



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

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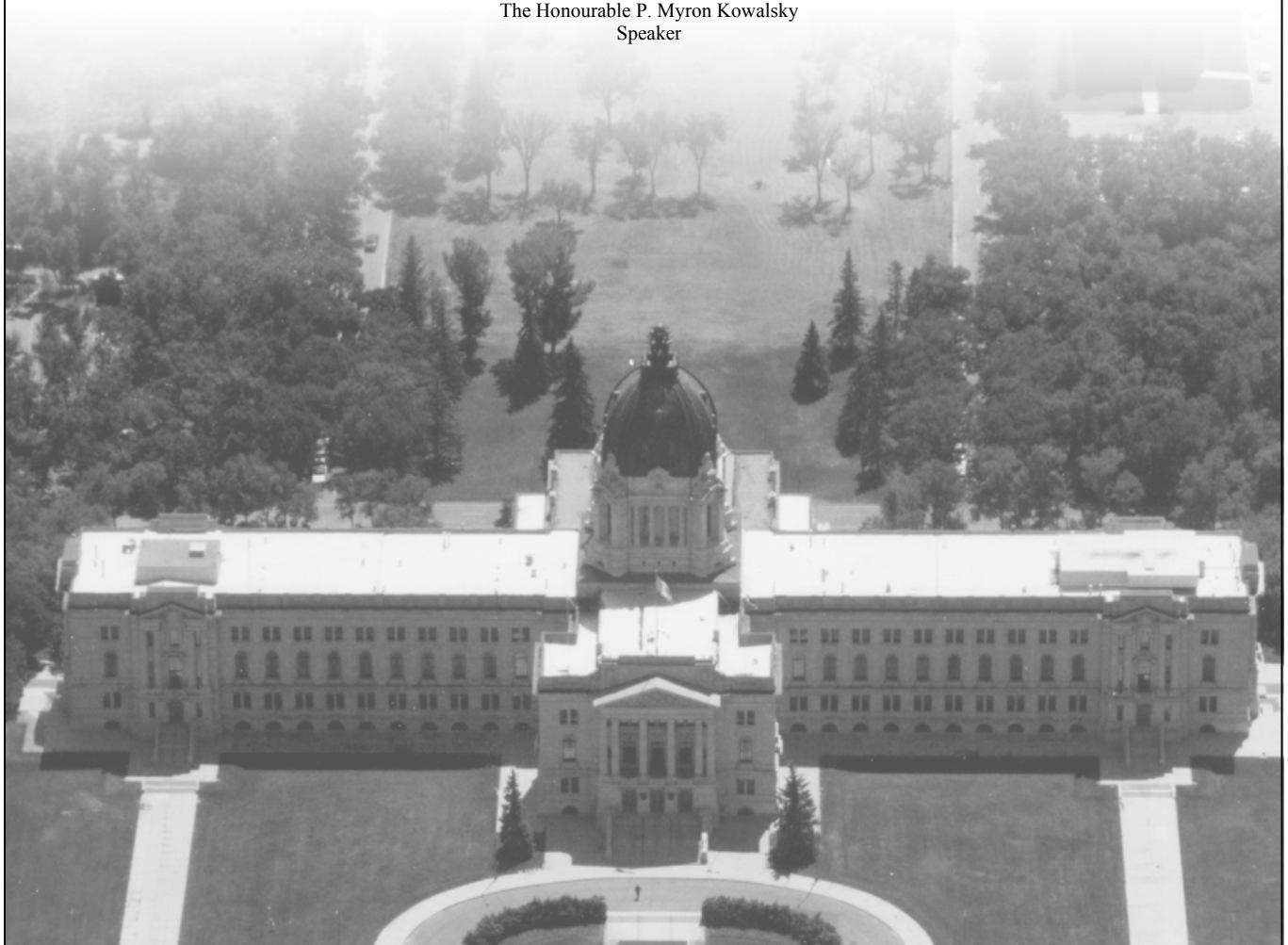
**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

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(HANSARD)

Published under the  
authority of

The Honourable P. Myron Kowalsky  
Speaker



**MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN**

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

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

[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**PRESENTING PETITIONS**

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

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was back in my constituency yesterday and avoided Highway 32 for obvious reasons. The prayer I am about to read will tell you why.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take immediate action and make necessary repairs to Highway 32 in order to address safety and economic concerns.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, these three pages of petitions are signed by residents from the communities of Cabri, Abbey, and Lancer. I so present.

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Swift Current.

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The petitions with respect to the need for group home spaces in Swift Current continue to roll in. The prayer of this one reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to provide the funding required for additional residential spaces for Swift Current residents with lifelong disabilities.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and present this petition on behalf of citizens of my home community of Swift Current, of Wymark, of Herbert, and of Selkirk, Manitoba. I so present.

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

**Ms. Eagles:** — Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this morning I have a petition to present on behalf of people from my constituency who are very concerned about the crop insurance premium hikes and coverage reduction. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take all necessary actions to reverse the increase in crop insurance premiums and the reduction in coverage.

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

And this is signed by residents of Radville. I so present. Thank you.

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

**Ms. Bakken Lackey:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of constituents of Weyburn-Big Muddy who are very concerned about the spread of crystal meth. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to implement a strategy that will deal with crystal methamphetamine education, prevention, enforcement, and treatment.

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

And the petition is signed by residents of Radville.

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

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to present a petition from parents in the constituency of Saskatoon Silver Springs regarding a much needed elementary school in the Arbor Creek area of Saskatoon. The prayer of the petition reads as follows:

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

The petitioners today live on Hinit Place, Greaves Crescent, Wright Bay, and Kenderdine Road in ... [inaudible] ... Saskatoon. I so present, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here for citizens that want to improve SaskTel cellular service in rural Saskatchewan:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take all the necessary actions to install the technical equipment necessary to ensure that all rural areas of Saskatchewan are protected by reliable cellular phone coverage.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by good citizens from Jansen. I so present.

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

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd also like to present a petition for improved cellular telephone coverage. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to provide reliable cellular telephone service in regions encompassing in the constituency of Biggar.

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

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

### READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

**Deputy Clerk:** — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and pursuant to rule 14(7) are hereby read and received:

A petition concerning Highway 51 through the town of Kerrobert; — that's sessional paper no. 808;

And addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 97, 637, 639, 640, 715, and 800.

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

**Ms. Bakken Lackey:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege today to welcome to the legislature, 14 grade 7 and 8 students from Yellow Grass. And accompanying them today is their teacher, Bev Rosnau, and chaperone, Cindy Renas. And, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to meeting with them after question period today. And I hope you all enjoy your time here, and welcome to your legislature.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think all of us who sit in this Chamber have very much appreciated the opportunity that we've had to be part of the adopt a family, the program established by the Saskatchewan Association for Community Living. We've all had a wonderful experience; to meet our families, to be part of their lives in a small way, and from them to learn. And I'm very, very pleased this morning to welcome to our Chamber two members of that family which have adopted me.

In your gallery, Mr. Speaker, are seated Margaret and Michael Halabura, and I want to welcome them to the legislature. They've had a tour of the building. Michael has joined me in my office this morning and helped me prepare for question period. And they are joined today by Mr. Scott Rodonets who was with me when I had opportunity to meet the Halaburas in their home. And Michael concluded that it wasn't such a big deal to meet a premier, but Scott, he was very cool. Well we really think that Michael is a very cool young man, and I would ask all members to welcome Michael and Margaret Halabura to the legislature this morning.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Moose Jaw North.

**Mr. Hagel:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two young women who live about 800 kilometres apart in the nation of Argentina but had to come to Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan to meet each other.

They are both Rotary exchange students, each hosted by one of the Rotary clubs in Moose Jaw. And I'd like to introduce first of all to the members Jessica Garino. And Jessica hails from her home community of El Palomar in the Buenos Aires province of Argentina. And she's completed her grade 11 studies and is participating in studies and activities here in Canada, in Saskatchewan.

And the other young woman beside her is Daniela Borgogno. Daniela is from her home community of Jesús Maria in the Cordoba province of Argentina and has a special, extra special place in my heart in that she lived with my wife Karen and I until just a couple of weeks ago. We were very enthusiastic about having a teenager back in our home again. We're kind of breathing a sigh of relief. The pace of life in our home has dropped a bit in the last couple weeks since she's moved on to another home.

These are two young women, Mr. Speaker, who we're very, very proud to have, hosting them here in Canada. They're proud of their home nation, Argentina, and no one will be surprised that among those many pins that they have on their jackets, they each have a centennial pin. And they will go home, I think, destined to be leaders in their own nation.

I ask all the members to join in saying, welcome to the Chamber here in Saskatchewan, and to wish them well in their visit till the end of this year and then much success on their return home to their native Argentina.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

#### Power of Pink Fundraiser

**Ms. Junor:** — Mr. Speaker, last night, artists, fashion designers, jewellers, cancer survivors, and supporters came together at the Power of Pink gala to raise money for enhanced breast cancer diagnosis and treatment services for women in southern Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, from pink scarves to pink champagne to signature desserts, it was a memorable evening of entertainment and celebration. Some highlights of the night included a Power of Pink fashion show featuring the work of local award-winning designers. A silent and live auction showcased jewellery and original artwork by Saskatchewan artists and popular celebrities. And Saskatchewan native Beverly Thompson,

co-anchor of *Canada AM* and breast cancer survivor, was the MC [master of ceremonies] for the evening.

Mr. Speaker, breast cancer is a prevalent health issue for many women. Access to timely, effective diagnosis and treatment is essential in increasing women's chances of survival. That's why all of the money raised at last night's event will go towards purchasing equipment for an enhanced breast assessment centre at the Pasqua Hospital.

Mr. Speaker, with better, more effective care, more women than ever are surviving the fight against breast cancer. With the expansion and enhancement of the breast assessment centre, programs and services will continue to provide patients with optimal care.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure all my colleagues will join me in congratulating the organizers of the Power of Pink gala on an impressive, sold-out event, and in thanking them and the Hospitals of Regina Foundation for supporting such a worthy cause. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

#### **Erindale-Arbor Creek Community Association Citizen Patrol**

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend the many volunteers of the Erindale-Arbor Creek Community Association citizen patrol in the constituency of Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Citizen patrols were initiated last spring under the leadership of Trent and Sheri Perehudoff and other concerned parents in the Erindale and Arbor Creek communities. The group has been supported by various donations of radios, vests, and flashlights from organizations such as the Saskatoon Kinsmen and SaskPower.

Every weekend evening from May through September, volunteers take shifts and walk through the neighbourhood to keep an eye on things. Hot spots are patrolled on foot and notes are kept on the type of activity taking place at the various locations. Generally, two teams are out at the same time with two-way radios to keep in touch. Anything suspicious is reported to the police for further investigation.

At least 75 people are already scheduled to take shifts in the month of May. They receive an orientation and instruction from the Saskatoon Police Service community liaison so they are able to best respond to the various incidents they may encounter. Store owners in the patrol area are grateful for the efforts of the patrollers and have been accommodating with offers of free coffee while on duty.

Citizen patrols have been very successful in curbing incidents of vandalism and reminding restless people that adults are watching out for trouble. It shows that this community cares about safety, justice, and the well-being of their neighbours.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you and all my colleagues to join me in congratulating the volunteers of the Erindale-Arbor Creek Community Association citizen patrol.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Athabasca.

#### **Saskatchewan Métis Wagon Adventures**

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Here's an event that fits perfectly with the Saskatchewan centennial celebrations. Yesterday morning at the Louis Riel Park in Saskatoon, the Saskatchewan Métis Wagon Adventures 2005 announced the kick-off of the Saskatchewan portion of a wagon trek that will be travelling across Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta this summer, Mr. Speaker.

The trek has been planned in co-operation with the Métis people of Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and BC [British Columbia], and individuals from all these provinces will be participating in the celebration of Métis culture and Métis history, Mr. Speaker.

The Saskatchewan part of the trek will be officially starting in Batoche on July 24 and follow trails used by the Métis in the 19th century. Mr. Speaker, the specific goal of the Saskatchewan portion of the trek is to celebrate and promote Métis culture and to educate Saskatchewan people about the very vital role the Métis have played and continue to play in the development of our great province. Within the trek there will be an arts and culture program, a youth leadership program, a Michif language program. As well, Mr. Speaker, Métis youth will document the journey and significance of Métis history of each of the towns and villages visited along the route.

Mr. Speaker, for those that are interested in participating in the trek, they can get information at [www.saskmetiswagon.ca](http://www.saskmetiswagon.ca).

Mr. Speaker, I ask all my colleagues to join me in acknowledging all the members of the Saskatchewan Métis Adventures 2005, whose hard work has made this important cultural event possible. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

#### **ArtsSmarts Awards**

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was recently informed by the Saskatchewan Arts Board that three communities in the Moosomin constituency have received ArtsSmarts awards.

The Broadview High School Drama Club received \$7,500 to engage students, seniors, First Nations partners, and adult drama members in creating a musical snapshot of Broadview. The project, called *Way Back When*, will focus on the stories of Broadview's main street, the surrounding farm communities, and First Nations.

Grenfell Elementary Community School received over \$5,000 to create a permanent art installation project that will reflect children's individual perceptions of their family, community, province, and country. The project will consist of each child creating a cement stepping stone that will be used to create an outdoor courtyard. This project will be unique to Grenfell as the only permanent outdoor art installation project in the community.

[10:15]

And finally, Mr. Speaker, Centre 48 and Montmartre School received over \$7,000 to present a series of arts classes and workshops that will engage students in transforming a storage space in Montmartre into a work of art that will serve as a studio for future art classes, literacy workshops, public readings, and music classes.

Centre 48 is an arts and continuing education centre that has served over 7,000 students since its inception in 2002. It offers programming to communities of Montmartre, Kendal, Odessa, Sedley, and Wolseley. Congratulations to these community groups on their receiving ArtsSmarts awards. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

#### SaskEnergy Volunteer Challenge

**Ms. Hamilton:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. SaskEnergy is presenting sponsor of the Jeux du Canada Summer Games and official champion of volunteers. On Monday, April 18, SaskEnergy announced a challenge to all Canada Games' corporate sponsors to encourage employee volunteerism and to get the highest percentage of volunteers registered.

SaskEnergy is pleased to announce and congratulate the winner of that challenge, Prudhomme Trucks Ltd. of Regina, with an extraordinary 33 per cent of registration of games volunteers. SaskEnergy would also like to extend its appreciation to all of the corporations who got involved, including Farm Credit Canada and Grand & Toy.

During National Volunteer Week, 500 volunteers registered as Canada Games volunteers. The games now has just over half of the 6,000 volunteers required to successfully present this world-class athletic competition. As the games official champion of volunteers, SaskEnergy volunteers will be assisting in training volunteers, providing accreditation, distributing uniforms, and hosting volunteer recognition events.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join me in commending SaskEnergy for this initiative and in thanking Saskatchewan volunteers and Saskatchewan businesses for their ongoing support of community events.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

#### Biggar Residents Receive Volunteer Recognition Awards

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate four Biggarites who on April 19 were recognized for their volunteerism. Mr. Richard L'Hoir, Mrs. Kate Yaroshko, Mrs. Kay Roach, and Mrs. Mary Ann Assaily were presented the awards at the 12th annual Volunteer Recognition Awards banquet in Eston.

The Wild Goose Recreation Association honours volunteers in member communities each year during National Volunteer Week. The awards are presented to individuals, facilities, and organizations who have displayed outstanding commitment and dedication to the betterment of culture, sport, and recreation within their region through their volunteer efforts. These four individuals were nominated by various groups within the community of Biggar to acknowledge their appreciation for the many hours they have contributed to the betterment of the community.

It is volunteers such as Richard, Kay, Kate, and Mary Ann that keeps a community active, healthy, and vibrant. I would like to thank these individuals for their time and dedication to the community of Biggar, and again congratulate them on receiving this award from the Wild Goose Recreation Association for their efforts.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Regina Elphinstone.

#### French for the Future Conference

**Mr. McCall:** — Mr. Speaker, recently two students from Regina, Gina Hochban and Nadine Kirzinger, were among 36 French immersion and francophone high school students from across the country to attend the eighth annual French for the Future national conference in Ottawa.

French for the Future is a non-profit organization that was founded by John Ralston Saul in 1997 to encourage students to study in French after high school. The program fosters linguistic and cultural ties among students enrolled in second language education programs, and encourages them to think about bilingual and bicultural lives.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to those students who gathered in Ottawa, hundreds of French immersion and francophone high school students from Regina also gathered to debate whether Canadians are engaged citizens. In total, Mr. Speaker, 3,000 students from 18 cities participated in simultaneous discussions. The conference also included a series of workshops on issues such as crime and the law, marketing, tourism, business, journalism, and arts and culture.

Mr. Speaker, bilingual education is becoming increasingly popular in Western provinces. Students at the Ottawa conference said the ability to read and speak French not only provides them with career opportunities, but they also appreciate learning about another culture.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure all my colleagues will join me in

congratulating Gina Hochban, Nadine Kirzinger, and all of the students from Regina who participated in the French for the Future conference. We are proud of their commitment to enhancing cultural diversity and in leading the way to an even more open and inclusive Canada.

Je voudrais dire pour le gouvernement provincial une grande bienvenue et félicitations. Merci, Monsieur.

[Translation: I would like to say for the provincial government a great welcome and congratulations. Thank you, sir.]

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

### ORAL QUESTIONS

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

#### Negotiations with Federal Government Regarding an Energy Accord

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well Prime Minister Paul Martin is in town today. Back in February, the Premier of this province agreed with the Saskatchewan Party when we said it was time to ramp up, to pick up the tone and the volume of our request for a better equalization deal and specifically an energy accord for the province of Saskatchewan here in the province.

Yesterday they asked the Premier if he would be meeting with the Prime Minister . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — Order, please. Order, please. The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr. Wall:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, when we say the word our, in this case because we agree, we're talking about all of us in this Legislative Assembly. We're talking about the province of Saskatchewan.

So they asked the Premier yesterday, are you going to get a chance now to meet with the Prime Minister on the need for an energy accord? And here's what he had to say: we have no formal scheduled significant meeting time around the energy accord.

Mr. Speaker, what we've seen so far from this Premier — he's gotten a flyby meeting with the Prime Minister at the airport on his way out of town, he has taken the opportunity not . . . has not taken the opportunity to travel to Ottawa to meet with the Prime Minister. Now there's no time scheduled when the Prime Minister is back in Regina.

Is this the Premier's definition of ramping things up for a new deal for Saskatchewan and an energy accord?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, point number one. Last year when we were engaged in a similar debate with the national government around equalization and we ramped it up, we went so far as to take out public ads. What did the Leader of the Opposition do? Criticized this government, criticized us for doing it.

Now I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, how things are accomplished. They are accomplished with determination. They are accomplished with logic. And let me report to the House this morning activities of just the last two weeks where senior officials — the most senior officials of this government — have been at the nation's capital meeting with the most senior officials of the federal government on this very issue. Those conversations and discussions have continued this week.

This week, Mr. Speaker, I had opportunity to sit down face to face with the Minister of Finance, federal, who lives in Regina. We had a good, if I may say, very productive discussion.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, I spent time on the telephone with the Prime Minister of Canada on this very issue. That is getting the work done, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr. Wall:** — Well we hope the Premier is successful. We do. And we for the record offer our help . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — Order. The Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We hope the Premier's successful. And for the record, we offer our help. But you know, it's strange that the Premier would point to his ads in the major daily papers of the province of Saskatchewan as evidence that he can make a solid and strong and effective case for a new deal for Saskatchewan.

Takes out ads — \$75,000 — in the daily papers, which generate three phone calls, Mr. Speaker, when the market for this is not the province of Saskatchewan, not the readers of the dailies. The market, Mr. Speaker, is the Prime Minister and the Finance minister. The people of this province expect the Premier to show some leadership. Newfoundland had leadership. Nova Scotia had leadership. When will Saskatchewan get that same leadership?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, I mean, the opposition will say one thing. The people of Saskatchewan know the facts. The facts of the matter are that a year ago, through the efforts of this government, we were able to achieve a sense of fairness for those years of equalization where this province was unjustly treated to the tune of over \$300 million, \$300 million. Now the Finance critic over there . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — Order, please. We've got too many people trying to enter the debate at the same time. Order, please. Premier of the province.

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Now, Mr. Speaker, this year earlier in front of the media, the Finance critic over there described that achievement by the people of Saskatchewan a year ago as achieving table scraps. That's how they described it. That's how they describe it. Mr. Speaker, I repeat — one achieves for the people of Saskatchewan through determination, through logical approach, and through perseverance, Mr. Speaker.

In the last two weeks there have been very significant discussions between the most senior levels of our governments. There has been an extremely important conversation between myself, face-to-face, with the Minister of Finance, federal. I spoke to the Prime Minister yesterday. Mr. Speaker, we are making progress on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, with or without the support of the Conservatives.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr. Wall:** — On two occasions now this morning, Mr. Speaker, the Premier has said the most senior level of officials of his government have been meeting with Ottawa. Isn't the most senior level of officials himself and his cabinet, Mr. Speaker? Isn't that who should be providing leadership on this issue? No, the Premier's shaking his head, no. In this case, it's the civil servants that are driving this issue. And no doubt that Finance officials can . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — Order please, members. Order. Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, no doubt that our senior level officials in the Finance department can and have done an effective job on this. But the people of this province and the people of this country need to hear from this Premier. They heard from Atlantic premiers before the Atlantic accord and everyone understands that, whether you disagree with their tactics or not, that's why they got a deal.

In our province we hear nothing from this Premier. When we ask him about the progress he claims to be making, you know what he says? He says, trust me. That's what he said yesterday to the media. Just trust me. Well you know, this Premier unfortunately has given the people of this province absolutely no reason at all to trust him, whether it's on new police officers, whether it's on tax cuts that he promised in the last election, whether it's on reducing waiting lists. Why in the world should the people of this province trust him on a file that he is completely silent about, Mr. Speaker?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, let me say this in regards to leadership. The proof of leadership, Mr. Speaker, is in benefiting the people we seek to lead. That is the proof of leadership. Now I know that the Leader of the Conservative Party over there doesn't want to talk about what's been happening in this province in just the last 12 months. Let's just review the record.

Stats Canada this week reported for the year 2004 that in all of Canada — in all of Canada — Saskatchewan has achieved real GDP [gross domestic product] growth at a rate third highest in the country. We have achieved personal income growth at a rate that is second highest in the country.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Now get this, Mr. Speaker, nominal GDP growth — number one; nominal GDP growth per capita — number one; real GDP growth per capita — number one; personal income growth per capita — number one; personal disposable income growth — number one; personal disposable income growth per capita — number one; productivity growth, real GDP per employment — number one in Canada.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Melfort.

#### Behaviour of Health Official

**Mr. Gantefoer:** — Mr. Speaker, last month the Minister of Health promised to look into allegations that a department of Health official made insulting comments to Brenda Goulet of Moose Jaw who was seeking reimbursement for an out-of-province MRI [magnetic resonance imaging].

As of yesterday, Ms Goulet had not heard from this government about her concerns; not until after we raised the question again in question period. Now it appears that the investigation into allegations against Dr. Jim O'Carroll have been completed.

Question to the minister: does he approve of this kind of rude and condescending behaviour from an employee in his department?

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

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, as I stated a number of weeks ago any kind of behaviour that is detrimental to people or rude to them is not tolerated and needs to be corrected. So, Mr. Speaker, what do we do when there are challenges or concerns raised? We make sure that the senior administrators, the deputy minister, and others work to resolve those particular issues as personnel matters and that's how this matter has been dealt with.

I understand the associate deputy minister has talked to the individual involved and that she now understands what has been done.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

[10:30]



**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Melfort.

**Mr. Gantefoer:** — Mr. Speaker, it took six weeks and further questioning from the opposition for this government to finally contact Brenda Goulet out of embarrassment. Ms. Goulet wonders why someone else had to apologize for Dr. O'Carroll after a reminder from the opposition and why that individual proceeded to defend Dr. O'Carroll's actions by saying, quote, "You have to understand doctors."

Not only did the department not encourage her to file her claim, they only offered excuses for Dr. O'Carroll's behaviour. Can the minister report to this Assembly what actions were taken against Dr. O'Carroll to ensure that this doesn't happen again?

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

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, personnel matters like this are dealt with in the department, in the civil service. And it's not an appropriate place here in the legislature to be talking about that.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

#### Legislation for Treatment of Drug Addicted Youth

**Ms. Bakken Lackey:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is an Assembly where elected officials bring forward issues of concern to Saskatchewan people and look for solutions.

On Wednesday, the member from Kelvington-Wadena brought forward a concern and a solution in the form of a private member's Bill to give families the legal tools they need to help their children fight drug addiction. We are asking the government to support this Bill so that we can together find a solution that will enable families to help their kids.

Mr. Speaker: to the Premier: will your government support this Bill?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Minister for Community Resources and Employment.

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I've said earlier this week, we are looking very seriously at this Bill and comparing it to our powers under section 18 in The Child and Family Services Act because we think it would be appropriate, if we already have 80 per cent of the solution, to look at improving it the other 20 per cent.

And as well I want to be very thoughtful about this Bill. The Children's Advocate has recommended that before such a major change is made in youth rights in this province, we should as well be talking to their office and to youth. We intend to do this properly, Mr. Speaker. It's a very big change and I do think parents deserve more ability to intervene, but we do need to look carefully at how this is going to happen and how it'll affect a large number of young people.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Bakken Lackey:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this government has not given a good enough reason why they will not support this Bill. Merely to hide behind section 18 is not good enough. They continue to want to study and to talk, but people want action now. And there is no more time to waste because every day we wait, more kids' lives are ruined and families are torn apart.

Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: will your government take positive ...

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order, please. I would ask the member to restate her question through the Chair.

**Ms. Bakken Lackey:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier: will his government take positive action and support the Bill put forward by the member from Kelvington-Wadena?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Minister for Community Resources and Employment.

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — I want to say again that we've had a member of our Assembly, the member from Saskatoon Sutherland, who's been working closely with addictions people, with families, with communities. A number of announcements that, were made this week of things that will happen right away. So there is action being taken right away.

On this particular matter, it has big legal implications. And I want to say that the Bill also includes, under the definition of addictions, alcohol, other drugs as well as crystal meth. It's quite wide reaching. And I think we need to be thoughtful about what the hurdle is to determine someone has an addiction before they can be locked up.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Bakken Lackey:** — Mr. Speaker, we have listened for a year about the government's talk about doing something. Parents are forced to stand by and watch their children slowly die in front of their eyes.

Mr. Speaker, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child has been ratified by 192 countries including Canada. Article 33 of that convention states, and I quote:

... parties ... [shall] take all appropriate measures, including legislative, administrative, social and educational measures, to protect children ... [from] the illicit use of narcotic drugs ...

Right now, Mr. Speaker, children in our province do not have the legislative protection when it comes to ensuring they can get

addiction treatment when they need it the most. Mr. Speaker, if the government is unwilling to support the Saskatchewan Party's Bill, what is the government going to do to give families the tools they need to help their children fight this deadly and destructive drug?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Community Resources and Employment.

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Mr. Speaker, the facts are that in Saskatchewan, children the age of 15 and under can be apprehended and required to be in particular circumstances and in particular settings. The age of 16, between 16 and 18 is the age we're discussing here. And I will just say that there is a reason why a province like Alberta, who tends to be pretty black and white on things, is taking until July 2006 to bring this into place.

Now we have this legislative session, we have the fall legislative session, and we have the spring legislative session, all of which would bring this in faster than Alberta. But I intend to make my decision much more quickly than that, Mr. Speaker, after I am sure that this is actually going to make a difference and not create more damage.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

#### Housing Conditions in Northern Saskatchewan

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a family in Wollaston Lake has been evicted from their home. The family was forced out after the home was declared unfit for human habitation. Mr. Speaker, Ed Benoanie is a local councillor. He blames the situation on the member for Cumberland. He says this member has failed to live up to an election promise to improve northern housing.

Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation who is also the member for Cumberland: why has she failed to live up to this promise? Why does she say one thing and do another?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Community Resources and Employment.

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, the facts are that the problems with the housing are related to it being winter, and sewage breaking and the ability to repair it before spring. The family has been relocated to appropriate housing, which is paid for by my department.

And in fact we have spent 30 million in increasing improved housing conditions in the North. We benefited over 1,000 . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — Order, please. Order, please, members. Order. Order. The Minister for Community Resources and Employment.

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — We've spent 30 million on northern housing. We've had over 1,000 northern households benefit recently through HomeFirst. Another 6 million will be invested. There are five new homes moving into this community in the spring as soon as the water and sewer can be hooked up, when the ground thaws out.

So in fact, we have informed Wollaston that there is housing money they can apply for. We're waiting for their application.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the member opposite, the question is, why is this happening? There are chronic housing problems in northern Saskatchewan and many of them. There is a need for roads, and there is also a need for jobs. There's also a need for this provincial government to do something.

Here's how Mr. Ed Benoanie describes this NDP [New Democratic Party] government's efforts to date. They do nothing, zero for provincial housing in the North. They say one thing and do the other.

Mr. Speaker, when will the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation, the member for Cumberland, live up to her election promises to improve housing in the North?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Athabasca.

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Mr. Speaker, it's been three years and one month since we got a question in question period from that opposition, Mr. Speaker. Three years and one month — one question about the North, Mr. Speaker. And I want to stand here today, Mr. Speaker, defend the incredible amount of work that we have done in northern Saskatchewan to promote . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — Order, please. Order, please. The member for Athabasca.

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have made incredible progress as a government to look at issues like home ownership through the remote housing program, Mr. Speaker. We have turned many social housing units over to families to finally own, Mr. Speaker. And we are continuing to work on water and sewer projects throughout the entire North, Mr. Speaker, and there are specific challenges as indicated in this case.

But I want to tell the official opposition, the Saskatchewan Conservative Party, this, is that no. 101 of your 100 ideas . . . I

want to add, why don't you start dealing with the facts and find out what exactly is happening in northern Saskatchewan before you get up and make these brash assumptions, thereby . . . [inaudible] . . . the people of Saskatchewan and this House, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Well, Mr. Minister, to the Minister of Northern Affairs, this is maybe the first time we've asked questions in northern affairs in question period. But to the Minister of Northern Affairs: are you listening? This is only a band-aid solution.

Mr. Speaker, the member of Cumberland has come up with a brilliant solution to the immediate crisis. The family with six children forced out of their home because it was deemed unfit for human occupation, this family will spend the next several months living in a motel. This is only a band-aid solution. Mr. Speaker, why not fix the problem, like the minister promised in the election. Does she say one thing or do another?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the . . . Order, please. The Chair recognizes the Minister of Community Resources and Employment.

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The members say one thing; the facts are another. There are five new housing units moving into that community, of which this family who is temporarily located until the sewer and water can be installed in the spring. So this is totally happening. The housing is there, the family is in appropriate housing, and you could not have people living in housing with sewage in the basement. And if that member thinks that that's a good idea, he should stand up and say so.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

#### Financial Assistance for Farmers

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, today in Saskatchewan farm families are making difficult decisions of how they're going to put the spring crop in. And many are just trying to find that dollars they need to do that. This morning we learned that over 1,800 Saskatchewan producers are still waiting for their 2003 CAIS [Canadian agricultural income stabilization] applications to be processed. Mr. Speaker. That's 1,800 families who need money for this spring and don't know when or if it will ever be coming.

Mr. Speaker, this is completely unacceptable. Is the minister going to deal with this problem and get this money out there, or is he going to as usual sit back and just watch what happens?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Agriculture.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to note that there are the observations of the members opposite, and then there are the facts. And I'd like to speak about the facts in this case, Mr. Speaker.

The facts are that in Saskatchewan we are far ahead of our neighbouring province in terms of the CAIS payments, that over 94 per cent of those payments are out. Mr. Speaker, the payments that are still left to come, generally — not all of them, but generally — are for the larger, more complex operations. Those payments we are told . . . and we have been pressing the federal government which means we are doing something on this, Mr. Speaker, to get the payments out as quickly as they can. They assure us that they are moving as quickly as they can through the system. Those payments will be out.

There are other options, Mr. Speaker, like advances that these farm families may take to help them to help them through this time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister might be surprised to find out that fertilizer sales are down, chemical sales are down, car dealers in rural Saskatchewan are hurting, machinery dealers in rural Saskatchewan are hurting. They're laying people off; it's costing jobs. And at the same time this morning we hear the Premier bragging about the GDP is growing, everything's growing. And yet they have no money for farmers, they have no time for farmers.

Mr. Speaker, maybe they should talk to Jack, their federal leader. He seems to have the Prime Minister's ear. They don't seem to be doing absolutely nothing for farmers. They can't fund the CAIS program. They piddle a little money into the set-aside program. Mr. Speaker, when it comes to standing up for rural Saskatchewan, that government comes in last place as usual in this country.

[10:45]

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of stress out in rural Saskatchewan. There's a lot of really sad stories happening and coming out of rural Saskatchewan. Isn't it time that government showed the compassion that they say they show and help farm families in rural Saskatchewan?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Agriculture.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again it is important that we deal with the facts here; it is

important that we not deal with distortions. We must recognize that farms are businesses and that those farmers are making business decisions about the kind of inputs that they will put in. They are doing that based on the kind of crops that they have had, the success that they have had in the past, Mr. Speaker. And it is very, very difficult for many of them.

Mr. Speaker, we have been making sure that we have been pressing for better programs. The Conservatives opposite and their cousins have been of little help in that, Mr. Speaker — little help. Because when there was an opportunity to help shift the system, Mr. Speaker, where were the Conservatives opposite? Nowhere. They sat on their hands. Mr. Speaker, we have been and will continue to work to make sure that our farmers get the support that's necessary. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

### WRITTEN QUESTIONS

**The Speaker:** — Order please, members. I would ask the Assembly to come to order. I would ask members to come to order. Order. Order. Order. The Chair recognizes the Government Whip.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased once again to stand on behalf of the government and table a response to written question no. 1,022.

**The Speaker:** — Response to 1,022 has been submitted. Seventy-five minute debate. Order, please. The Chair recognizes the member for Melfort on a point of order.

**Mr. Gantefoer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would ask you to check *Hansard* because I believe in response to a question by the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook, the member from Athabasca said — and I believe this is accurate — that there was . . . we were misleading the people and this House.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that is clearly unparliamentary language, and I would ask the Speaker to review *Hansard*, review this, and ask the member to apologize and withdraw those remarks.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — Order, please. Order, please. I will take the matter under advisement. I wish to — order, please; order, please; order, please — take the matter under advisement.

I would advise members that I have been trying to listen carefully to remarks of this type, and tone is also important as to how it's used. But I have been using a guideline with respect to words like misrepresentation or misleading or distortion, whether it is intended to be intentional or not, or deliberate or not. And that is the general rule, but I will check and I take it under advisement.

### SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

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

Order, please. Order, please. The Chair recognizes the member for Wood River.

### Funding of Municipal Agreements

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at the end of my remarks, I'll be moving a motion that urges the government to address the rising property taxes caused by the failure of this government to adequately fund municipal agreements. And, Mr. Speaker, it's pretty clear from this last budget that this government totally ignored municipalities, rural and urban.

And I know we've heard from the minister that wishes to talk about that more money has gone out into the municipalities, but I'd just like to start off with quoting from the budget document. And I would like to read the figures into the record:

The revenue sharing, urban revenue sharing for 2004-2005, 44,109,000; estimated for 2005-2006, 44,109,000.

I don't think that's much of an increase, Mr. Speaker, because it's exactly the same.

Rural revenue sharing, 33,961,000 in '04-05. Guess what it is for '05 and '06 — 33,961,000. I do not think that is an increase.

How about northern revenue sharing — 6,980,000; '05-06, 6,980,000. Mr. Speaker, the revenue sharing is flat. Zap, you're froze.

Now, Mr. Speaker, municipalities were looking for increases in this year's budget. Needless to say they were very, very disappointed. It had no increases, no increases in revenue sharing despite \$1.2 billion in additional revenue.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when the times were tight, fiscal situation was tight, the NDP had no problem going out to the municipalities and cutting back, and cutting back substantially. So the municipalities tightened their belts and said, lookit, if you're having a tight fiscal situation we can absorb some of the pain. But now, Mr. Speaker, there's gain, \$1.2 billion in gain, and what does this government do to the municipalities? Again, zap, you're froze, no new money for revenue sharing.

Mr. Speaker, a recent solution submitted to SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] for their convention . . . and I'd like to read this into the record. It says in part that the provincial government, asking:

Reinstate the Revenue Sharing pool to an appropriate level from the general revenues of the Province that reflects the original commitments to Revenue Sharing before reductions occurred through Provincial austerity . . .

The resolution also proposes that, once the revenue-sharing pool is established to an appropriate and acceptable level, that it again be indexed to the growth in personal and corporate income tax bases and fuel and retail sales. The basis for the estimates, the original escalator was based on the selected provincial tax basis — for an example, taxable incomes not actual income taxes and the value of the sales, not sales tax

revenues. It's easier to track the actual tax revenues and revenues raised on the four bases, and this proxy for the original formula better fits the idea of sharing revenues, not just sharing tax bases.

The provincial revenues from the four bases have increased over the '78 to 2004 program period from 660 million to 2.92 billion, an increase of some 342 per cent.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to put in what the magnitude of the gap really is, and this is the urban revenue-sharing pool annual amounts, in 1978 was initially about \$34 million. This rose to 67 million by 1986, before declining to 27 million — 27, that's below the original of 1978. And it declined to 27 million by 1997. And since that time it has rose to about 44 million, far less than the 67 million at its peak.

If the original 34 million had fully kept pace with the growth of provincial revenues, today it would sit fairly close to \$150 million — 150 million — and I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that it's at about 44 million now. It would therefore take more than another 100 million per year to get back on the original track.

Even allowing for a somewhat more conservative estimate, perhaps in closer proximity to the original tax base formula, it is still safe to say that the current annual pool of 44 million would have to more than triple — increase by more than 200 per cent — to meet the original goal.

In recent years the annual request of the provincial government, led by the cities, have been for additional urban increases in the range of 10 to 20 million, while the actual increases have been around the \$5 million mark. Now, Mr. Speaker, this is totally unacceptable to the municipalities.

So what do some of the municipalities have to say about this? And again, I want to read into the record what the president of SUMA has to say on this budget and this revenue sharing, and I'm just going to read right from his article:

The Provincial budget, panned by municipal leaders, contained no new revenue sharing for municipalities.

Schlosser says that while municipalities are disappointed by the status quo approach in the budget, it is really the Province who will ultimately suffer for ignoring the critical need for true revenue sharing in every city, town and village in Saskatchewan.

There is no doubt in my mind that there's going to have to be property tax increases in communities now.

So I'm dropping away from the quote, but we've talked about this, Mr. Speaker. Because of a lack of the revenue sharing, it is forcing communities and municipalities to raise their taxes. Although this government will say there's no tax increase, they've off-loaded to municipalities to the point where tax increases are inevitable in the municipal system.

Municipalities — and this is something I don't believe that this government understands — municipalities are the economic engine of this province. When you tie the hands of municipalities by ignoring the fiscal pressures they face, you

have not only hurt municipalities, but you have put the economic future of the entire province in peril.

Schlosser points out that it is the provincial and federal government that benefit the most through economic growth in our communities as they take in 95 per cent of every tax dollar collected. But if fiscal pressures and aging infrastructure prevent municipalities from creating this growth, everyone loses. The only positive thing out of this budget is the commitment to review the current revenue-sharing arrangement in time for next year.

Schlosser quotes:

I'm putting the government on notice. We have 12 months to make good on that commitment and deliver true revenue sharing . . .

Mr. Speaker, we hear, we hear from the minister on occasion and he has talked about more money going to the municipalities and more money going to the municipalities in the form of Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund.

Now I'd like to talk just a little bit on the Canadian-Saskatchewan Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund. And I know the minister has already spoke about this, that we've put money into this particular venture. But here's the kicker on this fund. This fund is financed 50 per cent by the municipalities, 25 per cent by the provincial government, and 25 per cent by the federal government. But the kicker is, if you've off-loaded and downloaded to the municipalities to such an extent that they don't have the money for their 50 per cent portion of the infrastructure to access infrastructure funding, how can they do it? And I think that's a fair question. How can they access it if they don't have the money for their 50 per cent?

Now, Mr. Speaker, it actually even gets worse than that. It's worse than that because . . . And I will read into the record from the guide:

Applicants incur and pay 100% of the project costs up front and are reimbursed by the federal and provincial governments for up to 50% of the approved funding total.

[11:00]

So here we have a situation where they have been off-loaded. They're not getting more money. Off-loading has taken place. And now they're required to put 100 per cent of their funds upfront for municipal infrastructure funding and then claim back 50 per cent. Well if they don't have the 50 per cent to start, how would they have the 100 per cent to do it upfront? There should be an explanation for that.

Mr. Speaker, we hear about austerity and what has happened in times of austerity — how the municipalities have tightened their belts. But now in the good times they're not getting any money returned. And it's a perfect example of again this government doing so little with so much.

There's always talk about the money and where's the money's going to come from. Now I would like to read some of these investments from the business gurus on that side of the House

and how this would go to municipal revenue sharing.

How about *tapped into.com*? That was a \$6.7 million loss. Wouldn't that have been nice to have that as part of a revenue-sharing pool? How about *Persona*, 9.4 million? Would that not have been nice to have for revenue sharing? How about *Navigata*?

And we talk about, can we continue every year sustainable revenue sharing. Again, I can't emphasize it enough. When times were tough we took money away. Times are good; we don't give it back. So the revenue sharing, it's not sustainable.

Well it seems like *Navigata* is sustainable because every year we put more money. I think it's 16 million more this year. Now we're at a loss of \$43.4 million in *Navigata*. Would that not have been nice in a revenue-sharing pool?

How about *Retx.com*, \$26 million lost? That would have been nice in revenue sharing. How about *Craig Wireless*, \$10 million? That definitely would have helped in revenue sharing.

I'll just go through some other ones: *NST* [*NST Network Services of Chicago*], 16 million; *Clickabid*, 1.9 million; *Soft Tracks*, 2.2 million; *Ag Dealer*, 8.9 million. That list that I've just given, Mr. Speaker, is \$124.5 million lost by this government on reckless investment in, some of them out-of-province companies like *Atlanta, Georgia*; *Nashville, Tennessee*; and in *BC* — \$124 million. And how can this government go out and talk to municipal leaders and say, I'm sorry, we have no money for you for revenue sharing; but oh by the way, we have \$124 million that we're willing to lose on these ventures.

And that's not all. That is not all. We can never forget *SPUDCO* [*Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company*], although that money was gone a little while ago. It's still not finalized — a \$35 million loss. That would have worked pretty nice in a revenue-sharing pool. How about *Channel Lake*, \$15 million; *Guyana*, \$2 million? That's another \$17 million that sure would have been nice in a revenue-sharing pool. How about *SGI* [*Saskatchewan Government Insurance*] losing 16.1 million on *Coachman Insurance*? I think every municipality would have liked to have that amount of money.

How about some of these other really, really wonderful ventures that this government entered into, like *mega bingo* — 8 million bucks lost, 8 million. And yet there's no money for revenue sharing. How about the *ethanol deal*, the *bogus ethanol deal*? We could talk about that one ad infinitum. It was only \$750,000, so that was just kind of a small deal. But still, \$750,000 blown. Even that, I know some municipalities would just love to have that in the revenue-sharing side of it instead of going into this venture. How about *Pangaea*? That's another, that's another huge one. That was \$3.5 million that was lost.

Mr. Speaker, the point is very, very clear. Here we have a government that this total amount has . . . adds to \$204.85 million. And I repeat, \$204.85 million lost, lost on ventures around the country. And we have zero dollars for revenue sharing.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to now read the motion that I'm

putting forward, seconded by the member from *Melville-Saltcoats*, and it reads:

That this Assembly urge the government to address the issue of rising property taxes caused by the failure of this government to adequately fund municipal agreements with northern, rural, and urban municipalities in the 2005-2006 budget.

Dated this date. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member for *Wood River*, seconded by the member for *Melville-Saltcoats*:

That this Assembly urge the government to address the issue of rising property taxes caused by the failure of this government to adequately fund municipal agreements with northern, rural, and urban municipalities in the 2005-2006 budget.

The Chair recognizes the member for *Melville-Saltcoats*.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to have the opportunity this morning, along with my colleague from *Wood River*, to talk about municipal funding this morning . . . or lack of, I guess would be a better way of describing it, Mr. Speaker.

We go back, Mr. Speaker, into the early '90s. And let's go back to the days of *Carol Carson*, when she was minister of *Municipal Government*, and the cuts we saw. And, Mr. Speaker, at that time I was involved in rural municipal government and the downloading that went on that time for the sake of balancing the budget. And everyone knew out there that that's why the reason of the downloading was happening and to some degree accepted it at that spot, but doing that with the promise that when things got better, that municipal funding would be increased and returned back to them.

Well that hasn't happened, Mr. Speaker. We saw in the last two or three years that a little additional funding has gone back into municipalities, up till this year of course, Mr. Speaker. But nothing to the tune of what was taken away from municipalities, whether you were a rural municipality, a village, a town, or for that matter the cities, Mr. Speaker, because they all took the brunt of the downloading that took on in the '90s to balance the budget. But now, when things have supposedly picked up in the province, the economy has improved, that money's not being returned to these municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, we can go back to the times of *Carol Teichrob*, when she was the minister of *Municipal Government*, and the downloading and the municipalities being asked to take less and do more and help build the economy in this province, while at the same time having to raise their local mill rates if they expected to receive any more money to keep up the infrastructure in all parts of *Saskatchewan*.

Mr. Speaker, I find it amazing that in our neighbouring province, in *Manitoba* in fact, even when we talk about the education tax on that province neighbouring us, they've dropped their education tax to the tune of about 50 per cent. And I realize this morning we're talking about a motion that

talks about municipal tax and municipal funding, but yet the two are tied very closely together because the same taxpayers out there receive their municipal tax bill and their education tax bill usually all in one form out there, and one bill. So we're talking about the same taxpayers. So when you give, as Manitoba did, give relief on the education side of it, it helps give relief to the same taxpayer and those that are paying municipal taxes.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have saw now that the cities of, like, Regina, Saskatoon, are raising their taxes anywhere 3, 4 per cent just to cover the bare necessities of keeping the infrastructure built — to repair roads, for example, and the streets in the cities of Regina, P.A. [Prince Albert], Moose Jaw, Yorkton, Weyburn, Estevan, and all of the cities of that nature that we are expecting and seeing grow to some extent, especially the larger centres. And the infrastructure costs are rising dramatically for these municipalities. And yet they're being asked to fund that on their own — the additional costs — because the government's not there to support them on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, I found it interesting this morning that the Premier got up in question period and was actually bragging about how the GDP is growing, the economy's growing. Everything's wonderful in the province. And then on the other hand we find problems like, as we had in question period, where the CAIS program's not being funded. They raise crop insurance premiums. They cut the coverage. They drop spot-loss hail.

On one side they tell us that everything's wonderful, and on the other side they completely ignore the parts of this province that have to actually provide the infrastructure to help an economy grow. And they don't seem to get that, Mr. Speaker. They don't seem to understand that without a vibrant infrastructure out there, businesses will not come to Saskatchewan, businesses cannot expand. And for that matter, the whole economy is affected by the infrastructure that we're asking for and talking about today — that the government has not certainly put extra dollars into in this province.

Mr. Speaker, we talk about taxes of all kinds in this province being probably the highest or second highest in the country. And then when we come to where we get high oil prices, and last year equalization money from the federal government — probably what, over a billion dollar windfall last year that wasn't expected, that wasn't included in the budget — and where do we see the benefits of that going? Well certainly not to the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Certainly not to the taxpayers of Saskatchewan. Because where have we saw them drop any taxes out here?

They talked and they put 8 per cent, I think it averaged out, that they put into the education tax in the province — forgetting of course, is what I've said before, Mr. Speaker, that in the early '90s the education tax on many farm properties out there probably went up 200, 300 per cent. And now we're turning around and returning 8 per cent and saying, well this should be satisfactory; this should make you happy out there; don't ask for more. Well I'm afraid people in rural Saskatchewan and urban Saskatchewan alike are saying, we need more. For this province to grow, we cannot afford any more local taxes.

Mr. Speaker, the problems out in rural Saskatchewan, especially this year, are magnified by the frost on August 20, by the BSE [bovine spongiform encephalopathy] problem that we had for the last couple of years — a number of things that have happened in rural Saskatchewan — low grain prices. In a lot of areas, Mr. Speaker, we have very low quality product out there, low quality grain. In some cases the bins are full but they can't move that grain. And therefore how on earth are they expected to pay more taxes, Mr. Speaker?

And I think it comes down to, as my colleague said from Wood River before, priorities — priorities of what this NDP government has for the people of Saskatchewan. Their priorities seem to be . . . And I think he talked about \$124 million that have been lost in ventures all around the world — some in BC, some in Ontario, some in Australia. I think we saw a \$40 million loss in Australia.

It's hard to understand, as a representative of the people of rural Saskatchewan out there, and explain to our taxpayers out there, how on one hand we can invest their money — the government of the day, the NDP government can invest their money — and it's become commonplace, Mr. Speaker, it's become so commonplace that it's not a big deal when we lose 10, 15, \$20 million in these ventures all over. And as my colleague had talked about, SPUDCO, another venture out there that I think people of Saskatchewan are very aware of.

But a lot of these ventures and investments people aren't aware of out there. They can't even understand, they can't fathom, why a government would want to invest all these dollars and continually lose in these ventures around the world, and maybe creating some jobs in Australia, or creating jobs in BC with dot-coms, in Ontario with insurance companies. We're creating jobs other places and losing these dollars. Mr. Speaker, somebody's getting the benefit of those dollars that we're losing, but it certainly isn't the taxpayers in Saskatchewan.

And at the same time we have a government, when the budget comes down, a Finance minister when the budget comes down, a Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs that said, we have no new money for municipalities. And that's hard to justify.

When we go home to our rural constituencies, Mr. Speaker, and people say, well what is going on in there? How come they had no new money for this, but they on the other hand can invest in this and continually lose? My colleague from Wood River had a whole list of ventures that this government has invested in and continually finding these horrendous stories of where we lost millions and millions and millions of dollars.

We have questions in question period three, four, five times a week on the long waiting lists in health care, Mr. Speaker. Couldn't those dollars be better spent shortening the waiting lists, dealing with the problems that we have here at home rather than playing big shot around the world with somebody else's money? I mean, any one of us can look like we're a big entrepreneur when we're dealing with somebody else's money.

I think it was Nelson Skalbania said at one time . . . I remember when he went under, and said, it's no big deal; I'm not using my own money; I really don't, I'm not that worried that I lost all these millions of dollars. Because Nelson Skalbania was an

example of somebody investing somebody else's money and if they lost it, I get my cheque at the end of the month — I'm okay, I'm covered.

Well it's very similar to what's happening here, Mr. Speaker. We have a government that's been in power so long and so out of touch with people of Saskatchewan that they aren't even embarrassed by the situations where we're investing money into ventures all around the world. We don't even seem to be at the point where we feel we have the obligation to explain to people of Saskatchewan that when we lose these dollars that we apologize for those losses. We've just got so accustomed to these losses that what we do is, before we know it, we jump into another one of these ventures and lose many, many more dollars, Mr. Speaker.

[11:15]

And all of it comes back to priorities of the Government of Saskatchewan of the day. This NDP government . . . And this has gone on, Mr. Speaker, since the early '90s. We were told we had to tighten our belts and everybody in Saskatchewan did that, both urban and rural. We paid the price at that time. We're told now — and on some occasions, the budget's balanced; in the last three or four or five years, that certainly hasn't happened — but we were told things are better now, Mr. Speaker.

Well you'd never know it by the tax bills that we're receiving in rural Saskatchewan, in urban Saskatchewan when it comes to municipal tax and education tax. And municipalities have done everything they can to keep from raising taxes, but have got to a point, I believe — as we see in Regina and Saskatoon and are going to see in many other municipalities, Mr. Speaker — the local tax has to go up. And the people picking up the tab are the local taxpayers.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm here in support of my colleague from Wood River and the motion that we're putting forth today asking for more funding for municipal government.

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for The Battlefords, the Minister of Government Relations.

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I hope that I have the opportunity here in the short time available this morning to be able to dispel some of the myths and provide some of the facts for those who are listening or who may read these remarks in *Hansard* in the next few days and months.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to bring to the attention not only of the members opposite but to the public at large that a little over a week ago, actually on April 18 of this month, here in the Chamber in Committee of Finance I stood and defended the estimates of the Department of Government Relations. And anyone who wants to take a look at *Hansard* — the transcripts of the proceedings of the legislature — *Hansard* for April 18, beginning on page 2551, Mr. Speaker, will see about an hour of questions and answers with regards to revenue sharing and this government's commitment to municipalities across this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, anyone who takes into account all of the

information that was discussed, disclosed, and debated during that period of time will see this government is strongly committed to the municipal sector, strongly committed to the men and women who are elected to municipal councils across this province, and strongly committed to the people who benefit from good decisions that are made by municipal councils right across this province.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — So, Mr. Speaker, the premise of the motion in front of us today, Mr. Speaker, is about the failure of this government in providing funding to municipalities that has led to property tax increases across the province. Well first of all, Mr. Speaker, let's just get a handle, that municipal governments were all aware of it — balance expenses and revenues, balance their budgets, make choices in balancing those budgets. And they do so with a whole lot of different circumstances.

Sometimes it's additional revenue from the province. Sometimes it's maintenance of revenues from the province. Sometimes it's even less revenue from the province. Sometimes it's with additional revenue from other sources. And sometimes it's with expenses that are either higher or lower depending on what's happening with policing services, library services, infrastructure services throughout their communities.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, that municipal governments take their roles and responsibilities extremely seriously and are doing their best to balance budgets, given their circumstances that they have in front of them. So, Mr. Speaker, we will do our best to ensure that municipal leaders across the province have the support of the provincial government and resources available to the provincial government, to assist them in doing the job that they need to do.

Now, Mr. Speaker, part of the debate here today has to do with revenue sharing. And it's not that we have a lot of time to discuss the whole issue of revenue sharing, but I'll do my best to throw a few of the facts on the table.

Number one is that this government, my department, and representatives of the municipal sector are sitting down right now, Mr. Speaker, to discuss revenue sharing between the province of Saskatchewan and municipalities across the province. A working group has been established that includes representatives of the urban municipalities, the rural municipalities, and the cities, Mr. Speaker, in particular the cities of Saskatoon and Regina. And we are discussing the needs of the communities with regards to revenue sharing and the ability of the province to maintain a sustainable and predictable funding allocation to the municipalities.

One of the things that's on the table for discussion of course is comparison with other provinces, comparison with other cities. And I have some information I'd like to share with the members opposite during this discussion. But at the same time, they're taking a look at the history of revenue sharing in this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, I just had a question in the legislature a while ago; I didn't have a chance to put all the numbers on the record, but I'd like to do so now, Mr. Speaker. The



revenue-sharing pool that the municipalities — and what in fact the members opposite have seemed to, seem to support by way of their line of questioning — is a escalator formula that existed in the revenue-sharing pool beginning in 1980 and moving forward. That revenue-sharing escalator pool, Mr. Speaker, started off with about a 10 per cent increase in municipal revenue sharing back in 1981-82 and increased by another 10 per cent revenue sharing to the municipalities in '82-83.

But, Mr. Speaker, no sooner did the Conservatives get elected in 1982 in this province, and all of a sudden the escalator formula that had been worked out by the New Democratic Party government of Allan Blakeney, no sooner did they get elected — promising free gas, or lower gas tax, home ownership rebuilding programs, and beginning their debt building in the province, Mr. Speaker — no sooner did that happen, and the first budget of the Conservative government back in '83-84 saw only a 4 per cent increase in revenue sharing. The next year, a 5 per cent increase in revenue sharing.

We hit 1985, Mr. Speaker, '85-86, and all of a sudden we have 0.1 per cent in revenue sharing; '86-87, a 3 per cent increase in revenue sharing. But in '87-88, 0.9 per cent. In '88-89, 0.5 per cent; '89-90, zero per cent; '90-91, zero per cent.

And then, Mr. Speaker, with this huge debt that was built up, no benefit to municipalities by the members opposite, the party of the members opposite, no benefit to the municipalities and a huge debt built up in this province, the government changed. And with the support of the municipalities, there was a 10 per cent decrease in revenue sharing followed by an 11 per cent decrease in revenue sharing, in order to deal with the circumstances that this province faced.

Then, Mr. Speaker, as revenue sharing started to increase again in '95-96, what happened? The federal government came forward with a new budget that took money away from education and health care, and severely crippled the province already in financial straits. And as a result of that, the municipalities again stepped forward with the provincial government and took a 38 per cent decrease in revenue sharing.

Mr. Speaker, that was a very strong commitment by the municipal sector there, to help get this province back on its feet. And what's happened, Mr. Speaker? The province is back on its feet; it is improving.

And this government began the following year, '98-99, with a 7.7 per cent increase in revenue sharing. But most importantly, Mr. Speaker, let's take a look at this government under this Premier in the last three years. 2002-2003, an 18 per cent increase in revenue sharing; 2003-04, a 15 per cent increase in revenue sharing; and '04-05, a 13 per cent increase in revenue sharing, Mr. Speaker. A commitment to the municipalities that over a three-year period of time amounts to 54 per cent increase in revenue sharing to exactly address some of the issues that the municipalities have raised with us.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have a very short amount of time left to indicate that this government did put additional money into infrastructure this year because the municipalities said to us, we need to have some infrastructure money. We had the opportunity to find what is the equivalent of an additional \$10

million for municipalities in each of the next four years. We have committed those dollars, an additional \$10 million in each of the four years to support the priorities of municipalities. And we have committed ourselves to working with the municipalities on improving the revenue-sharing arrangement between us.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think the single biggest threat to municipalities today is not the provincial budget that the municipalities know and understand, but the federal budget that at this point in time is in jeopardy because of the work of the members opposite, their federal Conservative Party.

Mr. Speaker, in this federal budget is roughly \$18 million this year for the province of Saskatchewan municipalities, and over a five-year period of time, about a \$60 million package for local municipalities.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is very important, as I conclude my remarks today, that the members opposite commit themselves to working to get the federal budget passed, to get money moving forward to ensure that municipalities have their commitments.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The member's time has lapsed. The Chair recognizes the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I listened to the Minister of Government Relations' comments with interest. And what I heard that minister say is his explanation of this government's failure to properly address this whole issue of revenue sharing and the larger issue of property taxes. And of course, as quite typical with members opposite, whenever they don't have an answer, they revert back to the 1980s blues, Mr. Speaker. They blame everything on the 1980s. Well maybe if they don't have . . . And then if that doesn't work, well then it's perhaps the federal government's excuse or it's their problem, and they look to the federal government to bail them out. And then if that doesn't work, I suggest probably the next excuse they'll use is, well we had a Depression back in the 1930s and therefore we can't address anything.

The people of this province realize that these people have been in power for the last 14 years, Mr. Speaker. And in that period of time all they can come up with is addressing the day-to-day situations without any long-term vision and without any long-term plan. And that's the reoccurring theme that you hear from the people of this province whenever they look at what this government does. They say there's no vision there; there's no long-term plan. And again we see that today, and we saw that in that minister's comments, Mr. Speaker.

He mentioned, Mr. Speaker, that he set up a working group with SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] and SUMA and the cities to address revenue sharing. And that perhaps is a bit of a start. But once again this government only gets it half right, Mr. Speaker, because what this government needs to do is look at property taxes in total. And there are two or three components, two main components, to property taxes. One is the municipal tax and the other is the education property tax, Mr. Speaker. And until you address property taxes — the whole, the total property tax bill that

property owners pay — and address that in a meaningful and a long-term way, we will never get out of this current situation that we find ourselves, Mr. Speaker.

What we have seen over the years, and particularly in rural Saskatchewan but also in urban Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, is an ever-increasing dependence on . . . to fund the K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] system on the backs of property owners, Mr. Speaker. And until this government screws up its courage and addresses it as they said they would in the 2003 election campaign . . . The Premier went around this province and said their program, their platform had the ability to receive the Boughen report. Well yes, they had the ability to receive it; they had no ability to do anything about it, Mr. Speaker.

And so that's why municipalities are finding themselves in the problems they have today. Because when they look at increasing their mill rate, they know they are only part of the total property tax bill. And in fact in rural Saskatchewan, quite often the municipal portion of the tax bill is only one-third or less. And so therefore they are very reluctant to increase the municipal portion of tax bills, but quite often they're forced into that because of the lack of funding from this government.

And particularly in the year that we've just seen, where this government had unexpected and windfall revenues of \$1.2 million, do you think there was ever a time that a government should look at the total tax question and sit down in a meaningful way and try and address that issue, you would think it would be in a year like this. But what do we see from this government, a half-measure once again. Instead of including the school board people, the boards of education, and sitting down with them and making them part of the group to address the total property tax bill and find a meaningful solution to the education portion; if we could address that and reduce that dependence on funding for the K to 12 system, that would give the municipalities some room to manoeuvre. And still the property owners would see a lower level of taxation if there was some meaningful reform in education property tax, Mr. Speaker.

[11:30]

But this government has no desire, no ability, and no plans to address that issue, Mr. Speaker. So what do they do? They say that it's everyone else's fault. It's the federal government's fault; it's the government of the 1980s. And perhaps they may have to blame it on the Great Depression that we had, and it set this province back and we're still suffering from that. It's everyone else's fault except their fault, Mr. Speaker, and that's not good enough.

We need to have a government that has some vision, Mr. Speaker, some courage to address the real issues of the day. And property tax is one of them, Mr. Speaker. It's a tax that prevents growth in our province. It's a tax, it's a barrier to people relocating in this province, because that is one of the issues that they look at when they look at what jurisdiction they would like to establish a business, or establish a home. They look at the total tax package, and property tax is an important issue, Mr. Speaker.

So as I said, we not only have frozen funding for municipalities,

Mr. Speaker, which then causes municipalities like cities, particularly the urban cities; we see property tax increases in Saskatoon of 4 per cent, and Regina of 4 per cent. We may not see any mill rate increases in some of the rural municipalities, Mr. Speaker, but we will see increased property tax bills because of reassessment.

And this is what I think this government is hoping for. That's why they froze revenue sharing, because they knew that there is a shift in assessment. And I've got municipalities in my constituency, Mr. Speaker, where their total assessment has gone up by 30 per cent or more. I've had property owners phoning me and saying that if the mill rates remain exactly the same as they were in 2004, Mr. Speaker, their property tax — total property tax bill — would increase by more than 30 to 40 per cent. So that small 8 per cent credit that they're going to receive on the education portion of their property tax is absolutely meaningless, Mr. Speaker.

And that's what that minister is depending on; that the municipalities, particularly on the east side of the province, won't need any extra dollars because they can leave their mill rates the same. They can go to their property owners and say well look, we didn't increase our mill rates, in fact, maybe we even lowered them a bit. But knowing full well that even those lower mill rates, will generate significantly more property taxes, both for the municipalities and the boards of education.

And that's why we saw — one of the reasons why we saw a freeze in the funding to the foundation operating grant, because these people over there know what the effects, or at least I would hope that they would know, perhaps they don't and they don't realize what's happening out there in certain areas of our province, Mr. Speaker.

So once again, I would like to reiterate that what we need is a long-term solution to the total property tax package. We need to address the . . . not only the municipal portion of the property tax bill, but the education portion.

If we can find a solution — and there are solutions out there, all we need to do is look at Manitoba — they were very . . . They brought in a program that lowered property taxes, the education portion of property taxes, by some 30 per cent last year and I believe it's being lowered again this year. We've got an NDP government over there. I would suggest to the Minister of Government Relations, why doesn't he give his colleague a call in Winnipeg and find out . . . and talk to him and see what they've done.

But I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that that minister hasn't got the courage to do that because it would mean some meaningful reforms that this government isn't prepared to bring forward, Mr. Speaker.

So as I said, then do . . . If you're not prepared to see what Manitoba has done, bring in your local governments. Bring in officials of your local governments; sit down with them and develop a plan because all the various parties . . . SUMA would be affected, SARM is affected, the School Board Association is affected, Mr. Speaker. And I think . . . and they have ideas. They have resources. They look at this. They've been talking about it. SARM's been talking about education on property

taxes for a long time. They have some solutions, Mr. Speaker, and I would think that it would be incumbent on that minister to involve these people.

I asked officials of SARM recently if they've been consulted on the whole property tax issue. They said the last time they were consulted, other than perhaps in the last day or two, was when the Minister of Government Relations needed . . . requested their input on how to distribute their \$55 million in education property tax release. That consultation took place I believe a year ago, and there's been nothing since, Mr. Speaker. And you would think, with the pressing issue that property tax relief has become . . . it has always been an issue in rural Saskatchewan, it is a growing issue and a major concern to many property owners in our major urban centres, and what is this government doing, Mr. Speaker? They're doing nothing. They like to blame. They sing their 1980s blues, blame the federal government, and now I think they'll say we had a depression, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — The member's time has elapsed. The Chair recognizes the member for Regina South.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to thank the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood for his contribution to global warming today, because what we heard from that member today was nothing but hot air. It is a complete misrepresentation of the facts. It shows a member that is not paying attention to the issues, a member who is not connected to the community, and a member who is not giving credit where credit is due.

Let me address a number of these points, Mr. Speaker, because what we are seeing with the members opposite is nothing but a smear campaign intended to lead the public . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. It is unparliamentary for a member to allege intentional wrongdoing on the part of another member. I would ask the member to withdraw the statement before he proceeds.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — I withdraw that statement, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Regina South.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — It is clear that the member opposite is on a campaign of obfusification, obfusification I would say, Mr. Speaker. It is clear that the member does not want to make well understood what his party's position is, or this party's position is, in terms of moving forward. And I think that the member opposite owes his constituents better than that.

Let me take a look simply at the points that this member has raised, and let's put the facts on the table.

Now the member opposite says that we should be implementing the Boughen Commission report. That's what that member says. That member says that there should be a 7 per cent sales tax on the restaurant meals across this province, despite what the business community has said, despite the hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people in his own constituency who

have petitioned against it. That member says he knows better and we should be putting that sales tax onto restaurant meals. That's what he says. He says that we should be shifting that tax over to the people who are buying food and make sure that they are paying more.

That's the position of the Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Speaker. That's the position of the member opposite, and he pretends to say, no, no, no, all I'm saying is you should implement the Boughen report.

Read the Boughen report. Read what that commission says, read what it is the petitioners said that that member tabled in this House, and tell us how he squares that position. That's what we need to find out from that party, is how it is they think that you can implement the Boughen Commission report without increasing sales taxes and placing that burden on to the restaurant owners of this province?

The member opposite says we should be drawing in the school boards into a discussion about how it is we deal with property tax. Well thank you very much for that helpful suggestion that we implemented more than a year ago. We brought together SARM. We brought together SUMA. We brought together the school boards. And we said, how do we address this issue? How do we make sure that we can get meaningful, sustainable property tax relief in this province?

And do you know what those members suggested? They said that we should do what this government did in this budget, and that is to implement a tax credit. That we should use that money across the board not just for agricultural landowners, as the member opposite suggests, as Manitoba has done, but for all ratepayers. Why would we not have in place a regime that supports all ratepayers? Why is it that he continues on his anti-business rant that wants to see a sales tax placed on restaurant meals, that says that business owners should not participate in the property tax reduction that we've introduced and that that should solely be vested with agricultural owners?

Why is it he does not support this government's program which is reducing, reducing property taxes for businesses, for agricultural landowners, and residents? Why is it that he does not support that? Why does that Sask Party not support this? How is it that the members opposite can say on the one hand that we need to take a look at the whole tax package of the province, and then deny the fact that this province is the most competitive, most competitive, not only in Western Canada but in this part of North America, in terms of our business climate?

How is it that that member can deny the facts that this economy is growing; that on indicator, after indicator, after indicator this province ranks number one in terms of GDP growth, in terms of income growth, in terms of support for our economy? How is it that he can deny the headlines that we see across the country that say the three Western provinces, British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan are booming? How is it the member can deny those facts?

The member denies the facts because it is not in his political interest to recognize them. The simple fact is that we know what is good for the Saskatchewan people is not good for the Saskatchewan Party because the Saskatchewan Party is

interested in perpetuating a series of myths that are not based on the fact and are not supported by the record of this government and that is what the problem is.

As we look from 2001, just from the time that this Premier took office — just from the time that this Premier took office — we have seen a tremendous turnaround in our provincial economy. We have seen this province move forward in terms of the changes that are making economic growth happen; changes to our resource royalty structure, changes to make sure that we've got growth in the manufacturing sector, changes to support our mining sector, investments that support our forestry sector. This is the way that we make sure that taxes are fairly based, because we support economic growth and thereby are able to better share the burden of the services.

The members opposite launch a not so subtle attack on our public services by attempting to undermine the base by which we pay for them. High quality services have a high cost. That's the simple fact of it.

Now they stand up every day and they demand that the government spend more on services in health care, that we spend more on services in education, we spend more in services in housing. And yet, they offer no solutions except for the one that the member opposite has suggested in terms of putting the sales tax on restaurant meals. They suggest no other options to deal with the taxation regime. They provide us with no concrete advice on how to deal with property tax relief . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . The member opposite says well, there's ideas out there. What are those ideas? Articulate what that idea is. Of the 100 ideas, so-called new ideas that the members opposite cooked up into a little pamphlet, of those, I ask them where is the concrete idea that shows how you're going to reduce property tax?

I want to know why the members opposite voted against a budget which will shift the burden of education funding on to provincial coffers and off of property tax. I want to know if those members opposite are going to stand in this House and support the property tax reduction Act that I've introduced into this Assembly. I want to know what those members are going to do in a concrete way to move this province forward, that protects our health care and education systems, and at the same time recognizes that we need to shift the way within our tax system that those are paid for.

I don't want to hear simply more hot air and platitudes from the members opposite. They claim to have new ideas. They claim to have a new approach. It is the same old Tory scheme of saying one thing, saying another thing, saying another thing, and saying another thing, and doing nothing.

That's the approach of those members opposite — whether it's on property taxation changes, whether it is in terms of their criticism of the Crowns which I have appreciated listening to today again, as the members opposite criticize our Crown corporations.

They say publicly, in front of the media, oh no, we . . .

[11:45]

**The Speaker:** — I would remind members the debate is to be confined to funding of municipalities. I recognize the member.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Well I apologize, Mr. Speaker, for that. I was simply responding to the comments from the member for Saltcoats who went on at some length about that. However if that's now not appropriate, I'll move on to a different section of my comments.

The overall support for our financial regime in this province is based on a number of things not the least of which, not the least of which is the strength of this government's finances. It has been the ability for us to turn the economy around. It has the ability for us to refinance the massive Tory debt which today continues to cost us more, cost us more than we spend on K to 12 education.

The member opposite wonders why we're not able to reduce the overall cost, the property tax. I'll tell you where there's \$600 million tied up. Mr. Speaker, \$600 million is tied up annually paying for a debt built up with the kind of ideas, the kind of leadership that the member for Swift Current is again purporting to have within this House.

That is the approach that those members . . . and I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, as I listen to their ideas and their approach, there is nothing new here. There is simply a rehash of the Grant Devine agenda. There's an agenda there that is interested only, only in gaining power, not in dealing substantively with reducing property taxes, not dealing substantively with economic growth, not providing any real alternative, simply providing criticism. And, Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that during the coming weeks and months we will make sure Saskatchewan people know those facts. Thank you very much.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to enter this debate. I noticed the member from Regina South, in his speech, was quite worried about the environment with hot air and global warming, and then he goes and contributes quite heavily to it, I might add there, with that speech.

At the end there he talked about debt and that is a problem. But a lot of that debt started in the '70s under Allan Blakeney when he stole . . . took, took, took. He took from businesses, businesses that had invested in this province, had brought money here, had brought things here and took it from them. It's called nationalization.

**The Speaker:** — Order, please. Why is the member on his feet? The member for Regina Elphinstone.

**Mr. McCall:** — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite used some language with regards to Allan Blakeney, former premier of this province, that was clearly unparliamentary, and I would ask the Speaker to rule accordingly.

**The Speaker:** — Order. The member's point is well taken. The member had used the words . . . language that was

unparliamentary. I give him the opportunity to withdraw that one particular word. The member for Arm River.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to withdraw the word that they stole from that company. But I will carry on that they nationalize the potash — nationalize it. For people that don't understand what nationalize means, they took it from them. They took it without their permission.

**The Speaker:** — On a point of order, the Chair recognizes the member for . . . Order, please. Order, please. I recognize the member for Regina South.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Given the Speaker's previous ruling in this debate, I'm sure that he will want to direct the member to seek some relevance and to stick to the issue under debate. Clearly the Speaker's already ruled that the Crowns are not a topic for discussion.

**The Speaker:** — Point of order is well taken. The member for Arm River.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The debate was going on about some debt, but I can move on to this particular motion because it does go at that. The motion deals with revenue sharing. A cutback to towns, villages, and cities that have happened over a number of years . . . I was a councillor under this NDP government when they cut back revenue sharing year after year after year, when towns are already struggling under a heavy tax burden and infrastructure problems, and things were brought in by this government at that end of it.

Mr. Speaker, and this government has constantly cut back over the 80 . . . or '90s support to towns and villages and cities. And now that they have . . . they talk about how great the province and what a great job they're doing and how much extra money they've brought in, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, and yet what do they do? Do they increase revenue sharing? No, they don't increase revenue sharing, Mr. Speaker. They don't. So then is that false . . . is what they're saying about how they have all this extra money, this extra oil revenue.

Why don't they send it to the towns and villages and the cities to lessen the tax burden out there that these people are struggling under, so they don't have to raise taxes, Mr. Speaker, out there? And they are going to have to raise taxes. I think there was a thing put in there that, Mr. Speaker, there was a thing put in there that they've . . . Saskatoon, if I remember right, Saskatoon has the highest . . . is going to have the highest tax hike in four years. And I know some of the other towns out there are going to . . . aren't going to have to raise taxes out there, Mr. Speaker. They're going to have to raise taxes.

And another thing, when it comes to it, I can't believe that the NDP voted against *100 Ideas* on that. We have the ideas 21, 27, 33, and 70 that talk with revenue sharing at that, that talk about that. You know why, because this government has no ideas. They haven't had ideas for years, Mr. Speaker. They've been bereft of ideas, and they're constantly been hollering over here. Well we've supplied ideas. We've supplied that to the people of Saskatchewan on how to improve this province, and how it's going to be improved under Saskatchewan Party government.

Because under this government, it has shrunken, Mr. Speaker, these towns, villages, and cities have shrunken. And they will continue to keep shrinking year after year after year because this government has provided no support for the people of this province for a number of years, Mr. Speaker, because it doesn't care about the people of Saskatchewan. It doesn't care about anything.

All it cares is about its state-owned businesses and how many more state-owned businesses can it take over, Mr. Speaker, because that's all this government cares about is state-owned businesses, as long as it's what's for the state, not for the good of the people, Mr. Speaker, the people that are struggling out there of it.

Some of the ideas out there, Mr. Speaker, that we put out there, is increased funding for K-12 education, provide short and long-term property tax relief. Another one is commit all provincial fuel tax revenues as a minimum annual investment . . . provincial and municipal transportation, construction, and renewal out there, Mr. Speaker, on that.

You know we got up today, there was the member that talked about the problems in the North, Mr. Speaker. And there are problems in the North. Have they increased the funding to the northern part of the province? No, Mr. Speaker, they haven't because that deals in revenue sharing because there's also . . . there's a northern revenue sharing. There's a southern revenue sharing, Mr. Speaker, and they haven't increased that at the end of it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Saltcoats made a good point when he talks that this government wants to use somebody else's money. It's always wanting to blame somebody else. It wants to blame the previous administration that was in there. But it doesn't want to go back to the '70s. You know, it doesn't want to blame that previous administration for the problems that were out here, that were caused under that government that started nationalizing things, that started chasing away businesses, that started chasing away people when the move went. The businesses aren't coming back. And they still talk about in the '70s, Mr. Speaker, when things were nationalized here.

But this government wants to blame, blame people. They want to blame the federal government — well they're not giving us enough money. If only the feds would give us more money. Well why isn't the Premier working on the Prime Minister right now to get a better equalizing deal? No, no. He's more worried about the Jack Layton making a deal for Ontario, helping Ontario and helping the East.

That's all our Premier is more worried about because all they care about is their party, Mr. Speaker. They don't care about the people of this province. They haven't cared for them for a number of years, Mr. Speaker. That's all they care about is their party, the future of their party, whether it's down east. And if their fortunes are down east that's where their Premier will go and help, Mr. Speaker, and while this province is suffering under revenue sharing.

We all know the costs of infrastructure have gone up to deliver good quality, clean drinking water out there. There's pressure

on towns and on villages to do that, Mr. Speaker. And is this government helping with increased infrastructure money? No, no they're not.

You know towns out there that have to build a water treatment plant are trying to do it on their own. There's a town outside of Saskatoon. The town of Osler has been trying to build a water storage tank, Mr. Speaker, a water storage tank. You know, and they have their share of the money. They have it in place, Mr. Speaker, but this government won't fund it. They have less water now for less than a half a day. If they fight a fire there, the fire department says they won't be able to put out that fire in that town, Mr. Speaker. That endangers people's lives.

That's how much this government cares about helping the towns and the villages and the cities out there, Mr. Speaker. They just sit back and watch as the towns and villages put up taxes, and they just say, well it's not our fault. You know, we've got all this . . . we have extra money here, but we want to invest it outside of Saskatchewan. We don't want to invest it here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. We wouldn't want to invest it here in Saskatchewan to help the infrastructure here. No, Mr. Speaker, we want to help. We want to help some outside company somewhere else.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's wrong, and that's why this government is on its way out, Mr. Speaker. For that I support the motion that was brought forth from the member from Wood River.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Deputy Speaker:** — Members, the 10-minute question/comment period will begin, but . . . Order. But last Friday there was a point of order on how the Speaker should be dealing with the 10-minute question/comment period. And there was some discussion, and the ruling is that at exactly 10 minutes the clock will be called even if you've only had the floor for 4 seconds and you're in the middle of a very good question.

So with those clarified rules I will now open the floor to question/comment periods. And I recognize the member for Regina South.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My question is in fact to the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood. I would like him to explain to the House why he thinks that there should be a sales tax placed on restaurant meals as is suggested by the Boughen Commission.

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

**Mr. Hart:** — Mr. Speaker, that question indicates the narrow-mindedness and the lack of vision of that government, Mr. Speaker. That question comes from the Minister of Learning and that is the sum total of his effort to address the property tax issue.

What I had said in this House, Mr. Speaker, and I'll repeat it, that if that government isn't prepared to deal with the issue, they should take some advice from this side of the House. And

what my suggestion was, and the suggestion from this side of the House is, to deal with this issue — call the members of SARM, SUMA, and the School Boards Association, and the government, and sit down with that group and start working on a long-term solution. But all that member can see is a very small part of one report, Mr. Speaker. And he has no vision and no idea as to how to solve this problem, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Cannington.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My question is for the member from North Battleford. Mr. Speaker, the government took the Boughen report and then cherry-picked from it what they wanted. Unfortunately all they got was the pits, Mr. Speaker.

They chose to raise the PST [provincial sales tax] which was recommended in the Boughen report, but Boughen also recommended a long-term reduction in property taxes, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately this government chose to ignore that part and simply take the pits, Mr. Speaker.

The amalgamation issue in education deals with . . . Amalgamation of school divisions was simply a diversion from the property tax issue, Mr. Speaker. When will real long-term property tax reductions take place to move education property taxes closer to the 40 per cent rather than the 60 per cent, Mr. Speaker? When will the government finally implement some real long-term property tax reductions from municipalities in education?

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The member's time has expired. I recognize the member for The Battlefords.

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I feel like I might use up all the time answering this wonderful question. The very first and very simple answer to the member's question is that we're in the process of doing exactly what he's asking us to do. And we're doing it in conjunction with the municipalities and the school boards.

We have a working group that was established prior to the Premier's successfully negotiated equalization matter. We took a discussion that was developing a long-term solution and applied it to a short-term interim arrangement that gets us into the long-term plan.

Now, Mr. Speaker, specifically this government is not supportive of transferring property taxes to the restaurant meals in this province. That was a choice we had to make, and it was a choice that we made very clearly. Mr. Speaker . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The member's time has expired. I recognize the member for Regina South.

[12:00]

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I want to give the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood a chance to answer the last question I asked him. Why is it he supports putting the sales tax on restaurant meals? Why is it he supports that? And what is his

vision for long-term property tax relief other than increasing taxes on businesses?

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

**Mr. Hart:** — Mr. Speaker, what we see here is a pretty pathetic sight, Mr. Speaker. We have the Minister of Learning and the only thing he can ask, Mr. Speaker, is on PST on restaurant meals. He is not prepared. He has no ability, no vision, Mr. Speaker, to address the major question, the global question of property taxes, Mr. Speaker.

And the people of the province should see what kind of a Learning minister we have, who goes out to Balgonie and throws up a smokescreen of forced amalgamation because he has no ability or no desire to address the real issue, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Government Relations, the member for North Battleford.

Mr. Speaker, if this government refuses to take seriously its obligation to properly fund municipalities so that the line can be held on property taxes, will it as a minimum give the legislature the assurance that it will stop off-loading costs on municipalities in the following areas: for instance, municipal policing agreements; in the area of water testing costs; in the delivery of water via SaskWater pipelines; in the escalating utility costs; in recreational facilities; in municipal regional garbage collection agreements; in heavy-haul road agreements instead of fixing the highways properly; and in any future new emergency communications system that may replace FleetNet?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member for The Battlefords.

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And again there's a short answer and a long answer. And I'd love to give the member the long answer because this government's commitment to everything that he put on the table in his preamble is absolutely . . . There's a commitment from this government that's unparalleled.

But the short answer, Mr. Speaker, is this government's commitment to the municipal sector, with increases in infrastructure funding, with increases in policing dollars from the province to the municipalities, with increases to regional waste management facilities showed in this budget demonstrates the long-term commitment that this government has to support those very programs he talks about.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member for The Battlefords.

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member from Wood River was so pleased to be able to talk about his little pamphlet, the 100-and-something ideas. One of those ideas, Mr. Speaker, specifically says he would, "Negotiate a new Municipal Revenue Sharing Agreement based in part on provincial own source revenues and the municipalities' ability to raise local property tax revenues."

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the member from Wood River — because we know that this government is currently in the process of discussing the options for additional revenue-sharing matters with the municipalities — what advice does the member opposite have to help us conclude a new revenue-sharing agreement with the municipalities?

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

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. One thing we would do is we'd sure listen to the municipalities and discuss it with them. But I'll tell you what we wouldn't do, Mr. Speaker. We wouldn't stand up in front of this Assembly and say that we would give more money to municipalities, but not do anything in revenue sharing.

And I quoted the figures when I spoke — 44,109 last year, 44,109 this year. I would say that's zero per cent increase. When we've got a \$1.2 billion extra revenue last year, and we put zero, zero into urban revenue sharing, zero into rural revenue sharing, zero into northern revenue sharing — zap, you're froze — at a time when we've got \$1.2 billion extra money and put zero into revenue sharing, we would not do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, my question is for the member for Regina South. And as he kicked off his leadership campaign for the NDP this morning, I noticed he forgot to acknowledge the revenue-sharing cuts that I'd talked about, the unconditional grant cuts, conditional grant cuts to municipalities.

Should he ever get to the point where he's sitting in the Premier's chair, would he return that money to the municipalities and would he restore the funding to where it should be, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Regina South.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I want to say that I appreciate the vote of confidence from the member for Saltcoats. I suspect that he'll be sitting in his leader's chair much sooner than I'll be sitting in ours, but only because of the nature of the party opposite.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me say this. We have made a commitment to return \$55 million to property tax payers this year. Last year we put \$54 million back in rebates through the

Crown corporations. We will have another \$55 million worth of property tax cuts next year. We are continuing to make investments in infrastructure. We are continuing to make investments in our communities. And we are continuing to try and shift the balance, shift the burden of education cost back on to provincial coffers.

I would note this year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that if municipalities hold the line, if school boards hold the line, that we will see that education portion shift from 42 per cent to 47 per cent funding, and I think that that is progress.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Lautermilch:** — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, since 1992 this government has paid in the neighbourhood of \$9.9 billion in interest on the provincial debt that was in no small way amassed by the former administration of the 1980s of which the Leader of the Opposition was an integral part as adviser to the minister for Economic Development.

I want to ask the member for Arm River what he believes that the former Devine administration, in concert with the Leader of the Opposition, could have done differently.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — The member's time has expired and that is the . . . Order. The 75-minute debate has expired. I recognize the Government House Leader.

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Speaker, I move the House do now adjourn.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — That is carried. This House stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. Monday. Have a pleasant weekend, members.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:07.]





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Minister of Crown Management Board  
Minister Responsible for Public Service Commission

Hon. J. Beatty  
Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation  
Provincial Secretary

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