



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

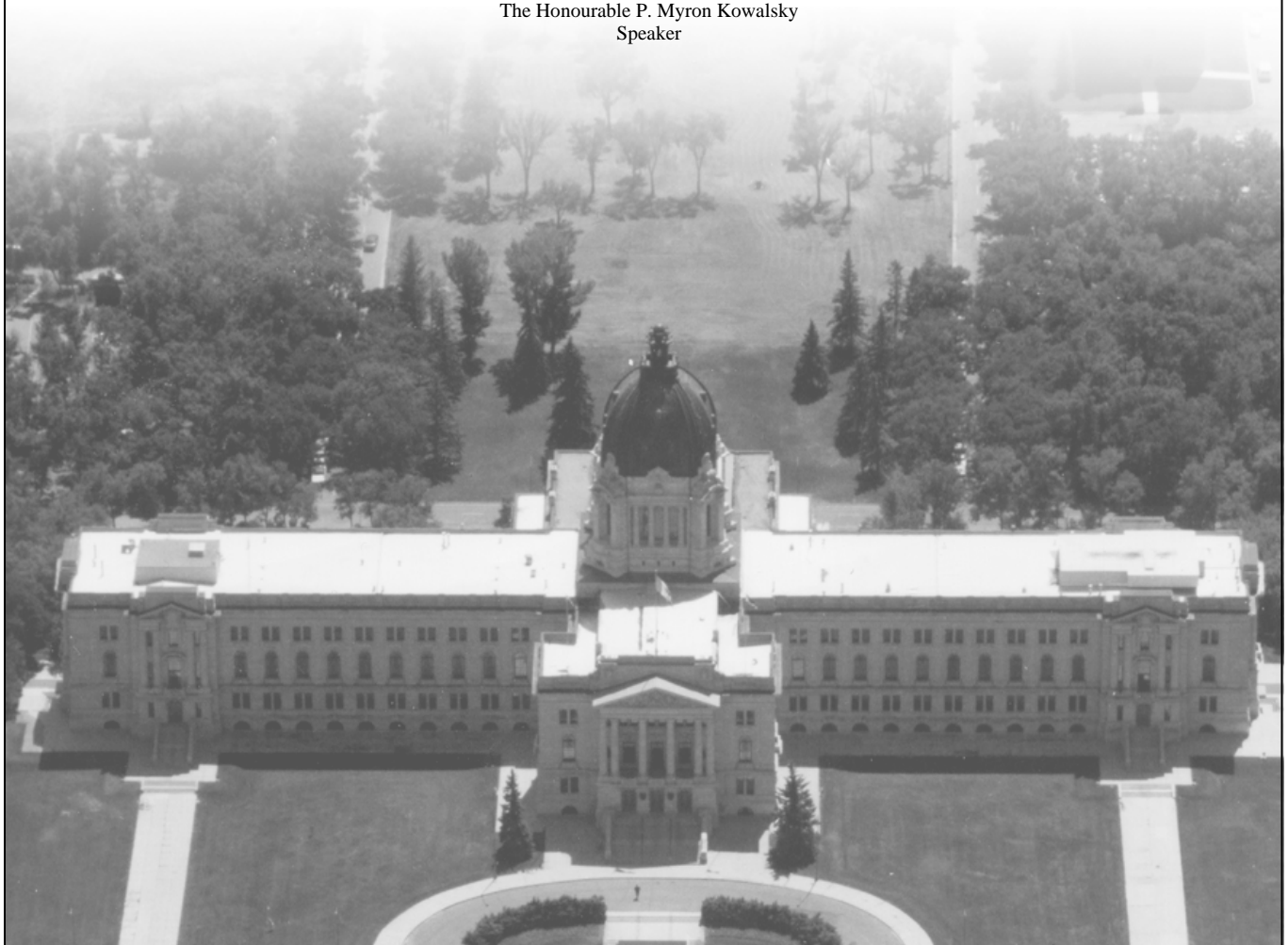
Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of

The Honourable P. Myron Kowalsky
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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 10:00.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker: — Members, this morning before we proceed to petitions, I wish to table the 2005-2006 annual report of the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A petition to present on behalf of the residents of Whitewood, Cowesses, and Broadview regarding dialysis in the Broadview area. And I read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary actions 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.

I so present.

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

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I rise to present a petition on behalf of constituents of Cypress Hills concerned about the condition of Highway 18. 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, today's petition is signed by individuals from the community of Consul. I so present.

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

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition too to present on behalf of citizens from around the province regarding the drug Avastin. And it's amazing how many petitions and how many people have actually signed these petitions as they've been presented day in and day out for the last number of months.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I just ask members to be as

concise as possible. When we're presenting petitions, we want to make sure that we are not entering debate. I recognize the member for Indian Head-Milestone.

Mr. McMorris: — Let me get right to the point. 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, Carievale, Alida, Antler, and Gainsborough. I so present.

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition to present this morning on behalf of a constituent from Carnduff. The prayer reads:

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.

These petitions, Mr. Speaker, come from the communities of Saltcoats, Carnduff, Glen Ewen, Gainsborough, Carievale. I so present, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to rise again today on behalf of people who are concerned about Highway No. 49. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause this government to repair Highway 49 in order to address safety concerns and to facilitate economic growth and tourism in Kelvington, Lintlaw, Preeceville, and surrounding areas.

The people that have signed the petition are from Kelvington, from Okla, from Nut Mountain, and from Lintlaw. I so present.

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

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of Saskatchewan citizens concerned with gravel highways. And 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.

The signatures to this petition, Mr. Speaker, come from the communities of Craven, Quinton, Southey, and Earl Grey. I so present.

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

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I rise today with a petition of citizens that are concerned with the safety of Highway No. 5. 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 and widen Highway No. 5 from Humboldt to Saskatoon.

And again, Mr. Speaker, the signatures demonstrate how well travelled this highway is. They are from Blaine Lake, Warman, Naicam, Saskatoon, Prud'homme, Humboldt, Meacham, Craven, Cut Knife, Colonsay, Wadena, Quill Lake, Canora, Viscount, and Bruno.

I so present.

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

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again today I stand to present a petition on behalf of the people in my constituency that are very concerned with the future of the Estevan Daycare Co-operative. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to review the decision to deny the requested spaces for the Estevan Daycare Co-operative.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this is signed by folks from Estevan, Bienfait, as well as other places in Saskatchewan. I so present. Thank you.

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

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand today and present a petition from the citizens from Biggar. The prayer reads:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will pray.

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

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

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

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

This particular petition is signed by the good citizens of the town of Watrous and Simpson. I so present.

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

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to rise in the House again to present yet another petition regarding funding of Avastin. I too will get directly to the point and 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.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by citizens throughout Saskatchewan. I so present on their behalf, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on Highway 36. 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 invest the needed money to repair and maintain Highway 36 so it can return to being a safe and economical route for Saskatchewan families and businesses.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition today is signed by the good people of Coronach and Moose Jaw, and I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order petitions tabled at the last sitting have been reviewed and pursuant to rule 15(7) are hereby read and received.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 19 ask the government the . . .

The Speaker: — Order please. Order. Once again I recognize the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Draude: —

To the Minister of Justice: how many offenders have attended a program through the prostitution offender intervention program in Regina for the years 2002, '03, '04, and '05?

And I also give notice that I shall on day no. 19 ask the government the following question.

To the Minister of Justice: how many offenders have attended the program through the prostitution offender intervention program in Saskatoon for the years 2002, '03, '04, and '05?

I so present.

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

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 19 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: how many people are currently on the waiting list for long-term care facility attached to Davidson Health Centre in Davidson?

I also have a similar question for long-term care facility in Wynyard, also a similar question for a facility in Watrous, also for the Heartland Health Region, a similar question for Silver Heights Special Care, and long-term care facility in Raymore, and also for another facility in Imperial, and also for the Nokomis Health Centre.

And I also give notice that I shall on day no. 19 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: what are the current vacant staff positions at the Davidson Health Centre?

Also a similar question for the Watrous Hospital, also the same question for Wynyard Hospital and also for Golden Acres facility, and also a similar question for Nokomis and also for Long Lake and also for Raymore, and also for another one in Raymore.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I

give notice that I shall on day 19 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Community Resources: how many children ran away from the Red Willow Centre in Saskatoon for the year 2004?

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To the Minister of Community Resources: how many children ran away from the Red Willow Centre in Saskatoon for the year 2005?

I also give notice that I shall on day 19 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Community Resources: how many children have run away from the Red Willow Centre for the year 2006?

I also give notice that I shall on day 19 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Community Resources: how long was each child gone when he or she ran away from the Red Willow Centre in Saskatoon for the year 2004?

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I also give notice that I shall on day 19 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Community Resources: how long was each child gone when he or she ran away from the Red Willow Centre in Saskatoon for the year 2006?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 19 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Government Insurance: in 2005 how many times has SGI extended insurance coverage for vehicle owners with expired insurance, and what was the total amount paid on those claims?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, through you and to you to members of the Legislative Assembly, I would like to introduce to you the members of the SaskTel Aboriginal Employees Network that are seated in the west gallery.

Mr. Speaker, the SaskTel Aboriginal Employees Network is a network of proactive Aboriginal employees who work collectively towards a workforce within SaskTel which represents Saskatchewan's Aboriginal population. It also seeks to promote and encourage a work environment that values and supports Aboriginal employees. Its members act as ambassadors, promoting and encouraging SaskTel as an employer of choice among Aboriginal employees.

Mr. Speaker, in the gallery is elder Walter Lavallee, Gerry Ruckaber, Patrina Freidel, Gord Kuhn, Kevin Denouden, Val Krumenacker. Also seated with the members are two former SaskTel employees who now work for the Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations, Mr. Speaker, and that is Marmie Poitras and Angie Merasty.

Mr. Speaker, the SaskTel Aboriginal Employees Network is having a meeting here in the legislature to sign a new constitution between SaskTel and the employee network. At lunch the Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations and the Minister of Northern Affairs will have an opportunity to join the members of the network. I regret I won't be able to because of prior commitments.

[10:15]

But I would ask that all members join with me in welcoming the members of the First Nations and Métis Network here and Aboriginal Employees Network here to the legislature and congratulations on their continuing good work in this area. Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition, I too would like to welcome the SaskTel Aboriginal Employees Network. It's great to see you here. I know that you do do great work and we thank you for all of that. So welcome to your Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Regina Lakeview, the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the legislature, 22 students from Sheldon Williams Collegiate in Regina Lakeview. They're students who are participating in the social studies 30 class of grade 12. And they're accompanied by their teachers, Mark McKeen and Dale Girodat. I ask all members to welcome them here to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Louis Riel Day

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today is a significant day for Métis people and for all Canadians. It is Louis Riel Day.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very special time to remember and to celebrate the contributions that Métis people have made and continue to make in this country. Louis Riel played a key role in ensuring that the voices of Métis people were heard and respected across Canada. He led two resistance movements to preserve and to protect Métis rights and culture. He also played a very significant role in the political process that led to the creation of the province of Manitoba in 1870.

Riel was a complex and controversial figure in our history, even bringing him to conflict with law and Canadian authorities. But his legacy even today is an inspiring and visionary leader who saw and foresaw the Métis as one of Canada's founding peoples.

Riel's unique and historical role in the development of the Confederation has contributed to the rights and interests of all Western Canadians. We also recognize the deep pride that he generated amongst his people. That pride continues to burn brightly today. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

The Hokey-Pokey

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, well, well, well, I see the NDP [New Democratic Party] is having its convention this weekend. Mr. Speaker, we have an NDP party that has to go into this convention as a government in the sunset of its life. And that sunset is caused not by advancing age but rather by diminished capacity.

Political incontinence and political senility have now given way to delusions of grandeur. The poor socialists that will come out and actually pay money for this tragic spectacle will probably get good value for their money. They will no doubt get a rousing lesson in creative financing, shell games, and miscounting from the Finance minister.

Speaking of counting, I hear that the Health minister and Justice minister are planning a debate on who can miscount the best — the one that can't count police officers or the one that can't count nurses. I wouldn't be surprised, Mr. Speaker, if the convention winds up with a giant group game of horsey that they learned on the Premier's bus tour last summer.

Mr. Speaker, to say that the party is led by a group of political cadavers is an understatement but it reminds me of another story about death. With all the sadness and trauma going on in

the world at the moment, it's worth reflecting on the death of a very important person which went almost unnoticed last week. Larry LaPrise, the man who wrote "The Hokey-Pokey," died peacefully at the age of 93. The most traumatic part for his family was getting him into the coffin. They put his left leg in and then the trouble started.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

New Democratic Party Candidate Nominated in Prince Albert Carlton

Hon. Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last night at a very well-attended nomination, the Prince Albert Carlton NDP elected Chad Nilson to represent them as their NDP candidate for the next election to succeed you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Chad was born and raised in Prince Albert and area. He's 27 years old and is very committed to his city and province. Chad has worked for the Department of Community Resources and Employment, the Prince Albert Youth Activity Centre. He currently teaches political studies for the University of Saskatchewan and conducts research for the Prince Albert Co-operative Health Centre.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to his various work experiences, Chad has an impressive education credential set. He has obtained a diploma in policing from the Lethbridge Community College, a Bachelor of Science in criminal justice, a Master of Arts in criminal justice from Radford University in Virginia, a Master of Science in political science from the University of New Orleans, and he is currently finishing the final stages of his Ph.D. [Doctor of Philosophy] in political science from the University of New Orleans.

Chad's appreciation for community leadership and civic involvement is the driving force behind his run for public office. He is inspired by the work of Tommy Douglas and he feels that the role of government in society should be to advance the liberties of individuals while also ensuring that no one is left behind. Most importantly, Mr. Speaker, Chad is strongly supported in this endeavour by his lovely wife, Amy, and their two children, Zach and Tazana.

Mr. Speaker, we are proud to welcome Chad, his youthfulness, his vision, and his experience. And we look forward to having another Nilson on the government side of the House working hard for the people of Saskatchewan. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Responses From Premier

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a hypothetical question for the members opposite and our

listening audience. If one would write a letter to the Premier of our province, a full-page letter talking about the most vulnerable children in our society — children who are being sexually exploited — and further in that letter ask questions and give suggestions and alternatives for helping those children, what should one expect back from the Premier of our province?

Mr. Speaker, I did write a letter and I guess it was naive to expect to get more than a three-sentence letter from the Premier saying, I got your letter and I gave it to somebody else to deal with. Is that what the government considers a response?

Well on this side of the House we call it passing the buck. It's the same response that the grieving widow, Crystal Bonderud, got when she went to see the Premier and she was told to go to the Ombudsman. Once again we see the Premier passing the buck.

The people of Saskatchewan have the right to expect their Premier to take responsibility for the actions of his government and its members. This Premier has been given the responsibility to be the leader but instead of showing true leadership he hides behind his position and passes the buck.

The Premier said, go to the human resources committee, go to the Ombudsman, go anywhere but don't bother me. Well, Mr. Speaker, as soon as this Premier has the strength of character to call the next election, the people of Saskatchewan will tell this Premier to go get another job.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. Order. The Chair recognizes . . . Order. Order please. Order. The Chair recognizes the member for Regina Coronation Park.

Transitional Housing Project

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In March of last year, a community research project of transitional housing services identified a need for more second stage housing in Saskatchewan.

I am pleased to rise in the Assembly today and say that just a couple of days ago I had the opportunity to participate in the official opening of a new second stage housing complex for women and children fleeing domestic violence. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan women and children deserve the ability to live safely with dignity, respect, and as independently as possible.

This project is going to make a very positive change for women and children on their path to a safe and respectful future. This exemplifies HomeFirst, our provincial strategy of creating more choices, and ties into our long-term vision of making life better for today's families and building a future here for our youth.

Mr. Speaker, the Wichihik Iskewewak Transitional House project was carried out by the Touchwood File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council Safe Shelter Inc. and supported by the federal and provincial funding. I thank all the partners involved for their efforts on behalf of Saskatchewan women and children. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mouseland Revisited

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a resident of the constituency of Batoche recently put her own spin on the NDP bedtime story of “Mouseland.” She begins by pointing out that she believes the mice or NDP are currently trying to disguise themselves as cats with a rash of new announcements and early holiday giving.

The author made a note of how cats are smart, independent, and do not take kindly to abuse. And in a line which sounds more reminiscent of Saskatchewan people in their regard for this NDP government, she writes, “Once you have lost their trust you will never regain it.” Do you think this might be what happened in Tommy Douglas’s Mouseland?

Now, Mr. Speaker, we all know the mess that mice can create when left to their own devices. They chew through things. They burrow into things and are not really constructive critters. The author of this new take on Mouseland seems to agree and further sums up the behaviour of the mice by writing, “Instead of encouraging our people to become healthy, beautiful and independent cats, we drive the cats away and discourage foreign cats from [coming] . . . in.”

This analogy perfectly suits this tired, worn out NDP government and a Premier that has overseen population loss in every year since he took over the office. The author of the letter sums up her feelings and those of many others in the province who have become fed up with this stale NDP government by writing, “If this Mouseland fantasy is the basis of the current ruling ideology, our troubles have only just begun.”

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Saskatchewan Party View of Canadian Wheat Board

Mr. Borgerson: — Mr. Speaker, until yesterday there may have been some question in some people’s minds as to where the Saskatchewan Party loyalties truly lie — with the people of this province or with their federal Conservative counterparts.

But when the members stood, the members opposite stood in this Assembly yesterday and voted against the government motion supporting the single-desk marketing power of the Canadian Wheat Board and the democratic right of farmers to decide the wheat board’s future, they made it clear beyond all question and all doubt that the only real loyalty the Saskatchewan Party has is to right-wing ideology and the philosophy that fat cats come first.

But that’s not our philosophy, Mr. Speaker. And when the members opposite say that the wheat board is not our business we say, as the social democratic government of this province, it is our business because the wheat board matters to every citizen

of this province.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday’s vote was predictable. The members opposite stood in their places and voted against the wishes of the majority of Saskatchewan farmers. They voted for an end to the Canadian Wheat Board and the service it has provided farmers for over 60 years.

And, Mr. Speaker, yesterday’s vote was also historic. Because by voting to end the Canadian Wheat Board the Saskatchewan Party opposite ended any hope they ever would have had of winning the next provincial election. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs. Order. Let’s all go at once here. The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Fiscal Stabilization Fund

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, for years now the NDP has had this imaginary fund called the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. There was no actual money in this so-called fund. The Provincial Auditor called it an accounting mirage.

But that didn’t stop the NDP from using this so-called fund to try to make the budget seem balanced or to go on a spending spree if an election was on the way, Mr. Speaker. All the while the NDP defended its use of this imaginary fund and the fact that it contained no actual money. But all of a sudden today, Mr. Speaker, the NDP government did a huge flip-flop. They have decided to put real money, nearly \$900 million, in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund.

Mr. Speaker, why this sudden reversal? And isn’t it a clear admission that the NDP government was wrong all along?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[10:30]

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

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I love getting financial advice from the members opposite. And there’s lots of it. There’s lots of it. On any given day you can get the advice that we should be cutting taxes more, or we should be paying pensioners more and increasing the debt, or we should be spending more on any number of different programs. The one thing you never actually hear them say is, you should balance the budget.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that in the mid-year financial statements we presented today, we provided for a balanced budget. We’ve increased transparency and understanding. We’ve changed the way the Fiscal Stabilization Fund is dealt with. We’ve increased the fuel tax; we created The Fuel Tax Accountability Act. We brought in an infrastructure fund. These are changes Saskatchewan people have asked for. We’re happy to be in a position of financial stability to be able to provide it.

And I would expect the members opposite will finally support it.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's funny how the NDP polling numbers go down, the Fiscal Stabilization Fund goes up.

Mr. Speaker, for years the NDP said, we don't need money in a Fiscal Stabilization Fund. Then all of a sudden today they say, we do need money in the fiscal stabilization. We need a lot of money. We need \$900 million. What changed? Well it's pretty clear, Mr. Speaker. There's an election coming. There's an election coming next year. And the NDP is dropping like a rock in the polls, Mr. Speaker, and they need to set up a huge slush fund to try to buy the next election. Mr. Speaker, isn't this what it's really about? Why is the NDP setting up this \$900 million election slush fund on the eve of an election?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Well yesterday he was accusing us, just a minute ago, he was accusing us of this being an imaginary fund. Now he's accusing us of it being a slush fund. Its number hasn't changed any between what we presented last year and what we're presenting now. The same amount of money is available.

We've used the cash on hand to provide a better, more transparent way of dealing with the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. This is providing us with the ability to make sure we've got a simpler, more understandable approach to dealing with it.

And I would say to the member opposite, he should understand this about the Fiscal Stabilization Fund: it is the savings account for the government. Once that fund is spent, it's gone. And so he should maybe be a little bit more circumspect in terms of what he's calling on to be dealt with out of that fund than he and his colleagues have been in the last few weeks.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, I'll remind the Finance minister that there was a referendum on that budget. It was called the Weyburn-Big Muddy by-election.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, it's pretty, pretty basic, pretty basic NDP economics. The polls go down. The slush fund goes up. The problem is, Mr. Speaker, it's not the NDP's money; it's taxpayers' money. And the NDP shouldn't be building up a mountain of money on the backs of Saskatchewan taxpayers just to try to buy themselves an election.

Mr. Speaker, when the 2006 budget was tabled, the NDP was already planning on spending \$520 million in their election slush fund for 2007. Mr. Speaker, could the minister please tell us how much of the \$900 million election slush fund does he plan to spend in next year's budget?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Well let's just recap where we're at, Mr. Speaker. Since this House came in, we have cut the sales tax. We have cut income taxes. We have cut small-business taxes. We have continued with our cuts to corporate taxes, the capital taxes. We are continuing to rebalance the finances of this government. At the same time we found new money, \$300 million worth of new money for social programs and infrastructure. At the same time, we have increased the transparency of the finances in this province.

Now I know that the members opposite don't like transparency, and God forbid we ever talk about accountability. I know that those members also never like to talk about the debt which, by the way, we have been continually paying down. The members opposite need to square their ongoing demand for more spending on everything from health care to social policy with their increased demands for cuts to taxes, with their increased demand for debt reduction. What is the policy of that member opposite and that party opposite when it comes to balancing this budget?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, the minister says he is setting up this election slush fund to create transparency. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's a good description because Saskatchewan people can see right through this NDP government.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — They know that this NDP government is going to use this mountain of money for this election slush fund. They're going to try to buy themselves the next election. Now the NDP is trying to tell us that it's good public policy. That begs the question, Mr. Speaker, why weren't they doing these things before? Why weren't they cutting taxes before, Mr. Speaker? Why weren't they creating more training spaces before? Why does the NDP only seem to do these things on the eve of an election?

Mr. Speaker, if the minister is truly interested in transparency, will he tell us how much of this election slush fund he will try to spend on the election?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — None. Very simply put, none. The Fiscal Stabilization Fund is there to help deal with revenue

shortfalls and changes in revenue. We'd predicted that we're going to need to draw on it over the next couple of years to help pay for the business tax reforms, until those kick in, so that we can make sure we've got the growth going on.

He might want to just tap the shoulder of the guy who sits in front of him and ask him if we were actually going to spend this on electioneering, why we wouldn't be doing the hundreds of millions of dollars worth of new spending that he's calling for? Tap the shoulder of the guy who sits just behind you and ask why we're not spending more in terms of the forestry sector. Tap the shoulder of the guy that sits over from Saskatoon Southeast who is calling on us to fully fund the pension liabilities.

That member can ask any member of his party for new ideas in terms of spending. What he cannot do is come up with an answer as to how they would continue to balance this budget.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Litigation Regarding Department of Highways' Contract

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's another example of NDP government incompetence where someone with a long history of criminal activity goes unnoticed and receives work from the NDP government. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Highways minister: why didn't his department do the proper due diligence regarding the contracting of Titan Excavating?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Highways and Transportation.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, back to the future, in estimates last year, that member asked questions with respect to the process: how the tenders are let, how due diligence is done. I can tell you and the House, members of this House, Mr. Speaker, that those questions have all been answered. He understands quite clearly what happened. He understands that the government has, the department has tightened up the process.

Mr. Speaker, there are people who do business in this province sometimes who are not what we would, I guess, all want to see and that is ethical business people. This was an unfortunate circumstance that was created by a rather unscrupulous person. And I would want to say that the minister, I think, handled it very well. I'm very comfortable with the work that they've done. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Weekes: — Mr. Speaker, this unfortunate circumstance was caused by the government's incompetence. Mr. Speaker, this all began when the Highways minister did not do his homework. His department never checked to make sure a bond was legitimate. Now Gerald Aalbers is out \$50,000 because the Highways minister did not manage his file properly. Mr.

Aalbers has been forced to sue the government to try and get his money back.

Mr. Speaker, why did the minister allow this situation to get out of hand? Why did he not do his homework in the first place, instead of forcing this man to sue the government?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Highways and Transportation.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, that member knows full well that there was a fraudulent signature that led to this whole circumstance. He also knows that those who should have been compensated were compensated, Mr. Speaker.

I want to say this. Why doesn't that member stand up and talk about the competence of the people who are running this department and talk about the good things that they're doing with the new \$90 million of money that's going into this budget?

Mr. Speaker, you know, his leader talks about money falling off of the back of a truck to pave roads and to fix highways. He talks about money falling off of the back of a truck to create training spots for young people in this province. Mr. Speaker, those people should get with the program.

What we're doing is putting money back into the hands of people of Saskatchewan who deserve the benefits for all of the things that they've helped to create in terms of strengthening this economy. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to say to you, I'm going to continue to support the people within the Department of Highways and Transportation for the good work that they do on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. That member can ask all the questions he wants in estimates, and we'll be glad to answer them again.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister knows full well that not everyone was properly compensated. Mr. Aalbers tried and tried to get his voice heard. He spoke personally to the Agriculture minister and then sent a letter on March 19, 2005. Mr. Aalbers used to be that member's constituent, Mr. Speaker. He even called the member from Saskatchewan Rivers. And not once did Mr. Aalbers ever receive a letter or a phone call back from those members, and now nothing from the Highways minister.

Mr. Speaker, why is the NDP government ignoring Mr. Aalbers and his request to be heard? Why wouldn't they at least meet with him before he had to sue the government?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Highways and Transportation.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say this, that

members opposite I think have some first-hand experience with fraud.

I want to say this, Mr. Speaker. The tendering process that we have in place here allows for good people who want to do business in this province to manage these portfolios. I want to say that we have changed some of the process with respect to checking the legitimacy of bonds and bonding agencies when we're dealing with an unfamiliar contractor.

Mr. Speaker, what happened here was there was a signature that was fraudulently representing a bond. And I want to say that the minister handled it, I believe, very well. I want to say that the deputy minister handled it very well, and the department handled it very well. Mr. Speaker, we have a process that I think allows for legitimate business people to do business in an efficient way with this government, and we're going to continue to improve on that process.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Documentation Concerning Oyate Safe House

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, 63 days ago the Saskatchewan Children's Advocate released his report on the Oyate Safe House. And I invite the Minister of Community Resources to turn to page 37 of that report. On that page you will find recommendations 14(06). It calls for the development of a shared vision and common service delivery principles within 60 days.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure, given all the controversy that has been written down about this issue, I would ask the minister: will he share with this Assembly and the people of Saskatchewan this mystical document?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, I table the mystical document.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have not been presented with all the minutes from the meetings between the department officials and the safe house board. The only minutes that have not been seen are the minutes when the minister was in attendance both in March and May. Mr. Speaker, on November 7 the deputy minister of Community Resources promised to search for any record, what ... [inaudible] ... of those meetings. I ask the minister: what has been found, and will he table those documents?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, the minutes of that meeting are mystical, Mr. Speaker, because there was no meeting. Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated in the past, we have primarily advised the Oyate Board that the advocate and the auditor were going to be engaged in the process, and we instructed them very clearly to co-operate and to be fully accountable to the process, Mr. Speaker. Again I'll point out, I've said this many times, and I stand by my answer, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Merriman: — Mr. Speaker, the minutes provided by his deputy minister — the outlines of the minutes with the Oyate Board — stated clearly that in March and May, Minister Belanger met with the Oyate Board. He's just stood and said in this House that there was no meeting. Mr. Speaker, who's right on this? Will he table those minutes, and why is he hiding them? Why is he covering this up? Why won't he share with this House the minutes of those meetings which could be critical to get to the bottom of this cover-up.

[10:45]

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, this has got to be one of the worst critics I've met in my entire life, Mr. Speaker. He doesn't get it at all, Mr. Speaker. So I'll say again: there was no meeting at all, Mr. Speaker. We primarily advised the Oyate Board directors that the advocate and the auditor were engaged and that they should fully co-operate with their work, and they should certainly be fully accountable through the process, Mr. Speaker.

And what is beginning to surprise me, Mr. Speaker, is the constant attack on First Nations people from the party opposite, Mr. Speaker. It is constant. Now I'm going to ask that member, what in the world do you have against First Nations people being actively engaged with the care and the development of First Nations children, Mr. Speaker? What is fundamentally wrong with that, Mr. Speaker?

It has always been negative, negative doom and gloom when it comes to First Nations people. Enough of that, it's 2006, not 1960s.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Merriman: — You know, Mr. Speaker, the minister is good at throwing out the personal insults. I think his first

comment was the big, fat mirror. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly prepared to admit the big, fat mirror is correct if he's prepared to admit he's incompetent because both of them are fairly obvious to me.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Merriman: — Mr. Speaker, his department sent an outline of all the meetings with the Oyate Board as requested. It shows two meetings with this minister. He's now saying they didn't happen.

Mr. Speaker, who's wrong? Somebody is not telling the truth on this issue. It's on a paper document. Will he provide those minutes to this House?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, our government has been very co-operative on this file. They have asked for information. We have submitted two big binders of information. Everything that our staff ever wrote, Mr. Speaker, on official meetings were certainly put forward in those documents, Mr. Speaker.

And again I'll point out to the member and to the people of Saskatchewan, what that member and that party does not want to do is talk about the progress we made on this file, Mr. Speaker. It is an exciting opportunity to finally find some solution to deal with the children who are being sexually exploited on Saskatchewan streets, Mr. Speaker.

But I'll point out again to the people of Saskatchewan: there was no official meeting. We primarily advised the Oyate Board that the advocate and the auditor were engaged.

And, Mr. Speaker, we know that they also met with the opposition. Was there minutes of their meeting, Mr. Speaker? Was there minutes of that meeting, Mr. Speaker? The Oyate Board met with the opposition, Mr. Speaker. What are they hiding, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Merriman: — You know, Mr. Speaker, first they wouldn't allow the former deputy minister to speak; they gagged her. Then the current deputy minister that provided a document that showed very clearly that there were two meetings — one in March, one in May — with the minister and his assistant, that those meetings happened. He is now saying they didn't happen. He's now saying there's no minutes.

Mr. Speaker, we need to get to the bottom of this. We need the former deputy minister to tell her story. Why is she being gagged, and why won't he produce those minutes?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Again, Mr. Speaker, this has got to be the worst critic in the history of the Assembly. Well he just simply doesn't get it. Mr. Speaker. There was no official meeting. There were no minutes at this gathering, Mr. Speaker, in my office. I primarily told the Oyate Board that the advocate and auditor are going to be engaged and that they should both be fully supported, co-operative and certainly accountable. I know that after our meeting we had in my office, which is an unofficial meeting, they went off to meet with the opposition. Now did they have minutes of that meeting, Mr. Speaker?

I tell the people of Saskatchewan is that all we have over there is doom and gloom, fear, Mr. Speaker, no plan. They are anti-First Nations in my opinion. On this side of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, we have a plan, we have progress. We are going to implement and are going to really help these children by reaching out to them, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Leadership and Political Futures

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Partly because of answers like that, the Premier of this province is having a pretty tough fall. And we're worried about him, Mr. Speaker. The Premier had to quell some infighting in his caucus here not long ago. He had some MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] advocating that someone no less than Dwayne Lingenfelter return from the oil towers of Calgary to lead the party. We know the Premier's got a convention coming up, Mr. Speaker, and we know there's some leadership review mechanism that may be activated there. We're worried about it, Mr. Speaker.

The question for the Premier is this: has he spent enough taxpayers' dollars? Has he made enough announcements to save his political career at this convention? We're worried about him. Will he be back on Monday morning, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, this session and particularly this past week has not been very good for the Leader of the Opposition or the Sask Party, and it's pretty telling, Mr. Speaker. It's pretty telling in the line of questions we have from him today.

Mr. Speaker, let's just review the circumstance here. You know before we came into this session that party and that leader was saying the biggest issue facing this legislature, facing the people, was the matter of youth retention and building a future for our young people.

Well that's a cornerstone of our Throne Speech, and they voted against it. But you know what, Mr. Speaker, it took us about

three weeks into the session before the Leader of the Opposition stood in this House and even mentioned the issue of youth retention. And how was that? He got up, read his paper that morning, came to this House and said, well here's a good idea from Manitoba; why don't you introduce that? That was, Mr. Speaker, a week after he released some kind of a plan — that nobody listened to — down here at the Regina Chamber of Commerce, which plan didn't have that same idea in it.

Then, Mr. Speaker — get this — the Leader of the Opposition goes out into the rotunda here, goes out in the rotunda, and says one thing out there that caught my eye. He said, you know what, we were just saving this, Mr. Speaker, we were saving this for an election. I . . . [inaudible] . . . a little more to say about that.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — This morning we heard pretty clearly how this government is setting aside for its own political purposes, an election slush fund. About \$1 billion they're going to set aside. It's not their money. It belongs to the taxpayers of the province of Saskatchewan, but they're setting it aside for an election slush fund.

I want to ask the Premier this, how many lessons does he need? How many lessons does he need before he and his government learns. Because you know what? There's a new member sitting — from Weyburn-Big Muddy — right in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, today because of a lesson unlearned from this NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, that Premier tried to buy the people of Weyburn-Big Muddy with their own money in a last-ditch promise. Will he please assure this House that he won't pursue that folly again, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, when will this Leader of the Opposition and when will this party learn that you can't say one thing here and one thing out there and one thing somewhere else because, Mr. Speaker, you're going to get caught.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition was asked by the press out there the other day, why it is that this NDP idea from Manitoba that he brings into the House wasn't in his own plan introduced a week before . . . [inaudible] . . . Why is that? Well he said, Mr. Speaker, he said, note these words, well to tell you the truth, he says, to tell you the truth — I'm quoting the Leader of the Opposition — to tell you the truth . . . which begs the question when was he not telling the truth. But he says here: to tell you the truth, we've been working on it for some time with a view towards looking to the election.

Mr. Speaker, it's all exposed. They are only concerned about their political future, not about the people of Saskatchewan. Here's a government investing in the young people of

Saskatchewan, investing in training opportunities, a government who cares about the people of Saskatchewan. We have an opposition that cares only about the Saskatchewan Party.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, it's easy to understand why members of his party attending their convention this weekend have some real concerns about that Premier's leadership and about the direction of this government.

We still have the longest surgical waiting list in the country. We have nurses saying the government's failing with respect to recruitment and retention. We have a Minister of Community Resources who puts politics ahead of kids, Mr. Speaker. We have another Minister of Finance who's setting aside for his political purposes an election slush fund, Mr. Speaker. We have a caucus over there that's not united, one that was actively trying to get a leader to come back from Calgary to replace this Premier, Mr. Speaker.

The question for the Premier is this: has he learned any lessons from Weyburn-Big Muddy? Has he learned any lessons from how the people of this province feel?

The theme of their convention this weekend is called, can you feel the Energy, Mr. Speaker. That's the theme of their convention. Mr. Speaker, if the Premier doesn't change his ways, the next convention theme will be can you feel the pulse because the party will be finished, Mr. Speaker.

Can we expect him back on Monday? Will he survive his own political convention this weekend, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, this, this, this is just too much fun. Mr. Speaker, today we had, we had one of the members over there demanding some minutes from some meetings.

Well you know, this week the Leader of the Opposition and his Finance critic were announcing to the whole world they're going to have a meeting, a meeting, they said, with the Minister of Finance of Canada, and they'll make the Saskatchewan case. Well I'd like to see the minutes from their meeting. I'd like to see the minutes from this meeting.

You know what I'm told, Mr. Speaker? I'm told there wasn't really a meeting. I'm told the Leader of the Opposition went off to the Conservative Party fundraiser, and they got together over the cocktail hour. That's what I'm told. Over some Harvey Wallbangers or something and had a meeting. Well I'd like to see the minutes of that meeting.

And then, Mr. Speaker, he talks about returning from Calgary. Well listen to this. This is in today's paper, a letter from a citizen of Saskatchewan to the *Star Phoenix* reflecting on the

Leader of the Opposition's visit to Calgary recently. He says:

[I] was . . . [interesting] to hear [that] Saskatchewan Party Leader Brad Wall's lavish thank you to "King Ralph". As I stood there, a question kept running through my mind: why would Wall publicly be thanking the ex-premier of Alberta for "what he has done for Saskatchewan?"

I truly felt embarrassed . . .

Well we are embarrassed . . .

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order please. Order please. Order. Order please. Order please.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Mid-year Financial Statements

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise in the House today to share with the Assembly the mid-year financial statements and to outline some of the decisions that we've made to increase transparency in our finances and at the same time build a better future for Saskatchewan families.

I am very pleased to announce that our strong financial position continues and that we are forecasting a \$402.3 million improvement in revenues over budget this year. As a result of the growing economy, personal and corporate tax revenue is up. This is a result of the fact businesses are more profitable and more people are working than ever.

It is this fact, the strength of our overall economy, that has allowed us to cut the PST [provincial sales tax] by 2 points to 5 per cent. In so doing, Saskatchewan businesses and families are receiving an immediate and an ongoing benefit from a strong and growing economy. For the average family this means tax savings of over \$300 a year. Businesses and municipalities will save over \$175 million in purchases this year. These are significant savings that are possible because of our growing economy.

Our improved revenue position has also allowed us to cut the income taxes by indexing the brackets and credits to the rate of national inflation, saving Saskatchewan residents another \$28.1 million next year. These changes build on our commitment in this budget of ours to cut property taxes for farmers. It's allowed us to implement further business tax changes on top of the 190 million in savings that will be realized through the business tax reforms announced in the budget.

We've been able to introduce changes to the dividend tax credit and small-business rate that are providing 5.3 million in additional tax savings. It'll help our economy grow and provide even more career opportunities here for young people.

In total, we have significantly rebalanced and reduced our business and family taxes in this province. Our cuts to corporate taxes, capital taxes, income taxes, sales taxes, small-business taxes, and property taxes mean that this year alone we have announced ongoing tax cuts of more than half a billion dollars for the benefit of Saskatchewan businesses and families.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[11:00]

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, this builds on the fact that since this Premier took office, taxes have been cut by more than three-quarters of a billion dollars a year. This has been possible because we've been responsible in our approach to balance the budget, to reduce our debt, and to make changes that have stimulated job growth and a stronger economy.

We have also been mindful however, Mr. Speaker, of the need to strengthen our social programs and invest in our communities. This mid-year report outlines that in addition to a significant reduction in taxes, we've made significant new investments in infrastructure, in education and training, and in our health care services. This includes \$324 million more in additional program and infrastructure spending at mid year.

In addition to this, I am pleased to announce that we will establish a cash fund, a \$100 million infrastructure fund for multi-year use. Money in this fund will be used over the next three years to support the building communities program. This initial \$100 million cash commitment will allow the building community fund to address targeted cultural and recreational needs for communities throughout our province.

In the coming weeks my colleague, the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation, will outline the criteria and objectives for this fund and will announce the initial projects to be funded under the initiative. We are anticipating about \$20 million will be spent this year alone to enhance our cultural and recreational infrastructure.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Other spending increases identified in the mid-year report relate mainly to items and initiatives already announced by the government. These include funds to deal with the nursing shortages in the health care sector; more funds for highway work, including the winter works program that we've announced; additional funds for labour market initiative; and this, a significant increase in the number of seats available for Saskatchewan students in our training system. We're also going to provide more capital money for the education and training system.

This mid-year report includes provisions to fully fund the CAIS [Canadian agricultural income stabilization] program for 2006 and to replace the water bomber that we lost this summer.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — With respect to the increased spending in this mid-year report, I want to indicate that we have continued to be mindful that windfall revenues are not

necessarily recurring revenues. As such, outside of the tax cuts, we have ensured that almost 80 per cent of the new spending is one-time spending only.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, fiscal responsibility is important to Saskatchewan people and the Saskatchewan NDP. And we will continue to keep the finances on track and our budgets balanced. People will know that when they elected us, the province's finances were a mess. We campaigned at that point on a platform for creating more open, honest, and accountable government. We've kept that promise and we've increased accountability and transparency.

To that end, I am pleased to announce today that we've decided to change the way we deal with the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. In particular, we've decided to fully cash fund it and in doing so we are going to improve the transparency and the accountability.

In summary I can say we have done what Saskatchewan people have asked of us. We've listened to what they had to say. We have learned from what they had to say. And we are now today prepared to lead by cutting taxes to stimulate growth and to provide benefits to the families; by increasing our investments in infrastructure through increased spending on highways and community facilities; by increasing opportunities for young people by expanding access to our education system; and by simplifying and improving the transparency and accountability of our finances through initiatives like the gas tax accountability Act, the new multi-year structure fund, and changes to the Fiscal Stabilization Fund.

Quite simply, there has never been a better time to live in Saskatchewan than today.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, our debt/GDP [gross domestic product] ratios are at a 20-year low. Taxes are at their lowest rate in decades. Record numbers of people are working, and we have an unemployment rate that is at a 30-year low.

We all made a lot of changes and a lot of sacrifices in the 1990s to pay off the excesses of the 1980s. And we are all finally in a position to see the benefit of that work, to enjoy the strength of a growing economy, and to know that together we really are building a better future for Saskatchewan families right here. With that I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well it's an interesting day. The Finance minister says that he's learned. He's learned that the way they were doing things for the last 10 years are wrong. Well, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to you, he hasn't learned very much.

He hasn't learned what the message was from the Weyburn-Big

Muddy by-election. You can't buy an election, Mr. Speaker. You can try to buy an election. The NDP tried that in Weyburn-Big Muddy. What happened? What happened, Mr. Speaker? The people of Weyburn-Big Muddy spoke in a decisive manner, and that's why that member is sitting on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, we're going to see more of that from this NDP government. They call this the NDP imaginary fund, the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. There is no money in this fund — none whatsoever.

The Provincial Auditor called it an accounting mirage, but that didn't stop this NDP government of trying to balance the budget, trying to make it appear that the budget was balanced, Mr. Speaker. Well what did the auditor have to say about that? What did the auditor have to say about the last 16 budgets from this government? Seven were deficits; nine were surpluses. And they were wrong to say that they've been balancing the budget all along.

Now they say that they've learned from this, Mr. Speaker. I would suggest that it's too little, too late. All of a sudden today we see this huge flip-flop on behalf of this NDP government. They've decided to put some real money into the Fiscal Stabilization Fund — \$900 million of Saskatchewan taxpayers' money.

Won't people be interested to read their paper tomorrow or watch the news tonight or listen to the news today to realize that this government has a \$900 million savings account? Wouldn't that be nice if Saskatchewan people could participate in that money, Mr. Speaker? But no, no, they'll have to wait. They'll have to wait till the very eve of an election to find out what the NDP government will do with that money, Mr. Speaker. It's a sad situation, Mr. Speaker, that's for sure — all at the same time of this province losing 4,500 individuals in the last year.

They talk about their savings account. They talk about their \$1 billion. They're proud that they're sitting on this mountain of money. At the same time, since this administration started, 18,000 people have left this province, Mr. Speaker. It's inexcusable, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that the polls aren't favourable to the government right now. What do you do when you're in a panic mode? Well I would suggest you're in full election mode. You maybe have to start a little bit earlier, but when you've got a big gap to try to erase, that's what you do, Mr. Speaker. That's what you do when you put the politics of the NDP ahead of the treasury of the province, of what should be happening in this province where the people of Saskatchewan should be benefiting from that money — where a signal could go out to those 4,500 that left, that 18,000 that left, that there is a plan to do something here in Saskatchewan.

We haven't seen that plan from this government, Mr. Speaker. We're waiting. We're waiting. All that we've heard so far, so far of this \$900 million, is that 520 million of it will be spent in 2007 on the election slush fund. Well I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, there won't be one penny left in that fund by the

time these guys are done, Mr. Speaker.

Will the population turn around? I doubt it, Mr. Speaker. I doubt it. From what we've seen from this government, they can continue to take their best policies from people on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we congratulate them when they do the right thing. They have the money, they have the money to do these things. But, Mr. Speaker, they don't have the interests of the people foremost in their minds.

And, Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to comment on this even though I didn't get any information from the minister. It seems to be the continuing theme from these guys. You know, first of all they don't like consultation and they certainly don't like to consult at all with the opposition. They just like to steal our ideas. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

TABLING OF SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

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

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Before orders of the day, it is my pleasure to submit supplementary estimates accompanied by a message from His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

The Speaker: — Order please. Would all members . . . Order please. Order, order. Would all members please rise for the message from His Honour:

[Dated November 16, 2006.] The Lieutenant Governor transmits supplementary estimates-November of certain sums required for the service of the province for the 12 months ending March 31, 2007 and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly. [Signed by] Dr. Gordon L. Barnhart, Lieutenant Governor, province of Saskatchewan.

Thank you. Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

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

Oyate Safe House

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today and talk on this subject.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to get on the record one more time that we agree with the all-party committee report to set up a safe house for sexually exploited children on the streets of all cities in the province of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, let's also get on the record that we believe that there needs be an Aboriginal content component to this treatment. Let's also get on the record that there are also children out there that are not Aboriginal that also need a program that should contain a faith-based component.

Let's get on the record that we believe that the current Oyate

board has failed over the last three years and needs to be changed to a new board of Aboriginal leaders that will give this safe house the leadership and attention it needs. Let's get on the record that the Oyate board has not done the job that it was contracted to, that the existing board had three years to bring to light the issues that have been brought to light by the press, the auditor, and the Children's Advocate and members of the Saskatchewan Party.

When I asked the deputy minister to quote me one good thing this board had done, he said and I quote, "built a house." With nearly \$750,000, Mr. Speaker, the only thing he could say is that they built a house. Not one thing about any program or one success of any one child; not one child success story in nearly three years.

Why is the minister and the NDP government so resistant to allowing another Aboriginal group to bid on this contract — a new group that could bring traditional and conventional Aboriginal healing methods to this centre? Why would we not consider sending these young girls to a reserve setting that elders and healers are readily available to offer both traditional, spiritual, and conventional healing methods to help healing these most vulnerable children?

Mr. Speaker, let's start from the beginning as why do I oppose the extension of this agreement with the minister and the Oyate Board. First of all, we've been unable to get the original proposal. We've been unable to get copies of the tender documents as to who was included and who was excluded. We know, Mr. Speaker, that an opening ceremony from the former minister from Moose Jaw and the FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations] was cancelled. To date we have received no explanation of why.

We do know that an employee was accused of misconduct and that employee had a criminal record, was allowed to be involved in this program. We also know that criminal checks were not done. We had never seen or heard of any program development done by this board or by DCRE [Department of Community Resources and Employment] or by the minister, that would've helped these vulnerable children.

Let's talk about what we do know. We know that Oyate was awarded the contract with no prior experience dealing with sexually exploited children. The board met several times without a quorum and on many occasions without a solicitor. The board members received honorariums which was against the contract. There was a lack of criminal checks done on staff. We know that nepotism was going on in the facility. We know there was financial irregularities. We know that employees that were paid, but not there. We know that the board met only once during 2005, even when the facility was closed due to concerns.

When the kids were put at risk, why was the minister from Rosemont not asking questions? Why was the minister not demanding a board meeting with her officials and Oyate? Why were there no DCRE members on the board for three years? We may never know the answers to these questions because the NDP blocked the former deputy minister from testifying.

It was interesting, Mr. Speaker, that the former minister from Rosemont voted in favour of having her former deputy minister

attend as a witness and answer questions, and then on the day before the meeting the minister informs me that the former deputy minister is sick and will be unable to attend. Well the former deputy minister did attend, but the former minister did not attend to vote with the other NDP members to squash Ms. Young from answering critical questions. It's interesting the former minister would be absent. Is it because she disagreed with the strategy not to allow Ms. Young to be a witness and tell the truth on this matter?

[11:15]

Why did the board not notify police and DCRE when a young girl was let go from the Oyate Safe House with other young girls? They were not stopped by a staff member, even though they were warned that this was a bad situation to put this young child in. Well, Mr. Speaker, the 13-year-old girl was robbed and beaten, with two broken ribs and a fractured skull.

Did the Oyate Board call the police? Well no one will answer the question. The Oyate Board Chair would not talk to the press about this case, even on the day the minister announced he would stay the course. Why would she not answer these critical questions? The minister won't answer this question, as he says he wants to hide behind privacy issues.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what about the child? Who defends her rights? Who will defend her right to be in a safe facility that the ministry and the minister have the ultimate responsibility for?

You know, yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the member from Nutana told me to get over it and move on. Would the member from Nutana like to say that to that little girl? Get over it and move on? That statement unto itself tells a story, a story of cover-up and mismanagement by this NDP government. If you don't like it, get over it and move on.

You know, Madam Deputy Speaker, where is this comprehensive plan that they continue to talk about? Well, Madam Speaker, if some of the children had gotten the care that they were promised, the care that was outlined in the tender, the care that the minister and the board were responsible to provide them, then maybe they could have moved on. Three years later they may have had a very different life. Some who were 13 and 14 will now be 16 and 17, and may now have been back with their families and had a very different lifestyle. Madam Speaker, what about those young children? They can't get over it and move on.

Madam Speaker, where are the missing minutes of the two meetings between the current minister and Oyate Board? I have asked these questions on several occasions, Madam Speaker. What is the minister hiding? Madam Speaker, if the minister is so confident in this board, produce the minutes and copies of the agreement.

Madam Speaker, training results in June of this year showed that six out of eight people in the program failed the test. These are supposedly the new recruits for Oyate.

So where are we today, Madam Speaker? The board has failed these children. They're back in the care of the minister, the minister that failed these children; back with the same board;

back with the same minister and failed again. What has changed? Same old players, same old song.

Madam Speaker, there's a cycle in every city in our province. We saw it in the health report last week about children in the inner city of Saskatoon. Yes, that's right in the Premier's own riding. We know kids not in school — approximately 1,500 in the city of Saskatoon alone — children facing severe health issues, children dying, and extremely high suicide rates. Madam Speaker, child prostitution is a product of these issues, and they're not being addressed at any stage in the process. If the NDP government had worked on the root problem, how many of these children would have been saved? Where is the NDP plan to address these issues?

The Premier said he was surprised about the issues on his own street in his neighbourhood. It's a wonder he has not taken any action on Oyate if he was oblivious to that. He continues to defend the indefensible — his own minister's incompetence on Oyate and more importantly the sexually exploited children and their future.

The Saskatchewan Party believe that we need to work together with Aboriginal leaders, mayors, churches, community-based organization, and a government that is committed to come with a comprehensive plan based on experience and results. Madam Speaker, we have said on more than one occasion in this House and outside of this House, we agree there needs to be an Aboriginal component to this. We believe that there has to be a sensitivity issue. We also believe that there has to be an organization and a group in this province who can come forward and provide both the cultural sensitivity and the healing methods of traditional Aboriginal culture.

Madam Speaker, in summary, this minister continues to cover up and try to deflect the real issue, his desire to continue on with the Oyate Board as if they were the only Aboriginal group in the province who has the ability in saving these unfortunate children. Madam Speaker, let's re-tender this and allow other Aboriginal leaders and elders to come with solutions, both traditional and non-traditional. Let's not continue to look at this as if it's in isolation or with blinders.

Madam Speaker, we have debated in this House since the opening day on the Oyate issue. Madam Speaker, we have asked questions. We have tried to get to the bottom of it. We have tried to understand how we can help these children, how we can get them back, how we can change their lives. We need to understand that in the three years that Oyate has been open, we don't have one success story to talk about, not one child that's been saved, Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal. We cannot point to one person that's been through that facility who's now back in school or back at home with their parents.

Madam Speaker, this is a tragedy. It's a tragedy that didn't need to happen. It's a tragedy that's been there for three years. And it would still be there today if it hadn't been brought to the attention both by the press, the auditor, the advocate, and the Saskatchewan Party.

The minister continues to want to make this a racial issue. Madam Deputy Speaker, I stand here in the House today to say this is not about race. This is not about anything but children.

And we need to take that into account. I have never heard the minister once stand in the House and talk about the children that are in this facility that are not Aboriginal — 30 per cent. Why is that, Madam Deputy Speaker?

Madam Deputy Speaker, we need to work with all groups collaboratively to make sure that these children receive the specialized, individual care that they need. These children can't fit into a box in a generalized program. Each one of them needs to be assessed for their needs, their ability, their education, their cultural needs, their spiritual needs. And we need to design the program around the child, not around the agency.

It has been shown time and time again, when asked, that the Oyate Board cannot produce one program that was designed or done. I heard the minister speak frequently about we're designing new and innovative programs. Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, I went out to BC [British Columbia] and found they've been doing this since the year 2000. They've already had one report back on it and are creating a second report on how to do this, Madam Deputy Speaker.

But the minister wouldn't want to pick up the phone and call and ask what other jurisdictions are doing. He wants to advocate and do his own program. Madam Deputy Speaker, surely there are other Aboriginal leaders in this community and around this province who could do this job.

And it's interesting that we only speak about Regina's safe house. We had asked in the committee meetings that we have a review of all facilities. And the government called it a witch hunt. Well you'd think you wouldn't have to ask. You'd think with what went on there, with a conscience you'd want to make sure that that wasn't happening in any other facility in this province when it comes to dealing with children. But no, we want to stay fixated and focused on the Oyate Board.

So what the minister is telling me that there is no other Aboriginal group in this province who's interested in fixing the problem. I don't believe that, Madam Deputy Speaker. I don't believe it for a minute. I know there are a lot of elders out there — and I've met with them this week and last week — who say they can provide traditional care which will be spiritually good and help these children. And why would the minister of DCRE not want that to happen?

Madam Deputy Speaker, I move:

That this Assembly condemn the government and the minister of Community Resources and Employment for not acting properly to protect vulnerable children at the Oyate Safe House based on evidence that operational practices put these children at greater risk of harm.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Saskatoon Northwest and seconded by the member for Kelvington-Wadena:

That this Assembly condemn the government and the

minister of Community Resources and Employment for not acting promptly to protect vulnerable children at Oyate Safe House based on evidence that operational practices put these children at greater risk of harm.

I recognize the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am absolutely honoured to join in the debate today. I look forward to seconding the motion, but I'm also very impatient and waiting with anticipation to hear how the backbenchers of this incompetent government can justify the actions of not one, not two, but three ministers who dealt with the children on the street.

This week we heard it described . . . This government was described to us as a government so incompetent they can't even do socialism right. I'm seconding the motion of my colleagues from Saskatoon Northwest who has tried since last March to make this government recognize their responsibility for their actions in dealing with the most vulnerable children in our province — the children who are at risk.

I said children, not young adults, because so many of the children on the street have addictions to drugs. Being addicted to drugs makes one incapable of controlling one's actions and mentally incapable of making responsible decisions. This government either believes this too or last year, when they introduced the youth detoxification Bill, they did it to get the rest of the Saskatchewan Party off their backs and out of the media. They supposedly said the necessity of involuntarily admitting kids into drugs is important because kids were at risk. Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, the kids at Oyate were at risk.

My colleague has described very well the events around Oyate and I won't repeat them. What I want to speak about is the reason Oyate came into being in the first place. The reason we in the Saskatchewan Party are disgusted and outraged about this situation is simple. We asked for, we cajoled, we argued, we begged, and we forced the government to taking action on this whole issue of children being sexually exploited.

In 1997, a then member from Humboldt, Arlene Julé, talked about this issue and she was relentless in badgering the government to deal with it. And I think it was interesting that the day before yesterday when the minister talked about it, their press release talked about the work they had done in 1997. That was started only because of the work that was done by members from this side of the House.

The then deputy minister, Dwain Lingenfelter, came over and tried and talk to her in a way that only Dwain Lingenfelter could manage and said that we should have an all-party committee. Ms. Julé at that time had to fight to be Co-Chair or this government would have taken credit for the whole committee.

This committee interviewed 35 witnesses. It travelled around the province to 11 different sites. We looked at best practices at 11 different jurisdictions. We hammered out resolutions and we had dozens of committee meetings.

There was one recommendation, I believe it was

recommendation no. 22, to have a secure safe house for involuntarily admitting children. That recommendation was not looked at. So instead, recommendation no. 25, the voluntary safe house, was looked at — with much needed Aboriginal input. That's the way we put it. We know the importance of having Aboriginal input. And it was discussed at length.

Now, Mr. Speaker, after that report was adopted we on this side of the House never heard a thing about the actions on the report except an occasional release of the number of johns' cars that were seized.

Once or twice when I have met with the FSIN women's commission, they told me they were going to ask for the all-party committee to be reinstated. There was deafening silence from that side of the House. I knew the issue hadn't gone away because I had spoken many times to front-line workers and police who talked about the children who were still on the street. But it wasn't until last winter when CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] broke the story that we knew this government, this socialist government, had failed again.

We knew the government failed business; we knew that with the SPUDCO issue. We knew they failed health care; we knew that with the waiting lists. They failed justice; we knew that with the crime stats. They failed agriculture because we hear that from farmers all the time. They failed people needing help through no-fault insurance; we hear that all the time. But, Mr. Speaker, these so-called guardians of the needy also failed our children. They failed the children who had been failed by everyone all their lives.

And as the facts leaked out a few at a time, the people of this province and those of us on this side of the House knew we'd been duped once again. We put our misguided trust and faith in this government that they would do what they said they were going to do — go above and beyond to help the children at risk — and they had again failed, and we were misled.

[11:30]

In fact yesterday it all became really clear when it was said on the other side of the House that we should just get over it and move on. It became clear there was just another sad act in the story of a party playing at becoming government. Mr. Speaker, when the minister from Nutana said, get over it and move on, she was basically not just saying that to us, she was saying that to the children on the street. She was saying, we failed, we screwed up but we're . . . got to move on.

The tough part . . . But really for those kids that's the same government that's writing a script for the next action of their play at government. They are just playing at government, Madam Deputy Speaker. They're paying for it with tax dollars and expecting people to continue watching their play.

Mr. Speaker, this safe house was set up for failure. Any one of the three ministers . . . Madam Deputy Speaker, any one of the three ministers who would have thought about this safe house for more than two minutes would have known that and so would have the Oyate board.

Oyate was given \$300,000. Think about this. It was given \$300,000. It was to be staffed 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. It was to detox, assess, stabilize, protect, educate, feed, provide entertainment, provide mentorship, provide leadership, provide cultural perspective, nurture, and give a home to children up to the age of 16. Oh, and by the way, they were also supposed to write reports, attend meetings, and draw up rules and regulation, and then write some more reports. And did I mention this was all supposed to be done for \$300,000?

Now for the Wall Street geniuses on the other side, I want to tell you that 24 hours a day times 365 days a year is 8,760 hours at \$20 an hour is \$175,200 for one qualified person to run that house. That's for one person. Saying that person didn't think they could do the job full-time, all day long, every day of the year, they might have to have somebody else.

Let's say they thought they might need some help like the other institutions like Ranch Ehrlo or some of the other ones. All of these . . . All of these have had minimum requirements. Perhaps they'd need three staff members a day. So let's say that we'd have to . . . And the member from Walsh Acres said, maybe our people should have OH&S [occupational health and safety] regulations.

Madam Deputy Speaker, those people there deserve to have some respect for the job they were doing as well. So we know that we need at least a half a million dollars to do the job, and that's beside getting somebody to help them with detox and education. Yet this NDP government for three years, through three ministers, never saw a problem and they never stood up and said, hey we screwed up. And if it isn't criminal it's at least the stupidest thing I ever saw this group do.

Yesterday Minister of Community Resources finally admitted they failed Oyate. I believe he called it, reached beyond their limits. Now they're supposedly giving Oyate another chance. Well maybe they'll succeed, but because they are playing with different rules, comparing apples to oranges. They are no longer expected to detox, stabilize it says. We're not sure exactly what they are expected to do but I'm willing to bet today that Oyate will get compensated. And they'll get compensated in much the same way as the residential school victims are compensated because when government screws up and they wreck the lives of somebody, then they're going to get paid for it.

And in fact the Minister of Community Resources talked about residential school victims and now he, being the Aboriginal rep, is paying. Money will not buy back the loss of reputation of the First Nations people that lost their reputation. It will not help the . . . [inaudible] . . . character of the First Nations.

Oyate took the fall and the blame for an incompetent government and I believe that the people of this province and the children in this province deserved more. It's the height of hypocrisy and ignorance. Using the minister's words, the member from Nutana was saying, get over it, move on. Well, Mr. Speaker, what about the kids? Who is going to do what with the kids? Mr. Speaker, this is the only issue that we should be talking about is the kids. The minister opposite says, where are the kids? That is their responsibility to know. If they don't know where the kids are, then you have failed. You have failed badly.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there is nothing we can say to the members in this House to make us believe or anybody believe they care about anything about the politics of their job. And I don't think that anybody wants to listen to them any longer.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Prebble: — Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, at the conclusion of my remarks I'll be making an amendment to the motion that was put forward by members opposite.

But I want to begin by laying out some of the basic issues with respect to Oyate and the larger question of meeting the needs of children who have had the misfortune of being sexually exploited on our streets. Let me say to begin with, let me just clarify first of all that Oyate is closed and has been closed since April of this year, Madam Deputy Speaker. I don't want the impression to be left that this safe house is still open, and members opposite haven't made reference to that.

Second, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think it is important to acknowledge that there are clearly problems that were identified with the operation of Oyate. And these have been clearly laid out in a special report prepared by the Children's Advocate for the province, and on behalf of government I want to thank the Children's Advocate, the Child Advocate, for the excellent work that he did in preparing this document.

And third, Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to point out to members opposite and to members of the public who may be listening that the Government of Saskatchewan, under the leadership of the minister of Social Services — now called Community Resources — made it very clear that all of the recommendations in the Child Advocate's report were going to be adopted and followed and an acknowledgement that the problems that were identified by the advocate needed to be addressed. So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I wanted to just put those things clearly on the record.

Now significantly in terms of how we move forward, I want to make the following points. First of all, it's clear that a new relationship needs to be established between . . . a new working relationship between the Regina Treaty Status Indian Services — in other words the tribal council that serves the Regina region — and the Government of Saskatchewan around services being provided to these children.

And I want to make the point that the issue is the relationship between the tribal council and our government. And what we are clearly saying to members opposite — although they obviously don't agree — is that this is the organization that represents First Nations people in the Regina region, and we intend to continue working with this organization on behalf of Aboriginal children at risk here in the city of Regina.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, the minister of the Department of Community Resources has made it clear that there needs to be a new approach taken to stabilization and assessment for children in Regina who are at risk on the street. And so, Madam

Deputy Speaker, the decision that has been made is that Ranch Ehrlo is going to be significantly involved in this whole process in a working partnership with Oyate and in a working partnership with the tribal council in the Regina region. And I think that is a very positive decision on behalf of this government and on behalf of the Minister of Community Resources.

And the roles, Madam Deputy Speaker, are going to be as follows: Ranch Ehrlo will take responsibility for assessment and stabilization of youth, including addressing issues of detoxification. And those services will be delivered at Ranch Ehrlo. And Oyate will have responsibility for residential care after youth have been stabilized, Madam Deputy Speaker, and after the initial detoxification concerns have been addressed.

So residential care, ongoing residential care after stabilization and assessment will be done by Oyate, but assessment and stabilization will be done by Ranch Ehrlo. And then, Ranch Ehrlo will work with the staff at Oyate in terms of delivering the residential program. And I think this is going to be a good combination, Madam Deputy Speaker.

So this is a very positive move on the part of government and it speaks to establishing a well-developed working relationship between government and the organizations that are delivering services to children who are being sexually exploited on our street.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, let me also point out that there are other initiatives this government is taking to strengthen the relationship that it will have with Oyate as residential services resume. And those services will only resume when all the recommendations that have been put forward by the Children's Advocate are actually fully implemented. But at that point, Madam Deputy Speaker, there will be two staff persons from the Department of Community Resources who are placed on the Oyate board on an ongoing basis. And I think that again is exactly what's needed to ensure that there is a common vision and a common working relationship between the Department of Community Resources and the tribal council and the Oyate board.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to, I want to say a word about the new funding initiatives that were announced by our government this week, because one of the important decisions that has been announced is that we will be putting another \$350,000 a year of additional funding into supporting community-based organizations that are providing services to youth at high risk on the street. This will be additional financial support to organizations that deliver outreach services to youth and additional financial support to organizations who provide youth and their families with services that help young people find alternatives to street life.

In addition to that, Madam Deputy Speaker, we announced that we were going to put additional resources into policing because clearly deterring sexual predators has got to be at the foundation of our strategy for stopping the sexual exploitation of children.

And our government has done a great deal in this area with the introduction of tough new legislation, four new Bills that have been brought in over the last five years, Madam Deputy

Speaker, all of which have made significant steps forward in terms of giving police the tools they need to deter sexual predators.

What we announced this week, Madam Deputy Speaker, was another important addition in terms of responding to the recommendations of the special committee, and that is additional financial support for new police officers who will be dedicated to working on stopping the sexual exploitation of children on the streets, so two new officers in Saskatoon, two new officers in Regina, and one new officer in Prince Albert. And I think this is a very positive measure.

Madam Deputy Speaker, let me also remind members opposite that we have implemented The Emergency Protection for Victims of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Act and that that Act is allowing police and child protection staff to apply on an emergency basis to a Justice of the Peace for an emergency protection intervention order. And those orders, Madam Deputy Speaker, are specifically designed to take children, to protect children who are believed to be at risk on the street but there is not enough evidence yet to file criminal charges. But, Madam Deputy Speaker, what is being done is that an intervention order is being applied to the suspected predator and if that predator reappears in the stroll area or is seen at all with the child, there's a fine of \$25,000, Madam Deputy Speaker.

We've also passed new laws that prevent sexual predators or suspected sexual predators from driving their vehicles around stroll areas — so we're trying to keep them off the stroll — and the result has been a significant decline in traffic on the stroll. And I've never once heard members opposite acknowledge that progress has been made in this area.

This is a tough file, Madam Deputy Speaker, and our government has taken a number of measures . . . I haven't had time today to make reference to all of them, but better student tracking, a lot more support for children who are not in school.

Let me conclude, Madam Deputy Speaker, by moving the amendment:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after "Assembly" and substituting the following:

support the development and implementation of a new comprehensive continuum-of-care model for sexually exploited children in response to the Children's Advocate recommendations on the Oyate Safe House and as proposed by the Minister of Community Resources.

I so move.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[11:45]

The Deputy Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Saskatoon Greystone and seconded by the member from Yorkton:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after "Assembly" and substituting the following:

support the development and implementation of new comprehensive continuum-of-care model for sexually exploited children in response to the Children's Advocate recommendations on the Oyate Safe House and as proposed by the Minister of Community Resources.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Yorkton, the Minister of Regional Economic and Co-operative Development.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. I want to say that I am entering this afternoon or this morning into the debate, wanting to share some of my own experiences over the years on a very significant file and that of dealing with children and family.

Madam Speaker, we've had a very, very difficult debate here over the last number of weeks. And I can say that, as a member of this House who has never had the opportunity of sitting as the minister responsible for Community Services — or as I know it, Social Services — this would be a very difficult opportunity to try to lead. And I say this from this perspective, Madam Deputy Speaker. I spent 20 years of my life working in the department of Social Services as a child protection worker, as a trainer of staff, and then worked for 10 years, Madam Deputy Speaker, with a private organization called SIGN [Society for the Involvement of Good Neighbours] in Yorkton.

I can tell you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I have been in the homes of children who have been neglected, children who have been severely beaten, children who have been abused, children who have been sexually violated. It was my job as a child protection worker to remove those children from those families and place them into the continuum of care which the department had in place.

I can say, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I, I have never experienced anything as painful as having to go into the home of a family and remove from their homes children who are screaming and crying and calling out for their parents as you take them outside of their family. I have never in my life experienced anything like that, and I can say, Madam Deputy Speaker, from time to time I still hear some of those voices of those children, a very difficult experience.

I want to say and trump what the member from Kelvington said, Madam Deputy Speaker, because she said the history of governments have been that they've screwed up. And the reality is, Madam Deputy Speaker, that in the time that I've practised in the field — in the early '70s, and I know before that — governments in fact did screw up because, Madam Deputy Speaker, the majority of children that we had in care then and that we took into care and those that we take into care today still represent many of the folk and young people from Aboriginal families. They still remain in majority those children.

But we did something different in Saskatchewan, not as a political party that decided that we would do this in isolation of everybody else, but collectively with people from within community, with leadership from municipal levels, from opposition parties. We were able to put together a strategy, Madam Deputy Speaker, that said we're going to work co-operatively together to build a society in our province of

which we can live and work together.

And what happened in the '70s, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that we had a lot of dialogue with First Nations people. And we said to them we can't continue to do business or we can't continue to raise our families and live together in our province in the way in which we do it today. And we set up an extensive network of how we'd work and collaborate and treat each other in building a stronger Saskatchewan society.

And we met with First Nations leaders . . . this government. And we did a number of things, Madam Deputy Speaker, that are outstanding. And we talked, yes, about children that were being sexually abused. And yes, we talked about children that were being neglected. And we talked about families who were unemployed. And we built a structure in this province, Madam Deputy Speaker, and it's about supporting families. It's about the context of how we deal with children for sure as the initial priority, but it's about how we integrate children and family into community. That's what the issue was all about.

And we built a Saskatchewan structure that's based on family-based services, Madam Deputy Speaker, because I can tell you that every one of those children that I took into care, screaming and crying from their families, where did they all want to go back to, Madam Deputy Speaker? Every one of them wanted to go back to their family. Not but one had ever indicated that they wanted to stay in the continuum of foster homes or child care institutions or to be placed for adoption, Madam Deputy Speaker, which I had some experience doing as well. None of them asked for any of those services. They all wanted to go back to their families and be part of that.

And so what did we do in this province, Madam Deputy Speaker, over that period of time, including what we did with children who were sexually abused? There should be nobody in this House who stands up and gives a speech that we haven't done anything with children who've been sexually abused in the history of this province over the last 35 years, irrespective of which administration was in place. We shouldn't be making those comments because they're not accurate.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we have today 34 community tripartite with RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] officers in Saskatchewan. Why? Because we said in this province that we needed to have Aboriginal people involved in policing their own family, their own reserves, because we were, as the member from Kelvington said, screwing up. And you know what? We made that agreement, Madam Deputy Speaker. And now we have it today.

We said, Madam Deputy Speaker, that we're taking way too many children into care. We're not providing the appropriate foster home support for them or the specialized services that they require. Our institutions don't have enough Aboriginal people working in them. And so we developed over the years in this administration and the administration that followed us in the '80s occasions where we had Aboriginal people working in those facilities, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And today under our administration in the early . . . throughout the period we have today, Madam Deputy Speaker, 19 — 19 Indian and child family service agencies to deliver these kinds

of services across the province. And they were put together collectively through debate and discussion. Why? Because as the member from Kelvington says, we were screwing up, those years. And so we made some decisions about how we would make that better when we put new resources into place, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And what have we done going forward since then, Madam Deputy Speaker? And the . . . [inaudible] . . . of the kinds of things that we've been able to do over the last 20, 15 years with First Nations people is unprecedented. We have today a model of child care service delivery and family services in Canada that was born in this province. We did it. We led the nation on this piece.

And today, Madam Deputy Speaker, it's been incorporated. And there shouldn't be anyone in this legislature who says that that's not the fact because it is. We've had provinces come here in the early '90s from all over Canada to adopt Saskatchewan's system. Why? Because it is the very best system in terms of how you deal with families and children, because it's family focused, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's family focused. It's about providing services to families.

And what have we done over the last number of years, Madam Deputy Speaker? Well we've provided additional support and financing for families that are of the poor. Have we done enough? By not a country mile we haven't done enough. And people would argue that we should do more, and nobody would argue that we shouldn't. And we should build on the work that we've done in integrating and providing opportunities for Aboriginal people into the workforce.

And we have today, Madam Deputy Speaker, some of the most comprehensive contracts with private sector and Aboriginal people in the nation — we have it here — to alleviate the kinds of things that cause the issues that we're talking about today, which is sexual abuse and poverty and neglect of children. It's a job, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's a job. It's an opportunity for you to be able to support your family and your children.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we had a number of initiatives that we voted on in this House over the last number of months. We've had \$14.1 million increases to the Saskatchewan Assistance Plan and transitional program. We have 1.15 enhanced dollars to employment supplement and \$3.6 million for child care subsidy. And we've increased our First Nations child care agencies. We have \$700,000 that we've put into that now, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, we continue to do a ton of things to build the relationship between First Nations and our government and our communities of Saskatchewan.

And what this debate should not deteriorate to, Madam Deputy Speaker — it should not deteriorate to — it should not deteriorate to the notion about the fact that there aren't, equipped today in Saskatchewan, appropriate First Nations communities that can do this job. Yes sometimes, Madam Deputy Speaker, there is a failure in the continuum to reach the level that's required to do good work and provide services. And that's been acknowledged. But we shouldn't discount their capacity to get stronger. We shouldn't discount their capacity to

do better work. And we shouldn't discount their capacity to provide leadership on this very important front.

And so, I say to the members opposite and to this legislature, we have a tremendous number of programs and services that we provide today. And I want to commend the minister that's been handling this file because it is the most difficult piece of work that anybody could ever have the responsibility of taking on and managing.

And that's why, Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm going to be supporting the amendment to the motion which says that we're going to continue to have a comprehensive continuum of child care services across the province for sexually assaulted children as well.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member for Moosomin.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I do count it an honour to be able to stand in the Assembly this afternoon and speak to this issue.

And I just want to begin by just quoting a couple of comments in one of the local papers made recently and the questions we're asked — when is the government just throwing money at a problem to save political face and when is it a heartfelt admission that a government truly screwed up in the care of some of society's most vulnerable people and is finally putting in the model of care and funding levels that should have been there in the first place? And, Madam Deputy Speaker, I was certainly pleased to hear the member who just spoke, the member from Yorkton, acknowledging the fact that there have been mistakes made. And no doubt about it, we trust that from the mistakes we've learned a number of things.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, if actually beginning to work and move towards the model that was brought forward by the all-party committee or the recommendations, if the debate that has taken place over the past number of months following recommendations and information brought forward by the Child Advocate and the Provincial Auditor then, Madam Deputy Speaker, the members of this Assembly have certainly been doing their job.

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, as I enter this debate, I think — as we have noted and most members have noted — children are certainly important in each and every one of our lives. And I was honoured to be part of the all-party committee that in 1999-2000 toured the province of Saskatchewan trying to address the issue brought forward by a former colleague, the former member from Humboldt, Arlene Julé, regarding children at risk.

And at the time, Madam Deputy Speaker, I had no idea of the number of young people — and specifically young girls — that were on the streets and the challenges that they were facing. And in fact, Madam Deputy Speaker, as we met with community groups, as we met with First Nations leaders and tribal councils, it was not only mind-boggling but it was emotionally draining to hear some of the stories that were

brought to our attention of the challenges that young people were facing. And we realized, Madam Deputy Speaker, that many of these young children were actually coming from dysfunctional homes as well.

And so the challenge we had as a committee was to come up with some recommendations that we hoped would encourage the government of the day, which is the current sitting government, to begin to move and address these issues. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, out of this, one of the recommendations that actually came forward was the implementation of a safe house actually and the house in question, Oyate Safe House.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I believed at the time that the involvement of the tribal council and the people in the Oyate Safe House was certainly one of a desire to meet the goals and objectives of the all-party committee. However what I've seen in the past number of weeks is what we've seen . . . a situation where the government has actually dropped the ball on the issue. We've seen a minister that has refused to actually come clear with the people of Saskatchewan regarding a number of concerns that were raised by the Child Advocate and by the Provincial Auditor.

[12:00]

We've seen a government that's been trying to hide from their responsibilities. And the scathing reports that we brought forward by the Provincial Auditor and the Child Advocate were issues that I believe from a while back the . . . there certainly were the indications that the government and certainly the comments that were made by the minister were not leading us to believe that the government really understood the issue. And I believe the . . . on one of the call-in shows the Child Advocate even made the comment that it was his feeling that the minister didn't understand the complexities of the problems that were happening at the Oyate Safe House.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, when you have a minister of Community Services on one hand welcoming scrutiny but then on the other hand refusing to answer questions, or when you have government members on one hand moving a motion to have the former deputy minister to come forward to Public Accounts Committee and answer questions, and then on the other hand when the deputy minister does appear, moving a motion that the deputy minister can't speak — you have to ask yourself what's going on.

Those are many of the questions, Madam Deputy Speaker, that we've been raising for the past number of weeks — questions that people across this province, people that care about children, are concerned about. People that care about children have been asking. And the member from Yorkton just moments ago acknowledged in this Assembly, in his past life as a worker in Social Services, of the traumatic situations that he faced. And it said to me that this member understood a number of the complexities that children at risk face. However, Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm not sure all the members on the government side of the House have the same or were showing the same compassion that that member was just speaking about a moment ago.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, as opposition members, it's our responsibility not only to criticize but to compliment the government when they do make a right decision. Now our criticism over the past number of weeks has been unrelenting. And I don't apologize for that because there have been some serious questions and issues and children's lives are at risk. But I notice from the amendment that was brought forward by the member from Saskatoon Greystone, the member talks about the development and implementation of a new comprehensive continuum care model for sexually exploited children. And I believe that's what the all-party committee was talking about in the first place.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, had the government actually moved on a number of those recommendations a number of years ago, we probably wouldn't be sitting here debating this issue today. But, Madam Deputy Speaker, well the Minister of Justice says, oh yes we would. And considering the complexity of the issue, he's probably right. He's probably right. There's no doubt about it. This is a complex issue.

However, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think it's important for us to realize that when you finally recognize you make mistakes — as the columnist said, the government screwed up — then maybe you need to move on. We've heard for the past number of weeks . . . We've another comment talking about:

For a year now, [the comment is, for a year now] we've listened to meaningless rhetoric from Belanger that the children come first — words that rang rather hollow, given the fact that the government entrusted their care and treatment to a board and staff at Oyate incapable of dealing with their problems.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, that's what the debate has been about. The debate has been all about the care of these children, how that care was being provided, whether or not Oyate Safe House was indeed the right place for this type of care. And as we've seen, Madam Deputy Speaker, we find that there were many situations in that safe house where children really weren't getting the care or even that the personnel providing the care didn't receive the proper scrutiny that should have been given at the time before they were hired.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as I think back to the number of meetings we had and the challenges that were brought to our attention by families, by parents, by grandparents, and by First Nations peoples, it's imperative, Madam Deputy Speaker, that we rather than the . . . I think it was the minister responsible for advanced education and learning was commenting about the fact today that it's not about the children. Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is about the children, and it's important for us to realize that it is about the children.

That's why this debate is taking place. It is about the children. It's about recognizing the challenges that face young girls that are placed on the streets, many cases against their will. It's about the fact that we also recognize, Madam Deputy Speaker, unfortunately that in this province the greater majority happen to come from First Nations communities.

And that's why it's imperative that we need to work with First Nations leaders and, as my colleague from Saskatoon

mentioned, the fact the . . . recognition that within the First Nations community we do have leadership. We do have elders. We do have men and women who have a genuine concern for young children and are willing to offer their help, their assistance to provide whatever means is necessary, whatever needs to be done to ensure that young children have a means whereby when they find themselves in exploited situations that they can find the safety and security of . . . whether it's a home, whether it's Ranch Ehrlo, or whether it's an extended family member that may be able to provide the care and love that will give them the opportunity to escape the ravages of the street life, Madam Deputy Speaker, and enable them to move on with their lives and to grow up to be valuable citizens in the province of Saskatchewan. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Sutherland, the Minister of Healthy Living Services.

Hon. Mr. Addley: — Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's my great privilege to enter into this discussion, a very important discussion that I think demands some sensitivity and some carefulness as we move forward in this debate.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I have really three areas that I want to cover in the brief time that I have. The first area I want to talk about is what the Children's Advocate says about the work that this government has done.

The Children's Advocate supports the government's plan for reopening the Oyate Safe House but does have questions about the care of vulnerable youth, the care that they will receive. Bernstein gave the government credit for its commitment to assisting youth by pursuing a cultural component for rehabilitating clients, providing more funding to community outreach programs, and laying out a multi-tiered plan that includes Ranch Ehrlo and Oyate.

And this is a quote, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the Children's Advocate says, quote, "I'm more comfortable with the restructured role . . . [of] Oyate. That will assist them with operating within the boundaries of their competency." He does go on however as a cautionary note that, quote, "Oyate is only one facility in . . . community dealing with a specific group of vulnerable children." But this is the important part. I'll go on, "But sexual exploitation is a major systemic problem in the province," Madam Deputy Speaker. This is an issue that didn't arrive recently. It's a long-standing problem. It's a stubborn problem to repair. It's a reflection of a lot of other occurrences that have happened within our province and within our country over the last 150 years.

But the most important point is what are we doing about it. The most important part we have — and I just have a brief time — but the three points I wanted to cover is the area of Justice and what DCR [Department of Community Resources] is doing as well as some of the areas that my department is able to work on.

Just this week, Madam Deputy Speaker, there are new police resources to combat child sexual exploitation. The Government of Saskatchewan is providing 133,000 this year and nearly \$1,000,000 annually to expand the provincial strategy on child

sexual exploitation.

The province will provide 50,000 this year with 550,000 annually to expand the capacity of police services to deal with the street level sexual exploitation of children. Five new municipal police officer positions are being provided; two each in Regina and Saskatoon and one in Prince Albert.

There is also work being begun to establish a specialized team staffed by two prosecutors and one assistant coordinator to strengthen the province's ability to use the flagging system to identify long-term offenders or dangerous offenders.

And finally, Madam Deputy Speaker, there is funding of 50,000 this year to begin a \$150,000 public education campaign aimed at preventing child sexual exploitation and that plan will be rolled out into the future.

Under the area of DCR, Madam Deputy Speaker, is the government expansion of those services, additional support for sexually exploited children. The focus, as the minister has said, is always to ensure protection, safety, and well-being of children in need. There will be an expanded, multi-faceted approach to address the needs of young people who require special care and treatment services. The new service delivery is being delivered by Ranch Ehrlo, Madam Deputy Speaker, and that is a leading child welfare agency with worldwide recognition of their abilities. There is also an expansion of services of \$350,000 in funding to other community-based organizations which are already providing outreach programs to sexually exploited children and youth in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert.

And this is in emphasis to the government's continued commitment to working with First Nations. There will be two more people on the board, two additional staff to consult with, and, most importantly, development of a plan to implement each of the auditor's and children advocate's recommendations.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there is also the long list of things that are being accomplished under the Premier's Project Hope. And I would just like to raise a couple of them: a day program in La Ronge that has been developed, and also an additional mobile treatment coordinator has been hired, and funding has also been provided to the detox centre in Saskatoon.

Regina's drug treatment court has been opened and is operating. We've expanded methadone services. The Project Hope implementation team is in place. We've held a conference in Saskatoon to help train addiction professionals. There is additional safer communities and neighbourhood officers in Regina and Saskatoon, and we've also hired additional drug treatment officers, two in Yorkton and two in North Battleford. We've also lobbied the federal government and they've responded to strengthen penalties under more serious drugs. As well, we've built on Meth Watch to ensure that crystal meth components are out of the hands of children. And also, we've also have an education and prevention director that is in place.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this brings me to my last point — and I have a very short time — is the opposition's handling of these types of issues in the last number of years. And it's really hard to accept some of the comments that they've made, when on the

one hand the Leader of the Opposition says and I quote, "There is not a single government dollar available to help free your son from addiction." He said that publicly when he knows that the Project Hope has provided additional dollars, multi-year dollars, additional beds in Saskatoon, in Prince Albert, and in Regina.

This is what the member for Saskatoon Southeast said in a householder: we won't have a single new bed until 2008. Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, when he said that, we had already had new beds in P.A. [Prince Albert], Saskatoon, and Regina, nearly two years ahead of the plan schedule.

The member for Saskatoon Northwest is wanting to enter the debate again and yet he is an individual that has advised parents to go out of province for treatment without checking to see if there's publicly funded beds here in Saskatchewan — and the media has caught him out on that — without checking. In fact, this is what he said about Project Hope, this is quote: "... truly it is [a] project no hope."

Now who are you going to believe, the member for Saskatoon Northwest or the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse which provided this government and this province with an award of leadership in the whole area of substance abuse?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Addley: — Madam Deputy Speaker, the opposition just can't help themselves. They have lots of words, but very little actions. In fact, even today in their talk, they're saying that we've thrown money at the problem. The Leader of the Opposition has said, we've throwing money off the back of the truck, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Yet just recently, Madam Deputy Speaker, they released a pamphlet that has their guiding principles. And I'm just going to highlight three of those guiding principles. The first one of them is smaller, less intrusive government. The other one is steady, gradual reduction in government spending. And finally, a strong safety net for those who truly need support.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, of all the million dollars that I've just talked about that's being spent, I would like to hear from the opposition in their question period and in their speeches how they plan on funding all of the ones that they're calling for when they're saying, well they want a steady, gradual reduction in government spending, smaller, less intrusive government. And which of these people are truly in need of support and which of the people that we're helping are truly not in need of support?

[12:15]

I think the public demands an answer. These people have laid out their plan, their guiding principles. We need a little bit more detail, Madam Deputy Speaker. So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I definitely support the member for Greystone in his motion and I oppose the motion put forward by the member for Saskatoon Northwest. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — This ends the 65-minute portion of

the debate and we'll now open up for question period. I recognize the member for Saskatoon Northwest.

Mr. Merriman: — Madam Deputy Speaker, to the member from Saskatoon Greystone, from Saskatoon Greystone: the Children's Advocate today stated in the newspaper . . . he questioned where treatment fits into the new service model which only mentions assessment, stabilization, and transitional care.

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

Mr. Prebble: — Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. Clearly treatment is going to need to be involved as part of both the detoxification and stabilization process, and also part of the residential care process. And Ranch Ehrlo will provide very important advice on treatment for these children.

And then that effort will be combined with the cultural knowledge that the tribal council will bring to bear in terms of the healing process, because I think we need a culturally appropriate healing process. So the combined efforts of the tribal council and Ranch Ehrlo will provide the treatment resources that these children need.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Healthy Living Services.

Hon. Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. My question is for the member for Saskatoon Northwest.

Their federal cousins, the Conservative Party of Canada, has cut and has not proceeded with the Kelowna accord, which is an important new strategy formulated by the federal government and by First Nations from all across Canada that will do great work to address many of the concerns that is subject to this debate, but also other areas beyond this debate. So does the member support the federal Conservatives in slashing and not agreeing with this report? Or does he think that the federal Conservatives should stand up and support the Kelowna accord?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Thank you very much for the opportunity to respond to the question. You know, the member from Saskatoon went on previously here about project no hope and where it's doing and what it's not doing. And, you know, the member knows very well that he hasn't put in place one long-term treatment bed in this province yet.

He goes on to talk about children and what children are doing. He's studying it well, but in fact he hasn't delivered one long-term treatment bed in this province as of today. What he's done is done reports, done studies, and blame — blame everybody but what is really in case. Maybe he would like to explain to me why the member from Yorkton closed Whitespruce Treatment Centre which was for addiction

children, and also dropped the program SADAC [Saskatchewan Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission]. Could the member explain that? Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Draude: — Madam Deputy Speaker, my question is to the member from Greystone. Since we started this issue of children on the streets, there's been three ministers that have dealt with this department. None of these ministers spoke about this in the House today, although we did have two cabinet ministers speak on the issue. The three people that really were responsible, the ones that we needed to have answers from, haven't been answering us at all.

My question to the member is: why don't the people who were aware of the issues all along — the member from Regina Rosemont and the member from Moose Jaw North and the member from Athabasca — why didn't they speak to this issue that's so very important, if in fact it is important to your government?

The Deputy Speaker: — . . . Saskatoon Greystone.

Mr. Prebble: — Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. Let me very simply say the minister who has responsibility for this file right now is the Minister of Community Resources, and he has been answering your questions every day in this Assembly for the last 12 days. You've had dozens and dozens of answers from that minister, and you've never acknowledged the progress that has been made on this file.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Yorkton, the Minister of Regional Development.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I'm holding today a document that's been circulated around the Saskatoon ridings, of which it says in it, one of the guiding principles . . . And I put this to the member from Saskatoon Northwest, answer the question to me which it is. Which families do you think — and children — that do not need to be supported in the social service system today of which we provide because your note here says that you're going to reduce the services to those who only truly need it. Tell me which ones of the folk that live today and work in the social services system no longer need the services. Could you describe for me which ones you would pull out of the system.

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

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you for the opportunity to respond. I don't even know what document he's talking about, but I will ask him because he was the minister that was there: why did the member from Yorkton close Whitespruce which at its time was a state of the art facility for children with addictions? You know, why does he have in his own Premier's riding children that are dying on a ratio of 4:1?

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. I'd ask the Assembly to allow

the member who's on their feet to answer the question without having to holler it to the room.

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, we saw that the health report showed in the Premier's riding a ratio of 4:1 children dying. We saw 1,600 per cent more suicide rate, and the member obviously hasn't done his job. Would he explain to me why he closed Whitespruce facility, a state of the art for addicted children in this province?

The Deputy Speaker: — The member for Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. The question that I have for the member from Yorkton is that we had some . . . the Child Advocate in his report put forward some interesting information and some of his fears. He talked about child-first legislation, and I know that the member from Yorkton talked about that as well.

I want to know how this member and this government sees the Children's Advocate's report and what they feel about his recommendations that children should always come first regardless of any other situation, regardless of the incidents around them. They want to know: what do you think about the children's-first legislation.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — There is no debate about, and there has never been a debate about . . . And in my comments I put very clearly that children have to be the priority. It's the model of what you deliver the services from, and they, Madam Deputy Speaker, are family based and family oriented, Madam Deputy Speaker. That's what I said.

And I say, Madam Deputy Speaker, that there is a continuum of services that are provided where you use institutional care, where you use foster home programs, where you use community support services to provide those, Madam Deputy Speaker, but the reality is that it's always about children first.

And we have a ton of programs in Saskatchewan today of which other parts of the country today provide, and they got their initiative from this province, Madam Deputy Speaker, in a host of fashions. Of course it's about children first, but the model is about ensuring that families are engaged in a full complement. And that is not the position, Madam Deputy Speaker, that Conservative governments in Saskatchewan have taken of the past, and it will not be the situation of which that members opposite would take, Madam Deputy Speaker, for sure.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member for Greystone.

Mr. Prebble: — Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. My question is to the member for Saskatoon Northwest and it relates to the issue of funding for the Department of Community Resources and further to the point that the member for Yorkton was making. In your current literature you're talking about cutting funding for key services. You'll recall that a few years ago you proposed a \$50 million cut to the Department of Community Resources. And my question to you is: in light of your plans for a \$50 million cut,

where will the funding come to continue to reduce poverty in the province and provide services to sexually exploited children?

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

Mr. Merriman: — Well thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. That's a very easy question to answer. That \$50 million would come out of the business investment fund that they have there that led to things like SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company]. We would take that \$50 million and we would put it towards children in this province . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — The member's time limit is now elapsed. Oh I'm sorry. Keep going. I'm sorry, I misread the clock.

Mr. Merriman: — You know they won't explain why they closed Whitespruce. I would like to know from any member over there, in the three years that Oyate Safe House was opened, how many children were returned to their families cured and healed? How many children were there in the facility in total? How many of them went back to their families? How many of them are still on the street today? And I know the answer to the question — absolutely every one of them.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — The time has now elapsed for the 75-minute debate.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

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

Motion No. 2 — Fostering a Balance Between Work and Family

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Madam Deputy Speaker, it is my pleasure to move the motion recognizing the contributions of the province of Saskatchewan and the ongoing . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order, order. I ask the members . . . 75-minute debate has now elapsed; 75-minute debate is elapsed. I ask the members to come to order. It was a spirited debate, but I've now recognized the member who wants put forward a private member's motion, the member for Regina Walsh Acres.

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is my pleasure to move the motion recognizing the contributions of the province of Saskatchewan to the ongoing struggle to strike balance between work and family. It is also my pleasure to rise today in this debate. Madam Deputy Speaker, no reasonable person can deny the great importance of balancing work and family life. It is a struggle that all working people share, a struggle, Madam Deputy Speaker, perhaps not unfamiliar to even the members of this Assembly.

The work and family unit of the Department of Labour

coordinates the activities aimed at lessening the negative personal corporate and more extensive economic consequences arising from employees' inability to balance their family and work responsibilities. The unit has come to some very compelling conclusions regarding the importance of this issue in those three primary areas.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as the social and economic realities of our time continue to change with the ebb and flow of our culture, the face of family life changes and adapts. Today in Saskatchewan 67 per cent of mothers of preschool age children contribute to the labour force. That is two out of every three mothers. Today in Saskatchewan two working parents characterize the majority of families and the vast majority of single-parent families contribute to the labour force.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in addition too, our population and consequently our workforce is aging as a result of the baby boom generation. As baby boomers retire and age, a large portion of our population will become dependent upon the care of family. Of course the challenge of caring for this large segment of society will not be a phenomenon unique to Saskatchewan. All of the provinces and states on the continent will be affected by the aging of baby boomers. Our population is experiencing an increase in work-family conflict and stress. Circumstances are forcing people into situations where they cannot sufficiently balance work and family.

My own situation was where, when my daughter was two years old, my father took ill, my mother was physically handicapped, and my daughter and I had to move into my parents' home to provide the care that my father needed at that time. Shortly after my father passed away, my mother ended up being afflicted by breast cancer. And being that we have no family members in Canada, that responsibility fell upon my husband and myself as well. So my family can very readily identify with the issue of balancing work and family and the struggle that it brings upon us when we're doing so in a situation where we have small children and are sandwiched in a situation where we're also caring for our parents.

[12:30]

Madam Deputy Speaker, so prominent has this issue become that the balancing work and family initiative of 1997-98 was established. It included a public task force and primary research on the employees in Saskatchewan. According to the 1998 Saskatchewan work family survey, an estimated 57 per cent of the employees in this province maintained the responsibility for the care of an elder. Twenty-two per cent spent an average of 3.98 hours a week providing such care. Madam Deputy Speaker, 18 per cent of the employees in Saskatchewan are estimated to be in this sandwich generation. Of course, Madam Deputy Speaker, the survey was conducted in 1998. Since then our society has continued to age and the incidence of care for older generations has only increased.

In addition to the increasing frequency of elder care, an estimated 14 per cent of employees in Saskatchewan have children three years of age or younger and an estimated 20 per cent have children four or five years of age. What this means, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that the responsibilities that our society bears to family is increasing. Of course the amount that

Saskatchewan residents are working is not decreasing. Precarious employment forces some to work several jobs in order to sustain themselves.

As I mentioned earlier, Madam Deputy Speaker, the incidence of two working parents has become steadily increasing for decades. The research of Saskatchewan's balancing work and family initiative has shown that the majority of employees report a significant amount of fatigue and stress in trying to balance work and family. In fact 51 per cent reported what the researchers deemed to be high role overload. Madam Deputy Speaker, they simply have too much to do — too many responsibilities between their work and family lives. Twenty-six per cent reported again what researchers deemed high work to family interference. This could be, for example, attending a workplace meeting while a child is ill.

Madam Deputy Speaker, a lack of work-family balance comes at a significant cost, not only to the employee in question or to that employee's family, but also to that person's employer and to the economy of Saskatchewan as a whole. Of course employees suffer stress and fatigue, and families suffer from a lack of time together. But, Madam Deputy Speaker, employers also suffer excessive absenteeism and decreased productivity. Stress contributes greatly to a person's physical health. Ultimately even recruitment and retention becomes a problem.

Madam Deputy Speaker, communities suffer from a society's inability to balance work and family. People are far less apt to join clubs, teams, or social groups without balance in their lives. Community and neighbourhood relationships suffer. There is also a significant cost to taxpayers.

A 2004 study found that a lack of work-family balance is increasing physician visits by 25 per cent, Madam Deputy Speaker. In-patient hospital stays are increasing 17 per cent, and use of emergency rooms by 23 per cent all across Canada. Balancing work and family life is not only the best interests on any individual employee; it is also necessary for business to operate efficiently and for our economy to flourish.

Madam Deputy Speaker, 1998 Saskatchewan work-family research showed a correlation between the amount of work-family conflict employees report and incidence of workplace productivity when polled employees indicated a relationship between lack of balance and feelings of dissatisfaction and decreased productivity at work.

Madam Deputy Speaker, evidence of this problem abounds. A 2002 publication based on the pan-Canadian research of Dr. Linda Duxbury and Dr. Chris Higgins suggests that employees with high levels of role overload are 5.6 times more likely to report job stress. They're also 3.5 times more likely to have high levels of absenteeism due to emotional, physical, or mental fatigue, 2.3 times more likely to report high intent to turnover, and 2.8 times more likely to miss work due to child care problems.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Conference Board of Canada reports that 75 per cent of employers believe employee stress can be attributed at least in part to difficulties in balancing work and personal responsibilities. In its 2000 *Changing Employment Relations* study, the Canadian Policy Research Network found

that when asked about what is important to job quality, 70 per cent of employees reported work-family balance. Madam Deputy Speaker, this is especially remarkable when one considers that only 62 per cent reported, pays well. Canadians, according to this particular study, are more concerned about striking a work and family balance than they are about being well paid.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this government recognizes the importance of this issue, not only to workers of Saskatchewan but also to business and to our economy. Our focus is on making life better for the Saskatchewan families and that is exactly why, Madam Deputy Speaker, Family Day will provide workers with the opportunity to tend to the growing needs of family and allow busy families to reconnect with a focus on family.

Our government has introduced the new statutory holiday called Saskatchewan Family Day. Our government truly understands the importance of Family Day. This government is committed to making Saskatchewan the best place in all of Canada for young people to live, work, and raise a family. We are committed to providing families with the opportunity to strike a balance. A prime example of that is Saskatchewan's recognition as having amongst the most statutory holidays of all the provinces in Canada. Combine this along with having the most generous vacation provisions in the country. It provides the people of Saskatchewan with the chance to achieve a good work-family balance.

Madam Deputy Speaker, time with family is critical for each and every one of us. Critical to a balance between work and family is the opportunity to re-establish the relationships that become strained by all of the responsibilities in life. Family Day is just another of this government's initiatives for families that will benefit workers, employers, and our economy alike.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Throne Speech provided a vision for Saskatchewan that is progressive and good for the working people of this province. Making life better for the families in this province is not simply a slogan, Madam Deputy Speaker. We are implementing real ideas and getting real results. Of course our ideas and our vision didn't begin with the Throne Speech, Madam Deputy Speaker. The spring budget set out a vision that we are now building upon. This has been the legacy of this government — a progressive approach and a clear vision. We have in the past and are continuing to address the issue of work-family balance for the sake of business, the economy, workers, and, most important, Saskatchewan families.

The results are clear. Madam Deputy Speaker, what price can be put on employee loyalty? Research shows that the long-term economic cost of employee turnover is considerable. There are issues of rehiring and retention of course, and that comes at a price. According to Statistics Canada, Saskatchewan has consistently achieved the highest average job tenure in Canada, exceeding the national average by 22.8 per cent in 2005. And in Saskatchewan you can count on a loyal workforce willing to help business to succeed in the long term. Madam Deputy Speaker, it is remarkable that Saskatchewan maintains its record for retention even in spite of the efforts to continuously slander the province by the party opposite.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the economy of Saskatchewan is so hot, so booming that week after week and month after month we are setting records for jobs in this province. Statistics Canada figures, released on November 7, show five thousand and one, seven hundred people were working in Saskatchewan in October. That's up 21,800 over the figure for October 2005 and exceeds the old record for October set only two years ago by 16,200.

Madam Deputy Speaker, October's figures represented the seventh straight month of record job numbers for the province. This is truly great news for Saskatchewan, and in the words of the member for Saskatoon Massey Place, just, quote:

"... the latest example of an economy and a province that are on a roll. [Madam Deputy Speaker] Our continued job growth is good news for both working families and for our young people who are currently building their careers and futures here."

But unfortunately bad news for the Saskatchewan Party who continually paint a negative picture of Saskatchewan, despite the facts. Madam Deputy Speaker:

Full-time jobs in Saskatchewan increased 22,900 over October of last year. [And] Youth employment was up 8,100 over last October.

Jobs were up last month in construction, services, the oil, gas and mining industries, trade, transportation, finance, insurance and real estate and public administration.

[Madam Deputy Speaker] ... manufacturing shipments, natural gas and oil production, urban housing starts, international exports, retail sales, building permit values, retail sales, and average weekly earnings are all up.

Saskatchewan had the second lowest unemployment rate in all of Canada in October, at 3.3 per cent ... [down from October 2005] and well below the national rate of 5.6 per cent. [Madam Deputy Speaker] This is the lowest unemployment rate for October in 27 years. Saskatoon had the third lowest unemployment rate among major Canadian cities at 3.9 per cent.

Clearly, Madam Deputy Speaker, there is no shortage of jobs in this province. Saskatchewan's economy is performing so well that there is only a shortage of labour. That is exactly why this province must continue to be progressive in its approach to workers. Who could possibly believe that destroying Saskatchewan's labour legislation in favour of what the misguided Saskatchewan Party calls, a competitive labour climate, will encourage workers to come to this province?

Who could possibly believe that scrapping some of the most progressive labour legislation in Canada, labour legislation that includes protections for workers' health and regulations for balancing work and family life could attract working people?

If we listened to the member from Kelvington-Wadena, the province shouldn't even have occupational health and safety regulations. Apparently we don't need them. Presumably the issues of safety for workers would take care of themselves. She

said on the topic of worker safety that, and that was in this Chamber, Madam Deputy Speaker, quote “. . . the government doesn’t . . . have to put forward every rule and regulation . . . ”

I suppose Madam Deputy Speaker that this shouldn’t be too surprising considering the Leader of the Opposition, along with his declaration of war on working people, has referred to the occupational health and safety legislation as merely, quote, “red tape and regulation.”

Madam Deputy Speaker, I wonder, I wonder if the 72 miners at the Mosaic mine near Esterhazy would agree with the Saskatchewan Party on how unnecessary labour legislation is. I wonder if they believe that safety issues would just take care of themselves.

On the issue of the Saskatchewan Family Day, we have some interesting quotes from the members opposite, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I would like to share with you. For instance the member for Saskatoon Southeast, as he stated in this Chamber, and I quote:

I would like to first start out, Madam Deputy Speaker, by commending the NDP for using yet one of the Saskatchewan Party initiatives. This is something that [again] the Saskatchewan Party has talked about for some significant period of time.

Now this is very interesting, Madam Deputy Speaker, given that the member from Cannington said that his party hasn’t even looked at the issue. Matter of fact he goes on to say that, personally he does have an opinion, quote, “As an employee I always wanted one, holiday in February, maybe every February 29th,” he said in *The StarPhoenix*.

[12:45]

Now if we move on to a quote from the *Leader-Post* from the member for Cypress Hills, the quote reads, “a mid-winter holiday even isn’t on the radar screen for Cypress Hills constituents,” said the member for Cypress Hills. Now the Leader of the Opposition as recently as October 2006 on CJME radio said, quote:

You know we just finished a by-election in Weyburn-Big Muddy and I knocked a lot of doors myself . . . I heard nothing from the people of the province about a demand for another stat holiday.

But yet the member for Saskatoon Southeast says it’s been on the radar screen for a significant period of time. I’m confused. Now the other quote from the Regina *Leader-Post* is that the . . . “Such a measure [to introduce a statutory holiday] was also opposed by Saskatchewan Party Leader . . . in 2004.”

And the member for Wood River in this Chamber of October, 2006 said, quote:

Mr. Speaker, we talked about the family day that was announced. Another political ploy to try and buy voters off I guess . . . Now teachers have already talked to us and said, you know what we have a set number of days in the calendar year that we must teach — 197. Now we have a

holiday in February. Where are we going to make up that other teaching day.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I haven’t had one single phone call from a teacher in my constituency or elsewhere complaining about Saskatchewan Family Day and I might be surprised ever to receive such a phone call. Now in contrast this has been on this NDP government’s radar screen for some time, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I’d like to quote the member for Saskatoon Greystone from March 29, 2001 and he said in this Chamber:

First, Mr. Speaker, I would like to see . . . [the] amendment to The Labour Standards Act that will provide every Saskatchewan resident with a statutory holiday in the third week of February. At the present time, there is no statutory holiday between January 1 — New Year’s Day — and Easter and I believe the time has come to put such a holiday in place.

Now that’s in stark comparison to the quotes that we have read, heard, and seen from the Saskatchewan Party members opposite.

Now the NDP, the NDP has a lot to be . . . You know it’s really sad, Madam Deputy Speaker, when the members opposite find this a humorous topic because as I’ve stated before we on this side of the House don’t find it humorous. Some of us . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Exactly. It’s hugely important. The members on this side of the House find it hugely important.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Ms. Morin: — And that’s why we are constantly reviewing situations where we can improve the work and family life of the Saskatchewan families in this province. We are concerned for their situation. We are concerned that they have . . . that there is a growing situation with having to balance . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. Order. I would ask members to respect there is a member on their feet. The Speaker cannot hear that member and she is using, I think, her full voice. So please respect the ability of the member to put forward her motion. Thank you.

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was ill for all of last week and my voice is still coming in and out and I apologize if it doesn’t come through clearly at some times. As I was saying, Madam Deputy Speaker, there is a growing situation where people are having to care for young families as well as for elder care because of the aging population. So we are always reviewing improvements that we can possibly make to address those issues and we take those issues extremely seriously, Madam Deputy Speaker.

It is clear to most of Canada and certainly to the people of Saskatchewan — if not the members opposite, Madam Deputy Speaker — that balancing work and family is a huge priority. It is also clear that Saskatchewan, under leadership of this NDP government, has been at the forefront in facilitating this balance with a progressive approach to labour, to business, and to the economy.

Madam Deputy Speaker, family . . . Saskatchewan Family Day, Family Day is a perfect example of that. Madam Deputy Speaker, I would therefore like to move the following motion, seconded by the member for Saskatoon Centre:

That Saskatchewan is a leader in fostering a balance between work and family with initiatives such as the new Family Day statutory holiday.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Regina Walsh Acres and seconded by the member for Saskatoon Centre:

That this Assembly recognize Saskatchewan for being a leader in fostering a balance between work and family with initiatives such as the new Family Day statutory holiday.

I recognize the member for Saskatoon Centre.

Hon. Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is a delight and honour to enter into this debate and second this motion. I want to first congratulate the mover from Regina Walsh Acres on her fine speech on a very important topic that's facing working men and women and families here in Saskatchewan. A very important topic and I think it's one that our government is addressing in many, many ways, one of which, the most important initiative, is the new Family Day here in Saskatchewan.

But before I start talking about that I just want to take a minute to review our economy. As the member from Regina Walsh Acres said, it is just so hot, it's unbelievable. The incredible economic growth that's happening in this province, despite what the members opposite have to say, Saskatchewan's economy is in phenomenal shape and only getting stronger. In fact, Madam Deputy Speaker, full-time jobs here in Saskatchewan increased over 22,000 over last October. We have the lowest unemployment rate since 1979 with over 500,000 people working here in Saskatchewan. And what's really important, Madam Deputy Speaker, youth employment was up over 8,000 since last October and there are another over 5,000 jobs on saskjobs.ca.

Our unemployment rate is the second lowest in the economy and what we're doing here is clearly working for the province and for working people. Maybe not working so well for the Leader of the Opposition and the Saskatchewan Party, but that's the way it goes. Saskatchewan is poised to post the fourth fastest growth among provinces this year and next. Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, these are the facts and the facts reflect one of the hottest economies in the nation, one that is benefiting Saskatchewan's working people.

Madam Deputy Speaker, despite what the members opposite claim this government has developed the climate for economic growth. We've managed to drive down the embarrassing debt left by the friends of the members opposite — the Tory government — and in doing so increase our debt-to-GDP ratio

up to the third best in Canada. Madam Deputy Speaker, this is pretty impressive considering the Conservatives left Saskatchewan with the worst debt-to-GDP ratio in the country.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, this financial management has provided us with resources to make significant tax cuts. Therefore, building on our government's vision to further enhance our competitive advantages, the Government of Saskatchewan has recently introduced some of the most significant tax reforms in the province's history. These reforms will promote Saskatchewan to the rest of Canada and the world as an even better place to launch and expand business operations. When fully implemented, the reduction in corporate and small-business tax cuts will result in a saving of over 500 million to the business community here in Saskatchewan. We've also recently introduced the provincial sales tax reform from 7 per cent to 5 per cent. This tax cut will show every Saskatchewan resident the real benefits of our booming economy. Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, businesses and residents of Saskatchewan will see about \$325 million in savings.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, we've worked hard with employers and workers and students to raise awareness too about workplace health and safety. This is very, very important. Through initiatives such as WorkSafe Saskatchewan, focusing on education, enforcement, we've seen some of the biggest decreases in worker injury rates here in Canada. Very, very important. They've declined by some 14 per cent since 2002.

And what do the folks over there say? Well what did the member from Kelvington-Wadena just say last week? You don't have to put forward every rule and regulation because employers know if you don't look after your employees they're not going to be there. They don't want to come to work. They like their employees. You don't have to trust government to tell them what to do. So I wonder if the folks over there would do the Family Day? And we'll see if they support that.

All right, Madam Deputy Speaker, recently I've just received the recommendations on the Commission on Improving Work Opportunities for Saskatchewan Residents. We commissioned this report to ensure improved access by part-time and vulnerable workers to employment income, employment benefits, and work opportunities here in Saskatchewan. Now we're currently looking at these recommendations, but we want to make sure we focus on one thing — one thing, Madam Deputy Speaker — that no one in Saskatchewan is left behind on the path to opportunity here in Saskatchewan.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to speak now about what this motion is all about — our unrivalled commitment to ensuring Saskatchewan is the best place to work here in Canada. Saskatchewan is a leader in work-family balance initiatives. Regular public holidays, along with the most generous vacation provisions in the country, provide the people of Saskatchewan with a chance to achieve good work-family balance, providing a high quality of life for all of Saskatchewan residents.

We have among the most generous vacation provisions in the country. We have provisions for bereavement leave as well as compassion care leave, neither of which are offered in our

neighbouring province of Alberta. And with our recently announced Family Day, Saskatchewan will have the highest number of holidays here in Canada. This is truly good news for the workers here in Saskatchewan, and I notice a lack of applause from the other side.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, we believe Family Day is a way of this government acknowledging the hard work, the hard-working families and individuals that have contributed to our booming economy. We believe Family Day is another means to help our workers strike a healthy work and family balance and feel the real benefits of our strong economy.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Family Day is one more component among many strong and innovative incentives that ensures that we have a quality of life here in Saskatchewan that serves our young people and attract qualified workers from across the country to fill the jobs in our booming economy.

I believe that a new public holiday to break up our long winter is one more example of this government's commitment to ensuring that Saskatchewan is the best place in Canada to live, work, and build a strong future.

I support this motion. And I want to thank you very much. This is a very important motion for these people, the people here in Saskatchewan. And so, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would encourage all of us to support that. To that end, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to now move adjournment.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — The member has moved adjournment of debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Madam Deputy Speaker, I move this House do now adjourn.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried. This House does now stand adjourned until Monday at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:58.]

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Premier

Hon. Graham Addley
Minister of Healthy Living Services
Minister Responsible for Seniors

Hon. Pat Atkinson
Minister of Advanced Education and Employment
Minister Responsible for Immigration
Minister Responsible for the Public
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Hon. Joan Beatty
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Minister Responsible for the Status of Women

Hon. Buckley Belanger
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Minister Responsible for Disability Issues

Hon. Eric Cline
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Saskatchewan Inc.
Minister Responsible for Information Services
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Hon. David Forbes
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Hon. Glenn Hagel
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Minister Responsible for Literacy
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Gaming Authority
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