



SECOND 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
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D'Autremont, Hon. Dan	SP	Cannington
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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
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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
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Schriemer, Joceline	SP	Saskatoon Sutherland
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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
Vermette, Doyle	NDP	Cumberland
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

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Yorkton.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today in the gallery I have three very special guests — James and Bryce Wilson, a father and son who happen to be very good friends of mine. James is a SaskTel manager from Yorkton as well as a very respected city councillor. His son Bryce is 16 years old, an excellent role model for his peers in Yorkton, and is very active in the community. Those are two of my guests, Mr. Speaker — very good friends.

As well, there's a very, very special guest in the Assembly today I'd like all members to welcome. It's my mother, Pat. She's been here a number of times, Mr. Speaker, but I've never had the opportunity to introduce her because it's usually been a special occasion, so this is it. She's a great role model, a loving mother, a hard worker. Hopefully I've acquired most of her work ethic and traits. And I feel bad for having to read this, Mr. Speaker, but there's so many things I've just got to read it off.

She's in large very responsible for why I'm here today, and she did give birth to me, so that's another big reason why I'm here today. She's an awesome mother for my two brothers and my sister, and I think a large part of her job as we were younger was keeping the three brothers from killing each other. Many times in my teens she probably thought she'd be visiting me in the big house, not in this House, and for that I'm very grateful. She was a very good role model to keep me from that path.

A very energetic lady, very active. I've had comments from people around this building as to how fast I move on my feet around here. In no small part it comes from my mother. In fact when she's doing her morning walks around Yorkton . . . She's retired but still moves like a gazelle, I'll tell you. And very often you'll hear a sonic boom around Yorkton, not from aircraft but from my mom.

She continues to work part-time in her retirement as well as volunteer in the community, church, and hospital, and local child hunger programs like the Soup Haven, and always has time for her family, Mr. Speaker. In fact continually she goes above and beyond and was probably the main caregiver to my two daughters as we spent our time helping our young son with his fight with cancer. So I'd just like all members here to welcome my mother to this Assembly today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly a group that are seated in your

gallery, and these are a group of graduate students who are pursuing a master's degree in either public management or public policy, and they are doing so at the Johnson-Shoyama school of public policy at the University of Regina. And they are accompanied by a person who is no stranger to the public service in Saskatchewan, Lynn Minja, who I believe is known to both sides of the Assembly. And I would ask all members to join with me in extending them a very warm welcome today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Highways.

Hon. Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan and as Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission, I would like to join the member opposite in his welcome of the graduate students from the school of public policy. The Johnson-Shoyama school of public policy is an important addition to our post-secondary potential and capability in the province, and we're glad that they're here to join us today; hope they learn much as a result of their attendance here. And we look forward to visiting you at the school at some point in the near future to discuss on a one-to-one basis some of the things that you're learning. Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Trew: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour today to introduce 28 grade 12 students seated in the east gallery. These students are from Thom Collegiate. Their teacher is Jeff Perry, and Mr. Perry has brought successive grade 12 classes to this legislature. I think it's safe for me to call this an annual event, for which I am very grateful because of the opportunity for the grade 12 students to see us in action and to just get a little bit of a discussion going about what it is to have a parliamentary democracy.

I met with this group a little bit earlier. They had some very interesting questions. And before I take my place I want to point out this 28-person, grade 12 soon-to-be-graduating class from Thom Collegiate really epitomizes what Saskatchewan's future is all about: bright, energetic, intelligent and they're going to go far. That's my prediction. Mr. Speaker, please join me in welcoming the grade 12's from Thom Collegiate.

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 introduce to you in the western gallery an individual who's a sound engineer, a musician. I'm speaking of John Bidochka, of course. John had been a constituent of mine. I unfortunately lost him to a move. I believe he's now in Regina Douglas Park. But John recently entered a great rendition of his anthem for the *Hockey Night in Canada* contest. It was a great

song, Mr. Speaker, but it didn't make it to the final cut, sadly. But anyway I'd invite all members to join with me in welcoming John Bidochka to his legislature. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Furber: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I rise with a petition in support of public safety and security in Saskatchewan. The petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government, in the interest of the safety and security of Saskatchewan families, residents, and communities, to immediately cause the Minister of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing to undertake a thorough consultation with a broad group of stakeholders — including the policing community; corrections community; community agencies, organizations, and educators that interface with gangs — so that he might understand the risks and challenges that gangs present to our communities.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

I so present.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition on behalf of Saskatchewan residents who have concern that Saskatchewan families are struggling to find quality child care for their children and concerns that this limits their future in our economy. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government through consultation with the child care community to immediately invest in growing the capacity of the early child care community to enable new child care spaces. This investment must include infrastructure funding for new facilities and expansion, funding to significantly increase the number of early childhood diploma and certificate training seats, and funding to ensure that the sector is able to increase its wages and benefits to attract and retain the needed personnel.

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

Mr. Speaker, I present on behalf of citizens in Pilot Butte and Regina.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon

Massey Place.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to present a petition concerning the Sask Party's decision to axe funding for Station 20. And the petition 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 who signed this petition, some of them are from my constituency of Saskatoon Massey Place, and other individuals are from various neighbourhoods of Saskatoon. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present petitions in support of a reduction in the education portion of property taxes. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to stop withholding and to provide significant, sustainable, long-term property tax relief to property owners by 2009 through significantly increasing the provincial portion of education funding.

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

And these petitioners are from Regina, concerned folks in Regina. And I so present.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Ruling on a Point of Order

The Speaker: — Before I call my next order of the day, I wish to rule on three matters that arose during yesterday's proceedings. I have chosen to make my statements at this earlier point in the day in order to allow my rulings to guide the proceedings during statements by members and question period.

Yesterday while listening to the statements by members during routine proceedings and later during debate on the address in reply, I became concerned over the choice of words and the level of discourse on display in the Assembly. I have reviewed the *Hansard* from yesterday and wish to highlight two matters of concern.

Firstly I find that on one occasion during the period of statements by members, remarks were made that insinuated untruthfulness on the part of hon. members. This occurred during the remarks of the member for Wood River where he indirectly insinuated that members of the NDP [New

Democratic Party] had knowingly misled this Assembly and the public on the Carriere settlement agreement.

Members are well aware that it is not permissible to accuse or suggest that another member was not being truthful or that they intentionally misled the House. This practice is codified in our rule 50(f), in paragraph 484(3) of Beauchesne's *Parliamentary Rules & Forms*, 6th Edition, and on page 525 of Marleau and Montpetit's *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*.

I call upon the member for Wood River to withdraw his remarks.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Speaker, I'll withdraw those remarks.

The Speaker: — I thank the member.

Secondly I wish to remind members of their responsibility to conduct themselves in a manner befitting this Assembly. There have been several instances in recent days when the choice of language has given cause for concern. In these early days of a new session, it is beneficial to revisit the guidance found in a ruling of May 29, 2000:

... Members are responsible for the words that they choose to use. Their words may be enthusiastic ... but that enthusiasm must be tempered by honest beliefs and an absence of insinuations and aspersions levelled against colleagues.

Previous rulings have often referred to paragraph 491 of Beauchesne's, 6th Edition, and I find it fitting to remind the House of one quotation from it, namely, that the "... language used in the House should be temperate and worthy of the place in which it is spoken."

I now wish to address the point of order raised yesterday by the Opposition House Leader. His point of order concerned the relevancy of certain responses given during question period. I also wish to thank the Government Deputy House Leader for her remarks.

In stating his point of order, the Opposition House Leader cited rule 19(3), which requires that "Responses shall be relevant to the question." This recently adopted rule codifies a well-established parliamentary practice: while ministers have a degree of latitude in how they choose to phrase their replies, the answers must nevertheless deal with the subject matter raised.

I direct members to page 431 of Marleau and Montpetit's *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, and to rulings by previous Speakers on December 22, 1986, December 18, 2002, and April 3, 2006, which also dealt with this point.

The exchange at issue can be found on pages 1503 to 1505 of Monday's *Hansard*. The questions were posed by the member for Regina Dewdney and centred on public safety and the government's approach in notifying the public when offenders escape from custody.

Two ministers responded on behalf of the cabinet. The responses provided by the Minister of Corrections, Public

Safety and Policing outlined the policy and actions taken by his ministry to address the matter. In contrast, the responses provided by the Minister of Environment related to a previous government's handling of the Murdoch Carriere settlement.

I find that the Minister of Environment's responses to the question posed by the member for Regina Dewdney were not relevant and they were not in order. Members are advised that their answers must be relevant to the question asked. If they are unable to provide a relevant response, they may decline to answer or they may take notice of the question. Thank you.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Biggar.

Delisle Chiefs Remember Terry Rak

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recently had the honour of attending the home opener of the junior hockey club, Delisle Chiefs. The game was dedicated to the Rak family. The origins of the Delisle Chiefs goes back to the Saskatoon Chiefs hockey club which, as Mrs. Rak states, was founded by Terry Rak's passions. He loved the game and especially the interaction with players, coaching staff, and other team managers.

This love affair lasted until Terry was diagnosed with colon cancer and his untimely passing on June 22, 2007. The family was keenly interested in keeping Terry's legacy of love for the Chiefs alive. After a one-year leave of absence from the league, the title of the Chiefs moved to Delisle, Saskatchewan, under the helm of the highly enthusiastic and motivated hockey persona of Gordy Ouellette. The Rak family is very happy with the continuation of the Chiefs hockey club and extremely pleased with the team's jersey sporting the initials T.R., and thank the town of Delisle for embracing the Chiefs.

[13:45]

I would like to extend my congratulations to the volunteers, managers, coaches, parents, owners, and players that have brought the Chiefs junior hockey club to Delisle. The dedication it takes to put a team on the ice is immense and commendable. To all involved with the Delisle Chiefs, keep up the good work and good luck in the future.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Prince Albert Celebrates First Nations Culture

Mr. Furber: — On October 9 and 10, Prince Albert hosted the 2008 Aboriginal Music and Arts Festival. The event began with the Waniska Gala Banquet held at the Art Hauser Centre. Gordon Tootoosis was the guest of honour. This event was well-attended, Mr. Speaker, and was a wonderful prelude to the Music and Arts Festival also hosted by Gordon Tootoosis and held the following evening at the E.A. Rawlinson Centre. As part of the festival, 25 talented youth produced and performed the second annual Northern Spirits Showcase.

Mr. Speaker, the celebration of First Nations culture continued throughout the weekend with the Northern Lights Casino 10th Annual Thanksgiving Powwow at the Art Hauser Centre which saw over 500 dancers competing in various categories. The rich pageantry was a sight to behold, to be sure. I was very pleased to attend the powwow and take part in the grand entrance Sunday evening. The weekend concluded with a spectacular fireworks extravaganza, which is still being talked about in Prince Albert.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join with me in congratulating and acknowledging the accomplishments of the organizers and artists of the Waniska Gala Banquet, Aboriginal Music and Arts Festival, the Northern Spirits Showcase, and the Northern Lights Casino 10th Annual Thanksgiving Powwow. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Estevan.

Positive Reaction to Funding for Technology Infrastructure

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In recognition of Education Week, our government made a major announcement that will give Saskatchewan people, no matter where they live, access to educational opportunities they have never had before. We announced nearly \$10 million in funding to enhance technology infrastructure in libraries, schools, and regional colleges.

About half of that money will go to implement a computer system that enables libraries province-wide to share their resources. The rest will be spent on setting up systems to facilitate online and satellite learning for schools province-wide.

Reaction has been overwhelmingly positive. Southeast Regional Library director Allan Johnson described the announcement as the most significant since 1967 when regional libraries were first developed. Multitype Library board Chair Zenon Zuzak said:

A lot of work has been done to develop the vision, to dream the impossible dreams . . . With this funding announcement today this dream will become a reality.

Saskatchewan School Boards Association executive director, Ernie Cychmistruk, said:

The fact that the satellite hardware and supports will soon be in every Saskatchewan school — rural and urban — holds a great deal of promise for enhancing learning opportunities for students.

But perhaps it was Jan Smith, Palliser Regional Library director, who summed it up best and definitely most shortest with “We are so happy.”

Mr. Speaker, improving and maintaining our province’s infrastructure is closely linked to our growing economy, improving our quality of life, and taking pride in where we live. These long overdue technology improvements for schools and

libraries will play a key role in that. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

The 100-Mile Journey

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On July 18 and 19, Shannon Loutitt, a neighbour of mine from Saskatoon Centre, ran a very special journey from the Edmonton legislative grounds to Athabasca. Calling it the 100-mile journey to bring a hero’s spirit home, she retraced her great-grandfather’s run in 1904 when, as a Métis mail runner for the Hudson Bay Company, he ran from Athabasca to Edmonton to warn of an impending flood. He did it in 16 hours, beating a rider on a horse by an hour. It was an extraordinary feat.

I was delighted to be there at the start to wish Shannon Godspeed on behalf of her neighbours back home. She completed the run with lots of help from supporters, including the Saskatchewan senator, Lillian Dyck, Chief Willie Littlechild, and Chief Tammy Cook-Searson of the La Ronge Indian Band, who ran the last eight hours, some 60 kilometres with Shannon.

Of course Shannon’s journey to bring a hero’s spirit home was very personal, but Shannon sees a larger role for running in building and strengthening our community as she helped organize a one-day, city-wide relay that included over 10,000 Saskatoon schoolchildren this past May. She also helped celebrate Tom Longboat’s 100th anniversary by running in the Boston Marathon, and I was delighted to speak of Shannon’s experience in Boston in the legislature a few years ago.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating Shannon on this truly amazing accomplishment, and we wish her the very best in her future endeavours. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Moose Jaw Food Drive

Mr. Michelson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A big salute to the citizens of Moose Jaw for the success of the Food Bank food drive last Friday. Each Halloween for the past three years, the Hillcrest Apostolic Church has organized a city-wide food blitz in support of the Moose Jaw Food Bank.

Some 350 volunteers committed their time to solicit the entire city for non-perishable foods. Dozens of drivers with pickup trucks and vans, followed by hundreds of door-to-door canvassers throughout the city. Meanwhile dozens of other volunteers were kept busy sorting the foods into specific categories to be boxed up and delivered for distribution by the Food Bank. The scene of the sorting centre reminded me much of the hustle bustle of a stock exchange as people hurriedly worked together for the cause.

I was part of the campaign and I can speak proudly of the volunteers and the citizens of Moose Jaw who showed their support and generosity. In most cases the pre-circulated Food Bank paper bag was filled and placed by the trick-or-treat treats, ready for volunteer pickup. In some cases people simply didn't have time to fill up the bag but insisted on being part of the process and went through their cupboards to find products to donate. This year a record of 39,500 pounds, almost 20 tonnes of food, was collected.

There are dozens of gracious stories where people expressed their appreciation of the campaign and enjoyed donating and volunteering for this worthy cause. Thank you to the donors, the volunteers, and the organizers for giving such generosity. Our efforts are appreciated, to show that Moose Jaw is a community of . . .

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Sports Hall of Fame Induction Dinner

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. North Battleford is home of one of seven community-based sports halls of fame in Saskatchewan. It is managed by a large team of volunteers throughout The Battlefords and has amassed over the last 20 years a collection second to none in the province. As has been said, Mr. Speaker, you go in to look around for half an hour and you'll stay for half a day.

On Saturday, November 1, the eighth annual induction ceremonies for the Hall of Fame were held. This year's inductees are Alex "Wuttunee" Decoteau, originally from the Red Pheasant First Nation, an athlete and soldier who, as a runner, represented Canada in the 1912 Olympic Games in Stockholm, Sweden; Fiona Smith Bell, a women's hockey great who played nine years with the Canadian national program and brought home nine international medals; Ray Hickson, whose community-building efforts in many fields included an extraordinary commitment to The Battlefords minor baseball program, especially for equipment and facilities.

Also inducted were two teams: first, the 1999-2000 North Battleford North Stars hockey team, which became the first team in franchise history to capture the Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League title, and with it went on to achieve the Anavet Cup; and, Mr. Speaker, the 1958 North Battleford Junior Beavers baseball club, which captured its first provincial junior baseball championship in the history of the Saskatchewan Junior Baseball Association.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to recognize and congratulate this year's inductees and the hard and dedicated work of the volunteers of the North Battleford Sports Hall of Fame and Museum. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatchewan Rivers.

Comments Regarding Settlement

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to read to this Assembly a statement written last Friday by one of Murdoch Carriere's victims, and I quote:

Upon reading the article in today's Leader-Post, victims of the Carriere assault are all in shock.

It was very painful to hear that Carriere received such a large amount of money to compensate him for all his pain and suffering.

Those words are unbelievable to us — that the man responsible for assaulting us for years received compensation for pain and suffering.

Murdoch Carriere was a friend to many politicians in office at that time, and it's clear our feelings as victims were secondary in the former government's battle to keep their friend Murdoch from hard times.

Murdoch Carriere should have been fired with cause several years before 2003 for harassing women.

We have all suffered for many years, and the injustice of the incident continually comes back and strikes us in the face.

Unfortunately this does nothing to ease the anger and the shock that the victims have experienced over hearing about this secret agreement.

We all hoped that justice would prevail.

Apparently not.

Where is our justice?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION PERIOD

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

SaskEnergy's Investment Strategy

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government is talking about selling our majority stake in Heritage Gas. To the Minister Responsible for Crown Investments Corporation: is Heritage Gas a profitable company?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I notice Heritage Gas is quite important in Halifax. I know that as well that the people there are utilizing the services of Heritage Gas. However Saskatchewan has made a large investment in Heritage Gas but as yet have not received a

positive return, Mr. Speaker. So as of the present time, the best information I have is that Heritage Gas is not profitable.

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

Mr. Trew: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I want to quote from the *Halifax Chronicle Herald*. Quote:

... a Saskatchewan government spokesman, would not disclose the amount of the investment made in Heritage Gas but said it wasn't one of the investments losing money for the provincial government.

Ergo, it's got to be making money.

Mr. Speaker, the government's own spokesperson, the government's own spokesperson says this is a profitable investment. If the minister plans to go ahead and sell the profitable Heritage Gas, how will this affect the revenues of SaskEnergy?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Heritage Gas, as in any large construction operation, takes place over a period of time. You have costs upfront, Mr. Speaker, and you have ongoing costs. The construction of the Heritage Gas system in Halifax is not yet completed, so the costs are not yet completely known to SaskEnergy to be able to make an evaluation as to whether this company will or will not be profitable . . .

The Speaker: — Order. The minister may complete his response.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So the costs continue to occur to SaskEnergy. We are unable at this time to make a determination as to whether or not at some point in the future it may be profitable. Mr. Speaker, it's an investment, however, outside of Saskatchewan when this is the number one economy in Canada, and we should be investing here.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, I don't know where to go. The government's own spokesperson . . .

The Speaker: — I call the members to order. The member from Regina Coronation Park.

Mr. Trew: — And, Mr. Speaker, if you think I'm confused, you want to check with the government ministers about this. I've never seen more confusion than what they're displaying right now. Their own spokesman says Heritage Gas is profitable, and yet the minister stands here and says, well

maybe somewhere in the future it might be. Well who's on first here? It's a profitable corporation.

Mr. Speaker, again quoting from the *Halifax Chronicle Herald*. Quote, "Mr. Woods said the government will use the money from the eventual sale of Heritage Gas for an investment within Saskatchewan."

Well this Saskatchewan investment will have to earn tens of millions of dollars just to make up for the lost earnings from Heritage Gas. To the minister: what will this investment in Saskatchewan be, and can he guarantee the investment will replace all of the profits of Heritage Gas?

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

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, this is an ongoing project. The final costs are not yet determined because the entire construction project has not been built. But I can assure the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, that we will be investing any returns that we gather from that project, Mr. Speaker, here in Saskatchewan.

[14:00]

We won't be, Mr. Speaker, investing in those kind of projects that they invested on previously, like \$15 million loss in Channel Lake while that member was sitting on the government side of the House; \$2 million in Guyana, Mr. Speaker; \$16 million that they lost in Chicago; \$9.4 million lost in Newfoundland, Mr. Speaker; \$24.7 million lost in Atlanta, Georgia, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The minister's time has elapsed. I recognize the member from Regina Coronation Park.

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, it's clear the government is selling off a profitable investment of SaskEnergy's. Heritage Gas is profitable now and it's signed a 25-year lease. It's projected to be profitable far into the future. The heavy work and the heavy investment of a start-up company is just ending, Mr. Speaker, and the rewards are now flowing and growing with Heritage Gas.

To the minister: since he is replacing a profitable investment with an unknown one, can he guarantee that this means no loss of revenue for SaskEnergy and therefore no more rate increases for Saskatchewan consumers?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can understand that member asking the question, which way to go. Because clearly, Mr. Speaker, when they were in government, they didn't know which way to go.

You know, the member opposite says that they foresee a profit far down into the future, Mr. Speaker. Well their own projects that they initiated, Mr. Speaker, outside of the province were

saying a 22 per cent return, and yet they recovered a negative 15 per cent. Now that's what I would call profits far into the future, Mr. Speaker, because they never occurred.

Things like, Mr. Speaker, \$10 million lost in Manitoba on Craig Wireless; \$72 million — you know how much support that could give to the people of Saskatchewan — \$72 million lost by Navigata in British Columbia. We're not going there, Mr. Speaker, like the NDP.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Trew: — Well, Mr. Speaker, we've already seen a 20 per cent increase in SaskEnergy rates. The government's already told us they're not going to use one dime of their surplus to help out Saskatchewan ratepayers. But now they won't even guarantee that their ideological drive to sell off profitable investments won't result in yet further rate increases.

So the Minister of CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan]: if he is so convinced that this plan is good for SaskEnergy and good for the people of Saskatchewan, then why is he so afraid to say that it won't result in a rate hike for Saskatchewan consumers?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, when you look over the list of losers that the previous administration invested in, you understand why the Crown corporations have to have an increase in rates, Mr. Speaker — because we have to pay for all the losses that they incurred, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, not only were those investments not made here in the province of Saskatchewan, they blew this money, Mr. Speaker, around the world.

The Speaker: — The Minister Responsible for Government Services.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the members opposite know SaskEnergy merely passes on the price of gas to the consumers. We do not make a single red cent of profit on that gas price, Mr. Speaker — not one red cent. This is the same policy that the previous administration carried forward, but we have to pay for their losses now, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Support for Livestock Producers

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture

announced yesterday the sell-off of 1.6 million acres of agricultural Crown land.

To the minister: who did he consult with before announcing this decision yesterday?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, actually the consultation has been all over the province of Saskatchewan. Producers, lessees all over the province, where they had cultivated land or pasture land, have been saying for years that they want an opportunity to purchase the land that they lease.

What we saw yesterday was a group in the rotunda yesterday — whether from SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] or the cattle industry out there — saying that this was a positive move that we made and long overdue. And I think the member should take notice that when their government was in power, they also sold about 600,000 acres since 1991. What we put on the table yesterday was 600,000 acres of cultivated land and 1 million acres of pasture land.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, according to the minister, the sale of all 1.6 million acres of land will raise about \$350 million. When asked on CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] radio what the government will do with this money, the minister replied, and I quote, "We want to improve the programming and things for producers out there right now, and I think this would loosen up some dollars for programs like that." Mr. Speaker, the minister is now telling livestock producers they should pay for their own assistance.

To the minister: given that the government is sitting on \$2 billion in cash, why doesn't he spend some of those dollars to aid livestock producers today instead of waiting for producers to pay for their own assistance?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the member opposite, and actually all the producers in the province, that if they aren't in a position financially to purchase the land or they're not interested in purchasing the land, they can continue on with their lease. We're not ending their lease.

But, Mr. Speaker, to make the statement that the member opposite did right now, we wouldn't have to repair the programs for agriculture in this province if, for 16 years, the NDP hadn't gutted every program that we have for farmers and ranchers.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, the livestock industry is struggling. In fact it's referred to as a tsunami when it comes to livestock. When asked if the government was going to provide any more help to producers, the minister replied, and I quote, "Not at the present time. We're hoping the market starts to return and the dollar has dropped, and I'm hoping that's going to make up our calf prices go up."

Hoping the market returns and the dollar drops is not the answer. Livestock producers deserve more than a minister that hopes things will turn around.

To the minister: what is his immediate plan to assist this struggling industry?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe this last 10, 11 months we've worked on a number of fronts to help out the livestock industry out there. One of the very first things we did at the request of livestock, both on the cattle side and hog producers, is put out a \$90 million loan — something that they actually asked for from this government. They didn't want an ad hoc payment because they were worried about countervail, Mr. Speaker.

There's a number of other areas. On the grain side, we're doing a crop insurance review to improve that program that has had a lot of cutbacks under the NDP. AgriStability, we're looking at bringing that back to Saskatchewan to try and improve the reliability and bankability of that program for producers. And by the way, producers are looking forward to that announcement.

Farm and ranch infrastructure water program in the Southwest. We're trying to help producers in the Southwest deal with three or four years of drought, on top of where we had a government under the NDP that never even had the Ag minister go down and take a look at how bad it was, Mr. Speaker.

And the list goes on: gopher rebate program, Mr. Speaker, where we've gone in and we're going to pay for half of the strychnine . . .

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, Alberta beef producers have received \$465 million in assistance in the past year. Saskatchewan producers are asking their government to put them on a level playing field with their Alberta neighbours. What they have received from their government so far are more studies and more information is required. We do know that we do have now in the province a gopher control program.

Will the minister place Saskatchewan cattle producers on a level playing field with their Alberta counterparts and provide them with some meaningful assistance?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the member should maybe do a little homework and check with the Alberta beef producers if she thinks that's a great program that Alberta's come out with, because the livestock industry in Alberta is not happy with what's going on in Alberta. Mr. Speaker, they're talking about mandatory age verification, traceability — full traceability being forced on them in Alberta. They're talking about breeding and animal husbandry. But all these things are being driven by the government.

Mr. Speaker, to that member: I have made one commitment to the livestock industry here and I stand behind it. We will not force them into any program like Alberta has done until they ask for it, and then we will assist them to go that way. But right now Alberta producers are not happy with their program. And we're working with our producers to see where they would like to go.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Public Notification Policy

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Safety's August 26 news release stated, "Effective immediately, if there is an escape from any provincial correctional centre, the public will be notified immediately . . ." It did not limit public notification to adult correctional facilities or to people considered dangerous.

Yesterday the minister admitted that his news release was unclear. Well, Mr. Speaker, we want to know what else might have been unclear. For example, how clear was his email to corrections staff? Mr. Speaker, to the minister: will he table today the email he previously referred to and any other documents that explained his new policy?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Corrections and Public Safety.

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to the member opposite, thank you for the question. The policy statement was given to my deputy minister after the escape. He transmitted that to senior officials. They are fully aware of the new policy to implement and to advise the public as well as the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police], via the media that we have a dangerous offender or not, but they're unlawfully at large from a secure adult facility. That's the critical point, Mr. Speaker, a policy never once given consideration by the previous government. We took care of that business, Mr. Speaker. Now we will have a policy to ensure public safety.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, the minister needs to show that he has done his job. Many people believe the failings of his new policy are directly related to his incompetent handling of a hastily announced policy. If the minister admits that his news release was unclear in communicating his new policy, why should the public have any faith that it was clearly communicated to his employees?

To the minister: if he has nothing to hide, why will he not table the email and other documents related to its communications policy?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Corrections and Public Safety.

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the member opposite for that question. Public safety is of the most important thing to this government, Mr. Speaker. And on that note alone, when this government recognized that there was a void in ensuring the public had immediate information about an escape from adult correctional facility, the RCMP are aware of that. We took one more step, Mr. Speaker, we made sure the media knew about it so they could give it to the public, Mr. Speaker.

What's important here is the lack of credibility on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker, on public safety. We spoke out last week, Mr. Speaker, 21 escapes from adult facilities never once released to the public, Mr. Speaker; never, never once done that, Mr. Speaker. The policy's in place to protect the public safety, Mr. Speaker. We're very proud of that. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister told reporters that he could not disclose the escapes from a youth correctional facility due to provisions of the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*. It's my understanding that those provisions relate to naming of young offenders, not to the fact that a young offender is unlawfully at large. But more to the point, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't explain what the minister did after the escapees in question were caught.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: can he explain how it was legal for the Ministry of Corrections and Public Safety to inform the public that escapees had been caught, but illegal to tell the public they had escaped?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for

Corrections and Public Safety.

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well in that case, that was public on Friday. There was two young offenders sentenced to open custody facility by a judge. They were deemed low risk, Mr. Speaker. That's why the information wasn't released to the public.

I'll have this Legislative Assembly know that from 2002-2007, 35 — 35 — young offenders escaped from secure custody facilities, Mr. Speaker, that there is no record at all of any government official or officials in the ministry . . . Justice has checked this out. They have never brought it forward to the public, Mr. Speaker.

[14:15]

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

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, 35 times in a 5-year span from a secure custody facility where young offenders escaped from, Mr. Speaker. No policy talk about that, no direction to the people of this province. You know what, Mr. Speaker? We respect the law. The law's a great thing. I respect the laws. I'm a former police officer.

I have to wonder, maybe we talk about reviews back and forth, maybe they should have had a better review of Murdoch Carriere, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Seniors' Income Plan

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the Minister of Social Services announced with much fanfare that she was increasing the seniors' income plan benefit to \$190 . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Forbes: — And that singles earning up to \$18,593 would now be eligible. Mr. Speaker. To the minister: can she tell this Assembly how many seniors will actually receive the full \$190 a month under SIP [seniors' income plan]?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was very pleased last week to make that announcement for the seniors of our province. They have been absolutely ignored for 16 years under the previous government. For 16 years, they received a free fishing licence and a pin. Their supplement was totally ignored.

As I said in my announcement last week, Mr. Speaker, that this would bring an additional 10,000 seniors that would receive some money through this income supplement as well as

receiving additional health benefits.

Mr. Speaker, when that is all calculated in January when it takes place, that's when we will know where the income levels are and the different levels that they will qualify for. The member should know that. It's a matter of knowing the income, doing the calculations. That will be done when the whole, entire plan takes place.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, we're being told by seniors whose taxable income is less than \$5,000 that they will not be getting the \$190 a month at all. One senior earning \$280 on CPP [Canada Pension Plan] was told she will get just \$31 a month. Others are being told they will receive nothing at all. And the reason, Mr. Speaker, they're being told that is that they don't qualify. They earn too much money.

So, Mr. Speaker, this begs the question, how much is too much? Is it the \$18,593 as stated by the minister in her news release last week? Or is it the \$4,560 outlined on SIP's own backgrounder? Or is it the \$16,313 as stated on the revised news release that now appears on the government's website? Mr. Speaker, to the minister: what is the maximum taxable income a senior can earn to be eligible for benefits?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite has a senior that has concerns about their exact qualification, I'd be more than welcome for him to issue a letter with that senior's concerns, and we will do the calculations, Mr. Speaker. I cannot do the calculations here in this House on the spot, and he knows that, Mr. Speaker.

What I can tell him is it will be more than what they received under the previous government. It will be more than what they received for the last 16 years. They will also receive the low-income tax credit announced by this government which is additional money that they will receive. Mr. Speaker, that's what I can tell them right here in this House.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Forbes: — Well, Mr. Speaker, seniors are confused and this government is responsible. A backgrounder from SIP suggests that anyone earning up to \$4,560 may receive as little as \$10 a month. The minister's news release issued last week used a cut-off of \$18,593 a year for singles and says that seniors will receive \$190 a month. Now the version of that news release that now appears on the government website — and still dated October 29, by the way — says the cut-off is just over \$16,000. Mr. Speaker, to the minister: why has she created such

confusion among seniors, and why is she trying to cover up her mistake by rewriting history?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe the pettiness of that member. If there was a calculation error, it was a small error made by officials. They're very apologetic. It does not, it is . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Allow the minister to respond.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — . . . place until January, Mr. Speaker, and we will field any phone calls.

This is coming from a member that did nothing, absolutely nothing for 16 years. Now he's going to quibble away about this increase. Why? Because it makes them look bad. It makes them look incompetent. It makes them look petty. It makes them look like they ignored the vulnerable seniors in our province for 16 years, and that's because that's what they did.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Saskatoon's Credit Union Centre Expansion

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today we held a news conference in Saskatoon to announce an expansion to Credit Union Centre. I am pleased to announce that the Government of Saskatchewan has committed 3 million for improvements to Credit Union Centre in Saskatoon.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Tell: — This project is scheduled for completion in time for the 2010 World Junior Hockey championships to be held from December 22, 2009 to January 5, 2010 in Saskatoon and in Regina.

The Credit Union Centre project will include the addition of 2,868 upper-deck seats to the west end of the arena. With this expansion, Credit Union Centre will surpass Winnipeg's MTS Centre in seating capacity for concerts, and compare favourably to other Western facilities in overall seating capacity for sporting events, trade shows, and conventions. Seating capacity is a major factor in the competition between cities for hosting major events.

Credit Union Centre is regularly competing with facilities outside of our province and, if we are to be successful in bid competitions, we must be able to offer optimum capacity. Event promoters look for the ability to attract the largest number of patrons which will provide the greatest revenue potential. This expansion will allow Credit Union Centre to compete for class A concerts and major national and international sporting events.

We all know that infrastructure is a major concern to this government, Mr. Speaker. Our government has much work to do to address the deficit left behind by the former government. We will be working hard to bring those deficits up to greatly improved standards.

At the same time, we are investing in new projects that will put us in good position for the future. Investing in infrastructure projects like the Credit Union Centre will ensure a stronger Saskatchewan and a better life for our people.

2010 World Junior Hockey championship tickets will go on sale November 8. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is good news for the Credit Union Centre in Saskatoon. This is a facility that's a pride of all people in Saskatchewan. And I know many people come from outside the province to attend concerts at that facility, so they'll be very pleased to hear about the expansion.

We know that the World Junior Hockey championship event, which is the goal to have all the seats ready for in Saskatoon, is also taking place in Regina, so I'm assuming that there'll be a similar announcement about the Brandt Centre here in Regina to prepare for the same event, because it also has a need for some seats.

Mr. Speaker, this work that goes to further developing the recreational facilities in this province builds on the long-term plans of the government. And clearly the amount of money that's been available to the government allows for many of these projects to proceed, as has been planned for quite a number of years, and we're very pleased to see that.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the answer to question no. 74 through 85.

The Speaker: — Questions 74 through 85 tabled.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Mr. Duncan, seconded by Ms. Schriemer.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Humboldt, the

Minister of Social Services.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Indeed it is a pleasure to rejoin the debate after initially joining it last night. I'm just going to recapture a little bit of what I talked about last night, which is why I will be supporting the Throne Speech from our government.

And I talked a little bit about housing and the fact that the previous government only increased the shelter allowance in 13 years, from 1992 to 2005, Mr. Speaker, they only increased the shelter allowance by \$5. There is no wonder that when the housing prices escalated at a very rapid rate, something that the NDP didn't even think was possible, they were in denial that our province could grow at all, that the \$5 increase was not near enough. There was already a discrepancy that was in place, and those that are most vulnerable could not deal with the escalating rental prices. That is why we increased the shelter allowance, we increased the rental supplement, we increased the emergency shelter rates, and we did it very quickly after forming government.

I talked a little bit last night, Mr. Speaker, about the support that we have given to the community-based organizations within our province. We have a year-over-year increase of 9.3 per cent — that's within our first year of forming government — and it's interesting to note, Mr. Speaker, that the previous NDP government had an increase in '04-05 of 1 per cent, an increase of '05-06 of 1 per cent, an increase of '06-07 of 3 per cent, and then in '07-08 of 3 per cent. So if you add that together, Mr. Speaker, that's an 8 per cent increase to the CBO [community-based organization] sector over four years. We did better than that in less than one year, Mr. Speaker. In the very first year we increased year over year 9.3 per cent.

I talked a bit last night, and it's unfortunate that the member opposite still wants to find fault with the seniors' income plan that we more than doubled. I know he talked about having it indexed, and over the 16 years that it's been totally ignored, if we index those 16 years, they would have seen a 40 per cent increase. We decided that 110 per cent was a little better than that, and that's what we did. And so talking about those initiatives, Mr. Speaker, I believe it shows leadership in a number of fronts. And it's leadership directed by the member from Swift Current, and I am proud to be in that government that shows that kind of leadership.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about what we have done for the disability community. The disability community has been very active in meeting with the new government and outlining the discrepancies that they have seen over the past 16 years as well. It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, to note that we have accumulated a waiting list of over 440 individuals with disabilities who are waiting for assisted living and/or programming that would more suit their need.

I was happy, Mr. Speaker, to be able to make a significant announcement to the disability community that we do not find that acceptable, that we will be meeting that need within the next four years. Mr. Speaker, we announced \$32.2 million to eliminate that waiting list. We were proud to do it. It was part of the Throne Speech; it was part of the promise of our government.

In addition, we talked about additional support for approved private service home supports. It's a very, very important part of our communities and one that we cannot allow to disappear, Mr. Speaker, due to the lack of support.

So therefore, Mr. Speaker, I am very, very happy to support the Throne Speech. I'm happy to support a government that is going to meet the needs of the most vulnerable people within our society, a government that has announced the largest tax reductions that we have seen in our province, a government that has made the largest announcement for seniors in almost two decades, a government that has made the largest announcement in support for the disability community than they have seen in many decades. I will be supporting the Speech from the Throne and proudly so. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[14:30]

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well I too am pleased to enter into the debate on the Speech from the Throne. Before I get into the text of my remarks, I do want to congratulate the new member of the legislature from Cumberland. The member of the legislature for Cumberland is well known in the educational field in the province having served in the K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] system as a trustee and also having served as a member of the Gabriel Dumont Institute, SUNTEP's [Saskatchewan urban native teacher education program] board of governors. Mr. Speaker, I expect that the new member of the legislature will serve this House with distinction, and he comes to this House ready to represent the people from northern Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, before I get into my remarks, I also want to talk a little bit about Saskatoon Nutana which is located on the east side of Saskatoon. Nutana is made up of a number of communities including Buena Vista, Nutana, the exhibition area, some parts of Haultain and Holliston, as well as University Heights, Mr. Speaker. There's a real mix of people that live in the constituency who work at the university, who are involved in the business community, who are professionals, who are involved in the service sector, and I have a large number of constituents that make their living working at Prairieland exhibition, particularly around the horse racing industry in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, all of us have referred to our constituency assistants. I'd like to thank my constituency assistant, Judith Gossen, who has been with our constituency for over 10 years. Judith is someone who pays attention to detail. And, Mr. Speaker, in our constituency we've been able to be voted the best MLA in the city of Saskatoon for over seven years. And I think that as a result of Judith's work in assisting me, we have garnered the support of citizens from all across Saskatchewan. So I do want to thank Judith.

Mr. Speaker, when the legislature adjourned in the spring, all of our members of the legislature were tasked with the job of going and listening to what our constituents had to say, as well as going to other parts of the province and listening to what citizens were saying about the future of our province.

Mr. Speaker, in the constituency that I represent, we have seen a number of condo conversions in Saskatoon Nutana. In fact, Mr. Speaker, in the area that I live in, which is the 800 block of Main Street, there are in fact five buildings at present that have been converted to condominiums. These are buildings that at one stage used to house senior citizens, people who work in the service sector, as well as students and professionals, Mr. Speaker. Those five buildings are not yet rented, and it appears as though, Mr. Speaker, with the slowdown in the real estate market, those units have not yet been sold to people coming to Saskatoon or living in Saskatoon. Mr. Speaker, five units times, you know, 30 is a significant number of housing availabilities that are no longer there for students, seniors, working people to rent, Mr. Speaker.

We have seen a significant increase in rents in the constituency that I represent. Those would be the buildings that have not yet been converted to condominiums. And rent increases have been quite astronomical. I have seen rent increases that have ranged from 100 to 200 to \$300 a month in some apartments, as well as a significant increase in rents when it came to individual houses that were being rented.

Mr. Speaker, for the first time in a very long time I am having senior citizens coming to the constituency office. And they're saying a couple of things, particularly since the meltdown of the market in September and October. They are saying that it is becoming more and more difficult for them to pay their rent if they are renters, pay their property taxes and utilities if they are homeowners, as a result of what's been happening in the province. Now, Mr. Speaker, many senior citizens in June, in Saskatoon, received a notice of the increase of their assessment when it comes to their individual homes, and this was based upon 2006 figures. And they are anticipating a significant increase in their property taxes as a result of where their individual homes and condominiums are located.

Mr. Speaker, in the province of Saskatchewan, we have been extremely fortunate since the early 1980s that our senior citizens, relative to seniors across the country, do not live in poverty, Mr. Speaker. And in fact we have some of the lowest poverty rates or had some of the lowest poverty rates in the country when it came to senior citizens. In fact we are well below the national average.

Mr. Speaker, I think we will need to pay attention very carefully to what is happening to our senior population in the province of Saskatchewan particularly with changes in the stock market and the impact that this is having on many seniors' savings as well as significant increases in rent and also significant increases in property taxes.

Mr. Speaker, I have received a number of calls about the Minister of Social Services' announcement with regards to the senior income plan. And while the minister may not want to acknowledge this, there is a lot of confusion as to whether or not people who receive the old age pension along with the guaranteed income supplement and, Mr. Speaker, Canada pension will receive any of this new increase in the Saskatchewan Income Plan.

And in fact, Mr. Speaker, I think it's imperative upon the minister to indicate very clearly that if you earn more than

\$18,000 a year as a single senior citizen, which is \$1,500 a month, you will not receive any Saskatchewan Income Plan. And, Mr. Speaker, I guess the question is . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . or is it \$16,000 a year? And there seems to be some confusion about that.

What senior citizens need to understand is if they receive the old age pension, the OAS, and the guaranteed income supplement only and they have no savings with interest or no Canada Pension Plan to speak of, they will receive \$190 increase, Mr. Speaker, but it is very, very confusing.

As well, Mr. Speaker, there is confusion for those citizens that live in low-income housing, and they are under the belief that if their income goes up that they will pay 30 per cent of their income to live in these low-income accommodations. And I think it's incumbent upon the minister once again to clarify that for those citizens living in the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation facilities, as I understand it, there will be no clawback of any Saskatchewan Income Plan that they may receive. If you're living in Métis housing or First Nation housing or other housing, I understand it that there could well be a clawback. And I think the reason why there is some confusion about this is for those seniors that received the old age pension and the guaranteed income supplement in the past — now those are federal programs — that income was recognized as part of the formula for determining what type of rent you paid at the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation.

So, Mr. Speaker, I really think that, given that senior citizens are vulnerable — and they're certainly vulnerable when it comes to mass communication — it would be very wise on the part of the Minister of Social Services to try and clarify this situation as quickly as possible because I do know that the 1-800 number and the 787 number for this program has been inundated. And people — which is understandable — so many people are calling that they cannot get back to them as quickly as possible.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make this point. Senior citizens' incomes at this stage are in jeopardy because of what's happened in the marketplace. Certainly their pensions are. They are seeing escalating costs of housing, particularly when it comes to property taxes and rent increases and utilities, Mr. Speaker.

And I will make the point to the members opposite that a few years ago, certainly when we were in government, there was a significant increase in SaskEnergy rates. The rate review panel agreed to this, and the Government of Saskatchewan determined that we would do two things. First of all we would send money from the General Revenue Fund over to SaskEnergy to mitigate that increase in natural utility rates and stop that increase to a bearable level, and we also put a significant amount of money into energy conservation. Mr. Speaker, we have not seen a response like that from the members opposite.

They have determined that they're just going to let the real cost of natural gas be passed on to the individual consumer, and the reality is for a lot of those consumers, particularly senior citizens and young families, seniors have been hit hard by the market, and young families have not seen the kind of wage increases to deal with escalating costs of consumer goods and

services in the province.

Mr. Speaker, another group of people that live in the constituency that I represent are students that attend the University of Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, it's quite clear that the government has signalled that the tuition freeze that has been in effect for four years now is over. And, Mr. Speaker, as a result of that decision by the government opposite, our students fully anticipate that they will see some significant tuition increases going forward into next year. Mr. Speaker, not only are students going to be faced with significant tuition increases, but they too have been hit hard with the escalating costs of accommodation, as well as food costs have seen some significant rises, as well as transportation costs, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, I know that the government issued a press release, I believe it was last week, about Saskatchewan's average weekly earnings being up to \$760.46 a week. But I do point out, Mr. Speaker, that there are other provinces in Canada — namely British Columbia, Ontario, and Alberta — that have higher average weekly wages. Newfoundland is coming close, Mr. Speaker, to our wages, and yet if you look at the tuition that Newfoundland students pay, they pay \$2,600 a year in tuition. And our students in Saskatchewan are paying on average about \$5,000 per year for university tuition, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing I note by looking at some of the statistics is that our consumer price index is escalating all across the province. And I think it's fair to say that while there are those of us that have certainly benefited from the economic growth that has taken place in the province of Saskatchewan, there are citizens in our province that have not felt the benefits of that economic growth, other than they have experienced significant rent increases, significant utility increases — particularly natural gas — significant increases in the cost of food and goods and services, and significant increases in the cost of transportation. And at the same time, their wages have not kept pace with those significant increases.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it's clear from paying attention to the speeches that have been presented in this legislature by the members of the opposition that they are trying to negate the 16-year record of the NDP. And, Mr. Speaker, as someone who was part of the NDP administration, when I go to the University of Saskatchewan campus which has been in my constituency and out of my constituency, I can say this. I see a new Kinesiology Building on the University of Saskatchewan campus. I see a synchrotron, the only one of its kind in Canada, on that university campus. I see a renovated convocation building which we're all very proud of . . . or the College Building. It's where some of our relatives convocated from in the '30s and the '40s.

[14:45]

I see a new InterVac facility. I see VIDO [Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization] facility; I see it expanded. I've seen it expanded, that Medicine college. I see a renewed College of Law, renewed College of Commerce, the Thorvaldson Building. As well, Mr. Speaker, my old Arts and Science building certainly got a bit of a facelift last year when the Congress was there.

So what we have seen is tremendous growth on the University of Saskatchewan campus, Mr. Speaker. And it is clear that we have a new academic health sciences building, that it's well on its way to being constructed at the University of Saskatchewan. And the members of the opposition are extremely proud that that building went ahead at a time when oil was not at \$150 a barrel. At the time when oil was below \$50 a barrel, Mr. Speaker, we made the decision to construct that new academic health sciences building on the University of Saskatchewan, and we are very, very proud that that building is going ahead.

Now I have not seen any evidence, any evidence of the last year in terms of construction of new projects that were not previously in place by the former NDP administration. I've seen no evidence whatsoever of anything that resembles the Sask Party's investment in infrastructure.

I also want to report to the citizens that it was an NDP government that built three or four new high schools in the city of Saskatoon during that 16-year period. We also saw a significant investment by SaskTel in the soccer centre, which is certainly a significant investment that is a showcase of what can happen when communities come together with a Crown utility to provide important services to our young people, Mr. Speaker.

So we will be watching with interest to see what the Sask Party invests in in any real tangible way in the city of Saskatoon that will in fact enhance our quality of life in the city of Saskatoon. And thus far, Mr. Speaker, we haven't seen much evidence. We have seen a lot of spin.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the other area that I think the Sask Party should be aware of is that we have a significant number of families in the province of Saskatchewan that are waiting for child daycare. And the Government of Saskatchewan has \$2 billion in its rainy day fund or its Fiscal Stabilization Fund — I think they're calling it the insurance fund now — and we have young people with young children that are trying to get their children into some kind of licensed child care in the province of Saskatchewan. And there are literally hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of families or children that are waiting to get into these licensed child care operations.

And I think this is a policy area that the Sask Party really could be of some assistance to, particularly to those young working families where both people are working or a single mom or a person trying to get a university or a technical education. It certainly would be helpful if the Sask Party could put some resources into beginning to invest significantly in child daycare in the province of Saskatchewan.

The other thing I note, Mr. Speaker, is that the Sask Party has said over and over and over and over again that there has been this growth of some 16,000 people since they came to office. And I want to put it on the record because it's important for posterity that people understand that since the Sask Party came to office — we've just got the second quarter results of population increase — we've seen growth of about 8,000 people, Mr. Speaker, not 16,000. I know they want to take credit for all of the population increase, but in fact it is simply incorrect. We've seen about 8,000 people.

And what is a bit disturbing in terms of starting to look at those

numbers, certainly in the last quarter, we saw some significant numbers of people leaving the province again, Mr. Speaker. And I think that's one area that we're going to have to keep an eye on. And it'll be interesting to see what happened with the results for July, August, and September because my sense from living in Saskatoon is that for a lot of people it was becoming very unaffordable, and there were more affordable places to go and make a living, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I was interested to learn of the Sask Party's policy on the Crown sector. This is a file that I spent some time on, as I was given this portfolio after the 2003 election. And we made a decision that it was our expectation that our Crown utilities were going to deliver the lowest cost bundle of utility rates in Canada. And, Mr. Speaker, we kept that promise. People in this province had the lowest cost utility rates in Canada after we were re-elected in 2003.

An Hon. Member: — Still do.

Ms. Atkinson: — Now the member opposite says we still do. Well we don't know that because there is no reporting to the public. One of the commitments that was made by the previous administration is that each year it would be reported to the public, through Meyers Norris Penny, where we stacked up relative to other parts of Canada.

Now, Mr. Speaker, they have indicated as part of this new policy as enunciated by the Minister Responsible for CIC — who happens to come from Saskatoon, who happens to have wanted SaskTel to invest in that soccer centre, Mr. Speaker — he has indicated to us that DirectWest and Hospitality Network, which are two profit centres for SaskTel, that they are going to be sold. They are profit centres and they are profitable, and they are profitable and they are profit centres.

And in fact if you look at SaskTel's annual report for 2007, you will see that there is a significant amount of revenue that is generated by DirectWest, Hospitality Network, as well as SecurTek, Mr. Speaker. Now what they have indicated to the public is that they're going to sell DirectWest and the Hospitality Network.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think this is foolish to say the least. We know that long distance revenues, certainly for telcos all across the country, are down as a result of deregulation by the CRTC [Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission]. We know that telecommunication companies in North America have gone to other areas in order to generate revenue, in particular the Internet, mobility or cellular telephone, as well as Max. We know from the annual report in 2007 that had SaskTel not done this, we would have seen a significant decline in the profitability of the company and also the company's . . . It would have been very difficult for them to have provided dividends to the people of the province.

Now I don't quite understand how their Crown policy is going to work. They have instructed the companies, the boards of directors as well as the CEOs [chief executive officer] and CFOs [chief financial officer], that they are not to invest outside of the province. They have instructed the CFOs and the CEOs that they are not to compete inside the province. Yet SaskTel is a competitive Crown. Yet SaskEnergy is a competitive Crown.

Yet SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] is a competitive Crown. And who knows what they're going to do with SaskPower?

We certainly saw what a right wing Conservative government did in Alberta, and they basically wrecked the electrical system there, Mr. Speaker. So it'll be interesting to see how they're going to make this, as I say, this policy, this dog hunt. It'll be very interesting, Mr. Speaker, to see how we proceed. They're not going to be able to compete in the province, and they're not going to be able to grow outside of the province. But you know, they're supposed to provide services to the people of our province.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think what we may have is a decision by the government. Because they're not prepared to say to us, we're going to sell off those Crowns, but we're just going to run them into the ground. And then what will happen, Mr. Speaker? We'll be all glad to get rid of them.

So, Mr. Speaker, these are the people that say they are the business sector. They know how to run business. In fact if I look at the minister's biography, he's supposed to be a business person in the city of Saskatoon, and yet he is saying to four companies, you can't compete with the private sector and you can't invest outside of the province if a good business opportunity comes along. You can't make money.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think the public — it'll take a little time — but I think the public needs to be watchful as this policy unfolds.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about the livestock industry and the hog industry. These are actually people that are in some very significant difficulty. Mr. Speaker, they have witnessed escalating costs of production, they have seen a dollar that has skyrocketed, and a declining industry.

And one of the realities for the livestock industry is that, in order to sell their cattle, there is really no place to go in the province of Saskatchewan. And in fact there is very little place to go, period. There's Tyson's and Cargill and Lakeland, and that is about it, Mr. Speaker. So there's very little competition in the marketplace when it comes to the livestock industry.

And when it comes to the hog industry, we know that there's Brandon, and Maple Leaf didn't go ahead with their plant here in Saskatoon. So, Mr. Speaker, we know that there are a lot of hog barns across the province that are empty as people have gotten rid of hogs. We know that our tallow population is being depleted.

And yet at the same time we live next door to Alberta. And I know the minister says he's going to listen to what the livestock industry is saying here, but we live next door to Alberta where over the years they have put literally hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars into their livestock industry in order to make sure that they had an industry relative to other parts of Canada.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would say this, that at a time when we have record revenues, I'm not sure we'll ever have another time in our history where we will see oil at \$150 a barrel or where we will see potash prices at \$1,500 a tonne. I'm not sure we will

see that again in our lifetime, but we do have revenue. We do have revenue, Mr. Speaker, because of significant commodity prices in the province of Saskatchewan. Now I note . . . I don't know if these folks read the newspapers — maybe they don't, maybe they don't. But I think that we have seen some significant revenues, and we may never see them again. And we have this window of opportunity to diversify our economy, And, Mr. Speaker, I see no evidence by the members opposite that they are doing anything to diversify our economy and support those industries that we will need here in the future.

And, Mr. Speaker, if you look at Alberta what they have done with their revenues, they certainly are not relying upon the commodity industry in order to ensure that they can deal with commodity prices that not only go up but, Mr. Speaker, they also go down. Now, Mr. Speaker, we are waiting for this vision. We're waiting to hear what they are going to do to ensure that we're not totally dependent upon resources that are non-renewable resources.

We need to have an economy that responds to the ups and downs of commodity prices where basically we're insulated, and we have not seen any evidence of that. And I think, Mr. Speaker, by just simply leaving the livestock industry and the hog industry to the vagaries of the market, I would say to the members opposite that a year or two from now, we will see a very, very, different industry in the province of Saskatchewan. We certainly have seen that in the last year or so, and I'm afraid given the resources that the Alberta government has put into the industry, they have positioned themselves, and in the meantime we've simply been here twiddling our thumbs, Mr. Speaker.

[15:00]

Mr. Speaker, there is one area that I want to congratulate the government on, and that is the area of people with disabilities. They certainly have indicated to the disability community that they are prepared to look at an income plan for people who have disabilities. It's certainly something that our government had been working on. It's complicated, Mr. Speaker. But I do want to congratulate the minister for her intention to ensure that people with disabilities, whether those disabilities have been from birth or as the result of accident, that those folks that are disabled will be able to have an income that will support them well into the future.

So we're looking forward to seeing how that income plan will roll out. But certainly I wanted to congratulate the members opposite and the minister for putting money into the disability community and the services for the disability community, but also signalling in a very clear way that it's their intention to move towards an income plan for persons with disabilities. So congratulations.

Mr. Speaker, I want to end my remarks by saying that we think there is so much more the Government of Saskatchewan could have done in this Throne Speech. And it's extremely disappointing that they did not do anything more when it came to child daycare. And, Mr. Speaker, we are disappointed that they really haven't addressed the whole affordability issue in the province of Saskatchewan or those people who are working and have seen some significant escalations in their costs of getting by, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to enter into the debate and the reply to the Speech from the Throne. First, I'd like to just congratulate the member from Cumberland. He did a very good job with his speech, and he did ask some questions. So congratulations.

I'd like to thank my family. As an MLA it's very trying on families, so I'd like to thank my wife, Cindy, and our three children for putting up with my absence from home. And I'd also like to thank my constituency assistant, Ed Young, and his spouse, Terry, and their two girls, which have been a lot of help to me as I have been carrying out my duties as MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly]. Of course I'd like to thank the constituents of Biggar constituency who has put their faith in me again, and I certainly have always tried to do my best and will continue my best on behalf of my constituents.

Mr. Speaker, I think looking at this Throne Speech and the fall announcement by the Premier, I think 50 years from now people will look back to this point in Saskatchewan history and say that this is a turning point in our history. I truly believe that it's a historic moment in Saskatchewan's history from a point of many points. When you look at the fall announcement of the Premier, it's incredible what we have been able to do as far as the help that we've been able to provide people.

When last spring after the spring session ended, the Premier asked the Saskatchewan Party, the government MLAs to go out and listen to the people in our constituents about how to spend the \$3 billion that we found they had a surplus. And certainly every member of our caucus did that. And we came back with very solid information and brought it to our committees and to caucus. And as you see from the announcements, that the government and our cabinet responded to what the people of Saskatchewan said to us.

In the summer I'd just like to point out an interesting situation. There's three members of the NDP Party came on a tour through Biggar constituency, and I'd like to quote from the Biggar *Independent*.

Cam Broten (Saskatoon Massey Place), Frank Quennell (Saskatoon Meewasin), and Andy Iwanchuk (Saskatoon Fairview) toured the Biggar constituency, August 12, gauging residents' response.

And it goes on to say:

"Those of us who have been out and about can share our experiences and what we've heard, and maybe pick up on some common themes," added Quennell.

The concerns are many and varied.

"Here, we've heard some concerns with the narrowing of the highway between Biggar and Perdue — No. 14 and the shoulders shrinking," stated Quennell.

And he goes on to add a few other things. And then it goes on

to say, "What they learn from constituents will be brought back to the party and used in the House this October."

Well, Mr. Speaker, it's very interesting from the comments from the other side that there seemed to be something radical that our Premier would ask the government MLAs to go out and speak to the constituents, and which we did. And now we find out, well, the NDP Party were out going around the province speaking to the constituents and to people of Saskatchewan. Well, Mr. Speaker, what we heard when we went out to speak to our constituents, there's three messages came back how to spend the \$3 billion surplus: they wanted tax cuts; they wanted more money towards infrastructure; and they wanted an insurance policy, really, for the future.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to bring the three members of the NDP Party up to date that toured the Biggar constituency. The highway No. 14 has been widened. They went through before the job was done. So you can say that the highway's been widened and the wider shoulders. And so everything, everything is fine.

The other theme that we heard from the NDP Party that I think they just expected that when we as a government had this surplus money, that we would only look at doing things like the hard economic things, like tax cuts and paying down debt and putting more money into infrastructure. Well we did do that.

But the other thing I think what the NDP didn't expect us to do — for some reason they start to believe their own rhetoric — that we weren't going to help people that are disadvantaged, like the low-income seniors and people with disabilities. And as we know, the government has rolled out one announcement after the other, Mr. Speaker, to help people who are disadvantaged in our society. It's called sharing the wealth.

Everyone is getting something from our announcements and from our Throne Speech. Some of it's tax reductions. There's infrastructure investments, and it just goes on and on. But I'm very proud of our government to have made the priority to help people like low-income seniors and to help people with disabilities and more funding toward CBOs so that the people that work in CBOs can get a higher wage.

And locally in Biggar, I'd just like to point out one example of where the Minister of Social Services responded to a request in Biggar which was very much needed. And the group is called the Biggar Community Connections. And they started out as a group home — and they still operate a group home — but they do many other things in the community. Like I said, they have a residential group home. They support independent living programs, support apartment living programs, activity programs, vocational programs. They support employment programs.

And this group expanded. They bought the old Novawood School in Biggar, and they expanded their programming. They ran into a shortfall of funding, and they made the request to Social Services to get some bridging money to keep their program going. And it wasn't long, without very little hesitation, the minister responded by granting them that bridging money so that they could continue their programs into the future. And that's something that's very, very hopeful —

this is a sign of how our government and our cabinet and our Premier respond to concerns when they hear about the problems in the constituency.

Mr. Speaker, I can certainly go on. I'm looking forward to hearing the Premier's reply to the Speech to the Throne, but just a couple of items what our government has done for the Biggar constituency. In the MRIF [Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund] program there's a total of \$1.82 million investments in MRIF projects across the constituency, Mr. Speaker. And also through the Saskatchewan infrastructure growth incentive program, \$1.3 million is approved and will be invested into the constituency of Biggar. That is substantial investments which is needed, and the government has responded.

I can go on and on, Mr. Speaker, but time is running short. I'd just like to tell a bit of a story. As I was driving to Regina, I always stop at the Co-op in Perdue and gas up. And as I was coming out after paying, the gas attendant, she just asked me was I going to Regina. I said, yes. And she said, well have a good week. And I said, well thanks. And I says, we will have a good week. Then she stopped and turned and she says, I want to thank you for that tax cut. She says, that means — in a real sincere voice — she says, that means so much to me.

So, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of that woman in Perdue and many other families across the province, that is the reason I am supporting the Throne Speech.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's going to be difficult to follow just the conclusion there of the member for Biggar and the Government Whip because I think he has quite aptly put into perspective for each of us — regardless of what side of the House we're on — the reasons that we are here. It is to serve that individual in Perdue and to represent the interests of families back home.

And on that note, Mr. Speaker, may I begin my address in reply to the Speech from the Throne with a thank you to my own family in Swift Current, to Tami and Megan and Colter and Faith for their ongoing support and perspective. And there is a lot of perspective at my home in Swift Current, and it's really a haven for me. And I just want to say again for the record how grateful I am for my family and how much I love them all.

And, Mr. Speaker, while I'm talking a little bit about home, I also want to take this opportunity again to acknowledge the reason why I can be here in the first place, or any place, frankly, is the constituents. It's the community, the people of the Swift Current constituency that I have the great honour of representing and have had that honour since 1999.

Again I want to thank all of them for the perspective I get pretty much every weekend when I'm at home, especially at Safeway. I've found Safeway to be a source of great perspective, where people seem to be very free in the produce section to tell you exactly what is right with the government and exactly what is wrong with the government. And I think the best advice that I have received to date in this new job has probably been right

around the orange section at Safeway. And so I want to acknowledge the people of Swift Current and thank them again for the great honour I have of representing them.

I want to acknowledge and welcome the new member for Cumberland who has been recently re-elected in a by-election. And I know he'll work hard to serve the interests of the people of that constituency, as well as provide a voice for people across the province in his duties as a critic for the official opposition.

You know, much has been said about speeches from the throne, Mr. Speaker, in different legislatures across this land and in the House of Commons. Much has been said about the usefulness of speeches from the throne. Whether or not there's enough specificity in those speeches. Whether or not they clearly outline the plans of the government. Whether or not the debate that ensues after the speech is read, whether or not that debate highlights for the people of the province the proper choices: a choice between the opposition, a choice between the government, maybe a choice between the records — in the case of an opposition recently defeated and a government newly elected — and a choice between the visions of those two entities because of course people on both sides of the Assembly weigh into that debate.

And if that is the measure, Mr. Speaker, of a good Speech from the Throne, that you are able to make that comparison from the debate that ensues, I think we have before us for our consideration an excellent Speech from the Throne. I think, Mr. Speaker . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — . . . that this document is as much about very specific actions, many of which have already been implemented by the government, as it is about a broader vision — the vision that is really encapsulated in the title of the Speech from the Throne and its theme: "A Stronger Saskatchewan. A Better Life."

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about those two things, about what is specifically in the Speech from the Throne, about the initiatives that are here, and maybe even the record of a relatively new government, and contrast that to a record of the previous government and some of the specific ideas we have heard or have not heard coming from the other side.

And then I want to conclude, Mr. Speaker, by examining this question of vision, this question of which side in this debate . . . and there are clearly two sides. I think we defeated the amendment. Did we win? I think we won that vote. We were able to defeat the amendment to the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker. And that amendment highlighted for all of us quite clearly that there are two sides in this debate on the Speech from the Throne. And I want to conclude how that reflects on the respective visions of the governing Saskatchewan Party and the opposition NDP.

[15:15]

Let's take a look though at some of the specifics, Mr. Speaker. Just the day before the Speech from the Throne was read, I had

the greatest honour of my relatively short public life when I got to . . . On behalf of a government, on behalf of a caucus that had deliberated and a cabinet that had deliberated and a Minister of Finance that had worked tirelessly, I had the great honour to be able to announce a four-part financial plan for the province of Saskatchewan that included, principally, number one, the biggest, largest historical tax cut in the history of our great province, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — And the fact that 80,000 Saskatchewan people, as a result of that measure — 80,000 low-income Saskatchewan people who have every right to expect to benefit from the prosperity of their province — dropped from the tax rolls completely in the province of Saskatchewan as a result of that tax cut, Mr. Speaker.

I had the great honour and the privilege to announce the second part of that financial plan which included an infrastructure build-out and a continuation of the government's ready-for-growth initiative. You will remember very clearly, Mr. Speaker, in our very first budget as a government, we signalled our determination to deal with the infrastructure facing the province.

And I want to remind members in this Assembly — members on both sides of the Assembly — that \$147 a barrel was not yet on the horizon, was not yet a surety in terms of a revenue stream for the government. I want to remind this House — all members in this Assembly — that potash prices, that the change in terms of that first quarter financial report we have received was not yet known when our government took a, I think a courageous decision to say, look, we believe this is part of a balanced budget. Because it's how we're hard-wired, to bring in those balanced budgets, Mr. Speaker. But without the revenue assurances that became evident later on in that year, we went ahead with a \$1 billion ready-for-growth initiative. That was the infrastructure investment we made for this province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, you will know that in the year prior to that, under the previous government, when you totalled all of the infrastructure spending, it was about \$600 million. Not a small amount but consider the comparison. In the first budget of a Saskatchewan Party government, it moved to \$1 billion.

So I was honoured a couple of weeks ago, as a part of this financial plan, to announce that the second component of that financial plan was not just the extension of a \$1 billion ready-for-growth initiative or the \$400 million increase we saw in our first year over the NDP budget, but \$1.5 billion in that infrastructure ready-for-growth initiative — pre-approved, already announced by our government. You can expect it; you can bank on it; it'll be there in the budget.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think it is worth deliberating, I think it's worth focusing a little bit on what that means to Saskatchewan because frankly a \$1.5 billion ready-for-growth fund is a pretty abstract thing. And what does that mean really?

Well, Mr. Speaker, it means that roofs in schools that had been leaking for five years get fixed. It means, Mr. Speaker, that air conditioning units in our health care facilities that have been broken for too long, that have caused untold discomfort for patients in the province of Saskatchewan, get fixed. It means Highway 32, which has been a goat trail for too long, servicing the oil and gas sector of our province and delivering royalties to the coffers here in Regina, gets fixed.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — It means, Mr. Speaker, that Highway 368, which has begged for some attention because it serves one of the most impressive light manufacturing corridors in the continent, Mr. Speaker, it means that Highway 368, also a bit of a goat path under the NDP, gets fixed, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — I want to say as well that I was very proud to announce the third component of that financial plan on behalf of the government, and that included a debt payment of \$1 billion. And it will mean, Mr. Speaker, that we are on track as a government to have reduced the debt of the province of Saskatchewan for generation after generation. If nothing else is achieved in the next number of years on debt — and I think there will be — but if nothing else is achieved in one year, in a full budget year of this government, its first full budget year will have reduced the debt of the province of Saskatchewan by 40 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Five thousand dollars a minute, Mr. Speaker, that's how much debt we're paying off. So at the end of my speech when . . . We are going to pay off a lot of debt this afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Finally the fourth part of that financial plan I had the honour of announcing on behalf of my colleagues, who helped shape this plan at a caucus meeting we held in Yorkton and then at a number of cabinet meetings — I want to say that, Mr. Speaker — we have set aside as an insurance policy to weather the current economic and the market storm around the world, we've set aside \$1.914 billion for the people of the province.

I'll tell you this, Mr. Speaker. This was a source of great deliberation. In fact just a week and a half or two weeks before we were going to make the announcement, I had a discussion with the Minister of Finance. I was just concerned. I was reading and watching all the same media that everyone else was, watching banks that had been around for 100 years fold over a weekend, watching the market slip 600 points and 800 points and people wondering about what the future for their pensions was going to be, watching the largest and most significant correction that we have seen certainly in the modern time on the financial markets.

And, Mr. Speaker, I phoned the Minister of Finance, who is a wise and a prudent man himself, and talked about maybe the

need for us to reduce the amount of debt we were going to pay down. We were going to originally be more aggressive on the debt to be about \$1.6 billion as opposed to the billion dollars. We decided to hold back about 5 or 600 million, to put it in the savings account, to put it in the insurance, Mr. Speaker. And already we hear members opposite say, well you're sitting on a mountain of money. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you what that \$1.9 billion is. It is a rock on which we will build the economic future of this province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — And we've heard the members all with their long list of expenditures they'd like to see made, members on the other side, members of the NDP. They continue to criticize the fact that this fund exists, but I defy them to go to their constituents, not even constituents perhaps in some of our ridings in rural Saskatchewan but go down in downtown Regina and ask the people of this city. Go into Prince Albert, go to Saskatoon and ask the people of those communities at a time such as this, insecure as they are with the markets doing what they are, do you think it was a good idea that the brand new Saskatchewan Party government said we're going to keep our powder dry in about 1.9 billion?

We will weather this storm. We will come out stronger on the other side and, when we do, we can pay off more debt and build more infrastructure. Those people in their constituencies will say, we are with the new government. That is exactly the right choice.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — So, Mr. Speaker, that was really the beginning of the Speech from the Throne for the session, and you will know this, that the heart of this document really is that financial plan. There's much more in the document in terms of initiatives, and we've seen announcements from the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Social Services and earlier today from the Minister of Tourism and Culture, but the heart of it certainly was the financial plan I just talked about.

I also want to be very clear with my colleagues in this Assembly on both sides of the House, that we are obviously benefiting as a government from strength in commodity prices. The revenues of the government certainly are benefiting from the strength in commodity prices. We understand that. We understand that the people of Saskatchewan know what's been happening in commodities and know that when they go up, the revenues of Saskatchewan go up, and so we don't debate that. We don't argue that. We accept it. I think all members of this Assembly do.

But the question, Mr. Speaker, I think that people have of their governments, whoever they may be, is what is it that that government will do with that good fortune. What is it that the government will do with these resources because after all, they don't belong to the government. They belong to the people of the province.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we have put together a financial plan that respects the fact that these are not resources . . . They don't belong to our government; they belong to the people. That tries

to deal with some immediate needs in terms of increasing costs in Saskatchewan — that's the income tax cut, some of the other initiatives announced by the Minister of Social Services — but also takes the long view in terms of debt reduction and holding back some money in our Growth and Financial Security Fund. And, Mr. Speaker, I think that the people of the province are supportive and in agreement with that kind of a plan that has a short-term and a long-term component.

And so the measure then is not how the money occurred, where the money came from. The measure is, did the government have their priorities right? And you know, Mr. Speaker, we won't have an election in our province now until November 7, 2011, but I would say this, that were some strange act of someone to occur where that would precipitate a general election in the province of Saskatchewan, and this side of the House were going to run on that financial plan, that short-term understanding of the need for Saskatchewan people to permanently share in our prosperity and our vision for debt reduction and a growing economy and infrastructure investment and a savings fund, if this side ran on that and that side ran on what we've heard from them, Mr. Speaker, in the first two weeks of this session, I like the chances on this side of the House in that kind of a situation, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — I think it's reasonable that a good measure of a jurisdiction that is enjoying some prosperity though is in how it treats the most vulnerable among it. First of all, perhaps on whether it plans to keep that momentum going — that's important — but also how are those who are most vulnerable in that society, perhaps not participating in the prosperity, doing.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to be associated with these women and men on this side of the House. I am very, very proud to be associated with the Speech from the Throne that outlines initiatives for those people who are most vulnerable among us, disadvantaged, as the member from Biggar has said earlier in his remarks, in how they are treated. And I think it's worth reviewing, Mr. Speaker, what this government has done in this regard with respect to both the Speech from the Throne and initiatives that have been announced already this year.

Mr. Speaker, there was a waiting list in the province of Saskatchewan of some 400 people who have intellectual and physical disabilities, and they are waiting and have been waiting for a very, very long time for the right programs, sometimes for day programs. Parents have been acknowledging that they exist and they have wanted to be able to access them for the health of their kids and for their own health as well so that they can be the caregivers and the moms and dads they want to be.

Four hundred people on a wait-list for those people who have physical and intellectual disabilities — not just waiting for programs but some waiting for that chance at independent living at a group home. And for years they would go to the government that existed prior to this, a former government that would seemingly have us to believe that they were broke, even though they sat on their own little mountain of money in the hundreds of millions of dollars — in the hundreds of millions of

dollars. In its last dying years, Mr. Speaker, that government was sitting on that kind of money.

And these people, the families of those with these disabilities would come and knock on their door and say, the wait-list is 400. How long is too long? We've been waiting for these . . . And I can't imagine a group more vulnerable in Saskatchewan today than those who have these physical and intellectual disabilities.

I have one brother. He has three sons. The youngest has Williams syndrome. And the answer was no. Every single time they came to that government to ask that question, the answer, Mr. Speaker, was no. From a government, from a social democratic government — a group, some self-described socialists — who say, boy, nobody cares like us. That's what they claim. Nobody is there for those who are vulnerable like us in the NDP. Nobody will be there for those who have disabilities or for those without a voice than us. But, Mr. Speaker, the truth of it is they weren't there for them — not for years and years and years.

And I'm proud to be associated with the men and women on this side of the House when we took the first opportunity we can to share some of the wealth in the province to say, a wait-list for these people in our province is unacceptable, and we are going to deal with it, and we will eliminate it, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, you can take a look at the increases to the rental housing supplements that this government has made to help people deal with the housing crisis. You can take a look at the training employment allowances that the Minister of Advanced Education has announced so that people can have an increase in allowance, continue to study so that they can get the education and the training to participate in the amazing economy that we see around us where 10,000 jobs are posted at saskjobs.ca.

Mr. Speaker, initiative after initiative you could point to both in the Speech from the Throne, in the first budget of the government, in this particular document that we are debating today.

Mr. Speaker, there's going to be more of this, not less — because I can tell you, as we saw with the senior income assistance plan, there's a lot of neglect that we're dealing with as a brand new government.

And I want to tell you, members on this side of the House — each of us — I think we're a little surprised because maybe some of us even started to believe some of the speeches from members opposite that we've heard for years. Some never believed, Mr. Speaker. Some never believed. Some who have been here for a whole lot of years never believed.

But maybe some did, started to believe some of the speeches we heard from members opposite about how much they care, about how much they're going to act on behalf of people who are vulnerable, who are disadvantaged, and who have no voice. And then in file after file, as the Minister of Social Services and

the Minister of Health and the Minister of Advanced Education have reported to our government, file after file there is a theme that we have inherited from that government, former government opposite, and the theme is neglect.

[15:30]

It is true of the senior income assistance plan, which hadn't received an increase since 1992, Mr. Speaker, also changed this week by this government and referenced in the Speech from the Throne. It speaks to the wait-list I talked about a little bit earlier. It speaks to the fact that it was a Saskatchewan Party government that introduced the largest ever, the largest ever one-time increase in the employment supplement program for people who needed a little bit of help right now.

They're facing higher housing costs, and many of the people that are applying for that program, have applied, are single moms, Mr. Speaker. Single moms. And they too were waiting for a government I think that would do more than talk, that would do more than just give speeches in the legislature, that would do more than just publish manifestos, that would actually take a little action, Mr. Speaker, to build that stronger Saskatchewan and a better life.

And that's exactly what happened in the case of the employment supplement as well, Mr. Speaker, that increased actually before we could get to the Speech from the Throne debate. That was because of the immediate action this government took as a result of the housing task force that we implemented in the spring, an action that we took immediately, Mr. Speaker. And people should be able to expect more of that kind of thing in affordable and balanced budgets.

But they should be able to expect, from their government, action in these areas which are clearly priorities for all of us, which are really about common sense and about ensuring people are participating. And I want to tell those folks that might be watching or listening right now, Mr. Speaker, that that's a reasonable expectation that they would have of a government. And they can expect that from this government. And we'll already put our record after one year up as evidence of the fact that we are dedicated to these common sense solutions, that people should expect to benefit from the prosperity in the province, and they will, Mr. Speaker. And they will.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday there was a really common sense announcement from the Minister of Agriculture that also speaks to the kinds of priorities that our government has. The Government of Saskatchewan owns a lot of land — a lot of agricultural lands, cultivated acres and pasture land. Some of it has some environmental caveats, some wildlife habitat issues, and so it needs to remain in the public domain. We certainly need to at least ensure the stewardship of that land. But much of it does not.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, it's our view, crazy as it is, it's our notion that if there is producers out there currently leasing that land that they ought to have a chance to buy it. And maybe even we could provide an incentive for them to purchase that

land. Because you know what, Mr. Speaker, 10 times out of 10, ranchers and farmers are better stewards of the land than any government of any stripe. It's common sense, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — It's common sense. And today in question period on that same issue, the member from Nutana — who's understandably off her game a little bit here in the last number of days — the member from Nutana, perhaps thinking about other things . . . And I would encourage her that she should think about some other things and action she could take. And more on that in a moment, because it relates directly to priorities that we're debating in this Speech from the Throne.

The member from Nutana asks today, or derides the announcement saying, well nobody's going to be able to afford to purchase any of this land. And then she goes on to criticize what the minister had to say about what the proceeds would be used for.

And we don't know what the uptake will be, but the minister was asked, quite rightly, by the media — I think it was CBC radio — well what will you use the money that you raise from the land sales for? And you know what the Minister of Agriculture said? Here's some more crazy thought for you, Mr. Speaker. The minister . . . And we're used to it coming from the member for Saltcoats. Here's what he said. Here's what he said. We're going to take the proceeds and invest it back into agriculture.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — That's what he said. And for that there was actually a series of questions in the legislature today. That these would be his priorities, that we would take this money and strengthen crop insurance that has been neglected for a decade or more by members opposite, who've been pretty good at increasing premiums but not very good at increasing the coverage, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Agriculture said, it makes some common sense, if you sell some agricultural land, to use part of it to help with the changes that we want to make to crop insurance, that we want to strengthen agricultural programs in the province.

Mr. Speaker, the fact that this would be even a question in question period speaks to how out of touch that side still is. The election was a year ago and they remain out of touch with the people of the province, and they are strangers even to common sense, Mr. Speaker. Strangers to other things as well that aren't parliamentary for me to get into at this point, but I'll get there eventually, Mr. Speaker, in a way that will not upset the Chair at all.

Mr. Speaker, you can take a look at a Speech from the Throne debate, I guess if you wanted to read it in its totality, and understand a lot about both sides — about how the government side is operating based on its speeches and how the opposition side is operating based on its speeches and its actions.

And I want to say this, Mr. Speaker — I've said it before in the Assembly — that our government, our new government has made mistakes, and we will make other mistakes to be sure, Mr.

Speaker. And when we do, as I've said over and over again, we will readily admit of them and seek to fix them and also seek to eliminate them. That's one approach to the humanity of government or of any human endeavour, of any vocation or avocation. That's one approach where you say, well we're going to make some mistakes. We've got goals and we expect excellence and we're working towards it. But when mistakes happen — as they will — here's how we're going to react. That is one approach you could take.

And I think you could see in the words of my colleagues here on this side of the House that that's the approach in terms of this debate. That's the approach that our government's going to take. Again I think it's reflective of the values of Saskatchewan people. I think that's how they also conduct themselves.

Compare that to what we've heard, maybe in the course . . . no, it's not so much of this debate, but in the course of the last number of days from members opposite about how they will conduct themselves, about what they are prepared to do in terms of what are clear and obvious mistakes that have been made by them either in opposition or government. Mr. Speaker, it is like November 7, 2007, never happened for them.

You know, I have never heard once in this House a speech from any of them. The Leader of the Opposition came closest, to his credit, but none of the others who sat in a government, Mr. Speaker, for a very long time and who lost an election quite decisively, I haven't heard from one of them any kind of contrition, any kind of admission that maybe they didn't get it all right. Maybe there were a lot of things that they got wrong. I've never heard it once, Mr. Speaker.

In fact in their response to this Speech from the Throne and the action of this government that we've taken, it basically can be summed up, the theme of their response is basically, well you're not doing it fast enough. You're not doing it fast enough. Which is an incredible response considering we have not yet sat on the government side of the House for one year, this new government. And we have done more in that one year than it did, in the case of Social Services issues, than that government did in 16 years, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — But it's not fast enough.

We gave you all these problems. Here's an infrastructure deficit 16 years in the making. Here's an infrastructure deficit in your health care facilities 16 years in the making. Here's an infrastructure deficit in the school facilities 16 years in the making. Here's a billion dollar pothole in your highway system 16 years in the making. Here's an income assistance plan for seniors 16 years neglected by us. Here's a 400-person wait-list of people with disabilities. We haven't done anything about that. Why haven't you fixed it all in a year, Mr. Speaker?

That's the position of the opposition right today that we've heard in the Assembly. It's why, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the credibility gap that they suffered on November 7, 2007, it's why the gap isn't any narrower. But it is wider today, November 2008, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible] . . . the people of this province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — I think you should be able to measure a government and an opposition by what they do and what they say. And that's true of debates in this Assembly, and it's also true of actions, Mr. Speaker.

It's true in the case of Murdoch Carriere and his victims, I would say, Mr. Speaker. I think that's a reasonable measure for us to look at in terms of how an opposition acts, how a government acts, Mr. Speaker. In that particular case, we know exactly what this government chose to do. We know, Mr. Speaker, what this government chose to do when faced with the potential embarrassment of this, of this Carriere victimization of the women in the civil service becoming public. They chose, Mr. Speaker, to not disclose it. They chose, Mr. Speaker, to not be transparent. They chose, Mr. Speaker, to say that what was clearly a buy off — a \$275,000 payoff and then a subsequent resignation — they chose to say that that was a firing when it clearly, when it clearly, Mr. Speaker, was not a firing.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Saskatchewan Rivers read some words into the record that is a quotation from some of the victims of Mr. Carriere that I think bear some repeating today, again as a measure in terms of the efficacy and the leadership ability of the two sides in this House — the government side and the opposition side. Quote:

It was . . . painful to hear that Carriere received such a large amount of money to compensate him for . . . HIS pain and suffering.

Those words are unbelievable to us — that the man responsible for assaulting us for years received compensation for 'pain and suffering'.

Murdoch Carriere [this is a quote, Mr. Speaker, of these women] was a friend to many politicians in office at the time, and it's clear our feelings as victims were secondary in the former government's battle to keep their friend Murdoch from hard times.

That's how the women feel today about this particular issue, Mr. Speaker. And again, the government failed to do the right thing when they sat over here and they dealt with this Carriere mess. They failed to do the right thing by those women and by the people of the province.

But at any time during this debate, in terms of the Throne Speech, at any time since the revelations have come out that clearly this was a resignation and not a firing — and they clearly had not been accurate in their depiction of this to the people of the province — at any time to demonstrate that they have understood now their new role and the importance of admission and contrition, they could have stood up and said, we were wrong. What we did was wrong. It was wrong for those women. It sent the wrong signal to the civil service. And not making sure the people of the province had all the information was wrong because we were asked questions, and time after time — 29 times we've counted — members of the former government stood up and did not accurately characterize what happened here, Mr. Speaker. And I'm trying to be generous and careful with my words.

So at any time since, Mr. Speaker, in the last 48 hours, in the last two days, if there is just an ounce of leadership left over there and integrity on this issue, someone could stand up in their seat, could stand up in the benches and say, we were wrong, and to these women, chiefly, and also to the people of the province, we apologize. That's what they should be doing, Mr. Speaker. They should take that chance to stand up and . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — But they won't. They won't. You can count on this, Mr. Speaker, that in the course of this session, either in this place or outside in the rotunda, you will not hear one of them with the courage of their convictions to stand up and offer that apology. And I think that's an interesting contrast on the two sides. Not that one is perfect. We are far from it. But one side, Mr. Speaker, is fully understanding and prepared to admit when there has been a mistake and then to provide redress to those who may have been affected by that mistake.

And whatever happens with this side, with our government, however long the people of the province give us the great honour of serving, I make this pledge to you, Mr. Speaker: that is how we will conduct ourself, not in perfection, Mr. Speaker, but in respect to those that we serve and to the principles this place is founded on, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, the second part of my address in reply is to focus on the difference in the visions on both sides of the House that we've heard prior to, and then since, the general election and then the vision that's reflected here in this Throne Speech document.

Consider, Mr. Speaker, if you will, the vision for Saskatchewan for members opposite. And again, most of this comes from before the election. But none of them have stood up to correct themselves and say, you know, we were wrong about Saskatchewan, about its future, and our vision wasn't worthy of the province with its great potential, and so we want to correct it for the record. Nobody has done that. So I can only assume, and we can only assume that these things that were said prior to the election are the things that they believe still about Saskatchewan.

Consider then, Mr. Speaker, what has been said by the former premier and my predecessor, for whom I have a personal respect and regard, but with whom I disagree vehemently on this point about Saskatchewan's potential. I think he was coming back from some sort of a first ministers' meeting, and it was recently after the province had gained have status, and he was clearly asked about it.

I remember reading an editorial in the *Leader-Post*. The editorial was referencing the then premier's remarks — the current member for Riversdale — about our recent have status. And they were quoting him in the third person and then directly as having said that we will — and this is the quote part — will always "be in and out" of equalization. That's what he said then.

His view then, his vision, was for the province to downplay the

fact we had achieved have status. He said we're always going to be bouncing, don't get too excited Saskatchewan. This is not the norm. That was his view then, and it is their view today — this is not the norm for us. All of this talk of success and prosperity, in leading the country, don't get too excited because we'll always be in and out of equalization. Mr. Speaker, that is one example of the vision that we have, the competing vision, and I'll get to how it contrasts with this Speech from the Throne, and our vision for the province's future.

[15:45]

Mr. Speaker, on the issue of population growth. I remember — you know, and I don't think we can talk about this enough — I remember the then minister of Economic Development and the member for P.A. [Prince Albert] Northcote, when he was the minister of Economic Development and was faced with a recent spate of out-migration statistics, people leaving the province of Saskatchewan. And by the way, that is also the record of the NDP. Notwithstanding a year or so of some improvement, they presided over out-migration and the getting smaller of Saskatchewan.

They asked the minister then, Mr. Lautermilch, what he thought about the fact that people were leaving the province and he made some analysis. He said, well you know, when people leave Saskatchewan and the GDP [gross domestic product] stays the same, it means, you know, there's a greater sort of personal wealth for the people that are still here. Of course the translation of that, Mr. Speaker, is that, don't worry when people leave because when they leave, there's more left for the rest of us. When people leave, there is more left for the rest of us.

Mr. Speaker, you know we've talked about this many times in this House, but it goes to the heart of the difference and the vision that we have for our respective provinces. Because members on this side of the House understand that when people leave Saskatchewan, they take their ties with them and their charity and take their kids from our school system and they take their taxes that would help us pay for programs that we want to provide to the province, and they take it elsewhere and someone else benefits. And when they leave, there's not more left for the rest of us; there is less.

Further we understand, we understand as well, Mr. Speaker, that actually when we get people moving into the province — and the NDP didn't believe this was possible either, and more on that in a moment — but when we see people moving into Saskatchewan, as we've seen in record numbers, we've seen this population grow at a faster rate than it has in five decades since this party formed the Government of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — But we understand when those families move to Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, they do bring their taxes with them and they bring their charity with them and they bring their ties with them and they bring their own energy that they have. And soon it doesn't take them very long after they moved here, they bring their own love for Saskatchewan with them — an enthusiasm for the province. And we're all better, we're all stronger for it, Mr. Speaker.

That's why we seek growth on this side of the House. It isn't for the reasons of statistics and pie charts. It's because growth is represented in that one family that moves from Medicine Hat to Swift Current, that one family that moves from Red Deer to Saskatoon, that one family that buys a farm in rural Saskatchewan and contributes to rural life in our province. Mr. Speaker, our vision is one that when people leave Saskatchewan, there is not more left for the rest of us. We need to attract people to the province.

I would also point this out in terms of the difference between both sides of the House and the Throne Speech and what we've heard from the NDP, that it wasn't very long ago when an actual, elected member of this Assembly — supported I would assume by her leader because again it was never corrected — said that in her view it was impossible for the province to grow at the national average, that is was quote “statistically impossible for the province to grow at the national average.” Well, Mr. Speaker, just for record we agree that Saskatchewan cannot grow at the . . . Well is not growing at the national average. We are exceeding the national average, Mr. Speaker, today.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — And so, Mr. Speaker, the difference in the vision's pretty clear. This Speech from the Throne speaks to a stronger Saskatchewan and a better life, a province that is bent on leading the country, a province that's going to really lead in terms of the innovation agenda for North America. A province that's going to continue to grow in terms of population and create jobs for people versus what I just detailed, this litany of woe that we hear from members opposite including when the former leader — again never corrected or challenged by anybody on that side — called Saskatchewan the wee province. I think it was in the tradition of Tommy Douglas. But you know, for as much as we can talk about the traditions of Tommy Douglas that need to be continued and remembered, if that is a tradition of his that we would be referred to as a wee province, that's a tradition that we should stop and will stop in terms of this government, Mr. Speaker.

So what have they learned, Mr. Speaker? What have the NDP learned? Well it was very, very, interesting post-election to read in the August 30 edition of the Regina *Leader-Post*, it was an article about the pending NDP leadership and renewal, and it talked about how some sources in the NDP were heartened, were encouraged by the chances for their own political success down the road because they had really thought Saskatchewan had reached its limit. And let me read to you the quote:

[NDP] Party members often express a belief there is no way for the Saskatchewan Party to go but down, victimized by high expectations and . . .

And here it is:

. . . a financial picture that will never be as good in the future as it is now.

And there you have it. And there you have it, Mr. Speaker, there is the sum and the total of the vision of the NDP today.

When faced with the reality that this province is leading every other province in the Dominion of Canada, that this province was just recently featured in *Fortune* magazine for all of its potential and all of the opportunity, that every chartered bank in the country is tripping over each other to say Saskatchewan is the number one place in the country, Saskatchewan's the place to be, when all the people in the province are feeling pretty jacked about their future here in the province and optimistic about all the opportunity that is here — when all of that is going on, the NDP say, the financial picture will never be as good in the future as it is right now.

That's it, Mr. Speaker. The Riders, they have too many injuries. They'll never make the playoffs. This is as good as it gets and we're just the wee province and we'll always be in and out of equalization. It always will be next-year country. Well maybe next year things will be better.

Well, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan we have a message, from Saskatchewan people actually — not from us — to those members opposite that they need to get with the times a little bit, because the people of this province are feeling pretty good about their future. They know they're not immune to what's going on in the world right now, but they feel very good about the future, and they do not believe for a moment that this is good as it gets. They believe that our best days are ahead of us, and thus it will ever be in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the new Saskatchewan, our Saskatchewan — not the government's, but our Saskatchewan — it doesn't subscribe to a vision of mediocrity. Mr. Speaker, the new Saskatchewan doesn't have time for those who think that our best days are behind us. The new Saskatchewan doesn't have time for an NDP that says it'll never get any better than this. The new Saskatchewan doesn't have time for a party, I would suggest, that has to reach back to, well to 1978 for its renewal, Mr. Speaker.

The new Saskatchewan, the new Saskatchewan is realistic and humble in our confidence. There's a humble self-assuredness that's out there to be sure. But the new Saskatchewan is feeling pretty good about our chances to continue to lead this province. The new Saskatchewan is out there thinking, man, I don't even know why the NDP are saying the word have-not because we're a have province today — one of only three in the Dominion of Canada — and we intend to stay that way. That's what the new Saskatchewan . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — The new Saskatchewan is saying you can break our fibula and our tibula and separate our shoulder, and we're going to be there on Sunday, and we're going to win the game, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — And this Throne Speech represents that, Mr. Speaker, and it is the intent of our government to follow through on these commitments, as we have on the election

platform, commitments we made in the campaign. We are going to keep those promises, Mr. Speaker.

We will keep the commitments of the Speech from the Throne. We will honour the people of this province we serve with a vision for their province that is worthy of the potential of their province, Mr. Speaker. We will, with their help and with their support and with their patience, create a strong Saskatchewan and a better life for Saskatchewan people, and I will be very happy to support, Mr. Speaker, the motion supporting the Speech from the Throne.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion moved by the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy and seconded by the member from Saskatoon Sutherland:

That an humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor:

To His Honour the Honourable Gordon L. Barnhart, Lieutenant Governor of the province of Saskatchewan.

May it please Your Honour:

We, Her Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Saskatchewan in session assembled, humbly thank Your Honour for the gracious speech which Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Those in favour please say aye.

Some Hon. Members: — Aye.

The Speaker: — Those opposed say no.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — I believe the ayes have it. Call in the members.

[The division bells rang from 15:55 until 16:00.]

The Speaker: — Those in favour of the motion please rise.

[Yeas — 36]

Wall	Stewart	Elhard
Bjornerud	Draude	Krawetz
Boyd	Eagles	McMorris
D'Autremont	Hickie	Heppner
Tell	Gantefoer	Harpauer
Norris	Morgan	Hutchinson
Huyghebaert	Brkich	Hart
Kirsch	Schriemer	Allchurch
Weekes	Chisholm	Wilson
Duncan	Michelson	LeClerc

Ottenbreit	Ross	Reiter
Bradshaw	Harrison	McMillan

The Speaker: — Those opposed to the motion please rise.

[Nays — 19]

Calvert	Harper	Junor
Trew	Van Mulligen	Atkinson
Nilson	Yates	Higgins
Belanger	Furber	Iwanchuk
Forbes	Taylor	Quennell
Broten	McCall	Wotherspoon
Vermette		

Clerk: — Mr. Speaker, those in favour of the motion, 36; those opposed, 19.

The Speaker: — The motion carries.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Gantfoer: — I'm standing so that I could move that this House do now adjourn.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has moved that 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 16:04.]

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Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Crop Insurance Corporation

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

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