



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

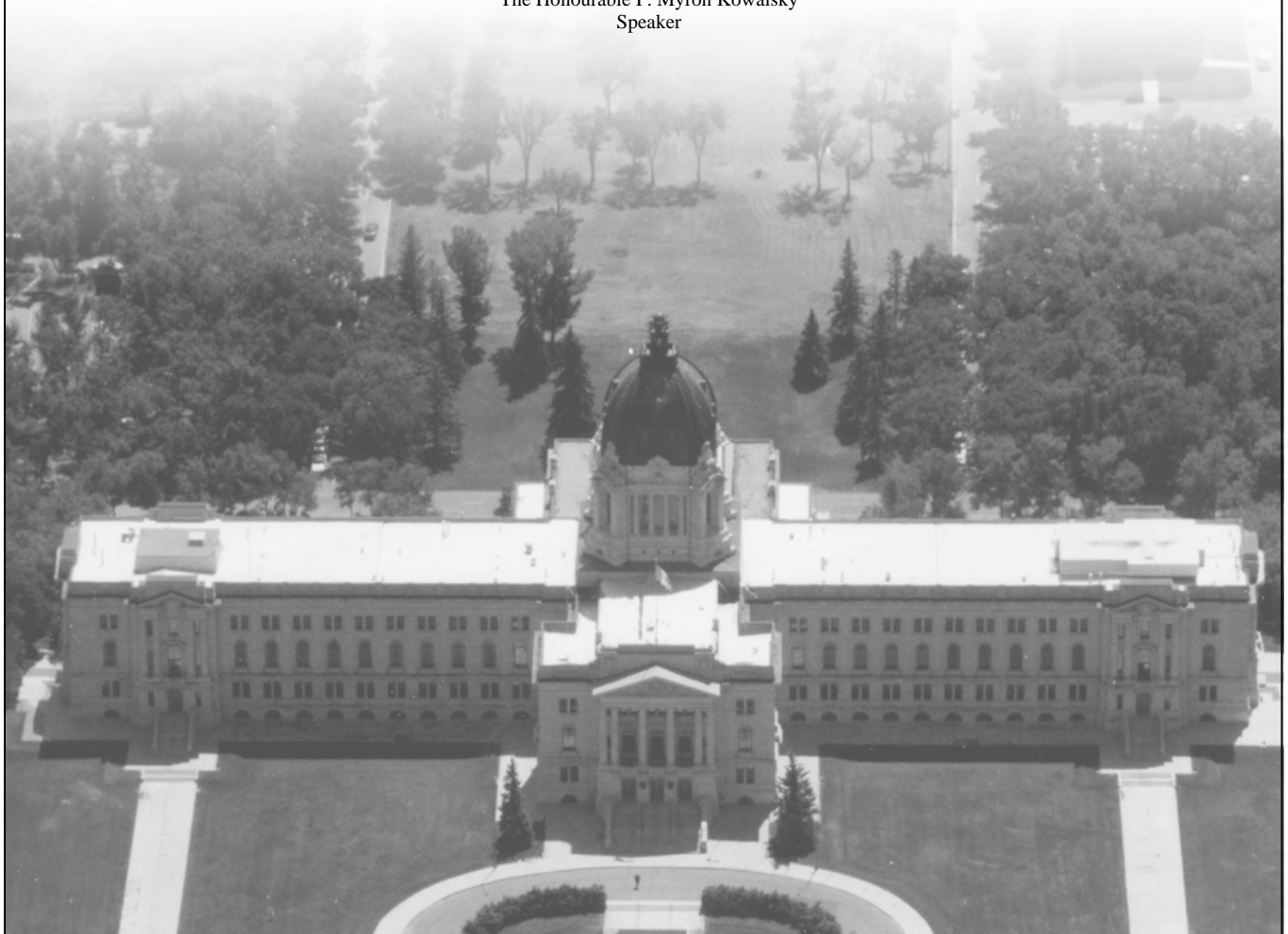
Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of

The Honourable P. Myron Kowalsky
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

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Wall, Brad	SP	Swift Current
Wartman, Hon. Mark	NDP	Regina Qu'Appelle Valley
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney

[The Assembly resumed at 19:00.]

EVENING SITTING

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

TABLING OF SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

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

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to now submit supplementary estimates accompanied by a message from Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

The Speaker: — Would all members please rise for a message from the Lieutenant Governor. The message is as follows:

The Lieutenant Governor transmits the supplementary November estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province for the twelve months ending March 31, 2006, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly. [Signed] Lynda Haverstock, Lieutenant Governor, Province of Saskatchewan.

Please be seated. The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, today I am tabling supplementary estimates to reflect the additional expenditures for the 2005-06 fiscal year, that is to say, the current budget year made possible by the additional revenue available in the current fiscal year.

Mr. Speaker, this government recently had more good news for the people of Saskatchewan. Significant additional revenues were identified in the release of the mid-year report last week. The mid-year report updates the province's fiscal and economic situation and also updates the current year budget.

Mr. Speaker, the mid-year report reveals an \$873 million fiscal improvement in the General Revenue Fund; \$873 million, Mr. Speaker, is excellent news for Saskatchewan. This year's improvement is largely attributable to oil and gas. About three-quarters of the overall improvement, Mr. Speaker, is due to stronger oil and gas revenues.

This province is also seeing a big drop in interest cost, reducing our overall interest payment this year by \$30 million. The government now forecasts a \$135.1 million surplus in the General Revenue Fund and a \$207.1 million surplus on a summary basis.

So, Mr. Speaker, what exactly are we doing with the money? Mr. Speaker, our strong bottom line allows us to invest directly into our main priority — Saskatchewan people. We strive to continue improving the lives for those that call this great province home. This government will cushion high natural gas rates for the people of Saskatchewan. We will dedicate funds towards education capital and debt reduction. And, Mr. Speaker, we are investing in important social and economic programs for the people of this great province.

Mr. Speaker, this government has a plan. We're acting on our commitments and fulfilling promises. Mr. Speaker, we're addressing immediate needs of this revenue. We're acting on commitments and advancing strategic plans. We're continuing on our path of sound financial management.

First, Mr. Speaker, we are putting \$139.5 million into the Energy Share plan to help make Saskatchewan an even more affordable place to live. We will assist people with unexpected higher energy costs to heat their homes this winter.

We're providing money for disaster assistance, Mr. Speaker, for those individuals suffering uninsurable losses due to flooding, windstorms, and the like.

We're topping up CAIS [Canadian agricultural income stabilization] for the 2005 crop year at a cost of \$84.2 million, bringing total additional CAIS funding in this fiscal year to \$159.2 million. That is additional CAIS funding, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we're advancing strategic plans for the future. We're carrying through on the Action Plan for the Economy with \$59 million being allocated for northern transportation corridors, \$700,000 for enhanced immigration efforts, 600,000 for First Nations and Métis economic development grants, and 400,000 for Aboriginal employment development program. Mr. Speaker, the latter two programs will spur the economy and jobs for First Nations people.

We're also carrying out key Action Plan for Saskatchewan Health Care actions, Mr. Speaker, such as the \$100 million for the academic health sciences centre at the University of Saskatchewan and \$108.1 million for regional health authorities.

Through other strategic actions we are fulfilling commitments that show compassion for people in desperate situations. Mr. Speaker, we are providing an additional \$2.9 million for the provincial alcohol and drug strategy tied to Project Hope. We're also providing close to \$1 million to Justice to pay for more police officers and a crime strategy aimed at missing persons and gang suppression. Mr. Speaker, while we are addressing needs and acting on commitments, we're also continuing on a path of sound financial management.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — The GRF [General Revenue Fund] is balanced with no transfer from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. And, Mr. Speaker, government debt is being permanently reduced by \$76.1 million. We are being fiscally responsible for future generations.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — I would also remind members of this House, Mr. Speaker, that this is the second significant permanent debt reduction in the space of one year — \$255.4 million in total since mid-year of last year. This is a significant achievement.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — So, Mr. Speaker, we have much good news to celebrate. We are in good financial condition. Our economy is performing well. In fact Saskatoon's economy is, quote, "the hottest in the country" according to the Conference Board of Canada. We have a surplus in the General Revenue Fund and the summary financial statements. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize the debt is falling.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — The budget forecast government debt at March 31, 2006, to be \$7.6 billion while the mid-year projection is \$7.4 billion, a drop of \$244.3 million. We're showing an \$11 billion total provincial debt projection at mid-year — the lowest level since 1988-89.

We're also reporting a total provincial debt to GDP [gross domestic product] ratio of 25.4 per cent, the lowest level since 1982-83, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we've struck a fiscally responsible balance between new spending and debt management. Mr. Speaker, we're confident Saskatchewan people will benefit directly from these initiatives. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to move, and seconded by the member for The Battlefords, by leave of the Assembly:

That Her Honour's message and the supplementary estimates be referred to the Committee of Finance.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance, the member for Regina Douglas Park, seconded by the member for The Battlefords:

That Her Honour's message and the supplementary estimates be referred to the Committee of Finance.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to enter into the debate about the supplementary estimates. In fact, Mr. Speaker, these supplementary estimates, to me they have an uncanny resemblance to that of the old, famous western from the 1960s called *The Good, The Bad and the Ugly*.

Mr. Speaker, I want to start with what I think is good news in this mid-term financial report. For starters, Mr. Speaker, it's good news that the oil and gas revenues are up by \$638.2 million — a whopping 76 per cent over what was projected, Mr. Speaker, just six months ago — as a result of the rising oil and gas prices. When the associated taxes are included, Mr. Speaker, it's about \$720 million in extra revenue, a number I seem to have heard about six weeks ago, Mr. Speaker. And what did the NDP [New Democratic Party] have to do about the rising oil and gas prices, Mr. Speaker? What did they have to do? They take credit for it, but they had absolutely nothing to do with it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it's also good that potash revenues are up \$11.2 million because of stronger than expected potash prices and markets, Mr. Speaker. And what did the NDP have to do with that, Mr. Speaker? Well at least this NDP government hasn't attempted to nationalize the potash mines like they did in the 1970s, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, and it's also good that the NDP has finally, finally made good on the promise for the academic health sciences centre. Mr. Speaker, five years late and five years after the Saskatchewan Party had made the commitment to build the new academic health sciences centre at the U of S [University of Saskatchewan], the NDP is finally putting up \$100 million towards the project.

The only problem, Mr. Speaker, is because of their dithering, five years of dithering, the amount of money is not enough. Five years of dithering has caused the cost of the project to double. It'll be some \$200 million when they finally get around to announcing the project, Mr. Speaker. If they took that money instead of putting it into the phony baloney Fiscal Stabilization Fund, when they did that, if they took that money and actually put it into the academic health sciences centre, it would be built, Mr. Speaker. And this province would have saved \$100 million, Mr. Speaker.

At least, Mr. Speaker, the government has finally taken the Saskatchewan Party up on Saskatchewan Party resolution no. HE05-4, passed at our 2005 annual convention and included, Mr. Speaker, it was included in the 2003 election platform.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I'll refer to a document that has been referred to in this House many times. Item number 2 on the Saskatchewan Party's *100 Ideas to Get Saskatchewan Ready for the Next 100 Years* that was introduced by the Leader of the Opposition in the spring session. Idea no. 2, Mr. Speaker: "Build a new integrated health sciences facility at the University of Saskatchewan." Well finally five years later. It reminds me about a promise of police officers in this province some seven years ago, Mr. Speaker.

Item number 9, incidentally it's on the same page. I want to refer to it. It says, "Establish a Children's Hospital in Saskatoon utilizing an existing acute care facility." Where is that in the supplementary estimates, Mr. Speaker? It was in the Throne Speech, but it's not in the supplementary estimates, Mr. Speaker. I guess we are waiting till we are in election mode. I'll guess we'll continue to wait, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad to see that the NDP has adopted some of the Saskatchewan Party's ideas. I'll change the page here and we'll look at no. 18 on page 3. And it says, "Partner with the Government of Canada to build three new all-weather roads in Northern Saskatchewan to facilitate sustainable northern communities and sustainable northern economic development." It's a great idea, Mr. Speaker, indeed it is. It's idea no. 18 in the Saskatchewan Party list of 100 great ideas, Mr. Speaker. But we are happy to see the NDP has at least said they will act on our idea with \$59 million for a new northern all-weather road.

There's also a commitment to act on behalf of this government on the Sask Party's idea, the plan for addressing the scourge of crystal meth in our province, Mr. Speaker. Another good idea

that couldn't have been acted upon soon enough.

And there's a commitment, Mr. Speaker, from this government to act on the Sask Party proposal to increase funding to community-based organizations that deliver social services in our cities, towns, and villages.

Mr. Speaker, of course these NDP commitments to Sask Party promises are only words from an NDP government and a Premier that most people in Saskatchewan have learned not to trust, Mr. Speaker. As the Premier and the Finance Minister and this NDP government have demonstrated, talk is cheap, Mr. Speaker.

[19:15]

So I and members on this side of the House, we will reserve judgment, Mr. Speaker, on the commitments made by the NDP in these supplementary estimates until they are backed by actions, Mr. Speaker. An important point. Actions speak louder than words and we are waiting for the actions of this government, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to move from what may be the good in these estimates to talk about the bad and then, Mr. Speaker, the downright ugly.

Let's talk about the bad, Mr. Speaker, and I've talked about this before in this House. Saskatchewan has the highest corporate capital tax rate in the country, the highest corporate tax rate in the country, the highest small-business tax rate in the country, the highest property taxes in Canada. How is this even defensible by this government, Mr. Speaker? Well it's not defensible, Mr. Speaker, it's deplorable.

This represents a lack of vision, a profound lack of knowledge about how the economy works and worse yet, Mr. Speaker, it appears that this government just isn't all that concerned. If it was, Mr. Speaker, it would lead; this government would show some leadership. If it was concerned, Mr. Speaker, this government would act. But the best the NDP can do, Mr. Speaker, is to react.

Here's a good example that I want to share with you. This government says in its documentation that in potash alone, the incentive package established in April has triggered more than \$570 million in investment intentions. Mr. Speaker, two things—and I'm glad that the hon. members opposite are listening—two things really jump out in regard to this statement, Mr. Speaker.

First it is notable that the NDP government didn't create a favourable investment climate because they led the way. No, Mr. Speaker. In fact for years this government quite visibly illustrated that it either didn't understand or didn't care about what the potash industry needed in order to expand. Only when pressured, Mr. Speaker, only when forced into a corner, only when pressured did this government do what it should have done years before. We could have had this investment and these jobs long before this spring, Mr. Speaker. But that would have meant the NDP taking action—that this NDP government, even though it's not in election mode, would have to take action, Mr. Speaker. That delay indeed is bad.

Secondly on this issue, the wording is interesting and it explains so much about what is wrong with this NDP government. The NDP government refers to the potash industry and it says, its investment intentions. Herein lies the difference, Mr. Speaker, the difference between members on this side of the House and members on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about the industry.

The industry, once it had a reasonable royalty environment, it acted. And it did so immediately, Mr. Speaker. Potash mines expanded. The companies spent and immediately they hired. They created jobs. Mr. Speaker, that's the way the private sector works. That's the way the rest of the world works, Mr. Speaker—quickly and decisively. Opportunities to improve the provincial economy slip by this government day in and day out because they dither. And that indeed, Mr. Speaker, is bad.

Saskatchewan is one of the largest producers of oil and gas in Canada. And in case the NDP hasn't noticed, we're in the middle of an oil boom. So why is oil and gas drilling activity in Saskatchewan down overall from last year? Why, Mr. Speaker, is oil and gas production flat when we're in the middle of a worldwide—and I emphasize a worldwide—oil and gas boom?

Could it be for the same reason that Alberta has three times the population of Saskatchewan and 10 times the economy of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker? Could that be the reason? Could it be because Saskatchewan has been saddled with CCF-NDP [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation-New Democratic Party] governments for most of the past 60 years—two parties that according to their founding documents, the same documents that you will indeed find on the website of the party represented opposite, Mr. Speaker, that they are committed to the elimination of capitalism? Unbelievable. Unbelievable. If there's any staff from the NDP watching today, get rid of that off the website, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member:—Why? That's their bible.

Mr. Cheveldayoff:—Well we'd have less to talk about, granted, on this side, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, let's talk about the job creation record. The job creation record of this government would suggest that the fault lies with this NDP government and its long-standing policy of getting rid of entrepreneurs and killing private sector businesses. Mr. Speaker, we've all heard the statistics. We all know what Statistics Canada had to say about the job numbers in Saskatchewan—down 6,200, October '04 over October '05. Job numbers in Saskatchewan down 6,200, during a boom. Unbelievable, Mr. Speaker.

Again according to Statistics Canada, Saskatchewan has lost 3,300 people over the 12-month period ending September 30. Where did they go, Mr. Speaker? More importantly, why did they go, Mr. Speaker?

Worse, Statistics Canada also reports that Saskatchewan's population continues to decline as people, especially young people, continue to leave. And yes, Mr. Speaker, that's bad. And it could get ugly if this NDP government lasts much longer. But fortunately, Mr. Speaker, the polls say otherwise.

Polls like the Environics poll of last Friday . . . And I know the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow's smiling so she must have maybe not read the poll yet but I suggest that she should do it because it says this government, their days are limited, Mr. Speaker. That poll speaks of a government that will be thrown out of office sooner rather than later.

You know, everyone's starting to speculate: when's the election going to be? Is it going to be in '06, '07, or — heaven forbid — '08, Mr. Speaker? But with polls like this I suggest that it's time that this government either change their actions or call an election very quickly, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it's time to talk about indeed what's ugly. What's ugly about these supplementary estimates? That \$244 million that the NDP is claiming the debt is being reduced by when \$185 million of that money, Mr. Speaker, is being transferred into the NDP's election slush fund. Yes, Mr. Speaker, that is indeed ugly. The fiscal stabilization phony-baloney NDP slush fund.

Mr. Speaker, it is also ugly that this Premier, this Finance minister, and this government has decided to fill the NDP government's bank account with an additional \$45.9 million from the operations of our Crown corporations.

Mr. Speaker, when it happens at the same time as SaskPower is asking for a rate increase that will add \$60 million to the power bills of Saskatchewan families and businesses in 2006, Mr. Speaker, that is indeed ugly. It's an ugly financial situation for families across this province to be in because of this NDP government.

And here is something else, Mr. Speaker, that's pretty ugly about the latest statement of NDP priorities. With almost \$1 billion in unexpected revenue from oil, gas, and potash, there is not a single dime, Mr. Speaker, not a single dime for tax relief for low- and moderate-income Saskatchewan families, many of whom — and I've said it many times in this House — many of whom who pay the highest personal tax rates in Canada, Mr. Speaker. In fact there is not a single dime in these latest NDP budget estimates for personal tax relief for anybody, for anybody in the province. Not one dime, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I've said this many times over the last week or so: if not now, when? If now is not the time to do it, when is the time to do it? Mr. Speaker, that's a question that people across this province will be asking this government. If not now, when?

Mr. Speaker, it's ugly that with almost \$1 billion in unanticipated revenue from non-renewable resources, there is not a single dime for revenue-sharing grants for Saskatchewan cities, town, villages, and rural municipalities, with no commitment to a new revenue-sharing agreement, Mr. Speaker.

And while there is \$100 million of new funding for health regions, virtually none of this money, Mr. Speaker — and this is an important point for everyone listening to understand and everyone in the House to understand — that virtually none of this new money, Mr. Speaker, is going to strengthen front-line services, Mr. Speaker. That's a real shame.

So where's all this money going? Where is it going? Who's

come up with the creative ideas on where to actually put this money — almost \$1 billion, Mr. Speaker? Well, Mr. Speaker, this is indeed the ugliest part of the whole story.

And it gives me no pleasure to be able to talk about this because I believe it's fundamentally the wrong thing to do in this province, the wrong thing for this government to be doing, not from a partisan perspective solely but to enhance the economy of this province.

They're going about it in the wrong direction because this Premier, this Finance minister, this cabinet, and all members on that side of the House, they support this idea of the government tucking away \$750 million, Mr. Speaker. Not a mistake — \$750 million into an NDP slush fund, the so-called Fiscal Stabilization Fund.

One of the members says, what? I guess he didn't get the memo. He didn't read the email. He didn't notice \$750 million. Yes, Mr. Member, it is there for the run-up to the next provincial election.

Now I know it's going to be a huge task for members opposite in the next election. Three-quarters of a billion dollars. They think it may help them. They know they need the help if they've been reading the polls lately, Mr. Speaker. But the phony-baloney Fiscal Stabilization Fund is not going to help anybody.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we know it will be spent. We don't know if it'll be spent tomorrow, or a month from now, or a year from now, or 2008 when the NDP might have to call an election. But it will be spent, Mr. Speaker. You mark my words. It will be spent.

Whenever this government decides that they're in the so-called election mode, that money will be spent. It should have been spent building the academic health sciences centre five years ago, but it wasn't, Mr. Speaker. And that's what's bad. That's what's ugly about these financial statements for this province.

Has it been spent on health care, Mr. Speaker? As I said earlier, apparently not because there is virtually no new funding for front-line services. Now if there is, show me where it is. But I haven't found it in here, Mr. Speaker, in these supplementary estimates which we're being told the NDP has \$873 million in unanticipated revenue. That's a lot of zeros, Mr. Speaker.

There is no tax relief for low-income families, Mr. Speaker, because there is not a dime allocated in these supplementary estimates for personal tax relief of any kind. This situation is indeed ugly for people in Saskatchewan. Not one dime for low- and medium-income individuals. And, Mr. Speaker, not one dime for permanent property tax relief.

Again the question is begged: if not now, when? When will this government see fit first of all to keep its promises from the last election, and second of all to move forward on changing some taxes that will actually benefit the economy of this province for the long term?

Mr. Speaker, it's absolutely clear from the NDP's proposed use of the almost \$1 billion in unanticipated revenues that this

government's priorities lie in solely one area, one area alone — building an election slush fund worth more than three-quarters of a billion dollars to spend in a blatant attempt to buy the support of Saskatchewan people with their own money, Mr. Speaker. Well Saskatchewan people aren't buying what the NDP is selling, Mr. Speaker. They're not buying any of it.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion I want to ask people of Saskatchewan a couple of questions. We all know that the NDP government is doing well. We all know that very well. We've seen the financial statements. We've heard about the \$873 million. But I ask Saskatchewan people, Saskatchewan taxpayers: it's your money, and how well are you doing? Mr. Speaker, I hear other members who want to enter the debate, and I certainly hope they do.

I have a second question, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, to ask you and to ask all members of the Assembly and all people tuning in this evening. And the question, Mr. Speaker, is this: has there ever been a reason, has there ever been a better reason to get rid of this tired, old NDP government? I suggest, Mr. Speaker, there hasn't. I suggest that the time is now. And I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader, the Minister of Government Relations.

[19:30]

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy today to join the debate started by the Minister of Finance tonight in placing on the table the supplementary estimates. I am seconding the motion to place these on the table, Mr. Speaker, proudly seconding these motions.

And while I'm thinking about that, Mr. Speaker, I'm also proud to be a colleague of the Minister of Finance here on this side of the House, in the New Democratic Party government. Mr. Speaker, I've had the opportunity and the occasion to work with the Minister of Finance pretty much from the day I got elected, Mr. Speaker. I've been fortunate enough to work with the minister as he's developed two budgets and has presided over two sets of supplementary estimates brought into the Chamber here, Mr. Speaker. And in each and every case, the needs, the interests, the priorities of the people of Saskatchewan have been addressed in a fiscally prudent manner, addressing their needs while balancing the fiscal needs of the province.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be a colleague of the Minister of Finance, proud to be a New Democrat, proud to be a member of this government. And I look forward to the development of the next budget, Mr. Speaker, as we look ahead to the future of Saskatchewan, a plan set out by the Premier in the Throne Speech brought forward just two short weeks ago and a plan, Mr. Speaker, that set out in September by the Premier and the Minister of Industry and Resources, the Action Plan for the Saskatchewan Economy. Mr. Speaker, a plan that recognizes the development potential of this province, a plan that recognizes the ability of this province to create and support new jobs and support the proud Saskatchewan families who are making this wonderful province their home.

Mr. Speaker, today as we are going forward with the supplementary estimates which, as the Minister of Finance correctly said, were additional estimates for additional expenditures as a result of additional revenues brought forward for the people of Saskatchewan, we are looking at a further investment in Saskatchewan people. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to discuss a few of those points as I go forward.

But I'm also intrigued by comments made by the member from Saskatoon Silver Springs just a few moments ago in this House, Mr. Speaker. And it reminds me of many of the things that I thought about through those miserable days in the 1980s where we had a government led by then Premier Grant Devine which thought nothing, Mr. Speaker, thought nothing of taking resources from the people of Saskatchewan, spending them without due care and attention, and building up what was then the largest per capita debt of any province in the history of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, these comments made by the member of Saskatoon Silver Springs reminds me of some of the comments he made earlier this year when we were discussing the spring budget of this government, comments that seemed to indicate that this province had billions and billions of extra dollars to spend, Mr. Speaker.

Well in fact, Mr. Speaker, what the supplementary estimates are doing for Saskatchewan people here today, Mr. Speaker, are recognizing that there are additional revenues available to us on a short-term basis, Mr. Speaker, because those revenues come from the resource revenues of the province. Roughly 80 per cent of the new dollars are subject to the volatile revenues of oil and gas and to a certain extent potash and uranium prices, subject to that cyclical marketplace where the prices can be high one day and lower, and in many cases much lower, the next.

Mr. Speaker, when we examine the ability of the province to provide for the needs and priorities of our people, we have to think of as government. We have to think in terms of balancing the ability of the province to meet current needs with the ability of the province to have certainty in revenues over the long term for long-term needs.

And, Mr. Speaker, what we have in front of us today primarily are a recognition of a one time . . . I think it's about 84 per cent of the expenditures recognize the revenues we have are one-time revenues.

And, Mr. Speaker, it should also be pointed out and I think it's clearly represented in the numbers that the members opposite haven't quite figured out yet, but we're not . . . different from the federal government, Mr. Speaker. What the province of Saskatchewan has in front of us in terms of additional revenues are not surplus tax dollars, Mr. Speaker. We have not collected too much tax from the people of Saskatchewan, but rather we have additional revenues that come from the resource base.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, we can't go back to that practice of the '80s of spending short-term money for long-term goals, and we can't continue to deal with the issue of addressing tax issues until we have some long-term certainty.

The Minister of Finance correctly pointed out when he did the

interim financial statement earlier this month, he said he didn't want to be in the position of lowering taxes today just so that he might have to increase them tomorrow or the next day, Mr. Speaker. It's difficult for governments to deal with those types of issues in that way. And as a result this government, Mr. Speaker, is moving forward on a very balanced approach to the provincial economy.

So, Mr. Speaker, what is it that we are doing for the people of Saskatchewan with the additional resources that are available to us today? Well first and foremost, Mr. Speaker, I think the people of Saskatchewan said to us as government, Mr. Speaker, they said to us it appears that the cost of home heating fuel is rising. The price of natural gas is increasing. The price of providing natural gas to the home is increasing. The province is getting additional revenues from that natural gas resource, and the government should use some of the revenues from natural gas to subsidize the home heating of Saskatchewan residents. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what this government has turned around to do. Roughly \$140 million, Mr. Speaker, of these additional revenues are being used to provide energy cost relief to the people of Saskatchewan.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, over the course of the last year and the year before that, families throughout Saskatchewan have talked about the need to provide additional support for agriculture.

And, Mr. Speaker, you are aware that in each and every budget, based on this government's approach to balancing the budget, we have been able to provide about \$100 million per year in each of the last two budgets to address the CAIS program, Mr. Speaker, the program that we share the costs with the federal government on. In each of those years, Mr. Speaker, it has been indicated that the cost of that program — and again this was an argument brought forward very strongly by the Minister of Agriculture — this was a program in which Saskatchewan is unfairly providing the dollars for our residents compared to the agriculture residents of other provinces. So, Mr. Speaker, we put \$100 million of money available to farm families through the CAIS program in our budget. And last year, Mr. Speaker, we recognized with additional revenues we could put more money into the CAIS program. And we did so.

This year, Mr. Speaker, earlier in the year we indicated that we would fully fund the 2004 CAIS program. And, Mr. Speaker, in the Throne Speech of the other day, in addition to the 100 million that was already in the program, this government committed to fully fund the CAIS program for 2005. What that turns out to be, Mr. Speaker, is since we budgeted for the CAIS program of \$100 million, we have of the new-found revenues — the resource revenues that the people of Saskatchewan asked us to share with farm families in Saskatchewan — we've identified close to \$160 million worth of new money for the agriculture sector in Saskatchewan through the CAIS program.

So, Mr. Speaker, we've been very responsive to families in their homes, farm families on the farm with substantial revenues coming out of these new-found dollars. Mr. Speaker, that's just the beginning.

The members opposite talked about the need for doing more and more and more. And of course, we know from the member from Silver Springs earlier that of course he's spent these

dollars three and four times over already, Mr. Speaker — something that we're not able to do because we believe in sound, prudent management.

But, Mr. Speaker, when we take a look at what else we're doing, he talks about not finding any new money for health care, Mr. Speaker. And yet from this pool of additional resources that are part of these estimates, Mr. Speaker, \$108 million worth of additional money for funding for regional health authorities . . . that means health authorities like Prairie North Health Region in my area will have additional monies to help them meet the needs of providing for specialists and reducing diagnostic times and providing additional time throughout their surgical rooms.

Mr. Speaker, these are very important dollars because the people of Saskatchewan said to the members of this government we need a more responsive health care system. The health care system is in need of additional dollars. And of course we moved forward some money in that regard.

Also at the same time, Mr. Speaker, this government was very responsive to those people who are active in the community-based organizations who are in many cases working with our communities most . . . people who are most in need of special care and attention, people who live in residential care homes throughout our community. And they've had difficulties over the years, Mr. Speaker, in retaining staff because of the difference in wages paid between the community-based organizations and the health care people who are doing much the same work.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we're addressing that issue in the additional resources that we have available. And, Mr. Speaker, community-based organizations I expect will respond to the supplementary estimates and the work that this government is doing and announced through the Throne Speech with great enthusiasm, Mr. Speaker. They've been asking us for this assistance; we're very responsive as we were to Saskatchewan families and Saskatchewan farm families in this regard.

And, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance provided quite a number of other examples. I only want to discuss one other example, Mr. Speaker, before I discuss permanent debt reduction which I think is a hallmark of the work that this government has been doing. What I want to mention, Mr. Speaker, because I think everyone recognizes that I've been doing a lot of work with municipalities over the course of the last two years, these estimates, Mr. Speaker, are bringing forward the federal funding that flows through the province of Saskatchewan under the new deal for the use of federal gas tax money in the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, these estimates are recognizing about \$18 million worth of money that was collected by the federal government and is by agreement moving through to Saskatchewan communities.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the municipal leaders will know, but not too many people throughout the province of Saskatchewan will know, that this agreement that the province of Saskatchewan has signed with the federal government was worked out in consultation with our municipal leaders. The deal we have in Saskatchewan is different than the deal we have in the other provinces — more flexibility in Saskatchewan and a greater

ability to meet the needs and priorities of Saskatchewan communities as a result of the work that we did together.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is very significant money for the municipalities throughout the province of Saskatchewan, and I just wanted to put on record what some of these numbers mean to the people who live in some of our communities.

And I just use the city of Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker, for an example. I mentioned that these estimates are flowing through about \$18 million. But, Mr. Speaker, by the time five years roll through, this province will be dealing with about \$147 million worth of additional money yearly to municipalities. The city of Saskatoon, these brand new dollars, Mr. Speaker, will ultimately result in, at the end of the five-year period, Mr. Speaker, \$12.3 million worth of brand new money annually to the people of Saskatoon as a result of the work that has been done by the municipalities, the provincial, and the federal government.

[19:45]

My own city, the city of North Battleford, will be receiving almost \$14,000 . . . or pardon me, \$253,000 this year ramping up to almost \$900,000, Mr. Speaker, in year number five. The town of Battleford with a population of under 4,000 people, Mr. Speaker, will be receiving close to \$240,000 per year. And a little community like Biggar, just south of the Battlefords with a population of around 2,200 people, will see about \$140,000 per year flowing through. Mr. Speaker, these are significant new dollars available to our municipalities for the delivery of very important infrastructure and other services in those communities. We are very pleased with the development of these new deal dollars.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance had indicated that a big part of what is in front of us . . . not a big part, Mr. Speaker, but a part of the dollars available to us here have resulted in debt reduction in the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I think we know that the most significant debt ever run up in the history of this province was run up by the Conservatives in this province, Mr. Speaker. And by paying down that debt, Mr. Speaker, we now have, as the Minister of Finance indicated, the lowest debt we've seen since 1988-89 in this province currently, Mr. Speaker. That means that the cost of providing services to the people of Saskatchewan is less today than it was previously. It means that the cost to the taxpayer of this province to provide for the services, for additional services, for additional support for infrastructure and that sort of thing is less than it would otherwise have been, Mr. Speaker.

So this is a major initiative on behalf of government to not just provide new spending, Mr. Speaker, but also to address the issue of debt. Now, Mr. Speaker, that's part of balancing the needs of the province — dealing with debt, reducing costs, dealing with new programs, increasing the ability of the people of Saskatchewan to recognize and realize an improvement in their quality of life. The Minister of Finance has taken a very cautious approach to these matters. It is exactly the type of approach which has led to increased credit upgrades, Mr. Speaker, and will continue to hold Saskatchewan in high regard across North America and the world by those to whom we still must rely on for borrowing, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we have

the money available to provide the types of services that people have come to count on.

Just one last comment before I conclude, Mr. Speaker, because as I indicated in my remarks earlier, the majority of the dollars available to us, additional dollars available to us, come from resource revenues — volatile, cyclical resource revenues. Mr. Speaker, if we are to rely on these types of revenues for long-term programs obviously you can see the problem we get into, Mr. Speaker, if we don't have long-term certainty, if we're funding long-term programs with short-term money.

So this province needs more than anything the support of the Saskatchewan people, the support of the Saskatchewan Conservative Party, the support of others, Mr. Speaker, in finalizing our energy accord with Ottawa to ensure that we have some certainty in our long-term revenue base, Mr. Speaker.

We're compared frequently to the province of Alberta by the members opposite, members across the way who believe that their colleagues in Alberta can do so much better than we can in Saskatchewan. But let's take a look at what Saskatchewan is up against when we're facing the same circumstances that the province of Alberta faces. Mr. Speaker, when you look at the ability of Alberta to retain the oil and gas revenues for their own purposes, we see a couple of things. Number one, Mr. Speaker, on the natural gas side of things Alberta gains almost 25 times what Saskatchewan gains from an increase in natural gas prices. On the oil side, Mr. Speaker, Alberta gains almost four times what Saskatchewan gains from an increase in benchmark oil prices.

Mr. Speaker, the system is completely unfair to the province of Saskatchewan and the people of Saskatchewan. Our ability to provide the same level of services that the province of Alberta does is impeded by this unfair process of not being able to retain and have access to the resource revenues to the same extent that the province of Alberta does.

I haven't started to address the other issues about how unfair it is compared to Newfoundland and Labrador, and Nova Scotia, even our friends next door in the province of Manitoba. The ability of this province to deliver long-term programs, necessary long-term programs, for the people of Saskatchewan is impeded by these matters.

And in fact, Mr. Speaker, when I take a look at the revenue base for the province of Alberta, I mean, it's incredible, Mr. Speaker. The resource revenue alone in the province of Alberta, the current budget for resource revenues in Alberta is \$7.6 billion or roughly the amount that Saskatchewan collects from all its revenue resources. And of course the surplus declared by the province of Alberta this year is greater than the entire budget expenditure for the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, there are huge differences between our two provinces. The province of Saskatchewan however is doing a very good job of providing the developmental support for industry.

The Minister of Finance has provided the incentives necessary to spur oil and gas investment in the province of Saskatchewan. The Minister of Industry and Resources has clearly indicated

that the outside investment in the province of Saskatchewan will be roughly 12 per cent in the course of the next 12 months. This is double the investment that we will see anywhere else in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

There are some incredible opportunities that have presented themselves in the province of Saskatchewan. We're able to table advantage of these opportunities. And, Mr. Speaker, these estimates in front of us today are just an indication of the benefits that the people of Saskatchewan will be able to reap as a result of the work that's being done by a strong, solid, balanced, prudent approach to delivering a financial package.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to second this motion today. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise this evening and join in the debate about the supplementary estimates that have been put on the table by the Finance minister this evening.

Now, Mr. Speaker, all of us I think in this House from time to time have some frustrations with the job. And I would like to share one of my main frustrations tonight and that is how long it takes for the government to have anything sink in that makes sense.

You know, Mr. Speaker, when I was first elected a decade or so ago, one of the very first initiatives that I heard of in this House that made sense to me was the initiative about advertising the dangers of fetal alcohol syndrome and effect on the packaging that was sent out from the liquor establishments in this province. And I heard with dismay the government of the day sort of saying, it can't be done; this is silly; what good is that going to do — because it was proposed from a member of the opposition, the member from Kelvington-Wadena. And it was frustrating to hear the government members take what was a very good and important idea that was raised by an opposition member and sort of discount it as being trivial and not worth the effort.

And yet today, this evening when I was watching the news, there was an ad on television warning people about the dangers of consuming alcohol while they're pregnant or breastfeeding. Makes a whole lot of sense. But the point was we had to take this government kicking and screaming from making a very simple decision to finally getting to the point we are today.

You know, Mr. Speaker, over the years there's been numbers of instances of this type where it is just absolutely dumbfounding why this government takes so long to understand a very simple and good idea and implement it.

I recall it becoming very obvious to the official opposition in 1999 that we were facing an imminent crisis in the health care system; that unless we did something pretty dramatic about the looming shortage of professionals — nurses, doctors, licensed practical nurses, technicians, and technologists — we were

going to very quickly get into a very difficult position where we didn't have enough health care professionals to meet the needs of the system. And the government ignored all of these concerns that were raised, not only by ourselves as the official opposition, but from the Registered Nurses' Association, from the Union of Nurses, from the College of Physicians and Surgeons. All of the health care professional organizations were saying that this is exactly true; it's a problem.

And one of the problems that were identified at that time is that in order to meet the challenges of providing enough health care professionals, you couldn't do it in ATCO trailers at the University of Saskatchewan because they didn't have the physical space in which to conduct this extra training programs. And also that it was important to develop a collaborative approach to the health care delivery system. That it would be very, very important as an initiative by the University of Saskatchewan to build an academic health sciences facility, and to make sure that this moved forward quickly and in concert — not only just as a building, as we see the money that's allocated today of approximately \$110 million — not only is that not enough compared to what there was, but because this government has dithered for five or six years, the cost of the project has doubled. So that it's going to take twice the commitment by the people of Saskatchewan in order to live up to our share of the commitment, and in five or six years in the making until we're finally getting an initial commitment in a fiscal way.

Mr. Speaker, in the meantime we've wasted several years of training opportunities because you don't educate health care professionals overnight. It takes time for these professionals to go through their training program, to go through their residencies and to be available in the job market to provide for the services of much needed patient care in this province. And in the meantime all we get from the minister is talking about websites that keep track of our abysmal, long waiting lists in almost every category, and some kind of vague responses of saying, we're going to improve this somehow.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen in additional monies for health care \$114 million. Of that, \$110 million is for the academic health sciences facility and it certainly is an important project . . . Oh, I'm sorry, it's out of the Learning budget — \$110 million is for the regional authorities.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the speaker just before me, the member from Battleford, said this is going to go to provide needed health care professionals, doctors and nurses and those sorts of individual resources to be available for the health care system. Well I think that if the member reads the budget document on the supplementary estimates that were tabled, it says it's going to primarily provide for joint job evaluation adjustments — which are well and good by themselves, but they don't provide an extra nurse at a bedside. They don't provide an extra specialist when they're needed. It doesn't provide for the kind of people that are needed to make sure that there's an ongoing, viable stem cell transplant program in this province. It isn't providing for any of those health care essential services. It's being used to provide for joint job evaluation adjustments that the health districts are going to have to face.

So again, Mr. Speaker, it's frustrating to see that this

government so badly doesn't understand what's actually needed in a timely way so that the actual health care system can be improved to provide more timely care for our residents. And instead this money is being used in a way that doesn't provide that kind of care.

[20:00]

Mr. Speaker, if you happen to look at some of the health care facilities' budgets that have been recently tabled, many of them have been tabled and posted on the Internet and you can actually see individuals' names. And I believe anyone who has received remuneration from the health authority in excess of, I believe, \$50,000, their name and the amount of money that they've been paid by the health authorities have been posted on the Internet.

And again it's very interesting because you will see that there are a number of health care professionals, nurses, licensed and registered nurses who are actually putting in obviously way in excess of a 40- or 44-hour workweek. And they're doing that obviously at double time or double time and a half rates of pay. And at the same time, many of our graduating health care professionals, nurses, etc., are not able to get full-time job equivalent positions at regular rates of pay.

Mr. Speaker, this is an example of the short-sighted vision of this government in providing an adequate number of health care professionals and also making sure that there are available full-time, permanent positions that are available for these people that are entering the workforce.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting as well that there's a quarter of a million dollars being spent on executive management which is again in some ways very frustrating. Because what we're getting from this government . . . And I would like to remind the House that this is the government that closed Whitespruce Treatment Centre. It's the government that dismantled the SADAC [Saskatchewan Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission] program for addictions. This very same government now makes \$250,000 available for the creation of a new ministry, and it doesn't create one more treatment bed for people that are addicted to drugs, particularly the scourges of drugs like crystal meth.

Mr. Speaker, again I point that out as an example of how this government's spending priorities are fairly inappropriate, given the fact that they've come into these windfall dollars. And they claim that this is one-time money. Well if they would do any planning, if they would do any programming to understand what is really needed in this province, these monies are needed to provide long-term, permanent positions in this province.

Mr. Speaker, certainly we would commend and suggest that expenditures in Health of \$3.4 million for the funding of Herceptin is a very worthwhile expenditure. But how can it be considered one term? This is essential money that should be in a permanent way going into the base funding for the drug plan because this treatment is very much needed for women suffering with breast cancer conditions.

Mr. Speaker, we see the extra money that's being spent on health care, and we certainly recognize that the money is being

spent in needed areas. But it's too bad that it takes so long for the government to recognize the importance of these expenditures and therefore we're not getting the kind of value that we should out of the money that's being spent.

I would like to also speak very briefly about the expenditures that are being projected and promoted in the field of learning. Mr. Speaker, we see a total budget of about \$120 million — \$114 million of that, almost \$115 million, is being spent for the academic health sciences at the University of Saskatchewan and I've touched on that addition, on that issue. In addition there is almost 2 million being spent on additional K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] education school capital transfers. It's a little vague as to what they might be, but I worry that we might be getting into again a problem with the implementation of the amalgamation plan that was announced previously.

Mr. Speaker, at the time we said that amalgamation was something that was progressing very well on a voluntary basis where it made sense by school divisions, and we were told that there were going to be three main benefits or three main reasons why we should support amalgamation.

The first stated reason was administrative efficiency. And, Mr. Speaker, it also seems to be very frustrating for me to realize that this government will not seek the counsel and wisdom of neighbouring jurisdictions or other jurisdictions in Canada to see if they've been through this same experience and to see if there's any wisdom that can be learned. And certainly we heard from our neighbouring province to the east, Manitoba, who went through an amalgamation process and to their dismay they found out that the cost of this process didn't result in any administrative efficiencies. In essence it added cost to the whole process.

And what we're seeing, although this is all in transition right now, is a concern about how we're going to make sure we deal with capital for our office buildings and things of that nature, if there has to be renovations to the central office location. We're seeing a whole new tier of administration being created in this whole system and we also suspect that the administrative remuneration on these larger districts is also going to creep up.

So we're going to find I believe that our situation is not going to be a whole lot different than what was experienced in Manitoba. It's not going to be a whole lot different. The minister opposite is shaking his head as if this isn't going to happen. But I'll stand in this House and I will bet the minister that when this is all over we're going to see that the administrative costs for these amalgamated school districts are not going to save the people of this province one red cent. The new structures are going to be every bit as expensive, if not more expensive, than the old structures. And they are going to be less efficient because we now have huge distances and huge amounts of time that are going to be spent behind the wheel of a car driving to these locations.

Mr. Speaker, there is a balance between ideological sort of blindness and practicality. And the school boards of this province were finding that. They were doing the practical things on the basis of what made sense for their ratepayers and for their communities. And we believe that that was achieving the kind of results that we were looking for.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to that, we also see that there are some concerns being expressed about how the program of the early childhood, early learning program are going to be implemented. Mr. Speaker, we think in principle the idea of making sure that there is early learning in child care in the educational system is a good idea in principle. The question will always be, are these extra funds to provide this program going to be adequate for the school boards to initiate the programs and to sustain them long term? We think that's important.

We're concerned that we're hearing from school boards that there has been very little consultation in a meaningful way as to how it's going to work and what their roles and responsibilities are going to be in this program. It's very much being generated from the Department of Learning as opposed to real bottom-up needs identification that says something needs to be done in this area. And again these are concerns that are being expressed to us at this time. And we certainly believe that they need to be paid attention to.

Mr. Speaker, in and by themselves, these expenditures are going to benefit the province. Our concern is, is that they could have benefited an awful lot more if this government had the vision to look forward and to anticipate these needs and to respond in a timely way when we could have had some cost efficiencies.

It's too bad that after all these years this government doesn't learn from their mistakes, is unwilling to learn from the experiences of other jurisdictions, and is only being able to come with any ideas in a second-hand way from, by and large, the official opposition's initiatives. And at least they're copying some of those initiatives, so something's getting done in this province because if it was left to their devices, we would be accomplishing very little, Mr. Speaker.

So I'm disappointed in the priorities that this government has outlined in the supplementary estimates. I think we need a lot more vision than has been exhibited by this government. But I suspect that we're only going to get that to change after another election. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to participate in the debate and discussion this evening. When I saw that there was supplementary estimates coming down, I thought that this was going to be an opportunity for the NDP government to try and demonstrate some leadership and try and demonstrate some of the things that they talk about as being near and dear to their heart.

And frankly, Mr. Speaker, what we've seen when we've looked through that is a lot of disappointment, a lot of things that aren't particularly beneficial, and unfortunately far too many things that are mop ups of problems that ill-advised policies have created before.

I'd like specifically to deal firstly with the issue of Corrections and Public Safety estimates. On their spending, an additional

\$2.535 million for adult corrections facilities, managing high inmate counts in adult correctional facilities . . . Mr. Speaker, the fact that we're spending more money and we've got more inmates is probably a sign that our police officers and prosecutors are working hard and doing what they are paid to do.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, having a high incarceration or a higher incarceration rate is an indication of the failure of the other policies that should have taken place before — things like early intervention programs for children, better educational and training programs, better probation follow-up in with young offenders, and more programs that create actual and real jobs.

And unfortunately by the time they become a statistic in the Department of Justice as an incarcerated inmate, it's often too late for that individual to be restored to being a valuable participating member of society. Mr. Speaker, funds should be committed early on to childhood issues; should be committed early on to other issues to try and prevent other issues that have come up.

I see as well \$14.65 million to provincial disaster assistance program. This is going to cover payments for the program of widespread flooding and windstorms earlier this summer.

Mr. Speaker, most MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] received large numbers of phone calls from dissatisfied citizens who had had to deal with this program. In particular we had flooding in Saskatoon, and we got people that were phoning their MLAs. They were phoning the city. The city of Saskatoon put on educational seminars to try and explain to people how the storm sewer system worked, how it was separate from the sanitary sewer system, and dealt with it in an upfront, businesslike manner. The various Saskatoon MLA offices on the NDP side were of absolutely no benefit to their constituents because we ended up helping them from all the way across the city.

Unfortunately that happens too often that the Sask Party MLAs do the work for the NDP MLAs, and it appears to be something that's ongoing. But I want to tell you something, Mr. Speaker; the MLAs on this side of the House are going to continue to do that because we value the citizens of this province.

Mr. Speaker, the situation with our corrections facilities is likely going to continue to get worse because of some of the other things that the NDP are not dealing with. We have huge problems in this province with addictions to crystal meth. The Education minister sat in this House last year and told us the issue with crystal meth was no big deal, was nothing more than the flavour of the week. And it wasn't until the entire North American continent rose up and said this is an international problem, this is something that has to be dealt with, that all of a sudden the light came on for that minister and for that government. And now they've decided to do something.

And what did they do, Mr. Speaker? They decide they've got enough money, that they can spend money to appoint a minister to look at the issue. That person goes out, does a study, does a review. All that person needed to do was to pick up the phone and phone some of the people that were working in some of the NGOs [non-governmental organization] or in some of the

health care facilities or talk to a police officer to understand the reality, the severity, and some of the issues that need to be addressed. But they chose not to do that.

Instead they've spent tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of dollars, to create a ministry. And, Mr. Speaker, that ministry has not yet created one additional bed, one facility, or anything that's going to help the citizens of this province — not a bit.

Unfortunately what is happening, Mr. Speaker, is the young people of our province are going to continue to become addicted to crystal meth and to other drugs because that government is more interested right now in building an airport for cabinet ministers and doing other issues, other priorities — paying for the entire caucus to become a cabinet minister and with the sad exception of one.

Mr. Speaker, it's a damning indictment of that caucus, and unfortunately the NDP has a very poor record on crime, and as taxpayers we will be paying the cost in increased incarceration costs.

[20:15]

I would like to read a quote from the Premier:

We are a government that dreams of a province where women and children and men can live and walk in their communities and walk on the campuses of our province without fear, without fear of violence . . . We dream of a new society without the fear of violence, and we say why not?

Well he might have borrowed the gist and tone of that from Martin Luther King, but unfortunately for that Premier, you can't walk safely in his constituency and in his backyard. Unfortunately he lives in one of the most dangerous places in this province and one of the most dangerous places in this country, and it's right in the Premier's backyard.

And when we make an issue about it, they accuse us of playing politics. They can make all the accusations in the world because we will continue to pound away at that problem until that Premier, that Justice minister, and the members on that side of the House decide that that's something they want to do with it.

I'd like to talk about some of the crime statistics, Mr. Speaker. In 2004 Saskatchewan's 15,159 Criminal Code offences per 100,000 people was the highest of any province in this country. Saskatchewan's violent crime rate was the highest in the country and more than double the rate of violent crimes in Ontario per 100,000 people.

Saskatchewan had the highest provincial rate of property crime in the country, only behind British Columbia, and had the second highest homicide rate in the country.

Saskatchewan continues to have the highest youth crime in the country with 19,185 charged and cleared per 100,000 youth. Mr. Speaker, that is, almost one child in five goes through the Justice system on an annual basis — a troubling and very discouraging statistic. I'm wondering whether that was a topic

of discussion last weekend at the NDP convention, and I wonder whether there's a willingness on the part of any of the members over there to try and deal with that. Mr. Speaker, there are an estimated 1,315 members of youth gangs in Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan's NDP government has the worst crime record in Canada over the past 10 years. They have the worst violent crime record in Canada over the past seven years. That's from crime statistics in Canada dated 2004. Violent crime under the NDP is 25 per cent higher than the next highest province. Mr. Speaker, that is from a government that tries to pride itself on caring and being committed to the residents of this province.

The NDP failure to address the causes of crime is something that this government should take seriously. And they may enjoy their laughs. They may enjoy the jokes over there this evening but, Mr. Speaker, we're here because of serious problems in this province. And we want to address those problems, and we want to raise them with that government, and it's troubling that they don't take any notice of the problems that are there.

I'd like to talk briefly, Mr. Speaker, about poverty. Child poverty has grown since 1998. By 2002 almost 19 per cent of children in Saskatchewan lived in poverty. Strange statistic, Mr. Speaker — that's almost exactly the same number of youth that get in trouble on an annual basis. Food bank usage has increased from 1998 to 2002. The food bank, Mr. Speaker, is in the Premier's constituency, and the Premier will not visit the food bank. Half of all First Nations and Métis children in Saskatchewan live in poverty.

I want to comment briefly on addictions, Mr. Speaker. It is estimated that 90 per cent of all crime in Saskatchewan has drug or alcohol involvement. Addictions are a major cause of crime, and Saskatchewan's crime rate has increased by 41 per cent since 1995. The Premier's cuts to addiction services over the 1990s has contributed to Saskatchewan's rising crime rate.

In 1993 the member from Riversdale who is now the Premier, as associate minister of Health, closed SADAC. In 1996 that same member who was at that time minister of Social Services was part of the cabinet that closed the Whitespruce youth addiction treatment centre in Yorkton. The member from Saskatoon Massey Place who was then Health minister was also part of that same troubling, flawed decision.

Mr. Speaker, fetal alcohol syndrome, the NDP delayed releasing their FASD [fetal alcohol spectrum disorder] plan for more than a year. When they finally announced that plan, there was too little funding for the program and no commitments to build a dedicated facility in the province. Unfortunately that issue remains unaddressed by this government.

Mr. Speaker, I want to comment just very briefly on the disaster relief funding. While the Saskatchewan Party agrees that more money is necessary to assist individuals and communities devastated by flooding and caused by the storms in Saskatchewan this summer, it is important to note that the government took \$1 million away from the provincial disaster assistance program in the last '05-06 budget. Surprisingly it's roughly a similar amount to what they want to spend on a hangar for themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move on now and talk briefly about the Department of Justice and the supplementary estimates for the Department of Justice. We note an increase in expenditure of \$110,000 for public prosecutions. And I go back to my earlier comments, Mr. Speaker, on the reason for the increase in prosecutions is because of failure to address root causes of crimes.

And another expenditure of \$1.1 million increased for community justice, law enforcement services to implement Project Hope, gang suppression, and establish a missing persons task force.

Mr. Speaker, it is our hope that there is some successes come out of that. It is probably a situation unfortunately of too much done too late to be of any real benefit. Unfortunately they've gone ahead and chosen to make the announcement without the consultations that they should've done with Child Find, etc.

And, Mr. Speaker, we note with no great surprise that we are going to spend an additional two point million dollars on the Milgaard inquiry. We're troubled that that process is taking as long as it is and appears to be a difficult process.

I would like to compliment the commissioner that is participating in that and commission counsel. It's a difficult and arduous task. And I'm wondering whether the minister might be willing to try and have some meetings and decide . . . work with these people to determine whether there's things that can be done that will shorten the process or reduce some of the costs that's there, whether things can be agreed to.

I understand that Mr. Milgaard is not terribly interested in participating in the program. So I wonder, I'm having some questions and reservations about some of the benefits that are going to come out of this inquiry if the person that's the subject of it is not willing. And we as a province have to make hard decisions about what benefits are going to be reaped from that inquiry.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, it's my hope that the minister would certainly have some consultations with the people involved in the commission to determine what can be done to salvage some benefit from that. We've spent a significant amount of money now and certainly don't want to waste what we've done.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I've commented when I was commenting on Corrections and Public Safety on the sad, sad statistics that we have. And I don't want to reread those, but the same situation applies to Corrections and Public Safety and also to Justice in a broader sense.

I think this is a government that is running on its last legs right now. They know that this is a problem that they cannot address. They've decided they will not address and what we're seeing now is a government that's doing nothing more, Madam Deputy Speaker, than window dressing because they are unable and unwilling to address that.

They made a commitment to the province in 1999 for 200 new police officers. It was probably not enough at that time and now we have announcements, pronouncements, re-announcements.

Every time another police officer retires, another one comes on stream.

But no matter whose numbers you use — the minister's numbers, the Federation of Police Officers — this is a promise that has not yet been kept. This is a promise that was made more than two elections ago and, Madam Deputy Speaker, that promise is a myth and it's busted.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Morgan: — Madam Deputy Speaker, it is difficult to find words that are appropriate when you go through an election promise made over two election cycles, a series of NDP Justice ministers, and they're unable to fulfill that promise. And with the large amounts of additional revenue that were there, I would have thought that this would have been something that this government would have made a priority on. But frankly, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think it's something that they've given up on and aren't willing to deal with.

Madam Deputy Speaker, part of this was funding for Project Hope. We will await with anticipation and probably some hope that there will be some benefit that will come out of this program. Frankly, from what we've seen so far there is little in the program that we've seen other than some hollow promises and some plans or intentions. But so far we haven't seen anything that has produced any tangible treatment programs, anything directed towards the development of a facility.

We have however seen a government opposite that is quite willing to spend a lot of time planning the parking spaces in their new hangar. And I guess when they rise above things, as they fly here and around the province, they may not be as concerned with justice and justice issues as the people that are on the ground that see these things on a day-to-day basis. And my advice to them, Madam Deputy Speaker, would be to get out of the plane and go for a walk on the ground, perhaps in Saskatoon Riversdale, and see if they can benefit from that, Madam Deputy Speaker. Thank you very much.

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

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I'm delighted to rise on behalf of the people from Kelvington-Wadena constituency to comment on the way the government has decided to spend the extra \$750 million or so that they received this year so far.

I think the people of my area and in Saskatchewan were hoping that they would see something that would make a difference to their lives. They're hoping that when they went to sleep at night that there'd be something that they could say, gee we are part of the windfall revenues that's happened to this province. We own this province and we've paid our dues here so let's see how we're going to make a difference.

I'm going to tell you to start off, Madam Deputy Speaker, that one of the things that I'm waiting with anticipation to see what the government will do about and that is midwifery. It's something that we've talked about and the government has talked about for a number of years. And they've made some

veiled promises in this Throne Speech and I'm waiting to see if the government actually will deal with it. We're the only Western province in the country that's failed to legalize midwifery.

And the statement that I think that is most telling is that it's utterly unrealistic to imagine that midwifery can thrive without funding. Have you ever heard the Minister of Health suggest that physicians should provide their medical services free of charge or that they should seek payment directly from their patients? I think that the people that would be involved with this issue are waiting to see the government actually will do something for them.

The other issue that I am very passionate about and I think members in the House are aware, that is the crystal meth and the Project Hope that the Premier talked about the last . . . half the year. I am aware that in the near future there will be an announcement made about this. And the only thing that I can hope for the people that have family members directly affected by an addiction that's so utterly devastating to not only their family but their community is that whatever this government has decided to do, they'll do it quickly.

We've been talking about the issue for two years in the House. And the Minister of Health has indicated in this Assembly that he's known about it for six years. It's just not good enough to say that we'll do it later on, Madam Deputy Speaker. It has to be dealt with now. When we can turn on the TV at night and hear them talking about the drug on a fiction show as easily as we talked about alcohol a couple of years ago, we know it's not an issue that's going to leave this province. It's something that every one of us hear about.

I have a grandchild in grade 4 that can tell you that the name on the street for this drug is jibb. It's not too many grade 4 people a few years ago would have known that. So what I'm saying is that it's infiltrated our society to a great extent, and we have to deal with it.

The information that we have about crystal meth is dealt with in many different departments. Health people look at it, Social Services, Justice. The police look at it. And one of the problems we have is there's no umbrella organization that actually collects all the information so that it can be . . . statistics can be made so the extent of the problem can be verified.

I know that in my own area, there has been a couple of deaths involving this drug but it was marked up to death by drowning or heart attacks or that type of thing. There's no information to show that basically crystal meth was the problem. So I know that meth isn't the only drug that we have to deal with in this province, but I do know of the addictions. It's one that people are scared of.

[20:30]

A lot of people have heard of what they call old cokeheads or people who have used heroin for a long time. They're old drug addicts. You won't hear of an old meth addict because they won't live that long. The very longest that they can live if they were using it to any great extent is seven years. So we don't have the time to put off any longer. We've already known about

it in this province for six years. The time has come.

I'm very disappointed that with the addictions issue we have failed to recognize the value of CBOs [community-based organization] in this province. SABAS [Saskatchewan Association of Boards of Addiction Services] has dealt with addictions and they basically are winding down or dissolving right now because the benefit they had to this province is not seen.

We put it under mental health and everyone is aware that of course there is a mental health issue to this drug but it's not the only part of it. We've got to be able to deal with addictions as an addiction. It's a disease. And when the Minister of Health has indicated that we can no longer use the words disease or abstinence, it sends a message that we have to deal with it differently. And the organizations that are working in other provinces are saying that we have to look at people on the ground, people that deal with it on a daily basis to deal with the issue.

I believe we need a foundation to deal with the addictions issue because the addictions workers have this one issue that's important to them. Mental health workers have very many of them.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when SADAC first came into place, they used to be 1 per cent of the health budget. I'm hoping that the Minister of Health can tell us how much money is spent on addictions at this time.

Madam Deputy Speaker, one of the other issues that people in my constituency are concerned about again is agriculture. And I had a call the other day from a young man who had been waiting to hear about his crop damage from wildlife and he learned, much to his shock, that if you get paid for a crop that's been damaged by wildlife you get paid less than you would if you were paid for it under crop insurance. And the numbers are really quite startling.

If you get paid for a field ruined by deer or animals, under wildlife you'll get \$2.61 a bushel. Under crop insurance it's \$3.61. This is the same crop. This is adjusted by the same people. This is by the same government, and it's \$1 a bushel less. To this family it makes \$9,000 difference. How we can justify saying that there is a difference in it is beyond me, and it's especially beyond the farmers that are being affected by this issue.

I have one specific issue that I think this falls under the Minister of Culture's domain, and it's regarding a development that was trying to take place around Last Mountain Lake. A young family had decided that they were going to put up a development, and they found, when they started to do the work, they found out that there was some tepee rings that were situated on four of the prime areas along the ridge. And when heritage resources came out to look at it, they were given a bill for \$2,800 for just looking at the project. We think that if it was something that had a cultural, a positive influence on this province, it would be something that would be picked up under the Minister of Culture's purview and not something that was expected to pay for by a developer who had no idea that they were getting into this area and that it was going to end up

costing this money.

But in the long run they found out that to excavate the tepee rings, it would have to be done . . . the material would have to be sent to Calgary, and the actual work would be \$30,000. This landowner had no idea that they were going to get involved in the expense of \$30,000 — something they hadn't planned on, something they didn't want, and something that's really going to be no benefit to the province because out of all the material they dug up so far, there really isn't anything interesting or historic that's going to make people want to come out to their area. It's just going to be an additional cost. And I'm hoping it's something that the ministers . . . that they will look at.

The two areas that I am responsible for in my portfolio, the first one is the First Nations and Métis Relations. And on October 18 I was delighted that the government put forward a news release saying that they were going to have a program to boost Aboriginal participation in the economy. Basically what they said is they were going to have a four-year \$5 million package that was going to help Aboriginal business entrepreneurs start a business.

Now this is exciting because we all know that to get a business started it takes some money and the leverage is important to go to the bank. But as late as Friday when I phoned this department, Madam Deputy Speaker, there was still no program details for this program. We've announced the program. They made a big press release, a big fanfare about the money that they were going to be spending for First Nations people, but there is no details to a program. Yet we have the spending announcement in this budget. We've got people that are willing to talk about it but they can't help the people.

Now think of how many First Nations people there are in this province. To have it run through a department that still doesn't know what they're doing, we'd be better off to write them all a cheque. This isn't the kind of thing that's helping First Nations people. If the department is willing to stand up and say we know they need something but we're not sure what yet, but we will do a press release and we will talk about it, what we have from this government is a whole lot of talking and not much action. And it's not helping the First Nations people that need it desperately.

The other area, Madam Deputy Speaker, that is of great concern is the money that has been given in supplementary estimates for culture operations support, \$3.033 million, up from about \$711,000 in the budget. This money is more than quadruple what this government had actually talked about earlier. Now what we have to know, what is this doing to help the people of the province? Is this already spent? Is this going to be going to something specific? How are we going to see that this is actually making a difference to the people of this province?

And even more frustrating is the centennial spending increased by about \$50,000 from the budget . . . 50 per cent from the budget. It's up \$3.95 million.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, we all took part in the centennial operations this summer. We all saw our children come home from Alberta and BC [British Columbia] and Ontario to celebrate with people who used to call their

homefolk. They're no longer here but they were quite happy to come home and celebrate. But we have just about \$4 million above what the government talked about in March and it's gone. Where did it go to? What was it spent on? We put in written questions ever since this House came back into session and way more than three-quarters of them have been . . . We've been asking the government to be accountable and they've ordered the replies to our questions.

We have no idea what this government decided to do in the backroom when it comes to spending money for this centennial and this cultural support. Where did the money go to? How can you decide over a four-month period that we've got a lot of extra money so we'll give one project 50 per cent more than they asked for and another one four times more than they asked for.

We've got individuals in this province who are crying for help to do what they need to do just to survive during the day. And we've got a group of 29 people over there have decided that they should control just about \$1 billion and put it in some way that's going to make them happy. What about the people of the province that this money belongs to?

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is one of the areas that is of great concern because we know last year that the centennial spending jumped dramatically because the NDP spent \$614,000 on a movie about Tommy Douglas.

Now that really helped the farmers in Saskatchewan. That really helped the cancer victims on the waiting list. That helped people who were trying to lower their taxes when it came to education tax on their property.

This is the type of thing that is so frustrating when we see people who think they know better than the people who gave the money to the government.

This is not the NDP money. This is the money that belongs to the people of this province. And it's time that we started seeing it and not in something more than a glossy brochure that the government gives us and says, we're going to be out of here in a couple of weeks and just sign your name to it, and we'll go home. And that's the way this government may want to operate, but that's not the way we would operate, Madam Minister.

There has got to be some accountability, and people have to see a difference in their life or they're not going to be here. We already know about the 6,200 fewer jobs, that population that's decreased. What are we going to do to make sure that our people are going to see a future in this province? \$3.95 million more for the centennial didn't make a difference, Madam Deputy Speaker. I don't think it did to people on this House or the people over there. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Arm River-Watrous.

Mr. Brkich: — Deputy Speaker, it's a pleasure to enter this debate. I want to echo some of the comments that was made by my colleague from Kelvington-Wadena.

When you do go around the constituency, they talk about the oil and gas revenue being higher this year, more money being taken in. But one of the things they'll mention is that, my life isn't any better. What's happening to the waiting lists out there? Long-term care beds, we're still have waiting lists for that.

The money isn't going to the people where it came from. The member that just spoke from here is totally right. It's not going back to the people that paid it, the taxpayers. They're not getting any benefits from that. And when I will go around in the constituency there isn't one good word said about the government with this extra money.

You'd think that they would be happy. They'd say you know like, seems like we've got budgeted for more money this year that's coming in. You know, my life should be a little better, maybe a little tax relief. Or the hospital should be a little better or better in the waiting list. Or my life should be a little better. And that's what they're saying.

They're angry out there, Deputy Speaker. They're very angry out there. They're angry with the government. This government has taken in a lot of money in oil and gas revenue this year, and probably through no help of the government, because I can remember them always talking about how evil the oil companies were.

You had a convention, this present government had a convention last weekend and I think one of the resolutions on that was to nationalize the oil and gas revenue — to nationalize the oil and gas companies. Didn't your party learn anything at all from the '70s when they did that? What kind of message does that send?

One member from North Battleford talked about Alberta and how much money they had and it's hard to compete with that. Well that's because they've worked with the oil and gas companies. They've worked with their natural resources, have turned them into other resources. And that's what this government should be doing.

It should be working. We should be expanding in Saskatchewan the oil and gas revenue. This should be coming in. Our budget should be growing every year with that. If you take the spinoff that comes from the oil and gas, would help rural Saskatchewan — would help it greatly, Madam Deputy Speaker, would help it greatly.

You take rural Alberta, the pipelines that go through. And I've got in the towns of just . . . I know in Kenaston, Hanley how many people go in the wintertime — and Bladworth and Dundurn — go to work in the oil fields in Alberta. I could probably, if I sat down and wrote the names down, I could probably come up with 30 names just like that, that go to Alberta, take their money there — take, make their money there and spend their money there and that.

And the spinoff from that . . . Just when I was home, there was a 23-year-old kid I was talking to. He worked in Davidson. This winter he got his A1 licence. He's going to drive, going to drive a water truck in Alberta because they're just . . . And he got that job just reading it in the paper.

He says that they're — and they are, you look in *Western Producer* — they are crying for workers in Alberta. They're expanding. The towns are growing. The businesses there are thriving in them towns — the spinoff from the hotels to the restaurants, to the gas stations.

And yet in rural Saskatchewan that's not happening here. And the potential here is just as great as in Alberta. And this government still does not get the idea. It talks about the oil and gas revenue, but it still does not work expanding it.

I mean, I still can't believe that they would have a resolution from one of their members to nationalize the oil and gas companies. That's all their people, a lot of their grassroots people think about is basically just, how can we take something from somebody else? Even though they got no idea how to develop it or do anything with it, how can they look at . . . basically they look at it and say, what can we take from them? This province hasn't suffered enough and they want to start even talking about something like that at their convention.

[20:45]

You know that, you think that word spreads. It does, Madam Deputy Speaker, it spreads to Alberta, spreads to Manitoba. Even the NDP in Manitoba they don't even talk about nationalizing there, that particular government. But this government, yes in the back rooms it talks about nationalizing it.

And then we wonder why that they're always worried that this revenue isn't going to last. They keep talking about a short term; it's very short-term. Well yes, you keep talking like that, you keep acting like that and yes it's going to be a short term for a very long period of time. It's not going to be here if you keep talking like that in front of the companies and to the businesses. You keep chasing them away.

You talk about the money that is coming, this money that is coming in on this particular estimates. It's not helping out in rural Saskatchewan. It's not helping education tax which this government promised to do years ago.

The farming crisis is large out there in rural Saskatchewan. Is there anything in this particular supplementary estimates to help rural Saskatchewan? No there isn't. They talked about in the Throne Speech they funded 2005 CAIS. Well why didn't they say that they're going to fund 2006? Because right now that's when the planning is going on for 2006. Now the farmers that are going to be able to stay out there and survive are starting to plan for next year and it would be nice if they knew that this government was going to step up to the plate and fulfill a commitment that they had made that they were going to fully fund the 2006 CAIS. If they want to do something for farmers in these supplement estimates, they could have did that, Madam Speaker.

Long-term care beds in my constituency, there's a waiting list. There's a waiting list on that. Is it addressing that in these estimates? I don't see where. And it's getting worse out there. In fact most of the towns you go through, the seniors are growing. They're worried out there in rural Saskatchewan as they're worried in the cities. I've got some relatives in the cities

here. There's waiting lists here too and we have an older population, Saskatchewan. And what's going to happen to them if you're not going to expand the beds? This is a government that closed 52 hospitals. Are they planning on closing more? They closed a wing last year in my hometown of Davidson, you know, and right now there's a waiting list to go to that, you know. So where is the government's priorities on that?

I can look through the estimates . . . I want to talk about a little bit about the Rural Development estimates. I see that they mention that there's money coming to it. Executive management — I would take it that means salaries; central services — I think that means supplies; and accommodation services, which means buildings and leases. Where else is this going to help the rural Saskatchewan?

The Rural Development office isn't any different than the Rural Revitalization office. I can remember when it first came out that's all it did was spend money on some office space and some help. I can look back and I can . . . they said it was supposed to help at the farm gate. And one of the things it said was improving or including emergency assistance out there for rural Saskatchewan.

Well I tell you what, there's an emergency out there. I don't know if this government realizes it, but I don't see anything in the Throne Speech and I didn't see anything in these estimates that are going to deal with that emergency. And yet they'll put that stuff out on their website and their nice little pamphlets they send out — yes we will step up to the plate. Well it's time to step up to the plate and get something going out there in rural Saskatchewan.

With the Rural Development estimates I don't see anything that's going to help out there in rural Saskatchewan. Not one little thing. I just see stuff going to either management or accommodations, to leases, different things like that. I don't see any plans. I've yet to hear a good plan of how they're going to get rural Saskatchewan going. We've lost jobs. We've lost population and our numbers have been going like that slowly over the years. And if we don't address this problem and address it now, we're going to be in trouble. We're in trouble in there right now throughout Saskatchewan.

You look at the towns. My major towns aren't growing. I mean you take like the Wynyards and Watrous and Outlooks of the country — if they're not growing what do you think the smaller towns are around them are, with the shrinking population?

The cities are facing the same thing. You talk to the businesses here. This province is going downhill and this government, I don't know, either doesn't seem to realize it or doesn't have any idea how to address the problem. I've yet to see any vision here except to stand up, they'll stand up and say how great things are. Well I know and I think they know that things aren't that great.

I know that at their convention they had people from rural Saskatchewan and I don't think they told them things were that great and rosy out there. I think they told them that they either have to address some problems; they're going to have to do something out there. And time and time again I get up here and I never hear once just say, you know we have some challenges

out there. We have to do some things out there maybe a little different. I never hear that from the members.

All they'll just say is, man how great things are and how great things are going to be and how great things have been. And they'll make some announcement that they made five years ago, that they made four years ago and re-announced it three years, and two, and this year again. But there is no change out there that's growing this province. There isn't one thing out there.

And you can say, well we're just saying it on this side, but you get there — all you got to do is look at the statistics — you get and look and talk to the people. And I know that at their convention that that came across either from some of the cities and a lot from rural Saskatchewan, but even some of the bigger towns from there — North Battlefords and Melvilles and Yorktons, that they had delegates from. I know that they told them that things aren't that rosy out there right now. I know that they got that at their convention and if things don't change in this province, it's going downhill and it's going to keep going downhill.

And that's a shame because of the potential of this province. It's a shame that it would be in this kind of shape, Madam Deputy Speaker. So when I see these estimates I really don't see a lot that is really going to help Saskatchewan grow at that end of it.

I would like to see some of the priorities in agriculture. I would like to see some more long-term beds opened throughout Saskatchewan in the cities and rural Saskatchewan, because it's a troublesome spot in both centres. That goes right across the board — is long-term care beds, is hospital waiting lists.

We've heard stories in here of cancer patients that are on the priority list having to wait eight months before they can get a biopsy or before they can get an MRI [magnetic resonance imaging]. I mean that's shameful. As a government, if I was sitting on that side, I'd be ashamed of myself if people are waiting that long. I don't even know if I could look myself in the mirror in the mornings if I had that and knew I didn't have a plan that I was going to address that.

Because since I was here in '99, them lists and them eight months to two years haven't changed. So I've been here almost six years and it hasn't changed. And if in six years, if you, government, can't change anything like that, maybe it's time you just stepped aside and got out of the way and let somebody else have a go at it because I tell you what, it's shameful.

And it's coming next election. It's coming into the cities because I'm getting it even when I'm up here, that they're disappointed hugely in this government and the vision and the lack of vision of this government, such as everybody is and that.

When you talk about health care, I mean that's just shame. You'd think them waiting lists would be in countries that are a lot poorer than Canada — a lot poorer — that have no natural resources like we got here in Saskatchewan. Nobody should have to wait a year for a test when you're on a priority, emergency list, on a cancer waiting list. That's absolutely shameful that you have to wait that long in a province like this.

So with that I said a few comments on these supplementary estimates. And with that, Madam Speaker, thank you. But I'll just reiterate again that I am very disappointed in the priorities this government has put forward.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance, the member from Regina Douglas Park.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker, for this opportunity to close debate on the motion that's before us.

I guess I should never expect more from the opposition than what I have seen, Madam Deputy Speaker. And again today, I should not be disappointed because I shouldn't expect it. But again, we see what we always see from the opposition, is on the one hand — and if we just go to the last speaker — is a plea to invest more, to spend more in certain areas of government. And that's, you know, a complaint that I guess I would have about all of their members.

And then other members say, but you should tax less at the same time. But never, never, never will you hear them talk at the same time about the words debt or balanced budgets. Never, never, uh-oh, uh-oh — we'd all better watch out, Madam Deputy Speaker, because you know that is just so reminiscent, so reminiscent of another period in our history when you had a government that was intent on spending, cutting taxes, never worrying about debt, never worrying about the economy, and running this province into the hole.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I just want to deal with a couple of issues that were raised, specific issues that were raised. One is the question of the projection of revenues. On October 16 the Saskatchewan Conservative Party opposition put out a press release and indicated that the government would have available to it from additional oil and gas revenues at the end of the mid-year, which is the end of September . . . So this is a couple of weeks after the end of the mid-year. And having tracked oil prices and natural gas prices every day, every day, they said that the government would have an additional \$720 million in oil and natural gas revenues available to it. Well they're out by \$96 million, out by \$96 million. They said oil and gas revenues. But when you add it up, they're out \$96 million.

Now you know, it's one thing, it's one thing in this era of volatile resource revenues to try to predict. But to have the actual prices every day speaks to a level of incompetence, Mr. Speaker, that I have never witnessed before — that you would have the actual information every day and be out by that amount. Well that's just a lesson. That's a lesson for the opposition to not put your spin doctors in charge of financial calculations but to actually get competent people that can do that for you.

And I might say they had, they had no projection when it came to income tax, no projection with respect to corporate tax, no projection with respect to sales tax, and no projection with respect to a \$30 million interest saving this fiscal year. So if they can't estimate, you know, revenues, looking back, what confidence, what confidence should we have in their ability going forward? None at all.

Now another interesting comment was by one of their speakers about that they didn't know where things were. When it came to financial reporting, they weren't clear. They just couldn't say where things were at. Well, Mr. Speaker, this year the mid-year financial report had 76 pages, 76 pages in this year's mid-year report.

How many pages do you think there were, how many pages do you think there were in the mid-year report in the last year of the Devine administration, Mr. Speaker? How many pages would you think there were? This year 76 pages. How many pages in 1991-92? How many pages . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . A big fat zero. And that member is correct because it was a big fat zero. Why? No mid-year reports. Why? No quarterly reports.

In fact there was one year, Mr. Speaker, that we actually had to take the government to court to get them to release the public accounts which accounted for how all the taxpayers' dollars had been spent. Had to take them to court kicking, screaming, dragging.

And here they say well we can't find it. Well, Mr. Speaker, when you plead ignorance, then in fact what you're doing is you're showing your ignorance.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to deal with this issue of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund that the opposition Finance critic calls phony baloney fund — phony baloney. That's notwithstanding the fact that since the 1920s, since the 1920s successive governments in Saskatchewan have had some mechanism for a rainy day fund to take in surplus revenues, to hold them until such a time as those surplus revenues might be required.

Why? Why? Because Saskatchewan has always had great volatility, volatility in oil and gas. Oil and gas has gone up tremendously in the last year and a half. But there may also come a time, as it has in the past, where those oil and gas revenues will also plummet precipitously, and therefore governments have always found it prudent to have some rainy day fund set aside in case you get a downturn in your revenues. Or, or you have an increase in expenditures because of a major challenge that you . . . occurred for example in agriculture where again this year where we see that we're expending funds over and above what had been calculated by the federal government for the CAIS program, a need to set aside significant millions of dollars extra, Speaker.

[21:00]

So you know we've always had, always have had some mechanism whether it's the old liquor authority reserve, retained earnings, or the Saskatchewan gaming and liquor authority. To my mind, to say that there should be no mechanism in Saskatchewan, no mechanism, is reckless — reckless, simply reckless.

And it's curious, and it's curious that this is their prescription for government. But when it comes to their own caucus, their own caucus, they're quite prepared to run a surplus one year, carry it over and use it some future year. But when they say . . . when it's government, oh no, you shouldn't do that. But when it comes to their caucus fund, they say, oh well that's appropriate

and that's good budgeting. But no, when it comes to government, no, no — you shouldn't do that.

But again, the people of Saskatchewan who are watching this have to ask themselves, why is it that when we've had some mechanism since the mid-1920s that's . . . now it's wrong? Especially, especially in a time of very volatile energy revenues.

Speaker, they also say it's an election slush fund, and he says the total amount of money that's allocated for the Fiscal Stabilization Fund . . . And if the people of Saskatchewan want to get the true accounting, I'd certainly advise them to go to the Government of Saskatchewan website, go to Finance, download the mid-year report. On page 14 it's all reported where every cent is proposed to go in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. And they will see that a fair number of those dollars are in fact set aside for mid-year commitments that we've previously made, including property tax reduction and funds . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes it's hard to speak when they just . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order, members. The Minister of Finance.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — So the public, the public can go to the website. The public can go to the website, download the report, look at the report.

And they will see in that report that there are significant dollars allocated both because of provincial commitments such as property tax relief and also because we have a peculiar situation with respect to the federal government where they say, we want to provide you funding for a period of five years for a program, but here it is — all of it — today. What do you do with it? You allocate it to a Fiscal Stabilization Fund so that you can draw on it as and when required pursuant to the agreement with the federal government. But that's not something the member would say.

Then the question is, is the \$255 million, roughly, unallocated in a budget of \$7 billion? And looking at historical allocations, is that an election slush fund or is that prudent budgeting? That is the question. That's another word that you'll never hear from them, Mr. Speaker, is the question prudent.

Now it seems to us when you listen to the members opposite that they're ready to commit permanent increases in spending, permanent tax cuts by one, adding to the debt. Now they have indicated that they would take \$174 million out of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund and put it towards spending on an ongoing basis.

Mr. Speaker, when, you know, when I heard the comments of the opposition Finance critic when he was interviewed the day that the mid-year report was put forward, and he was asked by a reporter on the radio: this is the government's plan; what would you do different? The very first thing he said, well I wouldn't put any money in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. So in other words he would increase the debt immediately by \$175 million. How typical, Mr. Speaker, that their very first action would be to increase the debt of the province to improve spending. Well

we expect no less.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, they seem ready to commit to permanent increases in spending, permanent tax cuts by basing future revenue projections on the high price of oil today. They say oil is at 57, 58, \$60 a barrel. It's going to be like that forever, and therefore we can spend forever on that basis. Less than two years ago, less than two years ago the price of a barrel of oil was less than \$30 a barrel. And today it's nudging 57, 58. And they say well if it's come that far in less than two years, we should be prepared to commit that level of revenue forever and base ongoing decisions on that.

That is something that worries us and should worry the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. How certain are we that oil will be sustained at that level? You know, Mr. Speaker, I don't think that one can budget in those ways. Can we have confidence in their proposal? Again, again, Mr. Speaker, when faced with a situation of calculating what had taken place, estimating actual oil revenues, they couldn't do it. They were out significantly. Can we party as they suggest? Can we afford everything that they suggest? Should we be concerned about another debt hangover in Saskatchewan? Wasn't that their approach in the 1980s, Mr. Speaker? We should all be concerned that, given an opportunity to display fiscal responsibility, they choose again fiscal, fiscal recklessness, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we expect no less. Mr. Speaker, our plan balances immediate needs of the people of Saskatchewan. Whether it's home heating assistance, whether it's support for our farmers through increased support for the CAIS program, our plan provides support for ongoing actions and strategies that we have to improve the economy and health care including a \$100 million allocation for a health sciences complex in Saskatoon. Our plan includes a prudent factor to set funds aside for future eventualities. It includes a prudent factor by paying down on permanent debt — again something they never talk about. We are committing 86 per cent of all these additional funds — 86 per cent — to non-recurring, one-time items. We believe that's responsible budgeting. It's a good plan, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion moved by the Minister of Finance, the member for Regina Douglas Park, seconded by the member for The Battlefords:

That Her Honour's message and supplementary estimates be referred to the Committee of Finance.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I seek leave of the Assembly to move several motions to refer the supplementary estimates to various policy field committees.

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave of the Assembly to make several motions with respect to referral to committees. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

MOTIONS

Referral of Estimates to Committee

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would move, seconded by the member from Saskatoon Nutana:

That the following supplementary estimates being:

- vote 1, Agriculture and Food;
- vote 23, Industry and Resources;
- vote 43, Rural Development;

be withdrawn from the Committee of Finance and referred to the Standing Committee on the Economy.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for The Battlefords, seconded by the member for Saskatoon Nutana:

That the following supplementary estimates being:

- vote 1, Ag and Food;
- vote 23, Industry and Resources;
- vote 43, Rural Development;

be withdrawn from the Committee of Finance and referred to the Standing Committee on the Economy.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the member from Saskatoon Nutana:

That the following supplementary estimates being:

- vote 77, SaskEnergy;
- vote 13, Saskatchewan Property Management;
- vote 33, Public Service Commission;

be withdrawn from the Committee of Finance and referred to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

The Speaker: — Moved by the member for The Battlefords, seconded by the member for Saskatoon Nutana:

That the following supplementary estimates being:

- vote 77, SaskEnergy;
- vote 13, Saskatchewan Property Management;
- vote 33, Public Service Commission;

be withdrawn from the Committee of Finance and referred to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the member from Saskatoon Nutana:

That the following supplementary estimates being:

- vote 73, Corrections and Public Safety;
- vote 27, Culture, Youth and Recreation;
- vote 32, Health;
- vote 3, Justice;
- vote 5, Learning;

be withdrawn from the Committee of Finance and referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for The Battlefords, seconded by the member for Saskatoon Nutana:

That the following supplementary estimates being:

- vote 73, Corrections and Public Safety;
- vote 27, Culture, Youth and Recreation;
- vote 32, Health;
- vote 3, Justice;
- vote 5, Learning;

be withdrawn from the Committee of Finance and referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the member from Saskatoon Nutana:

That the following supplementary estimates being:

- vote 25, First Nations and Métis Relations;
- vote 30, Government Relations;
- vote 16, Highways;

be withdrawn from the Committee of Finance and referred to the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Infrastructure.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for The Battlefords, seconded by the member for Saskatoon Nutana:

That the following supplementary estimates being:

- vote 25, First Nations and Métis Relations;
- vote 30, Government Relations;
- vote 16, Highways;

be withdrawn from the Committee of Finance and referred to the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Infrastructure.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. The Chair recognizes the

Government House Leader.

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

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 21:13.]

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Minister of Crown Management Board
Minister Responsible for Public Service
Commission
Minister Responsible for Immigration

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

Hon. Buckley Belanger
Minister of Northern Affairs

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

Hon. Joanne Crofford
Minister of Community Resources and
Employment
Minister Responsible for Disability Issues
Minister Responsible for Gaming

Hon. David Forbes
Minister of Environment
Minister Responsible for the Office of
Energy Conservation

Hon. Deb Higgins
Minister of Labour
Minister Responsible for the Status of
Women
Minister of Property Management

Hon. Eldon Lautermilch
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Hon. Peter Prebble
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Hon. Frank Quennell
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Hon. Clay Serby
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Hon. Maynard Sonntag
Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations

Hon. Len Taylor
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Hon. Andrew Thomson
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Minister Responsible for Information
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Hon. Harry Van Mulligen
Minister of Finance

Hon. Mark Wartman
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