



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

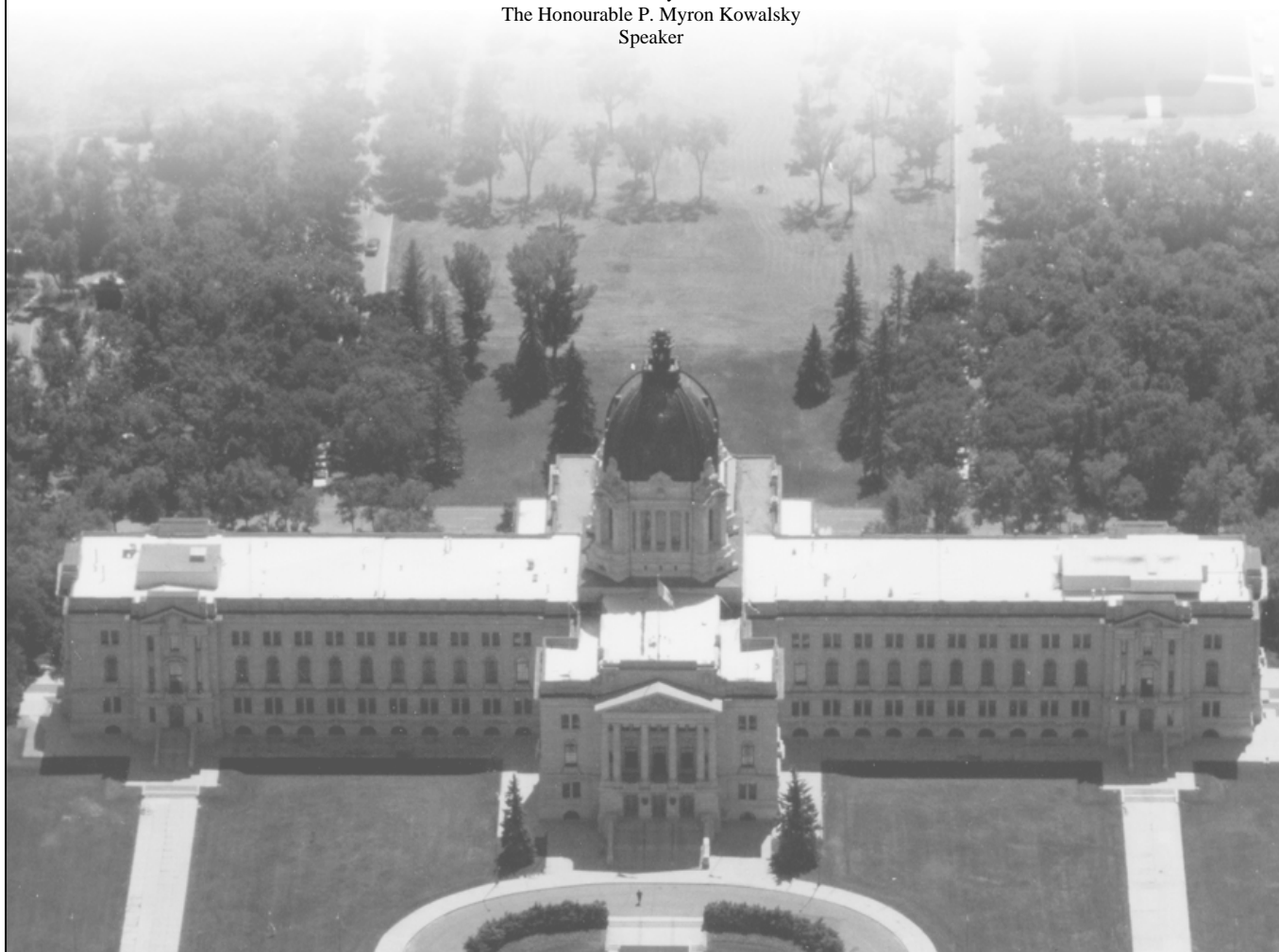
Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**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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Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Yates, Hon. Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney
Vacant		Weyburn-Big Muddy

[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The condition of Highway 32 has been an ongoing concern for the last several years. Today I present a petition again on behalf of constituents living in the vicinity of that particular highway. The prayer reads as follows:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, today's signatories to these two pages of petition are from the communities of Mendham, Leader, Prelate, Estuary. I so present.

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

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I rise to present petitions from constituents opposed to reductions of health care services in Biggar. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Biggar Hospital, long-term care home, and ambulance services maintain at the very least their current level of services.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

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

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

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

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

This particular petition is signed by good citizens from

Watrous, Prince Albert, and Plunkett. I so present.

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

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, continuing the petition that I presented yesterday, I will start in the prayer for relief where . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order please. Order please. I would just ask the member, caution the member as he's proceeding with his petition to do that in the usual fashion — a brief statement, read the preamble, and then carry on to the next person. The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Southeast.

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to act upon the following recommendation made February 2005 by the Government of Saskatchewan caucus committee on human services to the Saskatchewan Minister of Health, the Hon. John Nilson.

"The presentation from Saskatchewan Families for Effective Autism treatment concerning issues surrounding the support of autistic children and adults that need review, one in particular being the availability of behavioural therapists . . ."

The petition calls for a number of sources of relief:

Increase the early diagnosis of children with ASD, have respite and family support accessible based on need, support regional autism service providers and provincial autism organizations, ensure ASD adult services and supports are accessible and based on need rather than physical disability or mental ability, encourage and support autism-related research in Saskatchewan.

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

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

A petition concerning effective autism treatment, sessional paper no. 638;

And addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 4, 5, 7, 27, 64, and 67.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 27 ask the government the following

question:

To the Minister Responsible for SGI: did management of the department have established programs and controls to mitigate fraud risks or to help prevent or detect fraud in the year 2001?

Another question for the same day:

To the Minister Responsible for SGI: how did management of the department monitor any established programs and controls to mitigate fraud risks or to help prevent or detect fraud in the year 2001?

Another question, Mr. Speaker:

To the Minister Responsible for SGI: does management of the department have any knowledge of any actual or suspected fraud or illegal activity within the department during the year 2001? If so, what was the nature of this activity?

Mr. Speaker:

To the Minister Responsible for SGI: what did management of the department find as a result of its monitoring of any established programs and controls to mitigate fraud risks or detect fraud in the year 2001?

To the Minister Responsible for SGI: is management of the department aware of any allegations of fraud or other illegal activity within the department or its agencies in the year 2001 such as information received from employees, former employees, customers, clients, suppliers, or others? If so, what is the nature of that activity?

Mr. Speaker, I also have questions for SGI for 2002 and for SaskEnergy for 2001 and 2002. I so submit.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you in the Speaker's gallery my assistant, Patrick Bundrock, who's down here today to help me on some case files we're working on. Patrick handles all of the social services cases that we work on both for myself and my two colleagues in Saskatoon as well as all of the NDP [New Democratic Party] cabinet ministers on the other side who send them to us, and we want to thank them for doing that. And he does a terrific job and I certainly appreciate his . . . [inaudible] . . . and I would like everybody, including those ministers, to welcome him to his Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Addley: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join the member in welcoming Patrick to the House

today, particularly to the House where he's sitting as opposed to the House on the floor. Because I got to know Patrick a little bit better during the last provincial election — we had a very good campaign and I think he ran honourably, as did I, as did the Liberal candidate as well. And I've had some conversations with Patrick since that time, but I'm really pleased to welcome him here today but in particular welcome to that gallery as opposed to the floor of the Assembly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Yorkton Farm Forum

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I had the opportunity to attend a farm forum in Yorkton put on by Garry Breitzkreuz, the MP [Member of Parliament] for Yorkton-Melville. And Garry does this, has done this on a number of occasions and gives farmers a chance to catch up what's happening in agriculture and vent their views on just how bad things actually are.

I also want to commend, though, Eleanor Shumay, Kirsten Groeneveld, and the other staff that helped put this on yesterday, Mr. Speaker, because there was about 850 farmers in attendance in one hall and it was a very large crowd to handle. Mr. Speaker, they also . . . and I commend the staff at St. Mary's Hall also for feeding 700 people for a lunch where they only expected about 450 probably to 500 people.

Mr. Speaker, the message kept coming through over and over again just how bad things are in farming, especially here in Saskatchewan. Chuck Strahl gave a presentation, the federal Minister of Agriculture. Blair Harris, a farmer from Yorkton, gave a presentation on the shortcomings in the CAIS [Canadian agricultural income stabilization] program. Lionel La Belle gave a presentation on ethanol and the future it could have in Saskatchewan. Bill Cooper, a farmer from West Bend, told the audience how he has sold the big part of his farm and why, and how bad things are in agriculture. Alanna Koch gave a very good presentation on the WTO [World Trade Organization] talks and how subsidies are hurting our farmers here in Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, the message kept coming through loud and clear — things are tough in the agriculture front in Saskatchewan. I hope both the federal and provincial ministers of Agriculture were paying attention.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Scott Collegiate First Annual Arts and Music Gala

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night I, along with a good number of my colleagues, had the great pleasure of attending the Scott Collegiate first annual arts and music gala

evening.

It was an incredible night, Mr. Speaker. The capacity crowd was treated to a remarkable and varied assortment of food and music and comedy and poetry and visual arts and dance, much of it by Scott students themselves, Mr. Speaker.

The funds raised last night will go towards building the arts and music program at Scott. Arts education focuses on developing the natural abilities of students and encourages them to find their own sense of self. And might I add, Mr. Speaker, a vital arts program can play a critical role in keeping at-risk students in school. The arts gala is the latest in a string of initiatives and success stories coming out of Scott Collegiate, all of which are aimed at creating a healthy learning environment and providing each and every Scott student with the opportunity to succeed.

It's working. Initiatives like the arts program and the recently rejuvenated sports program are translating into more successful students, increasing enrolment numbers, and the largest grade 12 graduating classes in decades.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all of the sponsors, artists, and performers for an excellent evening of entertainment, and I particularly want to thank and congratulate Jennie Davies, Susan Bear, and all the fantastic members of the organizing committee, Principal Murray Greenwood, and all the Scott staff. And finally I want to say a special thank you very much to the Scott students — you have a lot to be proud about. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Saskatchewan's Biggest Single-Day Farm Auction

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on this day near Stockholm, Saskatchewan will see its biggest single-day farm auction when Mr. Don Gillen puts his farm on the auction block. There will be 83 quarter sections of land, or roughly 13,280 acres. Mr. Speaker, this amount of land is 12 times the size of the average Saskatchewan farm.

This auction is taking place at a time when *The Western Producer* is advertising nearly 13 pages of auction sales that will be taking place in not the too distant future. Unfortunately this has become the by-product of an NDP government that has failed to show any leadership in positioning our agricultural industry.

This is why we see Saskatchewan leading the nation in farm bankruptcies for the last three consecutive years. Now many producers are unsure whether they will have a farm to pass on to their children, and many farm children are unsure if they can make a go of the family farm no matter how hard they work. Many farmers' concerns are echoed in Mr. Gillen's statement that, quote:

... "people just think 'well what's the bother, what's the hassle?' ... They just feel that the government doesn't care about them."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Regina Walsh Acres.

Regina & District Labour Council's Centennial

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is a celebration in honour of a day very special to the history of Saskatchewan. Today we commemorate the centennial of the Regina & District Labour Council. For 100 years, the council has been working to improve the lives of people in the community. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to tell the Assembly that tonight several of my colleagues and I will attend the labour council's centennial banquet at the Regina Inn in celebration of the council's anniversary.

The banquet is also a commencement ceremony for the Regina & District Labour Council's annual general meeting. The president of the Canadian Labour Congress, Ken Georgetti, is to be the guest speaker. The evening will also see the presentation of the second annual labour community award, Mr. Speaker.

As an alliance of local trade unionists, the council has been extremely active in the community. In December the council, in collaboration with the United Way, announced the creation of the Janice Bernier Endowment for Food Security, a jointly sponsored fund in support of long-term food security programs in Regina.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to invite the members to join me in congratulating all those involved with the Regina & District Labour Council for their achievements in this great community, as well as congratulate all of those involved with the organization of the centennial banquet and wish them, the RDLC [Regina & District Labour Council], the very best for the next 100 years.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[10:15]

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

Race Track Gas Station Burns in Biggar

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the early morning hours of February 5, residents of my home community of Biggar arose to an orange-red glow and the flashing of red and blue emergency lights. This cold, windy winter morning the community's volunteer fire department was called to a fire at Biggar's oldest filling station.

The next few hours were spent fighting not only the fire but the wind and the cold as well. There was also the challenge of keeping the fire from getting into the underground storage tanks and propane tanks at the exterior of the building. This long-established building was not only a filling station offering full service as well as some vehicle maintenance, it was a convenience store and offered pizzas, subs, doughnuts, rental movies, and more, and was a popular stop for students at the

school just a block away.

More importantly, Mr. Speaker, Race Track Gas was a family business that the owners have been growing and expanding for many years. They employed a number of people as well as kept family members busy. I can only imagine the effect on the family of losing a business that they have spent so long building up and the uncertainty as to where to go from here.

I'd like to thank the Biggar Fire Department on a job well done in containing the fire and preventing what could have turned into something more serious. I'd also like to encourage the Buxton family to turn this tragedy into an opportunity for a fresh start in developing a new business in the community, whether it be rebuilding the service station or exploring a different venture. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatchewan Rivers.

Pineview Youth Centre

Mr. Borgerson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to providing Saskatchewan people, especially our youth, every possible opportunity for a safe and healthy future.

Yesterday as part of that commitment we announced the opening of six interim youth treatment beds in Prince Albert called the Pineview Youth Centre. The new beds are housed in a fourplex close to the Pineview Terrace Lodge.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize the need to act quickly to provide more services. This is an acceleration of goals set forth in the Premier's Project Hope.

It is imperative that Saskatchewan young people who require it have a safe place to go for treatment of substance abuse, allowing them to heal in body, mind, and spirit. With the announcement of these interim spaces in Prince Albert we will be able to provide vulnerable Saskatchewan young people with detoxification, stabilization, and treatment options more than two years earlier than initially announced.

Mr. Speaker, as an educator who has seen the wounds that drug addiction can inflict, and as a friend of parents who have suffered along with their children as they struggled with addiction, I welcome this announcement and all the steps this government is taking to meet this ongoing issue.

Mr. Speaker, the Pineview Youth Centre beds and the recently announced youth treatment beds in Saskatoon are excellent examples of our commitment that every child in Saskatchewan has every opportunity to achieve the best possible future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Saskatchewan Huskies Player Wins Hockey Awards

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of Watson's own has claimed three Canada West hockey awards for the 2005-06 season. Dean Beuker, fourth-year senior and forward for the Saskatchewan Huskies, was voted the conference's most valuable player. He is the seventh Huskie to win this award since it was first presented in 1978.

Dean was also named the player who best combined sportsmanship and athletic ability, earning him the University of British Columbia Hockey Alumni Trophy.

Beuker finished his season with a 47-point career high. It is the third time in the last four seasons he owned the conference's leading scorer. His achievement earned him the Dave "Sweeney" Schriener Trophy and the distinction of being only the fourth player in Canada West hockey history to win the scoring title three times. His 47 points also tied Jesse Pyatt of the University of Guelph Gryphons and Kevin Baker of Acadia University for the Canadian Interuniversity Sport scoring title.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to ask the members of the legislature to join me in recognizing and congratulating the achievements of Dean Beuker and wishing him continued records in his hockey career.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

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

Reaction to Nurse's Letter

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I read from a letter written by Jennifer Hanna-Woodworth, a nurse in North Battleford. The letter was highly critical of this health care minister and his comments about the crucial shortage of nurses, not only in Saskatchewan but in his own backyard.

Mr. Speaker, it is our understanding that shortly after we raised the issue, the nurse was told not to speak to the media. Mr. Speaker, to the minister: is this the standard practice when someone tries to speak out about problems in the health care system, that a gag order is put out?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am unaware of the circumstances that the member opposite raises. In fact yesterday, Mr. Speaker, I indicated in the Chamber that I was interested in talking to the letter writer and, Mr. Speaker, I was interested in meeting with the local, the SUN [Saskatchewan Union of Nurses] local in North Battleford, to which she belongs.

Mr. Speaker, my office is currently trying to set up that meeting. And, Mr. Speaker, I am more than happy to listen to

what the letter writer and the local president and her representatives have to say.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, we've seen this type of action from this government before. A couple of years ago, Dr. Jon Witt was fired after raising serious concerns about the emergency room care in Saskatoon. He was removed from his position.

Mr. Speaker, I remind the minister that nurses have a professional obligation to speak out when situations and circumstances are jeopardizing patient care, such as a nursing shortage. Does the minister believe in this form of censorship?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Mr. Speaker, the member's statement opposite defies credibility when one day they're advocating censorship and the next day they are not.

Mr. Speaker, this government does not approve of censorship at any time. The member says, the member opposite says that the approach that I'm taking in this case is not appropriate, Mr. Speaker. I wonder what part of consultation and being willing to listen he doesn't approve of.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McMorris: — That's quite an interesting answer, Mr. Speaker, because we've been advised that the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses made a presentation to the health district back in September '05, outlining the critical shortage in the North Battleford hospital and urging the board to take action. There has been no action taken since that meeting.

This young nurse had the courage to speak out. This young nurse is expecting her second child. Will the minister guarantee that her career will not suffer because she spoke out about the shortage of nurses in North Battleford?

The Speaker: — Order please. The House will come to order. The Chair recognizes the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have received the letter that the member opposite referred to yesterday. I've received even another letter from a nurse in North Battleford or a worker in the field.

Mr. Speaker, both letters refer to the fact that they had read my speech in the Chamber here the other day. And, Mr. Speaker, in all my years of being in political life at the federal level or provincial level I haven't had too many people in the same week say, jeez Len, I listened or read your speech. and I have

something to say about it.

Mr. Speaker, someone is circulating my speech in the Battlefords. I'm pleased about that. I'm happy to stand by the comments that I've made. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm more than happy to receive the comments of those who wish to respond to me in that regard.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order please. I would just remind the member that use of any member's name, including his own, is unparliamentary. The Chair recognizes the member for Indian Head-Milestone.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Right now a union representative is with this young nurse speaking on her behalf to the media in North Battleford for fear of repercussions because she has told the truth.

To the minister once again: can he guarantee that there'll be no repercussions to health care professionals that speak out about the health care system?

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've said in this Chamber and I've said outside this Chamber that I value the work that's being done by the civil servants in this province and in particular the work that's being done by the health care field and the nurses working in it.

Mr. Speaker, this government has no hit list, unlike that which we may have heard about in the past from members opposite. Mr. Speaker, we value the contributions of the health care professionals, and we want to encourage them to work within the system to ensure that it's the best system possible.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Timetable for Changes to Corporate Taxation

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last week this Minister of Finance said the Vicq report, as it applies to corporate taxes, represented a good road map forward. But he stopped short of committing to the detailed timetable for the implementation measures designed to improve Saskatchewan's competitiveness.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Finance commit today to the timetable as outlined by the business tax review committee?

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

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A finance question, how refreshing. All I can say to the member opposite . . .

The Speaker: — Order please. Order please. One at a time. The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to advise the member, as I've advised the public, the provincial budget will come down on April 6. I will make sure that he gets an invitation to be at that budget speech, and he'll have a full answer at that point.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister says it's refreshing. I'm sure it is after seeing the job numbers that have come out, the population numbers, the NDP polling numbers. And, Mr. Speaker, he spent the whole week looking through 20 years of documents to find a document that he had to apologize for, Mr. Speaker — not a good start for a Finance minister in this province.

Mr. Speaker, page 7 of the Vicq report recommends cutting . . .

The Speaker: — Order please, members. Order. Order. The member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, page 7 of the Vicq report recommends cutting corporate income taxes from 17 to 14 per cent on July 1, 2006. The report also recommends raising the small-business limit from the current \$300,000 to \$400,000 July 1 of this year, \$450,000 on July 1, '07, and \$500,000 in July 1, '08. And the committee recommends that the corporate capital tax be cut in half on July 1 and again cut finally on July 1, '07.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Finance commit to this time frame today and bring Saskatchewan's tax regime into the new millennium?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am of course aware of what's in the business tax review report prepared by Jack Vicq and his committee. I have spent a great deal of time since I was sworn in as Minister of Finance meeting with representatives of the business community and individuals in the private sector about this. I can advise the member again as I have advised others that on April 6 this government will present a plan that will foster investment and job growth in this province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, now that this minister is actually reading his briefing notes, it's encouraging. I think he will know, I think he will know, Mr. Speaker, that the world doesn't wait for this socialist government, for this NDP government. Alberta doesn't wait; they've cut their taxes. Manitoba doesn't wait; they've cut their taxes. Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan is being left behind.

This week Alberta announced additional tax cuts. The rate for larger corporations will be cut to 10 per cent, Mr. Speaker. The NDP in Manitoba is phasing out the general corporate capital tax. Unless this minister commits to the time table outlined in the Vicq report, Saskatchewan will fall farther behind, Mr. Speaker.

Why won't this minister send a clear signal to business today that he will decrease taxes in Saskatchewan to stimulate this economy? It's about time.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta have all presented their tax plans in their budgets and indeed, Mr. Speaker, I will too on April 6. I would welcome if the member opposite will maybe read up a little bit on what else he'd like to be asking for so we can avoid the horrid spectacle we saw last year when he called for — what? — 1 billion, 4 billion in extra spending immediately after the budget.

If he has other advice, I'm always interested in hearing it. But the budget will be brought down on April 6, and we will present a plan to continue this province's investment and job growth.

[10:30]

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, make no mistake. I have a lot of advice for this Finance minister. Mr. Speaker, last week we saw BC [British Columbia], Alberta, Manitoba create record job numbers. The NDP, the NDP — and he does need advice on this — has posted job losses in each of the last six months.

All the evidence shows, Mr. Speaker, there is something wrong with this NDP government's tax regime. The symptoms show that the NDP philosophy isn't working. Mr. Speaker, we have a road map. We have a solution given to us. It seems to work in other provinces. Why don't we try it here, Mr. Speaker? Will the minister commit today to the Vicq commission's timetable on tax reform, so we don't have to be left in the dust by every other jurisdiction in the country? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, I will commit that on April 6 this government will bring down a budget that will secure our prosperity, that will secure an environment for investment and job growth in this province, and will make significant new investments in the communities and the lives of working people in this province. And I will invite that member today . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, on April 6 this government will bring down a budget that will create an even better investment and job-growth climate, that will make significant new investments in our social programs, in our communities. I will invite that member not only to the budget; I will invite him to support that budget when it is . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, I'll remind the minister that I don't need his invitation to be here. The people of Saskatoon Silver Springs invited me to be here, and over 200,000 people across this province invited me to be here, Mr. Speaker, for that.

I do have more advice for the minister, but I'd also like to issue a challenge. They like to talk about the word challenge. I'd like to issue — through you, Mr. Speaker — a challenge to this Finance minister. Will he stand in his place today and commit to the full corporate package of Vicq in the timelines indicated?

Will he also stand in his place today and reverse the biggest broken promise in this government — the \$150 million tax grab? Will he stand in his place today and commit to that, Mr. Speaker? If he will do that, I will give him the credit that he is due on budget day. If not, Mr. Speaker, I think we can all agree that this budget will be an absolute failure. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On April 6 I will deliver the budget, but let me ask the member this. If this government comes forward with the budget that fosters investment in job growth, if it commits to Vicq, my question is, will that member stand on his feet and support that budget?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Swift Current, the Leader of the Opposition.

Provincial Business Environment

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Shortly after the Vicq commission report to this Legislative Assembly was tabled here, the Premier was asked for his comments about the report. Would he in fact be moving, would his government be moving to implement these long-awaited changes, overdue changes for our provincial economy? And the Premier said that we ought not to underestimate his resolve. That's what he said.

Then two weeks later or so, three weeks maybe, he's giving a speech to the Saskatchewan Mining Association in Saskatoon and says quite clearly that no, no it's not competitive business taxes that we're going to need in Saskatchewan. It's that businesses — the ones he would have been lecturing that night — have to pay more in wages. That's what he said. It's a bit of

two different stories going on here, Mr. Speaker.

So I'd like to know from the Premier on behalf of the province, on behalf of an economy that needs desperately some leadership from his government — which is it? Does he think the businesses small and large have to pay more? Or is he going to do something about the tax environment in this province?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — First of all, the Leader of the Opposition would profit immensely if he was actually to attend one of my speeches.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Perhaps then he could report accurately to this legislature. That said, Mr. Speaker, you've heard the Minister of Finance this morning. The budget will be delivered in this . . .

The Speaker: — Order please, members. The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Now, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has indicated again this morning the budget will be delivered on April 6 in this Chamber. And the full plan for improving investment climate in Saskatchewan, providing jobs to our young people, and building the social fabric of Saskatchewan will be laid out before this legislature.

I would challenge the Leader of the Opposition, I would challenge him this morning: does he have a plan? Well then let's have that Leader of the Opposition instruct his Finance critic to lay before this House a shadow budget. Let them set out exactly where they would expend the public purse, where they would change the taxation.

Now, Mr. Speaker, before I take my place — and I anticipate I'll have a little further opportunity to speak this morning — but before I take my place the Finance critic this morning says we're trailing in the dust. We're trailing in dust in Saskatchewan. Well this is an interesting thing for him to say when the city that he and I both represent are hereby headline declared "No. 1," Saskatoon, the " . . . most competitive place to set up new enterprise."

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — First, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the Saskatchewan Party's position on competitive business tax rates, he will know what our position is. He can copy our position because it made it into the Vicq final recommendations, Mr. Speaker. It's right in that report.

In terms of what the Premier has to say at his speeches . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, in terms of having to attend one of his speeches, we don't have to attend them, Mr. Speaker, because after people hear the Premier talk about the economy, they come away giggling, and the first place they call is us, Mr. Speaker. And they tell us about his comments, lecturing business on paying more and they told us about his very special canoe story where we all finished last and that somehow epitomizes the province of Saskatchewan.

The question is simple. The question is simple. The Premier said he supports competitive business taxes. Two weeks later he said no, no, business has to pay more in wages. Which is it, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I think as events of this past week have indicated, the Leader of the Opposition is very good at revisionist history.

Now the fact of the matter, Mr. Speaker, is that the Vicq commission, the Vicq commission was established as a direct outcome of the economic summit that this government hosted about a year ago — our centennial economic summit where we brought together business people, working people, young people, Aboriginal people. The only people who boycotted the economic summit of the province of Saskatchewan were members opposite, the Saskatchewan Party.

Mr. Speaker, that's where the work began, and the work will come to some real fruition and conclusion budget day, Mr. Speaker.

But isn't this interesting? Isn't this interesting? Now they want to talk about the budget which is to come. Why don't we want to talk about events of today? This week, Mr. Speaker, this week, Mr. Li Ka-shing, Mr. John Lau, and Husky Oil announced their intention to build a \$2.3 billion expansion of the Lloydminster Upgrader.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Here are the events of today. The events of today are that under this NDP, under this socialist government, the policies of this government are actually managing to squander an oil and gas boom. We're actually losing jobs, and we're losing people in the province of Saskatchewan today. That's what's happening today.

What else is happening today, Mr. Speaker? Well when small businesses in this province were recently surveyed by the CFIB [Canadian Federation of Independent Business] about the business climate that this Premier has given to them in Saskatchewan, what did they say? Mr. Speaker, what did they answer to the question, do you believe the Saskatchewan government has helped create an open-for-business atmosphere for the province? Eighty-eight per cent of those small businessmen and women say no.

If we are going to reach our full and quite limitless potential in this province, it'll be driven by the small businessmen and women in this province. Eighty-eight per cent of them think this government's got to go. In the meantime we're stuck with them. So what are his plans to fix this situation, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, this leader and this opposition is just not credible. It is just not credible. They will boycott an opportunity to sit down with the business community of Saskatchewan — with working people, with Aboriginal people, and young people — at an economic summit. They'll boycott that opportunity so they can sit outside and take pot shots at what the people of Saskatchewan are doing.

And what we're doing, Mr. Speaker, is building an economy, building a society that will provide a future for our young people in this province, Mr. Speaker. And that's what they will see — this opposition — and what the people of Saskatchewan will see when the Minister of Finance stands and delivers the budget on April 6.

In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, why are they so negative? Why are they not rejoicing in the fact that the single largest economic project has been announced, by Husky Oil, in our province's history? Why are they not rejoicing about the climate that draws that? Why are they not rejoicing about the work of KPMG who have reviewed cities across North America and have concluded that the most competitive cities in the continent are right here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker? Why are they not rejoicing about this?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Well I don't know, Mr. Speaker. I don't know, Mr. Speaker. What about the 2,300 people who lost jobs in the middle of an oil and gas boom? Why aren't they rejoicing, Mr. Speaker? What about the 2,000-plus people who left Saskatchewan in the middle of an oil and gas boom, who had to leave to pursue opportunities elsewhere? I wonder why they're not rejoicing, Mr. Speaker.

That's an unbelievable statement for the Premier to make. I wonder why the small businessmen and women of this province aren't rejoicing, Mr. Speaker, because they most assuredly are not, under the economic environment we have.

In addition to the information I just informed the House of, the small businesses were also asked about their 12-month, full-time employment plans. And where do our businesses rank in terms of their confidence in creating full-time employment in the next 12 months? We are third lowest in the country, with all of the potential we have.

Mr. Speaker, the question to the Premier is — we asked it off the top — is it competitive business tax rates, or is he going to lecture them on paying more, Mr. Speaker? Can they expect

some hope now, or do they have to wait for the next election? And what a day of rejoicing that will be, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The credibility of the opposition is at risk here because you see, Mr. Speaker, if you understand an economy, you understand its complexity.

Mr. Speaker, this government understands the complexity of economy. We understand about the need to compete and to have competitive taxation in this province. We've been working there and we're seeing the kind of results in the investment in this province. But if you're a one-trick pony and you think the only answer to economic prosperity is taxation cuts, I tell you, Mr. Speaker, you must have studied at the Grant Devine school of economics.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, let me tell you, this government does believe in working with our business community. To improve the wages for working people, we need to be competitive in taxation. We need to be competitive in wage rates. We need to be competitive in providing educational opportunities and training opportunities. We need to be competitive in a society and a fabric of a community that is unbreakable, where people can build their families and build their homes with confidence and security. Mr. Speaker, this government has a broad plan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, Professor Jack Vicq, who the Premier commissioned for this study on the business tax review, has said quite clearly that this is the number one issue. Certainly there are other elements to an economic plan, none of which this government seems to get. But at the top of the list — not the Sask Party, not even the CFIB — Jack Vicq, the Premier's own commissioner on the issue has said this is the number one issue.

The Premier initially said, don't doubt my resolve to do something about it. A couple of weeks later though he's lecturing business on the fact that they have to pay more money. We know what that kind of mixed message has done to our business climate. Eighty-eight per cent of businesses think we don't have an open-for-business climate. Twelve-month, full-time employment plans, we're third last.

Mr. Speaker, they were asked — the businesses were — is your business able to compete effectively under the current NDP Saskatchewan tax structure, and only 35 per cent said they were, Mr. Speaker. If we're going to create jobs, if we're going to hit the great potential of this province, we're going to need a government that understands how to get that done. It starts with the business tax changes in Saskatchewan. Does he have the courage to do it, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure what part of this the Leader of the Opposition does not understand. We're going to deliver a budget here on April 6, and he will see, revealed in this legislature, the entire plan of this government to encourage investment, to provide new opportunities for our young people, and to build a social fabric, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has gone to the public. He's come to this Chamber. He's essentially got two planks, two planks. He said you will build an economy. You will build a future for Saskatchewan families, one, if you simply cut the taxes and, two, if you rid this province of some of its labour protections for working people — hard-won protection — because that's the two-point plan.

[10:45]

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's not credible. That plan does not . . . that's not credible in any economic circle that's looking at the whole complexity of an economy and a society. I'll tell you, I'll take the word of the Royal Bank of Canada way before the word of the opposition leader. The Royal Bank of Canada says this economy is going to grow 3.9 per cent next year. And what is the headline, Mr. Speaker? The headline, boom time's coming. That's what's coming. Boom time's coming, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: — Order please. The Chair recognizes the Minister of Industry and Resources.

Expansion of Husky Lloydminster Upgrader

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this morning I'm pleased to rise to announce positive results from our government's investment attraction initiatives. As you know, our government has been working hard to promote our province as a great place to live, work, and do business.

We've got a creative strategy to attract investment, not only from local investors but also from investors beyond our borders. And, Mr. Speaker, it's working very well. It's projected that private sector investment in Saskatchewan will rise by 9 per cent this year, which is the third highest in Canada.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, Team Saskatchewan has been an integral part of our investment attraction programs. We've been travelling beyond our borders to tell the world about our province in a positive way, Mr. Speaker. We're telling the world in a positive way about the excellent products produced by our companies, about the opportunities in our oil and gas and mining industries, and about the cutting-edge research in biotechnology and the work done at the synchrotron and at the Petroleum Technology Research Centre.

Mr. Speaker, the Team Saskatchewan missions have led to ongoing discussions with industry and government, with a number of trade delegations from abroad visiting Saskatchewan and making contacts for what we hope will result in positive business opportunities.

In October 2005 the Premier had the opportunity to meet directly with Mr. Li Ka-shing, chairman of Husky's parent company in Hong Kong. The Premier talked about our oil and gas industry, about our ethanol initiative, and about our transportation and telecommunication systems. Officials from the government have been working with Husky and its parent company since that time to discuss these issues and others.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to announce to this House that Husky announced on March 20 it will now proceed with engineering plans to expand the Lloydminster Upgrader. It will take 15 to 18 months to complete all of the engineering work before the \$2.3 billion expansion will take place.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, that's one of the largest private sector investments in the history of this province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — And it's a positive story, Mr. Speaker, and it should be celebrated.

There is no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that one of the contributing factors in moving along the upgrader expansion was the networking done during the Team Saskatchewan mission. We value our relationship with Husky. It is through these types of initiatives we're able to build relationships, make connections, and talk about the opportunities available in this province.

Husky's announcement shows our business attraction initiatives are bringing investment to the province. And it's because we are a good place to do business, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — And we want to make it better. We've been doing work to create a positive business climate and will continue to do more in the upcoming budget.

How good a place are we to do business, Mr. Speaker? Just ask KPMG, which this week rated Saskatchewan cities among the top in North America for low business costs, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Or ask the Fraser Institute, which released a report on mining and rated our province as one of the best jurisdictions in the world to do business, Mr. Speaker.

Husky's announcement reminds us of the strong oil and gas industry that is fuelling our economy, Mr. Speaker. It's providing 25,000 jobs in communities across our province. It's supporting cutting-edge research at the Petroleum Technology Research Centre that is attracting interest from around the world. And, Mr. Speaker, it's contributing to this great province

of Saskatchewan, contributing to our quality of life that is second to none. I want to thank the people, business researchers, and others from across Saskatchewan who are joining our government to work hard on our business attraction initiatives. We also want to wish Husky well in its upcoming expansion work. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise today to respond to the Minister of Industry and Resources regarding Husky Energy's initiative and their projected investment there.

Mr. Speaker, the minister likes to boast about the work Team Saskatchewan does outside our borders, and I don't blame them for promoting Saskatchewan because it is a great place to live and Saskatchewan people in all of our minds are the best in the world. But Mr. Speaker, I can only imagine the trouble this minister has in selling this government's record when it comes to business, whether it's the ill-conceived policy directives like government-directed hours, that they have the most onerous business taxation regime in all of Canada, or in fact sending fundraising letters that claim businesses see a successful provincial economy and it wants to take it over. It shows a government that claims it likes business and then turns around and can portray it . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order please. I would ask members on both sides of the House to refrain from side debates so that we can hear the words of the member for Lloydminster. The Chair recognizes the member for Lloydminster.

Mr. Wakefield: — Mr. Speaker, it shows this government that claims that it likes business. It can turn right around and portray them as evil when it suits them. The official opposition has long touted the natural advantages of our province. But we have for a long time heard from members of the NDP the lowering of expectations and the message of mediocrity and the status quo.

We are very pleased to hear that Husky has announced plans to expand their upgrader in Lloydminster but I must emphasize again, it is Husky Energy's initiative. You might not conclude that listening to both the minister and the Premier.

It will create new jobs in Saskatchewan for Saskatchewan people and support the further Husky oil production in that area. And it leaves one to think what could happen, what could happen, if these initiatives that are offered through these select industries is extended to the entire Saskatchewan economy with for instance the implementation of the Vicq report.

Mr. Speaker, the record and the brand of this NDP is actually one of being unfriendly to those who create jobs in this province, to those who risk their own money into the Saskatchewan economy, and even to those who would choose to raise their families here. But we do extend our thanks to those like Husky Energy and others who contribute to our great province by creating the jobs directly for Saskatchewan people. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Why is the member from Athabasca on his feet? Ministerial statement?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Ministerial statement.

The Speaker: — Ministerial statements. The Chair recognizes the Minister for Community Resources.

Need for Foster Families in Saskatchewan

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, foster families are one of the most important roles in our society in caring for children and in helping them maintain connections with their own family, extended families, and their communities. There are currently about 750 foster homes in Saskatchewan providing care for approximately 1,750 children and youth.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Community Resources oversees foster care in the province and works jointly with the Saskatchewan Foster Families Association to provide that support and training to foster parents.

As the Minister of DCR [Department of Community Resources] I want to extend my sincere and heartfelt thanks to each and every one of the foster families for their generous and caring contributions to helping children and families across the province. This is very important, Mr. Speaker.

Well we're looking at ways to get more foster homes. We are trying to seek out approximately 150 more foster homes that are needed right now to provide a positive home environment for children who cannot live at home. To answer this need, Mr. Speaker, the province of Saskatchewan has kicked off a campaign to recruit more foster families. The campaign includes billboards, radio spots, and other initiatives at the provincial and regional levels.

Mr. Speaker, foster parents come from all walks of life with different cultural, education, and economic backgrounds. We are very interested in recruiting Aboriginal foster families as well as those who are able to care for children with special needs.

We recognize that public campaigns alone are not enough. Staff at DCR are continually looking and doing work at the local level to recruit more foster families and more foster homes. This includes making community presentations, setting up booths in malls and at community events and, Mr. Speaker, talking one-on-one with people. And this work will continue.

Mr. Speaker, foster care is an area close to my heart. As a new Minister for Community Resources, I'll be exploring opportunities in the near future to enhance foster care in Saskatchewan. This is a priority for me and my government. The fact that more homes are needed to care for children is very, very important.

But I also want to say just how important the experience can be for the families who provide foster care. Many foster parents have told me how important their experience has been, how rich

their experience has been.

Yesterday morning I had the opportunity to meet Kevin Harris, a local foster parent here in the city, who is currently providing foster care for two other children. What's interesting is that Mr. Harris has six children of his own. So why do he and his wife take in other children? Mr. Speaker, he tells me it is because of the rewards they experience in helping other children. In fact he considers one of the birth mothers of the child currently in his care as part of his own family.

Mr. Speaker, this is testament that Saskatchewan does indeed have a big heart. The need for more foster homes is there and I know that there are many caring people around the province that have wonderful homes that they can share with children. Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the people of Saskatchewan that a child needs a home like yours. Please rise to the challenge and consider being a foster parent. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm privileged to have the opportunity to respond to the ministerial statement and I want to thank the minister for getting this to me 10 minutes ago so we would have a lot of time.

Mr. Speaker, fortunately I also take this issue very seriously and understand it. And not even being the minister, I have met with this group six times in the last six months. I've had the opportunity to visit their office, meet with their director, meet with their board, and to try to work with foster families and the foster family association to improve the situation of foster families across this great province.

You know, one of the issues with foster families is that you have to look at the whole problem. It's not just one issue. It's how do we get to the position where we're in. And one of those issues becomes from addiction.

In the state of North Dakota, I just want to mention that with crystal meth addiction, one of the greatest things that's on the rise in that state is that foster families are up 25 per cent. A terrible statistic — a statistic that means that families are no longer able to care for their children due to addictions.

And where do we see this as part of Project Hope? Where do we see the correlation between these? Nowhere. Because really, truly it is project no hope.

[11:00]

You know, I've met with foster care families and we know, we know the tragic circumstances from which these people are dealing with. We know that homes that are designed for a maximum of four people have ten children in the home. We know that's happening today. That minister knows it's happening today. And the previous minister knew it was happening.

And how long has it been going on, Mr. Minister? Not for two

months — for years. Now we're having a campaign to expand on it, and I congratulate that. But we're always reactive. Why aren't we proactive in these situations?

When it comes to the number of children, how about the safety of these children when we have ten in a home designed for four? Are we screening the children? Are we intermixing children that have behavioural problems, sexual problems, with other children? What type of training and support?

I know for a fact that most of these foster families are underpaid for the work they do. They struggle. They have no ability to provide not only the basic needs of food and clothing on the money that they get, but for other issues with these children, to get them into sports, activities, recreational things — no, not at all. You know, why do we have 44,000 children living below the poverty line in this province that's on a boom? So why do we have foster families? And why do we have the majority of them living right in the Premier's riding?

You know, Mr. Speaker, the minister is beaking off over there and can say it. But he hasn't met with them and I have, you know. You know, they lack funding. The workers that work within the foster care . . .

The Speaker: — Order please. Order please. I would ask members who . . . Order please. The member for Saskatoon Northwest.

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What the member isn't hearing is that we're asking for more money for foster parents' association, for the great people that run and implement those organizations, for the people that work, and for the families that look after them.

You know, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting as one of the things we're doing is we're advertising on television. We're advertising on billboards. We're doing all this advertising. But I noticed that there's one distinct area missing, and it seems to be missing in all these government agendas. And that's in the faith-based community. It must be a terrible word to say, that in a faith-based . . . We can't have faith-based drug addiction treatment centres although the current system that the two government houses run under 12-step program, by the way, are faith based to a higher power.

You know, in meeting with the foster parents' care association in some of the issues that we're dealing with, one of the issues we're having is some of these children are FAS [fetal alcohol syndrome], autistic, dealing with drug addictions.

Not only is there a plan needed to get these children foster care families, but where is the plan to take them back and get them into their own families and to heal the families from which they came? There is no plan for that. It's okay to look after the children, but what about the families from which they came from? You know we recognize that there's a need for these type of campaigns. We recognize that there's an extension needed to this serious problem in our community and our families and in our cultures, except we don't want to incorporate faith-based organizations to this from which I don't understand.

You know we say no one is left behind. Well that's not true

because you can't have 10 children in a home and say no one's left behind. You can't take them from parents who are under distress or addicted or whatever issues the parents are dealing with, not deal with the parents, and then say no one's left behind.

You know I want to say to the minister, I certainly support the initiative, but I hope that in this budget that's upcoming we also see funding for this organization, a dramatic increase . . . Am I on a time limit, Mr. Speaker? Is there a time limit on this? Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I hope that in the current budget that we have funding for these organizations and for the funding that people that run the organization and for an expansion, but more so for a coordinated plan across all departments of government that deal with these issues from a social aspect.

Mr. Speaker, I will be looking very seriously at the budget when it comes and to what this minister is going to do in cash dollars into foster parents' associations and foster parents' families. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Why is the . . . Order please. Order. Why is the member from Yorkton on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — To introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The member for Yorkton wishes to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the House for the opportunity to introduce. Sitting in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, is a young man by the name of Ryan Bater. Mr. Bater is currently working as an economic development officer out of North Battleford, and he has done extensive work with the coming together of three regions in that part of Saskatchewan. He is their chief executive officer and has not only been working on building a strong rural economy out there, but in fact has been serving under an advisory committee that I have, Mr. Speaker, in helping strengthen the REDAs [regional economic development authority] across the province, and make recommendations to how we could build a stronger rural economy in Saskatchewan.

And it's young men, Mr. Speaker, like Mr. Bater and others who have made a tremendous contribution to the work of rural Saskatchewan. And I want to recognize Mr. Bater for being in the House today, to extend my appreciation for the good work that he does, not only in his region but for making a difference for rural Saskatchewan in the work that we do on rural economic development. And ask all members of the House to recognize him and thank him for the good work that he does for Saskatchewan people today, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MOTIONS FOR RETURNS (Not Debatable)

Return No. 572

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Government Whip.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, we'll convert to motions returnable.

The Speaker: — Would you repeat please, sir? I couldn't hear it.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Convert to motions returnable, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Okay. Converted . . .

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Return debatable, sorry.

The Speaker: — 572 has been converted.

Return No. 573

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Government Whip.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Return for motions debatable, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The 573 converted to orders return debatable.

Return No. 574

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Government Whip.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, return for motions debatable.

The Speaker: — It's been converted to orders for return debatable.

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Ruling Regarding Preambles in Motions

The Speaker: — Before calling on the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs, I wish to advise the member that his motion for a 75-minute debate contains a preamble. The motion begins with the phrase:

That since the Saskatchewan Business Tax Review Committee of 2005 concluded that Saskatchewan's business tax structure is outdated and poorly suited to deal with the competitive challenges of today and of the future . . .

Notwithstanding the generally relaxed practice of this Assembly when it comes to private members' motions, this phrase falls into the category of a preamble.

It is a long-standing practice of this Assembly that preambles are out of order unless in a formal or non-contentious motion. For instance, whereas clauses have been permitted in formal constitutional motions put before this Assembly such as the Meech Lake Accord. Otherwise when motions have contained

obvious preambles, the motions have been ruled out of order.

Therefore, given the discretion of the Speaker to modify motions with respect to form under Beauchesne's *Parliamentary Rules & Forms* 6th Edition, paragraph 566 (4), I modify the motion by eliminating the preamble. The new motion then without the preamble will read as:

That this Assembly urge the government to act on the corporate tax reform recommendations of the business tax review committee in this budget year adhering to the implementation schedule, and further,

That this Assembly urge the government to reduce the PST [provincial sales tax] to 6 per cent in this budget year and defer further sales tax reform as recommended by the business tax review committee.

The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

Taxation Policies and Recommendations of the Business Tax Review Committee

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure that I put forward this motion and enter into this debate. I appreciate the Speaker's advisement on the motion, and certainly we will change our motion accordingly.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what I'd like to do today as I enter into this debate is talk about five things: talk about the background, the Saskatchewan economy, and where we're at presently; and to go on to talk about what the Saskatchewan Party's solution is to this situation, Mr. Speaker; then to go on to talk about what Saskatchewan businesses have to say, those that create the jobs in our province, those jobs that are so needed here to keep our young people in Saskatchewan.

We'll go on and talk about what the businesses have to say, what the Vicq commission has to say, Mr. Speaker. The Vicq commission is very telling. The Vicq commission is very, very telling in what exactly they have to say. Mr. Speaker, I want to go on and talk about what this minister, this Finance minister and this government and this cabinet have to say, and it isn't a pretty story, Mr. Speaker. And then we want to conclude.

Mr. Speaker, let's start with talking about the facts, examine the background. A good place to start about with the facts is KPMG's tax facts book of 2005-2006. And I know the minister and others in the Chamber would want to hear this information. Let's start with major tax rates, 2005, Mr. Speaker. Let's compare where Saskatchewan is. Are we competitive, Mr. Speaker? I'll let members make that decision on their own.

Mr. Speaker, let's look at the corporate income tax rate in this province, Mr. Speaker, and compare it to other provinces in this country. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan, the corporate income tax rate, 17 per cent, the highest in the country. Mr. Speaker, we heard yesterday Alberta is lowering theirs from 11.5 per cent to 10 per cent. We are at 17 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, in fact for small businesses — those that create

many of the jobs in this province — the rates are even less competitive. On those making \$300,000 or more — and I know members will want to hear this — in Saskatchewan the tax rate is 17 per cent. In Manitoba, yes, Mr. Speaker, in NDP Manitoba that tax rate is 4 per cent, and in Alberta it's 3 per cent. No wonder Saskatchewan businesses are having trouble creating jobs.

Let's talk about the capital tax, Mr. Speaker, the largest capital tax in the country, and as Mr. Vicq has pointed out to us, the largest capital tax in North America — point six of 1 per cent . . . Mr. Speaker, the Premier and the Finance minister and others say, come invest in Saskatchewan. This is the place to do business. And when you start doing that, the first thing you'll get from this government — not even a congratulatory letter for coming here — is a tax bill, Mr. Speaker. That's the shame of it all, Mr. Speaker.

We can go on and talk about these tax rates, and I know my colleagues and members opposite will want to do that. But let's look at what it is resulting in, what it is doing to our economy in the province, what are the consequences.

And my hon. friend says, Mr. Speaker . . . well here it is, the "Sixth Straight Month of Job Losses under Calvert NDP [government]." It's "Like an Anchor Holding Saskatchewan Back." Mr. Speaker, it's shameful. Twenty-three hundred and fifty-six people have left this province. Well we have a problem here; that's for sure. And that's the government opposite, Mr. Speaker.

Four thousand less jobs. Manitoba created 4,000 jobs. Alberta created 40-some-thousand jobs. BC created thousands and thousands of jobs. What happened to this province, Mr. Speaker? We are being left behind. We are.

The parents who are seeing their kids leave this province, they are being left behind. And this entire province is being left behind because other jurisdictions are choosing to move forward and not dithering like this government is doing, Mr. Speaker. It's shameful. And that's where we are. And that's the background that we have to talk about today.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier today entered into the debate, and that's always a good thing when he can defend his own actions. And we were glad to see that he tried to enter the debate today. He said that we should come up with a shadow budget in the next few days.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I have news for the members opposite and for the Premier. Ten months ago we came up with that information, Mr. Speaker. We were the first group to make a presentation to the Vicq commission. Back on May 10 — and I know the Deputy Premier will be very interested in this — May 10, 2005 in Yorkton, Saskatchewan, Canada, when the business tax review committee had their first hearings, the Saskatchewan Party made the first presentation, Mr. Speaker. The Saskatchewan Party was the only party to make a presentation — the only party in Saskatchewan that took it seriously enough to make that presentation.

And I know that the Deputy Premier was interested in that. I know because articles appeared in his paper that he referenced

in this House later on, Mr. Speaker. It's unfortunate that he couldn't convince his party, his members opposite, his Finance minister — whichever one it was at the time — to actually make a presentation.

[11:15]

Mr. Speaker, we didn't hear anything from that NDP government. Mr. Speaker, they didn't even take it seriously enough to make a presentation. So, Mr. Speaker, for the Premier's benefit and members opposite, I want to go through that presentation that was made in Yorkton some 10 months ago where this party, this opposition not only criticizes but comes forward with alternatives and proposals — with a plan, Mr. Speaker, with a plan for sure. We're not afraid of targets, Madam Speaker, we're not afraid of goals, and we're not afraid of putting the policies in place that will reach those goals.

So let's go through them, Madam Speaker. Reduce the small-business tax to zero per cent on the first \$400,000 of net income over four years. Now, Madam Speaker, that sounds like an innovative idea but it is being done in other provinces. Other provinces are going ahead with that but, Madam Speaker, we are far away from that with this government in this province and that's a shame.

Madam Speaker, 10 months ago we said, reduce the corporate income tax from 17 per cent down to 11.5 per cent over four years. That would have had us match Alberta. But no, Madam Speaker, this government did nothing. They did nothing over the last year, and what happens? The world doesn't stand still for socialist NDP governments. Alberta is moving along; Manitoba is moving along. Alberta announced today they are lowering their rate to 10 per cent. That's what happens in a competitive marketplace. This government has no idea about what happens in that circumstance and their actions show that they don't.

We talked about expanding the manufacturing and processing profits tax reduction to include resource companies, Madam Speaker. What did the government do? Government hasn't done anything on that. At least Jack Vicq and his committee were listening. They listened to the Saskatchewan Party and that's why, Madam Speaker, we are so supportive of the work that Jack Vicq and his committee have done. They've done their homework. This government doesn't have a plan. Jack Vicq gave them a plan. He handed the plan to them. It remains to be seen whether they will actually act upon that plan.

Now, Madam Speaker, we had eight recommendations that we put forward to the Vicq commission back 10 months ago. Eliminate the corporate capital tax on new investment for the first four years. Just eliminate it right now. It's a new-growth tax cut. It's something that the Leader of the Opposition has been talking about, and again it's been falling on deaf ears over there. But Jack Vicq picked up on it. Jack Vicq saw enough information.

And I know that the former Finance minister is listening closely. And I know . . . you know, frankly, I might have had more confidence in the former Finance minister to do the right thing than the current Finance minister. It's a close race, Madam Speaker, but from what I've seen so far of this current

Finance minister, I think the former Finance minister was on the right track.

Reverse the decision to impose the resource surcharges on income trusts. Now I know neither one of the Finance ministers on that side really enjoyed hearing about this one, but that's what Saskatchewan companies are looking for, Madam Speaker. That's what they want in this province, and it's about time somebody in that government starts listening.

Phase out the corporate capital tax on general corporations and resource corporations over four years. Just get rid of it. It's an antiquated tax. It's a dinosaur tax. It's getting removed across North America. Those that even had it, those that even considered having it, they're getting rid of it. Even the federal government is getting rid of it, Madam Speaker, so it's about time. It's about time.

Madam Speaker, I want to go on to talk a little bit about what Saskatchewan companies are saying in this province about doing business in Saskatchewan. Do you believe Saskatchewan government has created an open-for-business atmosphere in the province? Madam Speaker, 88 per cent of the companies — some of those companies in the constituencies of the very members opposite — 88 per cent of them say it's not right to do business in Saskatchewan under this type of government.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has done their survey. They've surveyed members across this province and the results are dismal, Mr. Speaker. The CFIB goes on to talk about doing business in Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan companies have a 17 per cent increased tax load as compared to the average across Saskatchewan. So not even are we keeping up to the average. We should be leading the way across the country, Madam Speaker. Seventeen per cent deficit compared to other provinces across the country as far as doing business in Saskatchewan.

Can small and medium enterprises compete effectively in Saskatchewan? Is your business able to compete effectively under the current Saskatchewan tax structure? Fifty-two per cent, Madam Speaker, say no. The majority of the businesses in Saskatchewan say they can't compete under this structure. It's just not a way to improve Saskatchewan businesses.

Madam Speaker, I could go on and on quoting from this survey. The high priority issues . . . Saskatchewan businesses were asked, and I know members are very, very interested in hearing this. What's the highest priority for Saskatchewan businesses, the highest concern that they have? What are they concerned with the most? The total tax burden — 86.3 per cent of all businesses in Saskatchewan are concerned with the total tax burden in this province, Madam Speaker. That's general information. That's general studies that's taken from businesses across Saskatchewan. That's what they have to say.

Madam Speaker, I want to quote from the Fraser Institute. The Minister of Industry and Resources, he rose in his spot today and talked about the Fraser Institute. Well what did they have to say about Saskatchewan, Madam Speaker? The minister conveniently didn't mention this when he was talking about it. He said:

Most jurisdictions in Canada have performed reasonably well on this indicator . . . [of corporate income tax:] only Saskatchewan and Newfoundland failed to score . . . [50 per cent.]

We failed in that regard, Madam Speaker, and that's a real shame. That's the Fraser Institute. And I know that members opposite don't like to even debate issues that come forward from an economic think tank. But just to set the record straight, this is the portion that the Minister of Industry and Resources forgot to mention.

Well let's get a little closer to home, Madam Speaker. A little bit closer to home, but not quite in our province. Let's hear what Todd Hirsch has to say. You know, his article titled "The Western Economy Project." He goes on and I want to quote him, because he talks about what it's like to do business in Saskatchewan. He says:

Another reason for . . . skepticism is that taxes remain high in Saskatchewan. [True.] . . . personal income tax rates have come down, but [they] are still higher than in Alberta and other provinces. The provincial sales tax annoys people. Business taxes and the regulatory environment are onerous, and . . . [the] business community . . . [in Saskatchewan is right] in complaining [about it] . . .

[All of] these additional taxes weigh heavily on [the] average income earners, boom or no boom.

And Madam Speaker, this is the line that I like the most from Mr. Hirsch. Here's what he compares doing business in Saskatchewan. He said:

[It's] like [having] a picnic in the rain: no matter how good the food is, [you still] . . . get wet.

Now, Madam Speaker, it's a good line. You know, it's a funny phrase but it's very accurate of what it's like to do business in Saskatchewan.

We have a lot to be proud of here, but with this NDP government it's like having a picnic in the rain. It's like having a picnic in the rain. It's like having a picnic in the rain and the Deputy Premier forgets to bring his umbrella. Madam Speaker, we hope that they are able to change this in the next little while.

Madam Speaker, Madam Speaker, the Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce, let's hear what they have to say about this government. I'm told that I'm going to be running out of time, Madam Speaker, but I'd like to get on to what the chamber of commerce has to say, what the NSBA [North Saskatoon Business Association] has to say. And as you can see, I have a lot more that I'd like to talk about today. But, Madam Speaker, let's get to the motion at hand and entertain the debate and hear where we go from here.

Madam Speaker, I would like to put forward the motion today, seconded by my hon. friend and colleague, the member for Canora-Pelly:

That this Assembly urge the government to act on the corporate tax reform recommendations of the business tax

review committee in this budget year, adhering to the implementation schedule; and further,

that this Assembly urge the government to reduce the PST to 6 per cent in this budget year and defer further sales tax reform as recommended by the business tax review committee.

I so present, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — It's been moved by the member from Saskatoon Silver Springs and seconded by the member from Canora-Pelly, the motion before the Assembly. Take it as read? I would then recognize the member from Canora-Pelly.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, it's a pleasure to enter into today's debate about the future of Saskatchewan. Because as clearly indicated by the Vicq report and the position taken by so many individuals and so many different groups in the province of Saskatchewan when they were making their presentations to that committee, as my colleague has indicated, the Saskatchewan Party was very active in putting forward a plan that we believed was something that should be looked at. And we see almost an entire adoption of the plan put forward by the Saskatchewan Party.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it's interesting to look at the comments in the Vicq report. And I think that's what has to be highlighted so that not only people in Saskatchewan can see how important it is, but the Deputy Premier of this province might recognize that this is a very important topic.

Madam Deputy Speaker, from the press release of the Vicq report — and I quote from that press release — it says this:

A consensus emerged during our consultations that Saskatchewan's business tax structure was clearly uncompetitive and outdated.

That is the first statement that was in that press release, Madam Deputy Speaker. So you can see that as the different committee members listened to the presentations that were put forward, they recognized that Saskatchewan is uncompetitive and that we're getting left behind.

We listen to the lip service that the NDP members make to various topics that we've debated in this Legislative Assembly. And, you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, this is an example of one. They have been talking about the fact that Saskatchewan should not be left behind, but their policies continue to ensure that that in fact is exactly what happens.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Vice-Chair Charlie Baldock also stated in that press release, and I quote again:

Our . . . [dependence] on corporate taxes — highlighted by the highest provincial general tax rates on corporate income and capital — is a major disincentive to investment and job creation in the province.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I think that's a clear admission why this province in the middle of a boom, in the middle of one of the highest oil prices that we will probably ever see, this province continues to lose population. It continues to lose jobs.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, if you take a look at the statistics for the province of Saskatchewan, you will note that we have one of the worst per capita numbers for the age group 25 to 40. Madam Deputy Speaker, those are the people that are the job creators. They're the business owners. They're the people who have families. They're the entrepreneurs. They're going to build this province. And we have the worst statistic in all of Canada in that age group.

Madam Deputy Speaker, those are the people that will be paying consumption taxes. They will be paying food taxes. They'll be paying liquor consumption tax. They'll be paying all kinds of taxes, fuel taxes, to this province. But you know what? We are the worst in Saskatchewan. We are the worst in Saskatchewan. So it's time that this government recognizes that there are concerns.

And, you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, as my colleague indicated, one of the first meetings was in the city of Yorkton. And the Yorkton Chamber of Commerce made a presentation, and I want to enter into the record the quotation from the Yorkton Chamber of Commerce as found in the final report of the business tax review. And it says this:

A change in the mix of the business taxes is a flawed approach. Any changes that are made to the business taxes that do not make Saskatchewan more competitive will provide the same results we currently have, which is growth that is behind and substandard to our competitors.

[11:30]

Madam Deputy Speaker, that was one of the first presentations made on behalf of many people on the eastern side of the province. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, we can see the effect of a tax that is holding back development. Madam Deputy Speaker, that tax of course is corporate capital tax.

We have talked about one of the worst corporate taxes in this province, and that's property tax. The Deputy Premier recognizes full well what property tax does. He was the minister of Learning a number of years ago, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And I notice that the Deputy Premier wants to enter into the debate. And I'm sure he'll get his opportunity to justify why there are businesses on the east side of the province who are looking at their investment, looking at the fact that, due to the agricultural crisis currently in the province, they will find out that in fact they're still going to have to pay a corporate capital tax because they haven't made any money.

You know . . . and that's the irony, Madam Deputy Speaker. When we take a look at comparing ourselves to Alberta, comparing ourselves to Manitoba . . . As the Deputy Premier knows, we're very close to Manitoba. And he should look at the fact that Manitoba is leaving Saskatchewan behind. Manitoba has just indicated that they're going to be reducing their corporate capital tax rate from decimal six per cent to decimal

three per cent. What a change, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I know it's rather difficult for you to hear me. But I'm sure with my voice being as, you know, I think as strong as it is . . .

An Hon. Member: — Strong. Very strong.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you to the member from Indian Head-Milestone for that compliment. I'll continue to speak even though the Deputy Premier continues to chirp from his seat, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, let's take a look at Above Board Straw. Let's take a look at the company trying to develop a business in the constituency of Canora-Pelly. Above Board Straw has major investors from the United States. One of their worst obstacles that they have just encountered, Madam Deputy Speaker, as the first fiscal year ended on December 31, 2005, is now the payment of provincial sales tax. They have brought millions of dollars worth of capital investment into a plant near Kamsack, Saskatchewan. And now the CEO [chief executive officer] has indicated to me that he has to self-declare the PST on all investment in Saskatchewan.

The reaction by the investors out of the United States has been, why did we choose Saskatchewan? Why didn't we choose Alberta? If we'd have known about this and done all of this calculations, we wouldn't have decided to come to Saskatchewan. We may have decided to go to Alberta. And that is the situation that this government has to recognize because, you know, the PST exemption, the PST that will be eligible to be given back to the company is only when the company is profitable. That's what the situation is — only when the company is profitable will they have an opportunity . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. There are a few members that are entering into a side debate across the floor. I'd ask them to enter into the debate at another time, and I recognize the member from Canora-Pelly.

Mr. Krawetz: — Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm going to quote from the Vicq report. And it says this:

. . . most groups noted that [if] the application of PST to capital investments was very very harmful [it was very harmful] to economic growth.

The members, I'm surely are not going to disagree with the Vicq report in saying that. And a further comment in the report says this:

This affects new enterprises the most by increasing the capital required to start-up the business. It was strongly recommended that the PST on capital purchases be removed . . .

And that's the point that I've been making, Madam Deputy Speaker, is here we have an example of an entity that wants to develop in Saskatchewan. It wants to develop a strawboard plant near Kamsack. It has the technology. It has the capital investment. It has moved all of its equipment, but this government has created an obstacle for it. It has created an

obstacle for it in comparison to other provinces. We're not in the game. And I think that that's what Jack Vicq recognized when he said that we are uncompetitive. We have to get into the game, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it's also very interesting to note the headline in today's paper that says "Alberta beats Saskatchewan in the big race to cut business tax." Here again we're going to finish behind the incentives that other provinces are moving on. So let's take a look at Alberta, a tax rate now reduced to 10 per cent. We're still at 17 per cent. We now look at Manitoba who has just reduced its corporate capital tax from decimal six per cent to decimal three per cent. By the way, Alberta doesn't even have that tax; it's zero. And then we look at the situation as to how do we attract investors and how do we attract entrepreneurs to Saskatchewan.

Well there are some simple things that can be done, and I think very clearly Jack Vicq and the committee should be commended for laying that foundation, for putting in place recommendations, for putting in place a time frame that should be followed to make Saskatchewan competitive because that's what will encourage investment. And I stand before you, Madam Deputy Speaker, to say I am pleased and proud to support and second the motion put forward by my colleague.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Industry and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well thank you very much, Madam Speaker. And I'm very pleased to enter into this debate in which, listening to the opposition, people might think that there was no economic growth in Saskatchewan. They might think that, listening to the gloom and doom we hear from them, Madam Speaker. And I think it's important to remember that if we look at the economic growth occurring in our economy — last year, Madam Speaker, 2005 — the economy of Saskatchewan grew by 3.8 per cent, one of the best records in the country.

And, Madam Speaker, this year private sector forecasters say the economy of Saskatchewan will grow by 3.9 per cent. Madam Speaker, that's almost an 8 per cent increase in the size of the Saskatchewan economy over two years. And those people stand up and say you can't have economic growth under the taxation policy of this government. It's not true, Madam Speaker. It is not true.

They say, as they put out their not-credible gloom and doom, Madam Speaker, that there's no private sector investment in Saskatchewan. Well, Madam Speaker, this year private sector investment is projected to rise by more than 9 per cent in Saskatchewan, businesses investing in Saskatchewan. And yet, Madam Speaker, they say that there's no growth in Saskatchewan . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Now one of the members says, we're so far behind. Madam Speaker, we're going to have the third highest rate of private sector investment increase in Canada this year.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — They will not recognize it, Madam Speaker, because they have no credibility. They have one objective, and that is to continually trash this province, Madam Speaker. And I want to say to the members opposite over there that I had people telephoning me, business people from Alberta, after the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party spoke in Calgary at one of his fundraising dinners which is where he gets his money, Madam Speaker. They could not believe how negative the Leader of the Opposition could be speaking about our province.

And I say, I say shame for that, Madam Speaker. I say shame. And you know they like to get up and some of them quote Todd Hirsch, the economist from the Canada West Foundation. And what did he say, Madam Speaker? This is what he said. He said the Saskatchewan economy was on a roll, but we had a problem with attitude. And he said this: we need to shed our gloomy attitude.

Where does that attitude come from, Madam Speaker? That gloom and doom is led by the cheerleaders of gloom and doom in the Saskatchewan Party over there, Madam Speaker. And you know what, Madam Speaker? There are lots of people in this province — I know lots of people in this province of all political persuasions, and I'm not afraid to say it — who are sick and tired of listening to their unending complaining and gloom and doom. They're sick and tired of it.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Because there are those of us, Madam Speaker, on this side of the House and there are hundreds of thousands of people across Saskatchewan who are proud of this province, Madam Speaker, who do not spend every waking hour complaining about how bad they think things are in the province of Saskatchewan.

And I have this to say to that opposition. They say as if they are some kind of creators of the Vicq commission, that the taxation recommendations of the Vicq commission should be implemented by the Minister of Finance in the budget. They say that as if the Vicq commission is some kind of stranger to this government. Who appointed the commission, Madam Speaker? Not them. The commission was appointed by the then minister of Finance, the member from Regina Douglas Park, to advise government on what to do about taxation.

And I want to say to those people over there, and especially the Leader of the Opposition who's yelling from his seat . . . he worked for a government in the 1980s and into the 1990s that did what? He talks about taxes. That raised the personal income taxes in this province four times, Madam Speaker — that raised taxes. They did not cut taxes. They are all talk, all talk, no action, no action. What did they do? They brought in the flat tax on income to hit the seniors, to hit the low-income people, the most regressive tax in the history of this province.

And I say to that Leader of the Opposition who supported those people and those policies, Madam Speaker, I say this. The largest tax cut in the history of this province, Madam Speaker, occurred between 1999 and 2003 when this government cut personal income taxes by 35 per cent, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — And those people who supported a government that raised income taxes four times, Madam Speaker, and raised a wide variety of other taxes, lecture everybody about taxation, Madam Speaker. And that member from Silver Springs got up just a while ago and he said this. He was talking about the small-business corporate income tax rate. When we took office in 1991, Madam Speaker, the small-business corporate income tax rate was 10 per cent, left over by the conservatives over there. You know what . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. There are some members who are not in the debate who are yelling in the Assembly. I'd ask them to come to order, so I can hear the member.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — When we took government, Madam Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . They don't like the truth. The tax on small business was 10 per cent. Today under this government it is 5 per cent, Madam Speaker, 5 per cent.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Income taxes were the second highest in the country under those people. Today, Madam Speaker, according to the Alberta government in their budget documents, our income taxes are the third lowest in the country.

They don't like to hear about it, Madam Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition and the member from Saskatoon Northwest yell from their seats because they don't want the public to know the truth. They don't want the public to know the truth that there's economic growth in this province. They don't want the public to know that there's investment in this province.

I want that member from Saskatoon Northwest to listen to this, Madam Speaker. Investment in mining exploration this year — he thinks he knows something about the mining industry — will be \$200 million.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Two hundred million dollars. In 2002, what was it? Twenty-three million dollars, Madam Speaker. Where is it going? It's going like this. And any credible person in this province, which does not include one of those people over there, knows that as Todd Hirsch says, who they quote " . . . [the Saskatchewan] economy [is] on a roll," Madam Deputy Speaker. And they don't want to admit it.

What else do the headlines say? They say this. They say, "Saskatoon [is] good for business," Madam Speaker. The economy of Saskatchewan is growing, whether they want to admit it or not, and they're yelling because they don't want people on this side of the House to tell the people of Saskatchewan the truth.

But I want to say this. I go around this community and this province, Madam Speaker, on a daily basis, and I talk to hundreds of people. And when I talk to people, Madam Speaker, what they say to me is, the economy is on a roll. Things are good. We can't get enough workers. That's what they say, Madam Speaker, because there are jobs out there

whether these people want to admit it or not.

And I want to say this again, Madam Speaker. People are sick and tired of the negative doom and gloom from the Saskatchewan Party. People love this province, Madam Speaker. People see a future in this province, Madam Speaker, and we are proud of Saskatchewan.

[11:45]

And we have reformed the personal income taxes. We have reformed the taxes for small business. We have reformed the taxes for manufacturing and processing. Madam Speaker, we have reformed the oil and gas royalties, something they never did. We have reformed the taxes for the mining companies and exploration prospecting, something they never did.

But you know what, Madam Speaker? It doesn't matter what the government does or whether the economy is working, they will never admit it. They will never stop complaining. And the Leader of the Opposition, when asked what his policy would be, because we have brought in these policies to improve the economy, he said this — one time he said — I will appoint a committee if I become premier to advise me what to do. Well it's not credible, Madam Speaker.

And you know what he said the other week? This is what he said. They said, well the NDP has brought in policies to get the economy moving. How could you do any better than that? You know what he said? He said this, because I'm a different brand. He said, I'm a different brand. Now I don't know if it was Kellogg's or if it was Bacardi, Madam Speaker, but he says, I'm a different brand. Well you know what? It's just another brand of cornflakes, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Community Resources.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to sit here next to my colleague from Saskatoon, the Minister of Industry and Resources, to complement I hope in my very feeble way, to do justice to some of the points that he raised.

And I want to point out in continuing the whole notion of doom and gloom, and recognizing the business contribution that the many businesses throughout our province have made to our province, not just in the past but certainly in the future as well, to recognize them.

And I want to point out, Madam Speaker, that some of the work that this government has been doing to recognize the business people — small and medium and large, and the corporations that work and employ people of Saskatchewan — is that we appreciate their contribution, Madam Speaker. We appreciate businesses. And we appreciate corporations and the people out here that make a significant difference for our provincial economy, and employ workers and take care of those workers.

And I want to add to what the Minister of Industry and Resources say about that doom-and-gloom party. Every time,

Madam Speaker, we have some good news on this side of the Assembly, whether the headlines say the economy is booming, across the way there's a bunch of depressed Sask Party people, Madam Speaker. They're always depressed. Every time there's great news, they're depressed. They sit in their desk and they put their heads down, oh geez the NDP are doing it again. They're building the economy. Well that's not good for us.

And every time something happens in Alberta they say, oh Alberta this, Alberta that, Alberta's doing so great. What I say to the Sask Party guys, if you love Alberta so much, head out there. We'll see you later. We've got a province to build here, Madam Speaker. We got a province to build and we're going to build that province in co-operation, in a respectful relationship with the business community, and we're going to continue to build on that success, Madam Speaker.

Now let's go back to the Sask Party opposition for a moment. Let's go back to them for a while. Every time we have good news, they're depressed. Every time something happens in Alberta, they talk about Alberta. Every time something great happens, they say, oh no, but this problem exists. They have not got one solution on that side of the House to help the economy or the business people or anybody in Saskatchewan.

Now we look at the NDP, the provincial government, Madam Speaker. They have a plan. And I want to take aim at the Finance critic there from Saskatoon. Here's a guy, here's a guy that comes along and by luck he gets elected. And he says, now I'm the Finance critic; now I have all this knowledge of what I'm going to do differently.

Well, Madam Speaker, the first thing he did was he spent four billion bucks going four blocks — and that was then last year's budget — turn on the radio, and he promised everything to everybody. And you know the problem with Saskatchewan people is that they won't believe the Sask Party propaganda, nor do they believe some of the things that they're saying. And I'll point out he's got to be one of the most unsuccessful Finance critics I've seen in my time here, Madam Speaker, which is well over 10 years.

And I'll point out as well, you don't just talk the talk; you have to walk the walk. So whether it's their Finance critic being just somebody that has no credibility or doesn't know how finances work or whether it's the critic for Community Resources that didn't realize that two years ago they were talking about cutting social services and programs in budgets by 25 per cent, and now they have the audacity to come up and be saying, oh no, we're going to do things differently now; we're a different brand.

Well, Madam Speaker, Saskatchewan people do not buy that. You don't fake your way to developing an economy. It comes with an integrated approach. It comes with working with the business community. It comes with preparing the labour force. It talks about personal income tax. It is all connected. And it also talks about a social fabric.

So when they come along with their one-trick pony and say, oh corporate cuts, corporate cuts — we know that it's part of the solution, but it's one solution in many. And I'm just a hockey player from northern Saskatchewan but I come along here to try

and make a difference and even I understand more about what they talk about when they talk about economic building than the entire Sask Party caucus that may have many degrees.

The reality, the reality, Madam Speaker, is that they have no vision. They have no credibility. They have no plan. And the people of Saskatchewan when they ask them for arguments, what happens, Madam Speaker? They say, oh the NDP aren't doing anything great. They say, oh Alberta's doing everything wonderful. That's the only response, that's their only response. And you know you can't sell fear if you want to be a leader in this province. You've got to sell vision. You got to sell hope. You got to bring partners in. And, Madam Speaker, you got to acknowledge all the players that like this government does when it talks about the business community and all the corporations that do wonderful work throughout our province.

Madam Speaker, you look at all the arguments that they make. It's always doom and gloom. Saskatchewan's bad. Saskatchewan doesn't do anything good. Saskatchewan's a poor province, poor place to invest. My goodness, you know, if you're saying that as an opposition member, we say we don't want your attitude. We don't want your attitude. We reject your attitude. This is a great province. It's time to rock 'n' roll, time to acknowledge that the business community is a big part of the solution. And on this side of the House we fully support them. We'll fully work with them and we will fully respect them, Madam Speaker.

Now what really tires people of Saskatchewan, and I concur with my colleague, that people in Saskatchewan are sick and tired of that doom-and-gloom party over there that has no vision. They have no vision. Even on the credibility issues, they have no credibility, Madam Speaker. So every bit of their argument and every component of their supposed plan for Saskatchewan, the people of Saskatchewan look, see right through it and say, no, no, we've been there, we've done that, and we just don't want to go back there again.

Madam Speaker, I point out, I point out that every time there's been a successful economy in Saskatchewan where people are working, where we're paying down debt, where we're putting money towards skills and training, where we work with the business community — every time in the history of Saskatchewan that that trend has been going upward and it's been positive is when this NDP government has been in charge, Madam Speaker. That's the only time. That's the only time. And when we took over government in 1991 from that party, from that party, the cover-up party, we're paying over almost \$900 million in interest payments, Madam Speaker — \$900 million in interest payments. And that is the biggest disincentive today to helping the business community develop in this province, is the huge debt that this province has compliments of that party, Madam Speaker.

So don't come along and tell us in a sanctimonious way, oh we think you guys should do this. We don't want no advice from you guys. We don't want no advice from you guys because all you guys have been doing has been faking your way to try and confuse the people of Saskatchewan, trying to sell fear and say, look Alberta, envy us what we are. No, no, no.

We are Saskatchewan people. We're proud of where we're

from. We're proud of our citizens. And all the citizens, in my books, include the business people and the corporations that make Saskatchewan their home.

Madam Speaker, this is a good party. This is a good government. And we ain't taking not one bit of advice from that party that put this province well over \$15 billion in debt.

And I would point out as well, and I'd point out as well that the fact is this province, this province is tired of hearing of the debt. We're tired of hearing of the interest payments. And they say yes, you guys who have been there 15 years ago, we're tired of you guys saying that to us. Well the people of Saskatchewan, Madam Speaker, are tired of paying that debt. You're tired of hearing it; we're tired of paying it.

And the corporations and the business people in Saskatchewan, they know — these are very intelligent, capable people — they know they can move their industry forward under this government and that's why this government continues to get elected, Madam Speaker.

And I would point out in closing, Madam Speaker, what is the very important rule of thumb when you talk about trying to work with people is that we have to acknowledge people. We have to share with them our vision. And when you acknowledge people, you share your vision with them, then you give them hope. We today in this debate acknowledge the business community and we say these are Saskatchewan people. We're going to continue acknowledging them, respecting them, and working with them, Madam Speaker.

Plus, we also share in their vision of trying to develop a labour force, to bring costs under control, help with the infrastructure, bring the Aboriginal people into the economy. The list is long and certainly the process is integrated and is very complex. But we will continue moving forward, all under the while with the whole premise is no one is left behind on the path to opportunity.

Madam Speaker, it is very important that people of Saskatchewan call a spade a spade. And from my perspective I see not one little bit of vision on that side. Doom and gloom and fear — self-fear — and call Saskatchewan down. Madam Speaker, we were there before. We don't want to go there any more.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Chisholm: — Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is a pleasure for me to have the opportunity to join this debate and to speak in favour of the motion from my colleague from Saskatoon Silver Springs.

The arguments put forward in favour of adopting this report immediately and completely in relation to the recommendations regarding corporate tax reform are compelling. The timing of adopting tax reform recommendations is long overdue. The recommendations for corporate tax reform have been out there for a number of years.

We as opposition welcome this report and participated in the process that has led to its conclusions and recommendations. We commend the committee for its thorough study and its conclusions and recommendations. Had these or similar changes been implemented two or five or ten years ago, we as a province would not be in the non-competitive situation that we find ourselves today.

This government has been in the past unresponsive to the recommendations put forward to bring the economic environment of this province in line with what is happening around us. Their position, Mr. Speaker, was not that they could . . . their position, Madam Speaker, was that they could not afford these proposed changes. That position was wrong. We really could not afford not to introduce these initiatives.

Time does not permit me to discuss all of the report, but I will focus on three of the significant tax areas. These are corporate capital tax, corporate income tax, and small-business limit.

Saskatchewan's corporate capital tax presently at point six per cent is the highest in the country, the highest in North America. This compares with zero in Alberta and British Columbia. Since its inception the corporate capital tax has been criticized as being a disincentive for business to invest, to expand, and to hire employees.

Saskatchewan has become unique in its reliance on this revenue source, provincially and internationally. If we are indeed serious about creating jobs, then this particular tax must be addressed. The committee recommends the reduction by one-half, effective July 1 of this year, 2006; by an additional one-half, effective July 1, 2007; and total elimination, effective July 1, 2008. If implemented as proposed, this would send a clear signal to the corporate world that this province is indeed open for business.

[12:00]

Secondly in regard to the corporate income tax rates. As with the corporate capital tax, we are also uncompetitive when it comes to corporate income tax rates. Our rate of 17 per cent compares unfavourably with Alberta at eleven and a half per cent, now being reduced to 10 per cent. We're also higher than Manitoba, Ontario, and British Columbia. The committee states that the tax rate in a jurisdiction affects the decision to start or expand a business into a provincial jurisdiction. Keeping the general rate competitive in comparison with other jurisdictions is desirable to remove impediments to business start-up and expansion.

Thirdly, Madam Speaker, the small-business tax limit. British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario all sit at \$400,000 limit. Saskatchewan remains at . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. We would ask that you would respect the member on their feet and have a chance to enter the debate. The member from Cut Knife-Turtleford.

Mr. Chisholm: — Thank you, Madam Speaker. The variance in the small-business tax limit is another impediment to the growth of small business in Saskatchewan. If for example a business is operating at the \$300,000 level and paying

provincial tax at 5 per cent, it is a disincentive to expand, to risk additional investment, and to add to its workforce in anticipation of the provincial tax rate increasing from 5 per cent to 17 per cent on the additional projected income.

Madam Speaker, for the period 1977 to 2003, I had the opportunity to provide tax advice for a number of clients. The majority of these clients were farmers and small- and medium-sized business clients. It was a unique opportunity, Madam Speaker, in that for the most of these 26 years, I worked out of a chartered accountant office in Lloydminster. Yes, on the border between Saskatchewan and Alberta. Over this time I saw the increasing shift of capital, of investment, of jobs, and yes of our children, from east to west. This was not in the period of \$60-plus oil. The shift from my perspective, Madam Speaker, was caused by uncompetitive tax policy and government regulations.

Many of the successful small businesses that I was involved from start-up did start up in Saskatchewan. These ranged from construction companies, oil field service companies, agriculture-related businesses, and so on.

Initially, as in most small start-up businesses, tax was not the major factor in determining their location. However, as these businesses expanded and grew, tax becomes an important factor. The provincial tax rates, both personal and corporate, became the determining factor when they came to expand, to create more jobs and yes, to become even more profitable.

The series of events became all too common. Firstly, a move of part of the business operations to Alberta. Secondly, a move of the balance of the business operations to head office and the expanded buildings required to the Alberta side. And ultimately, Madam Speaker, the move of the family to Alberta. At this point all of the provincial tax, personal and corporate, is made payable to the province of Alberta. Unfortunately this shift has not slowed down. It continues.

This morning, Madam Speaker, we were impressed with the announcement of the new addition to the Husky Upgrader. Think about for a moment the \$99 million of engineering contracts that are being generated and the tax, both business and personal, that will be generated. Think about where these taxes will be made payable, Madam Speaker. I submit the vast majority will be payable to the provincial treasurer, province of Alberta.

The report on the tax review provides not only the reasons for the present dilemma but also the framework, including the timelines, to begin to address this situation. Madam Speaker, it is all about jobs. Business investment is required to create these jobs and the business climate must be conducive to business incentive.

Madam Speaker, it's about a shift — a shift from high taxes to a shift to new prosperity.

Madam Speaker, with the interests of our future at stake, I support this motion.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Northeast.

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, it's truly a pleasure for me to join into this debate and be a part of this discussion.

I did appreciate the fact that the speaker earlier today amended the motion because it helped to clarify it just a little bit although it's still quite confusing as far as I am concerned. Because when you look at the content of the motion and then you look at what the Sask Party's own report called *The Promise of Saskatchewan* says, it's contradictory. The Sask Party's own report, *The Promise of Saskatchewan*, says that:

While the government of Saskatchewan may not be in a position to offer meaningful reduction in taxes such as the corporation capital tax, it can be . . . [very] aggressive in terms of incremental taxes on new activity.

And that goes without saying, Madam Deputy Speaker. But I find it extremely confusing when their own report says the government may not be able to move in that direction, and yet their motion says, move in that direction. Very hypocritical, Madam Speaker. Very inconsistent. I mean, Madam Speaker, this is why that party over there has no credibility.

In fact, Madam Speaker, the Finance critic, the member from Saskatoon Silver Springs, said about this report, and I would like to quote an article from the *Leader-Post* that was the 24th day of the second month, February 2005. And I quote:

We think it's a step in the right direction, but I don't think it has been reviewed all that much.

Once again, Madam Speaker, they're saying one thing one day and then saying the total opposite the next day. Once again, Madam Speaker, that's why they have no credibility.

In fact if you look at now the preamble of their motion, the first paragraph of this motion says that we should implement the report. Then in the second paragraph it says we should only implement aspects of that report. They can't even maintain consistency in the same motion, never mind day by day. Madam Speaker, once again this is an example of why they have no credibility.

My grandfather used to have a saying that the proof of the pudding is in the eating. So often I think that we need to spend a little time looking at what independent third parties have to say about situations. In this case let's look at some of the submissions through the Saskatchewan business tax review committee, a submission by the Fraser Institute which, Madam Speaker, is absolutely no friend of this government's, that's for sure. But on page 14 of their submission they said Saskatchewan's small-business income rate is relatively competitive with most jurisdictions. They went on to say on page 15 that Saskatchewan's applicable threshold for small-business tax rate is relatively competitive with other provinces in Canada.

Madam Speaker, there is a third party verification — a third party which is actually a right wing think tank that would

probably fall into line with the members opposite there — and they're thinking and simply stating that they're wrong; that once again they have no credibility on this subject. They're saying Saskatchewan is in a competitive position.

The Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters, they are saying that the province should be commended for some of the tax breaks that they have recommended. And they go on to say that the current corporate tax rates, after manufacturing and processing credits, is currently competitive with any other province in Canada. Madam Speaker, once again a clear indication of why that party over there have no credibility.

But the one that really stands out, I think, Madam Speaker, is a statement according to KPMG. And they say that if you examine the following six cities in Canada — Regina, Saskatoon, Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg, and Toronto — the following conclusions can be drawn: the 10-year average effective corporate tax rate, including all taxes at all levels, is the lowest in Saskatoon and Regina. And if you look at the overall industrial averages of these cities in terms of total tax burden — that's total tax burden, Madam Deputy Speaker, that's the federal tax, the provincial tax, and the municipal tax — the tax rate is the lowest in the Saskatchewan cities.

That's why they led them to make this very bold statement. From KPMG, it says this is one of the key reasons why KPMG has said that Saskatchewan is one of the best jurisdictions in North America to set up a business. Not just in Canada, not just in Western Canada, but in North America, Saskatchewan is the jewel to set up a business. That is, as my colleague here says, the rest of the story. And one of my colleagues over there said, just that bears repeating. So I'll just take a moment or two to repeat that.

KPMG in their most recent study indicated that of the six cities of Regina, Saskatoon, Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg, and Toronto, the best place in North America to set up a business is either in Saskatoon or Regina. That speaks volumes for itself, Madam Speaker. It certainly does.

Now I think this motion to some degree sets the real comparison between our philosophy on this side and their philosophy on that side, Madam Speaker. They believe in a no government involvement, tax-free regime. They believe that without taxes we'd all be rich. Well unfortunately, Madam Speaker, that's not quite the way it goes.

One of my colleagues is quite fond of using this expression, and I'll just borrow it from him for a moment. Every so often in our history the right wing philosophy, the Saskatchewan Party conservative philosophy, gets into power. They are able to find their way to get themselves elected. And they bring to that position a philosophy that government doesn't work. And as my colleague would say, they sometimes in our history get themselves elected and they prove that government doesn't work. That's the difference between us and them.

I, like many people in Saskatchewan, believe we cannot afford not to pay taxes because through our tax dollars we have the services that we require. We have the services of health care, the services of education, the services of highway. We all contribute a little bit through our tax dollar to benefit from the

services when we require them.

They, on the other hand, would like to see it the other way. They would like to see a no-tax system or a low-tax system and that private sector, private sector would provide these services. If that's the case, then those services would not be affordable to most people.

In that case, those people would not have the benefit of a quality health care system that we enjoy here in Saskatchewan. In fact, Madam Speaker, we have the best health care system of anywhere in Canada right here in this province, and I must say I'm very proud of that.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Harper: — And I know that there are members on that side of the House that have experienced the health care system, and they would agree with me at least in private. But I can say, Madam Speaker, speaking on behalf of myself and my family members, that we have experienced that health care system. And we are very, very thankful that we have that top quality system here that has served us so well and continues to serve us that way. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[12:15]

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have a question for the Minister of Industry and Resources. There's a famous letter that's been referenced in this debate. It's from October 23, 2003, and I'll quote from the letter. It says:

Big corporations see a successful provincial economy and want to take over the most profitable parts of it . . . So they finance a political party, in this case, the Saskatchewan Party, to [go] get it for them.

It's a famous letter, Madam Speaker. It's the greedy corporate huckster letter.

Madam Speaker, my question to the Minister of Industry and Resources is, who wrote this letter? Did he write it? Did the Finance minister write it, or did the former Finance minister author this letter?

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Industry and Resource.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — You know, Madam Speaker, what I like to talk about are the facts. And the fact is this. That under the leadership of our Premier . . . What have we done since our Premier came to office? We have revised the oil and gas royalties. And I'd like to tell the members opposite that oil production is double what it was 10 years ago in the province of Saskatchewan.

What have we done? We've revised and reformed the mining royalties and exploration credits. And what has happened?

There has been a sixfold increase in exploration activity in this province, Madam Speaker. That's what has happened.

What have we done? We've gone from the second highest income taxes — thanks to them — in the country to the third lowest.

So when the members opposite get up, Madam Speaker, and try to suggest to people that there's an anti-business attitude over here, don't listen to their words. Look at the record. Don't do what they say. Look at what they do, which is a very sorry record, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. My question is for the member from Saskatoon Silver Springs. And this is a question that should require a simple yes or no answer. If the government implements the general direction and/or improves upon the recommendations of the Vicq report, will he vote for this budget and stand up for the people and businesses of Saskatchewan?

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. And with great pleasure I'd like to answer that question. I'm not sure where the hon. member was when I issued a challenge to the Finance minister. I challenged him that if he comes forward with a budget that honours the thrust of Vicq, that moves forward on the five recommendations on the tax reform, if he honours that and doesn't water down the timeline, Madam Speaker, and if this government reverses their decision to break their election promise . . . We all know what the Premier said in the last election. He said, no new tax increases. What did they do? The biggest tax grab in Saskatchewan history — \$150 million.

Yes, Madam Speaker, if they go and reverse that biggest tax grab, I will stand in my place and give credit where credit is due. But failing that, Madam Speaker, I challenge those members — those that are up for a challenge, Madam Speaker — I want them to say that this is the worst budget ever.

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

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, my question is to the member from Regina Northeast. And I would ask him if he would concur with the statement that is printed in the business tax review that says this:

Saskatchewan's policy of charging the PST on M&P equipment effectively increases the cost of capital by seven per cent. To the start-up firm, the initial equity requirements increase substantially more than seven per cent because of how banks and lending institutions secure financing.

Madam Deputy Speaker, will the member concur that that is a deterrent to growing businesses in Saskatchewan?

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

Mr. Harper: — Madam Deputy Speaker, the real question in this debate is a question of credibility. Does that group over there have the credibility with the people of Saskatchewan? And I would say no.

And I'm reflecting what is being said in my constituency. And why? It's because of their track record. Not only their track record as the former government in this province, but their track record in opposition where they have lacking consistency on any of their motions. They're lacking consistency on any of their statements. They have a hidden agenda, Madam Speaker. We know that. They've proved that in the last election. And the people of this province know that they have that hidden agenda, and they will not allow them ever to be the Government of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. My question is once again for the member from Saskatoon Silver Springs. And I would ask him the question once again: will he stand up and support the business people and the people of Saskatchewan if in fact this government implements the general direction on the timeline of the Vicq report in the provincial budget without adding new conditions to it? They have continually asked for this government to implement this report. Will he vote for the budget?

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Well, Madam Speaker, at least they're consistent over there. At least they're using the same language. He's using the same language as the Finance minister used last week. Will he go with the general direction? Will he support a watered down version of the Vicq report? Can we extend the timeline? No, Madam Speaker, that is not good enough for the people of Saskatchewan. What they want to see is what is in the Vicq report. What they want to see is what was in the Saskatchewan Party's submission of May 10, 2005 in Yorkton, Saskatchewan. That's what they want to see. Anything less will be an absolute failure, and we'll see what happens on budget day in this Chamber, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Madam Speaker. My question is for the member from Athabasca. Jack Vicq in the business tax review committee's report says that Saskatchewan companies don't even make the short list. After 15 years of this government's rule — most of the time that that member has sat

in his seat and occupied a chair at the cabinet table — Saskatchewan companies don't even make the short list under this NDP tax regime. Does he agree with that statement? Who knows more — him or Jack Vicq?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Community Resources.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. What I would point out, Madam Speaker, is you look at northern Saskatchewan when we started this venture as the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] some 10-and-some-odd months ago . . . 10 years and some odd months ago, is that when we looked at some of the challenges out in northern Saskatchewan, there was certainly a lot of challenges.

There was road challenges, school challenges. We needed medical facilities. We needed jobs, training, and employment. And, Madam Speaker, let's put it this way. In our constituency of Athabasca, there's now oil and gas development, Madam Speaker.

There is now a promise and a commitment by the Alberta government to work with the Saskatchewan government on building a road to Fort McMurray, which is very important for the people of La Loche who led this effort.

And you look at the forestry development opportunity in northern Saskatchewan. That's coming on board, Madam Speaker.

And the other important part — look at the diamond opportunities, look at the tourism opportunities, look at the marketing opportunities of this great province.

And all we have over their is doom and gloom and poor Saskatchewan's not going anywhere. And it's another drab, dreary day for our province. And that's the message coming from that opposition, Madam Speaker. And I will point out, I will point out, what qualifications . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Time's up. I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — My question is to the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs. Does that member support full harmonization of the PST and GST [goods and services tax], and what are the conditions he would put on doing that? Does he support doing that? Does he want it done today? Because he's talking out of both sides of his mouth on the PST. I'd like to hear right now, right here, what his position is on harmonization. And is he prepared to move \$650 million off of business people on to individual consumers to support his agenda?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Madam Speaker, I like this. I like answering questions from the minister. And I hope it's foreshadowing of what's going to happen in a few short months over here when I'll be sitting over there, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, it's interesting. It's interesting. We didn't hear, we didn't hear a response from the minister to my challenge to him either in question period or earlier today. We didn't even hear, we didn't even hear anything from the minister in this debate. He comes as we've got a few seconds left in this debate and asks the question.

Well, Madam Speaker, I stand beside Jack Vicq on that question when he says:

We further recommend that the sales tax reform be deferred subject to the Province completing broad consultations with Saskatchewan residents and . . . [Saskatchewan] negotiations with the federal government.

Madam Speaker, that member, that minister would be well advised to read this report and to follow its recommendations. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — Time for the 75-minute debate has now lapsed. Members, members, I congratulate you for your spirited debate and question and answer. We will now move on to private members' motions.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatchewan Rivers.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Motion No. 2 — Public Complaints Commission

Mr. Borgerson: — Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. I'm very pleased to stand here today to speak about the new Public Complaints Commission. At the end of my remarks, Madam Deputy Speaker — and now, Mr. Speaker — I will move the following motion:

That the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly endorse the government's creation of the new Public Complaints Commission which brings about fundamental changes to the public complaint investigation and decision process.

Mr. Speaker, this new Public Complaints Commission represents a fundamental change to the public complaint investigation and decision process here in Saskatchewan. When The Police Amendment Act of 2005 becomes law on April 1, it will create a unique Saskatchewan model for the investigation of public complaints. It's new to Saskatchewan, and in our opinion, it creates a public complaints model that is the best in Canada.

The creation of this commission is in response to both the Commission of Inquiry Into Matters Relating to the Death of Neil Stonechild and the Commission on First Nations and Métis

Peoples and Justice Reform.

This new five-member complaints commission is necessary to ensure that the investigation of complaints is done in a manner that is both respectful of and representative of Métis and First Nations people.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Members will come to order. Member for Saskatchewan Rivers.

Mr. Borgerson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This change fulfills the government's commitment to a governance structure for the municipal police community that is both transparent and accountable to all peoples in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, under the new process, every complaint regarding a police officer and every investigation with respect to a possible criminal offence with respect to a police officer will be subject to the direction of the police complaints commission. A member of the public may now make a public complaint to the office of the Public Complaints Commission, to a municipal police service, to the special investigations youth unit of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, to the board office of the affected police service, to the Department of Justice, or to an RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] detachment.

From there the complaints commission will determine whether investigations should be conducted by the complaints commission itself, by the police service against whom the complaint was made, by the police service with an outside observer appointed by the complaints commission, or by separate police service. Through this independent process, the investigation into alleged misconduct will be subject to the governance of the Public Complaints Commission.

Mr. Speaker, I think those involved in this process should be thanked for their work on this Bill. I believe that in the years to come, we will reflect on this work and realize how important and groundbreaking it has been. This is a significant historical event for Saskatchewan.

The new five-person panel that makes up the Public Complaints Commission is a product of consultations with the FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations], the Federation of Saskatchewan Police Officers, the Chiefs of Police Association, and municipal police boards.

The new members of the Public Complaints Commission will satisfy the need for our province to have proper representation in this area, and I would like to acknowledge these highly qualified individuals. Robert W. Mitchell, Q.C. [Queen's Counsel], is the Chair of the committee. He's from Regina and is the current Saskatchewan police complaints investigator and a former minister of Justice.

Catherine Knox, Vice-Chair, of Saskatoon is a lawyer who has provided advice to Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada and Battlefords healing circle. She has also served as a board member of the National Parole Board and is a consultant to Nova Scotia's Project HOPE. Ms. Knox is also a member of the Canadian Criminal Justice Association.

[12:30]

Ray Fox of North Battleford is a member of the Sweetgrass First Nation. He is the director of justice for the Battlefords Tribal Council, a city councillor with the city of North Battleford, regional director of the Saskatchewan Association of School Councils, and a member of the University of Saskatchewan regional advisory committee.

Mrs. Loretta Elford of Regina is retired from the Board of Education where she held positions of director of education, superintendent, and high school principal. And Mrs. Alford is currently a member of the board of directors of Conexus Credit Union and the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region.

And Michel or Mike Morris of Saskatoon is a respected Métis elder and board member of the Saskatoon Indian & Métis Friendship Centre, a member of the city police chief's advisory committee on First Nations and Métis relations, and an elder at the White Buffalo Youth Lodge and at St. Mary's Community School.

I believe that these commissioners will ensure public trust in our police services and the investigative process. With this commission, Saskatchewan will have the best system in the country for dealing with police complaints, clear procedures in place for the governance of complaints to ensure they're objectively and fairly investigated. The Public Complaints Commission will have direct control over the investigation into any public service complaint, including criminal matters. It will be able to investigate criminal allegations against police in a fair and thorough manner.

Mr. Speaker, this is all about trust and relationship, about having a place for people to go with their concerns and issues, a place they can trust, a place that will complement work already underway in this province's police services. It demonstrates our belief as a government that relationship and trust with Aboriginal peoples is not only important but essential and that we should find as many ways and places as possible to build this trust. This commission is one step — one important step — along that path.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Borgerson: — Mr. Speaker, we must not forget what happened to Neil Stonechild. It is a black mark in Saskatchewan's history, but I sincerely believe that with the work of the Métis and First Nations communities, the police, and government, we have moved forward to ensure that such events will not happen again.

We all want to live in a society where we can feel safe and protected. We all want to live in a society where we can trust those who were put there to protect us. And most importantly we want to live in a society where we can feel free to come forward and say something when that action is not conducive to the betterment of our society.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this week some of us had a presentation from Professor John Borrows from the University of Victoria. Mr. Borrows is with the Faculty of Law at the University of Victoria. He is an Anishinabe and a member of the Chippewa of the Nawash First Nation. He has an impressive background in Aboriginal law and First Nations legal issues, and he is

Canada's leading indigenous law scholar.

And when Mr. Borrows spoke to us . . . and I will apologize here for simplifying and condensing down what he said and interpreting it in my own way. When Mr. Borrows spoke to us, he talked about the term reconciliation. And he gave a definition that I haven't heard before, but a literal definition of the word reconciliation which he said means to sit back down together.

He reminded us of what the Treaty Commissioner tells us that we as a people all sat down together through the Crown when the treaties were first signed, that we are all treaty in a sense, all signatories of the treaties. And he reminded us that treaty is not just a legal entity but one of honour, of respect, of trust, and therefore, he said, spiritual — not religious but spiritual.

And Mr. Borrows spoke of five aspects of reconciliation. He spoke of legal reconciliation which is often limited in itself because of the adversarial nature of the justice system. And yet we see efforts at legal reconciliation across this country and this province with sentencing circles, Cree courts, and so on.

He talked of economic reconciliation to make dollars count for Aboriginal people so that they're equal participants in the economy.

And he talked about social reconciliation to ensure that indigenous people have the health, education, and social services they deserve.

And fourthly, he talked about political reconciliation so that there's recognition of sovereignty along with a mutual exchange of respect and understanding. We will see evidence of this next week with the presentation and acceptance of a special gift in this Assembly — a traditionally crafted moosehide runner and beaver pelt cushion that will hold the mace that lies before us, a symbol of political respect and I believe of reconciliation.

And lastly Mr. Borrows spoke of spiritual reconciliation, a recognition and respect for indigenous belief systems and, underlying this, a foundation of trust and relationship.

Mr. Speaker, when I think of spiritual reconciliation, I immediately think of my experience in the SUNTEP [Saskatchewan urban native teacher education program] program in Prince Albert, which is a teacher training program for Aboriginal students affiliated with the University of Saskatchewan. And in that program were students who were Métis and First Nations. The First Nations students were Dene, Dakota, and Cree. They came from the North and from communities around Prince Albert. The Métis students came from the city and from rural areas and from the North. And of all of these students, many of them were deeply rooted in their culture and knew their first language. Others were just beginning their journey of learning about themselves and about their culture.

So it seemed like a very homogenous Aboriginal teacher education program was in fact a very diverse multicultural program. And anyone who worked there or went to school in that program realized very early that in fact there was a spiritual

core to that program. And the best word we could find to sum it up was the word relationship — relationship meaning trust, humility, respect, but a parallel understanding that although there are differences that we must recognize and respect, there are commonalities or common ground that we must also stand on. And Mr. Borrows spoke of that when he talked to us earlier this week.

We call this a spiritual centre, not a religious centre but a spiritual centre in the SUNTEP program. And the very best word we could use to describe it was relationship. And when you have that kind of a spiritual centre to any program, you operate in a different way. And as we worked in the SUNTEP program, we realized that in fact this is the kind of centre that must exist in every classroom if it's to be a successful classroom. We realized that this is the spiritual centre that should be at the centre of every school and, to go even further, that this is the centre that in fact the justice system should move towards and that in fact a political system like this should consider as well.

And certainly there have been moments in this Assembly when we realize that we don't have a parallel understanding. We focus on the differences and engage in a purely adversarial approach and sometimes lose touch with what we do have in common. And the very best moments in this House are when we understand what we have in common and stand on that ground.

So Professor Borrows said that reconciliation can occur only if we have this parallel understanding. And he too used the word relationship. I'd like to bring a quotation forward from someone that we read in the SUNTEP program, a writer by the name of Parker Jay Palmer from the United States, an American educator who wrote a book called *The Courage to Teach*. And I'm quoting from Parker Jay Palmer. He says:

Relationships are all there is. Everything in the universe only exists because it is in relationship to everything else. Nothing exists in isolation. We have to stop pretending we are individuals that can go it alone.

So Professor Borrows when he spoke of reconciliation, he said that we need to sit back down together and develop relationship and understanding and trust with each other. And I believe that there is an element of reconciliation in the creation of the Public Complaints Commission, that part of it is to build and rebuild trust and relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

There is legal reconciliation, but certainly there is an element of spiritual reconciliation and perhaps some healing as well as a result of the issues raised by the Stonechild inquiry and the Commission on First Nations and Métis Justice Reform.

So the big picture here is one of being heard, of healing, and of creating relationship. And I'll quote from Parker Jay Palmer again. He says:

Why is being heard so healing? I don't know the full answer to that question, but I do know it has something to do with the fact that listening creates relationship. We know from science that nothing in the universe exists as an

isolated or independent entity. Everything takes form from relationships, be it subatomic particles sharing energy or ecosystems sharing food. In the web of life, nothing lives alone.

And he says:

Our natural state is to be together. Though we keep moving away from each other, we haven't lost the need to be in relationship. Everybody has a story, and everybody wants to tell their story in order to connect. If no one listens, we tell it to ourselves and then we go mad.

So the Public Complaints Commission, I believe, is a place where people's stories can be heard and where relationship can continue to be developed between First Nations, Métis, and non-Aboriginal people.

And so with those thoughts, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move the motion that I gave at the start which is:

That the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly endorse the government's creation of the new Public Complaints Commission which brings about fundamental changes to the public complaint investigation and decision process.

Moved by myself and seconded by the member from Saskatoon Meewasin. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Saskatchewan Rivers and seconded by the member for Saskatoon Meewasin:

That the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly endorse the government's creation of the new Public Complaints Commission which brings about fundamental changes to the public complaint investigation and decision process.

The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Meewasin, the Minister of Justice.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to second the motion of the member for Saskatchewan Rivers.

The member for Saskatchewan Rivers has been a long-time respected educator in the province of Saskatchewan, and I do not hope to match his eloquence. But I do hope I can contribute to the understanding of the Assembly and of the public of the important changes that are being made here. And I do want to emphasize the fundamental changes that the new Public Complaints Commission represents.

Mr. Speaker, eight days from now when The Police Amendment Act, 2005 becomes law, Saskatchewan will have a new model for complaints that is both unique to Saskatchewan and the best in Canada. It will be transparent. It will be accountable. It will be independent. It will be respectful. It will be representative, and it will be fair.

This new approach was developed by a steering committee that put incredible work into this project. This committee included the Department of Justice, Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, Métis Family and Community Justice Services, Regina Police Service, Saskatoon Police Service, the RCMP, Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police, office of the police complaints investigator, Federation of Saskatchewan Police Officers, and the chiefs of police of Prince Albert, Moose Jaw, Estevan, and Weyburn. The committee also heard from Shirley Heafey then the Chair of the Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP. This committee met on a regular basis for almost two years to develop this new approach, and we are grateful to all members for their diligence and openness to change.

[12:45]

I would like to repeat for members the comments I made to the media upon release of the Report on the Commission of Inquiry Into Matters Relating to the Death of Neil Stonechild. I made these comments on October 26, 2004. Quote:

I had the privilege to meet personally with Mrs. Stella Bignell, Neil Stonechild's mother, yesterday afternoon. I wanted to meet privately with Mrs. Bignell to express my sympathy to her, as well as the sympathy of the government of Saskatchewan.

I also met with Mrs. Bignell to apologize to her. I am sorry that she and her family had to wait 14 years for the investigation they deserved from the outset.

As parents, our worst nightmare is that our children will be hurt or worse, taken from us — that some unfortunate incident will rob them of their potential. That we will not see them grow [up] to be happy, healthy adults. That we will not see them experience the joy of having children of their own.

Mrs. Bignell has experienced all of this. But she has also lived with the belief that what she was told about the death of her beloved son was not complete and that the people she entrusted to find out those answers for her did not do everything they could . . . do . . .

No mother should be called upon to exhibit the strength and grace that Stella Bignell has shown throughout the years since her son's death. I admire her.

And I ask all citizens of Saskatchewan to join with me in offering our most profound expressions of sympathy and sorrow to a woman who has spent the past 14 years contemplating the endless possibilities of a life not lived.

Those were my words, Mr. Speaker. It is my hope that the changes we are discussing today will honour Neil Stonechild's memory, validate the hope of his mother that his death was not in vain, and that our response will help heal the divisions between communities.

Perhaps the greatest satisfaction for everyone who has contributed to our new complaints process was reading Mrs. Bignell's positive comments in the *StarPhoenix* some 10 days

ago when the commissioners were announced. I would quote her words:

I believe if they [had] had a commission with an aboriginal person in it, (First Nations people) would be more open to telling the things that happen to them . . . That would be the most important step for anybody to get any outcome out of what they're complaining about.

What I have to say today for the Public Complaints Commission is not important, is of little import at all, Mr. Speaker, compared to the affirmation that we have received from the mother of Neil Stonechild. I know I speak for everyone who helped develop our new complaints process in saying that we are glad that Mrs. Bignell is pleased with our work.

There are two concerns that we tried to address with the new complaints commission. Police services and the overall administration of justice have been criticized in those hard cases where a member of the public has died in a circumstance that would require the police to conduct an investigation of one of their own members. Notwithstanding the best of intentions and notwithstanding the best of efforts, there remains the concern that the police are policing themselves and that special treatment may be accorded.

And second, and perhaps connected to the first, Mr. Speaker, First Nations people are not using the existing municipal police complaints process as much as they should. And they are not using the RCMP complaints process at all. First Nations people have, however, demonstrated through the FSIN special investigations unit that they will use a police complaint system that they trust. It's these two concerns we have addressed.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the members about some of the improvements that come with this new commission. We are increasing from one police complaints investigator to five complaints commissioners, commissioners that are representative of all the people of Saskatchewan. Commissioners are chosen through consultation and the commission includes First Nations and Métis representation. In addition we are increasing from one field investigator to four field investigators employed by the commission.

Two of the three new field investigators have been hired and a third will be soon. Two of the new field investigators are of First Nations ancestry. In addition the three field investigators hired today are former police officers. It is important that those who undertake this work have extensive training and experience in conducting investigations. In addition to the existing Regina office of the complaints commission, we're opening a new Saskatoon office where two of the four field investigators will be stationed.

Finally, we have increased funding to support these initiatives, including \$150,000 provided to the FSIN for the work of the special investigations unit.

Mr. Speaker, these changes address the complaints process for municipal police services. However, the RCMP is federally regulated, thus complaints against the RCMP are handled by the Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP. I've

invited and encouraged the RCMP complaints commission to locate an office in Saskatchewan to make our two systems work together smoothly. The RCMP complaints commissioner has the following to say in her 2004-2005 annual report and 2004-2005 estimates, and I quote:

The Chair of CPC maintains a dialogue with other agencies and associations concerned with excellence in policing. The Chair has been very involved in consultations with the Province of Saskatchewan and its key stakeholders (e.g. the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) in its newly developed police complaints legislation. The CPC and Saskatchewan are committed to working together to find additional opportunities for collaboration and cooperation to better serve the people of Saskatchewan. The Attorney General of Saskatchewan has asked the federal government to consider having the CPC open a regional complaints office in Saskatchewan.

The Government of Saskatchewan Attorney General's department and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations had been particularly interested in having a commission presence in Saskatchewan because of the large Aboriginal populations being policed by the RCMP. Both organizations are asking the commission to share office with them in Saskatchewan in an effort to improve the complaint intake process for the Aboriginal community in that part of the country.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased with the openness of our suggestions that have been shown by the RCMP Complaints Commissioner. I intend to continue to encourage the RCMP commission and the federal government to act on this request.

Mr. Speaker, for too long the peoples of Saskatchewan have been divided and have had separate histories and — I think many believed — separate destinies, Mr. Speaker. This division was certainly facilitated by the many years in which First Nations people were confined, largely confined to reserves set aside for them and not allowed to participate as full citizens in the province, in their country, and in public life.

This province has no choice but to recognize that we have a shared history, that we have not been intruders upon each other's history. And the history that is shared will lead to a shared destiny, not with one group absorbing another, but with people working in co-operation, living in partnership, and building a strong future — our shared destiny together, respectful of our differences and finding strength in our diversity, fulfilling the motto of this province: "from many peoples, strength."

This will be done, Mr. Speaker, because First Nations people, Aboriginal people, will build, are building unique institutions — institutions that will reflect their sovereignty, their right to self-government. But it will also be done because institutions of the province of Saskatchewan, of the Government of Saskatchewan, of the people of Saskatchewan adapt and change to recognize the unique character of our province and our interest in our shared destiny.

One small step — and it is a large step for confidence in our police forces, for co-operation between peoples, for effective

policing and security for all people in Saskatchewan — but one small step towards that share of destiny is the unique institution that's being created a few days from now when our amendments to The Police Act become law.

This is an institution that is unique to the province of Saskatchewan. The way it has developed has been unique. The form it will take will be unique. The consultations that were involved were unique.

And this type of institution that recognizes the strength that grows out of the shared history of these peoples towards their shared destiny as they work together — one not absorbing the other, but each taking strength from the other — this is what we will be celebrating. We'll have occasions to celebrate it during the sitting, when it was referred to by the member who moved the motion, when the symbols of Aboriginal people are brought into this Assembly.

But in a very real way, while we struggle with mutual problems, problems that affect both our communities, as we work to solve those problems, we work, we build, and take those problems not as a crisis but as an opportunity to work together in partnership, in co-operation, and create not an institution that is separate, not an institution that is assimilated, but an institution that is unique and exceptional to our province and our recognition of a shared history with the First Peoples of this land and a shared destiny with them as we grow together in this land together, Mr. Speaker.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to second the motion of the member for Saskatchewan Rivers. And as it's only a few minutes before the House adjourns, given the hour, Mr. Speaker, I would move to adjourn debate.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It have been moved by the member for Saskatoon Meewasin that debate on the motion be now adjourned. 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. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, this being the first weekend of spring, with good wishes to you and all of the members and those in the House, I now move that this House do 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 that motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. This House stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30 p.m. I wish everyone a pleasant weekend.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:57.]

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