



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

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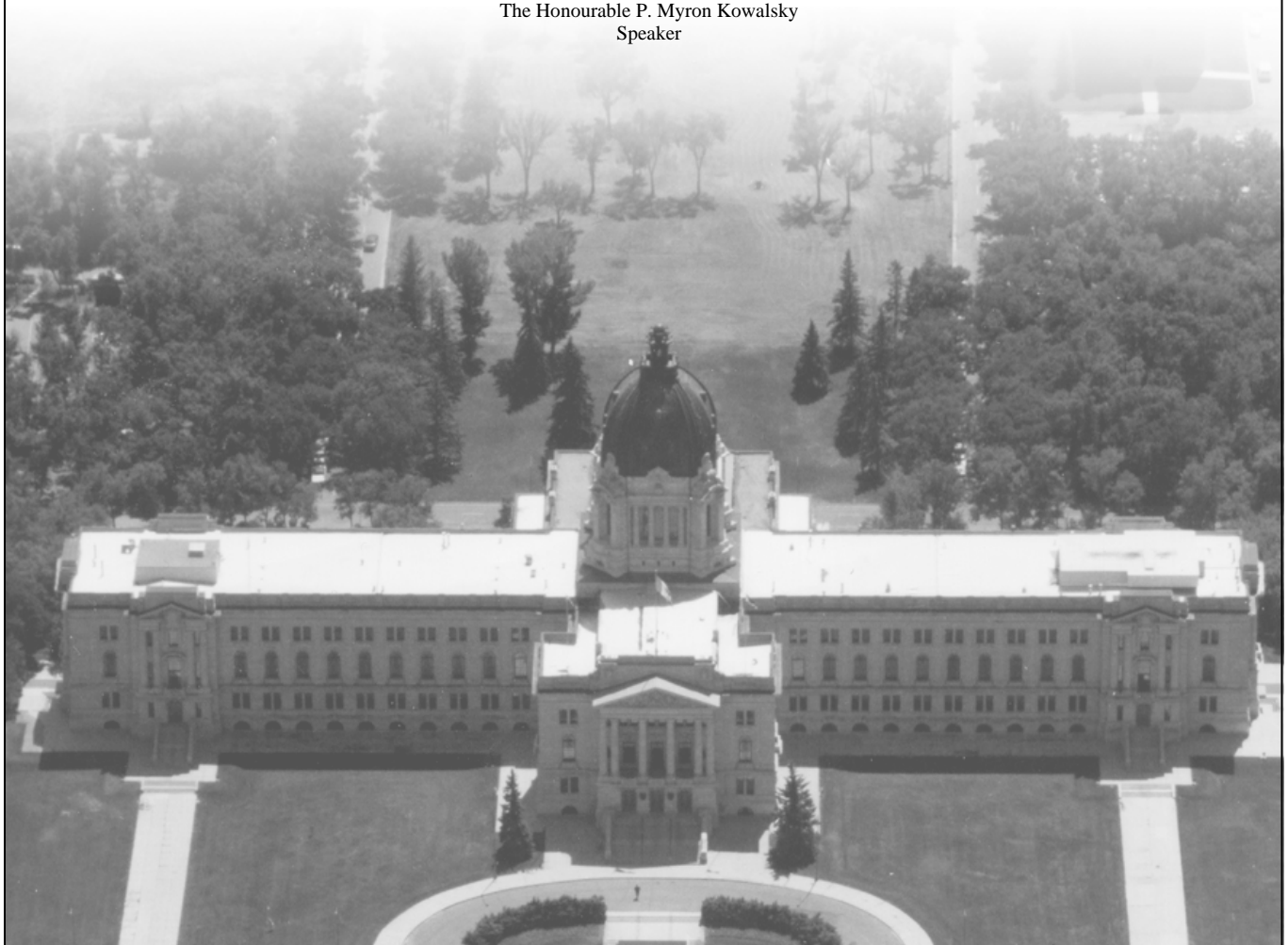
**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

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(HANSARD)

Published under the  
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The Honourable P. Myron Kowalsky  
Speaker



# MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

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

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise again today to present a petition on behalf of constituents of Cypress Hills who continue to be concerned about the state of highways in the southwest part of our province. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary actions to ensure that Highway 18 from Claydon to Robsart is repaved at the earliest possible time to ensure the safety of drivers in the area and so that economic development opportunities are not lost.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this page of petitions is once again signed by individuals from the community of Maple Creek. I so present.

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to present a petition on behalf of citizens of the province regarding the drug Avastin. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary actions to fully fund the cancer drug Avastin.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by people from Carnduff, Gainsborough, Prince Albert, and Glen Ewen. I so present.

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

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I present these petitions on behalf of a constituent who was a sufferer of cancer. The petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to fully fund the cancer drug Avastin.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

These petitions come from the communities of Storthoaks, Carnduff, Carievale, Regina, Calgary, Oxbow, and Gainsborough. Mr. Speaker, I so present.

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, today I had to make the tough decision on which petition to read, and I decided Highway No. 49:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause this government to repair Highway No. 49 in order to address safety concerns and to facilitate economic growth and tourism in Kelvington, Lintlaw, Preeceville, and surrounding areas.

The people who have signed this petition are from Preeceville and Porcupine Plain. I so present.

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

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition today to do with the drug Avastin. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to fully fund the cancer drug Avastin.

The signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Oxbow and Gainsborough.

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

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with lack of funding by this government for the cancer drug Avastin. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to fully fund the cancer drug Avastin.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals all from the city of Regina.

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it seems this government has a plan for more gravel highways in Last Mountain-Touchwood. I have another petition dealing with another highway, Highway No. 99. 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 provide dust suppression on the gravel portion of Highway 99 between Junction 6 and Craven.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, signatures to this petition come from the communities of Craven, Southey, Meadow Lake, and Regina. I so present.

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

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have several pages of a petition of citizens concerned with the safety of the access road to Bruno. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to upgrade the Bruno access road off of Highway No. 5, which would be the narrow Highway No. 5.

And the signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from Bruno, Viscount, Humboldt, and Martensville. I so present.

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

**Ms. Eagles:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to present a petition on behalf of citizens of this province who are deeply concerned about the government's refusal to fund the drug Avastin. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to fully fund the cancer drug Avastin.

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

And this is signed by citizens of Estevan and Regina. I so present.

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

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition from citizens of Wilkie concerned about their health care services. 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 Wilkie Health Centre and special care home 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 Wilkie and district. I so present.

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

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to present a petition today from residents from across Saskatchewan that are concerned and disappointed that the government made a decision not to fund the cancer drug Avastin. I'll read from the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon.

Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to fully fund the cancer drug Avastin.

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

The petitioners today come from Carievale, Carnduff, and Oxbow. I so present, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure as well to enter a petition to the Assembly. And I'd like to read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to implement a strategy that will see a dialysis unit placed in Broadview Union Hospital.

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

The petition I present is signed by folks from the communities of Whitewood, Grenfell, and Windthorst. I so present.

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

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the Assembly today to bring forth a petition signed by citizens of Saskatchewan. And the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to fully fund the cancer drug Avastin.

And the signators of this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Oxbow and Glen Ewen. I so present.

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

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition calling the Government of Saskatchewan to upgrade Highway 20 to primary weight status:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that Highway 20 be upgraded by primary weight status to ensure the economic viability in the surrounding areas.

Duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

This is signed by the good citizens in the town of Strasbourg and area. I so present.

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

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise in the Assembly this afternoon and present a petition on behalf of citizens of Saskatchewan concerned with the funding

of the cancer drug Avastin. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to fully fund the cancer drug Avastin.

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

Mr. Speaker, this particular petition has been signed by the very good citizens of Carnduff and Estevan. I so present.

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

**Mr. Merriman:** — Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the opportunity to speak. My petition is that the Saskatchewan government made a decision not to fund the cancer drug Avastin, and the prayer reads, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to fully fund the cancer drug Avastin.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by people from the city of Regina.

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

**Mr. Morgan:** — Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to rise in the House today to present yet another petition regarding the drug Avastin. I will read the prayer for relief:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to fully fund the cancer drug Avastin.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by citizens from a variety of communities across the province. I so present. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

**Deputy Clerk:** — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and pursuant to Rule 15 (7) are hereby read and received:

A petition concerning the cancer drug Avastin, SP [sessional paper] 21;

A petition concerning Highway 5, sessional paper 22;

Highway 36, sessional paper 23;

Children's Hospital in Saskatoon, sessional paper 24;

Highway 22, sessional paper 25;

Highway 310, sessional paper 26;

Broadview Union Hospital, sessional paper 27;

Addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper no. 7 and 8.

#### NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice I shall on day no. 9 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for Highways and Transportation: in the current fiscal year, does the government have any plans to convert highway section shops to satellite facilities; and if so, which section shops will be converted?

And also, Mr. Speaker, the same question for the previous two years.

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

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 9 ask the government the following questions:

To the Minister Responsible for SaskPower: who will own the carbon dioxide separation technology that will be developed for SaskPower's clean coal initiative? And a second question, what is the timeframe for the carbon dioxide separation technology agreement for SaskPower's clean coal initiative? In addition who owns the licensing rights for technology developed through SaskPower's clean coal initiative?

And also, who owns the patents and the intellectual property rights from technology developed through SaskPower's clean coal initiative? Also what is the financial responsibility of each partner in SaskPower's clean coal initiative? And finally, Mr. Speaker, what is the financial commitment from each partner in SaskPower's clean coal initiative?

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Yorkton, the Deputy Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — I'm very pleased this afternoon to rise and to introduce in the west gallery, Ilean and John Kolynchuk. They're from Melville. They're in the Assembly today for the first time, Mr. Speaker.

John is receiving treatment for cancer here in Regina and is here through the course of the week, Monday to Friday. John has worked with the railroad for many years — 38 years to be exact — and his wife has been a homemaker assisting with raising of their three children. And they're in the Assembly today to have an opportunity to examine how the Assembly works.

And I want to extend my appreciation to have had the opportunity to meet them today and to thank him for the

tremendous work that he's done in making a difference in our part of the world and helping us grow our economy in the Yorkton-Melville area. Thank you very much for being here and continued success in recovering through your treatment. Thank you very much.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the minister in welcoming Ilean and John to the Assembly. When I walked into the Assembly today and I looked up and the faces were very, very familiar, and it took a long time for me to figure out exactly where I'd met them before. But they're both . . . John is a member of the Elks club. And I remember a couple of different Elks' mixed provincial bonspiels that we were at and curling against them, and unfortunately I don't think we ever did beat them in any of the spiels that we were in. But I'd like to welcome them to their Assembly as well.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the Assembly, I would like to introduce a constituent sitting in the Speaker's gallery, Mr. Garnet Ball from Alida. And fact is, he just lives four miles east of me and tears up the roads between his place and town which I have to drive along, Mr. Speaker. So I'd just like to ask everyone to welcome him to his Assembly.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

[13:45]

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

### Gainer the Gopher Banned from McMahon Stadium

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is a sad day in Saskatchewan. Imagine our shock and dismay at our opponent's display of bad blood and poor sportsmanship. Mr. Speaker, the entire province is incensed — and rightfully so — over what is clearly a violation of all that Saskatchewan people value and all that we hold near and dear.

And it begs the question: whatever happened to the rules of good conduct and proper etiquette and fair play? Mr. Speaker, football is a rough and tumble game, and we've witnessed other transgressions over the years. But, Mr. Speaker, this one is different. The hard hits and give-and-take that go on at field level are one thing, but banning Gainer the Gopher, the Saskatchewan Roughriders' beloved mascot and our province's favourite gopher, from McMahon Stadium for this weekend's western semi-final against the Calgary Stampeders, Mr. Speaker

— I say that this has simply just gone too far.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

### Saskatchewan Fans at McMahon Stadium

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, this weekend all of Saskatchewan will be tuned to their TVs when the Riders take on the Stampeders in the CFL [Canadian Football League], and I know I speak of all members in this legislature when I wish the green and white the best of luck. But I think all of us were shocked at today's news that one important member of the Riders won't be making the trip — Gainer the Gopher.

Gainer has been banned from McMahon Stadium for this weekend's game because officials are reportedly concerned about him inciting the crowd. Mr. Speaker, I think the move by the Stampeders organization has less to do with the impact that Gainer will have on Calgary fans and a lot more to do with the fact that there are so many ex-Saskatchewan residents living in Calgary that half the crowd at McMahon Stadium will be wearing green this weekend.

Mr. Speaker, for 9 of the last 10 years under this NDP [New Democratic Party] government, Saskatchewan has lost population, mainly to Alberta. It's not enough that Saskatchewan has never won a Grey Cup while the NDP are in power. Now we're a home team when the Riders play in Calgary. Mr. Speaker, it's time to stop the out-migration of people from Saskatchewan, even though the NDP would say there would be more gophers left for the rest of us. Go Riders.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

### Natural Gas Services for Northern Communities

**Hon. Ms. Beatty:** — Mr. Speaker, despite what's happening with Gainer the Gopher, yesterday was an exciting day for the people of La Ronge, Air Ronge, Weyakwin, and surrounding area. The additional funding has been put in place to extend SaskEnergy's natural gas network north from Montreal Lake. Many people have worked extremely hard to see this day happen. It was only possible because of the dedication of the gas committee, municipal leaders, the Lac la Ronge Indian Band, and SaskEnergy.

Mr. Speaker, I look to the experience of Montreal Lake residents and businesses, and I'm excited about the possibilities for La Ronge and area. Today at Montreal Lake more than 260 homes and many community facilities including the school, the band office, the arena, and the health centre are enjoying the clean burning heat and savings with natural gas. It is my hope that in just over a year those same benefits will be felt throughout La Ronge, Air Ronge, the Lac la Ronge First Nation and Weyakwin. For businesses, reduced energy costs means new opportunities, and that opens up the future for jobs for our

young people.

Mr. Speaker, as the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] for the Cumberland constituency, I look forward to working with the community to see it take full advantage of this growth opportunity. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

### Saskatchewan's First Ethanol Symposium

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Speaker, a very important event occurred in the Cypress Hills constituency earlier this month. Saskatchewan's first ever ethanol symposium was hosted by Cypress Agri Energy and Action Southwest in the community of Shaunavon.

Looking towards future developments in biofuel production in our province, the symposium was organized to promote the feasibility and numerous benefits of ethanol production province-wide. The Cypress Agri Energy group has a real stake in ethanol, having worked diligently — and at their own expense I might add — to develop a 90-million litre facility in southwest Saskatchewan for more than five years.

There were 400 people or more who had the opportunity to hear from a panel of biofuel experts from Canada and the US [United States] including industry promoters, ethanol retailers, plant engineers and construction specialists. Information provided by each presenter made one point very clear: biofuel production can have a significant positive impact on the Saskatchewan economy.

The Deputy Premier made a half-hour presentation at the symposium and spoke glowingly about his government's biofuels agenda. But a wave of disappointment filled the room when he provided no assurance that the Shaunavon ethanol project could be an important player in the industry, nor did he make any commitments to infrastructure support.

The community needed to hear that its project provided an important template for future grain-based ethanol facilities and that the government was committed to seeing at least some of these plants erected in rural Saskatchewan. Failing to hear those minimal words of encouragement turned a successful, well organized day into a bittersweet event.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

### Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations Cultural Celebration and Powwow

**Hon. Mr. Quennell:** — Mr. Speaker, over the past week I, along with a number of my colleagues and 20,000 spectators, had the great pleasure of attending this year's FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations] cultural celebration and powwow.

Mr. Speaker, it was an extraordinary event filled with colour and sound and spectacle. As a cultural event aimed at raising awareness and promoting First Nations culture, it was an unqualified success and left no doubt whatsoever of the health, vibrancy, and strength of First Nations culture here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this is a significant milestone for First Nations people in the province. It is the 60th anniversary of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians. Commemoration of that important anniversary provided one theme for this year's celebration. The other theme was the Year of the First Nations Child.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's children and young people are Saskatchewan's future. And we will work together to ensure their future is bright and that Saskatchewan is a great place for them to live and work and prosper.

I also want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the contributions that First Nations leaders have made to the province through the FSIN over the past 60 years. Their efforts at protecting First Nations rights, building economics, and providing opportunity for First Nations have been invaluable.

Mr. Speaker, this past weekend's cultural celebration and powwow is proof of their past success and of their pride and standard of excellence that is the foundation of their future.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

### Review of Headlines

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While it was good to hear that members opposite continue to monitor the many speeches made by the Leader of the Opposition on broadcast media across the province, I do think they should listen with a little more care. And instead of merely listing the headlines provided to them in daily NDP caucus briefings and word puzzle books, perhaps the members opposite would do well to try some independent research.

Yesterday's list of headlines provided to this Assembly was at best incomplete. Some might even call it historical revisionism. Instead of copying the work of others, I think it's time that those members do their homework, and maybe they would get higher marks.

In order to provide some assistance to those members, I will now read a more complete list of headlines about the business and political climate of Saskatchewan. October 12, "Maple Leaf bails out of Saskatoon." October 21, "Faith low in Saskatchewan economy." October 19, "Youth exodus must be stopped." October 9, "Are power bills subsidizing NDP re-election bid?" September 29, "Premier likely hasn't ended concerns about leadership." October 28, "Tax cut signals NDP panic." October 28 again, "Family day should be renamed record profits day." October 28, "Sales tax cut cynical ploy." October 24, "Labour shortage a pain for new hospital construction."

Strangely these headlines didn't make the list compiled yesterday by the member of Regina Walsh Acres. If I didn't know any better, I would swear that the member from Regina Walsh Acres missed the stories on purpose. But perhaps maybe, Mr. Speaker, she was just too busy. Or perhaps she has trouble reading.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

### Person's Day Breakfast

**Ms. Morin:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had to recover first. Sorry.

Mr. Speaker, on Friday I was privileged to attend the 14th annual Person's Day Breakfast hosted by the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund. Person's Day celebrates a landmark legal decision of October 18, 1929, when the then highest court in Canada declared that women were persons and were eligible to be appointed as senators or magistrates.

This year's guest speaker was Nettie Wiebe, philosopher, political activist, and agrarian feminist who is currently teaching ethics at St. Andrews College at the University of Saskatchewan. Ms. Wiebe has been an active participant in public policy forums across Canada and around the world, speaking on numerous issues involving sustainability and human rights. She has been recognized as Global Citizen of the Year and received the Distinguished Canadian Award.

Although equality initiatives for women and minority groups are under attack by the Harper Conservatives, Mr. Speaker, we must be diligent. We must preserve the progress that has been made and be steadfast in our determination to realize equality in Canada.

Ms. Wiebe told the story of her garden. Although a hailstorm appeared to have ruined everything, the plants were so well rooted that they survived and flourished. So too the Canadian belief that no one should be underprivileged is deeply rooted.

Mr. Speaker, the disruption that is the federal Conservatives is simply a storm that will be short-lived, just as we in Saskatchewan will weather the negativity of the conservative Saskatchewan Party across the way.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — Members, on a point of order, today we've had three breaches of one particular rule, and that is that members' statements are not to be debated. First of all I think we had a comment here by the member for Cumberland, then an extended comment — the member for Humboldt — and then a little comment by the member for Regina Walsh Acres. So I just ask all members to keep in mind that members' statements are supposed to be stand-alone statements and should not depend or be a reaction to any other member's statement.

### ORAL QUESTIONS

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

### Wait Times for Cancer Care

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on this side this will come as no surprise that the Minister of Health yesterday failed to answer my question about how long cancer patients are waiting in Saskatchewan for their first visit to an oncologist.

In April, patients like Emily Morley were told she'd have to wait three months. That's three times the national average. We also learned about Doug Bonderud who had to wait four months for a second opinion from an oncologist. And that would be four months, Mr. Speaker, longer than three times the national average. I'll give the minister another chance today. How long do people in Saskatchewan have to wait for a first visit to an oncologist?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. If there was as simple an answer to the simple question that the member raises, it would be a simple matter of stating what would be the obvious.

But, Mr. Speaker, as far as cancer care is concerned in this province, there are many complications depending on the unique circumstances of each individual case. Mr. Speaker, we've also had the stresses within the system of having fewer than full complements of oncologists, which have now been corrected and in the process of being corrected. And, Mr. Speaker, we've had the challenge of being able to — using the resources available to us — provide the correct communications to individuals when they are first referred to the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency.

Mr. Speaker, we have taken the concerns, we have acted upon those in conjunction with the regional health authorities and the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency and, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you and assure the Saskatchewan public that waiting times are being reduced in this province.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

### Supply of Oncologists in the Saskatoon Health Region

**Mr. McMorris:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it's a simple question. How long do patients have to wait for a first visit to an oncologist? He talked about a full complement of oncologists now in Saskatoon which is quite interesting because yesterday we heard some conflicting information from other agencies, for example organizations in this area. For example, in 2002 the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency stated in a letter that we received that the full complement for Saskatoon would be



nine. Yesterday a spokesman for the agency said that a full complement was eight. When the minister spoke in his news scrum yesterday he said seven. What is it? Is it seven, eight, nine just to maintain a three-month wait? Or what is needed in order to bring the waiting list down to the national average?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The correct number is seven. It has always been seven, and other numbers that the member opposite has are incorrect or misleading or have come from sources that are not specific to the agency. The correct number is seven, Mr. Speaker.

And the efforts that are being undertaken by the good people at the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency and the regional health authorities, Mr. Speaker, are aimed at reducing the wait times, not maintaining them. The argument that the member opposite raises is completely misleading to the Saskatchewan public. He should recognize, Mr. Speaker, that the efforts we are taking are consistent with improving the delivery of services to Saskatchewan people, improving the ability of Saskatchewan people to live, work, raise their family in this wonderful province of ours. Mr. Speaker, we are reducing waiting times in cancer care and other care within Saskatchewan Health.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

[14:00]

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, the only person that's misleading the public is that Minister of Health from this NDP government, Mr. Speaker, because I'll send this letter over to him right after I'm done reading from it, quoting from it from the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency of 2002. And it says, and I quote:

... the Saskatoon Cancer Centre is experiencing a significant shortage of medical oncologists with five out of nine positions now vacant.

In other words, the full complement of oncologists in the Saskatoon Health Region is nine. He's saying it's seven, Mr. Speaker. I'll take the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency's numbers any time over that minister's, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, and what is it? Is it the fact that we have less incidence of cancer in Saskatchewan right now? I don't think so. Is it the fact that he says the waiting lists are getting shorter for cancer treatment? I don't believe that whatsoever, Mr. Speaker. When will this government do the right thing and supply the proper number of oncologists for people in the Saskatoon area?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite will not only today but I expect in the future use numbers gleaned from any number of sources to complicate the issues. Mr. Speaker, there are more, there are more oncologists in the Saskatoon Health Region than even the member opposite is talking about because, Mr. Speaker, there are medical oncologists, radiation oncologists, pediatrician oncologists, and stem cell hematology oncologists.

Mr. Speaker, in the Saskatoon Health Region, when you add all of that up together, there's about — well I can't add quickly in my head, Mr. Speaker — but there are seven medical oncologists in Saskatoon; there are six radiation oncologists in Saskatoon; there are two pediatric oncologists in Saskatoon; there are two stem cell oncologists in Saskatoon; and there are four clinical leaders who are oncologists, Mr. Speaker — not seven, eight, or nine.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm going to take about a minute to ask this question. Perhaps he can get his numbers added up in that time and give us a real number, Mr. Speaker. I certainly realize that there are different subsets, specialists in the cancer field. We know that. But when we talk about medical oncologists, and that's exactly what we've been talking about for the last number of days, medical oncologists is exactly what is stated by the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency in that letter. And they say that we need nine medical oncologists — not using some of the other specialists — nine medical oncologists for a full complement in Saskatoon. The minister stood in his place today and said seven. I'll take the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency's number any time.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, when is this minister going to step up to the plate and start dealing with the issue of recruiting the proper number of oncologists? I know he's got a real problem with setting targets — and I can see why because he needs to adjust it so that his numbers can fit, Mr. Speaker. Because the real complement is nine. When is he going to do his job and fill that demand?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The number of oncologists is determined by a national standard based on the number of patients in a province divided by the number of types of referrals that the individual oncologist can see. There are more people that can be seen by a medical oncologist compared to a radiation oncologist, for example, Mr. Speaker, and so the numbers will vary from time to time.

But, Mr. Speaker, this is a competitive and challenging environment for oncology. Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan

Cancer Agency — and in this case the Saskatoon Regional Health Authority — have worked diligently and very hard to ensure that we have a number of oncologists that meet the demand for the region and the area. Mr. Speaker, they have been successful at doing that just as they've been successful, Mr. Speaker, at recruiting cardiologists, endocrinologists, and physicians within the region.

Mr. Speaker, this has been a very successful year for recruiting in the Saskatoon Health Region. We should be very proud of the work they've done.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

### Physician Complement in Rural Hospitals

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP government's failure to recruit and retain doctors is also having a negative effect on my hometown of Spiritwood. As of 8 a.m. this morning the Spiritwood hospital has closed its doors indefinitely to emergencies and regular patient admissions. The three-doctor hospital has been operating with only two doctors — a husband and wife team — since August when the third doctor left. My constituents are worried about what is going to happen with emergency. Who will they go to to stabilize them before they are transferred to another facility?

Mr. Speaker, what specific steps is this government taking to ensure that the hospital can reopen to emergencies and patient admissions as soon as possible?

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite very well articulates the challenges that are faced in rural Saskatchewan and in rural communities throughout Canada, Mr. Speaker, that on occasion facilities face the stress of being unable to have a full complement of physicians, whether it's in the emergency department or whether it's just within acute care in the hospital. And, Mr. Speaker, this happens on occasion on a temporary basis throughout this province. This case is current in Spiritwood. We've heard about cases around the province in the past, and I suspect we'll hear about cases like this in the future.

Mr. Speaker, the regional health authorities are responsible for delivering the care, and the regional health authorities are responsible for recruiting and retaining health professionals with the help of the province. Mr. Speaker, in the case of Spiritwood — and I'm sure there'll be a supplementary and I'll go further on this in a moment — but, Mr. Speaker . . .

**The Speaker:** — Member's time has elapsed.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On October 13, 2006, hospital services in Spiritwood were suspended over the weekend. At that time, the overwhelming workload of the two remaining doctors was cited for the suspension of services. A representative from the Prince Albert Health Region told the CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] that the doctors, quote, " . . . 'indicated that they're not able to work this weekend. It's due to them being tired and . . . [they just needed] a break' . . ."

This is the very same reason the hospital has now cancelled emergency services and regular patient admissions. Patients now must either go to Saskatoon or Prince Albert for emergency care. Mr. Speaker, it is clear other centres are being forced to pick up the burden. What specific steps are being taken to staff up these other centres to handle the increased workload?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I knew there'd be a supplementary, and so I'm very happy to answer the question as it was raised.

Mr. Speaker, the regional care authority has the responsibility of ensuring patient safety and care. When there are stresses within the system and individual doctors acknowledge that they are having difficulty or cannot perform the responsibilities necessary, the regional health authorities will work with other centres to bring in doctors or, Mr. Speaker, they make arrangements with other regions to handle the care until the care for the people in a safe and secure manner can be handled in that facility.

Mr. Speaker, the temporary suspension in Spiritwood is to protect the safety and interests of the people of the Spiritwood area. The regional health authority is working with the community to communicate this to the people who live there. Mr. Speaker, I am confident that the regional health authority . . .

**The Speaker:** — Member's time has elapsed.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this situation is not unique in the town of Spiritwood. One hour away in Big River, the town is short one doctor. An hour away down the road at Shellbrook, the hospital is also short one doctor and soon may be short two. The situation is the same in rural communities across this province including Kamsack, Central Butte, and Arcola. The shortage means rural people do not have the same access to health care as their urban counterparts. The shortage also puts more pressure on urban hospitals that are already busting at the seams in a constant state of code burgundy.

Mr. Speaker, for 15 years, for 15 years, Mr. Speaker, this NDP

government has ignored the growing crisis in rural Saskatchewan. What guarantees is this government giving the people of Saskatchewan, and specifically the town of Spiritwood, that full health services will be restored to their hospitals, and by when?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And as the member knows, this government, in approaching the issue of recruitment and retention, has done a number of things this year. Number one, Mr. Speaker, we worked with the Saskatchewan Medical Association to put in place new measures to assist with the recruiting of physicians, particularly in rural Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, our new contract with the Saskatchewan Medical Association will put an additional \$25 million to work at addressing this issue province-wide. Secondly, Mr. Speaker, we have funded from the last year's budget a recruitment agency for the province to assist regional health authorities to do this.

Mr. Speaker, even without these initiatives, some of the health authorities are doing a very good job of providing new recruitment efforts to their communities. Rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, there's some days there's fewer doctors and other days there's more. Prairie North Health Region, Mr. Speaker, has just announced the hiring of seven new physicians.

**The Speaker:** — Member's time has elapsed.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

### Oyate Safe House

**Mr. Merriman:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister pointed out that I wasn't a social worker and I concur with that, Mr. Speaker. I'm just a parent concerned with children and I hope that's good enough for this minister.

Yesterday I asked the minister about an individual involved in the establishment of the Oyate Safe House who was arrested for sexual involvement with a minor. The arrest prompted the cancellation of an official opening. The minister said this individual had never been in contact with children at the safe house. Mr. Speaker, is the minister aware of any cases where employees working in the safe house were in contact with the children and under police investigation, and were there to his knowledge any employees at the safe house with serious criminal records?

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

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to point out that we explained to the media yesterday in relation to the case that that member opposite raised that the individual that was at the time working on the proposal didn't have any access to the children. He didn't work at this facility.

He wasn't on the board. He wasn't anywhere near Oyate. And what the member opposite pointed out to the media, and I quote:

“Clearly the incident points to a serious problem with the people running the safe house . . .”[said Merriman].

Mr. Speaker, he heard me when I told the media — and the media got it — that this individual was not anywhere near the Oyate Safe House, not a staff of ours, not a staff of Oyate, and not on the board. Yet that member gets up and misrepresents the point that I made and I clarified with the media three or four times. And he goes out and he says, these are the people running that safe house.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that member: if you're really as concerned about the kids that you say you are, stop playing politics and get on board . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order, order. I remind the minister to direct all his remarks through the Chair. The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Northwest.

**Mr. Merriman:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What the minister failed to state was that he couldn't answer the question: then why was the grand opening cancelled? Mr. Speaker, were there employees in the safe house required to undergo a criminal check?

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

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Mr. Speaker, to answer the second part of the question, I have an article here from Wednesday, March 15 of this year in which I was asked about an allegation of assault against the safe house employee. And from my perspective, and I pointed out at the interview with the reporter, and I quote:

“We have no evidence that there has been any problems, we have no evidence that they did not respond to the issues.”

And that was made in reference to the board not responding to the allegation, Mr. Speaker. This department insisted and insisted again that the Oyate board do a criminal record check on all their employees. And, Mr. Speaker, they did not do one on one individual, and he was a casual employee. The problem was immediately found out after there was an allegation. That employee was terminated or let go, and the issue was sent to the police. Mr. Speaker, the board did what they had to do, and they done that very quickly.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

[14:15]

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

**Mr. Merriman:** — Mr. Speaker, only one employee who wasn't really involved but was involved when we cancelled the meeting; another employee who was just a casual employee.

Mr. Speaker, he's making my case for me and I want to thank him.

That briefing note from Mark said the department had been assured that all employees were to submit to a criminal record check by June 2004. Can the minister tell this House if that deadline was met?

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

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Mr. Speaker, in our service agreement with Oyate, the department insisted and continued to insist that all employees are subjected to a criminal record check. And guess where that member got that information from, Mr. Speaker? He got it from the reports that we submitted to the Children's Advocate and to the auditor and to a special committee.

We have nothing to hide, Mr. Speaker. As we indicated in the past there were some problems. We responded to the problems. The board acted decisively, and this individual was released. Mr. Speaker, he was also investigated and I understand that there is no charges laid.

However, Mr. Speaker, we take the issue very seriously. We're going to resolve the matter, and we're going to continue insisting with Oyate that they've got to get their criminal record checks before anybody works at Oyate, otherwise they will not get any more funding, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Merriman:** — Mr. Speaker, the barn door is open; the house is out. They had three years, July 2003 until now, to do these criminal checks, Mr. Speaker. And now we're talking about we're going to do it ongoing. What about the children that were affected prior to that date?

The March briefing note provided to this minister concludes that one employee at the safe house was not subject of a criminal records check until 14 months — 14 months, Mr. Speaker — after the deadline was set.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister care to share with this House the results of that criminal check as outlined in the briefing note given to him a month after he joined and became minister of that department?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Mr. Speaker, it's important to note that all the information on the Oyate Safe House is very public. This is an issue that is two years old. And the member is correct in the sense that 14 months after we began insisting that the criminal records checks be done because our service agreements indicated, they found out that this individual was working on a

casual basis at the safe house and that they did not do a criminal record check and there was an allegation made against that individual.

We've done this story six months ago, very public story. And, Mr. Speaker, the board erred. And, Mr. Speaker, this is very unfortunate and is not acceptable. However from this day forward, Oyate will be cleaned up and they'll not get one red cent unless all the conditions of the auditor and the advocate are met. And, Mr. Speaker, that's where the work begins and that's where, as a minister, I want to focus my time on, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member from Saskatoon Northwest.

**Mr. Merriman:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I'll remind the minister that the story broke from CBC which started this, and Public Accounts Committee — pushed by this side of the House — to do the auditor's report and the Children's Advocate report. Otherwise, Mr. Speaker, that facility would be open today and he'd have done nothing.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Merriman:** — Mr. Speaker, let me read the briefing note.

The department learned upon the conclusion of the police investigation into the alleged sexual assault at Oyate that the former employee in question was hired by the agency despite having a criminal record including violence.

Can the minister please explain to this House how that happened?

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

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I pointed out earlier that as a department we insisted, and we continue to remind the board, that criminal record checks must be done. And, Mr. Speaker, our department did not run Oyate. It was being run by an autonomous board and we were assured on a regular basis that criminal record checks were indeed done.

Now what happened, Mr. Speaker, is the board did not do one criminal record check on this employee. There's an allegation that was investigated, and the board acted decisively, Mr. Speaker. The board let the individual go. There was a police investigation.

And guess what, Mr. Speaker? The Children's Advocate and the auditor give us a plan of action to follow. We've met with the board last month and we told the board, you've got to get those criminal record checks done. If you don't get them done, you will not be getting any further funding, Mr. Speaker. And I'd much rather listen to the Children's Advocate and the auditor than members opposite who purely have a political agenda because they keep focusing on the problems and not on the solutions, Mr. Speaker. Shame!

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Merriman:** — That's ironic that they asked for the criminal checks last month. It's been closed since April. That's really encouraging. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to also point out to that minister that they provided the funding and he has the sole responsibility as the Minister of DCRE [Department of Community Resources and Employment] for every child in this province under his care. And no matter who is responsible for Oyate, he is the final buck.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Merriman:** — Once again, Mr. Minister, this minister hasn't even read the material provided again. Once again, Mr. Minister, this minister keeps backing up. He has demonstrated complete incompetence on this file. Once again this minister has demonstrated a callous disregard for the young children involved.

Mr. Speaker, to the Premier and former minister of Social Services, when are you going to do the right thing? How much longer are you going to watch this . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, order, order. Member would restate his question through the Chair.

**An Hon. Member:** — Try to do it without reading.

**Mr. Merriman:** — I'd be delighted.

Mr. Speaker, when is the Premier going to do the right thing and replace this minister for complete incompetence?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to refer once again to the members opposite, we got a really good road map from the Children's Advocate and from the auditor. And, Mr. Speaker, we're going to follow that road map. It's right here, Mr. Speaker. That road map is very clear.

And as minister we're going to, we're going to follow all the recommendations, going to do exactly what the auditor and the Children's Advocate asked us to do. And, Mr. Speaker, what's really important, what's really important is the plan; it's clear and we've got good direction and that's what we intend to do.

I don't know how much more clear that I can be. When it comes to the responsibility that I have — and I take that responsibility very seriously, Mr. Speaker, because many of these kids are my own kids, Mr. Speaker. And we must continue building forward, working with Oyate, with the First Nations community, with the Children's Advocate, and the auditor.

What we're not going to do, Mr. Speaker, is follow that political agenda over there, because that does nothing to solve the problem, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### SPECIAL ORDER

### ADJOURNED DEBATES

### ADDRESS IN REPLY

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Mr. Trew, seconded by Ms. Hamilton, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Mr. Duncan, seconded by Mr. D'Autremont.]

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Nutana, the Minister of Advanced Education and Employment.

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I had a few moments last night to put some brief comments on the public record regarding our Throne Speech, and I'm pleased to enter into this debate on the Throne Speech. And last night, Mr. Speaker, I indicated that I wanted to remind the members opposite of some of their comments in the Throne Speech before the last provincial election, and I'll do that in a moment.

But first what I would like to do is say a warm word of welcome to the new member from Weyburn-Big Muddy. I remember coming into this Legislative Assembly. I was a tad bit older than the member from Big Muddy when I entered into this Assembly, but not much. And I can tell, Mr. Speaker, from the member's comments that he is a man that understands a bit of history. He maybe even is a student of history. He certainly cares passionately about this province, and I'm looking forward to hearing from the member from Big Muddy in the months ahead as we have a debate in this province about the future of this province.

The other thing I wanted to do, Mr. Speaker, is I want to welcome some new people that are working in my ministerial office in this building. Mr. Speaker, fundamentally the staff in my office have totally turned over. I think that the average age of the people, the young people working in my office is about 24 years or 25 years of age. And these are young people who are full of vim and vigour, and they care passionately about this province. I want to put it on the public record that they do good service for the citizens of our province day in and day out.

I also want to thank my constituency assistant back home in Saskatoon. I know that the members earlier last week were talking about Mr. Heppner and his constituency assistant being of good Mennonite descent. And I want you to know, Mr. Speaker, that the woman that works in my constituency office in the city of Saskatoon is also of Mennonite descent, and she is an extremely hard worker and does yeoman service on behalf of the people living in Saskatoon Nutana. Her name is Judy Gossen, and I want to thank her for the work that she does on behalf of the people of this province, providing important services to people who want to interact with government.

Mr. Speaker, this is a good Throne Speech, and I've had an opportunity to watch many throne speeches and listen to many

throne speeches in terms of my history in this Legislative Assembly. And what throne speeches do is they lay out the government's agenda for the following year.

They don't provide a lot of detail, but what they do is provide a framework for discussion, and it frames the budget process as you move into putting the meat on the bone, so to speak, Mr. Speaker. It really outlines the foundation for an agenda for the coming year. And in this case, I think it outlines a foundation for the future of our province which I think is important.

And as a student of history, you'll know how important history is. And one should never look back in its entirety, but one should never look forward unless you understand some of your history. And, Mr. Speaker, the historical facts are quite clear. In 1991 when the NDP came to government, the reality for us was that we were inheriting in the previous . . . in that year, a \$1 billion deficit. That is a fact.

Another fact . . . and I know the members of the opposition don't want to hear this, but the Provincial Auditor in 1982, when Allan Blakeney left office, clearly indicated that this province on a GRF [General Revenue Fund] basis had a surplus of \$130 million. There was no debt when it came to the General Revenue Fund. When our government came to office in 1991 . . . And it shows the overall debt. It was about \$3 billion, and it was Crown corporation debt. Oh no, I'll get you the record, member opposite. History is important and let's not stretch the facts. We know what we inherited in 1991, and we know what we left in 1982.

And, Mr. Speaker, some of my colleagues have said this. The members of the opposition want to become the government. They will do anything to become the government. But one of the things that has become quite clear to me, having experienced the history of 1980s, it's not only about government. It's about the treasury and who has access to the treasury, who has access to the wealth of this province that is created through taxes and royalties and so on.

And as a result of what we experienced in the 1980s . . . and I was a young person in this province in the 1980s. I was a young person. I know exactly what happened in this province, and young people left this province in droves in the 1980s. But we inherited a massive public debt.

And I remember in 1991 and 1992 and 1993, getting us all the way through the 1990s, the struggle that we had in order to ensure the bond dealers and the money lenders and the bankers that we were going to get our fiscal house in order. And I remember, and some of my colleagues were there, when we issued a bond. The Department of Finance issued a bond; there was a bond issue. And there were people who didn't want to buy our bond, and that sent a horrible signal through the money markets, a horrible signal.

And basically, Mr. Speaker, we had a cabinet meeting — and I think I could put this on the public record because it has been discussed — where we talked about do we turn this place over to Brian Mulroney, or do we make our way out of this mess. And we began to make our way out of this mess. And we did, Mr. Speaker. And it took us all the way through the '90s, all the way through the '90s. And you know we're an activist people.

We wanted to come into government and do things on behalf of our citizens. But the worst thing we could have done was to turn this place over to Ottawa. We were elected to right the wrongs of the 1980s and make this place right. And we did it. We did it, and we got ourselves out of that mess.

[14:30]

And the historical facts are, we have had 13 credit rating upgrades. We have fourteen credit rating upgrades. We have. That is a fact. The fact is — and the members of the opposition won't want to acknowledge this — we have, we have in terms of our debt to GDP [gross domestic product], we have reduced it to under 20 per cent. It used to be over 30, Mr. Speaker. That is a fact, Mr. Speaker.

The facts are, Mr. Speaker, we came out of the '90s, we came out of the '90s . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Mr. Speaker, I'd like to be able to put my comments on the public record. We came out of the '90s, and we got ourselves in a position where we had some flexibility. We started to reduce interest on the public debt, and that gave us some flexibility.

The other thing that happened in the late 1990s is the Government of Canada gave the provinces the ability to look at redesigning their income tax system. And in 1999 we promised the citizens of this province that we were going to reduce their personal income taxes by \$1,000 a family. And, Mr. Speaker, we had the Vicq report, and Vicq made a recommendation how over a period of years we could begin to reduce personal income taxes in this provinces. And, Mr. Speaker, we did it.

And then, Mr. Speaker, when the Premier of Saskatchewan — who they like to belittle, who they like to belittle — when he came into office as our leader in 2001, January 2001, he said, okay we have our fiscal house in order, and now what we have to do is get the economics of this place right, personal income taxes.

Then we changed our royalty structure — not only for heavy oil but for enhanced oil recovery. And then we thought, well we have some more fiscal flexibility. We need to change our mining royalty structure in order to perhaps not only expand the potash industry in this province but perhaps get another mine. And there's diamonds, and there's rare earth, and there's other opportunities.

And we did that, Mr. Speaker. And as a result of that, we now are positioned where we can reduce business tax, corporate capital tax, and corporate income tax which we did last spring. All of this has been put in place through careful thinking, careful thought, carefulness, Mr. Speaker, because we didn't want to put the province back in the position it was in, in 1991.

Now when I listen to the members opposite, when we're bleeding jobs, it's the NDP government's fault. And when we have job shortages and the economy starts to turn around, it has nothing to do with government. I want to assure the members opposite that the situation we're in now has been carefully laid out in the 1990s, the 2000 to 2005 period when we started to use some of the levers — the minimal levers that we have as a government — to change the economics of this province. And we are poised, Mr. Speaker, for the first time in a very long

time, for the first time in a very long time, to have this province running on all engines, Mr. Speaker, on all engines.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the members opposite, in the Throne Speech before the 2003 election, member after member after member rose in their seat and they told this side of the House that we were gone, that this government would never be re-elected. They had wagers that this government would never be re-elected. They said time after time that 28 days after the next provincial election they would change seats with us. They would be sitting over here.

It's very familiar, Mr. Speaker. I've heard the same information shared with this side of the House during this Throne Speech because they believe that before the next Throne Speech, we will have a new government. We will have an election.

And I remember being in, I think it was, Germany with some of the members of the opposition, with the member from Wascana Plains. And we were told that summer that we were gone. They were getting all ready. I mean as George Bush just said recently about the Democrats in the United States, they were busy measuring the curtains for their new offices and putting in new furniture.

Well, Mr. Speaker, one of the things I've learned in politics . . . and this is an important thing to remember. It's a very important thing to remember. A day is a long time in the life of a politician. A week is a long time in the life of a politician. A month is. Six months is. Eight months is. And one should never underestimate the determination of the New Democratic Party in this province and its MLAs, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — One should never underestimate our determination. And we are a determined group of people. And, Mr. Speaker, one of the things I've come to know, we are a fairly disciplined group of people. And when we set our minds to doing something, I think that we can do what needs to be done. And as I will say to the members opposite, it's not over till it's over, and we have a few miles to go before the next election. So don't become too arrogant too soon because you never know. You might be sitting there after the next election. Mr. Speaker, you just might be sitting there.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to what some of the members had to say about this province. And, Mr. Speaker, another word of advice for the opposition: it is absolutely fine to criticize the government. That's fair. It's fair to criticize public policy. It's fair to engage in good public policy debate. But I think one of the things you need to remember is that when you're criticizing the government you need to distinguish between the government and the people of this province and this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, I . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh yes you should remember this. You should remember this, Madam Speaker, because let me tell you about that. Let me tell you about that.

I have received some letters that have been sent by the Leader of the Opposition, who wants to be Premier, to young people in

this province. And these are young people who are wanting to come to the province perhaps. They want to move here.

And does the Leader of the Opposition talk about the thousands and thousands and thousands of jobs that are available in this province? No he doesn't. Does he refer them to the city of Swift Current's website where there are jobs, Madam Deputy Speaker? Does he refer them to the Swift Current Chamber of Commerce website? No he doesn't. Does he talk about various employers that are looking for people to fill unfilled positions in the province, Madam Deputy Speaker? No he does not.

All he does is he rails on and on and on about the Premier's government. Well, Madam Speaker, if you're a young person, you don't live in the province of Saskatchewan, you'd like perhaps to come home. Or maybe you'd like to move here because we have affordable housing. You could afford to drive a car. You'd have the lowest bundle of utility rates in the country. This is an affordable place. You're close to 100,000 lakes in this province. Does he try and put a positive image of this province forward? Absolutely not.

What the member of Swift Current does, the opposition leader, the would-be premier of Saskatchewan, all he does is dump on this province.

And in fact, Madam Deputy Speaker, last week when we had the announcement of the Family Day, what did he do? What did the would-be premier do? He had a very odd look on his face is what I recall on television, and he said everybody would be going off to Calgary to see their family.

Madam Deputy Speaker, do you want to know how many people stop me to tell me how offended they were by that? How offended they are about an Alberta sycophant? They are offended because we have family here. We have family here.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, if the would-be premier, the member from Swift Current, the Leader of the Opposition, wants to get himself to the position where he just might be premier, he needs to be more positive about the province of Saskatchewan. He needs to, he needs to start selling this province as a good place to live, work, and raise a family. And he needs to start encouraging young people to not only come to this province, but stay in this province.

But that's not what he's interested in, Madam Speaker. He is only interested in this Chair — it's all about power — and he's interested in the public purse. That's what he's interested in. He's interested in the treasury. He's interested in getting his hands on the peoples' money. And for whom? Is it about supporting the citizenry? Or is it about supporting their friends who have been waiting and waiting and waiting 15 years to get their hands, their mitts back on the public purse, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And we're going to remind the public what happened in the 1980s, because it's important that young people know this student of history. Because I watched as a young person, I watched who got rich and who didn't. Oh they say it was a long time ago, but we're paying for that money. We're still paying for that money. And some people got rich. And some people got rich. And some people got rich. And we know who they are.

And guess who's paying for it? We're paying for it. And we're still paying for it, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Now the other thing I want to talk about very briefly is about immigration. And I recall the member from Biggar speaking about immigration last night. And what's so curious about immigration . . . And by the way, we are making great strides on immigration in this province, great strides. But I'd like to remind the members what they had to say about our immigration policy last spring. And by goodness, you'd swear to goodness that they'd dreamed up this immigration policy themselves.

Well here's what the member from Rosetown Biggar said: "... bring people into Saskatchewan to be unemployed." We have massive job shortages.

Here's what the member from Cannington says, asks us if we were telling immigrants what was it like in Saskatchewan or are we "... painting bright blue skies..." when promoting our province. The message is, don't come. There's nothing happening here.

And then the member from Estevan says, what are they going to do when they get here, when literally there are hundreds of immigrants that could be and are on their way to Estevan to work because they have a lack of skilled workers in the province of Saskatchewan.

My point is, Madam Deputy Speaker, my point is that we have an immigration policy. It's working. We have an immigration policy where international people are coming from all over the world to fill some of those job shortages. We have an immigration policy that means that not only the nominee but their family is going to be coming to the province, and they're coming from all over the globe. And that's the way this province was over 100 years ago. We have communities that are welcoming these newcomers to our province. They are filling positions that are going vacant.

And the members opposite, one year ago, less than a year ago when we announced this policy, Madam Deputy Speaker, they were negative about this policy. And now they understand that we do have a labour shortage in the province of Saskatchewan.

[14:45]

But here's my point, Madam Deputy Speaker. Every time the Government of Saskatchewan moves forward with a positive initiative, they dump on it and then —might be six months later — it was their idea, and they're critical because it's not working as fast or as well as they think it should, Madam Deputy Speaker. And that's what the opposition's all about — not good enough, province isn't good enough, the policies aren't good enough, the strategies aren't good enough. All they do is dump on the people who are working in this province. I'm not talking about the government members of the legislature. I'm talking about the employers, the people in the communities, the regional colleges, the chambers of commerce that are working very, very hard to fill positions in this province and encourage people to come to this province, retain people in this province.

But all we have is the negative nabobs over there dumping day

in and day out, not on the government members but on the people of our province. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan are sick of it. They're sick of it. And if these folks want to be elected my recommendation is you need to start talking positively about Saskatchewan — not that they'll take my advice. But you need to start talking positively about this place because when you get people on a train you need to figure out how to get them off that train, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, the other thing I want to say, they talk about young people. I think it was in July we had a record number of young people between the ages of 15 and 24 working in this province — 105,000 young people. Pretty good I'd say, pretty good. Can we do better? Absolutely. But the trends are starting to come up.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in the last quarter, and we will soon get the quarter for July, August, and September, and the last quarter our population was up — not much, 305. But we seem to have started to turn things around, Madam Deputy Speaker, and we can. We have over on our SaskJobs.ca 10,000 positions in this province, just on the government website, that we need to fill and they are in all of their constituencies. That's important, Madam Deputy Speaker.

We have a recruitment and retention strategy and recruitment agency coming from the Department of Health. We have a labour market strategy that we're going to roll out here shortly, Madam Deputy Speaker. But I will say this, this province is now poised; we are poised, Madam Deputy Speaker, for the next century. And I can say it's because of the work that this government along with the citizens of our province did in the 1990s and in the first part of the last century . . . or this century.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, I believe we have the cornerstones in place. We just need to keep going in the direction that we're going. And we need to be positive and optimistic about this province because I believe that this is a province that has tremendous opportunities, offers tremendous opportunities, for all who live here and all that will come here.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, it's indeed a great pleasure to rise in the Assembly. It's been a number of times that I've had the opportunity to speak on behalf of Canora-Pelly residents.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to begin by first of all thanking my family members, my wife, Gail, who continues to be the principal and teacher in Invermay School and has been supportive of me for my entire 11 years as an MLA. And I really appreciate her support and her dedication to not only her job but also to helping me do my job.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this year was a year of mixed emotions in our family as . . . We have two children and our oldest has been a teacher in the community of Strasbourg now for a number of years. But our youngest daughter graduated



from the U of R [University of Regina] this spring and like many Saskatchewan people she has been given a job in Calgary working for an oil and gas company. And so she is one of a number of the, I think, very good young people in this province that has looked at opportunities in Alberta and has moved.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the people of Canora-Pelly have also had a mixed year. There have been tremendous crops grown in the more easterly part of the Canora-Pelly constituency and there are piles of grain from Kamsack up through Norquay, Pelly. But on the far western area getting closer to the area of Rama and Invermay which is in the Kelvington-Wadena constituency, we see very poor yields. A lot of land that wasn't seeded and of course because of that and because of wheat midge and other pests we see that even the yields in crops like wheat is down to 12 bushels per acre. Canola, due to rain and the heavy amount of heat that the crop experienced in the latter stages of July, we see six, seven, eight bushels an acre. So it's a mixed part of the province.

Madam Deputy Speaker, one thing. The minister opposite talked about optimism and there is optimism in the Canora-Pelly constituency when we talk about agriculture. Agriculture always has to be optimistic about next year or we wouldn't have any farmers.

And with the recent announcement by two private companies in the Yorkton constituency to locate their canola crushing plants, there is optimism. There is a chance that maybe prices will be affected in a positive fashion and that we'll see the opportunity for biodiesel plants in the future. And that is encouraging to farmers as they suffer through this last while where commodity prices have been extremely low.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I do want to begin by thanking the member from Melfort and the opposition member from Moose Jaw North for working diligently on producing a new calendar. For many of us who travel far to reach the legislature here in Regina, where we have a two and a half hour trip, it is difficult to get back to meetings on a Monday night or a Tuesday night. And now we will have that opportunity to have meetings scheduled into our calendars on Thursday nights and then to be in our constituency on Fridays and Saturdays and maybe, maybe, Madam Deputy Speaker, save having to go to our offices on a Sunday like many of us have done in the past. So I think this is a great step forward, and I think we'll see the benefits of that as we move through the next few weeks.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in the constituency also, tomorrow is election day for rural municipal councillors and reeves, and there will be some changes. I was surprised that the number of changes that may take place will not be as many as the number that has taken in the urban elections. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, I know I took a quick look at the number of changes in my constituency, and we will have a significant number of new mayors in the communities that I represent. And I look forward to working with those people in communities like Preeceville and Kamsack, which are two of the largest communities. And even some of the smaller communities like Togo and Stenen also have new mayors. So congratulations to all who let their names stand, and congratulations of course to those who will now be representing their communities.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this Throne Speech has created a number of concerns, a number of concerns in Canora-Pelly. And that's what I'm going to spend my few minutes on is talking about how this government, the NDP's policies have affected the people of Canora-Pelly and the delivery of services to those people. And I'm going to begin with health care.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm sure many have heard me in this Assembly talk about the announcement of the construction of a hospital in Preeceville, a facility that was announced already a number of years ago — 1999. And at that time, Madam Deputy Speaker, the cost was projected to be 4.5 million. And as everyone knows, the share that is expected to be raised by the local community is 35 per cent. So that would have meant that the community would have had to raise 1.6 million. They did that.

But we've been waiting seven years, Madam Deputy Speaker. And now when we finally see the possibility — and I say again the possibility because it is going to tender — the most recent projection for cost is now \$10 million. And Preeceville's share, the share for the Preeceville area — and it's not just the town of Preeceville, it's the entire area — has risen to \$3.5 million.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I think you see how that kind of delay, that kind of procrastination will now mean that the people of Sturgis and Stenen and Norquay and Preeceville and Buchanan and Rama now have to come up with \$3.5 million.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we heard today . . . In question period we talked about facilities that have closed due to lack of health professionals. I took a look at the medical SaskJobs postings for Kamsack, Canora, and Preeceville as of today. Today there are four postings for registered nurses. There are two postings for licensed practical nurses. There's one registered psychiatric nurse posting. There's one medical laboratory technician posting.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, the area requires six new doctors. We currently have a complement of six in the area that serve Preeceville, Kamsack, and Canora. But that area needs at least 12 and these are the recommendations of the Sunrise Regional Health Authority. So we need 12 and we have six. So that means we have a posting of at least six family physicians needed.

Madam Deputy Speaker, what this tells you is that with that kind of shortage, with that kind of need, problems develop in the system. And I'm going to tell you about a situation that happened in the middle of August. A situation occurred on a Sunday morning where my dad fell — and was severely injured — off his back step at his house. I was called and I came to his aid and I took him in my vehicle. And I wanted to call an ambulance but he said no, just take me in, and we headed into Canora.

Now Canora's the most . . . closest hospital to my area. When I got there, I went in quickly. He was cut severely and I wanted to leave him in the vehicle. And a nurse came out to tell me, to say no, Ken, you can't, you can't take him out of the facility. You must go to Yorkton because Canora's on bypass. There are no doctors in the Canora facility.

So we went, we went on to Yorkton. But when I got there, I looked around the emergency room and there were dozens of people waiting. And I recognized some people from Norquay and I recognized an individual from Kamsack. And I was thinking, well you know, why did they come here? Then I find out that Kamsack is on bypass for that very weekend. So we had two facilities in the Canora-Pelly constituency, two out of the three hospitals, both on bypass and we're funnelling everybody into Yorkton.

Well you know what happened there? I was amazed. Those nurses were just running. They were trying to do the best they could. The two doctors that were handling the emergency cases were trying to do the best they could, but it took three to four hours before my dad finally saw an actual doctor. Now what that shows you is that there is a lack of a plan. You can't, you can't have Yorkton . . . You can't expect Yorkton to handle everything when you don't have anybody in Kamsack and in Canora.

Let me tell you about another situation. In the facility of Yorkton when acute care facilities were closed, we were told, people in Canora-Pelly were told about what a great facility Yorkton would be as a regional hospital. Well let me tell you, Madam Deputy Speaker, there isn't even a pathologist in Yorkton today.

Last week, last week when my dad had to have a biopsy done on a Wednesday, his results were . . . The biopsy tests were sent from Yorkton because there is no pathologist. They were sent to Regina. Madam Deputy Speaker, those results did not come back, they did not come back for a whole week, because when Dr. Wanis's office called Regina, they said we are swamped. We can't deal with that kind of a deluge of incidents that have been sent from rural Saskatchewan. So, Madam Deputy Speaker, there is a problem in the health care field; there is a problem. And this government better recognize that.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to talk about a situation involving Canora. The specific item is regarding child care. We have been told, Madam Deputy Speaker, that there were going to be 250 new places created for child care. Canora was approached by the Community Resources minister's staff and said, you know, it would be a great thing if Canora had a facility. So they went through the process of putting forward a proposal to the government. They were encouraged by the government. And I want to read a press release, Madam Deputy Speaker. It says this: both the survey and the public meeting indicated that there was a demand for a licensed child care facility in Canora.

So they went through the procedure. They were encouraged to submit an application for 25 spaces, which they found out . . . And then they found out, Madam Minister, that there was a tentative agreement for a building and continued support from provincial representatives. The group was informed in March that an additional operating grant was available.

[15:00]

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, if you've worked on a project for eight or nine months and you've heard from the government that says there's additional funding, please do this, please do

this, please do this, and you've done all that, what would be your expectation? Your expectation would be that there would be an approval. But, Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to read from a letter dated July 3, and it is to the Canora Community Child Care Centre Inc., and I quote two paragraphs. It says this:

In determining the space allocations for 2006-07, consideration was given to the corporate priorities of the provincial government and the Department of Learning. Priorities reflect school-like services, support for immigrant families, northern and rural development, non-standard hours of service and links to post-secondary education.

Then it says this:

Your request for 25 new spaces for Canora Community Child Care Centre Inc. has been considered. Given the priorities mentioned above as well as the substantial number of spaces currently waiting for funding, not all requests were able to be approved. As such, I regret to inform you that the funding for the 22 new spaces you requested is not available at this time.

Suddenly 25 became 22. I don't know how that happened, Madam Deputy Speaker, but this program was expected. This program was expected. But you know what? This government wanted to do the Imagine campaign. Imagine if we had \$300,000. Imagine if the Canora community had some of that money, some of that money that was dedicated to this advertising campaign. Imagine, Madam Deputy Speaker, they could have a child care program in Canora that would serve the families of Canora.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Madam Deputy Speaker, there are so many things that need to be mentioned by myself in respect to the Canora-Pelly constituency, and I'm only going to touch on a couple of more.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in parts of my constituency, specifically Kamsack, there is a level 1. Level 1, 2, I guess is the best way of describing it. It is the Eaglestone Lodge. It is a facility that provides just tremendous care to people that still don't have the needs of level 3 and 4. But you know what happens to some of those people, Madam Deputy Speaker? They are on pension. They have a finite amount of money that comes into their hands. They don't have assets. Some of them don't even have family members living within this province, and many times there is a situation where their total income is about \$1,300.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the fee to live in Eaglestone Lodge was increased last year, and it's about \$1,500.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I wrote a letter to the minister, the minister again of DCRE to ask him what can be done. What can be done to provide assistance to these people? And, Madam Deputy Speaker, the response I got back just baffled me because it talked about the fact that the government doesn't fund level 1 and 2 anymore, and that if the needs were there that they could to level 3 and 4 and that care would be subsidized.

The question I was asking was this. If someone is short \$200, will social assistance provide that \$200 so that they can live in a facility as great as Eaglestone Lodge? The answer never came back. Never came back that said it was yes. It said, well you can call this number, you can call this number, you can call this number. The question I am asking is whether or not Social Services will ensure that these people are not out on the street.

Or in the matter of Kamsack, the town of Kamsack and many of the people in Kamsack have to do additional fundraising to complement and supplement the amount of money that is available from the individual. That's not what we should have for a system in a province as great as this is. That's just not acceptable.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when we talk about job creation and we talk about where this province is and the lack of population, it's just so evident when we see the example of the former minister of Learning and his new amalgamation schedule. You know, Madam Deputy Speaker, the numbers that were proposed for the Good Spirit School Division in 2004, the enrolment in all of those smaller divisions that were put together was 6,337. In 2005 that number was 6,092. And the September 30 statistics just obtained for 2006 are 5,861. So we see a drop of 245 in the first year and 231 in the second year.

What does that mean, Madam Deputy Speaker? At that rate of decline about a 4 per cent rate of decline in enrolments. And you can see the projections of the students that are in grade 12, 11, 10, all the way down to kindergarten. We will continue to lose. We will continue to lose the number of students we have in schools. What does that mean? Well obviously some school closures. It's going to mean some teacher cuts. It's going to mean that the students will have further and further to travel to a new school.

But you know, Madam Deputy Speaker — as I understand my time is drawing to a close — what this really means when you see that kind of non-population growth, and that's the best way I can talk about Saskatchewan, it has a non-population growth, and I quote from Doug Elliott, Doug Elliott's article of Tuesday, August 15. And it says this:

"If we don't see population growth, then the shortage of workers will affect the economy. People won't invest here and people can't be found to build a new plant, drill a new oil well or dig a new mine," Elliott said.

That's what that means, Madam Deputy Speaker. As we drop in the number of students, we will have less and less people coming out of grade 12 to enter university or enter post-secondary or go to job opportunities.

But do you know what we're seeing right now? We're seeing families, there's many families . . . I can give an example of one family in Norquay where not only is the father but now also his son are working in Alberta. They have left the home, and they are working in Alberta because that's where there is the job that will pay them sufficient money so that they can maintain their farm in Norquay, Saskatchewan. That's reality.

Now what's going to happen as these people work in Alberta? Do you not think that maybe the spouse that has been left

behind after a certain number of years will say, why don't I just move to Alberta? Why don't I become one of those people that lives in Alberta as well?

And that's, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think a concern of many people. They don't want to have . . . in cases of grandparents, they don't want to be the only ones left here in Saskatchewan because the members opposite know the statistics for the age group 20 to 45. Per capita it is the worst in all of Canada. Who are the people aged 20 to 45? They're the people that have families. They're the people that will have good-paying jobs. They're the people who will be buying things. They will be the builders of this province. We have the worst statistic in all of Canada. That's a record of this NDP government opposite, Madam Deputy Speaker.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is clear that this Throne Speech, as a number of people in my constituency have said, it's too little too late. Madam Deputy Speaker, I will be supporting the amendment and voting against this Throne Speech.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Deputy Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Justice, the member for Saskatoon Meewasin.

**Hon. Mr. Quennell:** — Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity provided to me to rise in support of the Speech from the Throne.

I want to begin by congratulating the new member from Weyburn-Big Muddy on his election. I don't know that he and I have a great deal in common, Mr. Speaker, but I think we might have one thing in common. I think both he and I were involved in partisan politics and organizing, working for candidates long before we were elected — in my case much longer before I was elected and in the case of the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy.

And I think we both probably thought when we came here that we knew a little bit about what we were doing here. And I expect that he is learning as I have learned that, well, we knew something, but it's a little different when you get to these seats. I'm sure the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy appreciates the honour that he's been given and the responsibility with which he has been entrusted, and I trust that he will do his best to fulfill those. And I want to welcome him here to the legislature.

I also want to thank the people of Saskatoon Meewasin who gave me the honour of being part of this legislature and part of this government — a government that has improved access to education for young people by funding tuition freezes for three consecutive years now and creating new training spaces; a government that has led the country in creating electricity from the renewable and sustainable power of the wind; a government that has increased access to quality health care; and a government that has encouraged our economy that is providing ever greater opportunities for young people in our province.

In respect to the Throne Speech I want to mention one specific but I feel highly representative item, one specific but highly representative provision of that Throne Speech, and that's the creation of the statutory holiday of Saskatchewan Family Day. I

say representative because the creation of Saskatchewan Family Day represents both the belief of this government that the benefits of our growing economy should be shared by ordinary Saskatchewan families, by average Saskatchewan people, and the creation of Saskatchewan Family Day represents the belief of this government that economic progress should support social progress, in this case strengthening the work-family balance, Mr. Speaker.

Now the reaction of the opposition to the creation of Saskatchewan Family Day is also representative. It highlights the difference between the Saskatchewan government which is working for the people of Saskatchewan and the opposition which is working for the interests of the Saskatchewan Party. The Leader of the Opposition's first reaction to the new holiday was this, quote, "bread and circuses." Bread and circuses, Mr. Speaker. That was his reaction. A commentator almost always favourable to the members opposite, a person who has been called something like the voice of the Saskatchewan Party called the opposition's reaction to the creation of this holiday, churlish.

Now I think it was William James who said that, Mr. Speaker, that to build character, you should do something for the sole purpose that it is difficult. And so that it was in the interests of building my character that I listened carefully to the opposition speeches on the Throne Speech — speeches that presented no alternatives, speeches that presented no vision, speeches that presented no plan.

The opposition members who have risen and spoken to the Speech to the Throne have spent quite an impressive period of time attempting to run from their record, running away from their participation in the Devine government, the least competent and most corrupt government in this province's history.

And the defence of the members opposite, their separation from this record is threefold. They start with, well we weren't there. It wasn't us. Now there are members . . . The member from Moosomin puts up his hand, Mr. Speaker. I don't claim that . . . He claims that he wasn't there. There are members opposite who were in the Devine caucus. The member from Saskatoon Silver Springs was a ministerial assistant. The member from Saskatoon Southeast was an organizer for that party before he received what he has termed a patronage appointment. So we weren't there doesn't really work for a lot of them. And actually, the member from Canora-Pelly who just spoke may be almost the only exception that proves the rule.

When it wasn't there doesn't work, when we weren't there doesn't work, they move to the defence that was put forward in part by the member from Cannington. Well we were there, but it wasn't that bad. Well his argument is I believe, Mr. Speaker, the argument of the members opposite was we're actually in the same circumstance today in respect to finances. Put aside all the cabinet ministers convicted for breach of public trust, we're actually in the same situation financially now that we were then. But of course that doesn't stand up to scrutiny, Mr. Speaker, because if that was the case, we wouldn't have had 14 credit rating upgrades between the circumstance then and the circumstance now.

[15:15]

So when they fall back from, well we weren't there or if we were there, it wasn't that bad, then they go, well we were there and it was pretty bad but I spent all my time in the daycare while I was in this building. And this is the defence of the Leader of the Opposition. He tried, I wasn't there. He removed seven years from his resume. But when he was pinned down, he moved away to, I was there, it was pretty bad. You should tell the member from Cannington that. But you know actually it was an asset. And I want to quote him exactly. On March 22, 2006, the Leader of the Opposition says, "I think it's an asset that I was involved in a government that lost its way on these issues."

On what issues, Mr. Speaker? On what issues they lost their way? Well on the issues of credibility and integrity, Mr. Speaker. And what was the role of the Leader of the Opposition in that government that, as he put it so eloquently, lost its way?

**An Hon. Member:** — Bartender in chief.

**Hon. Mr. Quennell:** — Well I'm coming to this. It's the chief of staff for John Gerich. John Gerich was one of those cabinet ministers convicted for breach of public trust, Mr. Speaker. But John Gerich was also the minister responsible for the Liquor Board commission. And over a two-year period, when the Leader of the Opposition was his chief of staff, over that period, Mr. Gerich received over \$19,000 of alcohol delivered to his office, delivered to the Leader of the Opposition as he now is. Nineteen thousand dollars. And he took delivery and, as a matter of fact I think he says, I think he admitted — I know he did when a reporter asked, you drank from the taxpayers' money too? — the answer of the Leader of the Opposition was, and again I quote:

I'm sure I would have done that, yeah. I'm sure I would have had some of that, absolutely.

And that absolutely is just my favourite part, Mr. Speaker. Just the chutzpah of that defiant absolutely. Not I'm sorry, but oh yes, absolutely.

So what was the Leader of the Opposition in Mr. Gerich's office? What was his role in the Devine government, the government that nearly bankrupted this province? Was he chief of staff or was he, as one of my colleagues suggests, the bartender? Of course these are not mutually exclusive, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the Opposition could have been one of those three-in-the-morning, one-more-for-my-baby, one-more-for-the-road type of advisers, and that would certainly explain some of the decisions the Devine government made.

It has been said that those who cannot remember their history are doomed to repeat it. The members opposite hope that the people of Saskatchewan cannot remember their history because they so, so much want a comeback, Mr. Speaker. It has been 15 long, thirsty years since the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues have had the opportunity to party in this building at the public expense.

Now you would think that the opposition would want to talk about more than a new name. You would think they would want

to put forward, given that history, take the opportunity to show that they've changed. You would think they would want to put forward some new ideas. But that opposition, Mr. Speaker, will not tell the Saskatchewan people where it stands.

Members rise . . . Members rise across the way and say we need a competitive labour environment. We ask them, what does that mean? They refuse to answer. What labour standards will be changed? Will they repeal the holiday to create a competitive labour environment, Mr. Speaker? The Leader of the Opposition has called for a war on labour. The questions are, how will that war on labour be fought by the opposition if they became government? And, for heaven's sake, Mr. Speaker, to what end?

The members opposite call for smaller government. What cuts to health care are they thinking about? What cuts to education are they thinking about? Why won't they tell the Saskatchewan people what their agenda is?

The Saskatchewan Party when it was founded said — and again I want to quote precisely — quote, "The Saskatchewan Party will explore partnerships in the health care field with private sector providers." What part of health care will the party opposite convert to for-profit if they had the opportunity, Mr. Speaker? They have an opportunity, when we're discussing the vision for this province, to tell us the answers to the questions. I suggest they take it. It is time for the Saskatchewan Party to come clean about its agenda.

For my part, Mr. Speaker, I support the stated agenda of the government as expressed in the Throne Speech:

[to] Make Saskatchewan the best place for young people to live, work, and build strong futures; [to] Strengthen Saskatchewan's leadership in improving public health care while reducing wait times and improving access to services; [to] Advance Saskatchewan as a leader in environmental protection and the green economy; [and] Ensure [that today] Saskatchewan families benefit from our strong . . . economy.

I'll be supporting the Speech from the Throne. I will not be supporting the amendment from the opposition.

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a real honour to stand here today as the voice of the people from the Kelvington-Wadena constituency for the 11th year in a row to reply to the Speech from the Throne.

I would like to start by congratulating the new member from Weyburn-Big Muddy. I know he's going to be a real asset to our caucus and a real important voice for the people of his constituency, and I'm very honoured to be working with him.

During the 2003 election there was drastic changes to the boundaries and I was no longer living within my constituency and I had never met a large number of the people that I represent. Now three years later I've had the privilege of meeting the vast majority of them, and after moving to

Kelvington two years ago we consider ourselves very lucky to be able to call Kelvington home. And I want to take this opportunity to thank them for their support and their warmth and their hospitality at all the events that I'm asked to attend right across the constituency. I don't always get the positive result I'd like to when they ask for my help but I always try and it's a privilege to be their voice in the legislature.

This summer one of the towns in my constituency, Foam Lake, was threatened not once but twice by fires that had the potential to wipe out the entire town. On June 28 a fire wiped out four businesses: Backyard Studio, Sears and the dry cleaners, a doctor's office and restaurant and a family home. And just four weeks later a second fire took two elevators. I had the privilege to attend an appreciation function to honour and thank the firemen who had literally risked their lives for their friends and their neighbours and their property.

One of the firemen talked about the night of the second fire — the feeling of helplessness as they watched the fire roll and grow in front of them. They saw the enormity of the situation and the very real possibility that the future of their town was in the hands of 14 to 16 firemen. They were still emotionally and mentally exhausted from the first fire.

The task looked daunting and then through the darkness of the night they saw the lights coming towards them from the North and from the East and from the West. They saw the fire trucks and the firemen from the other towns, the surrounding towns, who never questioned what had to be done. They started to work without speaking and they worked together and saved their neighbours' town.

And without a single request, when they looked around that evening there were dozens of farmers with water tanks on the back of their trucks doing the work that had to be done without anybody asking. And at the same time there were dozens of people supplying coffee and sandwiches, and later on meals. And there was nobody talked about the cost.

Mr. Speaker, rural Saskatchewan is populated by homesteaders who were tough and resilient people and worked together to create communities. I am very proud to say that that attribute hasn't left in our constituency and that's who I represent in the Kelvington-Wadena constituency. It's a true community.

During the summer the people of Kelvington were appalled at the CBC report on our town, using it as an example of the trend of small towns dying under this NDP government. And if you have any doubt that by far the majority of people in Kelvington see this government as on the wrong track and incapable of seeing their needs, you only have to look at the last three election results.

That being said, they know that in spite of this government they will survive and so for a full week the whole community came together at a large variety of events to confirm their commitment to the town. It was an overwhelming success culminating in a variety night with tickets sold out days before the event. And I sure wish CBC could have been there that night.

After that party I came to the legislature with a feeling of

euphoria and expectation. I shouldn't have been surprised this NDP lived up to its expectations it set for us in the last 11 years. Expect nothing and that's exactly what you'll get.

In 1996 I brought a memo into the legislature and tabled it in the Assembly. It had been left in the material given to me by the defeated NDP member in my constituency. It was written by the then minister of Economic Development to the premier, to the cabinet ministers and MLAs and deputy ministers to assist them in answering the questions regarding economic development in rural Saskatchewan. The memo stated, and I quote:

There was, and still is, no intention of providing a grand strategy for rural Saskatchewan.

Nothing has changed in 11 years since that memo was tabled. There's still no strategy for rural Saskatchewan. We've had ministers responsible for rural Saskatchewan. We've had departments to deal with rural Saskatchewan. We've had committees and reports and more committees, but still no strategy. And never has rural Saskatchewan been a priority for this NDP government.

When the members opposite have gotten up to respond to this Throne Speech in the last few days, the basic message they want to bring forward about rural Saskatchewan and about agriculture is the wheat board. They never speak about the changes that are needed to the pitiful crop insurance program that farmers are forced into in this province. It's by far the worst crop insurance program in the Prairie provinces.

They don't want to talk about the CAIS [Canadian agricultural income stabilization] program that the federal government has said that our government insisted stay in place. They don't want to talk about the right to burn farm diesel fuel in machines being used for baling and corral cleaning. They don't want to talk about the education portion of property tax. They don't want to talk about the fact that they put \$268 million less into agriculture this year than last year. They don't want to talk about the fact that the Wheat Pool has stepped in to help the farmers to give them high-speed Internet. And they don't want to talk about the fact that farms are forced to haul grain on roads that are really just a shamble.

In fact they don't seem interested in the fact that the Kelvington-Wadena farmers, by far the majority of them, had another very tough year. Less than 50 per cent of the crop is seeded in many areas, and right now it's still so wet that many of them are wondering about seeding in the spring.

None of these issues were talked about by this government. They wanted to talk about the wheat board. Here's a news flash for the members across. This NDP has nothing to say about the wheat board. It's between the farmers and the federal government. Unless there's a farmer over there that's holding a permit book, you don't have any right to waste our time in the legislature. Look after the mess that you've created for farmers in Saskatchewan yourself. By speaking about this in the legislature for some reason you believe you're giving yourself credibility. Validity in this issue is nothing more than a pompous acidity to the ninth degree when it comes to this government and the wheat board. The mere assumption that, because they've talked about it, it gives them some validity.

And again I will tell them, unless you're a bona fide farmer selling grain to the wheat board your opinion is not relevant in this legislature.

This weekend I went home and I really didn't have to ask for a response to this Speech from the Throne. Of course the announcement of a family day and the 2 per cent decrease in the PST [provincial sales tax] was welcomed. But to a person, the first response and question to me was, when are they going to call the election? This must mean there's going to be an election. The people of Saskatchewan, of Kelvington-Wadena are wise. They know that the government plays with the PST before every election. In fact for the last three elections in a row the government has lowered the PST just before the election and raised it the first budget after the election. The financial socialist geniuses across the road have grabbed a half a billion dollars from the people of Saskatchewan in the past three years and . . . [inaudible] . . . it away. And now they expect people to be really happy that they're giving it back to them.

The reason for the PST, for raising the PST in the first place, was to deal with the overwhelming burden of education tax on property. People know that for three years the PST grab, the half a billion dollars taken from the hard-working people of Saskatchewan, went into that great big black hole known as the General Revenue Fund and it did not touch the problem of the education portion of property tax.

Even worse than the tax increase they also see their education system going in the same direction as health care. Large paid bureaucracies, no one losing a job in the amalgamation and just ending up with a different title — and in most cases a raise — and the students are definitely no better off. But the real reason for amalgamation was never anything to do with financial savings. The real reason was to put a bigger buffer between government and the people they purport to represent. And no longer will they have to face a convention of 1,000 trustees all trying desperately to get this government's attention.

[15:30]

Mr. Speaker, I couldn't help but laugh at the member from Coronation Park as he tried to talk about the wheat board. The member from Coronation Park made a statement that if true should mean . . . that every NDP member who truly believes the statement, "New Democrats . . . [believe that] sometimes people need a hand up", should resign right now. They should tender their resignation because one of their cabinet members are making a mockery out of everything they supposedly stand for. I suggest to you that no one in our society needed a hand up more than the young girls who were under the care and protection of the Minister of Community Resources.

Mr. Speaker, some of these children were sent to a safe home, Oyate, reported by the NDP government to give children a refuge from a world of sexual exploitation and abuse, a world full of drugs, a world full of gangs, a world full of poverty and helplessness — a world where there is no tomorrow, where days blend into nights and weeks into months and there is no hope.

As a legislature, as a united legislature we learned the graphic details of the lives of many of these children who are being

failed by society and by government — thanks, I might add, to the then member from Humboldt who worked tirelessly on the issue.

The NDP government was asked by unanimous agreement of the legislature to deal with the 49 recommendations put forward by the all party committee on child exploitation. All elected members gave the NDP government the leeway to do whatever they needed to save these young children. Every one of my colleagues on this side of the House agreed that this NDP government should make it a priority. They agreed there should be zero tolerance for sexual exploitation in Saskatchewan.

Oyate should have been a safe haven but instead horrendous problems continued. And not only did they continue but it continued under the knowledge of the department and at least three government members. It's not only unconscionable but contemptuous, given the facts in black and white, the minister today still continues to deny knowing there was a problem. The people running the house asked for help and when it was not forthcoming they did what they had to do. And in my humble opinion there was a lot of people who were abused by this government. Never will I or my colleagues or the majority of people in Saskatchewan have any respect for that minister or the government who will stand by and accept the situation.

And you know why they accepted it? For one reason and one reason only — politics. If by admitting there was a problem at Oyate then perhaps the NDP members would have to question other actions and issues that the people of Saskatchewan don't even know about. The whole NDP philosophy of caring would be exposed to the bright lights of the world as nothing more than raw politics, people that are only worried about power and not worried about governing — never about doing the right thing, only about appearing to do the right thing. People of Saskatchewan know the truth. All the NDP gave these children who needed a hand up was a slap.

Before I take my place and vote for the amendment, I'd also like to read a few facts into the record to speak to the misinformation given to many by this tired, old, worn-out government who spouts rhetoric aimed at misleading the people of Saskatchewan.

According to the Provincial Auditor in volume 2 of the 2006 report on page 7 he states, and I quote:

... Government has lived within its means for nine [out] of the last sixteen years (that is the Government raised more revenues than it spent in each of these years).

The statement that there has been 13 consecutive balanced budgets is not true. On page 8 of the same report, the Provincial Auditor states that the net debt in '91 was 7.9 billion; in 2006, 7.8 billion.

A decrease, yes, but not the huge, enormous decrease the government would like people to believe. In fact, with a windfall of unbudgeted revenues of over \$1 billion in the last year alone, plus the extra money they took in from PST, that point one billion dollar decrease is a joke. What would have been the savings in the debt had the debt been paid off by the whole \$1 billion?

Page 34 of the 2006 report is a graph that the citizens of Saskatchewan should all see. Graph K, Government's liabilities as at March 31, 1991 to 2006, shows clearly that 1991 liability of \$17.6 billion was the lowest level of the liability in the whole time frame. Look at the total liabilities as March 31, 2006 was \$21 billion — an increase of \$3.4 billion since this government took office.

The Premier and the NDP members keep saying that the opposition doesn't offer any solutions. May I remind the government of the *100 Ideas* which was released last spring. And we've seen many of those ideas incorporated into this government's solutions: cutting corporate taxes; the crystal meth issue — Project Hope was born from that issue; increase in the basic allowance for those on social assistance; a children's hospital in Saskatoon; all-weather roads in the North to promote economic development. All of these and many more turned into solutions by this government.

Mr. Speaker, the private member Bills that are efforts to table legislation are perceived to be a dead-end process in this legislature. Government members are not free to support a Bill even if it's the most common sense idea, if it comes from the opposition. One of the NDP members last night acknowledged the former Kindersley member supported the budget while the rest of his caucus opposed it.

I'd like to point out that never once in 11 years has this government, this NDP government voted anything but in a block. The member from Regina Walsh Acres last year tried a type of show that she was an independent thinker on the most available hours Bill, yet at the very last moment she voted with her group to pass the Bill.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan are judging this government on their performance, not on their promises as this NDP government always hoped. Look at the results of Weyburn-Big Muddy. This tired, old, and, I might add, worn-out government recites platitudes and digs back three or four generations and talks about historic issues for one reason and one reason only — they don't have a plan or a vision for the future. They can't run on their record, a record of cabinet ministers misleading the public for six years, without feeling an ounce of guilt; cabinet members that risk the lives of children without remorse.

And because of this NDP government's legacy, the people in Saskatchewan are more cynical about politics. They won't take the word of the government for granted because they know that actions speak louder than words. People who want hope and direction and encouragement need only listen to these speeches given by the NDP members talking about the past and blaming everyone from the federal Tories to the '80s to know that they'll never take responsibility for their own actions.

People of Saskatchewan are victims of an insensitive and of a greedy government. They attack, they manoeuvre, and they manipulate every speech and every individual to shore up their weak and lifeless agenda.

Mr. Speaker, I waited to hear one of these members stand up and talk about something like the nuclear industry. Didn't hear it. I never heard one of them respond to the question if the PST

cut is affordable. I notice that there was an issue in the paper about it today by Jack Vicq. He questioned whether it was affordable. I never heard this government talk about it. They prefer to talk about the past.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'd be amiss if I didn't mention the performance of the Minister of Youth, Culture and Rec last night. He gave an auctioneer's version of an excited and hopeful government bent on buoying up depressed troops on the NDP side when he talked about celebration of arts in Saskatchewan.

The Saskatchewan Party agrees that the people of Saskatchewan realize the value of arts and culture in our province. We also applaud and recognize the value of the people who provide the music and arts. The number of talented people in our province is significant. The quality of life in Saskatchewan is given depth and value because of them. Of course we've lost a great number of these talented people in our out-migration. But I assure you this government's excitement about things, this year's coming activities, is not stronger, it's not louder or more passionate than members on this side of the House. We did however enjoy the 200,000 words in 20 minutes from the minister last evening.

Mr. Speaker, the minister responsible for First Nations and Métis affairs spoke of his work with First Nations. And I must tell you, the members, that I asked him about the problem that I see in the North when people in northern Saskatchewan pay just about double for a quart of milk compared to somebody in Regina. But people in the North pay the very same amount as somebody in Regina when it comes to a bottle of beer. This government hasn't had problem with that, with subsidizing the amount of money for liquor but milk was another issue. And the minister's response to me was, well maybe we should have a milk Crown corporation. I fail to see how that is going to address any of the issues that are a concern in the North.

The minister talked about his promises. He talked about paving roads into and accesses for First Nations. My question is, when and where is he going to do this? The government will choose of course where they would want to pave these roads and who will get the pavement. My thoughts is it will be where they need to win the votes, just like the promise to build homes on-reserve. Where it'll be is where the NDP needs the votes to gain a seat.

He spoke of cultural awareness, and still this government has not mandated treaty education in schools. We talked about health, but where's the strategy to deal with the issues of diabetes, of tuberculosis, of HIV [human immunodeficiency virus]?

The northern strategy is as helpful to the North as the rural strategy is to those of us living outside NDP seats. The only strategy this government works on is how to get elected again. For that reason and many others I have mentioned, I will support the amendment and not the motion.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Prebble:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to enter into this debate and to speak in favour of the Throne Speech that opens this session of the legislature and lays out our government's vision for the year ahead.

As I announced in January of this year, Mr. Speaker, I will be stepping down from my position as an MLA at the end of this term. I want to take this opportunity to sincerely thank my constituents for the privilege of being able to serve them in this legislature.

I also want to thank my wife, Louise; my mother, Trudy; my sons, Mark, James, and Michael; and my step-daughter, Monte, for their unwavering support throughout my years in provincial politics. I'm looking forward to the chance to spend more time with them when this term is completed.

I want to thank the Premier, Mr. Speaker, for the privilege of serving in his government as both his Legislative Secretary for energy conservation, renewable energy, and also as a member of his cabinet.

I want to express appreciation to my constituency assistant, Puck Janes, for the outstanding job she does in helping me and in helping all those who come in to seek the services of my constituency office.

Mr. Speaker, as I look back on the years that I've had the privilege to serve in this Assembly, I have witnessed first-hand the large differences between those who sit on the New Democratic Party side of the Chamber, where I'm privileged to sit, and those who now sit in the opposition benches, formerly calling themselves Conservatives, now calling themselves members of the Saskatchewan Party.

When I first was elected in 1978, the Saskatchewan economy was on a roll under the leadership of Allan Blakeney's NDP government. The government of that day delivered the best set of social programs in all of Canada. In 1982 the Conservative government was elected in Saskatchewan and quickly economic circumstances deteriorated. The Conservatives fired many professional public servants and replaced with their own hand-picked supporters who were much less competent.

The Conservatives promised less government but in reality they were very big spenders and they also liked to make big cuts to taxes. Their spending excesses and their tax cuts just didn't add up, Mr. Speaker. They quickly began to spend \$1 billion a year more than they took in. And as their debts piled up, they began to reduce spending on social programs and to cancel some social programs entirely.

A prime example, Mr. Speaker, of the kinds of programs the Conservatives cancelled was the children's dental plan. It was a school-based program that delivered free dental care to children. Through the work of dental hygienists hired under that program, Saskatchewan children and teens once had the best dental health in all of Canada. The children's dental plan was abolished by the Conservatives in 1987 and children's dental health in Saskatchewan has steadily deteriorated in the years since, Mr. Speaker. I hope, Mr. Speaker, that one day we will reinstate that plan as finances allow. I would very much like to see that plan returned to the people of Saskatchewan. We're



steadily making progress on programs like that, Mr. Speaker.

But let me focus at this point on that Conservative record because not only, Mr. Speaker, were social programs cancelled, but Saskatchewan's Conservative government stripped the Crown corporations of their assets, and ran Saskatchewan's Crowns badly into debt.

The Conservatives also sold off several of the Crowns at a small fraction of what they were worth. The combined result of excessive spending and poor Crown management meant that by the end of their second term the Conservative government had left a mountain of debt, \$14 billion, Mr. Speaker. The interest charges on that were over \$800 million per year and all that money every year had to be paid by Saskatchewan taxpayers before a penny of debt could be retired or before health and education or highways could be funded. Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, really was on the verge of bankruptcy.

[15:45]

During the Conservatives' time in government, young people decided to leave this province in record numbers. Knowing they would face defeat at the polls, the Conservative government hung on to power for a full five years in their second term, refusing to face voters at the traditional four-year mark. Finally in October 1991 an election was called, and voters overwhelmingly elected an NDP government.

Your NDP government has worked diligently since that time to turn things around, and slowly but surely we have succeeded. Gradually the public debt has been reduced to the point where it now sits at 11 billion. Interest charges are down to just over 500 million a year from a high of over 800 million. Mr. Speaker, that is allowing our government to invest more money in services for people, and health care, education, and social services have all had major increases from this government over the last seven years.

Under Premier Lorne Calvert, your NDP government has worked to rebuild the Saskatchewan economy. The last five years have seen steadily increasing job numbers to the point that this September we had 499,000 people working in Saskatchewan — the highest number of jobs in Saskatchewan's history. After years of minimum wage freezes under the Conservatives, the NDP has steadily improved the minimum wage, taking it to \$7.55 an hour, and it will be going up to 7.95 in April, Mr. Speaker.

The Crown corporation sector under the NDP has now had 15 years of good management, and the financial viability of each Crown corporation has been restored. And this was a massive task, Mr. Speaker. More than \$2 billion of Crown corporation debt has been paid off. Under Premier Calvert's leadership, the Crowns are now able to deliver to Saskatchewan people the lowest bundle of utility rates in the country.

**The Speaker:** — . . . please. I just remind the member, I don't believe he's quoting from a paper, but he should not be referring to any member by name.

**Mr. Prebble:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The lower debt and a strong economy is resulting in lower taxes for Saskatchewan

residents — a \$1,000 income tax cut per family between 1999 and 2003 and a 2 per cent cut in the PST announced just last week. There's been a wide range of tax reductions for small, medium, and large business as well.

Lower debt and a stronger economy has also meant that innovation and investment in social programs has been accelerated. This last three years in government, under our Premier, has seen improvements in social assistance rates, a two-year freeze in undergraduate tuition rates, an expansion in literacy programs, thousands of new post-secondary training spaces, an expansion of community schools, new daycare services, new MRIs [magnetic resonance imaging] and CT [computerized tomography] scanners, and a record investment in health care services for Saskatchewan people. Those who deliver community-based services have also gotten a well-deserved wage increase.

That takes us to the Throne Speech before us now, Mr. Speaker. Our government is poised to deliver on a wonderful package of measures to make life even better for Saskatchewan families. My message to voters, as I step down from provincial politics, is don't throw the progress away. Don't take a chance on a rerun of the conservative regime of the 1980s and early 1990s. Don't take a chance on the Saskatchewan Party.

I also say to Saskatchewan residents, remember the reason the Saskatchewan Party was created. The Conservative Party had been thoroughly discredited, not only because of its record but because of its corruption. As the decade of the 1990s progressed, issues of corruption among former Conservative members of government began to be investigated by the police. The end result was that approximately a third of the former Conservative caucus members went to jail or else, Mr. Speaker, were found guilty and had to pay fines. In one way or another, they were found guilty of a criminal offense.

The Conservative Party was forced to rebrand itself and the result was that the Conservative Party ceased to function as a meaningful political party in Saskatchewan, and instead the Saskatchewan Party was created. Every Tory MLA in the Saskatchewan legislature joined the Saskatchewan Party. Only one Conservative was ultimately left out because of his criminal involvement in child sexual exploitation. That is the record, Mr. Speaker.

With a caucus dominated by conservatives, it was no surprise, Mr. Speaker, that the Saskatchewan Party would attack provincial Crown corporations, which they did throughout the period up to 2003. It's no surprise that the Saskatchewan Party has proposed to freeze funding to health care and education as they did in the 1999 election. It's no surprise that the Saskatchewan Party has consistently attacked trade unions and opposed minimum wage increases.

And since it was rejected by voters in November 2003, it is no surprise that members of the Saskatchewan Party have been silent over the past three years about what they really stand for on the issues, Mr. Speaker. The Saskatchewan Party is running from its record, Mr. Speaker.

The New Democratic Party government Throne Speech before us offers new promise for Saskatchewan families and a bold

vision of how Saskatchewan will develop over the next few years. There is a firm plan to expand Saskatchewan's Aboriginal work force.

There is an action plan to strengthen our highway system by ensuring in law that every dollar paid in fuel tax at the gasoline pumps goes to highway construction and maintenance and other essential work performed by the Department of Highways.

There are specific commitments to expand literacy programs, continue the freeze on university tuition, and develop a children's hospital within one of Saskatoon's hospitals. There is a promise to create a new statutory holiday for families on the third weekend in February, a promise that I'm very excited about. And there is a clear plan for putting Saskatchewan at the centre of the Canadian music scene in 2007.

There is a commitment to fully fund the CAIS program and to support the Canadian Wheat Board. There is a commitment to achieve one-third of our energy needs from renewable energy sources by the third decade of this century. And there is a promise to expand the production, processing, and marketing of local organic food.

It's an exciting package, Mr. Speaker. In contrast the Saskatchewan Party offers no specific plan.

Before I close, Mr. Speaker, I want to raise one more pressing issue that all political parties in Saskatchewan must address. That is the issue of climate change. The Saskatchewan Party have been hopeless on the climate change issue from the outset, Mr. Speaker. Before the federal government signed the Kyoto Protocol in December, 2002, the Saskatchewan Party made Kyoto the sole topic of their provincial convention resolutions and resolved to oppose the Kyoto Protocol and the targets for greenhouse gas reduction with all the political muscle they could muster.

The federal Conservatives took the same point of view, and it is no surprise that upon being elected as the national government they have failed to honour Canada's international obligations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and abide by the Kyoto Protocol. In fact the federal Conservatives have cancelled many of the programs designed to implement Kyoto including the homeowner grants under the EnerGuide for homes residential contribution program.

The Conservatives also cancelled the commercial building incentive program which provided a grant for commercial building owners who build to an energy efficiency standard 25 per cent or more above the model national energy code for buildings. These are just two of a great many climate change initiatives that have been cut under Stephen Harper's watch.

I'm proud, Mr. Speaker, that our NDP government plugged the hole left by the federal Conservative government and continue to fund the EnerGuide for homes conservation program in Saskatchewan. I'm proud, Mr. Speaker, of the 172 megawatts of wind power that have been built under our Premier's leadership in Saskatchewan over the last four years, providing emission-free electricity to Saskatchewan homes and businesses. I'm proud of the energy efficiency standards for new public buildings that our government has set, 25 per cent

better than the model national energy code for buildings. I'm pleased that the Office of Energy Conservation abolished by the Conservatives in 1982 has been reinstated in Saskatchewan under the NDP. I'm pleased that Saskatchewan is providing important leadership on the development of zero emission coal fire generating technology.

But these good public policy measures are only a small start to what is needed, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Canada as a whole have a serious problem with rising greenhouse gas emissions. Canada is more than 30 per cent off its Kyoto target. And while Saskatchewan does not have an assigned target, our province's emissions are even more above 1990 levels than the national average.

Actions to substantially reduce greenhouse gas emissions is needed in every sector of the Saskatchewan economy. Over the past decade, the scientific community has reached a global consensus on the grim consequences of climate change. Western European countries are setting greenhouse gas emission reduction targets of 80 per cent below 1990 emission levels by 2050.

Just yesterday, Sir Nicholas Stern, the World Bank's former chief economist, warned the global community that if greenhouse gas emissions are not sharply reduced, the negative consequences will be on a scale similar to the Great Depression and the two world wars that marked the first half of the 20th century. Sir Nicolas estimates the cost of the world economy at \$7 trillion in lost output and predicts that 200 million people could be forced to leave their homes from the flooding and drought that result from climate change.

I had the benefit this summer of visiting with some of NASA's [National Aeronautics and Space Administration] leading scientists. Many are of the view that the world has only 10 to 20 years to turn things around before the consequences of climate change become enormous. If major emission reductions do not occur in this time frame, they fear that Greenland will ultimately melt and the additional water that enters the ocean will increase sea levels by six metres, causing many of the world's coastal cities to become uninhabitable. Many scientists at NASA also fear widespread extinction of species as animals and plants are unable to adapt to rapidly rising temperatures, escalating drought, and changes in rainfall patterns.

Mr. Speaker, these consequences can only be avoided if the countries of the industrialized world sharply reduce their reliance on fossil fuels, make all new electricity generation zero emission, and undertake a massive energy conservation program in every sector of their economies. Canada and Saskatchewan will need to do their share and will need to do it more quickly than is currently planned.

One of the obvious areas to start, Mr. Speaker, is in the area of new buildings, new vehicles, and new equipment. New buildings across this country, Mr. Speaker, should be built to the highest possible standards of energy efficiency. And building codes, Mr. Speaker, will have to be seriously looked at for energy efficiency in every province of Canada. It is difficult for Canadians to explain, Mr. Speaker, why all the US states but four have building codes for energy efficiency, all of western Europe has building codes for energy efficiency, and none of

the provinces other than Ontario have building codes for energy efficiency, Mr. Speaker. This is something that will need to change.

Similarly with auto efficiency standards. The federal government is signalling that it wants to adopt US standards by 2011. But, Mr. Speaker, that is moving much too slowly, and instead of adopting US standards, the federal government should be adopting the standards for auto emissions and automobile efficiency that have been set by the state legislature in California, Mr. Speaker. And those should be in place next year, Mr. Speaker. The automobile industry in North America knows how to meet them. It meets them for the California economy. It should meet them for the Saskatchewan economy and for the Canadian economy right across this country, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, these are just examples of what is required in Canada and in Saskatchewan. But my central message here is that significant budget allocations at the national and the provincial level across this country and in this province are required to address the issue of climate change. Time is running out for these measures, Mr. Speaker. Carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions, once released into the atmosphere, will be present at elevated levels for long periods of time — in the case of carbon dioxide, for approximately 100 years. And once these emissions have been released into the atmosphere, Mr. Speaker, the situation cannot be reversed. So we live with the consequences of climate change that follow, Mr. Speaker.

The New Democratic Party is the only party in this province that shows concern and genuine interest in this issue. But the pace at which action is taken must be greatly accelerated, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, let me conclude by saying that it is an honour to serve in this legislature. I'm very grateful to my constituents for the 15 years that I've been able to serve in this Assembly, and I want to thank them again for the opportunity that they have afforded me to serve. It's also been a great privilege to serve with my colleagues on the government side of the House, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank them for the opportunity to work with them in cabinet and in caucus. And, Mr. Speaker, I will of course be supporting the main motion and opposing the amendment. Thank you so much.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

[16:00]

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

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to join in the debate today of the Throne Speech. I want welcome the new member from Weyburn-Big Muddy. He's going to make an excellent MLA, an excellent first speech — a lot better than mine, probably even a lot better than the one I'm even going to make today at that end of it.

I want to acknowledge my family and their support for the long years I've been here. It seems like a long time. If there's any constituents that are watching from Arm River-Watrous I want

to tell them it's been a pleasure serving them, and I will keep on serving them, looking forward to serving them in the future.

Also want to thank my CA [constituency assistant] who's did a lot of work for a number of years I've been here, and has did a lot of research and helped a lot of people in my constituency. They deserve a lot of help and I want to . . . She's watching today and I want to thank you for the work that you've been doing with that.

We're getting to the Throne Speech. I've listened to them since basically 1999. And I remember one of the members opposite . . . Well the Throne Speech is laying out a plan for the future. Well they started, since I've been listening in '99, laying out a plan and things haven't changed since '99. You have to ask, and I'll ask my residents in Arm River-Watrous, have things gotten better for you since 1999? Are things better out there? And you know what they say? No. They say they're not. They talk about population loss. They talk about trouble in agriculture, Mr. Speaker. They talk about towns losing population, job loss. No they don't believe things have gotten better.

If you go out there and you talk to people in my constituency and you talk to people in Regina . . . and I've been talking to people in Regina and Saskatoon. They believe that things aren't getting better under this NDP government. So when this Throne Speech come out, yes they're cynical. You know I was in a coffee shop a couple days ago, and there's a couple guys ahead of me, and they were joking about. One guy says, oh gee, 2 per cent is off the PST and we'll save a little bit. And the guy says yes, but these were the same guys that raised it. Do you remember that? And the guy said yes, laughingly, he said yes. And you know if they get in again, they're going to raise it again. That's cynical.

The member from Saskatoon was talking about this party only interested in being in power. Well what about there. What about that. The people out there, they realize the stuff they're doing now isn't for the people; it's to try to hang on to power. It's about raising taxes when they first got in when they said they wouldn't, breaking their word when they said they would not raise taxes in the last election and then raising them. Going into another election, what are they doing? They hope to . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . That's it, buy votes, lower the tax. And the people out there are saying, you know, they're going to raise them. They don't believe that now.

They don't believe this government, and that's why they're at 24 per cent polling. That's right. You read the headlines. That's what the people are saying out there because that is that what they believe.

You talk about my constituency. Have things gotten better? I want to congratulate my mayors and councillors that have been elected, if any of them are listening, and the RM [rural municipality] elections that I believe are on tomorrow. Them people out there are facing a huge challenge out there to try to run these towns and the RMs under this present government. The money is getting tighter. There are talk about the facilities out there, the rinks. A lot of them are talking about not opening.

I had a couple of mayors that talked to me from small towns that have small town halls. They only get used maybe once a

month for functions. Do you know what, that SaskTel charges them a business rate for that phone? They've tried to go to SaskTel and say, why aren't we charged a residential rate? You know, maybe then we can afford to keep our phones. Or the town of Hawarden has taken their phone out because of that. What business is being conducted in a town hall, Mr. Speaker? What business? Why aren't they charged residential?

Why aren't you trying to help them towns, them rinks, them municipalities that are trying to do something out there? They haven't gotten one bit of help from this government. They've been cut constantly with infrastructure money. As towns out there fight and struggle to keep their aging infrastructure going, have they got any help from this government? Is there any help in that Throne Speech? No, Mr. Speaker, there isn't. And that's why the residents and the constituents of Arm River-Watrous do not support this Throne Speech, at that end of it. The power and heating bills are going up. How are they going to keep the rinks open this year, the halls? A lot of them are struggling if they're actually going to keep them open.

Are the highways any better in rural Saskatchewan since I've been here since '99? No, they haven't. I've gotten petition after petition sent to me since '99 on the highways — from 44 to 15 to 19 to 219 — of how they've been busted up.

This government talks about perception, of how they want the message that's been sent. Well I'll tell them of one of the messages that's being taken out here.

There was a couple from BC [British Columbia], Mr. Speaker, a couple from BC was coming on vacation to Saskatchewan. They were coming on vacation to Saskatchewan. They were going to Watrous to Manitou, and I was going to a national horse shoe tournament there. I was doing the opening pitch for there. And the people, the story going around . . . They brought me over these people. They had to tell me that story. I'll read you part of the letter that they had sent to the Premier on the perception of what they have of this province and what they're taking back to BC [British Columbia]. He says:

I want to share with you an amazing story. I hope you will appreciate how many times I was amazed. Perhaps you'll be amazed yourself!

I'll skip a couple of paragraphs. He's talking about his family history in BC and coming to a reunion. He goes:

[When] we reached Rosetown at 4:00 that afternoon and diverted onto Highway 15 for the last part of our journey. We continued our drive through Outlook, Kennaston, and pushed on to the farm where my family was gathering on . . . Friday evening for a barbeque. I was amazed by Highway 15. Particularly past Outlook. The pavement became a patchwork quilt of asphalt filled potholes. Frost heaves had left asphalt rubble and large holes to negotiate. Hundreds of red . . . warning signs were posted along the sides. Although it surely must have been a jest on someone's part, my wife and I were amazed to see a road sign saying "SLOW TO 90 . . ." [kilometres]. We certainly couldn't conceive of even going 90 . . . [kilometres] under the existing road conditions!

While we were negotiating the last few miles at a much reduced speed, to our amazement, we left a paved road and went straight on to gravel. Unfortunately there was a washboard which started our vehicle skidding. After turning 180 degrees we slid off the road and into a slough. The momentum of the vehicle carried us out into the water. Amazingly we did not overturn! At this time my wife was saying a rather loud prayer to God. In an attempt to get out she amazingly, ripped the door handle right out of the door. Of course the water was within three inches of our windows and the pressure did not allow her or any of us to open our doors. The windows were all closed and being electric I was fearful they would not open but again I was amazed that we were all able to open our windows, climb out and escape to the roof. My 16 year old daughter was . . . [amazed] as she helped her 8 year old brother get out of his seat belt and climb out . . .

My wife and I followed . . . [as] we watched our vehicle sink out of sight in 10 feet of water. . . All the horrible scenarios played out in my mind at that point and stay with me to this day but amazingly we were on the side of a Saskatchewan road alive and in good condition. Within the next 10 minutes three other vehicles had stopped to give us help. [There was an] . . . elderly [gentleman] Harvey Stewart from Simpson was one of those people. He was tearful as he asked us if anyone was still in our vehicle and recounted an . . . [innocent] of a 78 year old lady almost dying [in that same spot].

That's happened time after time in my constituency — of people almost dying. And this government is not doing nothing at that. He goes on to say:

I was amazed as I . . . [lie] awake that night [right] in my bed in the hotel room. For hours I listened to the breaths [of ] my son . . . as he lay beside me. In my mind I wrote and re-wrote many a letter to you during those quiet hours and not much I thought was complimentary. We have not . . . been able to replace all the physical things we lost but we are home [now] safe . . .

I hope I have not left too much to read between the lines for you to get the point of this letter. I now pray for the family of the person who will surely die on that road. Perhaps not this year or the next, but this is the inevitable legacy you leave this province.

And that was sent to the Premier. I don't even think he answered that letter. That is what we deal with out in rural Saskatchewan time after time after time. And this government does nothing out there to help out there.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Brkich:** — You know this government talks about the future of this province and yet I see it deteriorating under this present government. The people out there in my constituency, they see it deteriorating. And they've lost faith in this government as of . . . The people in the cities now are losing faith with this present government.

I can go on about different examples. I can go on about the

hospitals, the cuts out . . . that have been made out in my area. The long-term care facility that was closed. I can remember fighting when they wanted to raise long-term care fees by 95 per cent in this province, this government. And then they talk about caring for people? How we fought in the petitions for that and then they finally backed up when the pressure hit that finally. If we hadn't been here, they would have put that through.

Available hours, they talk about that. They talk about big business fighting. It wasn't big business. It was students that fought that. It was First Nations that fought that. It was workers that fought that — part-time workers that didn't want it. It was the people of Saskatchewan that fought that. And they will remember that when it comes to election time next, next election, Mr. Speaker. They won't forget that stuff out there that this government has pulled at that end of it.

Crime. Crime out there. You talk to people in Saskatchewan. You talk to people in the cities. You know what their biggest fear is, seniors? It's crime. That's what they're scared of out there. And what's this government doing to address it? Nothing yet. I can remember promises in Throne Speech of hiring extra police officers, of hiring extra police officers. Have they filled that yet? They haven't even filled that promise and that was in 1999. You go out there. Crime. Are they dealing with any of the crime, the gang situation that's happening here in Regina? No they're not at that end of it.

All they can talk about when they get up in this House is talk about history, our history. Well my history started in political . . . in 1999. All they can talk about is the '80s. Let's talk about their history, their party. When it started in the '30s, you want to talk about what was going on in the world. What political parties were starting to emerge at that time as it spread out through there? Communism. Communists was spreading out in rural . . . out there in the world about the same time the CCF [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation] started. You could say that's coincidence. It might be. You can say that except for one small fact — the *Regina Manifesto*. The *Regina Manifesto* which is still on their website today which they seem to be quite proud of. And they talk about state-run business, collective farms, and eradicating capitalism. That is their history; that is their legacy. As you go on.

You want to talk about their history. Then we'll move on to the '70s, through the Blakeney era, when they nationalized potash. They took companies away . . . took away from business. Nationalized potash. That's what they did in communist countries; they nationalized businesses. They started the land bank, which was a move towards collective farming. That is their legacy. As we move on.

We talk about their legacy. You know the last federal election, I got a pamphlet in the mail. There was a . . . We had different parties that ran. We had the NDP. We had the Conservatives. We had the Liberals. We had a Communist that ran in Blackstrap. You know what? She sent out a mail out. You know what she talks about? She says we have to form a block in parliament. If you can't vote Communist, vote NDP. She's got it right here in writing. Vote NDP because we're similar in beliefs. And she says, she also says, and just left-minded greens, if you're environmentalists but don't believe in state

ownership, don't vote for me. Just vote if you're an NDP. Obviously she thinks every NDP is into state-run ownership.

And you know what? That pamphlet went to all the people in Saskatoon, to MLAs from Saskatoon. I don't remember any of them saying, whoa, whoa, we're not, we're not, we're not connected with the Communist Party, you know you shouldn't be saying our name in your brochure. But I never remembered a statement like that. That's their legacy.

They've got a convention coming up right . . . coming up. What do you think they're going to be talking about there behind closed doors? They'll be similar to what happens at the federal one. I'd imagine they'll be getting up and address the crowd as brother and sister when they talk about that. I wonder what the resolution will be? It'll be running down business — big business, small business. It'll be talking about collective farms. They'll be talking about shutting down the mines up North, the uranium mines. That's what they'll be talking about at their convention.

And then they'll come outside and they'll say, whoa, we're business friendly. That all gets out there. You wonder why this province is in the shape it's in? Because of their legacy and what they stand for and what they believe in. That's why.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

[16:15]

**Mr. Brkich:** — The Premier, at that end of it, we talk about . . . I want to talk about . . . The member from Yorkton talked about families moving in. He talked about families moving in . . . out of province in Alberta. He's got a short memory. Does he remember when we fought the land reform on this side — the committee — when they wouldn't change it, when you had to be a Saskatchewan resident? Do you remember the fight we had over here in committee to get that passed?

I can remember the member from Nutana still, still doesn't like it, and she's head of immigration. You wonder why there's no immigration in this province right there? Do you remember that fight?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Brkich:** — They just said, big business will be moving out. All of a sudden now, he's talking about the families, which we said would happen.

You want to look at maybe Europe. There might be some families over there that might be interested in coming up. Maybe you should be looking at expanding that. There's Britain. In France and Belgium and Ireland or Scotland, they're in the same situation as Alberta. Land prices are high right now. Regulations are really strict there. They're looking at coming over.

But same as they had to do with . . . Alberta residents had to do up to about four years ago, they had to sell everything, move here for six months, then buy land. Why not have it so they can come here, maybe buy a section, rent it out to a local farmer, just see what the crops are, get a feel of it, go home, start

moving their stuff over slowly? Can they do that under here? Not yet.

So don't talk about progress. Don't talk about change. That's something you guys know nothing about. You live in the past. And that is why your polling is at 24 per cent, at that end of it. Mr. Speaker, that is why their polling is at 24 per cent, at that end.

We can go on. I can talk about different things. I just got a letter from the library board. It just said the funding has been cut again from them. They're struggling to stay open in these small towns. Have they gotten any help from this government Throne Speech? No. No help for library.

Regional college. They talk about supporting them. Are you actually doing anything for them? We had a meeting with them not that long ago. They say very little comes this way. Sure, they'd say, there were good things, but no support — no support for anybody.

But the NDP government, all they care about is staying in power. That is their only thing that they are interested in. That's all that they've . . . focusing on. And that's what they're going to be focusing on for the next year. Not what's good for the people of Saskatchewan. They will try to do anything, do anything to grasp on, to stay on to power, at that end of it.

We talked about health care, waiting lists. Many members have talked about it. Well it's the same in Arm River-Watrous. People are still waiting just as long. And we've been talking about it since '99 — since I've been here. The situation hasn't gotten any better.

The population is still being drained. You have to ask if they haven't fixed the problem by now, obviously they can't fix it.

They don't have a leader over there. The Premier over there, Mr. Speaker, to me he's a nice guy, but he's not a leader. He's not a leader. And one member over there recognized . . . I think there's some other members too but at that end of it. And I like the Premier. He's a nice guy but he is not a leader.

We are in troubled times right now. We are at a turning point in Saskatchewan history right now when we could be something. We could be a permanent have province. We could take our place alongside of Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, the provinces, instead of always crying for a handout. And under this particular NDP government we're missing opportunities and some of the members over there recognize that. I think they're starting to recognize that they need a change in leadership. Coming up to this convention I will give the Premier one word of advice. Beware of the ides of March over there. I will give him that piece of advice over there.

Talking about the Throne Speech, how will it help people in my constituency? I can't see that. I can see getting more letters of people almost dying on the highways, of waiting for lists on cancer lists, of wondering for weeks and weeks if their cancer is benign or malignant because they have to wait to get that done. That's a legacy of that government over there.

And their Throne Speech is not going to address it. They didn't

address them problems in 1999 and they're still not going to address them. I can't support this Throne Speech. You know why I can't support it? Because the constituents of Arm River-Watrous don't support it. The people of Saskatchewan don't support it, if you've read the papers and the letters. They don't support it and they will show that the next election at that.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I can't support this Throne Speech but I will support the amendment.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Moose Jaw Wakamow, the Minister of Learning.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise today to join in the debate from the Throne Speech and have a chance to put my comments on the record about the record of this government, plans for the future, and what a wonderful outlook the province of Saskatchewan has as we move into the province's second century.

Mr. Speaker, first off I would like to pass along I think a heartfelt thank you to my colleagues from Coronation Park and Regina Wascana Plains for the great speeches that they did to kick off this session in moving and seconding the Throne Speech. It was appreciated, and it's also an honour to be able to move and second the Throne Speech.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to join with my colleagues to offer a congratulations to the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy, and I hope that he enjoys representing the people of Weyburn-Big Muddy. It's an honour that few of us as MLAs in this House representing a constituency . . . it's a pretty rare privilege that we have to be here to represent a constituency in the province of Saskatchewan and that our constituents have given us this honour. I hope he enjoys it. There's always challenges. There's always some good debate. There is always some not-so-good debate as we have been witness to on occasions; some recently, I'm afraid. But, Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege, that each and every one of us has to serve in this House and represent the folks in Saskatchewan who have sent us here.

Mr. Speaker, it's been interesting to listen to the debate on the Throne Speech. There has been some pretty emotional speeches over the last couple of days, and it has been a pleasure to have the opportunity to listen to them. I think of my colleagues, the member from Saskatoon Nutana, who gave a very emotional accounting of the past 15 years of this New Democratic government and the struggles that were faced over that period of 15 years, the very difficult decisions.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I wasn't elected at that point in time, but I have heard from many of my colleagues and I have met many of the folks first-hand who were charged with pulling Saskatchewan back from the brink of bankruptcy. They have talked about some of the very painful and difficult decisions that needed to be made.

Then, Mr. Speaker, I've actually had the privilege of serving in this House since 1999 and representing Moose Jaw Wakamow at the point in time where the finances of this province were

beginning to turn around. Did we have some difficult decisions? Yes, we did. We've made a number of them over the past six, seven years. There has been changes. There has been new programs. There has been the end to old programs. And always we have struggled to make the best decisions for the people of Saskatchewan and that Saskatchewan can stand on its feet and move ahead as every province in Canada should have the opportunity to.

Mr. Speaker, since I have been elected, we have gone through some good years and some bad years. We have struggled with the decisions about, first off, the personal income tax changes that were put forward by this government. Could we afford to do it? Couldn't we afford to do it? How should it be done? How should it be laid out? But we felt that if Saskatchewan was going to be competitive with other provinces, we need to make the changes and be able to move Saskatchewan into our second century on a sound footing.

Mr. Speaker, the income tax changes were successful, and then we began to look at other areas. The mineral royalties were changed, some of the mining royalties, the oil and gas royalties. And we've seen benefits from those changes quite quickly, and joined with that, I think some good luck in that oil prices also and world events also facilitated some changes to oil and gas prices which Saskatchewan most definitely benefited from.

So we've seen a growing economy. We've seen some huge improvements in our economy. And, Mr. Speaker, I think the . . . Another big step was taken with our last provincial budget where we put in place the business tax changes, corporate capital tax — pretty substantial, in fact very substantial.

We know that Saskatchewan can be competitive. Saskatchewan is competitive. And we know that the Saskatchewan advantage is there — competitive tax regimes, reasonable costs of land and housing plus all of the benefits of a beautiful place to live, clean air, clean water. And I think the biggest asset of the province of Saskatchewan is the people that live here.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — And our Saskatchewan attitude.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's one of the pleasures that I have representing Moose Jaw Wakamow, is that Moose Jaw is a community much like the province of Saskatchewan. Fifteen years ago many people were saying, well the last one out, turn out the light. Many people figured we were down and out and wrote us off. And, Mr. Speaker, we showed them. A very dedicated group of people got together in the city of Moose Jaw, have done some great work — lots of battles along the way to make sure that everyone in the community bought into the idea — and we've seen a real turnaround in our city.

Is there a ways to go? Yes there is. Is there more things that could be done? Yes there is. But we've come a long way, and that's the same as the province of Saskatchewan. We've come a long way in this 15 years, and our fortunes have really turned around. We've seen the debt brought under control. We have seen our economic conditions changed, and maybe not quick enough for some people, but in a step-by-step fashion that has brought us to the point we are here in today.

Mr. Speaker, we seen the Throne Speech with its four pillars and really laid out where we want to see Saskatchewan go to over the next year and beyond. Now the opposition has stood on its feet, and they have criticized and they have said, well gee, this is the same old Throne Speech we've heard year after year. Well I must say to them, Mr. Speaker, they really weren't listening then. And there's a number of things since the last Speech from the Throne in 2005 where we laid out the plans for the future and built off what has happened in this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, just to look at a couple of the highlights, over the last year there was again a balanced budget. And we paid down debt in this province which many people have trouble thinking that we have such a large debt, but it has come down substantially in the last decade, the last 15 years.

The member from Nutana talked about our debt to GDP ratio dropping substantially. I remember reading one report where they talked about our debt to GDP ratio being almost 46 per cent. Currently we are well under 20 and closer to 15 per cent. It's a phenomenal turnaround, Mr. Speaker. And it's purely because of the hard work of the people of Saskatchewan and the situation over the last 15 years where people have just buckled down, pulled up their socks, and known that we've had some difficult struggles here in the province of Saskatchewan to get back on our feet.

So, Mr. Speaker, while we've paid down debt, we've done many other things. We've addressed the social programs, some increased wages to CBOs [community-based organization] across Saskatchewan, an increase in subsidy for child care.

Mr. Speaker, these are my favourites. We have kind of a limited time here that we can speak to issues. And instead of trying to cover every issue, there's a few things that I would really like to focus on that I think are important to the province of Saskatchewan and not only to the province but to the people, to the average citizen in the province of Saskatchewan.

[16:30]

Mr. Speaker, when, in no matter what organization I've been involved in, I've always thought of what it means to me and what it means to me and my pocketbook. And we sit in the House here, and we talk about millions of dollars or we talk about hundreds of thousands of dollars. To most people in the province of Saskatchewan, that's an amount of money that really doesn't have a lot of connect to them in their lives. It almost seems like an unrealistic amount of money.

So when I look at the programs we're doing and when I look at the things that we're putting forward, I want to know how it affects the families in my neighbourhood — how it affects the senior citizens that are still living in their own home on South Hill of Moose Jaw; how it affects single women who have families, are raising their families on South Hill, Moose Jaw, and what it means to them — because, Mr. Speaker, those are the folks that I talk to. Those are many of the folks that I see on a day-to-day basis when I'm at home in Moose Jaw.

And I want to know how it affects them because, Mr. Speaker, when I walk through this building as an MLA, I sometimes feel almost like a tourist. It's a rare privilege, like I said previously,

to have this opportunity, but I never want to lose that connection that I have to being an average family in Saskatchewan.

And that's my goal being here, is how do we connect the things that we do to Saskatchewan families? How do we make them feel or give them the opportunity to feel that what we do is for them and hopefully will improve the lives that they lead and the opportunities for careers in the province of Saskatchewan that their children will have, whether it's better opportunities at school, better opportunities at training. Or going back even earlier, Mr. Speaker, that when as young families they are beginning their careers that their children have the best possible opportunities in this province by accessing early learning and child care.

Mr. Speaker, you know, I've talked about child care quite a bit over the last number of months. And when the federal government cut the funding to the province of Saskatchewan for the national child care program, there was many people that were extremely disappointed.

I can tell you of women in this province who have fought for well over 30 years to put together a comprehensive national child care program. And when the federal government changed, they erased that. They said no, that isn't the direction we want to go. Doesn't matter that you will be responsible for child care in your province; we know better than you do. Doesn't matter the work your community groups have put into this plan. As a federal government we know better than you do. Doesn't matter the work you've put into it or what your needs are in your province, we have decided to change and put forward something different.

And I guess, Mr. Speaker, that's what happens in an election, if that's the direction that they had put forward, and people voted for them. They felt that it was their right and maybe their responsibility to go ahead with the \$100 per month for children under the age of six. And they called it choices, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, to be able to have choices, you need to have options to choose from. And that's one big thing that's lacking in this plan.

And, Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased and I was very proud of my colleagues when, although the federal government decided to pull the funding that they had committed to a national child care program, this New Democratic government said we have a good plan. We have worked with our stakeholders in the province of Saskatchewan. We have talked to young families. We have talked to community-based organizations, and we have put forward a plan that addresses what's needed in the province of Saskatchewan. And even though the federal government has pulled their funding with the change of the federal government, Saskatchewan will continue down the path of our plan to provide the best services we can to young families across this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, it does have choices in that plan. There's child care centres. There's home child care. There is issues that will deal with child care needs in rural Saskatchewan and in the North. Mr. Speaker, we've put together a good plan, and we see in this Throne Speech a commitment again that we will proceed with the Saskatchewan child care plan as quickly as we can

with the resources that are available to us without the federal government support.

And, Mr. Speaker, that's fundamental to children's success. It's fundamental to families in this province because, Mr. Speaker, when I go to work as a mother, I am a much better worker, I am a much better employee when I know that my children are in a quality child care somewhere in this province that will give them the care that they need, that meets the standards that we know are so important for children and have that early connection to early learning. Whether it's pre-kindergarten for three-year-olds or universal pre-K for four-year-olds, there's a need for children to have that very good early start. So, Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased that my colleagues have again said that this is a priority and will continue to work on this child care plan right across the province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this afternoon I've been kind of busy. And, you know, sometimes it's nice if you have a bit of a song in your heart, you know, when you want to stand up and speak. And I was feeling a little bit flat, you know. It's getting near the end of the day, maybe thinking about heading home to spend Halloween with all the kids coming to the door and try and guess which of your neighbours is knocking on your door. These little ones, they're so much fun on Halloween.

When the member from Arm River was standing up, I was listening to his comments. And do you know, Mr. Speaker, this is a great speech. It talks about four pillars. It talks about many of the good things that this government has done, talks about many of the things that we'll continue to work on over this next year, family holiday probably being the biggest one that will first jump out at them when they hear the Throne Speech or heard of the Throne Speech, but also . . . I mean, it just goes on and on. The freeze on tuition on post-secondary is continuing, expanding the literacy funding which again the federal government has quit or pulled back on.

But, Mr. Speaker, of all the good thing that's in this speech, of all the good things that are been talked about, whether it's the holiday, whether it's the 2 per cent cut to the provincial sales tax that the Minister of Finance announced, the thing that surprises me from the members of the opposition is they never criticize programs. It always turns to personal attacks.

It's kind of disappointing because you always think of this House there being great debates, debates more on the issues. And even the member from Arm River, when I just come back into the House this minute to sit down and take my place to be able to join in debate, was criticizing the Premier and talking about his leadership. And it's interesting how they're always worried about us across the floor. Now here we go. It starts up again. What about this one? What about that one? Do you know I would just once like the opposition to debate the issues.

They never have anything positive to say. They don't have anything positive to say about the province and, Mr. Speaker, it gets a little frustrating after a while. Now when you finally put something in place and then they say, well that was our idea . . . And I don't know why they figure it's their idea because they haven't put forward any ideas, any policies on any of the issues affecting the province of Saskatchewan in . . . I can't remember the last time.



But, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say to the opposition, you know, try dealing with the issues — not always making it personal — because we're all here to work for the same people. We're all here to work for the citizens of Saskatchewan.

And there's one area that I actually would like to comment on, that the member from Arm River talked about, Saskatchewan always asking for a handout. Now I actually . . . That's all he said. Saskatchewan's always asking for a handout. So I'm going to have to assume here, Mr. Speaker, that he was talking about our issue with the federal government and equalization. And it is infuriating. To think that retaining the revenues that Saskatchewan earns in a formula that's similar to what's been granted to other provinces in this country we all belong to is somehow viewed by the opposition as asking for handouts, that's frustrating.

But it's also something that all of us here in Saskatchewan need to work towards. It's something that all of us here in Saskatchewan need to be united on because the equalization deal that was promised by the federal Conservative government and which has been talked about by our 12 federal Tory MPs [Member of Parliament] multiple times during the election campaign — before the election campaign — was that Saskatchewan needed to be treated fairly.

Mr. Speaker, that's what we're asking for. So I wish the member from Arm River would just get on the same page as his Tory cousins in Ottawa and realize that Saskatchewan just wants to be treated fairly and be given the same deal that every other province has.

Mr. Speaker, I've kind of wandered through and by and around the Throne Speech. It's a great Throne Speech, and I will not be supporting the amendment. But I will be supporting the Throne Speech as presented by this New Democratic government, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise in the House again today and participate in a debate that has almost had an ongoing history. I think we've heard throne speeches on about six or seven occasions since I was first elected and today's Throne Speech debate is reminiscent of many others that I've heard previously. In fact they're so similar that I think that the speech writers probably just go back to previous copies and change a few words here and there and then produce what they call a whole new vision for the province.

But before I get involved in the actual debate today, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to offer congratulations to the newest member of the House, the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy. We're very proud to have him as part of our team. We were especially pleased with the maiden speech that he delivered in this House a couple of days ago and we think that based on what we heard that day, we can look forward to big things from this young man, and we're glad to have him as part of our official opposition team.

And I'd like to offer my congratulations for years of great service to this House to the Clerk of the legislature, Gwenn Ronyk, who I understand plans to retire at the end of the year. And I think that now's an appropriate time for me to put on the record publicly that I personally have appreciated her, my family has appreciated her openness to my wife and my daughter, and we're grateful for the years of service she has given the people of Saskatchewan through her role here in the Assembly.

I also want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I appreciate what you do in this House because sometimes it's tough to keep the competing sides and ideas at a civilized level. And I guess I should offer an apology to you because I think yesterday was the first time I've been rebuked by the Speaker so I wanted to say that publicly. And I think I crossed the line that Ben Heppner never quite crossed and I'm offering my apology now.

I do want to say too though that, you know, this is a House of passion and sometimes topics really just grab you right at the point where it hurts and you can't help but respond. And we've heard many impassioned speeches in the last couple of days. And I think, Mr. Speaker, that that bodes well for democracy. And even though there are rules to govern our speeches and what is said and how it's said, that passion is important as we delineate clearly the opposing views that the parties hold in this particular House.

[16:45]

I'm probably not as passionate a speaker as most but I think that I do bring to this position a sincerity and a belief that my constituents have recognized and supported. And as a result of their ongoing support I want to acknowledge the constituents of Cypress Hills today as well. They're great people. They're hard-working and they're honest. They're down to earth. They're what I would call resilient and resourceful.

But, Mr. Speaker, they're not very patient any longer. And I would reference, when I make that comment, two or three things: first of all Highway 32 — does that sound familiar? — Highway 21, Highway 36 south of Shaunavon to the American border. Those three highways, Mr. Speaker, are in a disgusting state of disrepair. And the people of Cypress Hills have put up with this condition and these deteriorating conditions for as long as I have been in the legislature. And I think their patience has run out.

There's some other areas, Mr. Speaker, that I want to address a little later on, particularly with reference to ethanol and the potential development of a facility in Shaunavon, and the agricultural crisis that many of my producers have experienced yet again this year. Every year I stand in this House and I say there's an ag crisis happening in some of my constituency and I think that next year will be better. I guess that's the only hope that keeps my producer groups going. But in fact, Mr. Speaker, the ag crisis has gotten worse year after year after year and just when you think it can't get any worse, it happens.

So, Mr. Speaker, I have a few things I want to touch on as it relates to this Throne Speech and what's going on in my constituency, and I hope to tie the two things together. This speech really was not much different, as I said, than the half

dozen or so that I've heard previously: long on promises, short on production, short on fulfillment. Say one thing, do another. But we've gotten even worse, Mr. Speaker.

In many instances I find this government saying something and doing nothing. And I think that's what hurts the people of this province so much. They hear with, you know, great grammar and much fanfare, all these laudable ideas and promises from this government and yet it produces nothing. And I can speak very specifically and clearly to the impact that this government's policies have had on the people of rural Saskatchewan and most specifically Cypress Hills.

Now when it comes to the Throne Speech itself, is there a highlight that we could focus on? Well I suppose that we could identify the announcement of a Family Day, a holiday in February as being the highlight of this speech. It probably isn't the most substantive thing that should have come out of this speech but it's been the one that garnered the most attention and it's what we would call a highlight. And I would say that on behalf of the people of Cypress Hills, it's probably a good idea.

Now most of my constituents are not regular wage earners. Most of them do not go to a job 9 to 5 or five days a week or any of that. Most of them are agricultural producers or people who are working long shifts day after day, long at tough jobs. So the idea of a holiday for the actual wage earner isn't that important and the other people who might enjoy this particular holiday will take advantage of it, I'm sure. And none of them will turn the idea of a holiday away. They'll accept that.

But, Mr. Speaker, part of the benefit of this holiday to the people of Cypress Hills is the fact that when Saskatchewan residents use that three days to go visit relatives in Alberta or go skiing in BC, they're going to drive right through the constituency of Cypress Hills. And that's good for business, Mr. Speaker. I have businesses, I have gas stations, restaurants, and any number of small communities along the No. 1 Highway that will see some increased business as a result of this holiday. And I think that from that perspective it's probably better for the constituents of Cypress Hills than many of the other rural constituencies of the province.

You know, there's so much traffic. I was in Alberta for a long weekend a while back visiting my own family. And when I was travelling back to Saskatchewan I was amazed, Mr. Speaker, at how much traffic was heading west. Not much traffic heading east on the return trip, most of it heading west. And that whole situation is replicated every time we have a long weekend in this province. You know, the doubters over here are saying, well you know that's not true. You know, they just need to stand on the Alberta-Saskatchewan border and count the cars going in opposite directions, depending on what part of the holiday it is.

But it was so problematic our former member of parliament, Lee Morrison, when he heard that the provincial government was actually going to create four lanes of highway out west, said that he was sure it would be three lanes west and one lane east. And that in a humorous way represents the, sort of the psychological and mental picture people can have of the traffic patterns that have developed as a result of the relationship that so many of my families, my constituent families, have with

people in Alberta, and other families in Saskatchewan who have children living in Alberta.

I listened to the member for Moose Jaw North last night. Great, great orator, you know. I have to compliment him on his oratory. It was a blustery speech if I could describe it as such — lots of wind, not a lot of substance but, you know, lots of velocity there. And while I am particularly impressed with his skill, I wasn't that impressed with what he had to say. Because what I find from the current government members as they had spoken on this Throne Speech is that they are clearly looking back into history.

I mean we have heard a recitation of every wrong and every evil that ever transpired in this province and as the saviours of the province they feel quite capable of identifying those problems and I think that was part of the member's speech from Moose Jaw North last night. But one of the things he said that I thought was interesting is that the Sask Party is running from its record.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the 2 per cent tax reduction is evidence enough that this government is running from its record. That 2 per cent tax reduction is a clear ploy to make people forget the sins of this government, the inadequacies of this government, the problems of this government, the failures of this government in the 15 or odd years that they've been in power.

So, you know, I would suggest to the members opposite that a 2 per cent tax reduction might be welcome, but it will not cover all sins. It's just not that big a deal. Mr. Speaker, a 2 per cent reduction might make good politics, but it's really poor public policy and it's especially poor public policy if it's decided three or four days before it's announced. And the fact that it was announced in a member's statement in this House on short notice clearly indicates that it's a move of desperation.

I think we have a comment from Murray Mandryk in one of his recent columns to that effect, where he says:

To be always changing course — particularly in the last year before an election — would make a government look panicky, desperate, and out of control.

I rest my case, Mr. Speaker.

Now as to the record issue, I think that . . . and we heard the other member from Moose Jaw just a little while ago say that they haven't heard a new idea from us in a long time. Well right here I have the Saskatchewan Party policy manual which was voted on and accepted by the party in February 2005 and in it is contained about 170 different policy planks. And I went through that and just highlighted in the index a few of the ideas that are in that particular policy manual and which have shown up, curiously, as government policy in the intervening two years.

Mr. Speaker, I only got halfway through the index of that and I already had 22 ideas right out of the Saskatchewan Party manual that have been adopted by this government in the last two years. Now if that isn't proof positive that this government is tired and old and have no ideas, I don't know what is. In fact I could enunciate them all for you. I might if I have time do just

that this afternoon.

Here's a couple of interesting examples, Mr. Speaker. On page 3 of the government's Throne Speech it talks about making Saskatchewan the best place for young people to live, work, and build strong futures. Now that is a curious point to express in this Throne Speech because if the government is able to overcome the deficit of young people in this province through the actions that they outline in this Throne Speech, I will be amazed.

Mr. Speaker, since this Premier became Premier, we've had 16,000 young people under the age of 35 leave the province of Saskatchewan — 16,000. Just imagine the contribution that number of young people would make to this province if they were here providing us with their skill and their ability and their educational talents and their entrepreneurship and their devotion to their job. Just imagine what those 16,000 young people would contribute to our province.

We've lost 4,500 people in this province in the first six months of this year. And the Canada West Foundation indicates that one in four young people below the age of 35 plan to leave the province to pursue their future — one in four — 25 per cent of young people currently living in Saskatchewan under the age of 35. We're worse than Manitoba, who are sitting at 20 per cent, British Columbia at 10 per cent. Young people in Saskatchewan do not see their future here. It's not that they don't want to be here. It's not that they think this is a bad place. They just don't think the opportunity that they need to pursue their career opportunities at the level they wish are existent in this province. And I think that of all the constituencies in this province, the constituency of Cypress Hills knows the pain of youth out-migration more than any other.

I think I've alluded to this previously, Mr. Speaker. I did a survey of high school graduates in the constituency a few years back — asked high school students in grade 12 what their plans were and where they planned to pursue their careers and their education and so forth. And in virtually all the high schools in the constituency of Cypress Hills, more than half of them planned to leave the province immediately on graduation. That means that they were going to Medicine Hat or Calgary or Lethbridge to find work, or they were going to those cities to pursue their education.

But the worst-case scenario was the community of Burstall where 100 per cent of the grade 12 graduates in that year were leaving the province. They didn't even consider SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology]. They didn't even consider the University of Regina or the University of Saskatchewan. They were leaving the province.

Mr. Speaker, that issue is probably one of the most heartbreaking problems facing the rural communities of our province. And no place knows that better than Cypress Hills.

Quite simply, when the government talks about making youth a priority, the constituents of my area in southwest Saskatchewan do not believe that. They have no faith in that promise. They have no faith in this government to deliver. And I think that that is indicative of how the people of the province are now starting to view this government.

I found it interesting, Mr. Speaker, that on page 4 of this Throne Speech, they talked about unveiling:

a new partnership between business, labour and our training institutions to provide counsel to government to meet Saskatchewan's evolving labour market needs; and [to]

strengthen and expand our regional training model to bring education closer to students and better link training to learners, job-seekers and employers.

You know, that's right out of the Saskatchewan Party policy manual. I refer to page 11. Right here. It's called Enterprise Saskatchewan.

Creation of a new partnership with business, labour, First Nations, local governments and educators called Enterprise Saskatchewan to create an entrepreneurial and enterprising economy;

[invest] . . . in [a] new and old economy infrastructure;

[invest] New resources for post-secondary education; and

The removal of barriers to private sector investment in Saskatchewan's key economic sectors.

Mr. Speaker, if that isn't plagiarism, I don't know what is. You know, Mr. Speaker, if this had happened in university or in school, they'd be expelled for that much plagiarism. But they borrow freely and claim it as their own. Mr. Speaker, I've got many more examples, and I'm going to have a chance to bring these examples to the attention of the public and to the government as my speech unfolds, but, you know, it looks like we're rapidly running out of time. How could that possibly have happened so soon?

Well, you know, it's amazing how fast time flies when you're talking about something that's important to you and important to the people of your constituency. And so given the short hour left, or shortness of time left, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to move that we adjourn debate.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member for Cypress Hills that debate 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, I move that this House do now adjourn.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

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

[The Assembly adjourned at 16:59.]



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