskatchewan, Mr. Shankar for being in this Assembly here today.

Your presence in our Assembly, the Saskatchewan Assembly here on Treaty 4 territory and the homeland of the Métis is valued by all members of this Assembly, and I provide you a warm welcome from the official opposition. I'm glad to hear that you're here to learn from and work with indigenous communities here in our province and to see some of the work and some of the empowerment that's going on within our

province, and certainly we value that.

There are many success stories here in our province with indigenous leaders and industry and government that participate in all forms of partnerships. And that treaty relationship is one that we value in Saskatchewan, knowing that we're all treaty people working towards making sure that there's a mutual benefit for all.

I think of the First Nations University of Canada here in Regina. I think of the Treaty Four Governance Centre. I think of the Office of the Treaty Commissioner or Treaties in the Classroom. I think of NORTEP-NORPAC [northern teacher education program-Northern Professional Access College] in La Ronge. I think of the International Centre for Northern Governance and Development at the University of Regina and so many other projects that are examples of empowerment, indigenous empowerment within our province.

Like any relationship here in our province, it's important for us to continue to place energy into this relationship because the work isn't done. And we're far from being where we need to be on these fronts, and the work toward full reconciliation continues in this province to address injustice and to ensure hope and opportunity and fairness for all.

It's my pleasure to welcome this delegation from India here today, of course a very important trading partner, world's largest democracy. And it's fair to say that Indo-Canadians themselves have left their mark on our province, building and shaping who we are as a province for many years in all facets of our province. So it's my pleasure to welcome this delegation to our Assembly here today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well just very quickly before I get to my introduction, I'd like to join the Leader of the Opposition and the Attorney General and welcome our friends from India. Between 35 and 40 per cent of all of Canadian exports . . . all of India's imports come from our province. All of the Canadian imports to that country, 35 per cent come from Saskatchewan. And we welcome them here to the Assembly here today.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also very honoured to be able to introduce a group that are in your gallery here this morning. We are all very well served by constituency assistants who work hard to deal with concerns that are raised and advocate for constituents on our behalf, Mr. Speaker, and I'm no exception.

I am very grateful for the work of my constituency assistant and for her friendship. And she is here with her husband today. Nola Smith is my constituency assistant. Her husband is Dave, who is also our worship pastor at the church we attend. And notwithstanding the fact that they have spectacularly poor taste in CFL [Canadian Football League] teams, they're a wonderful couple. One's a Tiger-Cat fan and one's an Eskimo fan. I've tried to make Rider allegiance a condition of employment but apparently that contravenes some sort of codes and laws in the province of Saskatchewan. But I do want to welcome them.

And joining them today is Nola's mom. Linda McDougall is here from Paradise Valley, as is Nola's sister Penny McDougall, also from Paradise Valley. And joining them as well, Scott and Janessa Bockint, who are from Winnipeg, Manitoba. Mr. Speaker, Nola and Dave and our guests are here attending the U18 National Hockey Championships that are being hosted here. Dave and Nola's daughter Chloe is an outstanding hockey player and so they're here for that tournament. Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members to please join with me in welcoming this group to the Legislative Assembly today.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Gardiner Park.

Mr. Makowsky: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed my pleasure to introduce a couple of folks in the west gallery, and it literally is a Folk. Mr. Kim Folk is here today from the Chris Knox Foundation, and we've heard from them over time. And as I'll be mentioning in a member statement coming up, our caucus along with Harvard Broadcasting and the Chris Knox Foundation have teamed up to send two recipients to the Grey Cup this year in Toronto. And we're very lucky to have one of the recipients here today in the gallery. Her name is Natasha Achter. She was able to attend the 2013 Grey Cup as well, I understand. So I ask all members to help me welcome them here today.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to join with the member opposite to welcome Kim here with the Chris Knox Foundation. It's remarkable work that this foundation takes on and it's a pleasure to have Natasha here as well. It's my pleasure to welcome them here, but most importantly, to the Chris Knox Foundation, all of its leadership, all those that support it, I say thank you on behalf of the official opposition and all the people of Saskatchewan.

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

Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the members of the Legislative Assembly, the MP [Member of Parliament] for the riding of Beauce, Quebec, Maxime Bernier. Maxime was first elected in 2006, 2008, 2011, and 2015. Maxime completed his law degree at the University of Ottawa. Then he held positions in several financial institutions and was the vice-president of the Montreal Economic Institute.

So Maxime has two daughters. He's very proud of his young daughters. Also he's very committed to his community. He made a commitment to run across his whole riding and raised 153,000 for the local food bank, so congratulations to Maxime. Maxime is also vying for the leadership of the Conservative Party of Canada. So thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and please welcome Maxime to our Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the official opposition we too want to welcome Mr.

Maxime Bernier. As an MP I understand he's got two daughters. Well I have three. So it's often a difficult task of being a father away from home so much, but we have such wonderful parents on . . . well the mom is such a wonderful parent that we don't have to worry about our children while we're travelling. So I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome him to the Assembly today.

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

Hon. Ms. Beaudry-Mellor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a special guest in the Legislative Assembly today up in your gallery, Mr. Larry Mueller, who is a long-time friend of ours and is very active in the football community here in Regina. But probably he's best known for being the father of Marc Mueller, who we've sadly lost to the Calgary Stampeders but is making his mark there as an excellent coach, unfortunately for us, I guess, in some ways. But Larry has dedicated countless hours in the football community here in Regina, and I just want to welcome him to his Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to stand in the House today and welcome three people that are seated in the back row of your gallery: Helen Harvey, James Harvey, and Les Dahlen. These people farm in the Pike Lake district of Saskatoon which is in the Rosetown constituency. Having said that, however, Mr. Speaker, all three of them have chosen to work in Saskatoon constituencies. Just saying we commend them for their good taste in where they've chosen to work. And they're here in Regina for some other matters. And we're pleased to have them in the legislature today and would ask all members welcome them to their Assembly today.

The Speaker: — I too would like to join the Deputy Premier in introducing my CA [constituency assistant], and unlike the Premier, I did make it a condition of employment for my CA, Helen Harvey, to be a Rider fan, and I know James is as well. And I'm so grateful, as we all are, of the great work that gets done back in our offices. And Helen's been with me from day one, and very appreciative of her hard work on keeping me in line. I know it's not easy sometimes, but I do appreciate her effort in that regard. So please join me in welcoming Helen Harvey to their Assembly.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Ms. Chartier: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise yet again today to present a petition to reverse cuts to the Lighthouse program. Mr. Speaker, the petitioners point out that in April 2014, the then minister of Social Services said the Lighthouse in Saskatoon would “. . . take pressure off of existing detox facilities, hospitals, and police cells while keeping people safe, especially in our brutally cold winters.” That same day, Mr. Speaker, the petitioners point out that the minister of Health said, “We want to ensure that individuals with mental health and addictions . . . have a safe place to stay.”

And again the petitioners point out that this government has repeatedly indicated that the Lighthouse stabilization unit keeps individuals out of hospital emergency rooms and jail cells. And, Mr. Speaker, we in the opposition could not agree more. We only need to look at the Saskatoon Health Region and the over capacity that has been happening there recently, record over capacity actually, Mr. Speaker. Although the Lighthouse cuts aren't the whole problem, they certainly do not help, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan immediately reverse their recent cuts to funding that allows extremely vulnerable people to access the services of the Lighthouse stabilization unit in Saskatoon, and revisit their imposition of a strict and narrow definition of homelessness in November of 2015 which forced the Lighthouse to cut back its hours of essential services in February of 2016, and take immediate steps to ensure that homeless people in Saskatchewan have emergency shelter, clothing, and food available to them before more lives are lost.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by citizens of Regina and Saskatoon. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Meewasin.

Mr. Parent: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to present a petition from citizens who are opposed to the federal government's decision to impose a carbon tax on the province of Saskatchewan. 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 Government of Saskatchewan to take the necessary steps to stop the federal government from imposing a carbon tax on the province.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by citizens of Saskatoon, Humboldt, Martensville, Warman, Perdue, Rosetown, and Clavet. I do so present.

[10:15]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition to stop the redirection of funding for the Northern Teacher Education Program, NORTEP, and:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Saskatchewan Party government to immediately restore their five-year agreement to fund the Northern Teacher Education Program Council and to continue to fund the NORTEP-NORPAC programs in La Ronge.

Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed this petition are from all throughout the province. And on this particular page, Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed the petition are primarily from La Ronge, and I so present.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition to stop the SaskParty's sell-off of SaskTel. The people that have signed this petition wish to bring to our attention the following: in the last five years alone SaskTel has returned 497 million to support government programs and services like education and health care. SaskTel's an important part of building a stronger and fairer Saskatchewan together. And once SaskTel — and, may I add, SaskPower — is gone, there is no getting it back, no telling what else the Sask Party will sell. The prayer reads:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Sask Party government to keep their promise, stop their plan to sell off SaskTel, and keep our valued Crown corporation in the hands of the people of Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, these petitions are signed by individuals from Prince Albert. I so submit.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Prince Albert Northcote.

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to present a petition condemning the Sask Party's cuts to the SAID [Saskatchewan assured income for disability] program. After nearly a decade of wasting the economic boom and blowing through the savings, the government is now forcing the province's most vulnerable people to pay for the Sask Party mismanagement.

The Sask Party's latest cold-hearted cut will take money away from people who are unable to work due to a disability; that many people who are being hurt by the Sask Party cut live with serious illnesses such multiple sclerosis, autism, and cancer, among other illnesses; and that contrary to the Minister of Social Service's claims, the government underfunds clients in regards to shelter allowance, and that shelter allowance should be reflective of the current rental costs.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Saskatchewan Party government to stop their plan to cut the SAID funding and immediately restore funding for those living with a disability; that shelter allowance is reflective of the current rental costs; and that the Saskatchewan Party government implement the recommendations of the Advisory Group on Poverty Reduction.

Mr. Speaker, individuals signing these petitions come from the communities of Clavet, Saskatoon, and Regina. I do so present.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise yet again today to present another petition calling on the government to reverse

the cuts to the Aboriginal court worker program. The Government of Saskatchewan cut the budget for the Aboriginal court worker program in the 2016-2017 provincial budget. And those on this side of the House know that Aboriginal court workers play an important role helping Aboriginal people in criminal and child apprehension cases. Aboriginal peoples are disproportionately represented in Saskatchewan's correctional centres, and Aboriginal court workers successfully help to make our communities safer through reduced recidivism rates. I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan reverse its short-sighted and counterproductive cuts to the Aboriginal court worker program.

I have several pages of this petition to submit today, Mr. Speaker. And those signing the petition today come from Rose Valley, Regina, Saskatoon, Drake, and Outlook. I do so submit.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

We Will Remember Them

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Tomorrow Canadians everywhere will stop to remember. For as long as we have existed as a country, there have been men and women who have defended it and, in doing so, given the ultimate sacrifice.

Saskatchewan has an unfortunate honour, Mr. Speaker. Private George Price enlisted in Moose Jaw in October of 1917. He was sent to France and served with the 28th Battalion. With the armistice finally signed to end that terrible conflict, minutes before our world could return to peace, Private Price was shot and killed by a German sniper. He was the last life lost in that conflict. We will remember him.

Other conflicts followed that one. Etched in our national memories are places like Ortona, Sicily, Calais, Juno Beach. More recently, Kapyong, Bosnia, and Kandahar. The names may change but the sacrifice does not. A parent has lost a child. A spouse, a partner. A child has lost a parent. This is a sacrifice we need to remember not just on November 11th but every day:

They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

Some Hon. Members: We will remember them.

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

Remembrance of Sacrifice and Service

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to stand and recognize the service of our veterans and the service of the women and men currently in uniform who, without reluctance, have performed and performed their duty to combat tyranny and oppression in our world. They have sacrificed, and they sacrifice so much to protect the freedom and democracy that our

great country values and enjoys today.

Saskatchewan itself has a proud history of service to our nation. People from all corners of our province have served courageously in every branch of the Armed Forces. Like so many others, my family has a history of service, including my grandfather who left Saskatchewan as a young farmer to serve Canada with the distinguished Royal Regina Rifles Regiment in the Second World War, as well as family members that continue to serve.

Such stories of sacrifice and service are common across our province. They traverse political divides, and they shape our identity as a nation, a province, as families, and as people. That is why Remembrance Day is such an important time for all of us to come together so that we can collectively — as friends, families, communities, a province, and a nation — reflect on the sacrifices of those who have served and those that continue to serve.

And there isn't just one day then which we should remember. These sacrifices are something that we should be thankful for every day. It is with that in mind that I ask all members of this Assembly to join with me in extending our thanks and our respect to those that serve, have served, and importantly those that we've lost. May we always remember and may our resolve for peace be strong. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Gardiner Park.

Appreciation for Chris Knox Foundation

Mr. Makowsky: — Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned earlier, I'm pleased to rise and recognize the good work of the Chris Knox Foundation. The foundation's named after a young Saskatchewan Roughriders fan who battled, bravely battled cancer in 2007. Word of Chris's story spread following the Labour Day Classic in that year '07 which inspired Saskatchewan residents to launch a fundraising campaign to send Chris, his mom, and his palliative care nurse to Toronto to attend the Grey Cup. Mr. Speaker, the campaign was so successful that an additional 10 families with sick children were also able to travel to Toronto for the game.

Sadly a short time after the Rider nation celebrated the big Grey Cup victory, Chris passed away. In his memory, Chris's family and friends launched a foundation in his memory to help young people battling cancer attend sporting, art, and cultural events to give them and their families a reprieve from their illness. So far, Mr. Speaker, 1,541 tickets to events have been distributed since that time. Every year they've sent a contingent to each and every Grey Cup.

I'm pleased to announce that our caucus is partnering with Harvard Broadcasting and the Chris Knox Foundation to help Natasha Achter and Lenore Bergeron attend this year's Grey Cup in Toronto.

I'd like to thank all the donors, board members, other volunteers of the Chris Knox Foundation who do such wonderful work in our province. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Letters of Hope and Support Sent to Northern Children

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The past year has been very difficult for northern Saskatchewan. We suffered the tragedy in La Loche, and recently six young girls have taken their lives in northern Saskatchewan communities since the start of October. Mr. Speaker, northern people are hurting, but Saskatchewan people are responding with tremendous acts of kindness and love. People are holding vigils, sending prayers, and writing letters of support.

Mr. Speaker, Fran Forsberg of Saskatoon started a card-writing campaign last week to let young people in northern Saskatchewan know how much people are thinking about them and that you matter. Fran invited people to go to Grosvenor Park United Church in Saskatoon and write letters of support for children in northern communities. She said her idea snowballed as people from across Saskatoon and the country expressed interest in sending their own messages. Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday thousands of handwritten cards arrived in La Ronge. Their goal is to have a letter of hope and support for every child in the North.

Mr. Speaker, 13-year-old Krista Forsberg, Fran's adopted daughter, said she wants to encourage young people to stay strong. She went on to say, "We should be really doing something about this and not just be sitting around and watching it happen."

Mr. Speaker, I want to say thank you to the people of Saskatchewan, and I want the children of the North and of the entire province to remember you are loved and you matter. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Highways and Infrastructure.

Ranchers Inducted Into Canadian Agricultural Hall of Fame

Hon. Mr. Marit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to acknowledge a rancher in my constituency, a friend and a relative who was recently inducted into the Canadian Agricultural Hall of Fame on November 5, 2016.

Bob Switzer and his wife Gail of the Sandy Bar Ranch south of Aneroid is an innovator in Canada's beef industry and has become a purebred Angus champion, judge and mentor, and an industry leader. Mr. Speaker, Bob was only 12 years old when he bought his first animal, and one year later he bought his first registered Angus cow. Throughout his life, he has been a passionate advocate for the industry and has used creativity and innovation to bolster the Angus industry and promote Canadian beef in southern Saskatchewan and around the world.

Mr. Speaker, it would be impossible to list Bob's accomplishments in this time frame, but here are a few. He organized the first Angus feeder sale in Canada, which has been operating for close to 40 years. He founded a project called Red Coat Feeders, which employees local people and runs about 20,000 head of cattle in a feedlot. He has bred and judged elite

herds, is very involved various stock growers associations and local 4-H clubs.

Mr. Speaker, Bob and his wife Gail are leaders in the cattle industry, and I can't think of a more fitting inductee into Canada's Agricultural Hall of Fame. I ask members to join me in congratulating Bob Switzer on this great accomplishment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Westview.

B'Nai Brith Silver Plate Dinner

Mr. Buckingham: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this last Tuesday, I, along with the Minister of Justice, attended the 62nd annual B'Nai Brith Silver Plate Dinner in Saskatoon. B'Nai Brith is an international Jewish organization that is committed to doing charitable work in the community and combats racism on the local and international level.

The Silver Plate Dinner is the longest running charitable dinner in Saskatoon, and this year it brought together 975 men from all walks of life. For the past 10 years, the organization has been focusing on supporting the youth in our community. They provided funds to help start the Children's Hospital Foundation of Saskatchewan, and they were the first contributors to the Saskatoon Public Schools Foundation.

Mr. Speaker, at the dinner, the former dean of education at the University of Saskatchewan, Murray Scharf, was presented the 2016 We are Proud of You Award for his exemplary volunteer service. Mr. Scharf retired from his position as dean in 2006, but is far from settling down. He was recently named an ambassador for the Saskatoon Council on Aging and also volunteers for the local military institute and numerous other organizations.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join me in congratulating B'nai Brith on a successful 62nd annual Silver Plate Dinner, and thank Murray Scharf for his volunteerism.

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

Opposition to Federal Carbon Tax

Mr. Steele: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this morning, 93 per cent of the delegates at the SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] Association of Rural Municipalities meeting passed a resolution against a carbon tax.

SARM members understand, just like members on this side of the House do, what the new tax could do to our economy. SARM understands the roles that Saskatchewan can play in mitigation and adaptation to climate change. They also understand what this tax means for our energy, mining, and agriculture sector.

[10:30]

This resolution comes a day after an announcement of more than 300 potash workers going back to work at the Colonsay mine. And members opposite would not stand up against a tax

that could send those workers right back out the door again.

The Leader of the Opposition claimed once that he would not just blindly oppose us here just for the sake of cheap politics, Mr. Speaker. I do not know if he has lived up to that. But I know he does attend SARM meetings and likes to glad-hand attendees. I ask him not just to smile and nod at those people, but take the common sense from the delegates, many of whom are farmers, potash miners, and oil field workers. Listen to them. Stand up for them. And stand up in this Assembly and oppose the carbon tax.

The Speaker: — Before question period, I would like to caution the members again. In an effort to preserve order and decorum, I would like to again caution the members not to dispute the truth, character, or honesty of hon. members. A full and thorough debate should be encouraged in the Assembly. However we must not say indirectly what we can't say directly. If this continues, I will be exercising rule no. 57(1) where the Speaker will revoke the member's access to taking part in proceedings for the remainder of the sitting day.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Donations to Political Parties

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, the other day when the member from Saskatoon Centre asked for the Sask Party's support to change Saskatchewan's broken and outdated election finance laws, the Premier, who has been refusing day in, day out to answer questions on his GTH [Global Transportation Hub] scandal, jumped to his feet and said that there is nothing wrong, that big corporations should be allowed to dump hundreds of thousands of dollars — well in fact millions of dollars — into the Sask Party because that's democracy, and Alberta companies are basically Saskatchewan people too.

Mr. Speaker, you can't make this stuff up. Will the Premier take this opportunity to admit that Saskatchewan's democracy should be for Saskatchewan people? And will he work with us to update our electoral finance laws and get big money out of Saskatchewan politics?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I welcome the question from my honourable friend.

I would note for the record that I think it's over the last 10 years or so, roughly 10 per cent of corporate donations to the Saskatchewan Party, one-tenth, has come from companies whose headquarters is outside the province, most of whom invest inside Saskatchewan. And so we do think it's reasonable that they would be able to participate, Mr. Speaker, just as we think it's reasonable for unions to have supported the NDP [New Democratic Party] with huge donations.

Mr. Speaker, and I would say the premise of his question is that this has been, in the past and in the future, this is inherently wrong, this practice. If that's the case, has he refunded the unions the huge donations they've given his party over the

years?

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — That's almost as ridiculous as the responses we were getting on his GTH land scandal.

Democracy. He keeps using that word. I do not think he knows what it means. Democracy comes from the Greek words for "power" and "the people." Mr. Speaker, I know the Premier knows this, and the Premier's an honourable man. So will the Premier stand with the people of Saskatchewan, change the laws, give them the power back, or will he stand with the big corporations in and out of this province?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — The average corporate donation to the Saskatchewan Party is just over \$1,000. This is over the life of the party. The average individual donation is just over \$100, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not sure where the big corporate money is coming from. Maybe he's referencing his own scenario, Mr. Speaker, where the NDP have accepted tens of thousands of dollars from unions. Now I understand he's saying he's prepared to go without those; he's prepared to have that eliminated as well. But the heart of the question is, if it is fundamentally wrong and anti-democratic for political parties to fundraise in this way, what's he going to do with the fact that his party has been so heavily dependent on the unions? And is he going to send that money back, Mr. Speaker?

The bottom line is this. When companies are employing people in our province in the thousands, if they want to get involved, if they want to come to a leader's dinner, if they want to be involved in politics, I don't think that's a problem.

In fact, you know, Great Western brewery just won an injunction yesterday against the NDP government in Alberta. Mr. Speaker, I would expect . . . That particular company, for example, has 16 employees in Alberta. We know that the NDP in that province undertook predatory practices, we would argue, against non-Alberta brewing companies. Mr. Speaker, I think it's reasonable that companies from outside of Alberta would want to get, brewing companies would want to get involved in their political process, especially when they employ people in that jurisdiction. I think their employees would want that. Mr. Speaker, I do think that's part of democracy, Mr. Speaker. We welcome the questions and the discussion, but we're satisfied with the current rules in the province.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — What a ridiculous response. We can pass laws next week that would fix this and that would ban union and corporate donations, Mr. Speaker. No one on this side of the House is suggesting that the Sask Party's breaking any laws. The fact is the laws themselves are already broken. They need to be fixed.

And so, you know, I guess I'll press the Premier once again. And he dismisses the couple of million dollars that he hauls in

from corporate Alberta, but will the Premier recognize the flaw in this, the perception that exists, and will he work with us to fix the outdated election finance laws and end pay-to-play in Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, this issue goes to the importance of transparency and democracy. It's this side of the House that finally brought in a lobbyists registry to the province of Saskatchewan. The NDP had . . . Well he laughs. The NDP had 16 years to do more than ask questions or talk about these things. There was no lobby registry when they were on this side of the House. They had 16 years to transparently report on ministerial travel, 16 years to improve reports to Saskatchewan taxpayers on how money was being spent. They never got it done. This side of the House got it done.

Mr. Speaker, there is an issue with respect to campaign finance that I have heard from Saskatchewan people, a source of concern. It's the fact that in the last election campaign, in the last election campaign, 72.5 per cent of all of the dollars they spent to try to get elected, on all of the services in their campaign, went to out-of-province companies, Mr. Speaker. There is an out-of-province concern in politics today, and the Deputy Leader, your own Deputy Leader doesn't think it's a big deal.

Here's what they outsourced to out-of-province companies: all of their advertising, all of their polling and focus groups, their website and digital advertising — I think there's companies in Saskatchewan that could do that — their election consulting, sound and lighting. They couldn't find a sound and lighting company from this province; they went outside for that. Online surveys and tour planning, Mr. Speaker. They took good Saskatchewan money, maybe money they accepted from unions from outside of the province, and they actually hired someone from outside Saskatchewan to plan their election tour. That's the election spending fundraising issue people are wondering about. Why won't the NDP, Mr. Speaker, support Saskatchewan business first?

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, outrageous. If that Premier, that Premier who's outsourcing project after project after project to a foreign corporation, wants to get into this debate — like the bypass that ballooned to \$2 billion to a company from France — we'll take on that debate and we'll fight for Saskatchewan companies any day of the week. But you know, really, on front after front, that Premier's gone from newsmaker to noisemaker, and he's distracting once again here today.

Lobbying is part of our democracy. Paying for access, though, shouldn't be. So why is the Premier so content on leaving legislation the way it is and letting big money's power come at the expense of Saskatchewan's people? Let's fix it.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the premise of the member's question is fundamentally wrong. Maybe that's how they

operated. Maybe when unions gave them the big money, or companies — and they accepted corporate donations — maybe the quid pro quo is that they would do their bidding, Mr. Speaker. That's not been the case on this side of the House since 2007, since nine years ago, Mr. Speaker. And the hon. member wants to actually debate about outsourcing business out of province. We've heard him stand in this legislature and lecture members on this side, lecture members on this side about buying Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we just had an election campaign in the province. Over \$1 million spent by members opposite — probably, we think, probably over \$1 million spent by members opposite to try to get elected. Mr. Speaker, interesting, interesting that 72 per cent of the \$1 million, 72 per cent of the \$1 million they actually spent outside the province. The list goes on. Their database support came from Ottawa. Their telemessaging — I think there's a telephone company that they purport to defend in this province — telemessaging came from Toronto. Election support came from Ottawa. Tour planning came from Mississauga. Online surveys came from Toronto, Mr. Speaker.

There might be a discussion about out-of-province issues with respect to campaigns. It has to do what members opposite . . . Why wouldn't they support Saskatchewan businesses in the expenditure of the funds they raise in politics?

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

Auditor's Report and Public Accounts Committee Meeting

Mr. Wotherspoon: — You know, the Premier's pretty worked up. The guy who's sending \$2 billion to a company from France at a time when we need jobs and opportunity here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

You know, in politics, perception is reality. The perception of influence raises questions about government's motivations. Real or not, when thousands or millions of dollars change hands, questions get asked. That's why it's so important to get the details on the Sask Party's GTH land scandal, such as: who was the person that contacted the former minister about the . . . with the land deal that wasted millions of dollars? Who was that, that knew the government was going to acquire this land, and how did they know it? The Premier said, on the floor of the Assembly just last week, that "the phone records, all the documents were made available to the Provincial Auditor." Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, the auditor has now confirmed that she was not given those phone records.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier admit this, and will the Premier finally commit today to bring those records to the floor of this Assembly? This should not be a problem if he doesn't have anything to hide. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Now he's back to the GTH, Mr. Speaker. Notwithstanding the fact that the Provincial Auditor appeared to the Public Accounts Committee, Mr. Speaker, and answered every one of the NDP's conspiracy theories . . . Well the member from Nutana wants to chirp from her seat, Mr. Speaker. I think she is interested, I hope, in the answer that we're providing here, because I don't think she was interested in what the Provincial Auditor had to say when it came to this phone

call, when it came to “leaked cabinet documents.”

All of the conspiracy theories raised by members opposite were debunked. They were taken apart systematically by the auditor. Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is, every record — including phone records — was available to the auditor. And the auditor indicated that if there was . . . had been red flags about matters, they even had a forensic auditor on staff to further look into those issues, but those red flags didn’t exist. Every document was available to the auditor that the auditor wanted, including cabinet documents.

Mr. Speaker, we’re happy to spend question period time on the Global Transportation Hub where we did, in the interest of transparency, asked the Provincial Auditor to do a complete review. She has verified there was no conflict of interest. There was no fraud. There was no wrongdoing. And systematically debunked all of the NDP conspiracy theories. We’re happy to answer more questions about it if that’s where the Leader of the Opposition would like to go today.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — The Premier knows full well that there was not a forensic audit. He also should know that the statement he references about wrongdoing certainly does not include the Sask Party cabinet or senior officials or actors of government, Mr. Speaker. And we know that millions of dollars have been wasted, and he can bet that we will push, day in, day out to get to the bottom of this scandal that wasted their hard-earned money.

Two businessmen, two businessmen have made big donations to the Sask Party. They made about \$11 million off the GTH land scandal. I’m not accusing anyone of anything, but we’re trying to get the truth. And it would help if the Premier would provide a response to some pretty basic questions. Why is the Sask Party government working so hard to hide the facts and doing things like blocking key witnesses from testifying before this legislature?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Energy and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much. First of all, Mr. Speaker, I know it was a long time ago, but just three days ago the Provincial Auditor had this to say before committee, and I quote:

. . . frankly, if we did a forensic audit, there would . . . [have been] a lot of matters that we included . . . [in] our report that would not have been provided to the committee.

So why would the Leader of the Opposition want the committee to have less information than what she provided by her audit?

With respect to the phone calls, she said, and I quote:

. . . there was allegations of fraud and error and so as auditors . . . we call it professional skepticism — so we keep that up. And so we ask, we have lines of inquiry. So what we did . . . at the information . . . [was that] in the emails, and we corroborated it with interview evidence . . .

and through that we didn’t see a need to pursue phone records.

Why is the Leader of the Opposition and the members opposite questioning the work of the Provincial Auditor? Do they support her? Yes or no?

[10:45]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, they claim to be open and transparent, and they say they have nothing to hide. Will the now Minister of Government Relations stand up and tell us why she endorsed this land scandal even before it made it to the cabinet table?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Energy and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, time and time again the members opposite stand in their place and, I would say, call into question the work of the Provincial Auditor.

The Provincial Auditor appeared before the Public Accounts Committee. The Public Accounts Committee, I believe by a resolution put forward by the government, by the Premier, asked the Provincial Auditor to do the work of looking into this matter. She did that work. She appeared before Public Accounts. She, at Public Accounts just three days ago, confirmed the findings of her report, Mr. Speaker, and answered all the questions that the members opposite put forward.

I don’t understand the members opposite now questioning the work of the Provincial Auditor, believing that they can do a better job than the Provincial Auditor. That’s the work of the Provincial Auditor. She did her work. Her office did their work, Mr. Speaker. And I would hope the members opposite would accept the findings of the Provincial Auditor.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, the now minister and member from Humboldt was in on the scandal from the very beginning. In fact she’s the only one whose name appears at the beginning and who still sits in cabinet. So can she tell this House how it all started? Can she tell this House how it all started and why was the recommendation — this is the key question — why was the recommendation to have Highways buy the land scrapped for the scandal to go through?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Energy and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, I think the key question is, why do the members opposite, why does the Leader of the Opposition and the opposition New Democrats not support the work of the Provincial Auditor?

The Public Accounts Committee asked the Provincial Auditor to investigate this matter. The Provincial Auditor went through that work. It was a very comprehensive report that she and her

office did undertake. She answered questions to the Public Accounts Committee indicating that she had co-operation from everybody that they asked for co-operation from, that she had access to all documents that she believed that she needed access to, and answered questions, Mr. Speaker — systematically went through — that the members opposite have posed in this House and committee, and answered every single question. Why do the members opposite not support her findings?

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

Ms. Chartier: — Mr. Speaker, that question was to the Minister of Government Relations. It's the same talking points over and over. But surely some of the members over there are starting to want straight answers as much as we do, Mr. Speaker. So how about the current Minister of Health? He was around the cabinet table then. Will he tell us what he thought of the deal? Why was it dismissed the first time at cabinet but approved the second time?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Energy and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, the Provincial Auditor has outlined that a number of questions were raised with the processes that the government has undertaken, Mr. Speaker. But the Provincial Auditor did also say in her report — she has said it publicly — that there were no red flags that were raised as a result of her work and that there was no wrongdoing, there was no conflict of interest, and that there was no fraud. And then later did say publicly on province-wide radio that there were no red flags that were raised.

I don't understand, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite, they asked the Provincial Auditor to do this work through the Public Accounts Committee. She does the work. They asked the Provincial Auditor to come to the Public Accounts Committee to answer questions about her own report. She answered every single question the members opposite have raised, and yet they still, for whatever reason, don't support the work of the Provincial Auditor, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I don't understand the members.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, that whole cabinet discussed this scandal. They voted on it and it passed. They all know something about it, and some may want to clear the air about some of the questions the people of Saskatchewan have. So what about the current Minister of Central Services? Will she tell us what she thought of the deal and why it was dismissed the first time at cabinet but approved the second?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Energy and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'll again quote just from . . . I know it was a long time ago. Three days is a long time, Mr. Speaker. I understand that. So I'll refresh the member's opposite memory. At Public Accounts, the Provincial Auditor said, and I quote:

In our view, we thought we did a thorough job, given the objective of what we were doing as an audit office. We thought we did a thorough job. We had hoped to have it to the committee earlier but, as I indicated, there were certain things that took us additional time because we . . . [took] additional steps. Bottom line, an audit . . . You use your lines of inquiry to determine what you're going to do next.

I know . . . [that there's a lot of media] that says we did a process audit.

Which is one of the things that the members opposite are chirping, that this was a process audit. She says:

I know [there's a lot] in the media . . . that says we did a process audit . . . But I think people have to understand in a process audit you still look for corroborating evidence and consistency of evidence. It's not just looking at what people have in terms of policies.

Mr. Speaker, the auditor did a thorough job. She said that at the committee. I don't know why the members opposite don't indicate that they support the Provincial Auditor and her work.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Prince Albert Northcote.

Ms. Rancourt: — Mr. Speaker, the talking points aren't actually answering any of the questions the people of Saskatchewan have about this scandal. So how about the Minister of Education? Will he stand up and clear the air? Will he tell us what he thought of the deal, why it was dismissed the first time at cabinet but approved the second?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Energy and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased again to rise on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan to answer these questions. I certainly hope the member from Prince Albert is not saying that I, as the minister that is answering these questions, is using talking points that have been provided by the Provincial Auditor, because I am quoting the Provincial Auditor.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite profess to support the work of the Provincial Auditor. The Provincial Auditor, in her report and then again in committee just a couple of days ago, said that there were no red flags. There was no wrongdoing. There was no conflict of interest, and there was no fraud. Would the members opposite please indicate whether or not they support the Provincial Auditor and her work?

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Prince Albert Northcote.

Rural Municipalities and Revenue Sharing

Ms. Rancourt: — Mr. Speaker, still no answers. All we get from the Sask Party is spin, spin, spin. And worse, cuts, cuts, and more cuts: schools, hospitals, people living with disabilities, and the list goes on. Now it's rural municipalities who will see the cuts.

Leading up to the election, this government promised there will be no changes to revenue sharing for rural municipalities. But they also didn't release a budget. Maybe that's because they knew they would have to break their promise. Less than a year later, the Minister of Government Relations said they will be reviewing resource sharing. That would be less money for municipalities, even though they promised things would be the same. To the Minister of Government Relations: why weren't they upfront with rural municipalities?

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate that day after day, question after question, we need to correct what the members opposite say. That is really unfortunate because that's not what was said.

Yesterday when I spoke with SARM, I reviewed the revenue-sharing commitments that we have made over the years since we introduced revenue sharing, with a formula, something the members opposite wouldn't do. I think the member opposite should know at the time that they had the honour of being government, there were tax revolts around this province because of the lack of action under the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, I did outline that there are some challenges and that we would be reviewing everything, but I did not say that we were going to discontinue revenue sharing.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Prince Albert Northcote.

Ms. Rancourt: — Mr. Speaker, rural municipalities will be getting less money, even though they were promised that they could count on that funding. These municipalities grow the food we eat and they are essential to our resource sectors. They are major players in our economy.

SARM has said they need more money to address crumbling roads and bridges — crumbling roads, Mr. Speaker, and crumbling bridges. This infrastructure is essential. It is essential to our economy. But the Sask Party isn't interested. They are saying one thing and doing another. Whether it's a bridge in Prince Albert, a road from Wollaston Lake, or the many rural and remote roads that SARM is speaking about, this government turns a blind eye. Mr. Speaker, when will the Sask Party acknowledge that their scandals and mismanagement are costing our municipalities?

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, since we formed government, \$580 million has been dedicated to municipalities through the municipal sharing agreement. The member opposite needs to understand her file before she stands up to do a question. She should know that the revenue sharing is a formula based on the PST [provincial sales tax]. The PST is down, Mr. Speaker. Municipalities understand that it is a percentage of the PST. If the PST reduces, so does the revenue sharing, Mr. Speaker. She needs to understand her file and do the math.

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

Budget Legislation

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Speaker, earlier this spring, the Sask Party scrapped our province's balanced budget law retroactively. With one stroke of the pen, they undid 20 years of protection for taxpayers and left Saskatchewan people vulnerable to that government's growing debt and scandals.

This is alarming, because that cabinet just authorized the government to take on \$6 billion more in new debt, and the Minister of Finance wants us to just trust him. At committee he told me that he was getting together with officials "in preparation for new legislation which will be introduced in the fall session." Mr. Speaker, we are quickly running out of days in this fall sitting. Will the Minister of Finance deliver on his promise and present a balanced budget law before the end of this fall sitting?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Doherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I thank the hon. member for the question. The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, we are consulting as I indicated in committee and when we talked about this in committee in the spring session with respect to a new fiscal accountability framework for the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

We are consulting with the Provincial Auditor . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well is the member from Athabasca interested in an answer or is he just going chirp from his seat, Mr. Speaker? . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Okay, he's going to chirp. He's going to chirp from his seat then, Mr. Speaker.

So what I've indicated is we are going to consult with other ministries of Finance across the country, Mr. Speaker, to see what's working in those provinces. We're going to consult with academics. We're going to consult with the Provincial Auditor. We will be bringing forward a fiscal accountability framework, Mr. Speaker, when it's ready to introduce in this Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

The Speaker: — Why is the Government House Leader on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — To move a motion, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has asked for leave. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

MOTIONS

Leaves of Absence

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to move the following motion, by leave of the Assembly:

That leave of absence be granted to the members of Regina Pasqua, Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood, and Regina Lakeview for Thursday, November 10th, 2016 to attend the 38th CPA Canadian regional seminar in Quebec City, Quebec on behalf of this Assembly.

I so move.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has a moved a motion:

That leave of absence be granted to the members of Regina Pasqua, Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood, and Regina Lakeview for Thursday, November 10th, 2016 to attend the 38th CPA Canadian regional seminar in Quebec City, Quebec on behalf of this Assembly.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. Before orders of the day, I would like to . . . Why is the member on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I would request leave to introduce a very special guest.

The Speaker: — The Premier has asked for leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried. I recognize the Premier.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank members for their indulgence. Actually it's rare that I get to introduce my wife in this Assembly, and she's here. She's just joined us, seated in your gallery. I think she was in town yesterday for some meetings. She's on the board of the Red Cross. And, Mr. Speaker, I've tried to put it on the public record just the importance of our relationship and of our marriage. I don't think I've done it adequately, and she may be not very pleased with this, me doing it in this way. But I just want to say for the record that I simply couldn't do this job without her and she means the world to me and I'm so grateful that she's here today in Regina. I'd ask members to welcome Tami to her Legislative Assembly.

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Ruling on a Point of Order

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day, I'm prepared to rule on the point of order raised yesterday by the Government House Leader.

[11:00]

He stated that during question period the Leader of the Opposition used the term "scandal-plagued member" as well as "scandal-plagued minister." He asked that the phrases be

reviewed to determine if they were in order. The Opposition Deputy House Leader responded that she believed that the words used were, "minister who is plagued by scandal."

I reviewed the record from November 9th, 2016 on page 1236 of *Hansard*. The Leader of the Opposition said, and I quote, "The minister of course has been plagued by scandal . . ." I find the language used by the Leader of the Opposition is acceptable. The point of order is well taken.

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Members should know not to challenge the Speaker unless the Speaker made a mistake on a Thursday, late in the week, session. The last line, to clarify for members, is, the point of order is not well taken.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to order the answers to question 172 and 173.

The Speaker: — The Government Whip has ordered questions 172 to 173.

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

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

Accelerated Well Cleanup Program

Mr. Steele: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you and to all the members of the Assembly and to all those around this great province watching this debate, it is an honour to stand before you today and speak about a proposed program that this government feels very strongly about. The program to which I am referring is accelerated well cleanup program, AWCP.

Mr. Speaker, during the remarks today I will be speaking about the importance of the energy sector in this province as well as going into detail about potential of this program and outlining the positive economic and environmental impact it could have. And at the end of those remarks I will be making a motion that will call upon the federal government to support and invest in this proposed program and in turn put many hard-working energy sector employees of this province back to work.

I want to begin, Mr. Speaker, by highlighting the fact that oil and gas industry has been a long and proud part of the national and provincial history. With the discovery of an abundant supply of crude oil and natural gas in the West, Canada's oil and gas industry began expanding its vast pipeline network back in the 1950s. This expansion contributed significantly to the development of domestic and international energy markets, all while propelling the Canadian economy forward. Mr. Speaker, those facts still ring true today, as Canadians and their international counterparts still rely on natural gas products made from crude oil to meet more than two-thirds of their

energy needs each and every day.

Furthermore the oil and gas sector still remains an important driver not only to our provincial economy but also of our national economy. In fact my home constituency of Cypress Hills, although sparsely populated, has a large oil and gas industry which contributes greatly to overall energy sources within this province.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Saskatchewan has a significant interest in ensuring that the Saskatchewan oil and gas industry is maintained and holds a competitive position amongst Canadian energy producing provinces while ensuring the development occurs in an environmentally responsible manner. This is because the oil and gas sector alone will bring in \$600 million of revenue into our province this year alone in form of corporate income taxes, resources, sales taxes, fuel taxes, personal income tax, and royalties and surface lease rentals. Mr. Speaker, this revenue will help to support public pensions, provide health care, build schools as well as hospitals, housing, and highways.

In addition approximately 300 oil and gas well companies that operate wells in Saskatchewan generate significant profits for both SaskPower and SaskEnergy. Moreover the energy sector accounts for 15 per cent of Saskatchewan's gross domestic product, GDP.

Mr. Speaker, in 2015 the oil and gas industry accounted for an estimated 33,000 direct and indirect jobs and years of employment. Also in 2015, there was nearly 178 million barrels of oil produced in this province for a combined value of 8.3 billion.

Industry investment of oil and gas in the new exploration and development is also accounting . . . account in this province. In fact this year alone it is estimated that 3.6 billion has been invested in further exploration in Saskatchewan's land. Mr. Speaker, it appears that trend will continue into the next year, as it has been reported that Saskatchewan is expected to drill more oil and gas wells in 2017 than any other Canadian province, even more than Alberta, Mr. Speaker.

Although this is great news for our province, there is no denying that since the global oil and gas markets began taking a downturn in late 2014, our oil and gas companies at home have also taken a hit. During oil price downturns, producers implemented steps to reduce costs in drilling, operating, servicing wells. This often translates into layoffs of the energy workers and, in many cases, abandonment of oil and gas wells.

Mr. Speaker, although this province maintains an unemployment rate below the national average and is in a unique position to weather the effects of the oil and gas price slump due to our diversified economy when accompanied to other resource-driven economies, we as a government take the plight of these energy workers very seriously and want to continue to do our part to minimize the impact of falling oil prices on Saskatchewan's oil and gas services employees and their families.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, we believe that we have a plan that, if supported by the federal government, would put over 1,000 of

these laid-off energy workers back on the job sites and clean up around 1,000 of those abandoned well sites. The proposed accelerated well cleanup program, which this government first brought to the attention of Ottawa back in February of this year, calls for a \$156 million investment from the federal government to stimulate employment into the energy sector of this province. That type of investment would give this government the ability to create an estimated 1,200 jobs by accelerating the cleanup and decommissioning of abandoned and suspended oil and gas well sites all over Saskatchewan over a two-year period.

Mr. Speaker, that means that former oil and gas services workers would not only be put back to work, but would also be working in the sector that they are knowledgeable in, making it the most qualified profession to do this type of work. These workers would be working on cleaning up and reclaiming a wide variety of non-producing oil and gas wells, ranging from smaller well sites that cost around \$50,000 to clean up to much more complex projects that would require around \$1 million to complete the decommission.

Regardless of the size of the abandoned wells, these re-employed energy workers would be tasked with sealing up wellbores so that no fluids or gases could escape, and would be removing any distracted equipment left on these sites.

Additionally the province would receive another economic benefit from the creation of this program. Industry would pay a tax to the province for taking on the cleanup of these abandoned wells, giving us another source of revenue. Mr. Speaker, I really want to draw your attention to that.

Government is dedicated to creating employment opportunities for our citizens. In fact this government has a record of creating these, job growth for the citizens, since we've taken office nearly a decade ago. In fact, between 2007 and 2015 our province's employment numbers increased by over 13 per cent. The numbers are even higher for full-time employment, which increased under this government by over 15 per cent. Mr. Speaker, the creation of nearly 1,200 jobs through this proposed program in one of the other most important industries is just another example of this record.

Moreover, this government knows that the creation of these jobs would not only be great for those individuals, families, and communities who have felt the impact of low oil and gas prices, but also for Saskatchewan and our economy as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, I know what to point out that the advantages of this program are not limited to only job creation and economic stimulus. If this proposed program is backed with a one million, fifty-six dollars investment by our national program, there would also be numerous environmental benefits. Mr. Speaker, much of the positive environmental impact I'm referring to would be seen during the reclaiming and restoration stage of the orphan well and gas well sites cleanup.

Each site would receive an environmental assessment upon the beginning of the abandoned well cleanup to determine the environmental impact the well site had on the area and to determine if there are any remaining environmental hazards on the site. The reclamation process would then begin. This would include the safe removal of, recycling of any old equipment left

and abandoned on well sites, attempting to redeem an environmental impact identified in the initial environmental assessment, such as oil or salt-water spills, and then further, finally restoration of the contouring of the sites so that is formed . . . natural conditions.

Mr. Speaker, another environmental benefit would be through the reduction of greenhouse gases and emissions emitted by these old sites. With the sealing of these orphan wells, greenhouse gases like methane and carbon dioxide still present in the well would no longer be able to escape into the atmosphere through the wellbore.

Furthermore a proper and thorough decommission and cleanup of these abandoned well sites would enhance public safety, as the area of land which the sites occupy will no longer pose an environmental threat nor will they be potentially a safety hazard to people or animals.

[11:15]

Mr. Speaker, one final note I want to mention, something that the leader of this government, our Premier, Mr. Brad Wall, has said about this program. Although it is well documented that the province is not legally responsible to clean up these orphan wells, the Premier noted when he first sent this proposal to Ottawa, that what is our responsibility is helping our people of this province. I along with all my colleagues on this side of the House agree with this and as a government feel that the accelerated well cleanup program has the potential to allow us to fulfill that responsibility and help some of the individuals and families from the energy sector in this province who are struggling right now.

So, Mr. Speaker, because of the importance of the oil and gas to our province and the national economy, as well as potential in the economy, the environmental benefits that the proposed accelerated well cleanup program could have for the citizens of the province of Saskatchewan, I would like to make the following motion:

That this Assembly supports a call on the federal government to immediately implement our government's proposed national abandoned well completion program that would put over 1,000 Saskatchewan energy workers back to work.

And I so move.

The Speaker: — The member from Cypress Hills has moved the motion:

That this Assembly supports a call on the federal government to immediately implement our government's proposed national abandoned well completion program that would put over 1,000 Saskatchewan energy workers back to work.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . or Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry. As always, it's important to me

to be able to rise in the Assembly here to enter into these debates. This particular program, I think the first thing that is very important to note is how the downturn in oil prices across the world have affected families and people here in Saskatchewan. And we know that the Estevan area and Weyburn area have been particularly hard hit, and this has caused so much distress for young families, people who have moved there to work in the industry and now, as the global production increases, we see the price dropping and they're subject to the whims of the international global oil market, Mr. Speaker.

So that's a devastating hit for these young families. I've heard stories of, you know, a wedding happening near Kipling, and the day before the wedding the man in the couple lost his job in the oil patch. So you can just imagine how this is hitting these young families that have moved there with the hopes of finding work for their families. That's something I think we need to keep first and foremost in this discussion.

And this downturn in the economy is affecting other parts of the province as well, Mr. Speaker. There was just an article in the paper yesterday or the day before of the impact on downtown Saskatoon. And we know that corporate and retail spaces are hurting right now, Mr. Speaker. It was an issue in discussion in the Saskatoon civic election, Mr. Speaker, where we know that the downtown Saskatoon is hurting because of the downturn in the oil prices. And even there was an article about Unreal City in downtown Saskatoon on 2nd Avenue where my son used to really enjoy going to buy his comics, and this store is closing down. It's been in operation for many years but the downturn in the oil economy is affecting him and his business. It's driving prices in retail spaces in Saskatoon downtown into places where people simply cannot keep their doors open anymore.

So certainly this is something we know. When oil prices drop like this, it creates all sorts of issues for a lot of people, and very serious issues for a lot of people. And you know, then I think what the problem then is, what do we turn to look to? When the global markets are depressed like this and our own sector then is hit really hard, what do we do? Well I think one of the things we look to is the government for much better leadership.

And what I want to harken back to is the opportunity that's been lost since 2009 when this government went through the third reading of *The Management and Reduction of Greenhouse Gases Act*, but never actually put that bill into effect. And what we know that would have done, is it would have put a number of high emitters into sort of a cap system where they could only emit so much, and anything that came over that, they would be required to pay a price for that carbon into what they call a technology fund. This is a very useful mechanism to inject money into the economy.

And also what The Conference Board of Canada said, it would also create jobs. And we do not see a government focused on creating new greentech jobs which would help us buffer in the times when oil prices are depressed by a glut in the market. So I think that's really unfortunate.

Another opportunity that may be missed as long the Premier continues to throw temper tantrums about the federal

government's heavy-handed imposition of a carbon tax, is the fact that this government will be able to use those revenues to help deal with some of these programs. The revenues that come from that heavy-handed carbon tax would actually be given to the Premier and to his cabinet, and then he could certainly work on programs like the accelerated well cleanup program, if in fact it is something that the government should even get involved in, in the first place.

Because we know full well, Mr. Speaker, that when oil was a dollar forty a barrel, Mr. Speaker, these oil companies knew that the decommissioning of these well sites was their fiscal responsibility. And you have to ask yourself, what sort of preparations, what sort of advance preparations did these companies look at when oil was a dollar forty a barrel, to take care of their legal obligations?

And it just makes you wonder, Mr. Speaker, what were they thinking when they actually don't have the funds in place right now? Or perhaps they do. That's the other question, Mr. Speaker. There's an article coming out of the *Oilfield Service News* on February that talks about how oil companies deal with their responsibilities under these types of arrangements.

Now this article was in response to the Premier's impassioned plea for assistance from the federal government back in February. And here we are talking about it again, Mr. Speaker, as probably a diversion so we don't have to talk about the scandals of the GTH and the excessive — well the auditor called it very irresponsible — spending of money, which we can't hear from any members of cabinet who were involved in it at the time, get up and tell us what really happened.

And as always we are stuck listening to one or two appointed cabinet ministers to use the same tired old lines about how the auditor did her job. And you know what, Mr. Speaker? The auditor did do her job. We've said that repeatedly. The ministers opposite aren't listening. She did her job and now we have a job to do. We in the official opposition have a job to ask those questions that arise out of her report.

Why this government is so scared of answering those questions is something that provides me with great concern, Mr. Speaker. And it's something I think the people of Saskatchewan need to be rightfully concerned about because we're not getting the answers from the Minister of Justice. We're not getting the answers from the former ministers who were responsible for those portfolios. The Minister of Health used to be the minister of Highways responsible for GTH. We know that the Minister Responsible for Government Relations was the head of Crown Investments Corporations when that deal first went on the cabinet table.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have a government that won't answer questions about that, and then they use this kind of 75-minute debate motion, and then they use this kind of motion to divert the discussion from where the real issues are, Mr. Speaker. So that's really, I think, deceptive. It's deceptive on the part of this government and it's deceptive on the part of the former cabinet ministers who were trying to not discuss the issue.

At any rate, here we are again on this red herring, and it's unfortunate that the poor member from Cypress had to bring it

forward. What I know is really interesting is why . . . We know that the riding of Cypress Hills would have benefited greatly from the Keystone XL pipeline. We have to ask why it didn't go through, Mr. Speaker. It's because the stubbornness of this Premier to deal in the global world in terms of how things are unfolding with the . . .

And if he hadn't made such a mess of his negotiations, if he hadn't made such a mess of the negotiation and made us look so bad to the American government, that pipeline would have gone through.

And they laugh, Mr. Speaker. They laugh because they know I'm right, Mr. Speaker. They're laughing because they know I'm right, and that Brad Wall did everything he could do . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — I'm having trouble . . . [inaudible] . . . hearing the member from Saskatoon Nutana. I recognize the member.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. One of the things this article pointed out was that this idea, and I'm quoting, "The idea was the brainchild of Dan Cugnet, chairman of Valleyview Petroleums Ltd., an independent exploration and production company from Weyburn." Mr. Speaker, we know that Mr. Cugnet is a big supporter of this party and has continually helped out this party with corporate donations. And we have to wonder why an exploration and production company who is responsible legally for the decommissioning of these well sites, why was it his brainchild, and what is it he's looking for? He is looking for help because he can't pay for his own responsibilities, Mr. Speaker? I think that's too clever by far.

This article goes on to say, "That Saskatchewan would be requesting federal financial assistance for activities well-known to be the responsibility of the E & P company mineral rights lessee seemed to take everyone by surprise," Mr. Speaker. And well it should. Why would Saskatchewan intervene in some sort of plan like this to take over the responsibilities of the E & P [exploration and production] companies whose liability it is, who didn't save for these times when oil was a dollar forty a barrel, much like this province went through our rainy day fund in the best times this province has ever seen? So I guess the oil companies took a page from the Premier's book when they blew through all that money, and now all of a sudden the oil companies . . . And there's no motivation for the oil companies to clean it up at this point, Mr. Speaker, so I'm going to . . . As always, running out of time.

But here's a quote again from the article: "After all, E & P companies try to compliantly decommission wells with minimal investment because there is no upside beyond the settlement of an existing liability on their balance sheet." No motivation for these oil and gas companies to do that, and yet the Premier is asking the taxpayer of Saskatchewan to do the same.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Kaeding: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would like to add my support to the motion:

That this Assembly supports a call on the federal government to immediately implement our government's proposed national abandoned well completion program that would put over 1,000 Saskatchewan energy workers back to work.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, whether the opposition wants to accept it or not, the oil and gas industry in Saskatchewan now plays, and will continue to be, a very important part of our economy. Oil and gas accounts for just over 15 per cent of this province's GDP. New exploration and development in the oil and gas sector was \$3.6 billion in 2015. The combined value of oil and gas production was 8.3 billion in 2015. There were an estimated 33,000 direct and indirect person-years of employment in the upstream oil and gas sector in this province. In Canada, Saskatchewan ranks number two in national oil production, and number three in national gas production.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are at an unprecedented time in our economic history. After cleaning up the NDP legacy of poor resource sector development and stopping the flow of young people to Alberta to find work, we find ourselves in an economic downturn. Unfortunately pipeline development has hit some major hurdles. Oil prices are mired in below cost-of-production levels, and we're hearing daily from skilled, out-of-work oil workers who are walking that fine line of whether they're being able to support their families.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, my hometown of Churchbridge, located 60 miles north of the nearest oil well, I know of a number, a number of young people who have been working in the oil patch. A couple have managed to stay on with the original companies, but at a significantly reduced salary. One individual owns his own oil service company and has laid off 50 per cent of his employees. One has gone to work on an American-owned rig in Kyrgyzstan. A couple others went to BC [British Columbia] in hopes of finding work in gas fields. The rest are applying, waiting, and wondering if there'll be work for them soon.

These are all young people with families to feed, house payments to make, and a community to support. At \$50 per barrel oil and an uncertain future lying ahead in regards to pipeline development, they are really unsure of where their future is. Mr. Speaker, we need to keep our rural communities strong. Schools continue to have students. The hockey rinks keep busy, and there are parents shopping at the local co-op. These communities continue to have good-wage-earning taxpayers that help keep the local and the provincial economy strong.

[11:30]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan has one of the most productive workforces in the country. In 2014 Saskatchewan's labour productivity was \$56.50 per hour, compared to \$53 an hour nationally, meaning for every hour of labour worked, \$56.50 was added to Saskatchewan's real GDP. Saskatchewan has the lowest unit cost of labour among provinces and one of the most loyal workforces in the country. Despite net employment growth of 5,200 jobs in 2015, the resource sector has been struggling during that same period. We cannot afford to lose these quality workers to some other province or

jurisdiction.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a solution to retaining the skilled workforce in this province, and it is called the accelerated well cleanup program in Saskatchewan. This proposal calls for \$156 million in federal funding to help stimulate employment in the oil and gas support sector by accelerating the cleanup of oil wells no longer capable of production. There are an estimated 20,500 suspended wells in this province that are currently not producing and are waiting to be decommissioned and/or reclaimed. Not all of those are truly orphan wells.

An orphan well is defined as a well that has been investigated and confirmed as not having any legal responsible or financially able party to deal with its abandonment and reclamation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, contrary to what the member from Saskatoon Nutana believes, our province has acted very responsibly, and that has developed an orphan well program in 2009 that was designed to ensure that the cost of abandoning and remediating orphan wells and facilities are being paid for solely through an industry-funded levy system or security deposits that are collected from the licences before they become defunct.

Since that fund was established, the ministry has observed 230 orphan wells that have been successfully abandoned and decommissioned and has remediated and reclaimed approximately 63 orphan wells at a total cost of approximately \$8.3 million.

They also have security deposits totalling \$68 million from distressed oil companies to ensure that there is money available to decommission in times of bankruptcy or financial distress. However there are far more wells abandoned than there are security deposits for, and this is where we are seeking federal assistance to get those truly abandoned wells reclaimed and our oil field workers back to work.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with our federal ask of \$156 million, it is estimated that our province could clean up an additional 1,000 orphan wells. On the average, a well cleanup could cost anywhere from 50,000 to \$150,000 per well. At the \$156 million funding level, it is estimated that the cleanup project could bring 1,000 more oil field employees back to work. These employees would be responsible for environmental site assessments, removal of old equipment, remediation of oil and salt-water spills, restoration and re-contouring the site, and the revegetation of land.

Not only are there physical environmental benefits, but it will also assist the government in reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by eliminating fugitive emissions from the old wellheads such as methane and butane.

A Princeton University study analyzed a small number of abandoned wells in Pennsylvania. They found that all wells leaked a certain amount of methane, but they found that over 16 per cent leaked more than 3.2 cubic metres of gas per day. This amount would supply a large house its daily gas requirements. Unchecked in the United States, this could represent 13 per cent of all the human-caused methane emissions in that country.

Mr. Speaker, orphan wells are not just a western Canadian issue. All through the shale oil region of the United States similar numbers are evident — North Dakota and South Dakota, Nebraska, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Oklahoma, just to name a few states. These have abandoned oil wells found beneath homes. They've found them underneath buildings, underneath streets. They're under busy streets. They're in parks. They're found in backyards, forests, and cornfields all through the United States. There have been open well holes in the ground in the United States from the 1800s. And these are concerns throughout North America, that these abandoned wells have been leaking oil, natural gas, and brine into soil and drinking water. And it even posed explosion risks.

Secondly, fixing orphan wells in Saskatchewan is going to restore agriculture land and habitat to its original state. Oil and salt-affected soils will be removed, and this land will be placed back to its original productive state. This is going to improve the safety of grazing livestock and wildlife around the old well sites. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that this is a common sense approach to a multi-level problem. If these environmental issues are not cleaned up soon, they're going to become a larger, more expensive environmental issue into the future.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, critics of this idea have suggested that the industry should pay for this problem. However a recent court decision in Alberta, the Redwater Energy case, ruled that in the case of a bankruptcy, energy companies must use their remaining assets to pay back their lenders before cleaning up old well sites. Unfortunately this ruling reduces the ability of even government regulators to ensure that they have secured adequate funds to properly decommission a well.

With the economic slowdown in the oil and gas sector being experienced today, it's safe to assume that the levies generated for the orphan well fund are going to be reduced, and that the impending bankruptcies that we're going to see among producers is going to increase the number of orphan wells into the future.

While increasing levies on solvent producers, which our friends across the floor are encouraging, it's going to add additional taxes to an already struggling industry, as it's about as beneficial as adding a carbon tax to that same industry.

The federal government is searching for new and unique ways to stimulate the economy. What better way to get small companies and people back to work. It's these small companies and their workforce that are the backbone to the oil and gas industry in this province. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we owe it to the Scotts and the Davids and Jackies in rural Saskatchewan; they deserve to get back to work. Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the motion put forward by the member of Cypress Hills.

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

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to add my voice to some of the issues that we're speaking of today.

And before I begin that, I want to point out that from our perspective as a caucus in opposition that we certainly

understand that the oil patch has been hurting. There are many families impacted. There have been many people that lost their jobs, and you see evidence of that throughout the province of Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, the whole western part of the country in fact certainly has paid their price as a result of the low oil prices, Mr. Speaker. And as official opposition, we want to be able to recognize that and to tell the workers that, from our perspective, we certainly feel their pain.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons why this debate is coming forward is because the Saskatchewan Party wants to play politics with the oil workers, Mr. Speaker. That's exactly what this is about. We all know it, in the sense that . . . The hurt is happening out there, Mr. Speaker, then they shouldn't further exacerbate the issue by simply playing politics with many of these workers' lives and certainly their livelihood.

Now what I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, is that as we begin the discussion, the first thing I want to do is recognize that the oil patch is hurting. And this motion is really asking the federal government to spend something like \$156 million on cleaning up some of the wells that the various members made reference to. I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, that this is the same government that's standing up here today and that killed the film tax credit that created a lot of jobs in the province of Saskatchewan. The Saskatchewan Party government ended that program. That cost a lot of jobs for the people of Saskatchewan.

You look at the northern part of the province, Mr. Speaker. Now they're really messing up the opportunity behind the NORTEP program. Well nobody's talking about those jobs lost, Mr. Speaker. You look at the Buffalo Narrows Correctional Centre, the jobs lost by those families in that particular community, Mr. Speaker. We're not making any reference to that. Let's talk about the SaskTel jobs that have been recently slashed in Moose Jaw, Mr. Speaker. How come we're not speaking of those families impacted, Mr. Speaker? Let's look at the challenges of housing in northern Saskatchewan. Why aren't those issues being addressed, Mr. Speaker?

Let's talk about the infrastructure commitment that the federal government made, Mr. Speaker. Let's talk about the federal government making commitment towards infrastructure for water and sewer and highways, Mr. Speaker, for all these necessary projects that really quite frankly the people of Saskatchewan are in desperate need of, Mr. Speaker. Let's talk about the uranium industry, where they're also hurting, Mr. Speaker. Let's talk about forestry, where it also has many great challenges. Let's talk about tourism in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

So one of the points that I would raise, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that all these industries in Saskatchewan that are hurting, including the oil sector, Mr. Speaker, is because we had the opportunity a number of years ago — four, five, six years, Mr. Speaker — and this government refused to react to the situation then, where people were telling them, take the record revenue that you've enjoyed, create a legacy fund, stimulate the other sectors of the economy as quickly as you can. And, Mr. Speaker, in their failure to do that, they come along years later when they're broke and try and play politics with many of the oil workers' lives. And I say shame on them, Mr. Speaker. That is simply not something that they should be doing on a

continual basis because, if I was an oil worker, Mr. Speaker, and I lost my job and I see these kind of antics that the Saskatchewan Party is pulling to try and create uncertainty out there, Mr. Speaker, well that's not fair at all.

So one of the things I think's really important is that as some of the members throw out these stats, Mr. Speaker, we want to throw out some stats as well. Why all of a sudden, out of the blue the Premier makes this motion, makes this motion without advising the opposition that this motion was coming forward? That goes to our point, Mr. Speaker. We were totally blind sided by this motion. Had the Premier had provided the leadership necessary on this particular motion and consulted with us, Mr. Speaker, we wouldn't be in a situation where we are allowing them to play politics with many of these oil workers' lives.

But for the reference and for the record, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out some of the things that people should know. We know that the Saskatchewan Party government in 2014 received the following amounts from some of the oil and gas companies in donations, and I'm saying the oil and gas companies, not the workers: from the Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors, \$1,820; from CAPP [Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers], 1,183; from CNRL [Canadian Natural Resources Ltd.], 1,820; from Cenovus, 14,618; Crescent Point, 5,820; Ensign Well Servicing, 2,825; T Bird Oil, 1,000; Teine Energy, 1,000; Villanova 4 Oil company, \$1,820. So, Mr. Speaker, there's seven or eight companies there that provided the Saskatchewan Party with \$31,900 in 2014 in donations alone.

So, Mr. Speaker, what is this about? Is it about protecting workers out in the field, Mr. Speaker? Is it about having the oil rig workers and the people that are going to clean up these sites, is it about them, Mr. Speaker? No, it's not about them, Mr. Speaker. They have . . . Quite frankly, the Saskatchewan Party are using, are using these workers, Mr. Speaker, simply because they're in a situation where they're being called on some of their scandals. And the fact of the matter is, is that to use the workers in this distracting way does a great disservice to them.

So we go back to our earlier points, Mr. Speaker, around the economy itself. There are so many areas that are hurting. And the millions of dollars that are being required and requested from the federal government, we ask . . . The question is: where should some of those issues be addressed? And the hurting oil patch is one area we obviously have to focus on, Mr. Speaker, as government. And I want to point out that the NDP certainly have a proud history of how we've attracted investment in the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, we have in many ways, shapes, or forms have done a great service to the oil sector and the oil industry the province of Saskatchewan throughout our history.

Now the Premier very well knows that when the former premier of Saskatchewan, Lorne Calvert, when he designed the royalty structure for oil and gas, Mr. Speaker, it prompted a lot of investment in the province of Saskatchewan. We brought the oil industry to the province of Saskatchewan. The Premier very well knows that, Mr. Speaker.

And look at the history. So one of the things that's really

important is that . . . The backbenchers may not know this, but when the Premier, when the current Premier became Premier, he said we're not going to mess with the NDP's royalty regime because that's what's attracting business and oil investment into Saskatchewan. Those were his exact words, Mr. Speaker. He's going . . . They're going to make sure that they're not going to mess with the model set up by the NDP, Mr. Speaker.

And I think it's really important for the people out there in the oil sector and the oil patch to know, is that we did bring oil investment to the people of Saskatchewan. And this whole notion by the right-wing governments and the Saskatchewan Party's mindset, they often make statements, Mr. Speaker, that are not very, not very visionary or well taken on our side of the Assembly.

[11:45]

Every time the economy of Saskatchewan . . . You look at the history of us as a province, and every time the economy of Saskatchewan is doing well, Mr. Speaker, the New Democrats were government of the day. Now what happened to the Saskatchewan Party? What happened to the Saskatchewan Party is they inherited, they inherited the boom, Mr. Speaker. They inherited the economy, and they inherited money in the bank. And a short time later, eight months later, Mr. Speaker, or eight years later this province is now in deficit. Every sector of our economy is hurting, Mr. Speaker.

And they play politics by picking one particular part of the economy to try and create a nuisance for the NDP, Mr. Speaker. And I say shame on them for using the workers in this way. Do not use the workers as pawns in this whole challenge to try and get more revenues from the federal government to help a number of sectors in our economy. And I say to them today that it's of great disservice to our oil industry overall. It's a great disservice to the workers when you use them in this fashion because we know the only reason that they're using them is to distract from many of their current challenges around the GTH, Mr. Speaker, and many of their scandals. That's the reason they're doing that today. We know it. The media know it. The people of Saskatchewan know it. And I daresay to the people . . . the Saskatchewan Party government that the workers know it too. So I think it's time that the Saskatchewan Party start showing leadership and maturity around some of these things. These motions that they bring forward are meant to use people and meant to use the oil workers, Mr. Speaker. It's not meant to support and defend them.

And I'll say to the people that are working in the oil sector, we understand that you're challenged right now. We understand that you're in a downturn. But I want to point out as a final comment that we will work with the oil sector to really begin to rebuild that industry, Mr. Speaker. That is our history. That is our legacy as a New Democratic Party. And I say once again that we understand the challenges that they're facing.

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

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's my pleasure to enter the debate around this important question because it's something that is certainly a part of my

constituency with the large amount of oil and gas activity in the constituency of Kindersley and well beyond that of course in many areas of our province: the Shaunavon area, the Swift Current area, the Lloydminster area, Estevan, Weyburn, and so on and so forth. Many, many areas of our province have oil and gas development in Saskatchewan.

And the member opposite, the member from Athabasca, listed off company after company that may have contributed to the Saskatchewan Party. And I would also say that they make something much more of a contribution to Saskatchewan. They invest millions and millions of dollars into our economy of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. In addition to that, they employ thousands and thousands of people in Saskatchewan, those companies, Mr. Speaker.

And I think it's time that members opposite said something other than derogatory comments about oil companies here in Saskatchewan and said, welcome to our province. Welcome to the investment that you have. Welcome to the jobs that you employ with people here in Saskatchewan. That's the kind of thing . . . That's the reason why there is so few members opposite, Mr. Speaker. And that's why after April 4th of this year, Mr. Speaker, there are more members in this House than ever, Mr. Speaker.

This is an initiative to help the oil industry, Mr. Speaker. If you listen to the NDP opposite, it makes it sounds like this is an issue that's just come up, oil well abandonment here in Saskatchewan. We have some 40,000 wells in our province, Mr. Speaker. Some of them have been in existence for decades, absolute decades, Mr. Speaker, and they're at various levels of development. Some are abandoned. Some are still in play but are not producing right now because oil prices are as low as they are, and some are producing. And there's other levels of development as well, Mr. Speaker.

But you listen to the member from Nutana. It makes it sound like this is something that just happened in the last few years. Well it's gone through successive governments, through many, many governments, where we've seen development of the oil and gas sector here in Saskatchewan. And unfortunately until recently, there was no oil abandonment reclamation plan in place until we made it happen here in Saskatchewan. And I think that's an important point, Mr. Speaker, is we made it happen here in Saskatchewan to ensure that the future of the industry would be a much more responsible industry in terms of making sure that wells were cleaned up when they are abandoned in the future. And that's an important point. And yes, absolutely there's been companies that have gone bankrupt over the years or are no longer in existence, and wells that have to be cleaned up as a responsible way to do things, Mr. Speaker.

And if the member from Athabasca was truly interested in seeing environmentally things being done in Saskatchewan and truly interested in employment, he would support this motion, Mr. Speaker. But he won't, but he won't support this motion, Mr. Speaker, and the reason is quite simple. The only thing he is ever interested in and the NDP are ever interested in is playing politics when it comes to these kinds of things, Mr. Speaker. That's the true legacy of the NDP around the oil and gas industry. It's all about the politics. And I will agree that, under the Lorne Calvert administration, they made some

positive steps to attract industry here in Saskatchewan. And we supported it all the way, all the way.

And if you were truly interested in again seeing the industry progress further, you would support this motion. But we all know, we all know that the member from Athabasca particularly, won't do it. He's only interested in the politics. He's not interested in anything else. He's not interested in the jobs. He's not interested in cleaning up the environment here in Saskatchewan, and there's lots of work to be done on that. And that's precisely the reason why this government brought forward this idea that came from the oil industry itself because we feel that it's important to take the steps. And they may be small steps initially to make a difference in the oil patch to clean up some of these wells.

I come from an area that has oil and gas development. We see them all over the place and many of those companies are long gone, Mr. Speaker. And as a result of that, there has to be an initiative to drive this forward. There has to be something done, an impetus to make sure that we see this problem addressed in the future. And that's precisely why, when the Premier went and spoke to members of the oil industry, they said this is maybe a small step, but at least it's a step forward. And that's something that I think is very, very important that we all have to recognize.

Let's set aside the politics for a little bit. Can we? I would ask the member from Nutana, if you are truly interested — and I know you are, I know you are — if you're truly interested in the environment of Saskatchewan, and I think you are, you would support this motion because it is at least a positive step in the right direction, and she knows it.

But unfortunately I don't think that they will support this motion even though it speaks to the issues that they have been raising in the legislature for a long time which is the environment and jobs. I think this is a great initiative, Mr. Speaker. It's something that the people of Saskatchewan, I believe, support very directly, Mr. Speaker. I think when you talk to people here in Saskatchewan they say, of course we want to see abandoned wells cleaned up properly.

And of course there's nobody in the industry anymore that believes that they should be absolved of any kind of liability around this, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I think the industry is very, very supportive of this simply because they know they have a responsibility to address the problems of the past, Mr. Speaker. And that's why I think we will see the oil and gas industry . . . If the federal government offers some support for this program, and I hope they will, if they offer some support for this program, you would see wells being cleaned up in a systematic way here in Saskatchewan. They range from a relatively modest cost of a few thousand, \$50,000 perhaps, to many hundreds of thousands of dollars depending on the amount of environmental reclamation that's necessary, Mr. Speaker, for these wells.

But at least it would be a step in the right direction. Any well that's cleaned up is a well that doesn't have to be cleaned up in the future, Mr. Speaker. It is an environmental liability that doesn't have to be addressed in the future. It can be addressed now, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, I think there's very good reasons why the people of Saskatchewan would support this

motion before the people of Saskatchewan. I think we would see jobs being created here in our province.

In the oil and gas sector right now, it is hurting. There's no question about it. When you talk to members of the oil industry, and I talk to them all of the time in my constituency and other constituencies as well, many, many of them are laid off, Mr. Speaker, and that's a tough thing for a young family to have to deal with. That when the economy is as difficult as it is and there's initiatives put forward by the government to help address the problems that there are in the oil industry, that we don't see support from the federal government, and unfortunately we most certainly don't see support from members opposite, Mr. Speaker. And that's unfortunate to say the least, Mr. Speaker.

The . . . [inaudible] . . . industry creates a tremendous amount of employment here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. It has for years and years and years, and that's again a very important thing for the province of Saskatchewan to have that kind of development here in our province. About 15 per cent of our GDP is a direct result of the oil and gas industry here in the province, Mr. Speaker. There are thousands and thousands of people employed in the industry. Many unfortunately have been laid off. At least this is an initiative to try and reclaim some of those jobs for the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And that's why I think . . . We certainly believe that there is initiatives here that are very, very good for Saskatchewan. There are billions of dollars that have been invested in the oil and gas sector here in Saskatchewan. We have a responsibility as legislators, I believe, to ensure that it is done in a responsible fashion, Mr. Speaker. And I would ask members opposite to really think about that, that we are doing everything we can, I believe, as a government to ensure that the oil and gas industry operates in a responsible fashion. And they do, Mr. Speaker.

If you go on any recently drilled oil well site here in Saskatchewan, you will see all of the efforts to mitigate problems that you can possibly imagine, Mr. Speaker. There's huge amounts of training taking place, education taking place, new initiatives taking place, new technology that's being put in place to ensure that spills don't happen, to ensure that there's going to be responsible education and responsible development in the future, Mr. Speaker.

And, yes, there are problems from time to time, and we've all seen those kinds of problems, most recently in the North Saskatchewan River. But it's still, Mr. Speaker, the responsibility of all of us, I think, to ensure that the proper steps are put in place, to ensure that development is done in a responsible fashion. And this is one of those initiatives. And, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude by just saying once again, if the NDP were truly interested in the environment and truly interested in jobs, they would support this motion.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Prince Albert Northcote.

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm happy to participate in this debate today. And I have to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's not very often that I agree with some of the members across there, and I have to say there was a couple

things there that I do agree about.

When the member for Cypress Hills was talking about how orphan wells, if we don't address them, there will be great environmental issues. There's a lot of information with regards to that, and it is really troubling knowing that we have this potential environmental problem, you know, that we're not completely addressing. And also the member for Kindersley, he's right. Orphan wells aren't anything new. It's been something that's been going on for a long time.

When you have the oil and gas industry in your country and province, there's going to be chances that that might happen. And I feel that this government didn't fully look into a plan on addressing that when our oil and gas industry peaked, and . . . which was good. But we know that markets fluctuate, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And so as a government that's responsible to plan for that. And this government was warned by the Provincial Auditor in 2012 about the issues of the orphaned wells. And so I'm going to summarize some of the things she said here:

Oil and gas exploration and development provides a key source of revenue for the province; however, it comes with inherent environmental and financial risks. Based on our audit, we concluded that the Ministry of the Economy did not have effective processes to manage the financial and associated environmental risks related to the future clean-up of oil and gas wells and related facilities.

The Ministry currently estimates the future clean up costs of existing oil and gas wells and their associated facilities could total \$3.6 billion. Although licensees are responsible for cleanup, there is a risk that a . . . [potential] of the \$3.6 billion . . . [will] be borne by the Ministry and hence taxpayers because licensees may one day not have sufficient financial means to clean up their wells and facilities or they may not be identifiable or locatable when cleanup is needed.

To date, only 10 of the estimated 700 potentially orphaned wells in Saskatchewan (wells where the licensee has no money or cannot be located) have been cleaned up. The Ministry needs to address the cleanup of orphan wells on a timely basis, update its estimate of clean up costs, and record the related liability in the Government's financial statements. Its last estimate of \$26 million to clean up orphaned wells and facilities is five years old.

[12:00]

Saskatchewan has 87,000 oil and gas wells and 5,300 facilities. The number of non-producing wells increased by 31%, or 7,000 wells, over the last five years. In order to mitigate the potential risks associated with an increasing number of inactive wells and facilities, the Ministry needs to assess what steps are needed to encourage their timely cleanup by licensees.

The Ministry also needs to improve its public reporting on the effectiveness of its oil and gas well cleanup programs, so that the people of Saskatchewan are aware of the progress of its initiatives.

Finally, we noted that the Ministry of the Economy is responsible for both promoting the development of oil and gas, as well as protecting the environment and the public from the impact of this development. We recommend that the Ministry assess its responsibilities and mitigate the risks associated with its dual, potentially conflicting, roles.

This was presented by the auditor in 2012, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I don't understand why that wasn't dealt with at that time. So the government has an Orphan Fund levy and fee, which I'm sure most of the members here are aware of. And so the purpose of this Orphan Fund levy and fee is so that it could deal with this exact issue.

So this legislation was developed June of 2007, which I think was a great idea. And again that was supposed to . . . I'll read what the purpose of it was:

The Oil and Gas Orphan Fund provides funding to address the costs of abandoning and decommissioning orphan wells and facilities and reclaiming the sites, as well as the costs of containing environmental emergencies arising from oil and gas operations. The fund receives revenue primarily through an annual levy that is paid by the oil and gas industry, thereby protecting taxpayers from exposure to these industry liabilities.

So again, this was introduced to protect the taxpayers so they're not paying for the consequences of orphan wells due to the oil and gas industry and making the oil companies have to pay for that. So I don't understand why that fund is not being used to deal with this issue.

So the Saskatchewan Oil and Gas Orphan Fund was established as a means through which industry pays for the costs associated with orphan wells and facilities, therefore ensuring these costs do not get passed on to the Saskatchewan taxpayers — right here in the legislation.

So that's one of the issues that I feel is something that needs to be addressed is that this problem has been brought forward before. And what is the government doing with regards to the oil fund and levy that has already been collected? And if that wasn't enough to deal with the situation we're in . . . The auditor said in 2012 it wasn't going to be enough. So why wasn't something addressed then? Is it because they don't want to approach the oil companies to get more money? Possibly.

So we talked a little bit about the environmental . . . I want to discuss the environmental issues with regards to leaving these orphan wells. And so the major risk the ministry faces in cleaning up orphan wells and sites is ensuring the ability to respond in a timely manner when they occur. Often as sites become orphaned they may have fallen into a state of disrepair, and there are environmental impacts.

So that's something that we really need to look at. Even the provincial government said in a press release, environmental site assessment, the safe removal and disposal of old equipment, the remediation of oil and salt water spills, the restoration and re-contouring of the site, and the re-vegetation of the land — that's what is really important. And again I thought that's what that fund was originally for, was to restore land back to normal

after orphan wells became orphan.

So one thing I wanted to point out is that the oil industry again has been around for years and years and it's been in other provinces, and it's been in other countries, and especially the United States, and so I was doing some research with regards to what North Dakota does because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you might be surprised that right now for North Dakota they say that they only have one orphan well in their whole state. And the last time that they had more than one orphan well was in 2011 when they had two orphan wells. And the reason why they don't have the situation that we do is because they have some strict, firm timelines with regards to well reclamation, and so then they're able to go after the oil companies in a timely fashion so that they didn't declare bankruptcy.

So what they have is, they have a use-it-or-lose-it policy in place. If a well has not produced any oil or gas in 12 straight months, one year, 12 straight months, North Dakota's industrial commission requires the owner of the well to either start pumping or plug the well. If the state doesn't get a response from the producer, it calls the company's bond, levies fines, and plugs the well itself. So they'll do it and then they bill the company, and so they hold the old oil companies responsible.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm not one that says that we shouldn't be asking the federal government for some money, but there's more than just oil workers that are out of jobs right now. We have 4,900 agriculture jobs that are lost in the past year. There's 7,700 construction jobs lost over the past year, and there's 4,400 fewer jobs for people who are age 15 to 24. And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we are going to go after the feds for some money, maybe we could put that towards getting other jobs as well, or fixing our highways and roads. Our infrastructure is challenged. Creating water and water waste infrastructure so communities across our province have access to clean drinking water, or fixing our schools and hospitals.

I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there's a lot of benefit if we do get some federal money from the feds, but I don't necessarily think it should be covering up for oil companies. So thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — Before we go to questions, I'd like to simply remind members to put their questions and their answers through the Chair. I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And we know that this motion is here today because it's a channel changer for other issues that this government is dealing with. So I'm glad to see the member from Kindersley has finally found his feet and his voice. I would like to ask him why he encourages a special adviser to negotiate a deal that wasted \$12 million, and will he let us know who . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — The questions need to pertain to the motion, not to other subjects. I recognize the member from Sask Rivers.

Hon. Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't think there's any doubt about it. This is a good idea that puts people back to work and has the benefit of being good for the

environment. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the member from Saskatoon Nutana. Will the NDP go against their federal counterparts and join with us on calling for the Government of Canada to immediately fund this accelerated well cleanup program? Yes or no?

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As we know, this particular debate is a channel changer for this government, and they're using it to avoid answering questions — very important questions — on other issues such as the GTH scandal. So I think what really should be debated in this House is why this government won't be able to put forward speakers that should answer important questions for the people of Saskatchewan.

We know that this is a . . . The accelerated well program is one that's the responsibility of oil companies. It always has been. It always will be. And for the government to step in in this way is a very unusual move. So it would be nice to hear from the member of Kindersley about what he thinks about this as well.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Prince Albert Northcote.

Ms. Rancourt: — The Premier has made helping companies who have not cleaned up their abandoned well sites a priority. His priority for scarce federal dollars is for these companies. How does the member from Cypress Hills think it looks when some of the companies that would benefit most have given the Sask Party over \$55,000?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cypress Hills.

Mr. Steele: — The oil well program is designed to take care of cleanup that should have been done in the past from when the opposition was in power. And companies are more than willing to step up and take care of this. We just need an incentive to move forward.

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

Mr. Bonk: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the member from Saskatoon Nutana. In your speech, you said you understand the devastating effects of low oil prices. Then why would you not support this motion and support the Leap Manifesto?

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

Ms. Sproule: — I'd like to thank the member from Moosomin for his question, Mr. Speaker. Of course we support the oil economy and we support the industry, and that's why we're asking for the industry to actually deal with this issue because it's their legal responsibility. And we know that when . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Orphan wells is a completely different issue. Obviously the Minister of Finance doesn't know about.

No, we're talking about abandoned wells, which is a completely

different issue, Mr. Speaker. Orphan wells, there's \$11 million in the fund right now. There's only 98 orphan wells, so that's not the question that the member from Cypress put forward.

We're talking about the abandoned wells that the Premier asked the federal government to support, and these are not orphaned wells. These are the wells that are about to be decommissioned. This is a decommissioning process. You can check with the government officials if you're not sure what we're talking about. The point is, is that those companies are currently in business and they are currently liable for paying for those. That's their legal responsibility, and that's all we're asking.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Prince Albert Northcote.

Ms. Rancourt: — How does the member from Melville-Saltcoats think it looks when on the same day that the Sask Party was asked to stop letting big company's money flow into political coffers, the Premier called for public dollars to flow into some of those same private company's coffers?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Kaeding: — Well, Mr. Speaker, what we're asking is the federal government to help participate in an environmental issue that we've got to deal with in this province. And you know, the access that we've allowed to this party, I think is open access that really anybody has available to them. So I guess I'm just a little perplexed by the question to be honest with you.

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

Mr. Parent: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Although we have a very resilient economy in Saskatchewan, we are not immune to low commodity prices. This is the reason why so many oil field service workers now are having trouble finding full-time work. The accelerated well cleanup program is a simple way that the Government of Canada can help put workers, in an industry that is hurting, back to work. Mr. Speaker, to the member from Prince Albert Northcote: will they join us in our call to put oil field service workers back to work?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Prince Albert Northcote.

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We do know that markets go up and down, and that's no surprise. So this government should have saved money when we had record revenues and put money away to deal with this situation, but they didn't. They spent all the money and now they're wondering what to do.

So if we get some federal dollars, I'd like it to address all the unemployment in this province — 11,000 less jobs. That's horrible. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the member from Melville—Saltcoats. The reference to some of the job losses in SaskTel and also the shutdown of the Buffalo Narrows Correctional Centre, does he believe those jobs are less important than the jobs being proposed here?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Melville—Saltcoats.

Mr. Kaeding: — Mr. Speaker, I guess just to clarify, there are no job losses in SaskTel.

And the second thing that we need to deal with is that every job is important to this government in Saskatchewan. And we've put lots of efforts into trying to provide opportunities for every person in this province.

We've got some concerns certainly with the economy. We've got job losses in every sector here. And I think we've done a remarkable job in Saskatchewan to be able to retain the jobs that we do when we start looking at other jurisdictions around us and the job losses that they've faced. And I think we've done a remarkable job in keeping the jobs that we do have right now.

[12:15]

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

Mr. Docherty: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In question period on Monday, the Leader of the Opposition asked the following question:

Will the Premier admit that he wasted a historic opportunity for Saskatchewan people? Will he now take action and implement a strategy to create jobs for Saskatchewan people?

Yet on two occasions in the last nine months, members opposite have refused to debate rule 61 motions calling on Ottawa to support our well cleanup program.

My question is to the member from Saskatoon Nutana. Since you refuse to debate our proposals, will you commit to proposing some ideas of your own to create jobs?

Maybe you're waiting for the launch of Festivus, Mr. Speaker, and the traditional airing of grievances . . . [inaudible] . . . debate, while trying desperately to score political points in question period. Mr. Speaker, I want the members opposite to air their grievances. Festivus for the rest of us. Thank you.

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

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Obviously the member opposite is a fan of the *Seinfeld* TV show — and I know we all were — so that was a humorous approach there.

But I think the important thing here is the reasons . . . You know when the government puts silly questions forward for

political gain, there's no point engaging in those discussions. Unfortunately we're in the same spot here today.

This is a non-issue. We know the Premier has already tried this and the federal government has refused. The federal government has refused, so now he's still knocking on that door and the door is closed. You kind of have to ask what's going to happen when the Premier then turns around and lambastes the federal . . . the Prime Minister, and he thinks that this program's going to get the federal funding that he thinks it should get, when he's turning around and calling down the Prime Minister all the time. That's not good tactics, Mr. Speaker, and it's hard to understand why the Premier is closing the door on that. So once again, the tech fund, it belongs to these guys. They could've created 8,500 jobs and they haven't.

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

Ms. Sarauer: — Mr. Speaker, to the member from Kindersley: how many shut-in wells do we currently have in Saskatchewan?

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

Mr. Boyd: — I don't know the exact number, Mr. Speaker, but there's lots here in Saskatchewan, and that's why this motion has come forward. That's why we feel that the important thing for the environment here in Saskatchewan, and for employment here in Saskatchewan, is to ensure that there are jobs available for people in our province and to ensure that we're protecting the environment, Mr. Speaker.

I don't know the exact number of them, and I think it's irrelevant, frankly, with respect to this. It's important to know that there's an initiative on the floor here right now that would deal with wells that are shut in, Mr. Speaker, that need to be addressed and environmentally cleaned up, and it would create jobs for the people of Saskatchewan.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Gardiner Park. The time has expired. Oh, no, we're done.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 2 — Calls to Action in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Report

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by Mr. Belanger.]

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Prince Albert Northcote.

Ms. Rancourt: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am happy today to talk about the motion that was put forward by the member of Athabasca. I think it's a really important motion that needs to be discussed. And I was happy to be asked to put some of my thoughts with regards to . . . Especially, I'm going to

focus on the calls to action with regards to the child welfare calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the first call to action is:

We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to commit to reducing the number of Aboriginal children in care.

And then they give some suggestions here, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So the first one is “monitoring and assessing neglect investigations.” So this is really important, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because a lot of the kids that are in care are First Nations, and they well overrepresent the number of kids that we have in care, which is unfortunate.

So the second recommendation that they have here is:

Providing adequate resources to enable Aboriginal communities and child-welfare organizations to keep Aboriginal families together where it is safe to do so, and to keep children in culturally appropriate environments, regardless of where they reside.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that’s so important. We need to really help foster families and help keep them together, and whatever we need to do to provide that. And we know that a lot of these situations are intergenerational. And so we need to make sure that we have programs that will help keep these families together, whether it’s parenting programs or whether it’s family-based programs because a lot of the situations with regards to residential schools and the Sixties Scoop, they prevented families from being able to foster and learn how to be healthy families at times. So I think it’s really important that our first measure is to try to keep families together.

And I think when we do focus on programming that we have to really focus on the intergenerational effects from residential schools. And they say with the documentation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that even if, like now we’ve got generations, so even if your parents or your grandparents were residential school survivors, that that had an impact on you as well, and that trauma. So we can’t forget to discuss that and talk about how that has the impact. You see that with a lot of things with regards to attachment as well. So I think that that really needs to be part of the programming that we provide.

And I think if we can’t, if the families can’t stay together because of safety issues, that we need to then . . . The second plan would be to keep children with extended families if at all possible, so grandparents, aunts, uncles. If there’s another healthy family option, I think that needs to be a priority. And I’ve been getting a lot of calls from families — grandparents, aunts, and uncles — saying that their family member was placed in care and they want to be the care provider, and there’s no issues with them being the care provider.

But sometimes the systems that we have take a long period of time to investigate and ensure that that placement is a good placement. And I think with some work with the ministry, that we can maybe look at a different way of providing that, like deciding which homes would be safe.

I know it’s not a one quick, easy answer, but I think we could work at maybe expediting that process because the longer that kids aren’t with their biological families, that’s when the attachment issues will progress. And you could just imagine being a young child and you might not completely understand the whole situation of the adult issues that are going on, and being placed with people that you don’t know who they are. They have different cultures or different systems, and it’s scary. And it has long-lasting effects. So if we can minimize that, that would be priority.

And I think another thing too is working with some First Nations communities or families to try to recruit them for foster homes, like looking at that being an avenue of recruiting. So if you can’t stay with your actual natural family, then maybe you could be with someone who maybe is a little bit more closer related to your cultural beliefs. So that would be some recommendations I would have, or suggestions.

The third one is ensuring that social workers and others who conduct child welfare investigations are properly educated and trained about the history and impacts of residential schools.

First of all, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I’m a real advocate of ensuring that child protection workers who have a social work degree are registered as social workers so they could be titled as that. The reason for that is because when you are a registered social worker, you’re bound by the code of ethics and you are expected to have a certain number of professional development standards. And then you have the standards of practice, so you have that professional body that really holds you accountable. And I think when you’re working with the most vulnerable kids or the most vulnerable families in this community, that it’s really important that you are a registered social worker or registered in your field so that you have those standards of practice and you know that you’re bound by that practice. I think it’s troubling to know that that hasn’t been a priority for the Ministry of Social Services. And I think with regards to that, then we’ll have better standards. So I would like to see that happen.

I think when you have staff and you’re hiring them, ensuring that they already are trained. Like the post-secondary training oftentimes has a lot of First Nations courses that you can take and stuff, and workplace training. And another thing that I know I’ve been having more involvement myself with is working with the First Nations students, with the First Nations University. So encouraging them to do their practicum placements at our ministry, and working at trying to recruit some of those students from those programs because the First Nations University does an excellent job with talking about cultural situations and talking about, you know, the importance of having culture in your life and what that culture looks like.

And then the other recommendations here is:

iv. Ensuring that social workers and others who conduct child welfare investigations are properly educated and trained about the potential for Aboriginal communities and families to provide more appropriate solutions to family healing.

v. Requiring that all child welfare decision makers

consider the impact of the residential school experience on children and their caregivers.

So that's all very important. And then the second recommendation is:

We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with the provinces and territories, to prepare and publish annual reports on the number of Aboriginal children (First Nations, Inuit and Métis) who are in care, compared with non-Aboriginal children, as well as the reasons for apprehension, the total spending on preventive and care services by child welfare agencies and the effectiveness of various interventions.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that's really important. We know that we have a high population of youth that are in care. I think in Saskatchewan, just in Saskatchewan in general, 25 per cent of our child population is Aboriginal, but in care it's about 65 per cent. And so again, like I said, it was high.

And so I know when I did estimates with regards to the Ministry of Social Services, I was able to get those numbers, so that was readily available. We never really got the layout of the reasons for apprehensions. I hope they have that laid out somewhere, and it would be really good to keep that information just like the calls of action says, so we could track what do we need to funnel our services into.

And the total spending on preventative and care services, I know there's a whole bunch of different programs that are being offered and the layout of exactly how much I think has been done in the budget. But we do know there was some cuts with regards to that, and I think at all means that we should try not to make cuts in those specific positions because it's just going to have a backwards effect. And it's not going to help families and the issues that we have with children in care, and the effectiveness of the various interventions. So that's also important to keep track of so that we know that we're investing our money in the certain areas.

So the third recommendation is, "We call upon all levels of government to fully implement Jordan's Principle." That is absolutely critical. We can't be sitting and fighting with the federal government with regards to dollars. We've got to make sure that the services are there for children and then we fight for dollars. And so that's a great principle to always keep in the back of our mind.

4. We call upon the federal government to enact Aboriginal child-welfare legislation that establishes national standards for Aboriginal child apprehension and custody cases and includes principles that:

i. Affirm the right of Aboriginal governments to establish and maintain their own child-welfare agencies. [We've got to work hard with the Aboriginal governments so that they're able to maintain their own child-welfare agencies.]

ii. Require all child-welfare agencies and courts to take the residential school legacy into account in their decision making.

iii. Establish, as an important priority, a requirement that placements of Aboriginal children into temporary and permanent care be culturally appropriate.

5. We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to develop culturally appropriate parenting programs for Aboriginal families.

And again I think that's a big thing that we need to focus on, is the parenting programs. And I really want to stress again that I think that it needs to identify intergenerational effects of residential schools, the trauma, the intergenerational trauma and attachment, and how that has issues with regards to the families.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my time is up. I could talk for probably hours with regards to this, but I do want to say that I'm in favour of this motion. And I'm going to adjourn debate. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Prince Albert Northcote has moved to adjourn debate on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Hon. Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I move that this House be now adjourned.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:30.]

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