



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of

The Honourable P. Myron Kowalsky
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Speaker — Hon. P. Myron Kowalsky
 Premier — Hon. Lorne Calvert
 Leader of the Opposition — Brad Wall

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Addley, Hon. Graham	NDP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Atkinson, Hon. Pat	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Beatty, Hon. Joan	NDP	Cumberland
Belanger, Hon. Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornrud, Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
Borgerson, Lon	NDP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
Calvert, Hon. Lorne	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
Chisholm, Michael	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
Cline, Hon. Eric	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Crofford, Joanne	NDP	Regina Rosemont
D'Autremont, Dan	SP	Cannington
Dearborn, Jason	SP	Kindersley
Draude, June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
Duncan, Dustin	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
Forbes, Hon. David	NDP	Saskatoon Centre
Gantfoer, Rod	SP	Melfort
Hagel, Hon. Glenn	NDP	Moose Jaw North
Hamilton, Doreen	NDP	Regina Wascana Plains
Harpauer, Donna	SP	Humboldt
Harper, Ron	NDP	Regina Northeast
Hart, Glen	SP	Last Mountain-Touchwood
Heppner, Nancy	SP	Martensville
Hermanson, Elwin	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Higgins, Hon. Deb	NDP	Moose Jaw Wakamow
Huyghebaert, Yogi	SP	Wood River
Iwanchuk, Andy	NDP	Saskatoon Fairview
Junor, Judy	NDP	Saskatoon Eastview
Kerpan, Allan	SP	Carrot River Valley
Kirsch, Delbert	SP	Batoche
Kowalsky, Hon. P. Myron	NDP	Prince Albert Carlton
Krawetz, Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
Lautermilch, Hon. Eldon	NDP	Prince Albert Northcote
McCall, Hon. Warren	NDP	Regina Elphinstone-Centre
McMorris, Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
Merriman, Ted	SP	Saskatoon Northwest
Morgan, Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
Morin, Sandra	NDP	Regina Walsh Acres
Nilson, Hon. John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
Prebble, Peter	NDP	Saskatoon Greystone
Quennell, Hon. Frank	NDP	Saskatoon Meewasin
Serby, Hon. Clay	NDP	Yorkton
Sonntag, Hon. Maynard	NDP	Meadow Lake
Stewart, Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Taylor, Hon. Len	NDP	The Battlefords
Thomson, Hon. Andrew	NDP	Regina South
Toth, Don	SP	Moosomin
Trew, Kim	NDP	Regina Coronation Park
Van Mulligen, Hon. Harry	NDP	Regina Douglas Park
Wakefield, Milton	SP	Lloydminster
Wall, Brad	SP	Swift Current
Wartman, Hon. Mark	NDP	Regina Qu'Appelle Valley
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Moosomin.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to present a petition on behalf of a number of residents in the province of Saskatchewan, and I read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to implement a strategy that will see a dialysis unit placed in Broadview Union Hospital.

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

Mr. Speaker, the petition I present today is signed by the folks of Broadview and Whitewood. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Cypress Hills.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again today I rise to present a petition on behalf of the constituents of Cypress Hills concerned about the impending closure in a day or two of the SaskPower office in the community of Shaunavon. The prayer reads as follows:

Your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to keep the SaskPower office in Shaunavon open to provide full service to the community and surrounding areas.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, today several pages of petitions are signed by individuals from the communities of Frontier, Claydon, and Shaunavon. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition to present today. The petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to ensure that the Maryfield School remains open.

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

These petitions come from Fairlight, the Fairlight and Maryfield areas, Mr. Speaker. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise again today on behalf of people concerned about the deplorable state of Highway 310, and the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause this government to repair Highway 310 in order to address safety concerns and to facilitate economic growth and tourism in Foam Lake, Fishing Lake, Kuroki, and surrounding areas.

The people that have signed this petition are from Kuroki, Fishing Lake, and Wadena. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Rosetown-Elrose.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you and good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I have another petition asking that full service be maintained at the Saskatchewan Power office at Rosetown. And, Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition are concerned that the banks cannot accept payment if the customer doesn't have documentation, a service which the office provides. The prayer of the petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to keep the SaskPower office in Rosetown open to provide full service to the community and surrounding areas.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I see the signatures on this petition are from three communities — of course the community of Rosetown but as well Radisson and Milden. And I'm pleased to present this petition on their behalf.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Thunder Creek.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On this great day to be a farmer, I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with the alarming practice of transferring patients from one ambulance to another on the highway. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to cease the transfer of patients from one ambulance to another while en route.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals all from the community of Chaplin. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Estevan.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to present a petition on behalf of people in my constituency who are very concerned over the condition of Highway 18. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to invest the needed money to repair and maintain Highway 18 so it can return to being a safe and economical route for Saskatchewan families and business.

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

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by the citizens of Lake Alma. I so present. Thank you.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be able to present a petition on behalf of citizens who are very concerned about this government's addiction to gravel and turning highways back to gravel as they've done on a section of No. 22. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to upgrade and maintain Highway 22 so it can return to being a safe and economical route for the Earl Grey area families and businesses.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signatures to this petition, Mr. Speaker, come from the communities of Dysart, Bulyea, Punnichy, and Duval. And I'm pleased to be able to present it on their behalf.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Humboldt.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'm sure everyone's wondering what petition I have today. But today I have several pages of a petition with citizens concerned about the safety on Highway No. 5. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to upgrade and widen Highway No. 5 from Humboldt to Saskatoon.

And the signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from Humboldt, Saskatoon, St. Gregor, Bruno, Dana, Kelvington, Buchanan, Naicam, and Quill Lake. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to present another petition from citizens opposed to a possible reduction of health services in Wilkie. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take

the necessary steps to ensure that the Wilkie Health Centre and special care home maintain at the very least their current level of services.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens of Wilkie and district. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present another petition on behalf of the 600 children under six years old and their parents in the Saskatoon Silver Springs constituency regarding a much needed elementary school in the Arbor Creek and Willowgrove area of Saskatoon. The prayer of the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to implement an allocation of financial resources this year to build an elementary school in Arbor Creek-Willowgrove.

The petitioners today, Mr. Speaker, come from northeast Saskatoon — from Buckwold Cove, Adaskin Cove, and Wright Crescent. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Wood River.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I rise with a petition from citizens that are very concerned that a withdrawal of the lab services of Lafleche and District Health Centre would cause undue hardships to residents, particularly seniors. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary actions to ensure that lab services are continued at the Lafleche and District Health Centre.

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

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by the good citizens of the area including Lafleche, Meyronne, Kincaid, Glentworth, and Limerick. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Rosthern-Shellbrook.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Assembly today to bring forth a petition signed by citizens of Saskatchewan that are concerned with the rural school closures. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take necessary actions to ensure that the Limerick School remains open.

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

Mr. Speaker, signatures to this petition are from Limerick and Saskatoon. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Batoche.

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to bring forward a petition from citizens that are concerned with the deplorable condition of Highway 368 from 4 miles south of Lake Lenore to 4 miles south of St. Brieux. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take immediate action and make necessary repairs to Highway 368 in order to address safety and economic concerns.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, it's signed by the good people of Carrot River, Humboldt, St. Brieux, and Colonsay. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Arm River-Watrous.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition calling on the Government of Saskatchewan to maintain Department of Highways section shop in Watrous:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that Department of Highways section shop in Watrous remain open so as to ensure the safety of all motorists and Saskatchewan Highways employees who would be affected by such possible closure.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

This particular petition is signed by the good citizens from the town of Watrous. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Southeast.

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to present a petition in the House today regarding maintaining full service of the SaskPower office in Rosetown, the town which my in-laws are from. I will read the prayer for relief:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to keep the SaskPower office in Rosetown open to provide full service to the community and surrounding areas.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by citizens from Rosetown. I so present on their behalf. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy.

Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise and join my colleagues in presenting a petition to maintain full service of the SaskPower office at Rosetown. And I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to keep the SaskPower office in Rosetown open to provide full service to the community and surrounding areas.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals from Rosetown, and I'm pleased to present it today. Thank you.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — According to order the petitions received at the last sitting have been reviewed and pursuant to rule 15(7) are hereby read and received.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy.

Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Advanced Education and Employment: what new department expenditures in the '07-08 budget is one-time spending?

And, Mr. Speaker, I have the same question for the Minister of Learning, the Minister Responsible for Public Service Commission; Culture, Youth and Recreation; First Nations and Métis Relations, Immigration, Northern Affairs, Government Relations, Saskatchewan Property Management, Highways and Transportation, Labour, Agriculture, Environment, Finance, Industry and Resources, Regional Economic and Co-operative Development, and Community Resources.

[13:45]

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Indian Head-Milestone.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: of the additional 274 million now allocated to the health care budget, which initiatives are one-time costs?

I also ask on day no. 43 the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: given the new initiatives in this year's budget, what are the department's forecasts in health spending for the next two years?

While I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I have a number of questions surrounding the issue of harassment. And I give notice to the government on day no. 43 the following question:

To the Minister of Health: how much money was paid out as a result of firing related to department employee harassment [got to get that right] in the fiscal year 2001-2002 all the way up to 2006-2007?

I also give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: of the harassment complaints filed in the 2000-2001 fiscal year, how many were verified?

And that continues on up to the year 2006-2007.

I ask the government the following question on day no. 43:

To the Minister of Health: how many department employees were charged with harassment for the fiscal year of 2001-2002, going up to the years 2006-2007?

And my . . . No, not quite the last group. I will give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following questions:

To the Minister of Health: how many harassment-related complaints were filed in the fiscal year 2000-2001?

And related questions going up to the year 2006-2007.

And my final set would be, I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: how many department employee harassment cases resulted in conviction, disciplinary action, or firing in the fiscal year 2000-2001, all the way up to the fiscal year of 2006-2007?

I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Moosomin.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Corrections and Public Safety: how many government employees were charged with harassment for the fiscal year 2006 and '07?

And I also give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Corrections and Public Safety: how many government employee harassment cases resulted in convictions, disciplinary action, or firings in the fiscal year 2006-2007?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Finance: what is the total financial impact of a 1 cent variance in the Canadian-US dollar exchange rate upon the Government of Saskatchewan's revenue projections for corporate income tax, corporate capital tax, and non-renewable resource revenue for 2007-2008?

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Finance: will the minister identify both the total amount of one-time spending contained in the 2007-2008 provincial budget, and all the individual one-time spending measures?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for the Forestry Secretariat: to date how many meetings has Tom Waller had with First Nations in his role as CEO of the Forestry Secretariat? What First Nations attended and when were the meetings held?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier, the member for Saskatoon Riversdale.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure this afternoon to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House a group of young men and women who are seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. They are members of the Hear the Youth committee of Prince Albert. And over lunch I and yourself, Mr. Speaker, and other colleagues had an opportunity to meet with the Hear the Youth committee, and they presented to us a document entitled *Voice the Vision of Youth*. An amazing piece of work, Mr. Speaker, that this committee has done in ascertaining the views of young people in the community of Prince Albert.

And I want to thank them for their work and thank them for visiting the legislature this afternoon. And I would like, Mr. Speaker, to introduce each of them and perhaps as I mention your name if you could just give us a wave to indicate who's here. Brigitte Jobin is here; Celeste Boran-Fetch, Melanie Demyen, Sabrina Demyen, Crystal Whiteman, Chris Sauve, Kurt Sauve, Matt Wareham, and Zach Nilson.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, the Chair of the Hear the Youth committee, Mr. Chad Nilson, who as you know happens to be the newly nominated New Democratic Party candidate in your constituency, Mr. Speaker, soon to be joining us on the floor of

the House.

I would ask you to join us in welcoming the Hear the Youth today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Canora-Pelly.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join with the Premier this afternoon on behalf of the official opposition in welcoming all of the young individuals in the Legislative Assembly this afternoon.

As we hear from youth across this province, it's great to see the initiatives that you've undertaken to represent not only your city but your fine community and area, and bring to the legislature your concerns about how we might grow Saskatchewan, how we might benefit from all of the input of youth.

So on behalf of the official opposition I'd like to welcome all of the young people from Prince Albert to their Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two constituents of mine that are sitting in the west gallery, Mr. Speaker — Mr. Ron Hitchcock and his son, Drew. Pleased to see you here today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you today and to all members of the Assembly guests seated in your gallery. We have some special guests here today. They're seated with one of our interns, Jonathan Selnes. With Jonathan are his parents, Sharon and Bill Selnes from Melfort. They arrived last night and were part of the supper that we had with the interns. And later on today after question period the Selneses are travelling, are beginning their trip to Calgary. And in view of the weather, we certainly hope that they have a safe trip. And I would ask all members of the Assembly to welcome them here this afternoon.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Regina Wascana Plains.

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the member opposite in welcoming the Selneses to the Assembly. Through the internship program, interns have the opportunity to serve on both sides of the House with a member and I'll be very fortunate indeed to have Jonathan serve with me when the changeover occurs. So I'm very pleased to see his

parents join him today and look forward to working with him in the months ahead.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure that I introduce to you and through you to all my colleagues a fine-looking bunch of 51 grade 6 students from Father Robinson School in the heart of the Saskatoon Silver Springs constituency. Father Robinson School is the largest elementary school in Saskatoon and I believe in the province — some 640 students, Mr. Speaker.

And they do everything in a large way. They even brought 17 chaperones with them and a couple of teachers. The teachers today accompanying them are Cheryl Green and Karen Cymbalisty. And the chaperones, Mr. Speaker, I have to read them; they're all my neighbours. James McLean, Rosemary Nazar, Debbie Lischynsky, Peggy Dauvin, Donna Parker, Debra Wieggers, Warren Gherasim, Brian Classen, John Stanzeleit, Marian Miller, Angie Cunningham, Sharon Schramm, Sandra Dunn, Connie Wruck, Audrey Cote, and Karen Cox.

Thank you very much for coming to your Assembly. I look forward to joining you for pictures and refreshments a little bit later on. And we do indeed hope that you have a safe trip home as well. I'll ask all members to join me.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Estevan.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all members of this Assembly I'd like to introduce two people that are very, very special in my life. Seated in your gallery are my daughter, Trisha Duckarmie, and her son, my grandson, Beau. Beau is up here today to visit the orthodontist so they just thought they'd stop in and watch the proceedings. So I ask all members to join me in welcoming them here today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Riversdale, the Premier.

The Plains are Alive with the Sound of Music

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is about to kick off the biggest series of musical events this province has ever seen.

This week's Juno Awards, recognizing excellence in Canada's music and recording industry, is being hosted by the city of Saskatoon. But it is just one of four major music events taking place in our province this year.

In September, Mr. Speaker, Regina will host the Canadian Country Music Awards. In October, Prince Albert will host Waniskâ, celebrating Aboriginal performers. And in October, Moose Jaw will host the Western Canadian Music Awards.

Mr. Speaker, it's all here this year and it's standing room only in Saskatchewan in 2007.

Mr. Speaker, this first for Saskatchewan did not happen by accident. For the past several years, the cities of Saskatoon, Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, and Regina have worked closely with our government to attract these major music shows to Saskatchewan. As a result of our coordinated efforts, ours is the first province ever to host four major music events in one calendar year.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — And, Mr. Speaker, our government has worked hard to make this a reality, investing in these events because we know they will bring long-lasting benefits to our economy and to Saskatchewan's music sector as a whole. Mr. Speaker, the Juno host committee anticipates the event alone will generate \$10 million in economic spinoff.

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the organizers of the Junos, congratulate all of the volunteers, and with them look forward to a weekend of great music in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member from Melville-Saltcoats.

Canadian Wheat Board Vote

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read some quotes from *Hansard* for you today. And in this case, Mr. Speaker, it's about democracy; it's about calling our federal government to task, Mr. Speaker, so that they will live up to their own legal obligation and that before they make any significant changes to the wheat board they will hold a full plebiscite with a fair question. It goes on to say, Mr. Speaker:

The Canadian Wheat Board Act, section 47.1 stipulates that this is the right of Prairie farmers to choose their marketing structures and any proposed change to the Canadian Wheat Board must be put to a farmer vote.

Well, Mr. Speaker, let's check those numbers. They were released today. Overall vote, 29,067 farmers voted. And of that, to retain the wheat board, only 37.8 per cent voted to keep the wheat board.

Mr. Speaker, prefer option to market to the Canadian Wheat Board or to a buyer of their choice, 48.4. To have the wheat board have no role in marketing, 13.8. What that tells me, Mr. Speaker, is 62 per cent of farmers want the choice to market their own grain.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, let's go on to Saskatchewan

and check our numbers right here at home — 15,327 voted. Of those that voted, 45 per cent wanted to retain the Canadian Wheat Board. On the other side of the coin, 55 per cent wanted the choice to market their own grain. Contrary to what that Agriculture minister has been saying, farmers have spoke and they want choice, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Centre.

Constituent to Run Boston Marathon

Hon. Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One hundred years ago, Canadian Tom Longboat of Six Nations Reserve won the Boston Marathon, beating the previous course record by a full five minutes. It was an extraordinary feat, one that inspired an extraordinary woman, a constituent of mine, Shannon Louttit, to run in this year's Boston Marathon in honour of the 100th anniversary of Tom Longboat's victory.

Shannon was not always a runner; she just began a few years ago after hearing the story of how in 1904 her great-grandfather, Billy Louttit, a Métis dispatch carrier for the Hudson Bay Company, ran 100 miles from Athabasca to Edmonton in 16 hours to get help for a flood that threatened the town. Athabasca now hosts the annual Billy Louttit Dispatch Triathlon in his honour.

[14:00]

Mr. Speaker, her great-grandfather's story inspired Shannon to start running and the story of Tom Longboat inspired her to qualify for the Boston Marathon. In a few days, she'll be leaving for Boston where she'll not only run in the marathon, but also coordinate the celebration of the 100th anniversary of Tom Longboat's victory.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this year Shannon and a group of six other Saskatchewan runners will be in Boston. Sadly though a fellow Saskatchewan runner, Bruce Sawchuk, who also qualified for the race, passed away suddenly this month. Shannon tells me that they believe his spirit will be there at the finish line urging them on.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join me in wishing Shannon and all the Saskatchewan runners the very best in Boston. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy.

Saskatchewan Legislative Internship Fundraiser

Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last night the Saskatchewan legislative interns held the first ever SLIP [Saskatchewan legislative internship program] steak night at Johnny Fox's Restaurant here in Regina. The interns are fundraising for their comparative study tour to Ottawa; to London, England; and Edinburgh, Scotland. And, Mr. Speaker,

we trust that they'll do some actual studying while they're on their trip.

I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate all five of this year's interns — Lucy Pereira, Jarita Greyeyes, Jonathan Selnes, Kiley Frantik, and Justine Gilbert — on hosting such a successful fundraiser. It was a packed house last night, Mr. Speaker, at Johnny Fox's with MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] and staff from both sides of the House, Legislative Assembly staff, and former interns in attendance.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the internship program has proved to be a worthwhile exercise in ensuring that our young people learn about and experience the parliamentary process first-hand. Alumni of this program have gone on to work in the public service, both provincially and federally, and a few are even still working here in the building.

Mr. Speaker, this year's group of interns are exceptionally bright and have already contributed a great deal to this Assembly. I'd like to wish them well on their study tour both in Ottawa and abroad. And I invite all members of the Assembly to join me in congratulating the interns on such a successful fundraiser last night. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Eastview.

Saskatoon Open Door Society 25th Anniversary

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, for 25 years now the Saskatoon Open Door Society has been welcoming refugees and immigrants to the city and assisting them to become informed and active participants in Canadian society.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatoon's Open Door Society exemplifies community spirit and cultural diversity, not only helping newcomers settle in and become effective members of the community but also helping the community to become more welcoming and more hospitable.

Mr. Speaker, I've long admired the work of the Open Door Society and so I was extremely pleased to attend their 25th anniversary celebrations along with a number of my Saskatoon caucus colleagues — including the Minister Responsible for Immigration — last week. Mr. Speaker, it was a wonderful event, attended by hundreds of people representing the diversity and vibrancy of Saskatoon's multicultural community. It was an evening of stories, Mr. Speaker, stories of refugees and immigrants coming to Saskatoon and successfully building new lives, making the city their own.

Mr. Speaker, the work of the Saskatoon Open Door Society is critical to those success stories. They are among the first contacts for newcomers and help them to adapt, to integrate, and to reach out into the community.

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate all the employees, board members, volunteers, and newcomers who, working together through the open door society, in the past 25 years have contributed so much to help make Saskatoon a great place for

everyone to live, work, and raise a family. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Cannington.

Minister's Responses During Question Period

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a time-honoured parliamentary tradition that the opposition holds the government accountable by asking questions in question period and that the minister responsible answers to those questions. But yesterday we beheld a spectacle in this legislature that was nothing short of bizarre.

The Saskatchewan Party asked some serious questions about the Murdoch Carriere scandal and instead of providing answers, the member for Nutana looked as though she was preparing to return to her former role in the official opposition and was in fact auditioning to become the leader of the official opposition. The member tried to deflect from the scandal by suggesting questions the opposition should be asking. One talk-show host referred to her performance as desperate and beleaguered. If the minister wants to ask questions from this side of the House, she won't have to wait long. Her time is nigh.

Mr. Speaker, I think the public should be outraged at the member's response when she was asked by reporters about her refusal to answer questions on the Murdoch Carriere scandal in the Legislative Assembly. She said, and I quote: "We enjoyed it actually on our side of the House."

She may have enjoyed herself, Mr. Speaker, but she showed a complete disregard and disrespect for this legislature, the legislative process, and most particularly for the female victims, many of whom are tuned in on a daily basis to question period.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

McKercher Cup Mock Trial Competition

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, over the past weekend, the 7th annual McKercher Cup mock trial competition for high school students was held at the Court of Queen's Bench courthouse in Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, this mock trial competition is organized by the Saskatchewan branch of the Canadian Bar Association and recreates the dramatic core of the justice system by having participants play the pivotal roles in a trial, including prosecutor, defence counsel, and witness.

It's an extremely effective hands-on learning activity, Mr. Speaker, that provides students with the opportunity to learn about the legal system while educating them about the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, something maybe members opposite could be interested in learning about.

Mr. Speaker, I'm extremely pleased to share with the Assembly

that Winston Knoll High School from my Regina Qu'Appelle constituency acquitted themselves extremely well in this year's competition, coming in second overall. Holy Cross in Saskatoon came in first. Nicole Little of the Winston Knoll team also won the award for the best defence attorney.

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate volunteer Christopher Wietzel, the young lawyer who helped Winston Knoll prepare for their competition, coach Scott McKillop, and all the members of the team on a job well done representing themselves and their school at this year's McKercher Cup Mock Trial Competition. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Indian Head-Milestone.

Waiting Lists for Orthopedic Surgery

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today in your gallery sits 59-year-old Adeline Gagnon. She has come to seek answers in her legislature. She's been hearing the Minister of Health telling everybody that waiting lists, surgical waiting lists, will be shortening. But that's not her experience.

To her, getting a call for surgery would be like winning the lottery. She has been off work since November of last year. She is in constant pain. She requires shoulder surgery and has been told she'll have to wait at least 15 months. She wants to know why she must suffer this pain and loss of income for over a year to get medical attention in this province.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I can tell the member opposite, the people of Saskatchewan, and the guest in the legislature here today that indeed waiting lists are dropping and access to health care services in the province of Saskatchewan are improving.

And, Mr. Speaker, just last week the Minister of Finance introduced a budget that provides the Department of Health with an additional eight-plus per cent in allocation that will further allow us to increase access by reducing waiting lists. Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of the work that we have done.

We know that we have more work to do but, Mr. Speaker, we have additional resources, and we will applying those resources to reducing waiting lists further. And I urge the member opposite, if he stands true to his philosophy there, to support the budget to ensure that we can move forward in the way in which we want to.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Indian Head-Milestone.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to the surgical care registry, as of December 2006, there are almost

7,000 people in this province waiting for orthopedic surgery. That's 7,000 people. So when the minister announces that he's increasing the capacity by 160 a year for hip and knee replacements, it's no consolation to somebody who's waiting for shoulder surgery, Mr. Speaker.

In fact Mrs. Gagnon is now worried that she might even have to wait longer. She wants to know why this government is spending \$350,000 to advertise a budget that falls far short of what people need in this province, and yet she can't find the money for surgery that she so badly needs. She wants to know why she is going to be forced to work past her retirement age to make up for the lost income while she's waiting for this surgery.

To the Minister of Health: what is the government going to do today to address the issue of Mrs. Gagnon?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to indicate to the member opposite that Saskatchewan has made a great deal of progress in recent years on orthopedic surgery. Mr. Speaker, we now do more hips per capita in Canada than any other province. And on knees, Mr. Speaker, on orthopedic surgeries, we're now the second. We do the second most surgeries in Canada. Mr. Speaker, we have made a great deal of progress in this regard.

And, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite refers to the Surgical Care Network, a system that was put in place by this government in recent years, Mr. Speaker. The Surgical Care Network is looked at by other provinces with a great deal of envy, Mr. Speaker. They are all seeking the resources, the fiscal resources to duplicate what we are doing here in Saskatchewan in order to ensure that they have access to the types of data that they need to assist them in reducing their waiting lists, the same as we're doing here in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Indian Head-Milestone.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mrs. Gagnon has gone through all the hoops this government has set up. She's called the quality care coordinator. She's called her surgeon's office numerous occasions. She's called the surgical care hotline. They all give her the same answer, and that answer is absolutely unacceptable for someone that's in as much pain as she is. They have just told her that she's simply going to have to wait 15 months or longer while she's in extreme pain. She can't do the simplest things, and she feels that she's being held hostage by this health care system.

When will the government get its priorities straight and eliminate the \$350,000 that Finance minister is doing to advertise his budget and start dealing with people's needs in this province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite talks about the steps that the guest in the gallery here today has undertaken. And, Mr. Speaker, I think that it is appropriate that the member opposite advise her that she has taken the proper steps to ensure that she is getting the care that she ultimately requires.

Mr. Speaker, the province does have quality of care coordinators in each of our regions who work with physicians to ensure that the waiting lists are addressed. And, Mr. Speaker, it is the physicians, the surgeons in this province, Mr. Speaker, who determine where people are on that waiting list, Mr. Speaker. Those surgeons are allocated at capacity within the operating rooms, and they allocate individuals based on an assessment, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite correctly identifies the process. We believe in quality of care, Mr. Speaker, and the member opposite needs to ensure that he . . .

The Speaker: — The member's time has elapsed.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Indian Head-Milestone.

Mr. McMorris: — As I said, Mr. Speaker, Mrs. Adeline Gagnon has gone through all the hoops. She's done everything this minister has asked her to do or their department had asked, and it's still 15 months at least — waiting. She's desperate. That's why she's here at her legislature today. She wants to know if she's the only one, which she knows she isn't.

There's 7,000 people on waiting lists for orthopedic surgery. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has the longest waits for orthopedic surgery in the country. The Wait Time Alliance gave Saskatchewan last year a failing grade in this area. How will the budget address the issue of failing grades in orthopedic surgery in Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Appreciate the question from the member opposite. You know I was listening to the radio this morning, and I was talking to some people in North Battleford this morning and, Mr. Speaker, last night it was reported that Leader of the Opposition was in North Battleford, Mr. Speaker, and he was critical of the Department of Health, Mr. Speaker.

But what the Leader of the Opposition said, Mr. Speaker, what he said, Mr. Speaker, was we don't just criticize the government; we provide alternatives. Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has an opportunity today to do what his leader says, Mr. Speaker. Stand up and offer alternatives to what is being done in the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, we have taken a great deal of steps. We have applied resources available. We have cut the waiting lists in half, Mr. Speaker. We intend to continue to do that.

The Speaker: — The member's time has lapsed.

[14:15]

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. The Chair recognizes the member for Humboldt.

Compensation for Forestry Secretariat Executive

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, Mr. Speaker, there's been a number of occasions where this NDP [New Democratic Party] government has demonstrated that they're very good at looking after their NDP friends. And many of its NDP friends come from the firm of Oliver Waller Zinkhan & Waller. Last year the NDP gave Tom Waller a contract to become the CEO [chief executive officer] in the Forestry Secretariat for six months. Could the minister of CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan] tell us how much money did Tom Waller receive for six months of work?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for CIC.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have to take that question under advisement. I don't have the specific number right here for them.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Humboldt.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And as I said the NDP are very good at looking after their friends, and I am more than happy to help the minister out here. Tom Waller's contract says that he was to be paid \$200 an hour to a maximum of \$180,000 for six months work. Mr. Speaker, that's \$30,000 a month. That's about twice as much as the deputy minister of Finance, Health or Justice gets paid.

The Forestry Secretariat has a budget of \$1.3 million and a staff of just five people. How on earth can the NDP justify paying Tom Waller twice as much as the deputy of Health to run a five-person government agency?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister Responsible for the Forestry Secretariat.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I can report to the House that the member has the numbers. It was . . . She received them through questions posed to the government.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that Mr. Waller has been under contract since he left the Crown Investments Corporation as its president and has been the chief negotiator and the head of the Saskatchewan forest secretariat as we've been working with industry to attempt to find a solution for a very difficult circumstance, which is the circumstance around forestry industry in our province as well as in others.

I can say to that member that Mr. Waller is a senior lawyer, and they have a lawyer in their caucus I think who can attest to the fact that the lawyer's legal rates are well within the guidelines of what Mr. Waller's contract is. That was by the way tabled

with the . . .

The Speaker: — Member's time has lapsed.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Humboldt.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know what's even more troubling about this sweetheart contract with Tom Waller and the NDP is that the NDP said that he was to be paid \$180,000 for six months work. However the Saskatchewan Party has received a response to a freedom of information request which shows that Tom Waller was actually paid \$278,000 for his six-month contract.

Mr. Speaker, that's nearly \$100,000 more than what he was supposed to be paid according to his already generous contract. Why was Tom Waller paid \$100,000 more than his contract?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the minister responsible for the Sask forestry sector.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Waller's contract was tabled with the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, and the expenditures are very much defensible. He has been working many long hours for this government.

Well, well . . . just a minute. Mr. Speaker, you know, the members, the members of this Saskatchewan Party are well known for dragging professional people in this province through the mud. It was short months ago you were accusing him, making allegations of criminal activity which were patently . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I'd remind the minister to direct his remarks through the Chair. The Chair recognizes the member for Humboldt.

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I have a copy of that contract that the minister's referring to, and it distinctly says, and I quote, "The maximum amount payable under the terms of this contract will be \$180,000." The answer to the written question that I submitted was that he was paid \$180,000, but the freedom of information request said that he was paid \$278,000.

Two hundred and seventy-eight thousand dollars for a six-month contract works out to over \$46,000 a month. That's over three times the top salary of the deputy minister of Health to run a five-person government agency.

Mr. Speaker, how can the NDP possibly justify this outrageous payment to their NDP buddy, Tom Waller?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister Responsible for the Forestry Secretariat.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, we will explain for

the media and people of the general public the terms of the contract and the expenditures that Mr. Waller has made, all of which I would say are very defensible and, frankly, a very wise investment. I would ask if that member has talked with the one lawyer in their caucus in terms of what lawyers and negotiators of this type generally bill, and I think she would then understand the nature of these contracts.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say this. I have watched them drag the former president of SGI through the mud in this legislature. I have watched them drag Mr. Waller through the mud in this legislature, accusing him of criminal activity, Mr. Speaker, which was patently false. I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that's what this Saskatchewan Party is all about. It's all about allegation. It's all about innuendo. It's all about the Saskatchewan Party attempt to forming the next government, Mr. Speaker, and this is not how they're going to do it. Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to you if there's a waste of money, it's what we're paying these people to be the opposition.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

Management of Harassment Complaints

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister in charge of the Carriere scandal didn't want to talk about the issue. But today the News Talk poll says that nearly nine out of ten people in the province think there's still a lot of answers to be given by this NDP government, so we're going to try again today.

Murdoch Carriere's nine harassment victims went to their supervisors, and they couldn't get help. Then they went to the associate deputy minister and the deputy minister of the Environment, and they couldn't get help. They went to their union, and they went to their departments, and they went to the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police]. And then they even went to the Premier — the Premier of the province — and their Premier wouldn't even listen to them. The only time this NDP government listened was when the story hit the papers and was raised by the Saskatchewan Party. What is to stop this from happening again?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for the Public Service Commission.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, there are some facts I'd like to put on the table. Fact number one, the women laid a formal complaint in September '02. Fact number two, Murdoch Carriere was suspended and had to leave the workplace in September '02. Fact number three, on February 12, '03, he was suspended without pay, demoted, sent to Regina, and he was suspended without pay for three months. Fact number four, Mr. Speaker, fact number four, he was fired on April 2, 2003. Mr. Carriere had not been in the workplace as soon as the complaint was launched, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Draude: — Fact number five is that we know somebody told that . . . Murdoch Carriere's victims came forward in 1994, and they were told, that's just Murdoch — in 1994. This NDP's government so-called zero tolerance harassment policy was in effect at that time. No one acted on the victims' complaints.

Mr. Speaker, what steps has the NDP government taken to deal with the individuals who ignored the harassment complaints?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for the Public Service Commission.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, the members opposite like to talk about 1994. Well it was in 1993 that this government formally introduced amendments to the occupational health and safety legislation that made harassment as an occupational hazard. And what did the member from Cannington do? He tried to delete that provision from the occupational health and safety legislation. Mr. Speaker, then, then he voted against the legislation. It was an NDP government that put harassment as an occupational hazard in the occupational health and safety legislation.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we've come a long way since 1993, Mr. Speaker. And in fact as I said earlier, Mr. Carriere was removed from the workplace. They say that he was in Regina in the workplace — simply not true. He was suspended without pay on February 12 for three months, and he never came back to the workplace, Mr. Speaker. Those are the facts, Mr. Speaker, which these people don't want to talk . . .

The Speaker: — The member's time has elapsed.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Draude: — NDP rhetoric doesn't protect women in the workplace. If it did, Murdoch Carriere would have been fired with cause many years ago and wouldn't have received hundreds of thousands of dollars from the NDP government. What steps has this NDP government taken to find out why their zero tolerance policy failed so very miserably?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for the Public Service Commission.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, the Government of Saskatchewan has introduced a revised anti-harassment policy which we have tabled with the members of this legislature. It was revised after the Murdoch Carriere situation.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what I can report to the public is that in the future if there were a case of this nature in the public service, a committee of deputies would determine the discipline that would be meted out, including firing, Mr. Speaker. That is the change in the policy as a result of what we've learned since 2003.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for

Martensville.

Government's Settlement with Murdoch Carriere

Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, the minister spent yesterday's question period practising up for her time in opposition. I would remind her that until the next election she is a minister and she has an obligation to answer questions, not only to us, but to the people of this province.

So I will re-enter a question that I had asked yesterday. The minister told the House that the government checked with the women before the settlement was given to Murdoch Carriere. The settlement was reached on January 9, 2007. The \$275,000 payoff cheque was dated and delivered on January 26. No one talked to any of these women until February 27. Why did the NDP keep their settlement with Carriere a secret from his victims?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for the Public Service Commission.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I know that the members of the opposition weren't pleased about how I handled question period yesterday. But I do say this, that they've had 16 years to be in opposition and really, Mr. Speaker, when you're in opposition you should learn how to be opposition members. And I didn't see any evidence of that yesterday. Particularly if you want to be the government, you need to be a decent opposition in order to be a decent government, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what I will say to the members opposite — and I said this before — we tabled in this legislature written answers to their questions regarding the cheque that was sent to Mr. Carriere's lawyer. And the member will know that there were a number of issues around income tax which we explained in the answers to the written questions and, Mr. Speaker, I believe I've already answered this question.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member from Martensville.

Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, the settlement was agreed to on January 9. The women were told on February 27, some of them by voice mail. The press release that the government issued was sent out before some of these women even heard. The minister has told us that the government checked with these women prior to Murdoch being given this settlement. That is simply not true.

Why did the NDP government tell us that they checked with Carriere's victims when they know that that's not what happened?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for the Public Service Commission.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I think that an important piece of information that the opposition may not be aware of, but in, I believe it was April '06, a couple of officials from the Department of Justice did meet with some of the women to talk

about the issue around Mr. Carriere and the issues that he had raised in terms of his statement of claim and going to the commissioner. Mr. Speaker, I understand, I understand that there was a discussion around how to proceed, as I understand it from the Justice officials. And what I will say to the member opposite, a decision was made based on recommendations from the Justice department that we were in a position where we would very likely lose this case. In fact they told us we were going to lose. And we chose to settle with Mr. Carriere and his lawyers. We settled around a number of issues which the members opposite fail to understand.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:30]

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Martensville.

Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, if the minister is so confident in the legal opinion that they received and the decision they made based on that, will she table that today?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for the Public Service Commission.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, it has not been, it certainly has not been our practice ever to table legal opinions that are provided by the Department of Justice. I don't recall any government ever tabling a Justice opinion because, Mr. Speaker, the Justice department wants to be able to deliver its legal advice to the government unencumbered by any kind of issues that may come up on the floor of the legislature.

But I will say to the members opposite, I can tell the public that we were advised to settle with Mr. Carriere because he certainly had a statement of claim, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Martensville.

Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, there's other information that the government is refusing to show us. Time and again this NDP government has refused to table the Murdoch Carriere settlement. We have asked questions in this House. We have asked written questions. We know there is not a non-disclosure provision in the settlement. So why is this NDP government hiding Murdoch Carriere's settlement?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for the Public Service Commission.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — You know, Mr. Speaker, the members of the opposition continue to portray the Murdoch Carriere settlement as some form of scandal, Mr. Speaker. I have said clearly on numerous occasions that the opposition has spent many question periods misleading the public in Saskatchewan.

And in fact they were running ads on the radio saying that we paid him \$275,000 to harass women which is totally ridiculous.

Mr. Speaker, we settled with Mr. Carriere because our legal advice indicated to us that we were going to lose that case, Mr. Speaker. We have tabled the information through the written questions. The members of the opposition know that he received \$120,000 pay in lieu of notice. As well the rest of the money went towards a myriad of issues including releasing personal information as well as defamation of character. And I will say . . .

The Speaker: — The member's time has elapsed.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes . . . Order please. Order. Order. Order please. Order. Order. Order please. Order. Order. Order please.

I would ask the member for Saskatoon Nutana to come to order. And I would ask the member for Saskatoon Nutana to withdraw remarks that have been . . . Members referring to another member in this Assembly, on the record or off the record, should be only by the member's title or the member's seat. And we should try to avoid — and this I would like to broaden to all members — any reference to name calling. I would ask the member to withdraw the names.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I apologize for unparliamentary language, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Written questions. The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Fairview, the Government Whip.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government, I'll be tabling responses to written questions 745 to 850 inclusive.

The Speaker: — Responses to 745 to 850 have been submitted.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Thomson that the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Mr. Cheveldayoff.]

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Government Relations, the member for Regina Douglas Park.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to join in this debate on the budget, and a very good budget it is too.

Before I begin my remarks I want to recognize the contributions by the member for Martensville and also the member for Weyburn. I did not have an opportunity to reflect on the maiden speech by the member for Weyburn, and I would like to do so now, as I do for the member for Martensville.

It's customary that both sides of the House will recognize these contributions. We've all worked hard and campaigned hard to get here. And to make a maiden speech is a daunting task, especially when you go up against critics that are very well informed, watch the proceedings like a hawk, know what's going on in this Legislative Assembly — and I'm just speaking of the people that are watching at home, Madam Speaker, never mind the people inside the Legislative Assembly.

We of course don't criticize and don't heckle the members in their maiden speeches for that reason, but in short, I just want to congratulate them on their contributions, and I look forward to working with them in the years to come as they perfect their roles in opposition.

Madam Speaker, since the early '90s, the government has been working very hard to (1) restore the fiscal foundation for the provincial government, and then (2) having repaired that foundation, then to work at improving Saskatchewan's economy. I believe we have achieved, are achieving that goal and we are seeing that reflected in the budget that was delivered last week.

I won't bore people with the details on our economy. It seems like every day someone has a comment about how well Saskatchewan's economy is performing. Whether it's job growth, whether it's increases in the GDP [gross domestic product], housing starts — no matter what the factors are — people are speaking very positively. Whether they're from outside the province or they represent an interest inside the province, people are speaking very positively about our economy.

I know that may not necessarily be widely felt in every quarter of the province. Certainly there will be communities in the North that are still hoping for a breakthrough in their economic growth. I know that there are in the agricultural sector, that it's not been very good years for some people on the farm. But for them too we hope that this will be a good year of good crops and good prices and that they too will be able to share in the economic boom that we are currently experiencing in Saskatchewan.

Madam Speaker, the priorities in this budget reflect the priorities that the government outlined in its Throne Speech, and that would have been last fall when we said, we want to make life better for Saskatchewan families. We want to strengthen public health care. We want to advance environmental protection and the green economy. And I think this budget makes significant inroads in achieving these goals.

I might say that in this budget debate we've seen more discussion than I've seen in some budgets on the question of

fiscal policy. The opposition is now saying that the government is spending too much. And for those who are watching these proceedings at home, they will know that this is a monumental flip-flop based on what they will have seen in the past where it's customary for members to — on almost every occasion — to offer up improvements in spending that the government should pursue or tax cuts that the government should pursue without fail over the course of these last few years.

They will remember comments like "... [the] government is sitting on a mountain of cash." And now that the government has achieved the position where we're actually able to invest significantly in a priority to Saskatchewan people, well now of course they're saying that the government is spending too much. Well I think the people at home will recognize it for the flip-flop that it is, Madam Speaker.

It's like they can't or won't criticize or talk about some of the specifics in the budget because these are popular initiatives. I know that two of the initiatives that have been discussed, they're certainly very popular in my constituency.

In my constituency there are many retired people, many senior citizens, and the University of Regina, and many students are also located in my constituency. And I can tell you that the prescription drug plan which proposes to cap a cost that is significant for many senior citizens is very popular with senior citizens. And the tax plan to encourage young people to start their careers here in Saskatchewan is also very popular among young people in Saskatchewan.

I still don't understand why it is that the members are attacking the drug plan. They have not yet indicated, and hopefully they will during the course of this debate, what their plans are for the drug plan in future years. Perhaps they could outline that for us and let people know.

So therefore it seems to be a matter of not dealing with the specifics in the budget but a matter of just dealing with fiscal policy. But my sense is that they really have no credibility when it comes to issues of fiscal policy. Credibility is something that can be earned because one has over time taken a principled, informed direction on a specific issue. And people recognize you for the contribution that you've made because of that consistency, because of your knowledge. Or credibility can be earned because you've been able to demonstrate through actual experience how you would pursue issues, in this case of fiscal policy. But clearly the members here have no credibility.

Again this is a group that has monumentally flip-flopped on the question of fiscal policy in the course of this budget. This is a group that really will not definitively speak about their history and their experience with respect to budgets in Saskatchewan. Oh for sure, we have the odd member of the opposition that will stand up and they will spin how it is that the Grant Devine government wasn't as bad as people make it out to be and that the reason that the debt escalated was simply because of interest rates and there being no other reason, which defies analysis and which defies any serious comment. But from time to time they're driven to doing that.

And then on the other hand you wonder, well are they in fact defending a record, because they also try at times to separate

themselves from the record of the Devine administration. The Devine administration, as you will know, and the people who are watching will know in Saskatchewan, is an administration that has been characterized as being probably the worst government in Canada ever — for any provincial government or any national government — because of their ineptitude, incompetence in terms of fiscal issues, and also their corruption when it came to handling the public purse.

But here's an interesting quote from a few days ago that again deals with this question of whether or not the members opposite, the Sask Party, are they defending a record or are they not defending a record. And this is a comment by the Leader of the Opposition where in question period he said in part, "Well, Mr. Speaker . . . it was the Romanow-MacKinnon government that brought fiscal probity to this province."

Now for those who are not aware of the meaning of the word probity, probity means integrity and uprightness, honesty. So what the Leader of the Opposition is saying that prior to the election of Mr. Romanow and the actions taken by Mr. Romanow as premier, and his cabinet, prior to that time there was no honesty, there was no integrity, and there was no uprightness when it came to questions of fiscal administration in the province of Saskatchewan. So by inference he's saying that there was no fiscal probity when Mr. Devine was the premier of Saskatchewan.

[14:45]

And which then calls into question, what is he really saying or what is he thinking because this is the same Leader of the Opposition who, when Mr. Devine was the premier, felt comfortable in working for Mr. Devine and his cabinet ministers at a very high level, and in fact went on to seek a nomination for the Progressive Conservative Party of Mr. Devine in the 1991 election. So he sought to become a member of this Assembly under the leadership of Mr. Devine. But now he says Mr. Devine did not represent honesty, Mr. Devine did not represent integrity. So now he's trying to distance himself from Mr. Devine.

But on the other hand then we get reports of a fundraising dinner that the Leader of the Opposition has in Calgary and who do we see sitting front-row centre at his \$300 per plate seat, who do we see sitting there?

An Hon. Member: — Dwain Lingenfelter.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — No. Mr. Devine was sitting there to hear Mr. Wall. So on the one hand they're trying to distance themselves. On the other hand it appears that the Leader of the Opposition continues to embrace the support of the former premier, Grant Devine.

Madam Speaker, I just want to say a couple of words about the question of a balanced budget. The budgets in Saskatchewan are balanced pursuant to balanced budget legislation which was put forward by the Finance minister of the day, Janice MacKinnon, and with the support of the full Romanow cabinet and the full Romanow caucus. And so when we talk about whether this budget is balanced or not, we have to do that in the context of the balanced budget legislation that is still in place,

was put in place by Mr. Romanow and Ms. MacKinnon. And based on the definitions in that balanced budget legislation, we indeed have a balanced budget.

And there are of course many people today in the banks and financial institutions that would tell you that Saskatchewan's record with respect to dealing with its fiscal challenges is doing a very good job in Canada. That is one of the reasons that credit rating agencies, those who examine our creditworthiness, have over time — well in the early '90s, because of the legacy of debt and deficits — reduced our credit ratings, and one of them at one point to what's called a BBB rating which is just one step beyond junk bond status.

That these same credit rating agencies, because of the actions by the Government of Saskatchewan . . . And these increases in credit ratings they are now providing continues to this day. It's been a huge, huge difference, where they now say that Saskatchewan has probably the third best credit rating in all of Canada. And that's a significant accomplishment given the depth of, well the depth of incompetence and the depth of misspending that we came from in the early '90s and late '80s, Madam Speaker.

So they can say what they like on their side of the House. The preponderance of evidence from history supports the comments that I am making that the Saskatchewan NDP has a very good reputation when it comes to balancing the budgets. And that's recognized by people in the financial industry. It may not be supported by the members opposite, but who really cares?

Madam Speaker, I want to just say a few words about what's in the budget for municipalities, that being part of my responsibilities as Minister of Government Relations. I can tell you that as a consequence of the debt that faced us in 1990s, the federal off-loads that we experienced in the 1990s, that as a consequence of that we reduced revenue sharing which had peaked at about \$120 million a year in provincial budgets — revenue sharing for municipalities had peaked at about \$120 million — that we reduced this to about \$55 million in the 1990s. But since we've restored the fiscal foundations for our province we have begun to reinvest in revenue sharing to the extent that with the increase today, the revenue-sharing pool now stands at \$127.3 million, which is the highest level in the history of that program.

In addition thereto, the provincial government has also corrected a policy of long standing of not providing the equivalent of property taxes where they have buildings to municipalities in which those buildings are located. And that's also significant at about \$13 million a year.

The percentage increase over the last number of years for municipalities . . . Well if you've gone from 55 million to 127.3 million that's certainly more than doubling the amount. And when you compare that to the percentage increase in any other aspect of government and, significantly, important public priorities such as health, education, social services, when you look at the percentage increase for municipalities as compared to those other public priorities, one can safely say, one can definitively say, that municipalities are an important priority for the New Democratic Party of Saskatchewan — very clearly a priority, and I don't think anyone can draw any other

conclusion but that.

And I might say too that the increase in this budget is an historic \$30 million. And I say historic because it's the single largest increase to the revenue sharing program in any year of the program in its history, Madam Speaker, and that's significant.

Our priorities with regard to this historic increase in revenue sharing is to address three specific areas. One, we want to ensure that there's an increase in operational funding across the board. We want to address inequities among communities that has crept into the program over the course of the years, where you have municipalities that have same population, same, relatively the same assessment base but getting vastly different per capita amounts from this program. We see this as an opportunity to correct that and to fix that, but still ensuring that all municipalities will see an increase in operational funding.

And we also want to provide funding for infrastructure for and transitional issues for rural municipalities. And I might say in that vein that I want to congratulate the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities for their budget submissions and for focusing on two very clear priorities that they identify and which we are supporting through this budget.

One is the roads to resources, which recognizes the need to invest in rural municipalities to assist them with the impact the heavy oil industry is having in their areas. And secondly, through something called the municipal primary weight corridors, which arose out of a consultation process by rural municipalities, headed by rural municipalities called Clearing the Path.

We think this is an excellent initiative by the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities and their member municipalities. And we as a provincial government look forward to working with them constructively to deal with the challenges that we have in roads and transportation in Saskatchewan.

So, Madam Speaker, I think my time is nearly at an end. I just want to say a few words, a few words about a federal budget which was also tabled last week, the Saskatchewan budget not being the only budget in Canada last week. And how should we characterize the federal budget if nothing but a budget of betrayal, of a broken promise of massive proportions for the people of Saskatchewan?

Prior to that budget, prior to the last federal campaign and in the federal campaign before that, the Conservative Party of Canada promised the people of Saskatchewan, promised the people of Canada that non-renewable resource revenues — oil, natural gas, potash revenues — would not be taken into account when it comes to disbursements under Canada's equalization program. That was their very clear promise. They knew — we knew — it all meant in the neighbourhood of \$800 million a year for Saskatchewan people. Some members of that party said that it would be even more money than that for the people of Saskatchewan.

Well in this budget they had an opportunity to implement that promise. They had an opportunity to make good on that

promise. And they failed, and they failed miserably. They did not do it, Madam Speaker.

So our economy is doing well. It's an economy that could very much use an improved equalization scheme so that we can further broaden and strengthen our economy to put it on a more competitive footing and in the long run to make this a true have province in the Dominion of Canada. That's what an improved equalization program would do for the people of Saskatchewan. That's why we've been so insistent that federal parties pay some regard. And then to have a federal party that does that and never, never, never implements that particular promise, it was indeed, when they came down with that budget, it was a bitter day for the people of Saskatchewan.

And it's a puzzler how they could go into that, into that election campaign, make that kind of promise, fully aware of what that promise means, and then to not deliver for Saskatchewan people because they as a party perceive there to be more important political priorities in other parts of Canada — whether it be in Quebec or whether it be in Ontario — and in the process shaft the people of this province. Well, Madam Speaker, that's their decision to make and . . .

But the one thing that comes out of all that that I just don't understand — and I just want to comment on that before sitting down — and that is the quietude that seems to exist on the other side, the opposition in the Legislative Assembly, on this particular question.

This is a group that, for those who watch the Legislative Assembly, they will know this is not an opposition that's at a loss for words or at a loss to criticize important events in our province. But on this particular question, on this particular question of this massive reversal, this massive breaking of a promise by a federal government, that they will say very, very little if anything at all. And that is a huge puzzler for the people of Saskatchewan about why they would, in their quietness, indirectly seek to support the federal Conservative Party, and in their breaking this promise for Saskatchewan people.

Madam Speaker, I've gone on long enough and I think I've exhausted my 20 minutes. And so I just want to close by saying that it'd be my pleasure to support the main motion to support this budget because I think it's a tremendous budget for the people of Saskatchewan. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Chisholm: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is a pleasure to have an opportunity to speak to this budget that this government has put forward. Before I get into my comments about the budget itself, I welcome the opportunity to thank those who were responsible for my being here in this Assembly, and for the opportunity and duty to address this House.

To the people of the Cut Knife-Turtleford constituency, I thank you for the mandate I was given in the fall of 2003 to represent our constituency. To the many constituents who have called our office or written or emailed and that I have had the opportunity

talk to personally, I thank you for comments, your concerns, your encouragement, your support, your advice, and your opinions.

For those of you who through our constituency office we have been able to assist, I can assure you that has been our pleasure. That is why I am here and that is why we have a constituency office. I would like to thank my constituency office staff, Cheryl Hume and Becky Schmitt, for their good work, their cheerful demeanour, and their professional manner in assisting our constituents. I would also like to thank our constituency executive and directors that provide the support at the constituency level that is so important to this whole process.

I'd like to thank my family for their continued support. My three sons are working and contributing to the provincial coffers of our neighbouring provinces to the west. I wish this wasn't the case. But at this point, Madam Deputy Speaker, this is my reality and the reality of oh so many Saskatchewan parents and grandparents — a reality that this government has not been able to address.

[15:00]

A special thank you to my wife, Heather, who continues to provide leadership, encouragement, and support that is not only appreciated by myself but indeed throughout our entire constituency.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the two newest members of the legislature: the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy and the member from Martensville. Any successful team will have a good junior program.

With your indulgence, Madam Deputy Speaker, I have a little story to relate which, if you will bear with me, does have relevance to what we are debating today.

An Hon. Member: — Sounds like it could be a long one.

Mr. Chisholm: — It's just a little story. In the fall of 2005 there was a married couple that utilized the services of a financial planner. They chose a firm with a reputable background and were hoping to receive advice on their estate planning and budgeting, etc.

They were quite pleased with the reports and directions they were given for that first year. They attempted to follow the plan, but found that during the year they were fortunate in that their revenue for the year was considerably higher than they had anticipated. Rather than commit this good fortune to substantially pay down their debt as they had been advised to do, rather they increased their spending quite dramatically. But they did manage to pay down a little of their debt, something less than 1 per cent.

However, overall they were pleased with the 2006 year and looking forward to their meeting with their financial planner for their direction for the upcoming year and for the future. As was the case the prior year, they dutifully took all of their records to the financial planner and awaited the call for their appointment. They were disappointed to hear that they would be seeing a different adviser this year, but they were dealing with the same

firm, so they proceeded accordingly.

The adviser that they had used the prior year had excellent qualifications. He had had a background in business, and they certainly appreciated that. Their new adviser also had impressive credentials, but they noted in their introduction to him that he didn't have any background in business. However, because they were dealing with the same firm, they were relatively comfortable that they would be receiving the same high quality and professional advice that had guided them through the past year.

In reviewing their last year's records with the budget that they had prepared with their adviser, they noted the following: in 2006 they had actually budgeted for a deficit of \$1,129. But they were pleased to see that they actually had a surplus of \$1,583 for the year just ended. Their savings account remained untouched during the year at \$8,875. This was good because it had been a good year, one of the best in recent history, and after all, that savings account was there for a purpose. It was their rainy day fund only to be touched in an emergency situation. It wasn't a lot of money but it did represent a reasonable contingency fund to be available in the event of a disaster.

Their debt was somewhat troubling, but they had in fact made a small dent in that in the past year. And they certainly hoped they could make a more concerted effort in this regard in the upcoming year. After all, the last thing they wanted to do was pass on to their children and grandchildren a debt problem. And who was to know how long interest rates would remain at these historical low levels?

So they together reviewed the year past and determined that although they had not taken full advantage of the good fortune of the previous year — they could have curtailed some of that extra spending and could have made a more concerted effort to reduce their debt — they were indeed on the right track. After all, income was up. Expenses were also up, but at least the income exceeded the expenses for the year. And their debt hadn't increased and their savings were intact.

So now it was time to say goodbye to last year and what's ahead for the coming year and the future. After all that's what planning is all about and that's what the budget is all about. It's an integral part of this planning process.

The adviser then presented his plan for the upcoming year. He stated at the beginning that he had some good news and some bad news. The good news was that the revenue was projected to increase by 1.8 per cent over last year's projected revenue. Last year your revenue was projected to be \$77,272. This year he projected the revenue to be \$78,673. This isn't really that good of news because your actual revenue last year was \$83,893. And some of this year's revenue isn't really revenue, but in fact a transfer from your savings account. But he would explain that later. It was a difficult concept to understand.

The bad news is that your expenses are going to be up by 9 per cent from your last year's projections. Yes indeed, they are projected to be \$83,497. The couple interjected and made the point, Madam Deputy Speaker, that this didn't make any sense. This was how they got into debt in the first place. It wasn't sustainable to be spending more than was coming in.

The advisor went on to explain that he didn't really see this as a problem. He agreed that yes, they would be showing a \$7,013 deficit for the year, but they still had a strong credit rating. And he added that in the past he had lowballed revenue a bit, just to have a bit of a cushion. How could the expenses have escalated at 9 per cent when revenues are projected to be less than they were the last year? Well, the advisor explained, here's one example.

I see that you have a family of four adult children. I noted that last year one of your expenditures was a transfer, a gift to your youngest daughter, of \$2,000. That was very nice. However to be fair, I've built into this year's budget a transfer to your daughter and to your other three children of an equivalent amount. They should all receive \$2,000. So that is part of the increase in the expenditure. I believe that this is only fair.

The couple pointed out that their three eldest children were all doing very well financially. In fact they were doing better financially at this time than were their parents. It was only their youngest child that was struggling a bit financially, and that is why they had incurred the expenditure in the past year. The advisor became quite adamant. He said that his definition of fair was equal, and that if his clients wanted to consider themselves to be fair, then this was the only way they should proceed.

The couple then brought up the question that if this was going to be the plan for the upcoming year, where would the funds come from to cover the shortfall?

The advisor had a plan. That was part of the report. Yes, he agreed, we have a deficit here of \$7,013. Well firstly, I would suggest, and it's built in here in this plan, where you would take \$5,099 from your savings to make this work. We still have \$3,776 that we can draw down next year. He added that this was a little tricky, but he'd been doing this for his clients way back since 2001. See, the trick is to take the money from your savings, the amount you need to show that you've balanced the budget. In this case, this year you should take \$5,099 out of your savings and — even though it's a little tricky, you know, with the Institute of Chartered Accountants and groups like that — we can put that number into your revenue. Now it's not really revenue, but we'll put it in there, and we'll include it as if it were revenue, and then you can spend that, as I have proposed.

The couple didn't quite understand the concept, but they did appreciate that their savings — \$8,875 — were going to be depleted down to \$3,776. Their next question was, okay, under your plan our savings are going to go down by \$5,099. Where does the rest of the projected deficit come from? Well that would come from increasing your debt, and I have included in your plan that you could do that. And oh yes, your interest expense will go up by approximately 4 per cent next year.

So the advisor summed up his report. It was fair, fairer than last year's report. And yes, he did have some minor concerns. Yes, the couple was actually going backwards, and yes, their financial situation was not healthy for the long term. Increasing debt is not a problem, he said. There's lots of opportunities in that area. He noted that he used a lot of credit cards and that the ability to increase your debt is readily accessible. Just look at how many credit card pre-approvals you receive each year in

the mail.

Well the couple were feeling pretty uncomfortable after the meeting. They were going to go home and review the recommendation, but decided right there, right then, to lay it on the line. Firstly, this proposed plan did not fit with their goals, their dreams, or their priorities. This financial planner was not to be trusted. This planner's services were to be terminated immediately. They would find a new planner who would produce a plan — a plan that would include that they would live within their means whereby you don't spend more than you legitimately take in. They would pay down their debt so that you don't leave a negative legacy to your children and grandchildren. And they would interpret fairness as to exclude silly.

I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for listening to this story. It may seem odd to have used numbers in the story that weren't neatly rounded off. The reason, of course, was that these numbers were multiples of real numbers — the numbers in the budget — to show that this is not a budget of vision and not a budget of sustainability for this province and not a budget that is acceptable. Like the couple in the story, the people in my constituency are telling me, it's time for a new financial planner.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this government is spending \$350,000 to sell this budget. Let's look at the features they are trying to sell. Firstly, the \$15 seniors' drug plan for those 65 years and over. The reality, Ms. Deputy Speaker, is that for many people turning 65 does not mean that their ability to pay has decreased. For the self-employed and with legislation in the works, even more people who turn 65 will not see a reduction in their income. In fact their income increases as they begin to receive their old-age pension and their tax credits increase as they qualify for the additional age exemption. Only an income tested plan can deliver to those truly in need in a sustainable manner.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the \$10,000 annual tax exemption for new graduates will have limited appeal. The reality is that the largest number of our graduates are considering seeking employment in either Alberta or Saskatchewan. That is the reality. In the illustration provided in the advertising campaign, one would get the impression that this proposed tax exemption would have the graduate who chose to remain in Saskatchewan or return to Saskatchewan in a position of being approximately \$1,100 better off annually for up to five years.

The basic personal exemption in Alberta, Madam Deputy Speaker, is \$15,000 compared to approximately \$8,800 in Saskatchewan. This alone reduces the perceived benefit from \$1,100 a year to \$380 a year. And oh yes, even though Saskatchewan's PST [provincial sales tax] is the lowest of all provinces, yes it is Alberta that does not have the PST. The \$380 advantage is very quickly long gone when the recent graduate buys their first vehicle and furnishes their first residence. So maybe, just maybe \$350,000, it may not be enough to sell this budget.

The people of Saskatchewan will reject this budget because it lacks vision, and it takes this province in the wrong direction. It does not fit with the potential of this province or the values of our people. It truly is the time to let the people decide. It's time

to terminate the services of this financial planner.

For these reasons, Madam Deputy Speaker, I will be supporting the amendment to this motion and not supporting the budget. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[15:15]

The Deputy Speaker: — Recognize the Minister of the Environment, the member for Regina Lakeview.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's a great pleasure to stand in this House and say some words of support for the budget delivered by the Minister of Finance. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm going to talk a little bit very briefly about my riding, Regina Lakeview. Then I'm going to talk about the budget. Then I'm going to talk about some important issues for Saskatchewan people.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, Regina Lakeview has many people who live in that particular area who are going to benefit from this budget. There are people who are elders, are seniors. There are many families, both big and small, and there are many artists, many musicians, many people who provide the idea part of our life. There are many teachers. There's many of the civil servants who make sure that our system works in this province.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, one thing about a provincial budget is that it supports the work of all of those people and affirms the kind of work that they do and how they live. And I just want to say on behalf of all the residents of Regina Lakeview that budgets are very important for them and their community, perhaps more so than some other parts of the province. And this particular budget is making sure that the salaries, the work, the things that they do will continue.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, as many people know, I like to make sure that I include Saskatchewan poetry, Saskatchewan literature in this House. And so I want to read a poem written by our first Poet Laureate, Glen Sorestad. And he wrote it for Myrna Kostash, a writer who wrote a book called *Reading the River* which was published last year, and this is a traveller's companion for the North Saskatchewan River. And I recommend it to people if they're interested in the Saskatchewan River and how that works.

But this poem is called, "Rivers (for Myrna)":

The river flows one way
and in its passing swift,
or slow, you feel
the weight of time,
the lunar pull, the turn
of seasons. Go with
the current and it takes
you where all things
come at last together.

But there is another way —
turn against the flow

and brunt the mystery
leading you where things
begin, where a river is
just a notion wrought
from sun and ice and stone.
The river flows one way,
but in the wonder of its
passing, we choose.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this budget is about making choices and where the flow of Saskatchewan is going to be going in the years ahead. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, as it relates to water, air, soil — those areas where I have responsibility — we are going to be making some very positive choices in this budget that will take us back to the source, back to the basic things that we need to do to live on this earth.

And I just wanted to affirm the kind of writing that Glen has done here, where he emphasizes and acknowledges that choices are being made and that people have a choice to not do things that they need to do or they have the choice to go back and start at the beginning.

Now this budget this year for Environment has \$204 million, and that covers many, many of the things that are done in that. But I want to emphasize the things that we're going to be doing for our green initiatives. This particular budget includes seven and a half million dollars for green initiatives, which builds on \$5 million which we had in the '06-07 budget. Those items in the '06-07 budget are going to 20 different organizations and projects, and those will be in Sask Environment, SaskPower, Office of Energy Conservation, and SaskEnergy, and other parts of government. And this funding represents concrete actions that are coming out of our green strategy.

There are projects that address climate change issues. And some of these include contributing to a reduction in the need for coal-fired electricity by providing \$900,000 to help consumers who meet their own power requirements from sources such as solar or wind to provide power back to the provincial electricity grid offsetting their energy costs. Madam Deputy Speaker, this is a project that deals with the net metering issue which we will be implementing in this year, 2007, and we're going to be doing it in a way that allows us to have it as a sustainable part of our power as we go forward.

Another project will help to increase energy conservation by providing \$500,000 in rebates to residential, institutional, and commercial customers who install solar water heating systems. We'll also have another project we'll be doing: getting more accurate information about air pollution levels by spending \$445,000 to purchase a mobile air monitoring laboratory. And we'll be collecting air quality data right across the province, but we do have a special concern about the northwest of the province and what is happening as it relates to development in the oil sands.

We'll also be spending money to help conserve water supplies threatened by global warming by giving rebates to customers who replace old toilets with new, water-efficient, low-flow models. And we'll also be spending money on water conservation programs and public education. This will be cost shared and go to different places across the province.

We'll be spending almost \$400,000 to support our watershed and aquifer protection initiatives and to fund projects to implement source water protection plans for First Nations lands and small communities with high-risk surface waters.

We'll be providing money to the University of Saskatchewan to assist us in the development of THREATS — the healthy river ecosystem assessment system. Other projects that I'm pleased to report are being brought forward are \$375,000 that goes to the Saskatoon forestry farm and zoo to improve their exhibits and take a strong part in promoting environmental education.

Our Saskatchewan Science Centre here in Regina will have \$25,000 to develop a wild Saskatchewan exhibit that explores the importance of ecosystems and the implications of biodiversity loss.

Another problem that we have in our province relates to the invasive alien species that come in our urban and rural communities, and we'll have half a million dollars available to address the management of alien species to make sure that our local biodiversity and species at risk are protected.

We have 415,000 that will be going to about 200 communities to assist with municipal recycling systems. We have money that goes to help with dealing with household hazardous waste collections days in targeted communities. That's a program that we'll be developing across the province as well.

I'm also pleased to say that we're able to support the secretary who has been looking at organic farming by giving \$210,000 to that work which will look at organic agriculture and how we make sure that our people have the advantage of having Saskatchewan-grown organic food. And we'll also have programs looking at urban pesticides and work with a number of other organizations throughout the province.

I'm also pleased that we have \$60,000 that goes to the Craik sustainable living project to assist them with their work in public education. We all know that they have been providing good leadership across the province as they work in the whole area of changing how we think and how we live in our environment here.

It takes the work of all of us together to make sure that we tackle these particular problems, and I want to thank all of the people who are part of that. This budget this year has another seven and a half million dollars which will build on those particular projects and will give us a chance to provide support as we unveil our full green strategy and also the government's long-term response to climate change. All of these things will be happening in the coming weeks.

This budget also provides \$12.8 million in capital for the fire management and forest protection services. This allows us to continue with the renewal of our aerial fleet, construction of additional fire towers throughout the forest, upgrading of fire access roads, and replacing of heavy equipment. In the coming weeks we'll have two new CV 580A air tankers that'll arrive in the province so that they'll be ready for service for this year's forest fire season. And we also will be continuing to work to make sure that in this year some of the costs around the replacement of the plane that went down last May will be

available for next spring's firefighting.

We also have noticed that in our overall firefighting system we now have 38 new fire towers that have been erected across the province, and that this has meant that we haven't had to spend as many hours with aerial detection costs over the last two years which has resulted in a saving of \$640,000. There have been increases in wages throughout the whole area of forestry and throughout the department and government, and this budget makes sure that these things are fully funded.

Also, working with my colleague, the minister responsible for the forest secretariat, we'll be having dedicated funding for that particular secretariat as this budget moves forward so that the good work that has been done there will be continued.

Also out of the Industry and Resources budget, the Saskatchewan Forest Centre will be receiving \$1 million to make up for the money that has been reduced by the federal government over this past year. We know that the forestry centre and the work that they do is important in supporting the socially, ecological, and economic sustainable forest economy of Saskatchewan.

Our parks system has received additional funding which will help them with upgrading in the parks, and that is well appreciated. And we also are fully funding the integrated water management framework. This allows the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority to continue with their work to have watershed and aquifer protection plans and also to continue with their work of protection of sourced water.

The Fish and Wildlife Development Fund amount is being increased by 297,000 to recognize the fact that there are increased revenues collected from the sale of the habitat certificates and the hunting, trapping, and fishing licences. And also this year \$325,000, which has traditionally been taken from the fund, will not be taken by the watershed authority as they will be using their own funds to fund some of these areas. So this means that there's over \$600,000 more in the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund this year for the good work that they do along with their many partners.

So this budget and the work and the . . . [inaudible] . . . supports Saskatchewan Environment, Office of Energy Conservation, and many others as we move forward and deal with a number of initiatives in our province. This budget has as its base the whole point of making life better for people here in Saskatchewan.

And we will continue to do the things that need to be done to make sure that we have a strong economy, to make sure that people of all ages want to have Saskatchewan as their home, and making sure that all the people in our province have access to health care for themselves and for their families. Also that our highway systems and our infrastructure, our telecommunications systems, all of these things are at the best level possible to make sure that everybody who lives in this province can communicate and participate with each other.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, earlier today I was watching question period in the House of Commons and I saw that the Member of Parliament for Palliser, Mr. Dave Batters, asked a question in question period. And as you know that's not that

common because he's a member of the governing party. But what really surprised me was that he asked the question of the minister of Indian and northern affairs, Mr. Jim Prentice, about the Kashechewan First Nation in northern Ontario. And it was clearly a softball question.

[15:30]

And it was very strange to me that the Member of Parliament for Saskatchewan would ask this kind of question from the minister about northern Ontario. And I have to ask this question: did he ask a question about the promises to the First Nations people of Saskatchewan? Did he ask any of the questions about the issues of First Nations people in Saskatchewan? Did he ask questions about where is the Kelowna accord, which was agreed to by the Government of Canada, not a particular party? I was extremely surprised that that's the kind of question that would come in that particular situation.

And unfortunately I have to ask the same question about a number of other members of parliament from Saskatchewan, in that we have not heard them ask questions at all about the promises that were made to the people of Saskatchewan as it related to the national equalization system that we have.

And as we know we are continually trying to raise this particular question across the country. Others of our neighbours have raised it. But it goes to the heart of what it is that you do when you campaign. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, I call upon all of our members of parliament from Saskatchewan to raise the question about what happened with the promises that were made to Saskatchewan people as it related to the finances of the country.

There are many situations where we know that we have worked hard to use the resources that we have, as is shown in the budget that I'm speaking about today, to provide services to Saskatchewan people. But we also know from our own analysis, but also from outside analysis, that Saskatchewan has been given a raw deal in Confederation — especially over the last 15 years — and that there are many things that would have been much easier for Saskatchewan people if we had the kind of resources that are coming to us. And we elect people to represent us in Ottawa and part of their job is to speak for Saskatchewan. So I remind all of the members in Saskatchewan that we are concerned that they don't seem to be bringing the message to the Prime Minister and to the federal government. And we look forward to better work on their part.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this budget is, that we have here in Saskatchewan, is good for the people in Saskatchewan. It's another step along the way to building a strong economy so that we can provide good social programs for all of our people. And I am very happy to say that I am supporting this budget.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm certainly pleased to be able to enter into

the debate on this budget. It's a budget that this government hails as a go-forward budget for the province of Saskatchewan. Yet there are many, many shortcomings in this budget as my colleagues have pointed out and also members of the public have recognized, Madam Deputy Speaker.

There's a number of issues, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I would like to cover. But perhaps the first thing that I would like to do is certainly welcome our newest member of this legislature, the member from Martensville. Certainly we are, on this side of the House, very pleased to have her as a member of the opposition caucus and certainly very proud of the excellent work that she has done so far. And also I should also recognize once again our young member from Weyburn-Big Muddy. And certainly these young people certainly have a long and I am sure a very successful future ahead of them in this legislature and other careers that they may want to pursue some time later, much later on in their young lives.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as the member representing Last Mountain-Touchwood, I have said many times before . . . and I will just very briefly repeat some of my comments that I have made over the years about the makeup of Last Mountain-Touchwood and the rural nature of the constituency of Last Mountain-Touchwood.

In my constituency, Madam Deputy Speaker, we don't have any large urban centres. We don't even have any medium-sized urban centres. Our largest communities are communities that are of a population of about 800 people or less. So we are certainly a rural constituency, and we have a number of rural issues that we are faced with, along with those other issues that all citizens across the province whether they are urban or rural face.

And I would like to speak about at least a few of the issues and particularly the rural issues that the people of Last Mountain-Touchwood are faced with. And one of the issues that is of great concern, as it is to many rural residents in the province of Saskatchewan, is the condition of our highways — and particularly some of our secondary highways that service communities and provide a valuable service to businesses and individuals that live along and near these highways — and the lack of attention and the lack of a plan that this government has had and the constant deterioration that we are seeing and particularly at this time of the year, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I would invite members opposite to drive north of Regina and drive down that section of Highway 22 that last summer this government saw fit to turn back to gravel. I would invite them to travel down that portion of highway today when we are receiving rain and wet snow. But you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, the people of the area are forced to travel on that highway.

And what's even more important, Madam Deputy Speaker, because this government has seen fit to close a number of rural schools and close some of the . . . The high school in Earl Grey is an example. We have more and more students travelling longer distance in school buses. And particularly on days like today that certainly is not an option that the residents feel is a viable option, and they have great concern about the safety of their children, Madam Deputy Speaker, because along that

section of highway we also have a large number of grain trucks delivering grain to a high throughput elevator. And the citizens of that area have been raising the issue of the deterioration of Highway 22 for many years, as long as I've been elected, and nothing has been done other than turning it back to gravel.

Then also I would invite them to take a drive down Highway 310 between Balcarres and Ituna and see the deterioration of that highway — another busy highway that serves many rural residents and residents of the communities, people living in the communities along the highway. And what has this government said to those area residents? They said, we're not going to fix your highway unless you are prepared to help with the cost of repairing and upgrading the highway. They've made that same sort of statement to the people in the Southey, Earl Grey, Bulyea area. Those people on that area along Highway 22 have rejected the government's blackmail.

The people along Highway 310 are so desperate to see improvements made to their highway that finally — after much thought and much discussion and out of desperation — they've agreed to the government's blackmail and said, okay we will very, very reluctantly help as best we can with the repair of Highway 310, to the point where the municipality that has the lowest tax base but yet has the greatest number of kilometres of Highway 310 through their municipality has levied an additional 1 mill per year for five years which will be dedicated to the repair of 310. They already are having difficulty maintaining their own municipal roads. But they've asked, the council of that RM [rural municipality] has asked their citizens to pay more taxes on top of all the other taxes that they are paying to help fix the highway. It's a shameful legacy that this government is leaving in rural Saskatchewan, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And on top of this, to add insult to injury, Madam Deputy Speaker, what did we hear from this government and from this Premier just very recently in the last number of weeks? They have finally admitted something that we have been saying for many years: that this government has no plan as far as repair and upgrading of our highways. The Premier admitted. He says, in the last 15 years we didn't have a plan but we've got one now. And they made their announcement of additional funding to repair highways. But it's too little and too late, Madam Deputy Speaker.

We've allowed the condition of our highways to deteriorate to the point where it reminds me of the old oil filter commercial where it goes something like this: where the individual's holding up a new filter and he says, either pay me now a small amount or pay me a lot later if you don't provide proper maintenance. And that's the situation that we've got ourselves into now, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Did we hear anything about a long-term sustainable plan to address the way we fund the K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] education system in this budget? We heard nothing, Madam Deputy Speaker. This government, prior to the last election, the NDP said, oh we've got a plan, and we'll be able to deal with the Boughen report, and we'll be able to address this matter. The Premier went to the SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] convention several years in a row and firmly said that the status quo was not on, and yet nothing really

has changed.

Certainly in the last couple of years when they have some windfall revenues from oil and gas, they put in place a tax credit. But that's not a fundamental change, Madam Deputy Speaker, in the way we fund the K to 12 system. It's a system that can be as easily removed as it has been implemented. And we've seen this in the past. Back in 2002-2003, I believe the years were, we had a small tax rebate program for education tax on agricultural property of some \$25 million per year. We had that program in effect for two years. Right after the 2003 election, that program was abolished.

And until very recently when this government is going into election years, and they have as I said these windfall revenues, they've been able to put a similar program in place which can very easily be renewed. What we need to do, and what this government said they would do, is meet with the coalition of organizations such as SARM and SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] and the school boards association and the association of resort communities and the Saskatchewan association of realtors — and there may be one of two other ones who have formed the coalition — and who are willing to sit down with this government and find a long-term solution as to how we fund the K to 12 system.

We hear nothing from that process, Madam Deputy Speaker. There's no leadership from this government on this issue because it's a tough issue, and they would prefer not to deal with it. And there has been, as far as I'm aware, no meetings or anything taking place. They're just hoping that this issue will go away. Well it's not going to go away. Property taxes and the education portion of property tax is an issue for all property owners across this province, whether they be rural or urban. And that is something that we heard on the doorsteps in Martensville. And that is something that I'm sure these people are hearing, but they are refusing to deal with it, Madam Deputy Speaker.

What did we hear on agriculture in this budget, Madam Deputy Speaker? Well frankly I think what I'd like to do is quote one of the leaders in the agricultural community. This government said well they're going to fully fund CAIS [Canadian agricultural income stabilization]. Well this is nothing new. Other years they played the silly little games, and they put a certain amount of money into the agriculture budget. And then they would later on in the year say, okay yes, we're fully funding CAIS.

[15:45]

This year, in an election year, Madam Deputy Speaker, they thought well we're going to take it one step further. We're going to say right upfront that we're fully funding CAIS, in a year, Madam Deputy Speaker, where I predict that the payouts under CAIS will be considerably less than they have been in other years due to the increases in commodity prices. So in the year when probably CAIS payments will be the lowest they've been in the last two or three years this government says, well okay we'll finally commit right upfront to funding CAIS.

But what do some of the agricultural leaders in this province say, Madam Deputy Speaker? Well I'm quoting now from an APAS [Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan]

news release on the budget. And this is the president of APAS, Mr. Ken McBride, and he says:

"I have to admit that we are a little disappointed. This was a big-spending budget, but not in agriculture . . ."

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, I hear the Finance member, the minister from Regina South, chirping about some of my comments, Madam Deputy Speaker. And I must say that his conduct today is certainly much improved over his conduct the other night in the Economy Committee, Madam Deputy Speaker. But he still hasn't learned his lesson.

And what I would say to that member is . . . I have two words for that member, Madam Deputy Speaker. Now those two words are Bill Hutchinson. Bill Hutchinson is the Sask Party candidate that will be representing Regina South after this next election, Madam Deputy Speaker, and the people of that constituency will have a member that was working on their behalf, Madam Deputy Speaker. And he will work with people. And he will work with other members of this legislature and, Madam Deputy Speaker, and they will be very well served, Madam Deputy Speaker.

But that member certainly hasn't learned his lesson and he continues to chirp. It must be spring, Madam Deputy Speaker, because the crows are back, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, another issue that I would like to touch upon is daycare in our rural communities. In this budget we have a commitment. It's right in some of the information provided with the budget, Madam Deputy Speaker. It says — they're talking about young people — and it says, "... 500 hundred new licensed child care spaces." Well the question that the people in rural Saskatchewan and in particularly one of the communities in my constituency, the community of Strasbourg, is are any of those new spaces going to be going to communities in rural Saskatchewan and in particularly the community of Strasbourg? I wonder if the minister can answer those questions.

Because there's a group of community-minded individuals in that community who have taken it upon themselves, because they've seen the need and they were being led by the mayor of the community, and they started a daycare on their own. The citizens of Strasbourg have done as much as they possibly can. There's been space donated. People are working for little or no salary, and they are struggling to try and maintain this service. They have asked for a bit of a helping hand from this government and to date they have heard nothing, Madam Deputy Speaker. And the question is, will some of that new funding go to spaces in rural Saskatchewan? I'll be very interested to hear their answer, Madam Deputy Speaker. And we'll certainly be . . . The minister is chirping yes. So will it be going to the community of Strasbourg, Madam Deputy Speaker?

I should relate a conversation that I recently had with a young couple that have moved back from Alberta to Strasbourg. They're both professionals. They grew up in Alberta. They said we saw some opportunities. And we have a young family and we often thought it'd be great to raise a young family in rural Saskatchewan. So we had an opportunity and moved to

Strasbourg.

You know what, one of their major concerns is daycare because they are both working. They want to have quality care for their children, Madam Deputy Speaker. And in fact they feel so strongly that if these services aren't being provided that they may have to reconsider their decision to stay. And they said if they're going to live in the city, they doubt whether it'd be a city here in Saskatchewan. They may have to go back. And that would be a real shame, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And so if we're going to spend money on advertising to bring young people back to our province, we better make sure that we have the services that are required.

And this is not, a daycare is not only an issue in Strasbourg. It's an issue in numerous other communities in rural Saskatchewan. I've heard, you know, working mothers express great concern about the lack of proper care for their children in a number of communities in my constituency, Madam Deputy Speaker. And we need to see if this government, the government that touts itself as being the people who look after the working families of this province, let's see if they're going to actually do something, or is this another case of all talk and very little action, Madam Deputy Speaker? I hope the latter is . . . that that's not the case, but I'm fearful that it is, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I heard the Minister of the Environment make a few comments about some of the things that his department is going to be doing on green strategy and those sorts of things. He's talking about, I believe it is \$7.5 million on the green initiatives, and it says in the Estimates book that this is money that will be used in support of the government-wide approach to improve the environmental management under the green strategy.

Well the green strategy, Madam Deputy Speaker, is something that this government has talked about for, I believe it's three or four years. They started the process and they talked about a green and prosperous economy. And to date what have we seen? We've seen a few small, little announcements here and there with promises being made, promises being made to develop a multi-material stewardship program which I understand is on the rails or perhaps has been derailed or perhaps has been discarded.

We've seen a couple of other little announcements here and there, but we've never seen the overall plan, a plan, an overall policy or framework that the people of this province can see and understand as to where this government is going as far their green initiatives. And to date, whenever I would ask the minister in estimates as to when are we going to see the overall plan, he says soon. Well soon was, I believe, six months ago, twelve months ago and eighteen months ago, and then we got the same answers. And today he says well we'll be seeing it fairly soon. Well that's an answer that we've seen for quite some time. All talk and no action, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And so what are some of the environmental groups that are watchdogs, as far as governments and their programs, what are they saying about this government? Well the Suzuki Foundation in their last report said that this government has no plan to

address to climate change; that Saskatchewan has the fastest increase in greenhouse gas emissions; and on a per capita basis, we are at the top of the pack as far as greenhouse gas emissions.

And we have \$7.5 million for some small, little handouts that this government, this minister wants to use as his little election slush fund, and that's what's going to address this greenhouse problem and climate change problem. This government that claims to be the protector of the environment, the protector of working men and women, just another example, Madam Deputy Speaker, of all talk and very little action. And once again, as some of the environmentalists say, this is nothing but greenwash, Madam Deputy Speaker. And I believe that. That's all it is. It's just greenwash, Madam Deputy Speaker.

So in conclusion, I would like to say that I certainly cannot support this budget, a budget that presents a false impression of the soundness of our financial picture in this province. So I will not be supporting the motion but I certainly will be supporting the amendment.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Prebble: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm very pleased to rise in support of this budget. It's an outstanding budget, Madam Deputy Speaker, and it reflects hard work by this government over the last 16 years to restore our fiscal situation in this province.

Over the last four years, including the measures in this budget, we've reduced debt in Saskatchewan for the Saskatchewan government by another \$1 billion. We've had 16 consecutive credit rating upgrades, Madam Deputy Speaker. And it puts us in a strong financial position.

And the Saskatchewan economy is strong — four consecutive years of increased employment growth, record employment this year, Madam Deputy Speaker, with 491,600 people working on average in Saskatchewan; unemployment at its lowest rate since 1981 at 4.7 per cent. And to give a sense, Madam Deputy Speaker, of the strength of the economy, in the last year alone the manufacturing sector in Saskatchewan has grown 53 per cent.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, that puts us in a very strong position to address key social needs in the province of Saskatchewan, and this budget does just that.

A lot of my constituents, Madam Deputy Speaker, are young people and a lot of them are seniors. And I'm privileged to represent a lot of university students in my riding, and they will be very pleased with one of the key initiatives in this budget, which is an enhancement of the assistance that is available for young people who start their careers here in Saskatchewan. We've introduced a new graduate tax exemption, and when coupled with other measures it will allow graduates of our universities and technical schools and graduate apprentices to earn \$20,000 of income each year over a five-year period with

no provincial income tax levied on that income. And that's a savings, Madam Deputy Speaker, of more than \$1,100 a year for each of our graduates over five years. So that's \$5,500 of benefit altogether for young people who graduate from our post-secondary institutes and take up employment in the province of Saskatchewan and make their home here. It's a very good initiative, and it will have the support of a lot of my constituents.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we're also taking steps to enhance new training spaces. We've increased new training spaces by 24 per cent over the last four years, keeping our election commitment that I and all other members on this side of the Assembly made to our constituents in 2003. We said we'd deliver 5,000 new training spaces. We bettered that, Madam Deputy Speaker, by more than 1,000. And in this budget there are 2,100 new training spaces being funded, bringing total training seats in the province of Saskatchewan to 31,400.

I also have a large number of seniors in my riding, Madam Deputy Speaker, and this budget addresses their needs. And of course the highlight is our new prescription drug program, universally available to all seniors in this province. There will be a cap placed, effective July 1, of \$15 on all prescription drugs under the formulary, Madam Deputy Speaker. And that is very, very good news for every senior in my riding. It's a well-deserved enhancement to our medicare system in the province of Saskatchewan.

In addition, Madam Deputy Speaker, our budget addresses the needs of seniors by permitting pension income splitting for all seniors when they pay their provincial personal income tax, and that is also a very positive measure.

And one of the things that all seniors care about, Madam Deputy Speaker — and all families, obviously — is their grandchildren and their children. And this budget is very good news for children in this province and for families in this province, Madam Deputy Speaker. We continue to enhance and establish new pre-kindergarten programs across this province. There is \$730,000 of additional money in this budget for 15 new pre-kindergarten programs across Saskatchewan and funding for 500 new licensed child care spaces across Saskatchewan, for a total now of over 9,300 child care spaces in this province thanks to the initiatives of this NDP government.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — We're also providing funds in this budget, Madam Deputy Speaker, for a dental sealant program for children in grades 1 and in grade 7 at our community schools. And this is a very important beginning, Madam Deputy Speaker, to what I hope will ultimately be an enhanced children's dental plan in this province. But it's the beginning of it again, Madam Deputy Speaker. I sat in this Assembly when the members opposite, the former conservatives now called Sask Party, eliminated the children's dental program in this province. And now, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am very pleased to be sitting on the government side of the House when we in the New Democratic Party begin bringing this program back to the children and the families of this province.

[16:00]

Madam Deputy Speaker, there's also funds in this budget to provide additional supports for children with autism and increased training for health professionals to serve as a resource for families with autistic children at a cost of \$490,000. In addition there is \$300,000 allocated for a centralized respite service available for families with children who have complex needs such as those who are ventilator dependent. And this year our government will cover 100 per cent of the cost of insulin pumps for a targeted population of children with diabetes. Madam Deputy Speaker, it's clear that this government cares about children in Saskatchewan, and this budget reflects that priority.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Madam Deputy Speaker, there are a number of other important health initiatives in this budget: funding for 2,000 extra surgeries to be performed this year, \$1 million to improve patient access to cardiac catheterization lab services in Saskatoon. Work gets underway, Madam Deputy Speaker, on a fifth MRI [magnetic resonance imaging] to be located at St. Paul's Hospital in Saskatoon. And we're significantly, very significantly dropping waiting lists, Madam Deputy Speaker, for MRI services in the province of Saskatchewan.

And in this budget very significantly, Madam Deputy Speaker, we provide extended health benefits for 30,000 low-income workers. This will involve provision of supplementary eye care benefits and enhanced drug coverage. And that is another outstanding social policy initiative by this government.

There are other important social policy investments in this budget that I want to make reference to. There is very importantly, in last year's budget and this year's budget, \$100 million that is being invested in inner-city development in Saskatoon, Regina, Prince Albert, and North Battleford — an outstanding social initiative, Madam Deputy Speaker. And in my home city of Saskatoon, this is going to mean hundreds of additional social housing units that are built in the inner city. It's going to mean an investment of \$8 million, Madam Deputy Speaker, in Station 20 West which is very, very welcomed by inner-city community associations.

It's going to mean, Madam Deputy Speaker, a \$17 million investment at Mount Royal Collegiate where we're going to allow students to not only successfully complete their high school, but go on in the same institute, Madam Deputy Speaker, to post-secondary training in the trades and a wide array of other post-secondary opportunities. And this is just an excellent initiative.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Madam Deputy Speaker, there's a couple of other key social policy initiatives that I want to focus on in my remarks. One is the enhancements to wages for our employees who work for community-based organizations. And I'm very pleased to say that with the hard work of my seatmate, the former minister of Social Services, that there is a \$5.7 million increase in wages for employees in community-based service organizations.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — There is also an important investment in enhancing policing services to stop child sexual exploitation on our streets, Madam Deputy Speaker. And I'm very pleased to say in this budget that there's \$1.3 million being invested in police resources to bring this practice to a halt in our communities. That is a very important initiative.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to turn to environmental issues. And the member opposite who spoke just before me was criticizing our government for a lack of initiative on the environment. Well I want to say, Madam Deputy Speaker, that this budget and the announcements that have taken place in the last three months just put to rest any comments he might have had about questioning the action and commitment of this government to addressing matters of climate change and environmental protection in this province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — And I want to specifically put on the record in light of his comments, some of the action that has been taken. First of all, Madam Deputy Speaker, on the important question of protected areas and land set-asides, this government, under the leadership of our Premier, has now set aside 9 per cent of the lands in this province as protected areas under the representative areas network program, and we're going to 12 per cent, Madam Deputy Speaker, which is the same target as that set by the United Nations. And I noticed the member opposite made no reference to that.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we have also just announced enhanced support for promoting organic agriculture in this province with another \$210,000 for that initiative just announced by the Minister of the Environment.

We have \$400,000 in this budget to encourage measures in the home for water conservation, including rebates for citizens in this province who buy low-flush toilets, because it's the flushing of toilets in the home that's one of the biggest uses of water in our homes.

There is, Madam Deputy Speaker, in this budget support for our new recycling initiative around used paint cans and our new recycling initiative for all electronic equipment, including televisions and computers, which can now be recycled at SARCAN, Madam Deputy Speaker. He made no reference to that in his comments.

It's easy to criticize when you ignore the specifics, Madam Deputy Speaker. And of course, Madam Deputy Speaker, we have announced a number of important new initiatives around climate change. And I just want to say that here one of the important things we've done over the last four years is to introduce 172 megawatts of wind power on to our system. Thanks to the initiatives of this Premier, Madam Deputy Speaker, we now have more wind power being generated in this province on a per capita basis than any other part of Canada. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm going to be working in this legislature during my time here and beyond, to see our wind power initiative enhanced even further in this province. Because I believe we can do more but we've made an excellent start.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we have retrofitted all our seniors

housing units in this province in terms of upgrading their energy efficiency, and the results have been excellent. We've invested \$1 million a year in this over the last five years starting in 2001 and ending in 2006. And I'm pleased to say that the energy savings have now more than offset the capital investment that we made. We've got more than \$5 million back in energy savings from the \$5 million that was spent in retrofit work. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, we have set the best energy efficiency standards for public buildings that you'll find anywhere in Canada, and 77 new public buildings have been built to this standard.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the member opposite ignores the fact that we've just announced — further to the recommendations that I was pleased to provide to the Premier, at his request, on further measures we can take in energy conservation and renewables — we've just announced half a million dollars for rebates for homeowners and commercial buildings and institutional buildings that install solar hot water in their facilities to reduce their use of natural gas.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, just on Monday of this week I was pleased to join the Minister of Crown Investments Corporation and the Premier to announce that we are taking the EnerGuide for homes program — that the Conservative government that members opposite like to support cancelled for a year — we have taken that and we have continued it throughout the year that the federal government cancelled it. And now, Madam Deputy Speaker, we've announced that we are enhancing it. Instead of a \$2,000 grant for homeowners who retrofit their homes, there'll be a maximum of up to \$5,000 available for homeowners who retrofit their homes.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — And that program is being extended by the province to 2011, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And in addition to that, Madam Deputy Speaker, we are supporting homeowners with these grants, who install geothermal in their homes or who install solar hot water or solar space heat in their homes.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Minister of the Environment has just announced \$900,000 for homeowners and farmers who want to generate renewable electricity on the grid through initiatives like solar photovoltaics or small-scale wind, so that that kind of distributed generation is being fostered in our province.

And the member opposite claims that nothing is being done, Madam Deputy Speaker. And this is just the start, Madam Deputy Speaker, because our Premier has made it clear that we're going to be announcing a comprehensive climate change initiative next month, Madam Deputy Speaker. And I'm very much looking forward to that.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to say a word about climate change and how crucial it is because, Madam Deputy Speaker, climate change is going to be one of the fundamental issues that the people of Saskatchewan and this

legislature and the people of Canada need to address in the coming decades.

And the members opposite are clearly on the record, Madam Deputy Speaker. They are clearly on the record as opposing the Kyoto Protocol. And throughout my years in this legislature, Madam Deputy Speaker, since I was elected in 1999, I have been on the record as supporting the Kyoto Protocol. And members on this side of the House, Madam Deputy Speaker, have made it clear with their voices that they strongly support initiatives that are intended to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and climate change in this province, contrary to members opposite, Madam Deputy Speaker, who sat here in 2002 and did everything they could to prevent a resolution being passed in this legislature that expressed support for Kyoto.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to talk for a moment about why the question of climate change is so critical because the international scientific community is clearly saying to the world that action must be taken to reduce emissions not just by 10 or 20 per cent but over the next 40 years reduce emissions by 60 to 80 per cent, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And the scientific community is also warning the world that if action is not taken on this front, temperatures, average surface temperatures will rise by between 2 and 5 degrees centigrade over the next century, Madam Deputy Speaker. That is a frightening prospect.

When you think about what a 5-degree change in temperature means on the earth, Madam Deputy Speaker, it's equivalent to the change in temperature between the last ice age and today in terms of average surface temperature on the earth. It's a 5-degree difference, 5-degree centigrade difference between the temperatures we've enjoyed over the last few hundred years and the last ice age.

And you also need to bear in mind one other important thing, Madam Deputy Speaker, and that is that all these greenhouse gases are going into an atmosphere that only extends, in terms of the breathable portion of it, about 5 kilometres above the earth.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, the consequences of us continuing our greenhouse gas emissions with these temperature increases that I've just described are as follows, and I want to just highlight five key examples of why we need this make this a major, major priority.

First is the threat of drought in our province and in many, many parts of the world, drought becoming much worse than it is now with declining surface water levels, increased forest fires, and many important agricultural areas that would become unusable.

Second, Madam Deputy Speaker, is the risk to our beautiful coral reefs around the world which will be destroyed if ocean temperatures rise by another 2 degrees centigrade. Already these are at grave risk, and they are a source of great marine biodiversity with a quarter of all marine life spending at least part of its time in the coral reefs. If global greenhouse gas emissions are not dramatically curbed, the coral reefs of the world will be destroyed.

Third, Madam Deputy Speaker, is the risk that is associated with mass extinction of species. Already the temperature increases that have occurred are resulting in animal populations needing to migrate towards the poles — significant differences, several kilometres every decade, Madam Deputy Speaker. And many animals are not successfully completing their migrations because they're blocked by urban congestion or because their food supply does not move with them. And many, many animal species are in decline by alarming numbers. Amphibian species, for instance, a third of them, Madam Deputy Speaker, already on the verge of extinction.

[16:15]

Fourth, Madam Deputy Speaker, we run the risk of Greenland and the Antarctic melting as temperatures rise. And we run the risk as the result of that, Madam Deputy Speaker, for sea levels rising sharply. Already the international scientific community is warning that sea levels could rise by nine-tenths of a metre over the next 100 years. And there are hundreds of millions of people who live in cities that are less than 1 metre above sea level, Madam Deputy Speaker, and also large, large numbers of animal species who would be threatened by such a sea level rise. So, Madam Deputy Speaker, those are just a few examples of why this issue is so critical to address.

And there's just one more that I want to make reference of in my brief time here this afternoon, and that is with respect to extreme weather events. Saskatchewan has experienced more extreme weather events over the last two years, more than we've ever experienced in the last 40.

And all around the world this is happening, Madam Deputy Speaker. More and more people are experiencing severe floods, severe hurricanes. And of course we saw last year the billions of dollars of damage that was done by Hurricane Katrina, Madam Deputy Speaker. And it's just one example of the more severe hurricanes that the Gulf of Mexico and many other parts of the world are experiencing. In Japan they're experiencing record numbers of typhoons, Madam Deputy Speaker. So this is a huge problem for the global community.

And I am so proud of our Premier, that he is coming forward and saying clearly to the people of Saskatchewan and to this legislature, against the opposition and members opposite, that reducing greenhouse gas emissions is going to be a major priority for this government in the decade ahead, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — And only New Democrats will deliver on this, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I know one thing for sure. The Leader of the Opposition opposite will never support a serious reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in this province. He's on record time and again as opposing Kyoto. He has filed petition after petition in this legislature opposing Kyoto, and we will fight him to the end, Madam Deputy Speaker, to make sure he never, never becomes the leader of government in this province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to make two other comments in closing. First of all, Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to express appreciation to my constituents for electing me for four terms in this Assembly. It's been a great privilege to serve them. This may be my last budget address because I announced a year ago that I would not be running in the next election and retiring from provincial politics, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And I want to thank my constituents for the chance to serve them. It's been a great honour. I also want to thank my family for the huge support that they have given me. My wife Louise, my sons Mark, James, and Michael, my stepdaughter Monté, my mother Trudy, have been a huge support for me. And I want to thank the New Democratic Party in my constituency for the privilege of nominating me and for the support they have given me. It's been a great honour to serve.

And finally, my final message, Madam Deputy Speaker, is to the people of Saskatchewan. Don't let the Sask Party take the progress that we've made over the last 16 years away, Madam Deputy Speaker. Let's not turn government, Madam Deputy Speaker, over to a party that bankrupt this province when they governed it from 1982 to 1991 with \$14 billion of debt. Let's not turn over government to a party that destroyed the children's dental program and dozens of other social programs during their time in office. Let's not turn government over to a group of people who, when they last governed the province, one of their first acts was to blow up the Office of Energy Conservation which we have now re-established, and to blow up the programs for solar energy in this province that we have now re-established.

Madam Deputy Speaker, let's not turn back the clock to a group of people, Madam Deputy Speaker, that when they were in government demonstrated their corrupt practices. Let's stay, Madam Deputy Speaker, with a positive government that's going to work for the betterment of families in this province.

I'm pleased to support this budget, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I will be opposing the amendment. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member for Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I hope I can get through my speech today. I've had a bad cold but we'll give it a try anyhow.

First I'd like to congratulate the member from Martensville on her election. It was a resounding victory where she received and Saskatchewan Party received over 77 per cent of the vote and the NDP only garnered 10 per cent of the vote. The worst showing in their history, I understand. So that's very revealing and it also speaks to the record of the NDP and why the people in Martensville and the by-election in Weyburn before that, why the people of Saskatchewan have turned on the NDP.

I'd like to get into more of the credibility of the NDP or the lack of the credibility of the NDP, but first I want to address the budget that has come down.

Madam Deputy Speaker, one only has to look at page 58 of the Saskatchewan provincial budget, *Budget and Performance Plan Summary*, 2007-2008. And the NDP say they have a balanced budget. But it's just not true, Madam Deputy Speaker, because you look on page 58, the Government of Saskatchewan summary statements of changes in net debt, first line, Madam Deputy Speaker, surplus (deficit) — well what is it? — it's a deficit of \$701.3 million. And at the bottom of the information, the net debt, end of the year is \$8.7514 billion. That's an increase of net debt of \$925.6 million.

So absolutely, Madam Deputy Speaker, this is not a sustainable budget. It's a pre-election budget. And obviously the NDP are trying to hoodwink the people of Saskatchewan into believing that this is a balanced budget when we know that it is not.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we need to only look at a number of very informative . . . and people from the industry . . . Look at what the CBIC has been saying. It says,

. . . looking at the summary accounts [which I just talked about] — which includes government departments and Crown corporations as well as such thing as . . . [drawback downs] from [the] reserves and pension adjustments — there is a \$701 million deficit planned for [the] fiscal year that begins April 1, the bank said.

Also, Madam Deputy Speaker, Randy Burton, political columnist for the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix*, he says, “. . . when you look at it all together, it's a very expensive campaign platform that no government is going to be able to afford in the long run.” Unsustainable budget, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I'd like to speak a bit about my constituency and really speak to what this budget says to my constituents. My constituency is called Biggar. It takes in the communities of Langham and Borden, Radisson, Denholm, also Wilkie, of course the town of Biggar, Perdue, Vanscoy, Delisle, Asquith, and all the rural areas in between, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And I was very interested to see the statistics about the population drop overall in Saskatchewan, but particularly in the constituency of Biggar. And I'd just like to point out what has been going on since 2001 when this present Premier came into power, up to date to 2006. And the numbers show, for the town of Biggar, a decrease of 9.4 per cent in the population. Then you go on to look at rural Biggar, a decrease of 16 per cent in the population; the town of Wilkie, a decrease of nearly 5 per cent in population.

Madam Deputy Speaker, then you look at the RM of Rosemount, the rural municipality, minus 20.7 per cent; Reford RM, minus 10 per cent. Go on, Madam Deputy Speaker, to other communities: Kinley, the village of Kinley, minus 12.5 per cent; Great Bend municipality, minus 13 per cent; Langham, which is relatively close to Saskatoon, minus 2.2 per cent population; Vanscoy only marginally increased in population, point five per cent; village of Ruddell, minus 20 per cent, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And it just goes on and on. You look at Ruthilda, minus 75 per cent in population; Denholm, minus 22.8 per cent; the village of Maymont, minus 20.7 per cent; the rural municipality of Eagle

Creek, minus 4.7 per cent.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is what's been happening in the constituency of Biggar since this present Premier has come to power. Go on to the village of Landis, minus 26.1 per cent; Grandview RM, minus 15.9 per cent; Mayfair, minus 10.5 per cent; the village of Perdue, minus 2.2; the Springwater village, minus 25 per cent in population; Vanscoy village, minus 1.7 per cent; and the town of village, point nine per cent.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, that is the result of this NDP government's mismanagement since 2001 and even before that. But particularly since this government has come to power under this Premier, this is the result of what's happened in the constituency of Biggar. People are leaving the constituency in droves, and it's interesting to note who they are. Well many of the young people, people that are working. Farmers, young farmers, middle-aged farmers, they've had to leave their farms, their homes, to work elsewhere, and generally they do go to Alberta for jobs and elsewhere. And so, Madam Deputy Speaker, the NDP government's track record is really dismal and certainly speaks to how ineffective their policies have been.

So now we look at this present budget and what do we have? Well we have a pre-election budget with a \$701 million deficit. And really the government has spent everything. The cupboard is bare, and what is there for next year and the year after? How does this government expect to turn things around in the future? Well unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, they aren't thinking beyond the next election. They're just going to spend as much money as they possibly can and try to buy the next election.

Madam Deputy Speaker, another important thing that the government tries to promote is it goes to the Canadian Wheat Board and the statistics or the results of the plebiscite that was held. And it's very interesting to note that nearly 55 per cent of the voters in the barley plebiscite have voted either for an option to market to the wheat board or other buyer of their choice, or take the Canadian Wheat Board totally out of the process of buying, marketing barley. And overall right across Western Canada, it's 62 per cent that would like an option of how they sell their barley.

Now the member from Saskatoon Nutana likes to write letters to the editor in the Biggar *Independent* about the Canadian Wheat Board and about my record on the Canadian Wheat Board. Well I wish she'd write another letter to the editor and state the results of this plebiscite concerning the barley. She's certainly missing the point. And the problem with her position is that we have been under the wheat board all through these years. And you'd only need to look at the statistics in the Biggar constituency and say people are voting with their feet. They're leaving the farms. They're leaving the towns and villages in the constituency of Biggar, and this is the same thing right across all of Saskatchewan while we have had the wheat board and single marketing.

So Madam Deputy Speaker, it certainly speaks to what people think about the Canadian Wheat Board, and obviously changes need to be made for marketing choice. And the people of Saskatchewan has voted, has shown what they think about the Canadian Wheat Board. So I think it should put it to rest. But I'm sure the member from Saskatoon Nutana will be writing

another letter to the editor stating some, her point of view about how important the Canadian Wheat Board is. But it certainly will not affect too many people in the constituency of Biggar because they know better. They know what the result of having the wheat board in place has been in the past.

It's interesting to note . . . and I had a constituent that came to me and was very, very upset. She along with many other people have taken the initiative to save energy, everything from, you know, using more energy-effective, energy-saving light bulbs and so on and so forth. And she says it's very disturbing to have gone to the expense and has done the right thing to try to reduce the uses of energy. And so what does the government do? Raises the rates, the energy rates, the power rates in Saskatchewan. So people in Saskatchewan are being penalized for doing the right thing. And only NDP government could come up with a plan to penalize people in Saskatchewan for doing the right thing.

[16:30]

I'd like to respond to some of the comments made by the member from Greystone, and unfortunately he misspoke. I'm sure he made a mistake when he took credit and his government took credit for the new MRI at St. Paul's in Saskatoon. Well I just want to straighten him out on that. There was no government money in acquiring the MRI for St. Paul's. That was raised by the foundation, by the people of Saskatoon, by Saskatchewan. And he certainly is wrong in taking any credit for the MRI in St. Paul's in Saskatoon.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, it's interesting to note the Minister of Highways has got caught saying something he shouldn't have, and the whole situation with the Weyerhaeuser plant in Prince Albert, where he jumped on the bandwagon and made an announcement about a pending sale of Weyerhaeuser to Domtar. Of course as soon as you realize what came out of his mouth, he starts denying what he did.

And I just like to relay a story about the Minister of Agriculture and what he did to the community of Biggar. There was a US-based [United States] packing plant that was considering building a packing plant in the community of Biggar. And there was a delegation from Biggar went and spoke to this business, this packing plant business in Kansas City, and it seemed that things were moving along quite nicely. And unfortunately everything was going along good until the Minister of Agriculture went down to the US and announced that this . . . he named the company who was considering coming to Biggar. And this company was so outraged by how unprofessional that Agriculture minister was that they called off the deal. They said they wouldn't deal with any government that would act so unprofessionally.

And then we see the member from P.A. [Prince Albert] doing exactly the same thing. Now we hope that his words do not put the kiboshes to the agreement. But it's interesting to see how this government operates and how they actually chase business out of the province.

I'd like to go back a bit to the budget, Mr. Speaker. The other thing that's happened with this government in power in the last few years is that there has been an increase of 1,459 new

government positions. This has all gone on while the population of Saskatchewan has been falling. So again, you know, the spending in the Premier's office is up by 17 per cent, and that is not a very good legacy to leave, Mr. Speaker.

Look at health care. I'm just going to touch on a couple of things. You look at health care. In the budget document they have, only going to increase the number of nursing education positions by 18 in the next year, and that's outrageous, Mr. Speaker, because everyone recognizes that health care is so important to Saskatchewan and the future of Saskatchewan and the health of Saskatchewan's people. But this government doesn't seem to want to recognize that they have a major role to play in the health care of Saskatchewan citizens. They can spend money left and right in pre-election goodies, but they certainly don't dedicate it to some very important areas.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, you look at the announcements leading up to this budget. You look at the announcements in Highways and Transportation. The minister and the Premier make a big announcement of \$5 billion over ten years in a transportation plan. Well, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately it was an announcement that was very hollow. When you take into account inflation, when you take into account the six pillars that this money's going to be spent on, well it leaves very little new money for the construction of highways and roads in this province. And again we are just left wondering, you know, what is the future in infrastructure development in this province, Mr. Speaker.

And in the past, Mr. Speaker, the Premier has said — you know when he was asked about previous spending in the Highways and Transportation — and he said how we have been doing things in the past has been in many cases ad-hoc without a long-term plan. That's a quote from CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] news, March 6th. The Premier admitted that there was no long-term plan.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the NDP have had eight different NDP ministers of Highways spending millions and millions of dollars without a plan. This is not accountable government. It certainly isn't. It is a sorry state of affairs, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the other thing that has to be said about this is that this budget is really hiding the fact of a \$701 million deficit. And the whole thing about . . . They have the budget announcement. They leak a number of items about the budget before they announced the budget to do one thing, and that was to try hide the whole Carriere scandal.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to put on record what the people of Saskatchewan . . . and the individual:

One of the nine female government workers who received compensation over harassment claims says complaints were raised long before the Department of the Environment launched an investigation in late 2002.

She goes on to say, "We were ignored." She says:

"We laid complaints and they said we weren't going through the proper channels . . . which we thought we were doing just by going to (our) superior."

The woman said that she believes a union representative bringing forward harassment complaints against Murdoch Carriere — the former director of fire management and forest protection — is what got a government investigation started in 2002.

She said some supervisors did try to help prior to that time, but it didn't go anywhere.

"It makes you feel really worthless," she said in an interview.

A statement dated March 25, 2007, that was written by the woman — one of nine to split \$135,000 from the government in 2004 — was read . . . [by my colleague].

In it, the woman says a meeting was held in July 2002 between the Department of the Environment's associate deputy minister . . . and five supervisors from the . . . [P.A. office upon] "repeated attempts to address the harassment."

"The supervisors were told in so many words by the ADM, 'That's just Murdoch,'" the woman wrote in the statement, which . . . [my colleague] quoted during question period.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a government that should stay in office very much longer. I'd certainly hope they have the courage to be calling an election soon. Mr. Speaker, I will not be voting in favour of the budget. I will certainly be voting in favour of the amendment. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Regina Qu'Appelle, the Minister for Agriculture and Food.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you very much . . . [inaudible] . . . thank you. Well, Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and a privilege to be a member in this House, to have opportunity to work with tremendous colleagues that surround me, and to have a leader who has been so clear in his foresight in outlining what we will do under his leadership from very early on in the leadership race.

And yet today he continues to make clear that there can be no social progress without economic progress. And there must not be economic progress without corresponding social progress. Mr. Speaker, true to his word he has helped rebuild this province, bring us to a place where we can now advance that social progress in unprecedented ways, Mr. Speaker, and that's what this budget does. And I will speak in favour and vote in favour of this budget, Mr. Speaker. And at the end of my time I'll make clear that I will not be supporting the amendment.

Mr. Speaker, to be able to serve in this House I need the support of a lot of people, as all of us do. And I'm very thankful for the support of my family: my wife Gail, my children, Alaina and Daniel, my parents, Bruce and Fran, and for my in-laws who I've noted before would probably never vote for me but they are

supportive of me personally.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the levels of support that there are there, but primarily I want to say thank you to the constituents of Regina Qu'Appelle Valley who have returned me a second time to this legislature with an even greater plurality than I had at the first election and who have put their trust in me to work for them to help strengthen our community and to help strengthen this province, Mr. Speaker. I think in the growth — the tremendous growth — that we're seeing in Regina Qu'Appelle Valley we are seeing evidence of the kind of turnaround that this government, this NDP government has made in the economy. And we'll continue to see the evidence as we strengthen the community through the social progress that we're engaging in, Mr. Speaker. So I thank them and I hope the support that this NDP government is providing for our constituency and in strengthening this province will, Mr. Speaker, lead to further opportunities to serve.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to spend a bit of time thanking the staff who surround me and enable me to do the many things that I'm able to do. To my constituency staff, Donna and Sherry, who work so hard during their working hours and who also volunteer much time, I am very, very thankful. I don't think anyone could be served better than what I have been by my constituency staff, Mr. Speaker.

My ministerial staff — second to none. These folks work with commitment, dedication, and a deep love for the province, and have provided tremendous service over the years that I've worked with them, and I am very thankful to them for their work.

And to the Department of Agriculture and Food and now to the Department of Regional Economic and Co-operative Development, tremendous staff there who provide great information, who provide the sound, solid information that enables me to do the work that I'm called upon to do. I am very thankful, Mr. Speaker, and I hope I serve them well in my capacity as minister.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in the House today in support of this budget. I think it's a tremendous budget. It clearly illustrates that our vision for Saskatchewan is one that is clearly down to earth, well-grounded, and that reaches, Mr. Speaker, beyond the limits of the sky. We will build a strong and prosperous province. We will build a strong and prosperous province. We will build a province where the people prosper and the people benefit. Mr. Speaker, this is a province that is becoming — because of its economic growth, because of its social progress — becoming a destiny for people from across this country and around the world, and we intend to enhance that over the years ahead, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Our focus in this budget, Mr. Speaker, is on making life better for Saskatchewan families by strengthening public health care, by advancing environmental protection and a green economy, by building an even stronger future here for our young people, by ensuring that families in Saskatchewan feel the benefit of our strong and prosperous economy.

To support these cornerstones, the budget for the next fiscal year includes new initiatives for health, including prescriptions for seniors and measures that are targeted at reducing wait times. Mr. Speaker, we have had success in developing these, and I know that the people of the province will appreciate them.

Youth will stay in this province because of the opportunity that there is here, the jobs that are available, Mr. Speaker. And added to that we are providing benefit that will help make this place much more affordable for them, the most affordable and desirable place to be in this nation, Mr. Speaker, because they will have tax exemptions on the first \$20,000 that they make for five years, Mr. Speaker. Their tuition fees in post-secondary education are frozen to help reduce their costs. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is the place to be for our young people to build their futures, to raise their families, Mr. Speaker, and to have successful careers.

Mr. Speaker, we have made decisions here that will strengthen the infrastructure of this province, decisions that are vital to continuing to build a strong economy — \$5 billion committed to transportation infrastructure over 10 years, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is going to make a difference to the economy of Saskatchewan, and as the priorities are set on those areas, that we'll have the best economic return, Mr. Speaker. We will see that return.

We'll see a strengthened economy that will enable us to do even more for the people of Saskatchewan. Our economy is strong. It's growing. It's strengthening, Mr. Speaker, and today we have a budget that really builds on that strength.

I think back, Mr. Speaker, and I think of the time in '91 and '92 as we were facing the challenges left over by the former Conservative government in this province. Mr. Speaker, the debt/GDP ratio at that time was 65.1 per cent, and, Mr. Speaker, we were virtually bankrupt at that period. It was a very, very difficult time. And the people of this province pulled together with our NDP government to rebuild the province, Mr. Speaker.

And today the combined government and Crown debt is down to 23.8 per cent, Mr. Speaker. This is a huge change — our government debt/GDP ratio at 15.6 per cent, Mr. Speaker. This is a province on the move, one of the best in the country with great economic growth and the ability to build and strengthen because of that debt/GDP ratio being so solid.

[16:45]

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Mr. Speaker, the advancements that we have made have allowed us, have allowed us to have the second lowest sales tax in the country applied to the least number of goods, Mr. Speaker. And it has also allowed us to build a strong health care with no health care premiums. Mr. Speaker, this is an affordable place to live because of the hard work this NDP government has done in rebuilding the province after the devastation of the Conservatives.

And all through this debate the members opposite have tried to call into question the economics that we have in this budget. But, Mr. Speaker, the unbiased judgment of the money markets,

of the bond raters has been clear, Mr. Speaker. This is our 14th balanced budget. And, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, 16 straight credit upgrades prove that fact. They prove it, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — And it's on that economic base that we can build. Mr. Speaker, we can build. We can have a 9 per cent overall increase this year. And I tell you, Mr. Speaker, it's sustainable and that is affirmed, that is affirmed by the CAs [chartered accountant] who are doing the economic analysis in government and outside of government, Mr. Speaker. The major banks look at us and they say, yes, yes, these people are doing the budget right, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, it is a sustainable budget.

That, Mr. Speaker, is what enables us to build solid economic planning, solid, sound budgeting practices, Mr. Speaker, and that's what we're engaged in. And that's why we have, Mr. Speaker, the 14th consecutive balanced budget.

And, Mr. Speaker, because we have that sound economic planning, we have been able to reduce income tax by one-third over the past eight years. It brings us to a place where we have the lowest income tax level since 1999. And I can tell you that we plan to continue with our tax reforms in the future.

We've achieved the second highest growth in international trade in Canada, Mr. Speaker — the second highest growth in international trade. We have also achieved the third fastest rate of job growth in the country, adding 20,600 new jobs from February 2006 to February 2007.

Mr. Speaker, it's no accident. It's planned. It's been clear since the Premier took over in this province that we were going to see an economic turnaround. Mr. Speaker, we're seeing it, and we're seeing the change, Mr. Speaker, as people are coming into this province. And the numbers next year in the census will prove, Mr. Speaker, that we have been building and growing this province successfully.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, the growth in Saskatchewan's GDP is higher than the national average because we have planned and yes, Mr. Speaker, because in that planning we have seen some good fortune, Mr. Speaker. We changed the royalty structures on our oil and gas, on our minerals, Mr. Speaker. And at the same time we have seen growth in the price. And yes, that has benefited us. And Mr. Speaker, it is benefiting the people of this province and it will continue to.

Mr. Speaker, our sound financial planning has also benefited agriculture and food. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's agriculture and food industry clearly has a vital role to play in this economy. It has a vital role to play in helping us achieve our vision for Saskatchewan, our goal of continuing to grow and strengthen this vibrant economy.

To help build and strengthen this agriculture industry, Mr. Speaker, we have been there on every front, providing support, encouraging, enabling, and building this industry. Mr. Speaker,

Saskatchewan's agriculture industry remains a priority for this province. And that's why this 2007-08 budget contains \$301 million in spending for agriculture. Mr. Speaker, this is a 13.7 per cent increase — 36.171 million increase over last year's budget, Mr. Speaker.

Now the members opposite try and obfuscate. They look at the year-end spending, Mr. Speaker, where we accounted for fully funding for CAIS, where we accounted for a whole number of other expenditures that shored up this industry, and they say, well it's not an increase. Mr. Speaker, they're wrong. Budget over budget this is a 13.7 per cent increase. Mr. Speaker, this is a \$36.7 million increase in budget for the Department of Agriculture and Food.

And it will be an effective budget, Mr. Speaker. And why will it be effective, Mr. Speaker? Because there is, also we are experiencing a turnaround in the agriculture economy, Mr. Speaker, where we have faced, over the past years we have faced negative realized net farm incomes. We have faced incomes that are lower than what the average is, Mr. Speaker. This year and last, the '06-07 and the '07-08 year are far above, far above the average realized net farm income.

And, Mr. Speaker, I haven't spoken to a farmer in this province that has said they'd rather get their money from programs than from the market, Mr. Speaker. They want the money from the market, not from the programs, Mr. Speaker. And that's where it's going to come this year. Prices are up and they're going to do better in the market, Mr. Speaker, and we're glad for that. And we've got program that's going to help support and strengthen those market prices as we move forward.

What are we going to do, Mr. Speaker, that's going to help them? Well we see a growing economy. We see growing prices. Mr. Speaker, what we're going to do in this province, we're going to fully fund CAIS. So where there are losses, Mr. Speaker, CAIS is going to help cover those losses.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to invest 2 million more in improvements to crop insurance and that's going to make a difference to farmers, Mr. Speaker. We've put in place a variable price option so when you've got rising prices, Mr. Speaker, they're not going to be locked in at a January price but will have the advantage of a July price. Mr. Speaker, this is going to make a significant difference and farmers will pick up this program.

We're going to see added coverage for identity-preserved canola, Mr. Speaker. We're going to see an increased establishment benefit for gopher damage which was very significant down in the Southwest last year and we're going to try and help out on that front.

We're going to see extension of the crop averaging program. We're going to see changes to unseeded acreage administration and a pilot program for wild rice, Mr. Speaker. That's what solid economic planning enables us to do, to put these advantages in there to help farmers if they run into trouble. But, Mr. Speaker, the real return is going to come from a better market this year.

Mr. Speaker, we're investing also in the areas of research. We

pushed for three years to get significant funding out of our wedge funding into the area of research, Mr. Speaker, \$34.6 million into enhanced research programs to expand facilities. And, Mr. Speaker, this is going to make a difference. When you see the kind of research that's going on in this province and the impact that it can have overall on agriculture, it's the right kind of spend to make to build this industry and to strengthen it for the future.

If we get one or two degrees of frost tolerance increase in our grains, Mr. Speaker, what a difference that would make in a year like 2004. Millions and multi-millions of dollars not lost because of these new developments made possible by our investment in research and development.

Mr. Speaker, we have many challenges in front of us but this solid economic planning and the investment that we're making — the increased investment in agriculture — is going to make a difference, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I also want to talk about the other department that I'm carrying responsibility for right now, and that is Regional Economic and Co-operative Development. Mr. Speaker, there we are working with the REDAs [regional economic development authority], investing in those REDAs to try and strengthen our rural communities.

We're working with ACRE [action committee on the rural economy] and we have implemented many of the recommendations that the ACRE committee has made to try and strengthen our rural economy. Why, Mr. Speaker? Because it matters to the whole of our economy. We want to see a strong and vital rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we are investing in our REDAs, we are working with ACRE to make sure that that happens. We're putting small-business loans out to enable small businesses and entrepreneurs to develop in rural areas. Mr. Speaker, we want to see the whole of this province, urban and rural, prosper, and I can tell you that this budget is set up to enable that to happen, Mr. Speaker.

And I'm pleased to stand here in support of the budget and I will be pleased to work on next year's budget to make sure that we strengthen and grow this province even stronger. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Mr. Speaker, I realize we're getting close to the end of the day now and so I would like to move adjournment of debate. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Agriculture and Food that debate be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — Before I recognize the Government House Leader, I would like to bring to members' attention a special guest who is seated in the Speaker's gallery. This young man comes from real good Saskatchewan stock. His name is Andrew Kowalsky — he's my brother's son — hailing from Saskatoon. And Andrew is here in Regina. He's currently working towards his steam engineering certificate and he's here doing some work and apprenticing or working alongside some of the people that keep this building warm and cold. So if the temperature should happen to vary a little too much, just let me know and I'll speak to Andrew and we'll get it repaired really quickly. Welcome to Andrew Kowalsky to the Assembly, please.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

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

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 16:53.]

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GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

CABINET MINISTERS

Hon. Lorne Calvert
Premier

Hon. Graham Addley
Minister of Healthy Living Services
Minister Responsible for Seniors

Hon. Pat Atkinson
Minister of Advanced Education and Employment
Minister Responsible for Immigration
Minister Responsible for the Public
Service Commission

Hon. Joan Beatty
Minister of Northern Affairs
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women

Hon. Buckley Belanger
Minister of Community Resources
Minister Responsible for Disability Issues

Hon. Eric Cline
Minister of Industry and Resources
Minister Responsible for Investment
Saskatchewan Inc.
Minister Responsible for Information Services
Corporation of Saskatchewan

Hon. David Forbes
Minister of Labour
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Water Corporation

Hon. Glenn Hagel
Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation
Provincial Secretary
Minister Responsible for Gaming
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Government Insurance

Hon. Deb Higgins
Minister of Learning
Minister Responsible for Literacy
Minister Responsible for Liquor and
Gaming Authority
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Telecommunications

Hon. Eldon Lautermilch
Minister of Highways and Transportation
Minister of Property Management
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Transportation Company
Minister Responsible for the
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Hon. Warren McCall
Minister of Corrections and Public Safety

Hon. John Nilson
Minister of Environment
Minister Responsible for the Office of
Energy Conservation
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Power Corporation

Hon. Frank Quennell
Minister of Justice and
Attorney General

Hon. Clay Serby
Deputy Premier
Minister of Regional Economic and
Co-operative Development

Hon. Maynard Sonntag
Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations
Minister of Crown Investments Corporation
of Saskatchewan

Hon. Len Taylor
Minister of Health

Hon. Andrew Thomson
Minister of Finance
Minister Responsible for Information Technology
Minister Responsible for
SaskEnergy Incorporated

Hon. Harry Van Mulligen
Minister of Government Relations

Hon. Mark Wartman
Minister of Agriculture and Food