



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

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The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Speaker — Hon. Don Toth
 Premier — Hon. Brad Wall
 Leader of the Opposition — Lorne Calvert

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Atkinson, Pat	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Belanger, Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornerud, Hon. Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
Boyd, Hon. Bill	SP	Kindersley
Bradshaw, Fred	SP	Carrot River Valley
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
Brotten, Cam	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Calvert, Lorne	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Hon. Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
Chisholm, Michael	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
D'Autremont, Hon. Dan	SP	Cannington
Draude, Hon. June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
Duncan, Dustin	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, Hon. Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
Forbes, David	NDP	Saskatoon Centre
Furber, Darcy	NDP	Prince Albert Northcote
Gantfoer, Hon. Rod	SP	Melfort
Harpauer, Hon. Donna	SP	Humboldt
Harper, Ron	NDP	Regina Northeast
Harrison, Jeremy	SP	Meadow Lake
Hart, Glen	SP	Last Mountain-Touchwood
Heppner, Hon. Nancy	SP	Martensville
Hickie, Hon. Darryl	SP	Prince Albert Carlton
Higgins, Deb	NDP	Moose Jaw Wakamow
Hutchinson, Hon. Bill	SP	Regina South
Huyghebaert, Yogi	SP	Wood River
Iwanchuk, Andy	NDP	Saskatoon Fairview
Junor, Judy	NDP	Saskatoon Eastview
Kirsch, Delbert	SP	Batoche
Krawetz, Hon. Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
LeClerc, Serge	SP	Saskatoon Northwest
McCall, Warren	NDP	Regina Elphinstone-Centre
McMillan, Tim	SP	Lloydminster
McMorris, Hon. Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
Michelson, Warren	SP	Moose Jaw North
Morgan, Hon. Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
Morin, Sandra	NDP	Regina Walsh Acres
Nilson, John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
Norris, Hon. Rob	SP	Saskatoon Greystone
Ottenbreit, Greg	SP	Yorkton
Quennell, Frank	NDP	Saskatoon Meewasin
Reiter, Jim	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Ross, Laura	SP	Regina Qu'Appelle Valley
Schriemer, Joceline	SP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Stewart, Hon. Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Taylor, Len	NDP	The Battlefords
Tell, Hon. Christine	SP	Regina Wascana Plains
Toth, Hon. Don	SP	Moosomin
Trew, Kim	NDP	Regina Coronation Park
Van Mulligen, Harry	NDP	Regina Douglas Park
Wall, Hon. Brad	SP	Swift Current
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Wilson, Nadine	SP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Wotherspoon, Trent	NDP	Regina Rosemont
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney
Vacant		Cumberland

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Humboldt.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's truly an honour for me today to introduce someone who has been extremely important for my entire life. For the first time in his life, an 88-year-old gentleman is in the Assembly of Saskatchewan, and that's my father. Bert McCullum is in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. He has never been in his Legislative Assembly. And I am so proud to have him here today.

Accompanying him, and his chauffeur, is another gentleman I've known my entire life, and that is Mr. Don Bowman. Mr. Bowman is very active in a number of community organizations and committees. And he has been the reeve for the RM [rural municipality] of Osborne for many, many years. So I would welcome everyone to welcome these two gentlemen to their Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Canora-Pelly.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Chess'n Math Association, Canada's national scholastic chess organization, promotes chess to students in grades 1 to 12. And the Saskatchewan association is sponsoring of course the competition here in Saskatchewan. And on May 18 and 19 in Edmonton, Alberta, there will be each of the grades represented. There will be 12 students represented. And it is my pleasure this afternoon to introduce four of the individuals who will be representing specific grades in the competition. I would like them to wave as I introduce them.

Representing grade 2 is Avram Tcherni. Representing grade 4 is Quinn Taylor. Representing grade 7 is Maegan Krajewski. And representing grade 11 is Dakota Wagner. Mr. Speaker, these four individuals, along with eight other individuals that will represent the communities of Saskatoon, Nipawin, North Battleford, and Leask will be, I'm sure, representing Saskatchewan very well. And I'd ask all members to encourage them by showing our appreciation for and welcome you to your Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you and to you to all the members of the Assembly today, seated in the Speaker's gallery is 25 ladies called the Travelling Nellies, and they're here from Rosthern. They hopped the bus early this morning, Mr. Speaker, and travelled down to their Legislative Assembly. And I would ask all members of the Assembly to

please welcome these 25 Travelling Nellies to their Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and, through you, to all members of the Legislative Assembly a friend seated in the eastern gallery, Nicole O'Byrne, who's a scholar. She's got an honour's degree from the University of Regina, a law degree from the University of Saskatchewan — very interested in issues surrounding Aboriginal people and the law. She's doing graduate studies out in British Columbia, and I can't help but think that the semester break has brought her back to us for more study. Anyway if all members could please join me in welcoming Nicole O'Byrne to the Legislative Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well to you, Mr. Speaker, and through you to the rest of the Assembly, I'd like to introduce a school group in the west gallery. There's 21 students from the Wymark School and a fine looking bunch. And I happen to know their teacher very well. Mr. Brad Gasper is their teacher, and we go back a number of years. He came from the town of Glentworth originally. And I'll be meeting with them after. The chaperones that are with the group today are Keith Trudeau, Melissa Schapansky, Lynn Dyck, and Brent Nelson. Like I say we'll be meeting after question period, and they'll have a chance to ask a few questions of me, and I'm looking forward to that meeting. So I'd ask all members to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from 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 a couple of people that are very special in my life. My two sisters are here today. They are seated in the west gallery, Edna Irwin and Audrey Thompson. They're up to spend a couple of days with me, and they usually do this every session, so I look forward to having them here with me for a while. So I ask all members to join me in welcoming them, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Martensville.

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join my colleague in welcoming the group from Rosthern. I grew up in Rosthern, and while I no longer live there and I don't have the pleasure of representing Rosthern, it is still very much my home, and it's nice to see familiar faces in the gallery today. So I would like to welcome the group from Rosthern to their Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to join with my colleague, the member for Wood River, in welcoming the students from Wymark School. Wymark, as members will know, is very close to the city of Swift Current, and early on in my career here I had the privilege of representing Wymark. It was in the constituency of Swift Current. And mostly to embarrass her, I stood to say a special hello to Nicole who's in that gallery as well. But I'd ask members again to join with me in welcoming the students from Wymark to their Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Thunder Creek.

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce to you and, through you, to all members of this Hon. Assembly Nadia Williamson, representing NWL contemporary dress shop in Regina.

May 4 to 10, as Mr. Speaker will know, is Women Entrepreneurs Week in Saskatchewan, a time when we recognize the significant contributions of business and professional women to the province's economy. And Nadia is an excellent example of a successful young woman that is contributing to the province of Saskatchewan.

After graduating with a diploma in fashion design from La Salle College in Montreal, she has worked for over 10 years in Saskatchewan in Canada's film industry. Now Nadia has applied her knowledge, natural talent, and experience to become the owner-operator of the NWL contemporary dress shop in Regina. Nadia was a finalist for the 2007 ABEX [Achievement in Business Excellence] Awards as young entrepreneur of the year for Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce. In addition Nadia is on the board of the Saskatchewan Motion Picture Association. She's also a member of the Saskatchewan Young Professionals and Entrepreneurs, and Regina Women's Network.

Women entrepreneurs, Mr. Speaker, are a force in the province's business community, owning and operating approximately one-third of Saskatchewan's businesses in 2008. Thank you to Nadia and all women entrepreneurs in this province for the contributions they make each and every day to our growing economy.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents and the surrounding area in the Five Hills Health Region. And it implores the government for improvements to health care in our region. Mr. Speaker, 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 provide funding for the expansion and renovation of the Moose Jaw Union Hospital.

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

Mr. Speaker, I table this on behalf of residents in Chaplin and Moose Jaw, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition that is concerning the growing housing crisis for many in our province because of low vacancy rates, skyrocketing rental increases, and inappropriate condo conversions. And, Mr. Speaker, the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to ensure that the task force on housing affordability hold open public consultations for all Saskatchewan citizens.

I so present.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Massey Place.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm presenting a petition in support of Station 20. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately restore funding to the Station 20 project.

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

Mr. Speaker, the individuals that signed this petition are mostly from the city of Saskatoon, from streets like Avenue O South, Isabella, Kingsmere, Guelph, Avenue Y, Avenue N, 5th Avenue, University Drive, and I see one from the town of Outlook, Mr. Speaker. I so present.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today and present petitions in opposition to the government's Bill 5, The Public Service Essential Services Act and Bill 6, An Act to amend The Trade Union Act. And the prayer reads as follows:

We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan urge the new government to withdraw both Bills and hold broad public consultations about labour

relations in the province.

And as duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And the petitions are signed by residents of Aberdeen, Saskatoon, and Langham. I so present.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Rosetown-Elrose.

Emergency Preparedness Week

Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, May 4 to 10 is Emergency Preparedness Week across Canada, and this year's theme is 72 Hours . . . Is Your Family Prepared? My colleague, the Minister of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing designated this special week yesterday at Balgonie School.

Emergency Preparedness Week is an annual national event that encourages everyone to be ready to cope on their own in an emergency for at least 72 hours. This enables first responders to focus on those with the most urgent needs in the crisis.

Events and activities are happening across the country this week with the goal of having every family ready for an emergency. Mr. Speaker, being prepared is something all Saskatchewan residents should strive to be, as you never know when a flood, tornado, or blizzard may happen. Having a plan and the basic supplies like bottled water and canned food can help ensure you're ready if a disaster strikes.

This government believes in keeping our communities safe and secure. Emergency planning skills have come in handy in recent years in disasters ranging from flooding to evacuations due to forest fires to the recent tragic explosion in Nipawin. This is why I'm proud to join with the minister in this proclamation and hope all Saskatchewan residents heed this advice too and make their own emergency plans. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Raising Awareness about a Saskatchewan-Ghanaian Partnership

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today it's an honour to make all members aware of an informative and collaborative work that is being done here at SIAST. Over half a world away, students at the Wa Polytechnic in Ghana are the subject of an 11-minute documentary made by SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] students right here in Saskatchewan.

Where's Wa? is a film made to raise awareness about a partnership between SIAST and the African school. Wa, home to about 80,000 people, is located in the north end of Ghana in one of the most underdeveloped areas of the country. Wa

Polytechnic was established in 1999, and SIAST got involved in 2005 with the purpose of assisting the school in developing a 10-year, strategic planning guide in helping train instructors that will teach short and part-time courses. Currently Wa Polytechnic offers programs ranging from agricultural engineering to business, and in future they hope to offer more short courses with SIAST's help.

Moose Jaw SIAST Palliser Campus recently hosted a special screening of the film which was attended by an instructor from Wa Polytechnic. Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all members join me in congratulating those at SIAST that are involved in this very important partnership and for also highlighting Saskatchewan citizens that contribute so much to our province, but also around the globe. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[13:45]

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

Annual Awards Banquet for Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Saskatchewan

Hon. Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Speaker, Saturday evening I had the privilege to attend the annual awards banquet for the Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Saskatchewan. The Outstanding Achievement Award went to Dr. Lee Barbour, head of the department of civil and geological engineering at the U of S [University of Saskatchewan]. His recent work has focused on reclaimed watersheds for the oil sands industry.

Teresa Drew of Regina won the Promising Member Award. Ms. Drew's recent electrical design projects include the Conexus EventPlex at IPSCO Place, the Regina General Hospital mother-baby unit renovation and expansion, and the STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company] Regina bus depot project.

Philip Olson, the chairman and CEO [chief executive officer] of Titan Uranium Inc., was recognized with the McCannel Award for his service to APEGS [Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Saskatchewan] and the profession of engineering as a whole. The award is named after Roy McCannel, the founding member of the association.

Margaret Kuzyk won the Brian Eckel Distinguished Service Award. Among many other endeavours, she has worked as Saskatchewan's chief building official and once sat on the advisory board of the architectural and building technologies program at SIAST.

The SRC's [Saskatchewan Research Council] geoanalytical laboratory's high-security diamond facility won the Exceptional Engineering/Geoscience Project Award. And the Saskatchewan mining explorations guidelines advisory committee was the recipient of the Environmental Excellence Award for the development of mineral exploration guidelines applicable to the mining industry inside this province.

So, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the province of Saskatchewan, I would ask all members to thank these award winners and to

encourage them to continue to pursue excellence in their professional field of service.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Avant-Garde's Annual Show and Fundraiser

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, today is the perfect opportunity to speak about an event that I had the pleasure of attending, given that it is International Youth Week 2008 — a week to recognize the achievements, talents, and contributions that young people make to their communities and to the province as a whole.

Avant-Garde's 4th annual High Fashion and Hair Show is a fundraiser to provide bursaries for students wishing to study aesthetics and cosmetology who would otherwise not have the opportunity to do so. The students of Avant-Garde, which is an owned division of Ehrlo Community Services, work with local designers and models to display the latest trends in fashion. This year's remarkable show was themed Moulin Rouge and featured the work of a number of young Saskatchewan-based fashion designers with the fashions being presented by models with Stages modelling agency. The fantasy competition winning entry was Pajara Exotico by teams members Azahel Castaneda, Sommer Boswell, Tara Melnyk, and Shayla Fitch.

Mr. Speaker, the mission statement for Ehrlo Community Services is to promote healthy communities in which children and families can achieve full potential in environments that are safe and nurturing. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank everyone involved with this year's event, in particular co-ordinators Lori Pawson and Margaret Titanich for providing this excellent opportunity to showcase the talents of young Saskatchewan people. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Carrot River Valley.

Youth Business Excellence Awards

Mr. Bradshaw: — Mr. Speaker, last Saturday night I was honoured to attend the Youth Business Excellence awards in Tisdale. One hundred and sixty-five people were in attendance for the seventh annual YBEX [Youth Business Excellence] awards which is held yearly in northeastern Saskatchewan. The evening is hosted by Newsask Community Futures Development Corporation. Newsask, as many members know, is a community development organization with the mission of being the region's leader in fostering job creation. Since 1990 Newsask has lent out over \$6.86 million creating over 870 full-time and 410 part-time jobs throughout northeastern Saskatchewan.

In the seven years since the first YBEX awards were presented, over 235 grade 6 to 12 students and youth under the age of 30 have participated. This year saw 29 applications involving 45 youth. Awards were provided for the creation of a business idea and the development of a business plan as well as a business

venture category.

Mr. Speaker, that evening a record \$6,750 was provided in youth cash awards, and schools linked to the winners involved also received \$1,750. Mr. Speaker, there were many young people presented with awards. I can say that as a parent that a great deal of time and effort went into all their business ideas. Not only that but all their businesses were set for northeast Saskatchewan proving once again the superiority of that corner of the province.

I would ask all members to join me in congratulating the winners of the YBEX awards. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from The Battlefords.

Elections Canada Investigation

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nobody wants to turn on the TV and see footage of their party headquarters being raided by the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police], but that's exactly what happened to Conservatives on April 15. Elections Canada, an independent non-partisan agency, is alleging that the Conservative Party of Canada constructed a scheme in an attempt to exceed spending limits in the last federal election by over \$1 million. The alleged scheme involved expenses which Elections Canada claims should have been paid for by the national party being shifted onto local candidates' books. According to Elections Canada's interpretation, the alleged infraction would have seen local Tory candidates reimbursed with taxpayers' funds they didn't deserve.

Sixty-seven Conservative candidates participated in this in-and-out scheme as well as claiming a 60 per cent reimbursement from the government from the phantom ad money. One of those Conservative candidates lost a very tight race, Mr. Speaker, decided to move into provincial politics, and is now sitting in this House representing Meadow Lake.

We're all eagerly awaiting, Mr. Speaker, to hear what comes of the Elections Canada investigation. But you know what, Mr. Speaker? In the meantime I'd like to point out that these allegations sure are reminiscent of the kind of stuff you'd normally only see being done by governments in what the member, in his own words, called banana republics.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Saskatoon Food Bank Donation Drive

Ms. Schriemer: — Mr. Speaker, we just celebrated National Volunteer Week, and Saskatchewan has the highest volunteer rate in the country. This past weekend the Saskatoon Food Bank had a donation drive.

The Saskatoon Food Bank on average serves 7,000 people a month. And on Saturday they held a city-wide drive for

donations. As of today, the food bank has received 18,000 kilograms of product, and more is still coming in.

I had the privilege of participating in this effort. On my team was Daniel Laliberte, a young man from Quebec who is participating in Katimavik; Darrel Forman, a businessman from Saskatoon; and Christine and Steve Lawson.

Christine and Steve are a young couple with four children: Christopher, age 10; Matthew, age six; Julia, five; and Shawn, two. These young children fully participated in knocking on doors and collecting articles for the food bank. They had a blast running up and down the street, carrying food bags to the truck. Not only did these children learn to help others, but they got exercise doing it. After two hours of walking, they were all ready for bed.

This is the second time Steve and Christine participated with their children in the food drive. What a wonderful way to teach children about social responsibility and serving others who are less fortunate, in the true spirit of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I was touched and impressed by their example, and I encourage other families to follow their lead.

I would like the House to join me in recognizing Daniel, Darrel, and the Lawson family. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Support for Low-Income Families

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, there has been a great deal of discussion lately about the rising costs of housing, but we know rising food prices are also putting the pinch on Saskatchewan's most vulnerable people.

In 2005 the Sask Party released *100 Ideas* to help grow Saskatchewan. Their no. 3 idea was to, quote, "Increase the food allowance for social assistance recipients." To the Minister of Social Services: what is she doing to help low-income families deal with the rising food prices?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Social Services.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'm very happy to stand up to answer that question.

The NDP [New Democratic Party] failed the most vulnerable people of Saskatchewan when they were in power. They had 16 years. And their record shows that they failed, and they even

admitted it, Mr. Speaker. It's interesting. A member of the NDP Party said, and I quote:

"It is a clear signal that we certainly have not accomplished our vision or our goals on making sure that no one is . . . left behind. People are being left behind."

That was said in 2006 when the Leader of the NDP was the premier of this province. He admitted that he was leaving people behind.

What have we done, Mr. Speaker? Well immediately after becoming the minister, we added money or we met with the city of Saskatoon to help with discount bus passes. That's what we've done to help people.

Mr. Speaker, we have made one of the largest food bank donation announcements. We have donated \$440,000 to the food banks of . . .

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Centre.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well in a *StarPhoenix* article entitled "Priced out of the market," Linda Pritchard says her stomach has adjusted to the feeling of being hungry because she's having to choose between putting food on her plate or the plates of her grandchildren. Her rent is going up from \$550 a month to \$900 a month. That, combined with the noticeably higher prices at the grocery store, is making it almost impossible for Linda and her family to make ends meet.

Mr. Speaker, Linda's family is like so many others who are on assistance, facing a double whammy of skyrocketing rents and rising food prices. To the minister: she has more than a billion and a half dollars in the bank. What will she do to help families like Linda's?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Social Services.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'm more than happy to address that question. What did she do just a short while ago? And that was to give the largest increase to the Saskatchewan employment supplement that we have ever had in this province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — That's what she will do to help people, unlike the previous administration that did absolutely nothing to increase funding for the most vulnerable people.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon

Centre.

Mr. Forbes: — Well, Mr. Speaker, we know the Minister of Health has been busy cutting programs that help vulnerable people. And we know the Minister of Social Services' only solution to the housing crisis so far has been to appoint a two-person task force to study the issue. Well while the Health minister defends his mean cuts and the Social Services minister waits for a report to hit her desk, Saskatchewan residents are struggling. While the minister has made some changes that will help low-income citizens, her government has made many more that will hurt them.

To the minister: will she show that she truly has the best interests of low-income families at heart and commit to helping families struggling with rising food prices?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Social Services.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I suppose the member opposite didn't hear the answer to my last question. We just gave the most significant increase to the Saskatchewan employment supplement that this province has ever seen. That is to help families in order to meet the increased costs. So, Mr. Speaker, they can use it for food. They can use it for rent. They can use it for child care expenses. They can use it as they choose to address the issue.

The member opposite mentioned the task force on the housing. What did his party do when they were in power? On the eve of an election, Mr. Speaker, they had a quiet little committee that met people by invitation only. They made proposals. Those proposals have not been implemented for six months, and they admit that they're failing, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Revenue Sharing with Municipalities

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, municipal leaders across the province knew immediately what the Saskatchewan Party's budget meant for the people of Saskatchewan — property tax increases, huge property tax increases. Some communities were predicting hikes of up to 10 per cent. But thanks to a public outcry, the Saskatchewan Party decided to pry open its \$1.5 billion purse and increase funding to the municipalities.

This government has had two chances to adequately fund municipalities. I don't know how many do-overs it will take, but to the minister: when is he finally going to get it right and properly fund municipalities?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Municipal Affairs.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I've never seen such a shameless flip-flop in my entire life. I doubt if anyone in this province has. The party that took \$300 million out of the revenue sharing for municipalities is now demanding it be restored. The party that made Saskatchewan's municipalities . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Minister Responsible for Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The party that made Saskatchewan's municipalities wait 16 years for a better revenue-sharing agreement, and didn't get the job done, is now demanding an overnight solution. Finally, Mr. Speaker, after our new government has worked directly with municipal leaders to provide a top-up of the revenue-sharing pool, opposition members are clamouring to take credit for it. Mr. Speaker, this is indeed a shameful spectacle. It reveals a shocking disrespect for municipal leaders and a profound misunderstanding of their issues and priorities.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:00]

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

Ms. Higgins: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the cost of living isn't getting any easier for the people of Saskatchewan to deal with. Daily we see the effects of increases in the prices of transportation, food, housing, and of course property tax. It's getting more and more difficult for the people of the province to cope with these costs. Even with that additional funding that was finally pried out of the Sask Party's hands, Saskatoon is still facing a property tax hike of 5.6 per cent and Regina of 2.9 per cent. And of course that doesn't even include the education portion, which will probably also increase.

My question is again to the minister. The Saskatchewan Party is sitting on over \$1.5 billion in cash surplus. When is this minister going to get it right and properly fund the municipalities?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Municipal Affairs.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, obviously the member forgets the simple lesson in arithmetic we were trying to instruct in estimates yesterday. First of all, we met our campaign commitment of an interim increase to the municipal revenue-sharing pool of 7 per cent. Then when the opportunity presented itself with increased revenues available, we moved very quickly and very effectively to more than double that

amount to 15 per cent.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — That's exactly what municipal leaders were hoping for. It is most welcome. It is most appreciated. And this of course is not all that's being done. We have already started the discussions on a new and improved revenue-sharing deal — something that the former government couldn't do in 16 years.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Funding for Education

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, people across this province are recognizing the failures of this first Sask Party budget, and they're recognizing it through the inflating costs that they are facing. Mr. Speaker, with over \$1 billion in the bank, school divisions should have been funded sufficiently to prevent mill rate increases.

The other side finds this funny; we don't.

The people of our province are already facing the increasing costs of housing, of food, of transportation, and of course property tax. My question is to . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. The member may place his question.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — My question is to the Minister of Education. Will the people of Saskatchewan be forced to add education mill rate increases to their list of inflating costs?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what people in the province are not surprised at, they are not surprised at the fact that this government has done exactly what it said it would do. It has put education as a priority. Mr. Speaker, an increase of \$241 million to the education budget — Mr. Speaker, that's 25 per cent.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — For the first time ever, Mr. Speaker, for the first time ever this government will be spending \$1.18 billion on education. Mr. Speaker, there are no minus 2 per cents and minus 4 per cents across the province like that NDP government did during their term in office. Mr. Speaker, we're recognizing the fact that we need to build this province. And an extra \$241 million I think is very, very important to boards, and it's important to the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, while our minister can shout big numbers really loudly and try to deceive the public, the education funding's inadequate. The president of Saskatchewan School Boards Association has said that because of the inadequate education budget, the majority of school boards will be forced to raise mill rates. Mr. Speaker, we see a proposed 6.5 increase in the Light of Christ and the Living Sky divisions; 7.8 per cent in Prairie South. Sun West, Sask Rivers, Holy Trinity, Regina Public, Regina Catholic, they're all facing . . . they've already announced that these increases are coming. There's so many more to come.

The Sask Party's inadequate funding fails school divisions and it forces tax increases on our residents. To the minister: will he commit today to additional educational funding or is he content to stick taxpayers with the bill?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — You know, Mr. Speaker — and I'll speak softly — this government has inherited, this government has inherited a mess, Mr. Speaker. We've inherited a mess that has resulted in the province of Saskatchewan relying . . . I guess I'll have to yell.

The Speaker: — Order. I recognize the Minister of Education.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — You know, Mr. Speaker, the people in Saskatchewan understand that education funding comes from two sources. It comes from the government grant which I've just indicated to you, Mr. Speaker, has risen by a total of 241 million.

Mr. Speaker, I guess I will have to raise my voice because the members opposite don't seem to understand, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — They don't understand that the funding . . .

An Hon. Member: — What am I to do, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: — That's a good question. Order. The minister may finish his response.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan taxpayers contribute the most of any province in Saskatchewan to funding of education. That is the legacy of the former government. We're trying to address that, Mr. Speaker. We have provided \$156 million to property tax rebates, Mr. Speaker, unlike that government over there who continued to increase the amount of contributions from taxpayers.

That member needs to understand that there are two sources, and we have increased our source, but the whole funding of education still relies on property tax payers, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Funding for the Arts

Mr. Furber: — They gave people a pizza for a rebate, and now they want to eat half of it themselves.

Mr. Speaker, questions remain about the minister's plan for the arts community in Saskatchewan. She has axed . . .

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

Mr. Furber: — We know that she's axed \$3.45 million slated for the Saskatchewan Arts Board — a proven arm's-length funding mechanism for Saskatchewan artists with a 60-year history in our province — and put it back into the ministry so she can decide how she can spend it.

Can the minister guarantee that none of this funding diverted to the Arts Board will go to former Saskatchewan Party president, Saskatchewan Party candidate, and current federal Conservative candidate Michelle Hunter or any organization that she represents?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Tell: — No. Mr. Speaker, the Government of Saskatchewan has provided the Saskatchewan Arts Board almost \$6.1 million in base funding, an increase of \$60,000 to the Arts Board. The Arts Board adjudicates money to support arts and artists.

We are following in line with the Saskatchewan Institute of Public Policy article, Mr. Speaker. For some time, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has lacked a framework to support a thriving arts and cultural sector. Existing policy tends to be implicit, reactive rather than proactive, lacks coordination, transparency, and financial support. That is the policy that was under that members opposite here.

What we are going to do is take a step back, follow the recommendations of the Saskatchewan Institute of Public Policy to come up with a framework . . .

The Speaker: — Member's time has elapsed. I recognize the member from P.A. [Prince Albert] Northcote.

Mr. Furber: — Two things, Mr. Speaker. Clearly, clearly she did not answer the question, which is unfortunate. Clearly she was reading from a document . . .

The Speaker: — Order. The member from P.A. Northcote.

Mr. Furber: — Clearly she was reading from a document. I'd like to have that document tabled in the House, if she would. Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . You can have my questions.

As I've asked the minister's deputy, some interesting things he has to say about the Arts Board and the arts community in general. Recently he has said he sees something of a self-sustaining arts community in our province. Now while all Saskatchewan artists desire to become self-sustaining, one has to wonder if this statement isn't code for something more insidious.

So, Mr. Speaker, to the minister: is this talk of self-sustaining just code for pulling government support for the arts? If not, why has she already begun her attack on the Arts Board and artists in our province?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Mr. Speaker, this government has followed through on our commitment to sustain and continue arts funding in the province of Saskatchewan. I think it speaks well for our province's thinking on the arts and they're prized and valued in this province, Mr. Speaker.

We have provided 1.6 — and I'll say it again — million dollars in base funding, an increase of over \$60,000 for this year to the Saskatchewan Arts Board. For that member to suggest that we do not have respect and admire the Saskatchewan Arts Board is ridiculous, Mr. Speaker. We put our money where our mouth is, Mr. Speaker. We value the arts and cultural community in this province. Promise made, promise kept.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I just remind members to place their questions and responses through the Chair. I think it'll add to the debate. The member from P.A. Northcote.

Mr. Furber: — Well if she's admiring the Arts Board and cutting their funding, I'm certainly glad she doesn't admire me and the work I do.

We learned yesterday that the minister plans to use some of her three and a half million dollar slush fund to become a better party planner. She boasted to reporters that she's cut funding at the Arts Board in order to develop a policy on events planning — clearly a tourism initiative. That's right, Mr. Speaker, events hosting.

The minister is confusing funding that should be going to support Saskatchewan artists with money that will go to throw really nice parties to which I'm sure my invitation will be lost.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: why is she taking money out the

hands of artists and putting it into events planning? With a billion and a half dollars sitting in the bank, why doesn't she change the name of her ministry to tourism, parks, culture, or sport?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Mr. Speaker, contrary to the thoughts of the member being expressed across the way is that I had no say in what the ministry, the name of my ministry actually is. It was provided to me on the day that I was asked to join cabinet, Mr. Speaker.

The role of government, the role of government to developing policy to support development of the arts and cultural sector: we control all public funding that flows to arts and culture organizations, and as such government has a primary role in how the culture and arts sector functions, Mr. Speaker.

And that's what we've said, Mr. Speaker. We are going to take a step back, thoughtful approach, consulting with the arts and cultural community to develop a framework, Mr. Speaker, to sustain an industry over the long term, Mr. Speaker. Again promise made, promise kept.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Accountability

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Enterprise and Innovation who we've learned is responsible for international trade offices. Mr. Speaker, what safeguards are being put in place to ensure that there's proper oversight of government spending in any new trade offices set up by this government?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Enterprise and Innovation.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — I thank the member for the question, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to inform the member that no new trade offices have been opened by this government.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, we've come to know Bill 31 as the unaccountability Act and for good reason. But this Bill is not just about raising the thresholds for government spending,

Bill 31 is about so much more.

Section 30 of this Act gives the power to cabinet to create out-of-province trade offices and appoint whoever they want to be in charge of them. And that person can buy and sell property of up to \$150,000 per year without approval from cabinet. The unaccountability Act indeed, Mr. Speaker. Why should unelected, unaccountable person appointed to these offices use hundreds of thousands of dollars of taxpayers' money to buy and sell property without the approval of cabinet and without the transactions being made public?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:15]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend is trying to have a debate with the straw man. He's set up a bit of a straw man argument. Unfortunately it looks like the straw man is winning, Mr. Speaker. This is an interesting line of questions. I would say this, I would say this . . .

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — I would say this, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Okay. We've already been very clear that all the thresholds that exist currently with respect to cabinet approval and reporting will be maintained until we get an opinion from the Provincial Auditor with respect to this Bill. No decisions have been made with respect to trade offices or officers.

Though I will say this, Mr. Speaker: this government is absolutely committed to continuing the economic momentum we see, momentum that includes 500,000 people working in the province, Saskatchewan leading in building permits, Saskatchewan leading in earnings for Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker. We'll continue the momentum that means more people in the province, more jobs, and more opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Quennell: — And the longer they're in office, Mr. Speaker, the more people are having trouble making ends meet.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, I am sure the Premier needs no reminder about the fiascos of the trade offices in the dying days of the Devine government. He was chief of staff to John Gerich who was the minister responsible for those offices. But let me remind the rest of the House of some of the abuses of the trade offices at that time.

One of those offices cost taxpayers \$23,000 per month for a 19th floor office with curved glass bay windows overlooking the Hong Kong harbour. One of these trade officers, a former Tory cabinet minister, bought a luxury condo with a swimming pool, ocean view, and 24 carat gold taps.

Again my question to the minister or to the Premier is: what safeguards are being put in place to ensure . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. The Speaker is having difficulty hearing the question. The member may place his question.

Mr. Quennell: — Again, my question to the minister or the Premier is: what safeguards are being put in place to ensure that there is proper oversight of government spending in these new trade offices?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I guess, I guess it shouldn't surprise us at all that, as we get closer to the end of session, the NDP are trying to invent issues now in question period. Why is that, Mr. Speaker? Could it be that they want to change the subject, that they want to change the subject from, for example, the trade, labour legislation that we have . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, could it be they don't want to talk about the fact that they are so far offside with the people of this province when it comes to labour legislative changes proposed by this government? Could it be the fact that they want to change the subject from polling that came out just prior to this session that showed them mired, mired to below where they were prior to the last election? Or could it be they don't want to talk about the positive news, about the fact that we lead Canada in population growth . . .

The Speaker: — Order. The member from Regina Walsh Acres. Final comment to the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — That we lead, Mr. Speaker, in unemployment, in the lowest unemployment rate; in wholesale trade, in retail sales, in construction permits; that this government is advancing the interests of this province, has the support of the people of Saskatchewan doing that. That's why they've got nothing left with a week to go in this session, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 40 — The Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day Act

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker,

it is my privilege this afternoon to move that Bill No. 40, The Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day Act, be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — The Deputy Premier has moved that Bill No. 40, The Ukrainian Famine and Genocide (Holodomor) Memorial Day Act, Bill No. 40, be now read the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to accept the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. When shall the Bill be read a second time . . . oh first reading of this Bill, pardon me.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a second time?

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of Human Services Committee.

Standing Committee on Human Services

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Human Services to report Bill No. 34, The Graduate Retention Program Act with amendment.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the . . . When shall this Bill be considered in Committee of the Whole? I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill and that the Bill and its amendments be now read a third time.

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 34, The Graduate Retention Program Act and that the Bill and its amendments be now read the third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. The minister may now read the amendments the first time.

FIRST AND SECOND READINGS OF AMENDMENTS

Bill No. 34 — The Graduate Retention Program Act

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, I move that the amendments now be read a first and second time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the minister that the amendments be now read a first and second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — First and second reading of the amendments.

The Speaker: — The minister may proceed to move third reading. I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 34 — The Graduate Retention Program Act

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that this Bill now be read a third time and passed under its title.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour that Bill No. 34, The Graduate Retention Program Act be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — Third reading of this Bill.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice Committee.

Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice

Mr. Kirsch: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice to report Bill 23, The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 2008 with amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall this Bill be considered in Committee of the Whole? I recognize the Minister Responsible for Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill and that the Bill and its amendments be now read the third

time.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Municipal Affairs has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 23, and that the Bill and its amendments be now read the third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — When shall the amendments be read a first time?

FIRST AND SECOND READINGS OF AMENDMENTS

Bill No. 23 — The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 2008

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that the amendments be now read a first and second time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the minister that the amendments be now read a first and second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — First and second reading of the amendments.

The Speaker: — The minister may proceed to move third reading.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 23 — The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 2008

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that this Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister Responsible for Municipal Affairs that Bill No. 23, The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 2008 be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — Third reading of this Bill.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice Committee.

**Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs
and Justice**

Mr. Kirsch: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice to report Bill No. 33, The Active Families Benefit Act, without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be considered in committee. I recognize the Minister Responsible for Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill, and that the Bill be now read the third time.

The Speaker: — The Minister Responsible for Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 33, The Active Families Benefit Act. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. The minister may proceed to move third reading. I recognize the Minister Responsible for Tourism, Culture, Sports, and youth.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 33 — The Active Families Benefit Act

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that this Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister Responsible for Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport that Bill No. 33, The Active Families Benefit Act be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — Third reading of this Bill.

**PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING
AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES**

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair responsible for the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies

Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies to report Bill No. 18, The Public Service Amendment Act, 2008 without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be considered in committee? I recognize the Minister of Highways.

Hon. Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill and that the Bill be now read the third time.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Highways has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 18, The Public Service Amendment Act, 2008 and that the Bill be now read the third time. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly . . . Pardon me. Members are agreed. The member may proceed to move third reading.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 18 — The Public Service Amendment Act, 2008

Hon. Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Speaker, I move this Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Highways that Bill No. 18, The Public Service Amendment Act, 2008 be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — Third reading of this Bill.

**PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING
AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES**

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on the Economy.

Standing Committee on the Economy

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on the Economy to report Bill No. 17, The Highways and Transportation Amendment Act, 2008 without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be considered in committee? I recognize the Minister of Highways.

Hon. Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill and the Bill be now read the third time.

The Speaker: — Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. The minister may proceed to move third reading.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 17 — The Highways and Transportation Amendment Act, 2008

Hon. Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Highways that Bill No. 17, The Highways and Transportation Amendment Act, 2008 be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — Third reading of this Bill.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the government I'd like to order questions 616 to 627.

The Speaker: — Questions 616 to 627 ordered.

[14:30]

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 24

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Norris that **Bill No. 24 — The Trade Union Amendment Act, 2008 (No. 2)** be now read a second time.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moose Jaw

Wakamow.

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I had an opportunity the other day to stand and make a few comments on The Trade Union Amendment Act (2) or more commonly referred to as the oops Act. And while people that are just tuning in to watch session today may not understand why it's called that, I'll give them a quick review.

Mr. Speaker, much of the legislation — and I have to say especially the labour legislation — that's been tabled by this government is full of errors, inconsistencies, and actually does not speak well for labour relations and activity . . . and our labour market activity in the province of Saskatchewan in the future, and that's for a number of reasons.

There was never any public consultations that were done. There was never any input from a variety of stakeholders. And, Mr. Speaker, that's truly what builds a good piece of legislation is when you have the community and the province as a whole be able to make comment and have their thoughts and intentions when it comes to a piece of legislation, their understanding of how it should work, how it would best work. That was never done with either or any of these pieces of legislation.

And the current government has continued to refuse to look at public consultations and to take the legislation out and about. So with that start, we know that there are going to be problems to follow and that's really what brought about The Trade Union Amendment Act (2), commonly referred to as the oops Bill or Bill 24.

Because clearly what this does, the government had gone ahead and made some changes at the Labour Relations Board. They had signalled to all in the media what their plans were for the Labour Relations Board and how they were going to change from one Vice-Chair to . . . or from two Vice-Chairs to only have one Vice-Chair. But then they forgot that the legislation didn't allow them to do that. And while they had already tabled one set of amendments to The Trade Union Act, then when they'd also talked about what their plans were for the board and they were told that they couldn't do this by in fact the legislation that was currently there. We had to point it out to them that it wasn't possible to structure the board the way they were telling everyone what their plans were because the legislation didn't allow for it. The legislation said that there needed to be two Vice-Chairs — a chairperson at the Labour Relations Board and two Vice-Chairs.

So what we had a couple weeks later was the oops Bill — or Bill 24, which is The Trade Union Amendment Act (No. 2) for this session — to straighten out and make the legislation align with the views of the Saskatchewan Party government. And this is a problem. There's a number of cases that are going to be referred to the Labour Relations Board in some of the legislative changes that are before this legislature in this session. There is going to be more work at the Labour Relations Board. The work is going to be of a different type, but still there is a concern that adding more work to a board that's been reduced in size is going to mean problems down the road.

But, Mr. Speaker, what this speaks to, I think, even in a bigger context and broader context is the lack of thought and foresight

that was put into any of the labour legislation that's been tabled, when we have to, within weeks, have additional pieces of legislation tabled to correct errors, omissions, mistakes . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . That's right, after they were pointed out to them, as my colleague from Regina Dewdney quite clearly points out. These errors and omissions had to be pointed out to the current minister, and he had to go back and redo the legislation and bring forward amendments which we're seeing in Bill No. 24.

So this really points to a number of things. It points to a number of areas where we question who wrote the first couple of pieces of legislation, when you need to have corrections tabled right away. That's also an issue. If you have had an outside third party that is in fact somewhat biased to one side or another, that is a problem. It's a problem right across the province for a variety of people that never had input into the legislation or a chance at actual public consultations, in the true sense of the word.

So it brings up many issues. It brings up a number of concerns. But, Mr. Speaker, I think more and more this Bill really points to what's been an issue this whole session. It's been a fiasco — I said this yesterday — this labour legislation since it's been tabled. Who said what? Someone contradicts themselves within days. Legislation's tabled that needs to be corrected within a couple of weeks. It just goes on and on. And I have to say, it would almost be a comedy of errors if it wasn't so drastic in the effects that it will have on the labour market situation in this province.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier just got up and spoke during question period in one of his answers, and talked about a booming economy, how we're just number one in so many areas here in the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, all that was achieved in the current labour market. All that was achieved in the current, under the current labour legislation that exists in this province.

The people who have built the economy have worked under this legislation. The employers have worked with this legislation. There has been a stable environment in this province, and here we are in these booming times to pay back what's owed, to do a favour for someone — I'm not sure what it is — but we're having legislation that's been tabled in this House that obviously, within days it's obvious how faulty it is.

And this government — that's fine, they're re-elected — have dug in their heels and said, we're not listening to anybody but our friends. Come whatever and high water, we're going to pass this legislation . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And you know the members are heckling and hollering from the side, but I'll bet you not one of them can stand up and they can explain this piece of legislation to me.

We have gone through hours and hours and hours in committee and have not got a straight answer or an explanation to the extent and the impact of this legislation. The minister cannot even explain it, but yet he is saying the people of Saskatchewan should be happy. They should sit back and say, well isn't this wonderful this new government is doing this great legislation. But not one of them can explain it, not one of them can talk about the implications, not one of them can explain why it is so

faulty, and the areas of concern. They give long, lengthy answers, carry on in some very flowery, extravagant language — not particularly eloquent I would say, but extravagant language — and, Mr. Speaker, it's inappropriate.

I will always go back to a very good friend of mine who I'd sat and had a conversation with and we had talked about legislation, the legislative process, and how you go through public consultations, how you have the discussion with the broader public, and the need for discussion with the broader public because, Mr. Speaker, as government, you can pass pretty well any law you like.

You can put any piece of legislation to become the law of the land in the province of Saskatchewan, but if you haven't carefully discussed this with the public, if you haven't had the debate and the public consultations with stakeholders and those beyond direct stakeholders, if there isn't a clear understanding — and it doesn't have to be agreement, Mr. Speaker, there does not have to be total agreement with what you're doing — but if there's an understanding as to why the government is making this move, an honest, upfront explanation as to why the changes need to be made, then there is an acceptance when you put these laws in place.

But, Mr. Speaker, when you jam through a piece of legislation and two weeks later you've got to start fixing your mistakes already, there's a worry. And when people don't understand the new legislation there will be a difficulty with following it. And there will be push-back, and that's a worry. And it doesn't matter if we're talking about this legislation or any legislation, that will always be the case. But, Mr. Speaker, there's a number of things that I can say on this piece of legislation, this Bill 24, trade union Act amendment (No. 2) . . . And that tells you, Act (2).

Well the member from Moose Jaw North says no sense. Well you know what? I wish the member from Moose Jaw North would meet with some of his constituents who have wanted to meet with him over these various Bills and maybe he would have a better understanding.

And, Mr. Speaker, I know there are a number of my colleagues that would like to have some input into this Bill 24. So, Mr. Speaker, I will end my comments and turn the floor over to my colleagues. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to take part in this debate. Just previously we had a member from Moose Jaw North talking about how, in response to challenges from the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow, about actually meeting with his constituents around Bills 5 and 6, and of course the son of Bills 5 and 6 — the perhaps ill-begotten son — No. 24.

And of course I was reading with great interest in the Moose Jaw press the other day about how there had been a protest over at the member's office. And it turns out it was during the lunch

hour, but the member missed it because of course he was out to lunch. And I guess it sort of sums . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . The member from Moose Jaw North of course, because the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow is very diligent in meeting with her constituents.

But it's kind of interesting, Mr. Speaker. On a number of occasions we've challenged the members opposite to take this out to public consultation, to take Bills 5 and 6 . . . And again this is the progeny of Bill 5 and 6. And this is very interesting, Mr. Speaker. We've got more to say for the member from Kelvington, if she wants to carry on in this regard. But perhaps we can get to the body of my remarks.

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, when the Bill was first introduced — the amendment to The Trade Union Act — part of the rationale was to speed up the process. And of course in speeding up the process they wanted to do in the Vice-Chairs. And of course they realized, you know, after it was pointed out to them by members on this side, that in fact that was wrong. They needed to change their, to amend their amendment to make sure that it was square by the law.

And if their rationale was really about speeding up the process and ensuring that people had a timely resolve to matters brought before the Labour Relations Board, of course eliminating Vice-Chair positions would make less sense if you wanted to expedite proceedings under the Labour Relations Board.

But oh no, they thought this was historic. They thought this was great stuff. They thought it was fair and balanced, Mr. Speaker, which of course is the tag line for Bill O'Reilly's show on FOX News in the States, *The O'Reilly Factor*, and that of course is about as fair and balanced as Al Franken made it out to be in the book *Lies (And the Lying Liars Who Tell Them)*.

I guess it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, if they wanted to expedite the process under the Labour Relations Board, they could have done a lot of different things. But instead of putting in changes that actually helped expedite the process, helped to bring earlier resolution to certain of the cases, they went about this botchery of a misadventure around the Vice-Chairs, and of course now we have to debate Bill 24 to correct that.

And I think about my constituents who actually have cases before the Labour Relations Board, Mr. Speaker — people whose very lives are affected by this, whose ability to draw an income and to provide for their family, to put bread on the table and who have had . . . You know, I think of one gentleman in particular who's had a case before the Labour Relations Board and the kind of uncertainty and fear that was injected into his life by the changes that have been made here. And then now we see a continued sort of botching of the attempts that the government has made in their approach to the Labour Relations Board.

And I think about that, Mr. Speaker, and I think, you know, what were they thinking? What would have them act in such a precipitous manner? What would have them, you know, not get their facts correct? Why would they go off so half-cocked and so refusing of outside counsel or, you know, advice from the broader public? Outside counsel of course is no problem because they're quite happy to bring people in to help them

draft the legislation, but in terms of engaging in a broader public consultation process like the kind that we've talked about in this legislature these past weeks.

And I guess the thing is, Mr. Speaker, in this regard they just wanted to lock it in. They just wanted to ram it home. And in terms of whether or not this is going to make the Labour Relations Board more efficient, more effective, again I think the proof is in the pudding in terms of the kind of mass confusion and fear that has been injected into the work of the Labour Relations Board as it stands right now.

But in terms of the overall situation with the Labour Relations Board, in terms of what's happening, Mr. Speaker, it's sad that we've had a process where the Chair had been chosen through an open, objective process; where the Vice-Chairs have been, had gone through a competition in that regard.

[14:45]

Mr. Speaker, we've seen the minister say one thing one day, another thing the next, and again that's, that's part of a pattern, Mr. Speaker. But you know, this is a circumstance where, where actual detail, where the error for margin for people is not that big so they need to know the facts.

So what happens to the cases that were, were being tried and how those proceed, Mr. Speaker? Whether or not this actually expedites the process, again I think there's been a lot of time lost in terms of the taking it sideways.

There have been a lot of aspersions made about whether or not the Labour Relations Board was balanced in the first place and I think of, you know, Justices that sit in this province, Mr. Speaker, that have said that yes, in fact the Labour Relations Board was fair and balanced. So that the Sask Party knows better than the judge, Mr. Speaker. I find, I find kind of interesting that they want to use fair and balanced which is of course this tag line for Bill O'Reilly, also kind of interesting, Mr. Speaker.

I guess there's more to be said on this Bill and there's more work to be done in terms of going out and talking to people to gather more information, more counsel on this. But again it's at its base, Mr. Speaker, this particular piece of legislation, Bill 24, is the misbegotten exercise that arises from a need to correct the mistakes in the first place that were made by the members opposite. So in the interests of going out to gather more information, Mr. Speaker, in terms of talking more fully with the stakeholders and getting a broader sort of take than has been demonstrated on the other side that they're not interested in, I now adjourn debate.

The Speaker: — The member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre has moved adjournment of debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Clerk: — Committee of Finance.

The Speaker: — Committee of Finance. I do now leave the Chair.

[15:00]

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Executive Council Vote 10

The Chair: — The item before Committee of the Whole today is a main vote for Executive Council. I would ask the Premier if you would like to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And may I just say in advance of the questions and answers, I'm sure we're going to have an animated discussion about some issues and some other exchanges that will be about discovery and information provision. And let me just say in advance, I want to indicate my appreciation to the Leader of the Opposition for the questions that will come and perhaps other members opposite who will also engage in the estimates that we have.

It's a pleasure to introduce officials that have joined me today for Executive Council estimates. To my immediate right is the deputy minister in Executive Council, my deputy minister, Garnet Garven. To my immediate left is my chief of staff, Reg Downs. We have senior policy adviser in Executive Council, James Saunders, and our director of corporate services, Bonita Cairns, has also joined us. We look forward to the exchange that will follow. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Subvote (EX01)

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

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. And with the Premier, I want to welcome the officials who have joined us and all of the members who are present for committee this afternoon.

Mr. Chair, I appreciate the Premier's commitment to engaging in the process this afternoon. I'm sure his willingness to provide answers to the various questions that will arise. I'm hoping to spend some time with the Premier this afternoon on the areas of process and decision making in the government that he now leads. Other members of our caucus will have a variety of issues they will want to raise with the Premier in what I believe is a period of three hours that we have allotted for us.

Let me begin, Mr. Chair, with engaging with the Premier in a little discussion around the decision-making processes in your government, whether it's to establish policy or legislation or, for that matter, financial and budget considerations. I wonder if the Premier could walk us through the process that is followed by his government. Let's begin with legislation. What process is followed to bring a piece of legislation to this House?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Two parts to the answer to this question. As a brand new government, there was a compelling need to be able to deal with platform promises that we had made in the election campaign.

Some of those election campaign promises involve pretty straightforward legislation. For example, fixed election dates, which I hope members opposite are in support of, although I was alarmed to hear some questioning from the member from North Battleford that would lead me to believe that they're not actually in favour of this very transparent change that is needed in the province towards fixed election dates.

However, that commitment was made in the campaign, and so the legislation of course was driven by the promise, as was the case with respect to used-car tax. We didn't wait for the legislation, Mr. Chair, with respect to used-car tax. We moved on that shortly after the election on the 7th, and we in fact have signalled our intent to move towards fixed election dates as well on the day after the campaign.

There are other elements of the legislation we're dealing with in this session, the process for which again the genesis of it certainly was the election campaign. The genesis actually would have been the policy development we underwent as a political party well before the election campaign. There was discussion on trade union Act amendments in our party and policies adopted. Certainly The Enterprise Saskatchewan Act, driven again by the platform. The graduate retention program, which received third reading today in this Assembly, also driven by the platform.

So throughout this process, we also engaged members of our caucus who provided some assistance and review with respect to legislation. In the future, where we are not perhaps facing the compressed timelines as a result of an election in November as we were this year — in other words, for the session coming up — you know, the usual processes will be followed as we have seen from other governments.

And those include, for example, listening to stakeholder groups, sometimes individual ideas with respect to the genesis of an idea of a legislation, taking that forward through to our MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly], sometimes brought forward by the MLAs to cabinet or a cabinet minister where the legislation can be championed at that level, reviewed obviously back down through the process back up to the cabinet. That actually happened on a number of cases here with respect to legislation that we're dealing with in this session.

It'll be a bottom-up process certainly, but it will be a process that is driven by the promises we made in the campaign. We fully intend to keep them to the extent they require legislation to do that. There was promises to be kept, but that legislation will come forward in due course.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, it's not quite the answer that I expected. I'm trying to search out from the Premier for the public's information — because the public has an interest in this — precisely how a piece of legislation appears in this House moving from an idea, whether it happens to be an idea in the platform or in fact an idea that was not in the platform, in fact an idea that may in fact violate what the Sask Party platform indicated.

So let's use a more specific example. Let me begin with then the Executive Council Act — the Act, the legislation that appeared in this legislature which proposed to increase the

spending limit that this government would allow itself without public reporting through an OC [order in council] process. That legislation appeared in this legislature. Now I will argue that it was in fact a contradiction to what was in the Sask Party platform when the platform called for increased accountability and transparency. Now we can have that debate. I don't think it's really debatable. This is a bad piece of legislation.

So let me be perhaps a little more specific with the Premier in terms of the development of legislation. So someone had the idea for this Executive Council Act. First of all, whose idea was that?

Was it an idea generated by the Executive Council? Was it generated somewhere else in government? Was that Act reviewed by a legislative review committee? A cabinet committee of ministers, for instance, who would give it a serious review. Was it reviewed in total by the cabinet? Was that piece of legislation then reviewed by the caucus? Did that legislation have any external review? Did that piece of legislation in fact have any opinion from the auditor before it was tabled?

So I'm asking the Premier if he can answer the very specific questions about that piece of legislation and in those answers then further explain the process that occurs within his government.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. A couple of points with respect to this specific Bill, with respect to Bill No. 31. As I have said quite publicly, the intent of this Bill, it's administrative in nature. It seeks to make some administrative changes. Some the hon. member has referred to; others he hasn't, including removing the unnecessary step of reappointing legislative secretaries every year.

There are some common sense changes here that include changes to the responsibilities of members of the Executive Council with respect to tabling documents that are housekeeping in nature. And so the administrative changes were considered — including the threshold issue — considered by a government that did make a promise with respect to transparency and accountability and is keeping and will keep that promise with respect to transparency and accountability.

The intent of this legislation was to move government towards efficiency. I remember when the hon. member raised some questions about this in the Legislative Assembly, raised some good points about the merit for changes in the threshold, but also went on to I don't think quite accurately characterize what other provinces do because we know that in some cases with respect to grants, for example, some provinces require no orders in council at all. Ministers have that authority, as long as it's in the budget, approved in the budget. Some orders of government . . . The national government, for example, has much more stringent thresholds, including \$10,000. And so the intent of this Bill was to improve the efficiency of government.

It was interesting to me to note at the cabinet meetings, at early, early cabinet meetings that we were approving the kind, scope, and nature of fish filters being used by the Ministry of the Environment. We think the Environment officials are probably the best ones to make that judgment together with those experts

who provide fish filters and that cabinet rather could be talking about things like, well, for example, ensuring that our economy is ready for growth, could talk about the competitiveness of our economy or how are we ensuring that those most vulnerable among us are participating in the prosperity that we're seeing and ideas to achieve that.

So we sought some efficiencies, Mr. Chair. When it was pointed out though that changing the threshold could also have an unintended consequence of reducing the speed with which these initiatives are reported to the media and therefore to the public — which is, they have a right to know in terms of the spending of their monies — we said as a government that we would simply refer the matter to the Provincial Auditor, that none of the thresholds would change until we got advice which we would make public from the Provincial Auditor, asking for that advice as we seek to balance both efficiency and accountability and transparency.

So that's the nature of the origins for the Bill. We've been over that. The Provincial Auditor is going to review the provisions that have been raised, quite rightly I would say, by the hon. member. And when the auditor reports back, we'll have a public discussion about this balance between efficiency and accountability.

[15:15]

Mr. Calvert: — Well, Mr. Chair, I'm not here, we're not here debating Bill 31. I'm asking some very specific questions about how a piece of legislation like that, which is so obviously flawed and which so obviously breaks a campaign promise, could arrive in this legislature. Maybe I'll just ask the questions one at a time to the Premier. He should be able to answer without consulting anyone. Does he, in organizing the function of his government, have a legislative review committee made up of cabinet ministers?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, we know that different governments are ordered and organized differently, and we know the hon. member presided over a government that was big on committees. There were OC committees and reg review committees and policy committees of the cabinet. Maybe it's because the cabinet just kept getting bigger and bigger, and so that's how they organized. And I would argue that sometimes that would have worked for the cabinet, the previous cabinet. Sometimes it didn't. I don't think there's any perfect organization or system.

We have a cabinet in the province of Saskatchewan smaller than what existed prior to, prior to the election campaign, and the cabinet considers legislation, as it did in this regard. And we also have policy committees of our caucus because in our party we want to make sure that caucus is included into the decisions that are taken. And as we go forward, as we move further away from an election where the timelines were compressed, there will even be greater involvement on the part of policy committees, standing policy committees of our caucus that hear from groups and also come up with their own ideas and propose those to the cabinet.

It's interesting. I think there's going to be a publication in the province of Saskatchewan coming up very soon. I think the

author or at least the compiler, the editor that is compiling it is Mr. Howard Leeson. And I think he's made an invitation to perhaps to the hon. member to talk about his views of policy development, and he has also made the same invitation, I believe, to our government and to myself, and so we'll be able to compare very fully what are obviously differing views.

Clearly the views that that member has about the importance of committees, of orders in council committees and cabinet committees, can cause some dramatic failures in the government. Witness, for example, the government's intention — previously the NDP government — to increase nursing home fees by 90 per cent, Mr. Chair, by 90 per cent. I think people were asking at that time, who approved this? Was there a committee process? Who thought that was a good idea?

Now quite rightly, after a withering attack from Saskatchewan people and after consistent questioning from the then opposition Saskatchewan Party, quite rightly the government backed away, changed its mind. And at the time, I think if you consult the record, the opposition of the day began its next comment with, that was the right thing to do, something you acknowledged was a mistake because your processes let you down. All the committees that you have perhaps at the time let you down, but you did the right thing.

I have noted when our government, in this particular instance, has given credit to the opposition — the current opposition — with respect to their concerns on the Bill, when we have said, you know they make a good point, we're going to refer this to the Provincial Auditor, you will hear no such grace coming from members opposite. You'll hear no such acknowledgement that this is perhaps how the system should work.

So if the hon. member wants to spend his time in estimates talking about processes in cabinet, none of which are perfect, we can go down the list, and I will go down the list of those spectacular policy failures that his government experienced with all of its committees and processes.

Or we can get on perhaps — I hope — to the substantive issues that face Saskatchewan today including the economy; including our efforts to rebalance the labour legislative environment; including, I hope, the federal-provincial relationship that we want for the province; including our efforts to ensure that those vulnerable among us are enjoying and sharing in the prosperity that we see right across this province. If he wants to talk about cabinet committees and process we'll do that. I hope we get to these issues as well, Mr. Chair.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, let me ask another simple question. Let's hope the Premier can spare us the five-minute answers. Did this legislation, this Bill 31 that betrays a Sask Party promise, that would hide accountability of spending, did it go before the caucus of the Saskatchewan Party government for approval or not?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Chair, as I've said, cabinet looked at this particular Bill. There was discussions that involved members of the caucus, and the Bill was introduced in the legislature. We're now saying we're going to refer this piece

of legislation to the Provincial Auditor for example for his counsel on the balance that we seek between, between efficiency and accountability, which I think is how the system should work. No system is perfect.

I wonder for example, Mr. Chair, if the hon. member can say in good conscience that the Murdoch Carriere settlement was approved by his caucus. I wonder if the hon. member would be able to stand in his place and say that the most available hours debacle presided over by the current member for Wakamow when she was the minister, I wonder if he would say that was approved by the caucus or the cabinet or all of these other processes. Well the hon. deputy leader is nodding her head, which I think is actually says something even more alarming about the decision-making ability of the previous government and explains why they suffered the fate that they suffered at the poll and apparently have yet to learn the lesson that Saskatchewan people provided for them on November 7.

So the Bill, this Bill 31 will be referred to the Provincial Auditor for his advice with respect to a balance between efficiencies that we seek and, Mr. Chairman, and transparency, and that report will be public. We'll be able to go through that piece of legislation, pass that legislation, make whatever changes we need to ensure that government's moving along efficiently, but that we are also transparent and accountable. And you know it's an example of the system working. I salute the hon. member for raising his concerns about the Bill because they will lead to, I think, a better outcome, and that's how this place should work. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Calvert: — Well, Mr. Chair, when the Saskatchewan Party was elected by the people of Saskatchewan, the people of Saskatchewan believed what they said. They said they would bring accountability and transparency and competence to the decision making of government. Well the Premier's now admitted that they don't have a process within to judge legislation or to test legislation. Obviously from his answer, members of his own caucus were not aware of this, wasn't even brought to the attention of his entire caucus. Something this wrong, this flawed, was not even brought to his caucus.

I would recommend to the Premier, he's got backbenchers who would have told him that this is in fact is wrong -headed legislation, wrong-headed legislation. And this is not the only example, Mr. Speaker, that we've already seen in a matter of months of a government who introduces without proper consultation or without proper internal process, decisions which then have to be immediately reversed and retrieved from.

That a budget, a Minister of Finance that's already had to amend his budget, that's rare, Mr. Chair, rare that a member of Finance in his first budget with this kind of financial resource would have to amend that budget even before it's passed by this legislature. What? The Minister of Social Services took to the Treasury Board a four-year plan for Social Services. I assume the Treasury Board approved it. But maybe not, maybe no one read it, not even the minister because as soon as the plan is unveiled, they have to retreat from it because it's so wrong.

Then what's next? Well the minister of municipal government, Municipal Affairs, he goes all around the province saying, we're going to do our campaign commitment. We're going to

do our campaign commitment. It's 7 per cent and you'd better get used to, you better get used to tax increases. Now they sit in the House, the minister claps for tax increases which he's forcing on the municipalities and the property tax payers. Well as soon as there was a little bit of push back, they have to change the plan. But did the minister of government affairs know anything about this? Did he know that the Premier's going to stand up in the House and change the plan? Did the Minister of Finance know? We suspect not, Mr. Chair.

This is government on the fly. This is not government which is competent, and that is the conclusion, by the way, of the editorial board of the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* who makes the same observation. If this is how decision making is being done in this government now, in these first five months, I tell you it's a very bad omen for the future of the people of Saskatchewan, their treasury, and their public policy — a very bad omen.

Now, Mr. Chair, let's talk about another issue which I know the Premier is fully informed on and shouldn't take a lot of guidance from his officials on this matter. I want to talk about their approach to the senior public service of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this government chose, upon its election — fair enough — to retain some very good public servants. And I'm here talking about the most senior level of public service, the deputies. They chose to retain some very good, qualified deputies. They also chose, Mr. Chair, to terminate without cause other very qualified, experienced deputies.

I would like the Premier to explain to this legislature and to the people of Saskatchewan what criteria was used to terminate long-term public servants, valuable public servants, or to keep those long-term, valuable public servants. What was the criteria on the termination without cause of deputies, and on the other hand, to keep deputies?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well in his preamble, Mr. Chair, the Leader of the Opposition made some comments that I think deserve a response, and so I intend to do that today.

You know, it's interesting with respect to the decision the government made on revenue sharing for municipalities. It's interesting to note that as the budget stood on budget day, the municipal revenue-sharing portion that we had committed to, the increase in spending represented the keeping of an election promise. We promised that we would increase revenue sharing by 7 per cent, and that was in original budget. That promise was kept, along with 50 other promises in that particular budget document also kept, but we kept that commitment.

What happened, what intervened, Mr. Chair, if you remember, is a record, a record land sale in terms of oil and gas rights for the province. That was an intervening event. And maybe, maybe for the hon. member who now characterizes an adjustment as just managing on the fly, maybe that's an indication of the fact that he would simply do nothing with a windfall of that revenue.

Here's the magnitude of the oil and gas sale that intervened in this regard. Last year in the province of Saskatchewan, it was a record year for oil and gas land sales in Saskatchewan at a quarter-billion dollars for all of last year. In the last two months,

because I think in part of the powerful message this government has sent about royalty consistency, about a business-friendly approach to the economy, because of that, in the last two months we saw a \$265 million land sale in two months. Now for this government, for this government that is a material change. That is a significant change that happened after the provincial budget was tabled, Mr. Chair.

Now if you are used to how the previous outfit used to run things, you would know that they made very few of these mid-course adjustments. They would rather simply hoard the money, especially early in their term. And they were masterful at this, but of course the people of the province saw through it. They weren't buying it anymore. They wouldn't provide any of that additional resource at the beginning of their term. At the end of their term, why they were throwing promises and money like they were boxes out of the back of a truck. That was exactly what was happening in the province of Saskatchewan.

This government intends to be transparent, intends to be different. And when there is a quarter-billion dollar change in two months in the affairs of the province, we say then to the municipalities not only will we see our promise from this current year, but we'll raise it next year's promise and we'll get to that own-source revenue sharing formula, Mr. Speaker. And I'll tell you — Mr. Chairman — and I'll tell you the reason that they sit over there today is because they tried to practice that old style politics.

[15:30]

They'd sit on their mountain of money for months and months at the beginning of their term thinking the people of the province can be tricked. At the end of our term, why then we'll promise everything. Then finally we'll increase the minimum wage. And more on that in a moment in terms of comments from his own people about his motivations for finally increasing the minimum wage just before an election campaign.

We're not going to operate that way, Mr. Chairman. We going to provide proactive government. We're going to be there to meet the needs of a growing economy. We are going to be ready for growth. We will sustain the momentum in the province of Saskatchewan.

He has led off in this session interestingly with why it is a government would change their position. Well I hope that he is prepared to comment as to the 90 per cent fee hikes for seniors in our province in nursing homes which he backed off of quite rightly. Wonder who all vetted that. Wonder who came up with that. It sounds like something that the member from Nutana would think of — a 90 per cent increase for seniors in their nursing homes — because you see there's always a lot of talk from that member about helping people in need but the actions all belie the words more often than not.

I wonder if the hon. member will stand up and say why they flip-flopped spectacularly on most available hours or as some people called it, the job killing monster, Mr. Chairman.

I wonder if the hon. member will stand in his place and explain to the province of Saskatchewan and in particular nine women who'd like to hear how they arrived at a decision to provide an

out-of-court settlement — over \$200,000 — to someone who was convicted of harassment and fired for assault. I wonder if he'll stand up and explain the decision-making process around that.

With respect to the senior civil service of this province, Mr. Speaker — and we've answered this in a written question — we have made changes as a new government would. Some senior civil servants — many have been retained, some have been changed. Those that have been changed, we have let go without cause and are negotiating settlements, Mr. Chairman. We have followed the course in fact in a few moments, because I expect there will be another question, we have followed a course that was much more civilized and, frankly, much more caring for the individuals involved than we ever saw from that party opposite in 1991 at that transition.

And I look forward, Mr. Chairman, to the next question because I expect I will be able to expand on that comment. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — Well, Mr. Chair, the Premier's got one thing right. There's going to be another question because he didn't come anywhere close, not anywhere close to the question that I just asked, which I think is a very significant and important question.

But it is telling, it is telling when the Premier does not want to answer questions. He'll go into flights of rhetoric as he used to do as the leader of the opposition. We've heard all of those speeches. He won the election. He is now the Premier. He is responsible to answer the questions for the people of Saskatchewan.

It's a very simple question: what criteria was used? He is the Premier. He is responsible for the senior public service. What criteria was used to choose which deputies would remain in the service of the people of Saskatchewan and which deputies would not remain in the service of the people of Saskatchewan? Or was it simply a random choice? Or is it, as his Deputy Premier has said to the public, that those senior deputies had to agree with quote, "the philosophy of the Premier." I'm asking a very straightforward, simple question to which this legislature and the people of Saskatchewan deserve a straightforward answer. What was the criteria used in choosing which deputies would remain with the public service and which deputies would be terminated without cause?

The Chair: — I would ask that officials not get involved in debate and the members also not engage them.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — I see the hon. members are now engaging officials in debate. Is that where we've got to? I would say to the chairman and to the member for Nutana, is that where we've gotten to? I have a mind to ask the Minister for Advanced Education to answer a few questions here and stretch the proceedings out a little bit perhaps . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . That's right. The questions are . . .

Mr. Chair, in answer to the question, I think it's important to look at what previous governments perhaps have done, what

criteria his party has used for changes they made. And then we can discuss whether or not they reflect the views of this current government with respect to transition.

I note for the record, and I'll be happy to table it, the hon. members should really go over this before he asks these questions either in estimates or in question period. *Leader-Post* Regina, Tuesday, 3, 1991, here's a quote, "But Premier Roy Romanow insisted Monday the government is well within its rights to replace Crown executives and senior civil servants without finding fault in their work." Let's repeat that, Mr. Romanow said that ". . . the government is well within its rights to replace Crown executives and senior civil servants without finding fault in their work." That's what he said. Mr. Romanow said that.

But he said . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well the member for Athabasca just said from his seat, Romanow's a smart guy. And I'm glad he said that because there's more about what Mr. Romanow had to say on this date in the *Leader-Post*. He also went on to say, and I quote:

"I think that arrangements of personnel can be made by governments for as little or as big a reason — depending on your point of view — that the persons affected doesn't fit in with the general approaches and directions of your government."

That doesn't fit in with the directions of your government — that is what Mr. Romanow said. That's the opinion of the NDP. But he said something else on the October 23, 1991. Again Mr. Romanow, who the member for Athabasca venerates and holds in great esteem, maybe even pines for the days when Mr. Romanow, maybe he's pining for the days when Mr. Romanow was the leader of the party . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I think he did. I think the member for Kindersley is right. No wonder he loves him so. I think it was Mr. Romanow that recruited him to the party. And I'm sure he's a little bit disappointed with respect to what he sees today.

Mr. Romanow said also on the 23rd of '91 on this very issue, we are going to do with these people — this is the senior civil servants and Crown executives: We will "do with these people what we are doing with everybody else, which is based on competence and political affiliation . . ." He said, if a person is not politically compatible with an NDP: "He said if a person is not politically compatible with an NDP administration, 'it makes the person not competent to carry out the job,'" Mr. Chairman.

These are the views of that party. These were the views of the former leader. These are the views of the former government where he sat in Executive Council. I want to tell you the question was of our government. These are not our views.

Yes, we're going to make changes with respect to the senior civil service. Yes, we will want to ensure that the agenda of the Saskatchewan Party, that which we campaigned on — those things that we promised — become a reality, become reflected in government policy and action. But, Mr. Chairman, we will, with much greater civility and a sense of fairness, proceed with making changes in the civil service, including the retention of senior civil servants and Crown executive — some, some

changes without cause to civil servants and Crown executives; some transfers and transitions within the civil service.

We will do those things professionally, Mr. Chair. We will respect the individuals involved. And those who are let go, we will thank them for their service, and the process to negotiate a settlement will be undertaken as it is in the case of those changes that this brand new government has made. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Calvert: — Well, Mr. Chair, apparently we now know what Mr. Romanow thought about this question 20 years ago. My question and the question of the people of Saskatchewan and the question of the public service is, what does the Premier think? What is the Premier's opinion?

He is no longer leader of the opposition. He is now Premier. He has a responsibility to explain his decisions, not by quoting Roy Romanow of 20 years ago, at the time when he was working in this building or had very shortly left this building in the employment of the Devine government. We don't need to talk about that. We need to talk about what he's responsible for today.

This Premier made a decision to terminate without cause some very long-standing public servants. I don't need to read their names into the record again today. He says that people like John Wright, that people like Lily Stonehouse should be treated with respect. That's what he just said. Well if he wants to treat those public servants with respect, why is it that a number of them now are having to revert to the courts, having to go to the courts to sue his government to get a fair severance?

So let me ask this question, Mr. Chair. What has the Premier budgeted in the budget of Executive Council for the payment of severance to those valuable public servants which he fired with all their years of experience? How much does he estimate this severance bill is going to be? And why should it be that some of these public servants now feel they have to go to the courts to get a fair settlement?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, a couple of comments generally with respect to the issue of transition. First of all, I will say this. The Leader of the Opposition is clearly not listening because the last half of my answer was precisely the views of this current government, my views with respect to changes that are going to be needed when a new government comes in.

On November 7 the people of the province of Saskatchewan voted for change. It ought not to surprise anyone. I know it surprises members opposite. They have not gotten over November 7. There is no contrition. There is no admission that they were way off base, that they no longer reflected the values of Saskatchewan people. We see that in their tirades against common sense labour legislative changes that 70 per cent of the people of the province of Saskatchewan support. We see that every day in their line of questioning, Mr. Speaker, weaker and weaker, and more inside and more inside every single question period, unable to reflect the values of Saskatchewan people. So it ought not to surprise us that they are still having trouble with

the fact that on November 7 people voted for change.

In fact it's interesting because their own supporters . . . and I'm going to quote from *The Commonwealth* magazine which is an NDP Party publication, from 2007, where it says . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well the hon. member just asked, I guess to take a bit of a shot, is this the premier? I want to say to that hon. member this. I want to say to that hon. member this. If he wants to review previous Executive Council estimates, he will note the fact that it was the rare occasion when he ever answered a question. Every one so far this afternoon has been answered. Moreover it isn't your choice. It isn't the choice of the member for Nutana. It isn't the choice of *The Commonwealth* magazine or the NDP who will be the Premier, who will be the member of the Executive Council, who will sit on the government side of the House. That choice rests with the people of this province, and they made it in on November 7. They made it on November 7.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[15:45]

Hon. Mr. Wall: — This member is getting up and saying, well the Premier didn't answer the question, when the Premier exactly answered the previous question. So I think it's germane as to what his own party has said with respect to the changes needed when a new government takes over or when a new government is elected. I think that's the question. I think that's the question.

So here's what his own party said in *The Commonwealth*:

After the 2003 election and in spite of high public expectations, [and I'm quoting] the Calvert government seemed to stumble right out of the blocks. There was much talk about change in the bureaucracy but instead of bringing in new deputy ministers and putting its own stamp on the government, the new NDP government instead chose to shuffle the deck and simply redistribute the existing pool of talent.

Now that's the view of *The Commonwealth*, not the Saskatchewan Party government, not the opposition Saskatchewan Party, but it goes to the point that we're discussing. We believe that when people vote for change, there ought to be an expectation that change will happen.

The severances that are going to be afforded to deputy ministers and Crown executives, those budgets remain with the ministries and the Crowns, and we're not going to release them because, for example, we are currently negotiating with some of those individuals. When the severances are complete — for Executive Council, for leaders in line departments of government — they will be fully disclosed. But it speaks to the fact that this hon. member just seems to not get it, that he would want this number to be disclosed by the ministries now when negotiations are underway, when court proceedings are underway. It's a ridiculous question, Mr. Chair.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I asked a very specific question to

which we have not received an answer. My question is simply, how much has been budgeted for the purposes of severance of senior public servants? How much has been budgeted, Mr. Chair? Why is it that senior public servants, who the Premier says his government wishes to respect, are forced to go to the courts to find justice? How is it we are now six months from November, almost, and there is no settlement? Why is that, Mr. Chair, Mr. Chair?

Now the Premier wants to quote *The Commonwealth*. Fair enough. I appreciate that he reads *The Commonwealth*. He should read more of that magazine. It would do him some good. Now I'll read a quote that's not from *The Commonwealth*. In fact it's from the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix*, from the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix*, dated not years ago or months ago, but dated March 29, dated March 29. This is the view of the editorial board of the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix*, and I quote:

If, as is generally the case, the Saskatchewan Party used its first budget to set the tone for its administration, the province has a growing list to worry about.

This is what *The StarPhoenix* says about this new government:

Rather than appear to be competent managers of the public purse, Premier Brad Wall's team has been extravagant in its spending, ham-handed in its communications strategy and incompetent in its delivery.

Now that's the opinion of the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix*. Perhaps the Premier would like to get up and wax eloquent on that opinion of the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix*.

Mr. Chair, to move to another area of responsibility that falls directly under the Premier and under Executive Council and that's the matter, Mr. Chair, of contract negotiations with the public sector. Now this matter will consume — as it will consume every government — a fair bit of attention because it is through the arrangements with working people across this province that public services are delivered, in some cases directly through agencies of government and in many other cases through third party funded programs like SAHO [Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations] and health care like our community-based organizations.

So I'm going to ask the Premier: how has he and his cabinet and his government established the mandate for what will now be a round of bargaining that proceeds over the next several months and years? How does this government achieve its mandate direction, both for itself in its own negotiations and for those third party agencies and organizations which are funded?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, I guess we could exchange quotes from . . . and recent ones. The hon. member seems to not care about what his own party paper said about him, and maybe we'll get into some of these other quotes from Fraser Needham, the editor of *The Commonwealth* from just in December of '07 where he points out how the government failed to address racism, failed — the NDP government — failed on the environment, failed with respect to the Murdoch Carriere scandal, failed on social issues. Actually he gave credit here to the Saskatchewan Party for prodding that old NDP government to finally move on the minimum wage, did his column.

But that's . . . Well the hon. member from Walsh Acres is laughing at Fraser Needham, and I don't she ought to treat with such disdain a supporter of her party who publishes the NDP newsletter. But there it is on the record, there it is on the record. The member for Walsh Acres deriding members of her own party because of course no one is, no one is as smart as the hon. members opposite in terms of all things frankly, Mr. Chair; that's quite clear.

But there are some interesting quotes in today's paper from columnists, and I guess we could get into that. Columns that question the relationship between the hon. members opposite, the NDP, and the Saskatchewan union leaders and whether or not it has clouded their judgment, whether or not it has made it the fact that the hon. member and his party are so out of touch with, with Saskatchewan people, not just as it relates to labour legislation, but certainly that's part of it.

The bargaining mandates for the province are certainly . . . The process used will not be, I don't think, dissimilar to the process used by the previous administration in terms of bargaining committees, a Treasury Board process, and then up to cabinet. This is the way that, that for the most part bargaining has occurred. The bargaining mandates have been developed in the province and it will be followed by our new government as well.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, let me ask the Premier, have they established a bargaining mandate for this round of negotiations? And if so, can he provide to the legislature the broad parameters of that bargaining mandate?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, by the way it's interesting to note — and on to the hon. member's question in a moment — that in 1991, for example, the average severance package paid to the Crown presidents for example was \$222,500:1991 dollars, Mr. Chairman. And so there is, there's certainly details available in terms of 15-year-old, 15-year-old transition payments made to fired executives of the Crown corporations.

Mr. Chair, we have inherited a situation in the province, and let me talk specifically about nurses first of all with respect to the bargaining, with respect to the question on the bargaining mandate that our government is going to adopt. We've inherited a situation that is almost unprecedented in Canada, certainly unprecedented in the Prairies in terms of the deleterious state of nurse recruitment and retention left to us by the former government where other provinces . . .

Now we should back up. In the early 1990s a lot of governments who were seeking to balance the books did so at the expense of training seats. They cut training seats. A lot of nurse training seats were cut in Saskatchewan. But to be fair, a lot of nurse training seats were cut in Manitoba. So round about the mid-1990s, a little bit later, other provinces with other governments — it's not a partisan statement, some of them NDP, some of them not — but other governments in other provinces woke up in the mid-'90s and said, we have created for ourselves a future disaster in the making because the cuts went too deep and we will not have enough nurses to keep our hospitals open, to keep beds open.

Other provinces moved on that. They sat down with their

nurses. They sat down with the stakeholders in the economy to try to develop a plan to make up for the massive cuts in the early '90s. That happened in Manitoba. It happened to an extent in Alberta. Did it happen in Saskatchewan, Mr. Chair? No, it did not happen here.

And nurses have been saying for years that the result of that is 8 to 5 emergencies in rural Saskatchewan. If you have an emergency after 5 o'clock, tough luck because we can't keep the facilities open. The result of that, I mean code red every other week it seems at a hospital in our tertiary centres. The results of that incompetence and that neglect on the nursing issue has meant that we have among the longest waiting lists in the country for certain kinds of procedures.

So that's the situation we've inherited . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . We've also inherited code burgundy, the hon. member is offering as a correction. It's very kind of her. It's very kind of her to do it without the tone of derision in her voice as well, Mr. Chair.

I will say this about what we then need to do with respect to nurses. As an example, we need to be able to compete with Alberta. And so that's part of what's being negotiated now. And we're not going to do it on the floor of the legislature. But the contracts that we're going to seek to negotiate with all the public sector employees of the province have to reflect the fact that we need to keep up, obviously, with the cost of living. We need to be able to be competitive in areas where there are labour shortages. We need to make sure that we are recruiting and retaining the people that we need to provide good public service to the province. This will govern our bargaining mandates for Saskatchewan. This will govern the process.

Maybe the hon. member will stand up and advocate 0, 1, and 1 again like he did for everyone, a cookie cutter that he then must, that he then must change midstream because he knows it's not working. And he had to offer, I think it was called the light-at-the-end-of-the-tunnel clause, Mr. Chairman. They had to do all of these midstream adjustments. The hon. member for Cannington points out that that light at the end of the tunnel may have been a train. And he may be right with respect to November 7.

This is the view of the NDP — mandates for every sector, every public sector worker, regardless, regardless of shortages, regardless of whether or not we're competitive with Alberta. We don't view things in that way. We take a common sense approach to bargaining. We take a common sense approach to developing a bargaining mandate that would reflect the fact that there are shortages in certain areas of public service where we need to do a little bit more to recruit, that we need to be able to compete with the province next door in some areas. In some, by the way, we are competitive. In fact our wages in some areas of public service are higher than Alberta.

So we come to this place. We come to the people of Saskatchewan with a common sense approach that says our bargaining mandate will reflect reality and will be driven by results, the outcomes we desire which, of course, is the provision of public service, and in the case of health care, the provision of timely health care. This will be the bargaining mandate, policy development process we have followed and we

will continue to follow, Mr. Chairman.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — Well, Mr. Chair, I asked if he'd set a mandate. He has not answered that question. I've asked him to give us the broad parameters of the mandate. He hasn't answered that question. He wants to spend more time talking about the time we were in government than his responsibilities, Mr. Chair.

Let me try it again. With the nurses — the Premier wants to talk about nurses — has the government provided to SAHO a bargaining mandate? And within that mandate, does SAHO have the parameters to deliver the memorandum of understanding that his Minister of Health signed with nurses? Is it a parameter that's provided to SAHO for bargaining with our nurses?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, is the Leader of the Opposition . . . You know, I think we kind of gave him a pass on a question earlier when he was saying, how much have you budgeted for these out-of-court settlements or the court-directed settlements that may come from the severances that have occurred. I kind of thought, well that would just give him a pass. He surely can't mean we'd provide those numbers to the public, but rather that we would report it fully afterward, so that there is a bargaining position on behalf of taxpayers. This is, after all, taxpayers' money we're talking about, Mr. Chair.

Now the hon. member wants us to say, here's what our bargaining mandate is. Here's what we want. Here's the bargaining mandate we've given to SAHO for the nurses. Here are the numbers. Well that's not very respectful of collective bargaining, Mr. Chair, is it? I don't think. Well they're kind of laughing. They want to know what the mandate is on the floor of the legislature.

[16:00]

The Chair: — I enjoy a good debate, but there's getting to be some constant bickering going back and forth, and it's kind of interfering with that. I would ask the members to respect the members that have the floor. I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, Mr. Chair, the Leader of the Opposition who sat here in this chair for some period of time, who was the minister of Health, wants us to say on the floor of the legislature what the bargaining mandate we've given to SAHO is, to show our hand in a negotiating process. It's taxpayers' dollars first of all; secondly it's spectacularly, it would be spectacularly incompetent for anybody to do that. It may be that for someone to ask that a government would do it, someone who has the experience of sitting in this chair to spend time in estimates saying, will you release the . . . would you release your secret bargaining mandate that you've given to SAHO.

The answer to the hon. member, the answer to the hon. member is no, we won't. But we will bargain in good faith with nurses. We will bargain with them as the minister did when he developed a recruitment and retention partnership with nurses, historic not only to the province but to the country, respectful of nurses and respectful of the fact that we have a huge hole — an

NDP hole — to dig out of when it comes to trying to ensure that we can recruit and then retain nurses for the health care system in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, one more time I'll try to get an answer from the Premier. The answer was a very specific question. Have they established a mandate for bargaining? Have they established a mandate that has been provided to SAHO, the broad parameters of that mandate, and does that mandate accommodate the memorandum of understanding which the Minister of Health was so proud to sign with our nurses?

Because, Mr. Chair, if the mandate does not encompass the memorandum of understanding, then I tell you what: the health districts are not going to be able to meet the requirements of that MOU [memorandum of understanding].

Will the Premier, will the Premier today assure this legislature that a mandate has been established, that the broad parameters of that mandate will in fact encompass the provisions of the MOU that the Minister of Health now shouts from his seat about, Mr. Chair? A very simple question, and to this we would appreciate a very straightforward and simple answer.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well the hon. member, the hon. member from his seat, the hon. member from his seat just said, after his question he said, these are the questions that nurses are asking. I'll tell you about the questions that nurses are asking. They're asking why an NDP government, a social democratic government ignored SUN [Saskatchewan Union of Nurses] for years and years and years and let this problem build up. And if he wants a number, I'll give him one today on the floor of the legislature. The number is 800. That's how many nurses we've committed to recruit for this province, to retain, and we intend to keep that promise, Mr. Chairman.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — I've got another number for him. Another number is 300. That's how many nurses the hon. member for Regina Qu'Appelle and the health regions have gone to the Philippines to recruit, some of whom are arriving even now in the province of Saskatchewan. There's a number.

Mr. Chair, in the hon. member's question, in the hon. member's question he says, well you know, I just want to know if there's a bargaining mandate. I don't really want to know what's in the mandate, but is the nurses' partnership agreement in the mandate? It's incredible. It's incredible.

First of all, of course a mandate has been provided. Secondly, Mr. Chair, we will not be negotiating on the floor of the legislature. We will not be disclosing the people's position on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan on the floor of the legislature. It just doesn't make any sense. I'm trying to be as kind as I can, but we're not going to talk about what's in the mandate.

And if this is, by the way, is how the hon. member negotiates deals, no wonder we got the Domtar deal we got in the dying days of that government. If this is how that hon. member

negotiates deals, no wonder this is how we got SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company], Mr. Chairman. If that's how that hon. member negotiates, Mr. Chairman, no wonder we got dot-coms in Georgia and Tennessee.

The new government, Mr. Chairman, doesn't operate that way. People voted for change on the 7th, and we intend to provide it for them, Mr. Chairman.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Chair: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Massey Place.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. To begin, could the Premier please provide us with his definition of what is a mall.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Chairman, malls can take a number of different forms, so what we'll endeavour to do is immediately provide that definition to the hon. member. We'll send it across the way as soon as we can write it out in proper form and encompass all the different aspects of what a mall might be.

And I look forward to the next question, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Broten: — Well thank you, Mr. Chair. I look forward to the tabling of those documents indeed.

I've gone to Swift Current a few times. I've had the opportunity to travel there, and I've had actually the opportunity to do a little bit of shopping in Swift Current. More than once I've visited the Swift Current Mall, and in the Swift Current Mall there are quite a few stores. There's a flower shop, some clothing stores. There's a wedding shop, a music shop. I assume that since this is, this mall, the Swift Current Mall is in the Premier's constituency, that he's had the opportunity to shop in this mall. And I would assume also that since he would frequent this mall, that this would be his basic understanding of what a typical mall is.

In explaining to the media why the Sask Party axed Station 20, the Premier suggested that he could not support the development of a mall, and this was his explanation as to why he killed Station 20 as it was designed at that time. Clearly to anyone that is involved with Station 20, there is the understanding that Station 20 is not a mall and that to characterize it as such is a misrepresentation of what Station 20 is.

Why did the Premier so meanly and so inaccurately describe Station 20 as a mall, and why did he use this ill-informed understanding as a reason to exclude so many people in Saskatoon from experiencing the benefits of our economy, especially when the Premier is sitting on \$1.5 billion?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well first of all I don't know what the hon. member has against malls to characterize something as a mall is somehow bad. I have said to those who have organized Station 20 that when . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well and I've said

to those Station 20 supporters that certainly no offence was made with respect to their efforts to put together this development. I understand the motivations for the people that support Station 20. We don't agree that this is the best result, the best outcome for what is needed in that particular area, and there will be much more to talk about in the days ahead on that I know, Mr. Chair, and maybe in subsequent questions.

We're not in the business of building . . . I mean if the hon. member wants to get into it, some malls have offices, and some malls have retail outlets. And this particular Station 20 as a development was going to have both of those things — a clinic and offices and a store, a co-operative grocery store meant to meet some needs in the area. There were also some very attendant concerns with this development that were ignored by the previous government, not the least of which was the concerns of the auditor about the funding.

I know the previous government didn't seem to really care much about the Provincial Auditor's concerns with how they spent taxpayers' money. That's perhaps their experience and their view. It is not our view, Mr. Chair, and we took very sincerely and seriously the concerns the auditor had around Station 20.

Additionally, I would say that we believe it's important in that particular area of Saskatoon that Station 20 is to serve, was to serve, there are a number of First Nations people. There are a number of First Nations people that come under the care and auspices of the Saskatoon Tribal Council, in fact I would say a significant portion of the population there. Let us consider then, Mr. Chair, what that hon. member seems to want to ignore and ignored apparently if he had a hand in the development of the proposal.

The Chief, Joe Q., the tribal chief for the Saskatoon Tribal Council, said this:

Although new construction in the core area of Saskatoon is normally welcomed, the . . . [Saskatoon Tribal Council] has watched in dismay as the planning and the direction of the project was wrested away from the community by service agencies operated and/or run by non-resident, upper middle class proponents with strong political ties.

I'll read it again for the hon. Member. He may be, I'm not sure if he's being referred to. “. . . upper middle class proponents with strong political ties.” Not our words, the words of the chief.

Well the member for Elphinstone is laughing. And no wonder, no wonder, Mr. Chairman, that the chief of the Saskatoon Tribal Council is a little offended with the attitude this government had on Station 20 because he wasn't asked for his opinion though his people live in the area, Mr. Chair, and now that he has put his views on the record through a member of this Assembly, their response, the member for Elphinstone, is to laugh, Mr. Chair. No wonder a lot of people on the Station 20 issue are having a hard time taking, increasingly are having a hard time taking those members opposite seriously.

The chief goes on to say:

The Station 20 project proponents made it very clear that our involvement would be at best, token . . .

Let's repeat that because the member for Athabasca may not have heard it. Here's what the chief of the tribal council said:

The Station 20 project proponents made it very clear that our involvement would be at best, token and 'advisory'.

Well, Mr. Chair, the hon. member for Athabasca, he just makes light of that. He makes light of the fact that the chief of the tribal council, who wrote to the government on the issue of Station 20, believed that First Nations people, that a duly constituted, duly elected First Nation tribal council — the Saskatoon Tribal Council — felt as though they were treated as token by that government. And the member for Athabasca is still chirping from his seat. And he doesn't seem to care, and it's all a big joke. And, Mr. Chairman, that's why he is sitting over there, and that's why they'll be over there for a long time to come.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — I think the hon. member ought to maybe get his member under control because we are talking about a serious matter. What is desired by both the proponents of Station 20, by the Saskatoon Tribal Council, and by the Government of Saskatchewan is that we would best address issues in the core area. And that is access to health care, and that is access to nutrition, and it is proper education, and it's dealing with issues in the core areas like addictions.

And that's what our budget was all about, and that's why we will continue to work in that area and why our government will put its investment where its commitment is with respect to improving, improving that area and achieving the objectives and the goals.

We've also heard from urban Métis association, by the way, who shared the views of the tribal council, who said they weren't consulted. So was this truly just a last minute commitment, promise by the government to try to shore up support, or is it the best possible way to achieve what we all want to achieve in the Riversdale community on the west side of Saskatoon?

We believe it's important. We believe, on this side of the House, it's important to find the right solution to these, to these issues. And we intend to do that. It may not be the way that was contrived by the members opposite. It will involve consultation with stakeholders. We subscribe to that radical notion, Mr. Chair. And no one ought to doubt however our resolve to deal with the issues that face that core area and core neighbourhoods right across our province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Broten: — Well, Mr. Chair, you must, you must understand, when the Premier's giving his reasons as to why Station 20 was not supported by his government, the confusion that occurred with the people in Saskatoon and the people in this province because we had a very, a very scattered response from different ministers.

We had the Minister of Health suggesting that it was because of other spending concerns with fire alarms, and it was an either-or situation. We had the Finance minister suggesting that they were unable to support Station 20 West, based on misinformation that he had according to how much funding had been already raised to that point in time. And then we had the Premier almost making an off-the-cuff remark about not supporting a mall.

And I think most people have seen that the types of responses, the varied responses made it clear to everyone that the true reason was not the reason that was being represented because if the true reason was being put forward, then we would have had a uniform response by all the ministers involved, and we wouldn't have had one story here, one story there, and another one over there.

[16:15]

The makeup of the Station 20 group, as well . . . I didn't happen to see the Premier at the march that occurred where media reports suggest that there were over 2,500 people at that march. I didn't actually see any of the Sask Party members there.

It's important to recognize that the people that support this initiative do indeed come from across the city. There are people from the east side of the river; there's people from the core neighbourhoods. And this is represented every day by the petitions that we present in this legislature, Mr. Chair, that people across the city, regardless of political stripe . . . This is the interesting thing. I've spoken to people from all parties who clearly see that the Station 20 project was a good idea, and they clearly see that the Sask Party has missed the mark on this one by not supporting it.

So the Premier suggests that while the Station 20 model as it was originally put forward was not a model that his party could support and he suggested the mall rationale as the reason why he could not support it, but he claims that he is still, that his party is a supporter and defender of the core neighbourhoods and Saskatoon in general.

We know that in the core neighbourhoods the Westside community clinic plays a very important role. And we also know that the Westside community clinic is a very busy place, and that it's in fact bursting at the seams with all the activity that's going on in there. In fact, I think it was just last night the Health minister in estimates made some comments about when he was touring, how he saw how full the community clinic was. There was some cooking activity going on. And it is a busy place, and it's in need of expansion.

So at this time, will the Premier commit to funding either the expansion or the relocation of the Westside community clinic?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, there are a number of agencies in that particular neighbourhood that provide excellent services to people who need them, and our government's going to be working with all those agencies to ensure that they're properly resourced and can provide them.

Certainly we're aware there's a need for, for resources in terms of the Westside Clinic. There's a need for resources at the food

bank. That's why our government in its budget kept another campaign promise to increase funding to food banks and community-based organizations for life skills training and employment skills training of \$5 million. So, Mr. Chair, there are also other agencies that continue to be funded by this government, and CBOs [community-based organization] as well, in addition to the Westside community clinic. The White Buffalo Youth Lodge is another one.

The initiative, the student wellness initiative community health program, or SWITCH [student wellness initiative toward community health], is another one. KidsFirst is involved. The building health equity program is another resource.

I would also say this, Mr. Chair. We believe that — and we're, we're certainly receiving this feedback — that St. Mary's, which is right in the former, the former premier's constituency has been in long need of some attention from government in terms of the Saskatoon separate school. We know of the huge, the very important community services provided at St. Mary's, including health care, including programs to ensure that, that kids do not go hungry. There needs also to be support there for the fact that this particular school has been allowed to absolutely run down to not a very good state for anyone who has been there.

I had the chance, along with the former member, Mr. Merriman, to serve a lunch there with Care & Share, another agency providing a great service to that area and other areas of Saskatoon. And this is years ago, and then it was pretty clear that the school was in need of some, some significant investment. So the hon. member ought not to doubt this government's resolve to deal with the issues in the area.

It may not be about building a building. Let's remember this Station 20 decision was announced by the former premier in his own riding at the very, very end of the government, at the very, very end of the government, of its life. And that's why a lot of people were questioning the motives in the first place not of the people and the partners involved but of that party. They had seen too many announcements in those six months prior to the election being called in October, too much thrown off the back of a truck by that very, very desperate government of the day trying to hang on, to cling on to power. And so the motives around this particular announcement I think were doubted by people — not the motives of the partners involved certainly but of the party in power.

And so the question with respect to all the agencies, including the Westside Clinic, is a valid one. These are groups that are providing excellent service. They need the support and the resources of government. And for those groups in Saskatoon on the west side and around the province, our government is going to be there.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I have a short question for the Premier. Is it the intention of his government to provide any kind of assistance over and above the \$6 million that has been announced for water wells in the

southwest part of the province to assist those farmers that are facing their fourth year of drought?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well first of all, the premise of the hon. member's question is, as usual, incorrect because there is much more that producers in the Southwest are receiving from the government, as are producers across the province. It is true that we are not going to ignore those producers, as the previous government did. And that's why in the budget, the government, the new government has highlighted, as the member pointed out, has committed to a \$6 million farm and ranch water infrastructure program.

There is work that is needed with respect to obviously the wells, just generally speaking with respect to RMs who are in a third or fourth year of a drought on the infrastructure piece. And I have noted actually with interest the support for this initiative from producers in southwest Saskatchewan who, when it was announced by the minister — I think last week — were very public in their support for this kind of initiative. And of course, the long-term solution here — no surprise, it is always the case — is going to be co-operation from the weather.

For the hon. member — since she may or may not know this, living in Saskatoon — some good news on that front in the Southwest, obviously much, much more is needed in terms of rain, but there's been some progress. But with respect to the premise of her question being wrong, let me just say this: we on this side of the House, in the election campaign, promised to significantly increase the rebates, the education property tax rebates for Saskatchewan people, for all property owners in the province.

Interesting, interesting on this point, Mr. Chair, that the NDP also made their promise with respect to the education portion of property tax which weighs heavy on producers regardless of where they live. And guess what, Mr. Chair? If the NDP had won the election and were sitting over here, there would be no additional property tax relief for Saskatchewan producers either in southwest Saskatchewan or anywhere else. There would not have been also the review and the improvements already made to the crop insurance program and the follow-through on the commitment we made to review it with a view to improving coverage.

Neither, I don't think, would there have been any progress with respect to the issue of gophers, which are very attendant to the drought in southwest Saskatchewan. And rather than, rather than have to drag our government to the right decision with respect to strychnine, as producers in the area had to do with that government because they simply seemed to stop caring about rural Saskatchewan, rather than that we acted proactively and the Minister of Agriculture made some significant announcements.

Now the situation in the Southwest today is that producers are still coming out of, hopefully coming out of a very long-term drought. The government has committed to improve property tax rebates for all producers, to important crop insurance improvements, and also to this specific \$6 million identified in the budget for the area.

And, Mr. Chairman, our minister has been to the area, toured it early in the spring, has committed that after the session he will be going back to the area and watching it very closely to see where the situation is at, to see what's happening with respect to weather.

But as my hon. member for Kindersley has said, thankfully in Saskatchewan we don't lose, we haven't lost a crop in May. And so we will be monitoring the situation very carefully. Our member for Wood River is doing that now. Our Minister of Agriculture is doing it. The Minister of Highways is from Cypress Hills; he is as well. And certainly as a resident of Swift Current I'm very aware of the situation as well, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Chair, through you to the Premier. It is true that we do have a water program that was announced and it is appreciated. It is true that in one part of that region this morning they had about a millimetre of rain and in another part of that southwest drought area they had about a half an inch of rain last week. But the conditions there are very, very dry. Very, very dry and people are concerned.

One of the things that the minister or the Premier will know is that people have the opportunity to move their cattle out of that region. And I'm wondering, given the commitment of the government to rural Saskatchewan, and so many people in that party that come from a farm background, are they prepared, given the escalating costs of transportation, to assist in any way those ranchers in that area in moving their cattle through some assistance for transportation?

As he knows, the price of cattle are down. They are having a difficult time with feed costs, as he will know, and now they have to move cattle. Is there anything that his government might have in the offing to assist those ranchers and producers in that region?

[16:30]

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I thank the hon. member for the question. I mean it is a serious issue. It's why — and I thank her for pointing out — we've also, the minister also announced the initiative to assist producers in moving cattle to other less affected areas, areas where the pastures are a lot healthier.

And I can say, well the hon. member keeps asking the question. I'm going to answer her question. Yes. I'm going to answer your question. The Minister of Agriculture tells me that uptake on the program has been very strong, that it's nearly fully subscribed in terms of available pasture — that's the case now — without any assistance on transportation. I will say this, as the minister has said in question period and as our government has said, we are going to be carefully watching what goes on there because although the recent moisture's been welcomed, we're a long ways away from dealing with what is a three-year drought, to be sure.

The other issue for us as a government is that we inherited a situation where crop insurance had not been attended to, had not been maintained. That's why you saw us put \$25 million into that crop insurance program to make sure the coverage was there. We inherited a situation where the government had not

done enough with respect to the weight of funding education that falls on producers.

The government had, up until that point — and mind you, there was an intervening election — had not moved with respect to the cattle situation which was certainly, which was certainly getting difficult before the campaign was called. They chose to do nothing. We, within weeks, Mr. Deputy Chair, moved on that issue as well, providing a loan program for those who produce hogs and cattle in our province — which, as has been noted, what stakeholders asked for — even though we understand that for some, another loan isn't always the best, the best situation.

In our budget as well there is a significant investment for rural infrastructure. We also inherited a situation where — would be the case in southwest Saskatchewan and elsewhere — where the state of our health care facilities, the state of our school facilities, had just been left. They were living on depreciation on that side of the House. They weren't keeping up with demands in terms of infrastructure in rural Saskatchewan. So that too was a centrepiece of our budget.

With respect to the Southwest, we are going to be carefully watching what's going on down there. And we have taken steps for all producers and specifically for producers in the Southwest that we will deliver on. And again everyone's hopeful that the weather's going to co-operate and we'll have a crop there, and in areas that are flooding, we'll have improvements there as well so all farmers in Saskatchewan can look forward to very high prices, a bountiful harvest.

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you. Through the Chair to the Premier. The Premier will know that while there are high prices, there are also escalating costs for inputs — herbicides, chemicals, fertilizer. In fact fertilizer costs have practically tripled. And that's what farmers are facing this year. At the same time, we have companies that are certainly enjoying record profits.

But to the Premier: it is true that we, you know, you've never lost a crop at this time of year. But one year ago his Minister of Agriculture said in this Assembly that farmers and producers were making their decisions in the southwest part of the province, and was the government prepared to offer a per acre payment. This is also a Minister of Agriculture that called for loans. And obviously the previous government had many short-term loans at various times for producers. But we also had, as a government, per acre payments. And we also had per animal payments, certainly in the northwest part of the province when there was drought.

And I'm wondering whether his government — by mid-June if the situation is still as serious as it presently is — is his government prepared to make a per acre payment even with the changes to crop insurance? I acknowledge those changes. Is he prepared to also consider a per animal payment as was done in the northwest part of the province when that part of the province experienced very significant drought?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, the answer to the member's question is that we are going to be watching the situation very carefully. It's where we live. I can tell you even in the city of

Swift Current — where obviously there are actually many farmers that live there but not everybody in Swift Current's a farmer — everyone understands in my hometown the importance of what's going to happen and unfold this spring. I would take it from the hon. member's question that her position has changed because you see . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . well she says not at all. Because her position is that she does not support per acre payments for this particular disaster in the Southwest. Her position is that she doesn't support acreage payments for those affected by the drought in southwest Saskatchewan. Well she's nodding her head. Then why didn't it happen, Mr. Deputy Chair? She sat in the cabinet. She was a senior minister in this government when those individuals came to the legislature when the drought was on for three years, Mr. Deputy Chair. Did she support payments then and if so, did she say anything to her colleagues at all? Because I remember the Agriculture minister simply was steadfast. The answer was no.

Was there any money even for infrastructure, \$6 million for water infrastructure, from that government? The answer was no. Was there any money for property tax rebates for farmers in the Southwest or around the province in addition to what had happened from the government? The answer was no. Was there any more investment to crop insurance to improve the program by the \$25 million this government has committed? The answer is no.

I mean the member's raising important questions. They are important questions. We will monitor this situation. But I'll tell you what — well, I've given her the answer — I'll tell you what. Her position has obviously changed when it comes to helping producers in southwest Saskatchewan or anywhere else. Well I'll tell you what, Mr. Deputy Chair. In this budget is specific investment for southwest Saskatchewan. In this budget is more investment for crop insurance. In this budget is proactive moves with respect to gopher controls, something they never understood about, something they laughed about in this Legislative Assembly. In this budget is investments for property tax rebates for producers in southwest Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Chair, this party, this party has kept its commitments with respect to rural Saskatchewan. And when that member sat in a very senior position in the cabinet, she did not support, she did not support help for southwest Saskatchewan producers who were facing a drought. She didn't support them because nothing happened for those producers under that government. Nothing happened.

So, Mr. Deputy Chair, we welcome the questions. We invite her to . . . I'm sure she will be monitoring what happens this spring to see the effect of the program that has been announced by the Minister of Agriculture. We will be doing the same thing together with the RMs, the reeves, the leaders, and the producers in southwest Saskatchewan where we live, Mr. Deputy Chair.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Chair: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Centre.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I find this very interesting. I was listening with interest to the

Premier who has talked a lot about consultations and how proud he is about the style of consultations that he takes.

I've stood many days in this House presenting petitions about people asking for full public consultations on the task force on housing affordability, and not a word from the other side. So I find this very interesting. The Premier today has the nerve to stand up and talk about the great consultation processes that he's committed to. But my question is about this. And I see that actually we have a member from the task force on housing affordability in the House today. So this is an important question, Mr. Deputy Chair.

My question to the Premier is this: we know that there is no brand new money for housing in this budget, no brand new money for housing in this budget. We also know that the task force for housing affordability will report on May 30. Will he commit, on behalf of his government, to provide the resources to meet or to support the recommendations that this task force will give, that we do not have to wait a full year until the next budget? They have \$1.5 billion. Clearly we can do something over the summer months, make some commitments. Is he prepared to do that?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Chair, first of all, the hon. member raises a very important issue. The issue of housing in Saskatchewan right now is obviously very important. We see very, very strong housing markets right across the province, and not just in the major centres. We see them in places like Moosomin. We see them in places like Humboldt. We see them in places even like Alida, notwithstanding the neighbours that you might have to live beside, and I'm only referring to my hon. friend who sits down the aisle.

It is an issue, the result of a strong housing market and of growth. One of the attendant consequences is that prices have gone up and rents have gone up. And it's why, by the way, our government has undertaken historic new investments with respect to increasing, record increases to help those who are employable but require further assistance. It's also why the minister responsible appointed a task force to deal with this issue of housing and to report very quickly.

And I also acknowledge one of the members of the task force who's joined us today, a distinguished former member of this Assembly, Mr. Pringle, and he is joined in his efforts of course by another distinguished member of the Assembly, Mr. Merriman. They have been . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — They have been travelling the province and they have been undertaking a very significant consultation, and for that hon. member to somehow suggest that they're not doing their job, that they're not getting around the province of Saskatchewan, that they're not getting around the province of Saskatchewan to get their consultation done, I think it's disrespectful to both of those individuals involved who are working very hard, who are working very hard to bring back a report — just now in a matter of weeks — to the government on this, on this very important issue.

Interesting to note in the situation we inherited, there was some

development and some progress being made by Sask Housing and the Ministry of Social Services, but really nothing in the platform that existed from the NDP in the election on this issue of housing, which are now . . . the member has characterized as the most, the most pressing issue facing the province.

Nonetheless I want to say to the hon. member that 856 social housing units are currently at various stages of development. They'll be on stream over the next 18 months. Many are in the inner-city neighbourhoods of Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert. Across the province 26.4 million is available for Aboriginal off-reserve housing trust, and another 24.2 million allocated for the affordable housing trust.

The member will also want to know that in Saskatoon, 506 affordable housing units are in progress, 275 scheduled to be available this year in 2008. Total value of affordable housing projects in progress in Saskatoon is \$42.7 million.

With respect to the situation that, that's going to unfold into the future, I will say this to the hon. member: we are looking forward to the report of the task force. We know that more needs to be done on this issue for both affordable housing and just generally to look at the issue of, you know, the number of apartments that are available in our province. What can be done, for example, to encourage those who develop apartments, not necessarily only affordable housing now, not exclusively affordable housing, but apartments which will ease some of the demand crunch as well? What can be done to provide an incentive perhaps that these will be built?

Options are going to come forward from the task force. I think it would be, I think it'd be irresponsible for any member of this Assembly to say, we are going to fund all of those recommendations. We haven't seen them yet. We don't know what they are. We don't know if the recommendations will have, if they will have exact dollar values attached to them, or whether or not that will need to be researched. Surely the hon. member, surely the hon. member is not advocating that we would just say today, whatever is in the report is going to be completely funded, when we don't know if the task force is going to be able to come with exacting numbers even on what they're recommending. We do look forward to the report. And that member and members of this House ought not to doubt our resolve to ensure, Mr. Deputy Chair, that while we ensure that the Saskatchewan economy continues to . . . Mr. Chair, while the Saskatchewan economy continues to grow, while we want to continue to experience growth, that we will deal with the challenges of growth.

[16:45]

We will make sure that people in this province are benefiting, all people in this province are benefiting. We will deal with issues that affect the core areas. We will be dealing with issues around housing for the province, for people in Saskatchewan. This is the commitment of the government. And I want to assure that member that I think he's going to welcome what he sees on this front in the future, just in generally from this government on our desire to have a growth agenda that does not leave people behind, Mr. Chair.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Chair: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. It didn't take long for the softer side of the Sask Party to disappear. Station 20 cuts, I won't go into that since my colleague from Massey Place has covered that pretty well. Vulnerable workers' health benefits cut. But the one I do want to talk about today is the children's dental sealant program that was cut. All of these have health implications.

The dental sealant program was targeting children in grades 1 to 7 and screened them in their community schools. The Minister of Health said at the time that the cut was announced that these children could be more cheaply served by accessing their own health, the dental health benefits program and going to the dentist, basically. And the fact is many of these children simply don't go to a dentist. Eventual costs of the lack of dental care far exceed the preventive costs of a dental sealant program.

SAHO, the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations, commended the establishment of the dental sealant program and in fact wanted more services for children, for dental health for children. And they had some compelling background information that they shared in some of their resolutions at their recent convention.

They said that:

... reports suggest that 25 percent of children in Saskatchewan have no coverage for dental care, or have barriers to using existing plans. Families that have workplace dental plans such as First Nations Inuit Health Branch or Supplementary Health, often do not access dental services due to such barriers as the location of the dentist, extra billing, paying "up front", and cultural sensitivity.

Dental caries is the most preventable chronic illness in children. Dental pain and/or infection negatively affect children's eating and sleeping, as well as their ability to concentrate. Oral health of children is a significant public health concern, as it is an indicator of overall health status ... 100,000 school days are lost each year [across Canada] because of dental disease. [And] in the long term, poor oral health can be linked to adverse pregnancy outcomes, and heart and respiratory diseases.

... Early Childhood Caries [or cavities], which can be prevented by proper mouth care and feeding practices, have continued to increase over the last 10 years ... [and] rates for kindergarten and grade one children from low income neighbourhoods were triple ... [the rates for children] in all other areas ... children of ages five and the general prevalence of ... [cavities] is three to five per cent in the general population,

And there also, there also ... Well the Minister of Health can yell at me all you want. I wrote this myself and I do know about this. And my question, Mr. Chairman, is to the Premier: why did you let your mean-spirited, vindictive, and extremely short-sighted political agenda get in the way of good public policy and obviously — and targeted vulnerable

children — by axing a program that has clear and evident benefit? And the children's dental sealant program, why did it have to go? I think it was purely your political agenda and good public policy was totally ignored.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well you know, Mr. Chairman, the hon. member points out that there are thousands of people who need this service. And certainly for her to try to pass off as fact that now there is simply no dental sealant services available to kids is simply not the case. It's a question of location — schools versus a dentist office. Her question, which the premise of which is about the thousands of people, of kids who will need the sealant, belies the fact that this program up until the end of March is benefiting 225 kids. It's an average cost of \$1,000 per child. The sealant is certainly ... The services are available to those who need it and, Mr. Chairman, for her to indicate that the services are not necessary, or are not available to kids, is simply not the case.

Ms. Junor: — Thank you ... [inaudible interjection] ... Yes, I just wrote another one. Exactly.

I think it's easy to characterize that these children that are ... the pilot project that was put in place would cost \$1,000 per child in the initial stage. That has nothing to do with what will happen. And as the preventative benefits come forward, SAHO's background information — which I won't read any more of — but the children that are served now that have to go in for dental surgery, and there's a significant number of them in the province, that has a huge cost. This is preventative. It may cost \$1,000 in the pilot project to get the pilot project up and running, but you have forgotten the out years and what will happen when you put dental sealant on children in grades 1 and 5 or in grade 1 and 7.

They're not going to go to the dentist. They don't have middle-class parents. They don't have middle-class access to transportation and services. They don't go. This was a preventative program put in place to deal with inner-city issues in community schools. And to pass it off as being cheaper to do it some other way is simply ignoring the facts of what this would have done for these children.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — I didn't hear a question there, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Junor: — Thank you. Okay. My question then — the Premier didn't hear a question — the question is, will he restore the program?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Chair, the answer to the hon. member's question is that the dental sealant is going to continue to be available to kids in the province of Saskatchewan, not as it was constructed under this \$1,000-per-child initiative that the hon. member refers to.

I will also say to the hon. member that this government will also, Mr. Chair, we will also continue to do things like providing the largest increase in the history of the province to the Saskatchewan employment supplement that helps

low-income families, 80 per cent of which are single moms. This government, this government, Mr. Chair, will continue to do things like a half a million dollars in increased funding to school-based, anti-child-hunger programs. We're going to continue to do that.

This government will continue to provide actual addiction treatment beds for people who need them instead of press releases and rhetoric. This government, this administration will continue to do things like provide a 15 per cent increase in rates in terms of foster parents in our province — an issue that was completely ignored by those members opposite. This government will continue its commitment to kids, whether they need dental sealant, whether they need proper education, whether they need, whether they need to be fed, whether they need to be supported in later years with education so they can be a participant in the prosperity of the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Furber: — I thank the hon. members opposite for the cue. I've got a question for the Premier. I wish it was a shorter question. Unfortunately their bungling of the Domtar file is so substantial and so comprehensive, it'll take me a while to get through it all.

Why is it that the Minister of Energy and Resources had no idea of the results of the task force chaired by the member from Batoche? Why is it the same minister has no idea what's in the Saskatchewan Party platform as it pertains to forestry? Why is it that the same minister claimed to have had talks with Domtar when clearly no talks had taken place? Why is it that the Minister Responsible for Enterprise and Innovation has no ideas of the responsibilities directly prescribed for Enterprise Saskatchewan regarding the forestry industry?

It seems that nothing that was promised for this industry has been carried through — their own promises — by this government. I'll quote from my hometown paper of December 3, 2007. Again question to the Premier, quote, "Was it just lies, Brad Wall?"

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Would the hon. member repeat the question?

The Chair: — Sorry. Would the hon. member . . . We were even having trouble. Maybe turn your mike or push your mike up a little bit.

Mr. Furber: — Start from the start?

An Hon. Member: — Sure.

Mr. Furber: — Good stuff. Good stuff. I like to get on the record two or three times with this stuff.

I wish this question was shorter. Unfortunately their bungling of this file is so substantial and comprehensive that it'll take me a while to get through it all again. Why is it that the Minister of

Energy and Resources has no idea as to the results of the forestry task force chaired by the member from Batoche? Why is it that the same minister had no idea what was in the Saskatchewan Party platform as it pertains to forestry? Why is it that the same minister claimed to have had talks with Domtar when clearly no discussions had taken place? How is it that the Minister Responsible for Enterprise and Innovation has no idea of the responsibilities directly prescribed for Enterprise Saskatchewan regarding the forestry industry?

It seems that nothing that was promised by this government — their own promises — has been delivered on for this industry. So I'll quote from my hometown paper, December 3, 2007, where they said, "Was it just lies, Brad Wall?"

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Point of order, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: — What is your point of order?

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman of Committees. The members can't do indirectly what they can't do directly. The member is inferring that the Premier is lying in his statement. That is not appropriate for this House. All members are assumed to be honourable members, and therefore everything spoken in this Assembly is assumed to be the truth. I ask that you ask the member to withdraw that statement and apologize unequivocally.

The Chair: — Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I heard the same comments that the member from Cannington heard. The document that was quoted from has just been sent down to the Table. It is a newspaper report in which a simple question is being asked. The member from Prince Albert Northcote has simply read from a newspaper in a community affected by a decision and a question was posed. The member from Prince Albert Northcote is just posing the question posed by the newspaper. I think, Mr. Chair, you would find it in order.

The Chair: — It was a little difficult for me to hear which we had stated before, but I will do rule 50, subvote:

(o) quote anything that if stated directly would be contrary to the Rules and practices of the Assembly, except that in reading an extract the use of a Member's proper name may be permitted;

(p) use any display, prop, demonstration or exhibit of any kind to illustrate his or her remarks.

I would ask that the member not do something indirectly that he would not do directly. I could not hear all of his remarks, so I will leave that up — I can always check *Hansard* — but I will leave that up to the member if he wishes to apologize.

Mr. Furber: — I withdraw the statement and apologize to the House.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. The hon. member raises the issue of Domtar which was the source of some

discussion both prior to, during, and then after the election campaign this fall. The then opposition Saskatchewan Party was very, very clear. As soon as this deal was announced by the hon. member for Riversdale, that this deal was not driven by what was good for the forestry industry . . . It was not driven by what was good for the city of Prince Albert. It was not driven by what was good in the long term for those who worked in the mill. It was not driven by what was good for taxpayers who — thanks to this deal — could have had \$100 million risked in what very, very possibly could've been another SPUDCO, Mr. Chair. The deal was driven simply by their desire to try to cling to power, to try to hang on to both seats in Prince Albert and Saskatchewan Rivers.

[17:00]

And even with the deal, Mr. Chair, even with the announcement, the people of Prince Albert and area and the people of the province saw through it. They saw it for what it was. They saw it for the pulp fiction that it was in terms of good economic sense for the province or for the use of taxpayers' dollars. That's why there's a member from Saskatchewan Rivers sitting over here and a member from Prince Albert Carlton sitting right over there, Mr. Chair. They saw through it. They saw through it.

In addition, Mr. Chair, when this deal was announced shortly, shortly after this deal was announced . . . Here is some of the reasons why we know it was done very, very hastily by the NDP who wanted quickly to get to an election, who thought this was their answer, their secret weapon in three constituencies around P.A. and including Saskatchewan Rivers. We know they were in a hurry because, Mr. Chair of Committees, they didn't consult with First Nations in the area who are actually partners with the government, partners with respect to some of the assets involved.

In fact, Mr. Chair, I'll tell you this, I remember driving from Swift Current to Regina the day after this agreement was announced — or maybe it was two days after this agreement was announced — and getting a call from the chief of Montreal Lake. I think actually I called him to find out what he thought. Did he support this great announcement that was ballyhooed by the former premier, the current member for Riversdale? And do you know what he said? We don't know anything about it. No one has consulted with us — the Montreal Lake First Nation that has a role to play, obviously that has a traditional area that's affected by the forest.

In fact, Mr. Chairman, when they finally did get a copy of the agreement that this government almost got away with signing with respect to this particular asset, this \$100 million agreement, when they finally got a copy of the agreement to find out how it would affect the Montreal Lake First Nation, do you know where it came from? From the Saskatchewan Party. It came from the opposition, who thought that maybe these partners in this arrangement, those who have heard the rhetoric of the member for Riversdale about his intention to partner with First Nations meaningfully, those who probably heard the rhetoric from the member for Prince Albert Northcote certainly heard the rhetoric from his predecessor, certainly heard the rhetoric from his predecessor that they weren't consulted at all. Here is what he had to say Chief Lionel Bird . . .

Well now the hon. member asked a long question. He had to ask it twice, and now I think he'd want to be interested in the answer, including, Mr. Chairman, quotes from . . . Well he's getting very angry. He's getting very angry, Mr. Chairman. I can't help, I can't help the fact, I can't help the fact that he holds this deal and all the trouble it has caused him against his leader. I can't help that that's the case.

I can't help the fact that he's had more positions, Mr. Chairman, on the issue of Domtar than there are seats over on that side of the House, although increasingly that's not a big challenge. I can't help but note that not just a few weeks ago, I think, he was now out in the rotunda confessing to the media that he, and maybe he alone — he might be out of step with his leader — he doesn't even think there should be any government money that goes into the mill. That's what his position is now, even though, even though he ran under a banner that said we're going to put government money in.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — So I know why he's angry, Mr. Chair. He's angry because this was exposed, Mr. Chairman. This deal was exposed for the \$100 million risk, the \$100 million last-minute political election gamble of the leader, the member for Riversdale at the expense of what was right for taxpayers, what was right for Prince Albert, and what was right for the forestry industry, Mr. Chairman.

Here's what Chief Lionel Bird had to say:

“There's a legal requirement for [the NDP government] to consult with us,” [This was in *The StarPhoenix* September 13] Bird said, adding that the province has proceeded with its plans “without any care or desire to deal with any concern [from] the Montreal Lake Cree Nation . . .”

That's his former government. That's his party. Chief Marcel Head said on September 13 in Shoal Lake he said, “‘There just doesn't seem to be any co-operation' . . . ‘We've [been kind of] left in the dark about this.’” This is about the Domtar deal. That's the question that the member has asked. Well on September 14 on CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] news, a Domtar executive, Mr. Rathier said, “‘We feel that it is premature at this time to give people false hope and to say to them by next summer . . .’” which was a promise that he made and a promise that that member made . . .

The Chair: — The debate has been very good, but I would start to ask the members to direct your question through the Chair and to keep the debate good. And I notice it's been getting a tiny bit personal.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Chair, I'm reading quotes, including the quote from Domtar themselves who said that they didn't want to see anybody giving people false hope, and what he was referring to of course was a commitment made just on the eve of an election by a very desperate leader of a desperate political party with respect to the Domtar arrangement.

And so, Mr. Chairman, I could go on. Shawn Williams is a former mill worker and a current Prince Albert city councillor who said, quote, “I'm a union guy, but I can see reality.” And

that was in my mind; that is a terrible deal. This is a councillor and a union member, a terrible deal “To invest that much money for the province? I don’t know. It just was an election gimmick.” Which brings me back to my first point, the people of Prince Albert saw through the deal.

Here’s what the new Government of Saskatchewan is doing with respect to this particular issue. The new Government of Saskatchewan is engaged in negotiations with Domtar. We are engaged with other players in the forestry industry, because certainly the forestry industry is hurting. Our Minister of Enterprise and our MLAs from those affected areas are engaged with a consultation process on how \$34 million of federal dollars, meant to provide transition for those in the forestry sector, will be distributed — including that member’s constituency of Prince Albert.

I will note this, Mr. Chair, we’ve seen, and as far as I know — and maybe the Minister of Energy and Resources or the Minister of Enterprise can correct me — we’ve seen no correspondence, no ideas coming forward from that member who purports to represent the people of Prince Albert Northcote on what we should be doing with these significant resources we have to provide transition. We hope that he’ll do that, because I think that would be the responsible action on the part of a member that’s concerned, as he no doubt is, for people in his constituency.

In the meantime, we’re going to work with Domtar and other players of the industry to try to get that mill up and running, to try to provide some answers to this question that do not involve picking winners and losers to the tune of risking \$100 million taxpayers’ dollars on a last-minute, desperation deal signed by the member for Riversdale — one that was so transparent that the people of P.A. and all across the province saw it exactly for what it was.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Chair: — I recognize the member from Athabasca.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman or Deputy Speaker. Just got one question, but before I get to my question I want to make a couple of points. I want to first of all point out to the hon. member that the incoming government has such a tremendous opportunity to do so many things, and I don’t believe in the history of Canada any incoming government had such tremendous wealth and opportunity inherited by them and presented to them by an outgoing government.

And I want to point out, Mr. Deputy Chair, that in terms of some of the work that was done by the previous government very quickly on population growth, I would give A plus plus. On revenues from oil and gas, I’d give it an A plus plus. Revenues from potash, A plus; revenues from taxes, A plus; revenues from gas taxes, A plus; revenues from employment, A plus; and of course revenues from wheat, barley and all the other good amount of income that they enjoy, it’s been A plus plus all over the place, Mr. Speaker.

And I wanted to point out one of the funniest things I ever heard in the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, when a couple of the members

of that government got up and they said we now see the population growth up 50,000, I think was the figure that they used. And I could be corrected on that figure.

And they wanted to give the impression to the people of Saskatchewan that there is these 50,000 people all lined up at the border from Manitoba and Alberta, and then on November 7 the election came on and the Sask Party won and they said, hey everybody, let’s go into Saskatchewan. The Sask Party won. You know, that’s the impression that they give. So we have these 50,000 people hanging around our borders waiting for these guys to win, and the rest of Saskatchewan is kind of basically laughing their heads off. And of course they’re going to say all these great things that happened it was because of us.

Well I just wanted to give these guys an update that all the great news, all the great news that you guys are currently enjoying, a big, big message — you had absolutely nothing to do with it, but you’re welcome. And that is from the NDP government that worked this province for a number of years.

Now after we’ve given ourselves . . .

The Chair: — Order. I’m having trouble hearing the member that’s on his feet. I would ask that the members respect the member that has the floor.

Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, after we’ve seen this government inherit billions of dollars, sitting on 1.5 billion in the bank, and really I think that member has the easiest job in the world, just go around spending money. Anybody can do that. But somehow, somehow, Mr. Chair, they’re making a mess of many, many things. And I’ll give them my report card on what they’ve messed up so far.

Have they done anything on the rising cost of food? A big fat F. On addressing some of the rent problems that people of Saskatchewan are facing, the cost of housing, a big fat F. On addressing taxes, a big fat F. On dealing with the cost of medicine, a big fat F. On the high prices of gasoline, a big fat F. On helping families with power, with heat costs, insurance costs, a big fat F. On the Domtar deal, they ripped it up, a big fat F there. On essential services, a big fat F. Municipal financing and funding, a big fat F. And on the environment, a big fat F as well, Mr. Chair.

So look at what they have done. In the five or six months that they’ve been in government, they really have not done anything. All they have done is spend money that they inherited from the people of Saskatchewan. And every file that they have touched, they have messed up, Mr. Chair, every file.

So I want to point out again, I want to point out again, the North is also looking at what this government does. They’re looking at what this government does. So once again we’re going to check what they do. Whether it’s Indian and Métis Affairs funding cuts or whether it’s Northern Affairs cuts, we’re going to see what they do in the North.

So my question I have for the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party. When we began, when we began the effort in northern Saskatchewan to do the one road that was really important to the Northwest, was to connect Fort McMurray into our region

— the La Loche, Fort McMurray road — our former premier took the initiative on three or four occasions to sit down with the then premier, Ralph Klein, and get Premier Klein to commit to have this road done.

Now we all know Premier Klein was ousted. He was ousted. And now they have a new premier. And, Mr. Chairman, the point of the matter is there was discussions that happened in the States, I believe. There was discussions happened in Ottawa, and a variety of other locations that our former premier undertook with the Alberta premier to get this road done. And, Mr. Chair, it's only 70 kilometres, 70 kilometres to build a road into Fort McMurray, to see all these wonderful opportunities, in particular for the people of La Loche, and more in particular for the people of northwestern Saskatchewan, and really for all of Saskatchewan.

So the question I have, with all the wealth that you have, all the money you have . . . And a significant point I would make is that when we were in power the first 13, 14 years was cleaning the mess left behind by those guys over there. So now that these guys have all this money . . . People are working. They're getting record revenues. We're saying, give it back to the people. Give it back to these priority areas, and you haven't been able to even do that correct.

So my question, the single important link for the northwest part of Saskatchewan besides the Far North road is the connection from Fort McMurray to La Loche and Buffalo Narrows and on. Will that hon. member undertake a personal initiative as our former NDP premier did, and get a commitment from his counterpart, the Alberta Premier Stelmach, to get that road done — yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well a couple of comments before we get to the member's question, which is an interesting one, given the fact that the commitment was made and I'm sure the new government — which is the same party — will maintain the commitment that was made.

But interesting that the long preamble to that question, Mr. Chairman, involved the member almost dislocating his arm patting himself on the back. He forgot, he forgot one A for them, an A for arrogance. Can you believe the preamble to the question? Can you believe it, Mr. Chair? That party, that party on November 7 was rejected by the people of the province of Saskatchewan. What was the popular vote — 37 per cent of the support at a time of unprecedented growth in the . . . 37 per cent support, 37 per cent support.

[17:15]

Have we heard any contrition from members opposite? Have we heard them say you know what we made some mistakes, and we got it wrong, and we're going to listen to the message from Saskatchewan people and we're going to learn from them, we're going to learn a little bit of humility? Mr. Chairman, have we heard any of that? No. And leading that grade, leading the parade of arrogance is that member for Athabasca who says, his conclusion must be, look I've given ourselves all A's so all of the people of the province of Saskatchewan are wrong because they chose to boot us out of office, and I am right.

Imagine, imagine, Mr. Chairman, everyone's shock that that party still fails to connect with Saskatchewan people with that kind of attitude. Imagine, imagine the fact, Mr. Chair, imagine the fact, Mr. Chair, that they remain mired, mired way down in the polls, way down in the polls, Mr. Chair, with that kind of attitude. You know, Mr. Chair, I know it's counter to the rules, so let me apologize in advance for referencing the fact that the hon. member's left the Chamber — asked a big long question about the road and walked out.

The Chair: — We have a tradition here of not mentioning members either in the Chamber or outside of the Chamber. I would ask that that rule be observed.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well the heckling comes from this member from Massey Place about whether something's classy or not when this is the behaviour of his hon. member who was asking a question, purportedly on behalf of the people of Athabasca. Mr. Chairman, first of all, I apologize for the reference that I just made to the fact that the member left the Chamber before I had a chance to answer the question.

I will say this, I will say this, that there's another report card that is worth noting, and other comments from groups right across Canada that are worth noting, with respect to reviews on our government and what we've been able to achieve in only five or six months. The Royal Bank provincial outlook says that Saskatchewan will lead all provinces in economic growth, not just this year but next year. The Canada West Foundation annual economic profile and forecast states the outlook for our economy is excellent, that our GDP [gross domestic product] will grow at 3.6 per cent. We've seen editorials only a few weeks ago in the *Leader-Post* from columnists in Edmonton who note that the new growth oriented governments in Saskatchewan and BC [British Columbia] — the new growth oriented governments here — are going to give Alberta a run for its money.

We see BMO Financial Group predicting Saskatchewan will be Canada's economic leader in 2008. We see references in the London *Financial Times* of not just the economy, but the brand new government in the province of Saskatchewan making the right steps in terms of balancing our labour legislative agenda, sending the right signals on royalties for our province. And by the way, I note that the member, I think, for Regina Coronation Park just yesterday was advocating the NDP's position on royalties, which is that they should go up.

What would happen to the growth that is fuelling jobs and opportunities in our province if ever they were in charge again, if ever they were allowed to squander the momentum, to squander the growth that we see in the province?

Here's some more of our report card. With respect to population growth, we are as of May '08 — our checklist — second in Canada. Average economic development growth, first in Canada. Average weekly earnings, second in Canada. Unemployment rate — in terms of being low — third in Canada. Number of people employed, we need to do some more work there because we've got a labour shortage. Wholesale trade, first in Canada. Retail sales, first in Canada. Construction overall, in terms of building permits, second in Canada. Residential building permits, second in Canada. New vehicle

sales, third in Canada.

There's been other reports recently in the media about what the people of the province think of this government when they've been asked by pollsters and those who seek the opinion of people in Saskatchewan. They asked the people of the province what they thought about the labour legislative changes that we are making. Seventy per cent, on the substantive measures and The Trade Union Act amendments and essential services, 70 per cent of the people of this province support what this government is doing.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — We've seen other polls just before the session which indicate that even though we were over 50 per cent on November 7, we've actually moved up. We know there's more work to be done. We know we have to continue to earn that support. We're going to do that.

One of the ways we will earn that support is to make sure that there are opportunities for development in the North. And so the province certainly will continue with the remaining about 8 kilometres or so of the road on our side of the border. The answer to the question is, will we be raising it with the Alberta government, the fact that their work needs to happen? The answer to that is yes. We can't obviously control what they do, but the point will be made.

Interesting though, the premise of the question, the premise of the question was that so Saskatchewan people can leave his constituency and find work in Fort McMurray. I don't think he's been reading the newspapers or following what's been happening with our economy or looking at the opportunities of oil sands development, and in the case of his constituency, also particularly of new mineral exploration and mining development in his own backyard. Because you know what? The rest of the province is talking about — not the member and not the NDP — but the rest of the province and the rest of the country is talking not about how people are leaving Saskatchewan to go elsewhere but how people from other parts of Canada are coming to Saskatchewan to seek opportunities, Mr. Chair.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Chair: — I recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to weigh in on the Premier's estimates here. You know, it's been a long day — I have to say — here listening to our Premier spin and twist and carry all sorts of messages by snagging a message from the member from Regina Elphinstone and twist it into something else or grab something from the member from Athabasca. But if that's how he chooses to carry himself as our now newly minted Premier, I guess that's his choice.

I will definitely offer him the chance here to display, display something he was just talking about. And I guess he was talking about contrition. He was talking about admitting mistakes, and he was talking about humility. And I think that he will have the opportunity, if he's the statesman that I believe the province

expects our Premier to be, to be able to extend and display all of those things in the answer to my question.

It's well known that under our Premier's leadership, our now Premier's leadership — the then leader of the opposition — that this party criss-crossed this province making promises all over the place about school closures. They would go out to town hall meetings and would share all sorts of statements about where these should be staved off, these shouldn't be happening, and that the NDP government was failing on this end.

And I guess people expected an awful lot of this new Saskatchewan Party government and rightfully so. Not because the people of the province aren't intelligent. Quite the opposite. Because they listened to these folks opposite, the members opposite, and they trusted them.

And I guess I'll just maybe share a statement from one year ago that was our opposition leader at the time, the opposition leader at the time, our now Premier. And this is from the *Moose Jaw Times-Herald* on April 18, quote: "Wall said the party would end closure for most of 50 schools by designating funds to schools of opportunity and schools of necessity." So we're talking about most of the schools there. Now that's the majority of school closures would be closed. Well we'll get to it in a bit, a little bit more here, but we know that that's certainly not happening. We're maybe talking about a couple of schools being staved off for a couple of years.

But again I guess the people of this province aren't stupid to believe that this party was going to stave off on school closures. The people of this province had high expectations for good reasons. And they're incredibly intelligent. And they had good reason to. When we have our now Minister of Finance, the then Education critic, on June 21 issuing press releases with, and I quote, and this is from the Sask Party press release:

Gantefoer said he understands that keeping schools slated for closure open will cost money, and promised those funds will paid-out retroactively, should the Sask Party form government.

And this is just a . . . I mean, I have stacks of quotes here that could validate again why the people of this province had rightful high expectations of this government, but this government's failed to deliver on this end. The facts are this. The facts are that the legislation that was presented was status quo. It held what's going forward . . . or what's been in the past with some minor tweaks. There's not significant changes here.

We're talking about insufficient funding across the board for school divisions. And when it comes down to school closures, funding might be one of the biggest factors, of course also declining enrolments, but insufficient funding across the board. We're talking more than 20 out of 28 school divisions that have seen insufficient funding. This is a real hurt on education in rural Saskatchewan.

Off-loading of the technology-supported learning program on to school divisions without providing any resources or any capacity to do this, well this has been a tool that rural Saskatchewan has utilized in remote areas for many, many years, amongst others to ensure that they had equal access to the

course and programs that were going to allow them to be able to go forward with all the different future ambitions that you would in a larger centre — another attack on rural Saskatchewan.

Now we want to talk . . . And I know the minister's proud of adding transportation funding, increasing the funding on transportation. Well you know what? I think each of us pay, Mr. Chair . . . Sorry, through you, Mr. Chair, we each go to the gas pump every day, and we know where that extra transportation funding's going, and it's certainly not for the betterment of the school division. It's being eaten up at the pump just like every single resident in this province knows, so we're not even keeping up with the cost of gas.

Then we want to look at the facts on this issue — terrible, inequitable, inequitable communication. We have the member from Thunder Creek two months ago out, you know, offering promises and commitments in his constituency.

We have the Premier two months ago out in his offering all sorts of commitments, saying we're going to have a much more rigorous process — something that hasn't happened. Two months ago the Premier thought we were going to see a much more rigorous process. We haven't seen that. Two months ago when the Premier said that, he challenged the autonomy of school divisions across this province. He dismissed and disrespected the process that school boards have gone through in the past and that were engaged in at the time.

What else do we see? We see \$1 million, a measly million dollars for schools of opportunity, and the member from Kindersley says, a measly. That's right, \$1 million is a lot of money, but it's certainly not a lot of money for looking at trying to address, if we're trying to address the needs of school closures. When we have a Premier who said a year ago that he's going to address most of the school closures through school of opportunity — \$1 million goes nowhere for that.

I guess we're getting to the point here. The Premier and his cabinet have the knowledge, they have the authority, they have the resources to follow through on their many, many promises. They've chosen not to. They've chosen to break those promises.

I guess my question to the Premier is: why the change of heart? What does the Premier have to say to all those he broke promises with, and why is rural Saskatchewan, education in rural Saskatchewan struggling under his leadership?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Chair: — Order, order. Order. Order. There's been a little more increased chatter going on. I know that we've been here for a while and Premier's estimates are a little more vocal, a little more intense, but it's starting a little loud and even when the question isn't being asked, I would like a little more quiet here, so the people on the floor and the people that are talking, I can hear both the questioner and the answer that's being put. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, thank you to the hon. member for the question. We will be . . . I'm not sure if it's happened already because I promised to table my definition of the word

mall. We'll also be tabling our definition of the word measly in a moment for the hon. member's benefit. It might be a million. It might be less or more than a million, but we'll get that definition to the hon. member.

He raises an important question with respect to rural education in Saskatchewan. And we have seen, we have seen under the NDP government previously, as we have in so many other areas, a real disrespect and a disregard for the realities of rural Saskatchewan.

Certainly true of . . . And we talked a little bit, frankly, about agriculture policies of the government. They would never fully fund their share of the farm safety net programs, for example. They refused to deal with crop insurance issues and while the hon. member who was now the premier made several promises with respect to property tax, doing something with respect to the education portion of property tax, he never did it. He wasn't able to keep his promise.

Part of the reason why they lack credibility on education, on real issues right now today — and I'm speaking of course of the NDP — that is a fact notwithstanding the very animated questioning from the new member from Regina who's just asked the question on The Education Act.

[17:30]

What is pretty clear though is that he hasn't read the Act. What is pretty clear, Mr. Chair, is that he has not or he's chosen either to . . . He's not read the Act or he's chosen to ignore the parts of the Act that clearly demonstrate the promises made by the Saskatchewan Party prior to the election have been kept. Promises for schools of opportunity designation and funding have been kept. Promises that the FOG, the foundation operating grant, needs to be reviewed,

And this is what it says in the platform. Let's just go through it. Here's what we campaigned on:

Revising the Education Act to improve consultation and assessment process before changes are made to school facilities;

Here's the definition of what the Act will do. The Act will include a school review committee of a maximum of nine members. This committee will include four members of the school community council, two members from the immediate community, two members from the surrounding municipality, in addition to one member from a First Nation reserve if the reserve has at least one pupil attending the school. The time for them to do the work to explore every other option, every other option, instead of that school closing, the time extended for that, the process extended for that is in this Act. Revise The Education Act to improve consultation and the assessment process before significant changes can be made to a facility. That's a promise made in the Act. It's a promise kept.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — You've got to read the Bill, I'd say to the hon. member. He's got to read the Bill and he may want to read the platform. We can table that as well, because if you go to the

next point in the Saskatchewan Party platform “Securing our Future,” it says:

Providing dedicated provincial funding for schools that meet stringent [and they should be stringent] criteria as schools of opportunity . . .

That’s in the platform; it’s in the Act. A promise made and a promise kept, Mr. Chairman.

Revise the foundation operating grant. The work’s under way. It’s a promise made and a promise kept, Mr. Chair.

So I guess, I guess the member thinks that standing up and saying something often enough will just make it true. I think he’s going to find as he spends more time in this Assembly that what better makes things true is the truth. What better makes things true is actually reflecting the Act that’s before the legislature right now, The Education Amendment Act.

And while he’s reading it again and reconsidering his position, while he’s doing that, Mr. Chairman, I think he may also want to reflect on a couple of questions. Why in government for years and years, but especially of late when school boards were working to close, were looking at school closures, why did they propose no such changes? Why did they not commit to rural Saskatchewan and the entire province that they would ensure that there was a process in place that would ask every single question, that would explore every opportunity before the irrevocable decision of a school closure is taken?

They had a chance to do that, Mr. Chair. They sat over here. They sat at the cabinet table. They had their processes for developing legislation. They could have stepped forward and ensured that there was that process, that consultation, that scrutiny of these decisions so that irrevocable school closures weren’t taken unnecessarily in the case of a community that was growing. But they chose not to do it.

Our government, Mr. Chairman, has kept its promises. Our government has signalled to school boards, by the way, that they ought to wait. They ought to wait on decisions that they’re taking with respect to school closures until the results of the Act are shown, until that opposition helps us pass that Act. And if that happens, Mr. Chairman, I’m very pleased to report more announcements like that of May 6, 2008 where the Prairie South Board of Education has defeated a motion to close the Eyebrow School at its regular meeting that was held today. And they’re going to take . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — They’re going to take a look, they’re going to take a look at opportunities provided under this Act.

I remember I was on an open-line show not long ago and I remember getting a call from a gentleman from Eyebrow prior to the Act being tabled — the Act that that member opposes, the Act that that member rants against in this Assembly and did the same here. And do you know what he said, do you know what he said, Mr. Chairman, this caller to the open-line show? He said Eyebrow is growing. There is oil and gas activity in the area. There are other agricultural-related opportunities. This is

not the right time to close the school. We think new families are coming to Eyebrow now and will continue to come in the future. There will be more students for the school. We think this is a school of opportunity.

And my response to him was, we made a promise in the campaign around schools for opportunity. He’s going to see a Bill introduced in the legislature that will keep that promise. The promise was kept. The board has made their decision with respect to Eyebrow. Now it’s up to a demonstration of growth for two years. Thereafter that school may close still if growth doesn’t happen, but for two years if it is designated a school of opportunity, as per the promise we made, there will be another chance for that school. There will be another chance because the people of Saskatchewan on November 7 said the province deserves more than just arrogance and ignoring a problem. It deserves some action with respect to school closures, and it deserves a party that in power keeps its promises. And that’s what we’ve done, Mr. Chair.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. The hour is drawing to a close when we will conclude the Premier’s estimates, and I know other members on this side have other questions. I have several questions which I . . . one or two. I do not expect the Premier perhaps to have the information here, but if he would commit to provide the information, we would appreciate that.

And they are these two questions: will he commit to provide to the opposition the numbers of staff now employed in each minister’s office, no. (1); and no. (2), the total number of staff now employed in Executive Council. Would he commit to provide those two answers?

An. Hon. Member: — And their names.

Mr. Calvert: — And their names.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the hon. member for his question. We will furnish the member with that information. In the very near future we’ll send over a letter with all the attached information.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I thank the Premier for that commitment. I want to also address a question to which I think the Premier will be able to answer today. We had a short discussion about this the last time we were doing some Premier’s estimates. And it had to do with a question that arose from an article which appeared in the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* on March 18, a column by Mr. Randy Burton, in which he makes this comment. It was a happy article from the government’s point of view. It showed the government apparently enjoying some fair public support. In any event the article indicated by Mr. Burton that, quote:

An internal poll conducted for the government recently shows the government is still enjoying a honeymoon with voters.

I asked the Premier in our last estimate experience if this poll had been paid for by Executive Council. He said it had not been paid for by Executive Council. And so I ask him now if he's had, in the intervening time, has had time to discover where in fact this poll was paid for as an internal poll conducted for the government.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, the answer is the same as it was when we discussed this in supplementary estimates and that is that although Mr. Burton very, very often has most everything right in his columns, whether they may take some opportunity to criticize the government or not, this is an occasion where the reference to this particular . . . these numbers that were in the column, his reference to this being an internal government poll were simply incorrect.

Mr. Calvert: — So then to be clear, is the Premier indicating that Mr. Burton — well he's just said Mr. Burton was wrong in what he reported — will he then say to the House, as the leader of the party, was this poll paid for by the Saskatchewan Party?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the question from the member. I think it's Executive Council estimates and so any issue before the Government of Saskatchewan, whether it's in Executive Council, whether it's writing to other ministries, I think is something that is certainly available here for scrutiny.

I will say this: the numbers that I saw in the article looked very much like party polling that we have undertaken that do show I think the number was 53 per cent support for the government of the day, and those numbers are very similar to research that we have done as a party.

And I think that's . . . although we understand, although we understand, Mr. Chair, that this is just very early on in the life of our government, we have a lot of work to do — to keep promises that we've made; to earn the support that we received from the people on November 7 — certainly to the extent that these were very similar to party polling, that was encouraging.

Mr. Calvert: — I assume from the Premier's answer that in fact the poll referred to by *The StarPhoenix* was a Sask Party poll and that's fair enough. But we'll want to confirm with Mr. Burton that in fact his information is wrong. Because there is a very serious question that will arise if in fact government funds were used to do this kind of political polling.

That said, Mr. Speaker, I've listened with interest to the Premier this afternoon. I've listened with interest to the Premier this afternoon. I want to pick up on one point because it is very close to my home. And before the Premier gets up and rants and raves and say you had 16 years to do it and didn't do it, I admit we didn't do it. But he has the opportunity, Mr. Chair, and the money to provide for the community of Pleasant Hill in Saskatoon a new St. Mary's School. He spoke rather glowingly of the school. I mean, his comments this afternoon, he spoke of his understanding of the need for a new St. Mary's School.

Now, Mr. Chair, I want him to go that one step further and explain how it is with the kind of resources available to this Premier and this government . . . You know, we talk about 1.5 billion in the bank. Well it's growing at a rapid rate, Mr. Chair.

With the kind of commitment that he's made to infrastructure, knowing that we have completed a new W.P. Bate School, two new high schools, but have not completed the new St. Mary's, will the Premier today . . . On behalf of those residents of Pleasant Hill, I ask the question: will he commit to a new St. Mary's School?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, hon. member, for the question. This school is very important, and it's in a sad state. And so certainly it, along with a number of other facilities, are a priority of our government. I want to say that to the hon. member. I also want to say that there are other facilities, both health care and education facilities in this province that are suffering from neglect, many, many years of neglect. And the hon. member says, you know, don't go back over the 16 years.

Well the truth of the matter is, especially in health care and in education, we have inherited . . . and in highways. But in these two areas, the questions on a school . . . We have inherited a huge, huge infrastructure deficit. It was the choice of this government . . . When tens of millions were needed, hundreds of millions were needed for education facility infrastructure investment, they put in over the years, you know, a fraction of that. The same is true for health care.

In this budget the billion dollar ready-for-growth initiative changes that. And can there be more? And should there be more? Is there still more deficit, infrastructure deficit to deal with, to overcome? Absolutely there is. We cannot fix years of neglect in six months.

But I want that member to know, with respect to St. Mary's and with respect to educational facilities in this province and health care facilities in this province, that we are serious when we say we have taken the time to learn from the experience of other jurisdictions who have seen rapid growth. We've learned from Alberta who said, make sure you're taking care of the infrastructure deficit across your province if you want to sustain the growth. That includes health care and education.

We have heard it loud and clear. The budget that was introduced by the Minister of Finance put those words into action. There is still more to be done and no one ought to doubt resolve of this government to get that work done, to learn those lessons, and to deal with issues that we've inherited like the St. Mary's School in Pleasant Hill.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[17:45]

Mr. Calvert: — Well, thank you, Mr. Chair, and I did not — I'm not sure if other members did or any of the viewing public in the Premier's response — hear a commitment to a new St. Mary's School. I did hear a commitment to further work and I'm sure that the residents of Saskatoon and Pleasant Hill and the separate board in Saskatoon will want to pursue this discussion further, as I will.

You know, Mr. Chair, the Premier talks about the infrastructure deficit, and fair enough to say there are needs in infrastructure in this province than when we were in government. We

recognized that. We recognized the need, for instance . . . we recognized, for instance, Mr. Chair, the need for infrastructure in his home city of Swift Current where we constructed a brand new regional hospital. We recognized the infrastructure of transportation in the southwest of this province where we completed the twinning of the No. 1 Highway.

Now the Premier is trying to base his entire approach to dealing with growth on infrastructure and he talks about the billion dollars in this budget. Well you know what the calculations have shown, Mr. Chair, that when it comes to the Highways budget, this new investment we're told will result in 28 new kilometres of paved road. Well that's important, Mr. Chair, 28 new kilometres. The budget document talks about twinning the No. 1 Highway. Well for goodness' sakes, Mr. Chair, Highway No. 1 has been twinned by the former government except the little space down at Moosomin that needs some road signs.

Mr. Chair, we have watched now a government come to office with a fair significant public support and a large majority. As my colleague from the North has pointed out in the debate this afternoon, no other government in the history of Canada has come to office with the kind of fiscal and financial resources that have been left behind by our government for this government to work with. No government coming into power in the history of Canada has come into that situation with an economy that is stronger and more functioning than the economy of Saskatchewan is today and was when they in fact assumed office. That's just the plain fact.

They have done little, if I may say, Mr. Chair, this Premier and his government have done very little, very little that would encourage and sustain economic growth — 28 new kilometres of highway. Now they've committed to maintain the royalty regime that we had in place — committed I guess to leave it there for 16 years, it's so good. They're benefiting from the changes we made to the potash industry and they have inherited well beyond even their own dreams because in the interim we have all watched how resource prices have climbed.

So that oil barrel that's coming out of Saskatchewan soil today is providing \$120 in value and it's hard even to imagine the kind of financial resources now available to this government. So how is it, Mr. Chair, how is it that in this circumstance of economic strength and fiscal capacity and wealth of the Sask Party government, that we're debating issues like no support for the renters of Saskatchewan?

The Premier's talked about support for property tax payers — as small as it is, at least it's something — but there is no support from this government for the thousands and thousands of families in this province who rent. No support from this government, from a billion five and more, for people who live in the inner city and have devoted years of work to a Station 20 project. They don't need the advice of the Premier on what to do. Mr. Chair, that project grew from the community. It wasn't a government project; it grew from the community.

Mr. Chair, why is it with this kind of wealth, they are cutting benefits from vulnerable workers? Health benefits. Why is it that they're ending a dental sealant program? And why, Mr. Chair, with this kind of wealth available to them, are they not seriously taking on the questions of the environment and the

reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in our province?

They adopted our targets. They recognized, they recognized the worth of the targets that we set, but what they did not recognize is \$320 million dedicated to that purpose from the sale of the upgrader. What did they do with that money? Well they've squandered it. They've simply dumped it into general revenue funds and out it goes. It's gone. This one-time sale is now gone, Mr. Chair. And they are left with targets, but no capacity and no plan to meet those targets for the future of this province and its people.

Mr. Chair, we've read headlines about this government that read something like this: "Government's actions signal trouble ahead." We've read headlines in this province's newspapers in the first five and six months of this government that read in bold letters, "Hypocrites," referring to the kinds of things that were being said before the election and the kinds of things we've seen since the election, Mr. Chair.

This government is early in its life. It's early in its mandate. It's only five and six months old. But, Mr. Chair, we're beginning to see a very troublesome pattern. A pattern. A pattern of incompetence. Incompetence in decision making — we've witnessed that again today — and a pattern that says this economic boom and financial benefit that they've inherited is not going to be shared with the many in our province. That people are being left behind today and will further be left behind in the future.

Mr. Chair, this Premier and this government has an opportunity, an opportunity to do the right things for the people of Saskatchewan, to do the right things for people who are in low-income circumstance, to do the right things for families across this province, to do the right things for farming families in our province. They have a capacity unlike any other government that has ever come to power in this province.

Now today we've listened to the Premier at length — at length — and those who I think have watched objectively would agree with me that what we have watched is an individual who has not given up the position of leader of the opposition.

We have heard a great deal of criticism of the former New Democratic Party government. We have heard very little from this Premier in way of substantive answers to specific questions. We have not heard from this Premier much of his agenda for the future of this province and we have heard even less about his agenda for the families and those who are bearing some of the costs of the boom.

And so, Mr. Chair, I take my place and I expect the Premier will rise and perhaps give us some further time for questioning. But let me say this, a very specific question to the Premier: with the resource revenues that are now flowing into the treasury, what precisely, what precisely is the fiscal balance today as a result of increased resource revenues? How much money today does the government have available to them as a result of the change in resource revenues?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, the finances of the province will be reported in due time when the next quarterly report is released and I know the hon. member will want to comment at

that point about the state of the finances. So will the Government of Saskatchewan.

I'm actually looking forward to that comment from the hon. member and from his party because I know what we didn't talk about here today in this legislature, and there is some historic economic momentum occurring in the province to be sure, right now in Saskatchewan. It's happening. The beginnings of that momentum happened prior to the last election. There's economic momentum. We have seen it step up, I would say, since the election. I've already pointed out commentaries that highlight the fact that our announcement with respect to royalties were part of the reason for this record quarter-billion dollar land sales we've seen in the last two months. I will point to the fact that labour legislative changes are also part of a growth agenda that are contributing to the momentum that we received.

But there is momentum right now in Saskatchewan. And there is certainly revenue streams coming into Saskatchewan, into the province. Everybody can understand, everyone understands and watches what happens to the price of WTI [West Texas Intermediate]. When the price of oil goes up, obviously revenues to oil generating jurisdictions goes up as well.

And so I find it passing strange that at this historic time in the province's history, when we had three hours available for the hon. member, the Leader of the Opposition, and myself to talk about the future, to talk about what it is that we should do with these revenues, to compare perhaps the challenges of current infrastructure demands with a desire to reduce debt for future generations, Mr. Chairman, we could have had that debate here today. That would have been a useful debate.

Last year we had a debate about nuclear power. As it turns out then, the then premier said, well we can't really even have a discussion about nuclear power because it doesn't make economic sense. Well I'm not sure, I said at the time, we're not sure if that's the case. What about small reactor technology? And we had a bit of a back and forth.

And he had his position and I had mine, but it was a substantive discussion about an important issue. We have 23 per cent of the uranium production in the world, sometimes up to a third, and we want to seek to see this resource benefit future generations. We want to add value to it. We want to create opportunity in Saskatchewan.

We could have had that discussion today. It's an important debate. There are people that feel strongly on either side of that. We could have talked about royalties. Our government has made a decision that we will not increase oil royalties, and we've seen the result of that.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Increasingly we hear from the NDP, they don't support it. At their convention they passed a resolution that said no, we want to increase royalties. And they quickly tabled that resolution, but it'll come back and they'll talk about it again. And every time they do, oil companies here and outside the province and hundreds of people who work for service companies cringe because they know, heaven forbid,

there's at least a thin chance that that outfit could form the next government. And we would see, then, royalty policies back to the 1970s that chased our industry to other places, Mr. Chairman.

We saw yesterday in the Legislative Assembly the hon. member for — I think it's Coronation Park, I think it's Coronation Park — hon. member for Coronation Park in a question in question period say, why is the Saskatchewan Party government promising corporations a royalty tax freeze while at the same time promising the people of Saskatchewan a power rate increase? What, what if . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well, and the Hon. Leader of the Opposition says, good question. The premise of it is that they don't want to see these royalty rates stay the same.

Now there are those — and I've talked to them in this province — who say no, we should be increasing royalty rates right now. And if that's their view, fair enough. This would be the place to have that debate and discussion. This is where we can talk about the future of the province of Saskatchewan. But he chose not to do that. He chose to do what he did and those aren't important questions. And Executive Council estimates are about answering questions that the opposition asks and I did that.

But I'm just pointing out, I'm just saying, Mr. Chairman, that what a great opportunity was lost because the hon. member opposite doesn't want to talk about oil sands development where he now is protesting against them even though he was granting permits. Doesn't want to talk about the duty to consult and accommodate, maybe the most important issue facing First Nations and development in the province. Didn't talk about, didn't mention First Nations once in a question, or this issue of the duty to consult and accommodate. Didn't talk about nuclear power. Didn't talk about whether or not we should take this opportunity to pay down some debt in the province or look at what we're doing with respect to taxes on people who have the lowest incomes in our province. That would have been an interesting debate.

We could have talked a little bit about how under the NDP in Saskatchewan, how under the NDP in Saskatchewan they taxed low income people at the highest rate of any province in Canada. Maybe it's time to fix another NDP mess. Maybe we could have had that discussion today. But the hon. member did not choose to do that.

I want to tell that member opposite though that these are the issues the people of Saskatchewan are talking about. You bet. They're talking about the cost of housing. They're talking about the cost of living. They were talking about the amazing growth they see in the province. They're asking questions about what do we do with this revenue. Should we pay down some debt? They're asking questions about nuclear power. But they would have watched today and throughout this session an NDP focus on themselves mostly, focus on their own declining interests.

That's why they're sitting over there, Mr. Chair, because they do not reflect the interests and the values of the people of the province of Saskatchewan. And what are those values? Well I don't think people in Saskatchewan expect too much of whoever their government is. I think one of the . . . at the top of the list of what they expect from a government is that a

government would do what it said it would do, that a Premier and a cabinet would do what they said they would do.

And so as we wrap up estimates I think it's worth a review. If that's an important measure of a government, and I believe it is — whether or not you keep your promises — let's see how the new government is doing, knowing that we can always, we can always do better. We can always improve. We can always learn from mistakes that we make.

Well the promise was made for a smaller cabinet. The promise was made. The promise was kept. The promise was made to eliminate the NDP used car tax. That promise was made. That promise was kept. A promise was made to cancel a Domtar deal that was a disservice to taxpayers and the people of Prince Albert. That promise was made. It was also kept. And now we're working with Domtar to get that operation moving again in Saskatchewan.

[18:00]

We made a promise to get tougher on drunk drivers. One of the first acts of this government, of the Minister of Justice, was to keep that promise. Mr. Chairman, we promised the creation of a new public-private partnership to take the politics out of economic development called Enterprise Saskatchewan. One of the Bills we introduced was an Act to create Enterprise Saskatchewan. It was a promise that was made and a promise that was kept.

We promised to end the games, playing around, when elections are in this province. And we've seen that NDP party play those games with Saskatchewan people. We promised fixed election dates. We promised them in the election and we delivered them. And, Mr. Chairman, there are many, many more promises yet to come. And I'm grateful for the opportunity to go over them just now.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, Mr. Chairman, as a wrap-up, we also promised legislation for trade union Act amendments that 70 per cent of the province supports. We made that promise. In about a week from now, we will keep that promise, Mr. Chairman.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — We promised, we promised, Mr. Chair, better cancer care for Saskatchewan people. We promised more funding to those fighting cancer. Promise made, promise kept, Mr. Chairman.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — We promised that we would stand with those who were fighting colorectal cancer by funding the drug Avastin. We made that promise in the election because we fully intended to keep that promise after the election, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — We promised to get rid of the wiener roast

tax the NDP imposed. We kept the promise. We promised to invest in our parks and in regional parks. We kept that promise, Mr. Chairman.

We promised, Mr. Chairman, to engage Saskatchewan people to ensure that they can help us go green, to give them a break to buy hybrid cars, and to do the right environmental things in their houses. A promise made and a promise kept, Mr. Chairman. We promised more police officers . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — We promised more police officers in the budget. We made that promise during the election because we planned to keep it after the election, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, we promised an aggressive youth retention strategy, a plan where young people could earn their tuition back if they would just stay in this province and help build it. We made that promise. Today, third reading, the promise was kept, Mr. Chairman.

And I could go on and on and on. I could go on and on. But allow me to just say this. We campaigned, Mr. Chairman, we campaigned on commitments that we made to Saskatchewan people in this platform. We intend to keep those promises. We intend to make sure that the prosperity we see today in Saskatchewan is sustained through infrastructure investments, through responsibility in the fiscal management of the province, through competitive taxes, through a competitive regulatory and labour environment, and yes, by ensuring that those most vulnerable among us are also participating in the prosperity.

And I'm prepared to say this early on in our government. By these measures, we will be prepared to be judged on election day on the 7th of November in about three and a half years from now. We all know the date because we kept that promise. We intend and welcome the chance to be judged by those commitments, by our vision, because these things we intend to do, Mr. Chairman.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, we seem to have extended the hour. I have several more questions, Mr. Chair, with your permission. Mr. Chair, I take it we've extended the hours; therefore I have several other questions.

While the Premier is on the subject of keeping promises, what about the promise that his Minister of Health made to health care workers in this province that there was no need for essential services legislation? What about the promise he made to get rid of the fiscal stabilization fund? What about the promise made by members opposite all across the province that they would keep your schools open? What about the promise made to farmers for acreage payments? What about those promises, Mr. Chair? Where does the Premier put those on his agenda?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, first of all with respect to essential services, and I guess we will go this one additional question even though we are past the time. And I think if we . . .

Actually, Mr. Chairman, I think if we refer to the record, we'd find out that last year I think the wrap-up by the hon. leader, the then premier, took us a little bit behind — minutes as we are now — beyond the exact time agreed to by both sides. But apparently it was okay then. It's okay then, but not now.

The answer to the question . . . The hon. member will know that in January about a year ago, my preference for investigating essential services legislation for the province, in the wake of a threat by plow operators — or not by the plow operators; they were never in support of it, I don't believe — but by SGEU [Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union] leadership to withdraw snowplow operators from servicing the province. In the wake of that, I was on the record as saying we ought to look at essential services legislation.

Now, Mr. Chair, there did not appear to be any more compelling need for specific statements on that regard. And what the hon. member, what the current Health minister said, was true. What happened in between the time that he made those statements was a strike affecting — how many? — 400 people a day in terms of their health care, a CUPE [Canadian Union of Public Employees] strike where there had been no essential services provision.

So should a government learn from that? Should a government take a look, another look at that and say, you know what? We better reconsider the need for essential services legislation. We better put the needs of Saskatchewan people first. We better put those who need cancer care ahead of any workplace interruption. We better put public safety ahead of our friendship that we may have with union leaderships, Mr. Chair.

And so we made that adjustment. And the people of the province of Saskatchewan, the people of the province of Saskatchewan stand by the adjustment we've made. The polling in the weekend paper shows they support essential services. They want us to choose health care and public safety over any work stoppage, and that's exactly what this government will do, Mr. Chair.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I want to take this opportunity on behalf of our entire caucus, and I'm sure on behalf of all members in the legislature and the public who observe, to thank those officials who have served the Premier well today. He has drawn on their expertise on a number of occasions. And because these officials who join us in the Premier's estimates do head the public service in Saskatchewan, I want to, through them, thank the entire public service, both at its most senior levels and at its very front lines, for the very, very committed and quality service they provide to the people of Saskatchewan. So our thanks to the officials who were here today to serve the legislature, and through them to all of our public service in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Chair: — The question before this committee is Executive Council, subvote (EX01) for the sum of 4,651,000. Is that agreed to?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. The next subvote is (EX07) for a total of 533,000. Is that agreed to?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Order. Next subvote is (EX04) for the subtotal of 1,442,000. Is that agreed to?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Next subvote (EX03) for the total of 1,531,000. Is that agreed to?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Next subvote (EX08), 454,000. Is that sum agreed to?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Next subvote is (EX06) for the total of \$105,000. Is that agreed to?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Before the committee:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2009 — Order! — the following sum for Executive Council, \$8,611,000.

Is that sum agreed to?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

[Vote 10 agreed to.]

The Chair: — That concludes the business before the committee. I would recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Chair of Committees. I want to thank first of all the officials who have joined us today from Executive Council. I appreciate the effort they've put into the preparation of information prior to the estimates, the Executive Council estimates, and of course their support and their help while we went through the estimates today.

I certainly want to agree with the Leader of the Opposition that now is the perfect opportunity through the deputy minister to the Premier to extend our thanks to the civil service of the province who have been a great source of help with respect to our efforts in transition as a brand new government to begin to implement our agenda, and so I want to take this opportunity to thank all of them.

May I also, Mr. Chair, thank all members for their questions that were asked today, for the exchanges that occurred after that. We are here because we have strong opinions about the future of the province and our communities, and we don't agree on everything. But on the principle objective, which is Saskatchewan's success, we agree. And so I acknowledge and

thank the members opposite who have asked questions out of their commitment to the province and to service here in Saskatchewan and in the Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, as well for your leadership through this committee process.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Chair: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'd like to move that we rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

The Chair: — Government House Leader has moved that we rise and report progress. Is that agreed to?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of committees.

Mr. Brkich: — I am instructed by the committee to rise and report progress.

The Speaker: — When shall the committee sit again? I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Gantfoer: — Next sitting, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

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

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. This Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 18:12.]

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Premier

Hon. Bob BJORNERUD
Minister of Agriculture
Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan Crop
Insurance Corporation

Hon. Bill Boyd
Minister of Energy and Resources
Minister Responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs

Hon. Ken CHEVELDAYOFF
Minister of Crown Corporations

Hon. Dan D'Autremont
Minister of Government Services
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Gaming Authority
Minister Responsible for the Information
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Minister Responsible for Northern Affairs

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Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission
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Minister of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing

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Minister of Municipal Affairs
Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan
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Minister of Education

Hon. Don McMorris
Minister of Health

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Minister of Justice
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Minister Responsible for the Workers'
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Hon. Christine Tell
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Minister Responsible for the Capital City Commission