



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

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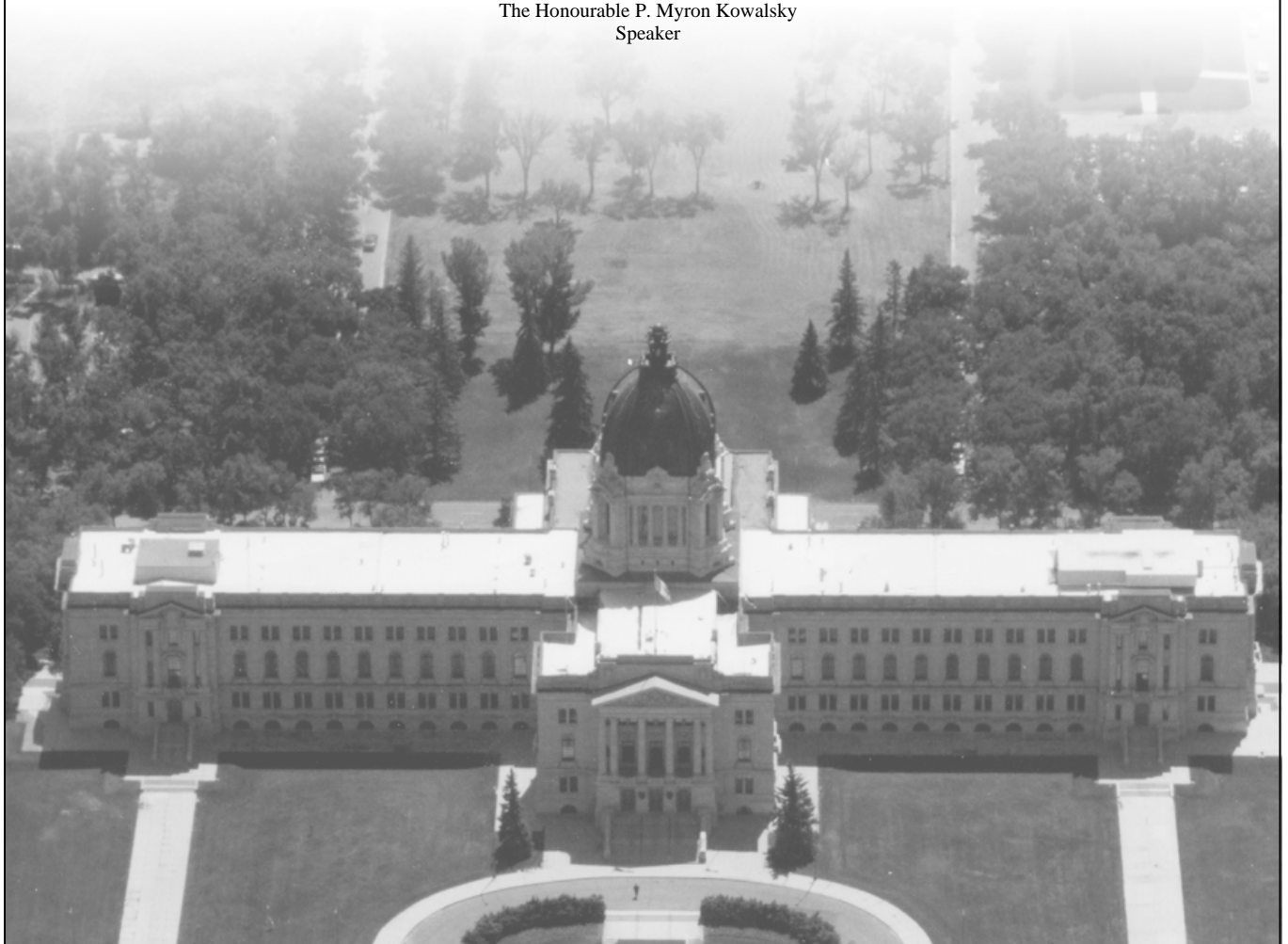
**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

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(HANSARD)

Published under the  
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
Heppner, Nancy	SP	Martensville
Hermanson, Elwin	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Higgins, Hon. Deb	NDP	Moose Jaw Wakamow
Huyghebaert, Yogi	SP	Wood River
Iwanchuk, Andy	NDP	Saskatoon Fairview
Junor, Judy	NDP	Saskatoon Eastview
Kerpan, Allan	SP	Carrot River Valley
Kirsch, Delbert	SP	Batoche
Kowalsky, Hon. P. Myron	NDP	Prince Albert Carlton
Krawetz, Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
Lautermilch, 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

[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege this morning to present a petition on behalf of the residents of Saskatchewan. 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 action to implement a strategy that will see a dialysis unit placed in Broadview Union Hospital.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good folks of the community of Broadview. I so present.

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

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These eight pages of petitions represent just a few of the signatures of more than 600 individuals who signed similar petitions in the community of Shaunavon. They're concerned about the potential closure or the imminent closure, I should say, of the SaskPower office in that community. 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 keep the SaskPower office in Shaunavon open to provide full service to the community and surrounding areas.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, today's petitions are signed by individuals from the community of Shaunavon and other surrounding communities.

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition to present on behalf of citizens of the province regarding the Broadview Hospital and the lack of a renal dialysis unit there. 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 implement a strategy that will see a dialysis unit placed in the Broadview Union Hospital.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by many people in the Broadview, Whitewood, and the Cowessess area. I so present.

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

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise today on behalf of people who are concerned about the state of Highway 310 in my area. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause this government to repair Highway 310 in order to address safety concerns and to facilitate economic growth and tourism in Foam Lake, Fishing Lake, Kuroki, and surrounding areas.

The people that have signed this petition are from Kuroki, Margo, Hazel Dell, Wadena, and Moose Jaw. I so present.

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Rosetown-Elrose.

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I have another one of the dozens of petitions with hundreds of signatures of people who are concerned about the decision by SaskPower to close the customer service office in Rosetown. Mr. Speaker, the prayer of the petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to keep the SaskPower office in Rosetown open to provide full service to the community and surrounding area.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition come from the communities of Rosetown, Sovereign, Herschel, Zealandia. I'm pleased to present it on their behalf.

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the member for Cut Knife-Turtleford.

**Mr. Chisholm:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise this morning to present a petition on behalf of the residents of the areas of Turtleford, Turtle Lake, Livelong, Glaslyn, and Fairholme. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to resurface and properly maintain Highway No. 3 from Fairholme to Turtleford and the Livelong access road.

I'm pleased to present this this morning, Mr. Speaker, and the signatories are from Livelong and Turtle Lake.

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

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be able to present a petition on behalf of constituents who are very upset with this government's action in turning a

portion of Highway 22 back to gravel. 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 maintain Highway 22 so it can return to being a safe and economical route for Earl Grey and area families and businesses.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, signatures to this petition come from the communities of Bulyea, Earl Grey, and Southey. And I'm very pleased to be able to present this petition on their behalf.

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

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And again it will come as no surprise today that I have several pages of a petition of citizens that are concerned about the safety when driving on 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 the signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from Quill Lake, Saskatoon, Humboldt, Prince Albert, Cudworth, Bruno, Sturgis, Viscount, Meacham, and Dundurn. I so present.

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

**Ms. Eagles:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again today I rise to present a petition on behalf of constituents of mine who are very upset with the condition of Highway 18. 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 18, so it can return to being a safe and economical route for Saskatchewan families and business.

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

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by folks from Beaubier and Lake Alma. I so present. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Weekes:** — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present another petition opposed to possible reductions of health care services in Biggar. The prayer reads:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

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

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

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I rise with a petition from citizens that are very concerned about the hardships it would cause residents, particularly seniors, if the lab facility at the Lafleche and District Health Centre would close. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary actions to ensure that lab services are continued at the Lafleche and District Health Centre.

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

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by the good citizens of Lafleche, Aneroid, Meyronne, and my hometown of Fir Mountain. I so present.

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

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Assembly today to bring forth a petition signed by citizens of Saskatchewan that are concerned with the condition of our provincial roads. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to resurface and properly maintain Highway No. 3 from Fairholme to Turtleford and the Livelong access road to No. 795.

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

Mr. Speaker, signatures to this petition are from Livelong and Turtle Lake. I so present.

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

**Mr. Kirsch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition on cellular coverage. The cellular coverage provided by SaskTel in a lot of areas is unreliable and/or in a lot of cases nonexistent. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

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

And, Mr. Speaker, it is signed by the good people of Lanigan, Carmel, Humboldt, St. Brieux, and Lake Lenore. 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 of Saskatchewan 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, Saskatchewan Highways' employees who would be affected by such possible closure.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

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

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

**Mr. Morgan:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to present a petition regarding sexual harassment in the workplace. I will read the prayer for relief:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to create legislation to require employers in the province to implement a sexual harassment policy that incorporates zero tolerance for harassers; open investigations being conducted by trained, capable, and unbiased investigators; disclosure of findings to the victim and harasser; accountability by investigators; and zero tolerance for employers that target complainants.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed with many pages of signatures from good citizens of Saskatoon and area. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Merriman:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition for petitioners that believe the future economic proposals are in jeopardy due to the status of Highway 20 and that there is an urgent need to upgrade that part of the highway prior to weight status. And 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 Highway 20 be upgraded to primary weight status to ensure the economic viability in the surrounding areas.

By the good people from Nokomis and Watrous. I so present.

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

**Mr. Duncan:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm

pleased to rise today and present a petition regarding a dialysis unit in the Broadview Union Hospital. And I'll read the prayer:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good people of Broadview. I so present.

## READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

**Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel:** — According to order the petitions received 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 Cypress Hills.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 40 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Advanced Education and Employment and Immigration: how many harassment-related complaints were filed in the fiscal year 2000-2001?

I have a similar question, Mr. Speaker, for the fiscal year 2001-2002, 2002-2003, 2003-2004, 2004-2005, 2005-2006, 2006-2007.

[10:15]

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 40 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Advanced Education and Employment and Immigration: of the harassment complaints filed in the 2000-2001 fiscal year, how many were verified?

Mr. Speaker, I have similar questions for subsequent years right through to 2006-2007.

While I have the floor, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 40 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Advanced Education and Employment and Immigration: how many department employees were charged with harassment for the fiscal year 2000-2001?

I have similar questions for subsequent years through to 2006-2007.

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 40 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Advanced Education and Employment

and Immigration: how many department employee harassment cases resulted in convictions, disciplinary action, or firings in the fiscal year 2000-2001?

I have the same question repeated for all years through to 2006-2007.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, while I have the floor, I give notice that I shall on day no. 40 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Advanced Education and Employment and Immigration: how much money was paid out as a result of firings related to department employee harassment in the fiscal year 2000-2001 through to 2006-2007?

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 40 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: how many long-term care beds will the new Olive Lodge long-term care facility in Saskatoon accommodate?

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance, the member for Regina South.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to welcome a large number of people who have joined us here today to hear the provincial budget that I'll bring down shortly. I know people have travelled from all across this province. Many represent different communities, different interest groups, different stakeholders. And I've welcomed very much, as have my cabinet colleagues and caucus colleagues, the advice that they provided us in preparing the budget. I welcome them here today.

I want to tell members I'll be on my best behaviour today because my mother is joining me. So if I'm not as animated as usual, you'll understand why. So again, please join me in welcoming . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

#### Commitment to Reducing Property Tax

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to set the record straight when it comes to the NDP's [New Democratic Party] commitment on reducing property tax. Over the last two days, we have heard the NDP government can't keep its promise on long-term property tax relief because the federal government broke its promise on equalization.

However, let's set the record straight. The promise the Premier

and the NDP government made was clear, unequivocal, and did not include any mention tying property tax relief to federal equalization payments. In 2003 the Premier told the SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] convention, and I quote:

"Our priority in tax reform for government over the next several years must be the matter of . . . education [funding]."

And quote: "The status quo is not on."

On the day he released an NDP 2003 election platform the Premier said, and I quote:

"It is a platform that provides the room to receive the recommendations of the Boughen Commission on the funding of education."

Then on November 12, 2004, a news release on school division amalgamation. The then Learning minister who is now Finance minister said, and I quote:

"These changes are necessary as we move forward to provide long-term, sustainable property tax relief."

I think it is disingenuous at best for the Premier to now say that he cannot keep this promise without federal equalization money when that was never a condition of his original promise. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

#### Retaining and Recruiting Health Care Providers

**Ms. Junor:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Retaining and recruiting valuable health care providers is a priority for our government. Today health professionals from all across Saskatchewan are gathering at 22 Telehealth sites to learn more about the \$6 million retention initiative that we announced in January to help reduce employee workload and burnout, and to promote professional development opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the best retention innovations very often come from health providers themselves, and this program capitalizes on that valuable source of knowledge. This workshop will ensure that health workers and employers are aware of the program and can start working together to apply for these retention grants. Funding for the program flows from our \$25 million retention and recruitment plan.

Mr. Speaker, we have recently announced a number of new initiatives aimed at recruiting health providers. Since introducing these programs, we've seen more health care workers choose Saskatchewan. For instance, 35 per cent of new recruitment grant applicants are health professionals coming from Alberta to Saskatchewan. Thirty-eight per cent are new Saskatchewan graduates choosing to stay and take a job in our province.

Mr. Speaker, this is exciting news for Saskatchewan's health system. With the health workforce action plan as our guide, our government will continue to follow through on our commitment to ensure the province has the right number of health workers to meet the needs of our members. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

### Voice of a Victim

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday my colleague, the member for Martensville, asked the Minister of the Public Service Commission some questions on the Murdoch Carriere scandal that arose from a statement by one of the victims. Mr. Speaker, I would like to share the full statement with the House today to get it on record. And I quote:

I am one of the nine women who were part of a settlement relating to the sexual harassment that eventually led to the dismissal of Murdoch Carriere.

I worked in the Environment Department with Murdoch Carriere.

When I complained to him about his behaviour, Carriere would respond with several points. He would say I was lucky to have my job. He would say he had friends in high places, while pointing to a picture of the Environment Minister, Buckley Belanger. That picture was always in Carriere's office. I felt threatened and frightened for my job.

Some people tried to do the right thing but were shut down. Most people in high places just turned a blind eye to Murdoch Carriere's behaviour.

Murdoch Carriere should not have been rewarded for his repeated harassment of women in the workplace. It is wrong.

And I end the quote. Mr. Speaker, I think that it's very important that these women's voices are heard after being so ignored for so long by this government.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

### The Reality of Equalization

**Mr. Yates:** — Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's 12 federal Conservative members of parliament have betrayed the trust of the people of this province.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Yates:** — Betrayal — there's no other way to put it. Saskatchewan's Conservative members of parliament and the Prime Minister are on the record promising that 100 per cent of

resource revenues would be excluded from equalization. Some went so far as to provide numbers, Mr. Speaker. Eight hundred million dollars a year said one. Over a billion for Saskatchewan said another.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the reality falls far short of that — some \$800 million short. Mr. Speaker, \$800 million a year is enough to eliminate the provincial sales tax. It could mean the elimination of the education portion of property tax. Eight hundred million dollars is enough to cover the cost of tuition for each and every Saskatchewan post-secondary education student four times over.

And where are the members opposite on this issue, Mr. Speaker? Firmly under the thumb of their political masters in Ottawa. It's true. The Leader of the Opposition has bleated a couple of times in token protest of Harper's broken promise, but the Saskatchewan Party's unflinching support of the federal Conservatives on this issue is illustrated clearly by their refusal to debate our motion calling on Saskatchewan's Conservative members of parliament to vote against the federal budget.

And it's proof positive that the Saskatchewan Party's loyalties are with the federal Conservatives and not the people of this province, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

### Coverage of the Carriere Scandal

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since the member from Riversdale became the Premier in 2001, there has been only one issue that comes to mind that has received as much coverage as the Murdoch Carriere scandal, and that would be the fact that the NDP misled the people of Saskatchewan for six years about SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company].

At times like these, editorials and commentaries are plentiful, and I'd like to share a commentary from John Gormley of Rawlco Radio from March 12 of this year. I quote:

So, Saskatchewan's tired and desperately campaigning NDP government started last week deflecting and dodging the indefensible, a 275,000 dollar payout to an ex-high ranking civil servant they'd fired for cause, [and] for allegedly harassing women employees.

In fact nine women who said that they had been harassed were paid \$130,000.

And Murdoch Carriere has been convicted of two counts of common assault, but to pay him out is inexcusable.

[And] So, the week went on. The same tired and desperate NDP government ends up losing a byelection with the lowest popular vote in nearly 70 years. [And] The day after, the tired and now emphasize, really desperately campaigning government rolls out for the first time . . . a ten-year highways plan and after fifteen years in

government actually . . . [spends] more money than they take in from roads from me and you . . . [to] road taxes.

Yet the week . . . [at the end of the week] the same government dogged by the same scandal. Lesson . . . important matters of principle that count just don't go away . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

### Friendship and Close Ties

**Ms. Morin:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, of friendship W. Somerset Maugham once said, "We know our friends by their defects rather than by their merits." Well, Mr. Speaker, by that measure it's clear that the Leader of the Opposition knows who his friends are.

The Leader of the Opposition was recently in Calgary to raise money to further his right wing agenda here in Saskatchewan. Attending the dinner were a number of his old friends and colleagues from his days working in the Devine government.

Mr. Speaker, Doug Emsley was there. For those who may not remember, Doug Emsley was Grant Devine's assistant principal secretary. Gordon Dirks was there, Mr. Speaker. Gordon Dirks was Grant Devine's minister of Social Services. And Paul Schoenhals was there. He was Grant Devine's minister of Energy and Mines. And last but not least, Mr. Speaker, Grant Devine himself attended the Leader of the Opposition's fundraising dinner.

Mr. Speaker, as Somerset Maugham once said, that's definitely a group of friends who would know each other "... by their defects rather than by their merits." After all, they were all members of the most inept and most corrupt administration in the history of Canada — one that left this province close to bankruptcy and teetering on the edge of ruin.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party likes to deny their close ties to that misguided administration, but I'm sure that the Leader of the Opposition and the other Sask Party members didn't deny their affiliation with the Devine government at the dinner that night. How could they, Mr. Speaker? That would just be too much to swallow.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

### Connections and Relationships

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, over the last few days the Saskatchewan Party and the media have been asking various NDP cabinet ministers about their connections with Murdoch Carriere, the former government manager who was fired for harassment and convicted of assault, who the NDP happened to pay \$275,000 to.

Mr. Speaker, it's not just the opposition and the media who have questions. It's government employees as well. Last week a government employee emailed a radio talk show host about their concerns, and I wish to quote it:

I've noticed every time I see this news clip of Carriere in his old Prince Albert office on the local TV news, a picture of whom I believe is Eldon Lautermilch hanging on his office wall beside some stuffed geese. The picture is at least the size of your common Saskatchewan map, and we were discussing this at work last week.

We all work for the province and this was the coffee discussion. When asked around the table who in their right mind would ever hang a huge picture of the minister in the office, not one person said they would ever do that. It's 100 per cent inappropriate.

Mr. Speaker, with the government refusing to provide answers on this case, it's no wonder that people, including government employees, are left to speculate about the true relationships between NDP cabinet ministers and Murdoch Carriere.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

[10:30]

### ORAL QUESTIONS

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

#### Disclosure of Information Regarding Murdoch Carriere

**Ms. Heppner:** — Mr. Speaker, for two weeks the official opposition has asked the Minister of Public Service Commission how many complaints were brought forward by women prior to the nine women that we know of involved in the Murdoch Carriere scandal. First the minister said she could not answer the question with any precision. Then she said she couldn't divulge personal details, but she did promise the media that she would give them the number of complaints.

My question is simple. What is the number? How many complaints prior to 2002?

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Minister for the Public Service Commission.

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Mr. Speaker, in the province of Saskatchewan we have the freedom of information and personal protection privacy Act which, as all members of the legislature will know, covers private and personal information including people's personnel files. I've indicated this in the past. I can say this to the members opposite, that I'm not at liberty to reveal any information that's contained in people's personnel files.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Heppner:** — Mr. Speaker, since it took the NDP



government four years to even apologize to Murdoch Carriere's victims, it's not surprising that they have no answers for us today. The victims of harassment and the people of this province deserve answers today, not four years from now.

So I'll ask again — and I'm not asking for personal information; I just want a number — how many women launched complaints against Murdoch Carriere prior to 2002?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Minister for the Public Service Commission.

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to speak to the credibility of the members of the opposition who are desperately seeking to become the Government of Saskatchewan. And the credibility goes like this.

At first, Mr. Speaker, they accused the Government of Saskatchewan of erasing Mr. Carriere's hard drive, and that was simply inaccurate. Secondly, they accused the Government of Saskatchewan of having a gag order on the women, and that was simply inaccurate, Mr. Speaker. Then they portrayed the comments of Justice Laing and tabled a document in the legislature where those comments are nowhere to be found. And that speaks to their credibility, Mr. Speaker.

And then, Mr. Speaker, I think the worst offence of all is to have ads running on Rowlco Radio stations saying that Mr. Carriere was compensated for harassment using taxpayers' money, when that is clearly inaccurate.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Heppner:** — Mr. Speaker, one of the victims said in a letter the minister was given yesterday, and I quote:

Some people tried to do the right thing but were shut down. Most people in high places just turned a blind eye to Murdoch Carriere's behaviour.

Clearly the harassment was going on for quite some time and no one in this NDP government listened to any of these victims. I'll give the minister another chance to answer my very simple question. How many people complained about Murdoch Carriere prior to 2002?

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Minister for the Public Service Commission.

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Mr. Speaker, when the NDP government came to office in 1991, as part of our overhaul of the occupational health and safety legislation in this province we included harassment as a occupational health and safety offence. What did some members that were in this legislature in that time period do? They not only voted against the amendment to the occupational health and safety legislation, but they tried to delete harassment as an occupational health and

safety issue, Mr. Speaker.

In the province of Saskatchewan we have legislation that protects workers from harassment in the workplace, whether they work in the private sector or the public sector. We expect that our workplaces will be safe and free of harassment, which those members voted against in the early 1990s.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Heppner:** — Mr. Speaker, talking about zero tolerance does not make it so; practising it would. And these women have not experienced that.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Ms. Heppner:** — We've seen lately that members on the opposite side seem to have a hard time hearing us from time to time. It's relatively quiet in here and I don't know how much louder I can speak but I will ask one more time. How many complaints were lodged against Murdoch Carriere prior to 2002?

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Minister for the Public Service Commission.

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Mr. Speaker, I will once again confirm that that is private, personal information, Mr. Speaker. But what I will say to the members opposite, what I will say to the members opposite, on April 1, 2003 when we all woke up to the front page of the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* and saw the content of the Gillies report, the members opposite not once, not twice, not three times, but four times called for the firing of Mr. Murdoch Carriere.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have another piece of legislation called The Public Service Act, which clearly distinguishes between the hiring and firing which is done by a professional public service and the role and function of the elected, the politicians. We do not hire and fire, but nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, we did — with their concurrence, at their urging, Mr. Carriere was fired. And we have now compensated him for a number of issues, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Ms. Heppner:** — Mr. Speaker, the victims of Murdoch Carriere's harassment have stated that the abuse went on for a very long time. They have told us that people tried to do the right thing and bring forward complaints. When was the very first complaint about Murdoch Carriere brought forward, and why didn't the NDP listen to the victims then?

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Minister for the Public Service Commission.

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Mr. Speaker, under the harassment

policy people lodge a formal complaint against an alleged harasser. The harassment was lodged in September 2002. A person was appointed to investigate the harassment. Mr. Carriere was demoted by three levels. He was suspended without pay for three months. And he was moved to Regina and he had no staff, Mr. Speaker. But I can say to the members opposite that the deputy minister of the day disciplined Mr. Carriere and the rest, Mr. Speaker, is history.

Now I know why the members opposite want to continue to discuss this issue. It's because they don't want to talk about a booming economy where we have thousands and thousands and thousands of new jobs being created. They don't want to talk about hope that people . . .

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

#### Ministers' Relationships with Murdoch Carriere

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's clear that the minister opposite doesn't want to talk about her government's allowance of harassment in the workplace of nine women in the Department of the Environment in 2002 and before that.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Mr. Speaker, a couple of days ago the former Environment minister denied having a personal relationship with Murdoch Carriere despite the fact that Carriere called him in December 2002 for help once an investigation was taking place. The minister denied such a relationship despite the fact that he had known Carriere for more than two decades.

Mr. Speaker, can the former minister of the Environment tell us today whether or not he has ever visited Murdoch Carriere's Niska Camp in the Cumberland delta?

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Minister for the Public Service Commission.

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Mr. Speaker, as the members opposite will know, I am the person responsible for the Public Service Commission and I answer questions on this file.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what's interesting about the members opposite, and it's because I don't think any of them have ever been in government, when you are a minister you become acquainted with people that work in your government department. You become acquainted with them. You develop a professional relationship with them, Mr. Speaker. That is not unusual. And if you were to ask any minister in this country, they have a professional relationship with the people that work in their department. This is not unusual.

But, Mr. Speaker, what is unusual is for the members opposite to portray that professional relationship as one of friendship and

a personal relationship. Now let's talk about what friendship and a personal relationship means. It means they come to your house for supper. You might golf together. You might go on holidays together. You might have dinner in Calgary, which those . . .

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

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand the minister is responsible for the public service, but I didn't realize she was also responsible for the former minister of the Environment. Surely, Mr. Speaker, visiting camp Murdoch would be a personal thing, not a ministerial responsibility.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have been told that the former minister of the Environment visited Murdoch Carriere's Niska Camp on several occasions. We have also been informed that the member for Athabasca is not the only member of the NDP cabinet to have spent time at camp Murdoch. Can the Premier tell us how many members of his cabinet, including himself, have visited camp Murdoch?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Minister for the Public Service Commission.

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Mr. Speaker, what I didn't say to the last question is it was that very member that amended to take out the harassment clause in the occupational health and safety legislation and voted against it.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to say this. The former minister of the Environment advises me today that he has never visited that camp.

Now what I also want to say to the member opposite is that those people will say and do anything to besmirch people's private and public reputations. They have done it to civil servants in this legislature; they have done it to citizens, and they have done it to members of the legislature. And I would say to the members opposite, that is unacceptable behaviour.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Mr. Speaker, misdirection is not what the people of this province want and need, especially after this NDP Premier and his government rewarded Murdoch Carriere with a huge settlement of 275,000 and increasing, Mr. Speaker. People want answers and so do the victims. My question is again for the Premier and he needs to think very carefully about his answer, especially given his do-over news conference last Thursday evening. Has the Premier ever golfed with Murdoch Carriere, keeping in mind that many people golf at Elk Ridge and Waskesiu?

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Minister for the Public Service Commission.

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Mr. Speaker, the members of the opposition . . . And this is where they stoop to. They stoop to a level where they will fling mud and hope some of it sticks. But that takes away from the issues that this province has to deal with. We have record employment. We have record economic growth. We have thousands of people moving here under the immigrant nominee program. And we have people coming back from all over the province and, yes, all over the country, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — And guess what, Mr. Speaker? We are taking our advertising campaign into the heartland of Ontario and into Calgary, Alberta, and people are coming here. And they don't like it, Mr. Speaker, because what they want is a dreary old province so they can be elected. Well we are on the move, Mr. Speaker. There is a buzz about this province. And we'll have more to say about that at approximately 11 o'clock.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This issue is about harassment and disregard of women in this government run by the NDP, Mr. Speaker. Once again, I address my question to the Premier. Has the Premier ever golfed with Murdoch Carriere?

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order please. I've been listening to the questions that are being asked and I would ask members, when they're asking a question, that the question be related to the responsibilities of the minister. And it should be clearly related to the responsibilities rather than something of a personal nature.

Next question. The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

#### **Government's Settlement with Murdoch Carriere**

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, the NDP has said that it can't comment and provide answers to the questions that the people of the province have on the Murdoch Carriere scandal because it's bound by confidentiality agreements. Well, Mr. Speaker, today that doesn't appear to be the case. When asked in a written question by the Saskatchewan Party whether it was Murdoch Carriere or the NDP government that asked for a non-disclosure in the settlement, here's the response that we received from the government, and I quote:

The government's position throughout negotiations was that it would not agree to a non-disclosure provision and none is contained [none is contained] in the settlement with Mr. Carriere.

Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: why then will he not table this agreement? Why won't he answer questions about this? What is he hiding on this scandal, Mr. Speaker?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

[10:45]

**The Speaker:** — The Chair recognizes the Minister for . . . Order. Order. The Chair recognizes the Minister for the Public Service Commission.

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — You know, Mr. Speaker, that Leader of the Opposition has obviously have what I call the dirt brothers. And they're not very good at it. You know, if you throw enough dirt, it's going to stick, Mr. Speaker. They're not very good at it.

Mr. Speaker, what's really curious, the members of the opposition, particularly the Leader of the Opposition, has demanded to know about people's personnel files. Well I'll say this. He had a private, quote, "conversation" with some Member of Parliament in Ottawa the day of the budget. And what did he say in the paper when the journalist asked him what was the conversation about and who did he talk to? He said it was confidential. That's what he said. He said it was confidential.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I will say this. Those members opposite have an opportunity to have federal members of parliament vote against the federal budget and get \$800 million for our citizens.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Wall:** — You know, Mr. Speaker, that government and the federal government have a lot in common. The federal government believes, though it's not true, that they kept their promise to Saskatchewan in equalization. And that Premier believes that he kept his promise on property tax and he has not, Mr. Speaker. That Premier and the Prime Minister have a lot in common on that file.

Here's the question again to the minister, if the Premier won't stand in his place and answer it. The quote from the written question that the government provided is this:

The government's position throughout negotiations was that it would not agree to a non-disclosure provision and none is contained in the settlement with Mr. Carriere.

Why then will this Premier not direct his minister to table that agreement so the people of the province can find out why they gave \$275,000 to someone who was convicted of assault and fired for harassment? What is he hiding, Mr. Speaker?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition wants to talk about promises made and promises kept. Let me talk about promises made and promises kept. We promised to build a green and prosperous economy. We promised to reduce the tax load on Saskatchewan people. Mr.

Speaker, in this term of government this government has reduced the tax load on the average citizen in Saskatchewan by 1,000, \$1,200.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, we promised to make change to property tax. You bet I said the status quo is not on. This government has reversed the ratio in rural Saskatchewan where it's now 40 per cent of personal taxes on property as opposed to government support of 60 per cent with the farm land of Saskatchewan.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — In this year alone, Mr. Speaker, we have cut taxes by \$500 million on the businesses and the people of Saskatchewan. That's a promise made and that's promise kept. And this Leader of the Opposition will not stand in this legislature to defend the people of Saskatchewan against the broken promise of his cousins in Ottawa. He won't do it, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, we're very grateful that the Premier has finally decided to take to his feet and answer a question. Here's another one for him. In April 2003, the then Justice minister, Mr. Speaker, the current Minister of Industry said this in *Hansard* in this Assembly. Here's what the then NDP Justice minister said:

In the event that there is a lawsuit against the government of Saskatchewan, [and he was referring to the Murdoch Carriere scandal] it will be the position of the Government of Saskatchewan that the termination of Mr. Carriere was justified. We will defend that position vigorously in the courts.

In the intervening time period though, Mr. Speaker, that Premier for some reason — he won't tell us why — decided to pay him \$275,000 just to make it go away — an insult to the women, a victimization of them again. I ask the Premier again: what has changed between 2003, the minister of Justice's comments and his current position? What is he hiding, Mr. Speaker?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, this is a government that believes in the process of law. It believes in keeping the law, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, why is it that we're now three weeks into the session, when these questions have been asked on almost a daily basis, when every question has been answered, Mr. Speaker, why is it the Leader of the Opposition wants not to talk about other issues in this province? Why does he not want to talk about front page stories from the *Leader-Post* — stories, headlines — "Pleased to be coming

home"?

**The Speaker:** — Order. The House will come to order. Order. The Chair recognizes the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, why is it the Leader of the Opposition does not want to talk about . . .

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, why does the Leader of the Opposition not want to talk about what's right on the front pages of the newspapers as of yesterday? Headlines, "Pleased to be coming home." The story of Cam and Crystal Hamilton, who in 2000, Mr. Speaker, Cam Hamilton could not find a job in this province.

They decided to look again, Mr. Speaker, and here's the quote from Cam and Crystal Hamilton. "There's so many jobs available now. He had four interviews in November and was offered all four jobs."

Mr. Speaker, that's the record of a New Democratic Party government — building for the Saskatchewan family, building for the future of this province, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, this morning I received an email from a grade 11 student at Balfour Collegiate. He's been paying very close attention to question period, watching the legislative proceedings, and perhaps could he himself provide some answers to the Premier's question to me.

The Premier's saying, why are you asking questions continually about the Murdoch Carriere scandal? The answer is, because they won't answer the questions, Mr. Speaker. The answer is they will not tell the province what they're hiding.

Here's what this young grade 11 student had to say after he watched the Assembly. He said:

I was thoroughly disgusted with the NDP when . . . [they] answered [and I'm quoting] Nancy Heppner's questions with that sob story about "Murdoch Carriere."

He goes on to write about his disgust as a grade 11 student watching this Premier and this government in action . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, I'll table it. Absolutely.

In four months [he says] I will be a voter, I can rightly say: I know who won't get it.

This is an issue that is important to the province of Saskatchewan. It's important to the women for the reasons of victimization. It's important for the province of Saskatchewan because it goes to the point of whether you can believe anything this government says.

I ask the Premier again. That Justice minister said that the government would fight it in the courts. You've changed your

position. What has changed? What are you hiding?

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, it is a government that acted decisively when we discovered what was happening in the Department of the Environment and terminated Mr. Murdoch Carriere. We terminated against the process. Mr. Murdoch Carriere launched a civil action.

The best legal advice tells us that if we want to escape greater costs to the people of Saskatchewan and not put these citizens, these women through the process, the public process again, it was to settle against claims of defamation and inappropriate firing, Mr. Speaker.

The question is, did that Leader of the Opposition in his conversations or email with this young person did what he did with that other young person? Remember when he got an email once before? What did he do? He sent an email back and said, this is a terrible province, Mr. Speaker.

Well I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you this province is opening its doors to the young people at Balfour Collegiate, to the young people from every community in this province, to First Nations and Métis young people, and to young people from across Canada, and you're going to see the evidence of that in just a few moments when the Minister of Finance takes his place.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — The member's time has elapsed. The Chair recognizes The Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, I would say to the Premier that he should table that particular email that he just referred to, and what we will find out again is that the Premier is being a little bit fast and loose with the facts, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, well he should, well they're all yelling from their chairs. They ought to table it then. They ought to be prepared to back up what they say in this Assembly. The fact of the matter is they can't. The fact . . .

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

**Mr. Wall:** — The fact of the matter is, is that a week ago the Premier had to call a press conference at 20 after 5 because what he had told this Assembly, he realized, wasn't close enough to reality.

I ask him again. In light of his government's own answer to a question we asked — that they fought against any kind of a non-disclosure provision, that there is no non-disclosure provision in the agreement with Carriere to pay him \$275,000 — in light of that fact, will he not do the right thing for once on this file? Will he do the right thing and table that agreement and answer questions that the people of this province have?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan these days are turning on their radios to find advertisement, Mr. Speaker, paid for by those very same taxpayers, which is at very best misleading. And it's put on those radio stations and paid for by the taxpayers by the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the Leader of the Opposition this question: will he do the right thing for once? Here is a New Democratic Party government that has taken this province from bankruptcy to boom times, Mr. Speaker. Here is a New Democratic Party government whose focus is making lives better for Saskatchewan people, building for the future of young people in this province. Their focus, Mr. Speaker, is the future of the Saskatchewan Party. Our focus is the future of Saskatchewan families, Saskatchewan people, and the great province of Saskatchewan. Will he do the right thing later in this debate around the budget and vote for a budget that is bold, Mr. Speaker, and broad and will build for the future of Saskatchewan families? Will he do the right thing?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### WRITTEN QUESTIONS

**The Speaker:** — Order please, members. Order. For written questions the Chair recognizes the Government Whip.

**Mr. Iwanchuk:** — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government I will be tabling responses to written questions no. 638 and 639. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** — Responses to 638 and 639 have been submitted.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

### TABLING OF ESTIMATES AND SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

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

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my distinct pleasure to submit the estimates accompanied by a message from His Honour . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order please. Would the member proceed.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Mr. Speaker, I may not have been able to be heard, but I am very pleased today to be able to submit the estimates accompanied by a message from His Honour the Lieutenant Governor. Thank you.

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

The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain

sums required for the service of the province for the 12 months ending March 31, 2008 and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly. [Signed] Gordon L. Barnhart, Lieutenant Governor, province of Saskatchewan.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my pleasure to rise today in the Assembly to present a fiscal plan that is going to make life better for Saskatchewan families.

In the past year alone, since I stood in the Assembly to present the 2006-2007 budget, something very significant has changed in this province. Today, in part because of the measures undertaken by our NDP government, the measures we've introduced in the past year, there is a growing sense of confidence and pride about our province. Our economy is stronger and is in a period of sustained growth. Our families are enjoying the benefit of living in a have province that continues to provide the lowest cost utilities because of our Crown corporations. Our communities remain strong, and our infrastructure continues to support the growth of new industries and new jobs throughout this province. A record number of people have jobs and are working in Saskatchewan today. And our province is increasingly recognized as the best place in Canada to live, to work, and to raise a family.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

[11:00]

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Mr. Speaker, this is a great time to live in this great province of Saskatchewan. The plan I present today is a plan that will make life even better for Saskatchewan families. It's built upon the confidence we're seeing in our communities today. It's built upon the values of Saskatchewan people. And it will build upon the strength of a growing economy.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to table our 14th consecutive balanced budget. Mr. Speaker . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Oh, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite will have a lot to howl about as the day goes on I . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order please. Order please. Would the Minister continue.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Mr. Speaker, today's budget is our largest ever at \$8.3 billion and commits about 7.8 billion to the programs that support Saskatchewan families. This is about a 9 per cent increase over last year's budget, a 1.4 per cent increase over last year's forecasted expenditures.

This budget includes a \$75 million surplus in the GRF [general revenue fund]. This budget saves Saskatchewan people half a billion dollars in taxes through the first full-year reduction of the PST [provincial sales tax].

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — This is the second year that we've been able to reduce business taxes. We've got included in this budget the indexation of the income tax benefits and continued property tax relief.

And this budget funds our largest ever capital program of \$535 million. A program that supports our improvement to roads and highways, schools, and other infrastructure. This budget makes significant investments in new tax cuts for middle-income families to protect their buying power. It'll make significant new investments in our communities, our shared infrastructure, and it will lay a foundation for this province to grow. By making these investments, we'll help maintain the quality of life that Saskatchewan families value.

This budget will also make significant new investments in our medicare program to help ensure that health care not only remains accessible but affordable. It makes significant new investments in the young people of this country who seek a bright future right here in Saskatchewan. This budget is going to do this in a way that's affordable and sustainable.

And it's worth noting, Mr. Speaker, it is worth noting that today Saskatchewan has the third lowest debt-to-GDP [gross domestic product] ratio in this country at 16.1 per cent.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — The estimates that I have tabled today, Mr. Speaker, show that we project our debt-to-GDP ratio to drop again to 15.6 per cent. This is the lowest that it has been in decades, and it is a result of making the right investments to stimulate growth while at the same time paying down the debt built up by previous administrations.

It is worth noting, Mr. Speaker, it is worth noting that in the past four years we have paid off \$820 million worth of debt. We have seen our interest costs drop from 14 cents on the dollar to 7. We've seen our credit ratings increase and in the past year we have added three additional credit rating upgrades — our 14th, 15th, and 16th consecutive upgrades under this NDP administration.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — As a result, Mr. Speaker, today we have a credit worthiness equal to that of Ontario. We have worked hard also to increase the transparency of our finances through measures like The Fuel Tax Accountability Act, the creation of the Saskatchewan infrastructure fund, and the cash funding of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund.

As I indicated at mid-year, we expect this year to draw down the Stabilization Fund to protect our social programs from the variation in tax revenue resulting from the unprecedented and sweeping tax cuts we made last year. Even so, Mr. Speaker, this budget will maintain over \$370 million in cash reserves to guard against revenue fluctuations that are dependent upon commodity prices.

It should be no secret to anyone in this Assembly, let alone in

the province, that the strength of Saskatchewan's commodities today are really the secret to our continued wealth. Saskatchewan, like the rest of Western Canada, continues to experience strong economic growth as a result of increased demand for our non-renewable natural resources. Market analysts are telling us they expect to see positive trends for Saskatchewan's oil, gas, uranium, potash, precious metals, and agricultural sectors both in terms of production and price in the coming year. This provides a degree of confidence that our economic growth will continue. In fact we are predicting that GDP will grow by 2.9 per cent this year. This is a full half point higher than the national average.

This growth and prosperity is going to mean that Saskatchewan will continue to be a have province for years to come. Mr. Speaker, we welcome what that prosperity means for Saskatchewan people although we do remain disappointed that Ottawa will continue to claw back the resource wealth that belongs to the people of this province.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Mr. Speaker, during the last federal election Prime Minister Harper promised to allow Saskatchewan to retain the full benefit of the non-renewable resource wealth to encourage growth and diversification of our economy. On Monday he broke that promise. As a result, Saskatchewan people will be denied the full benefit of its natural resource wealth. However we have been advised that we will receive a one-year, one-time payment of approximately 226 million through the equalization program this year. That money will be reduced to zero next year. These monies are contingent upon the federal budget passing.

I want to say this, Mr. Speaker, although Stephen Harper and the Conservative MPs [Member of Parliament] broke their promise to Saskatchewan people, we will keep ours and we will commit 30 per cent of the one-time equalization money to reducing property taxes.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Mr. Speaker, this will allow us to extend the 8 per cent property tax cut to cover the next two years. Furthermore, we will deepen the tax cut from 8 per cent to 10 per cent on the assumption the federal budget passes.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — We have also decided the remaining 70 per cent of the money will go directly to debt reduction. This will mean, Mr. Speaker . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — This will mean that, since this NDP government was re-elected in the year 2003, that we have paid down nearly \$1 billion in debt on behalf of Saskatchewan people.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — We believe fiscal prudence is an

important value of Saskatchewan people. And although the broken promise by the Prime Minister will take away our ability to reduce taxes or increase services, we believe that the one-time money should be used to better Saskatchewan's balance sheet. Our balance sheet is indeed strong, Mr. Speaker — and strong in part because of the growing economy our fiscal and economic policies have supported.

Since this Premier took office, we've undertaken a series of changes to strengthen our economy and to encourage the creation of jobs and growth throughout our province. We started with the personal income tax reform. With the election of the new Premier in 2001, we undertook oil and gas royalty reform to encourage production. We restructured the potash royalties, we worked with the uranium companies to restructure their royalties, and we worked together to look for ways to increase jobs and attract new investment and build on our production in our key sectors.

These changes that were undertaken by this administration have helped create an economy that today allows us to be a have province.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Last year, Mr. Speaker, we built on these changes by making sweeping cuts to the business taxes of the province to encourage investment, job growth, and economic growth. These changes included eliminating the general corporate capital tax, reducing the general corporate income tax rate, reducing small business taxes, and improving tax incentives for manufacturing and processing.

In October we went further and we cut the provincial sales tax from 7 per cent to 5 per cent, achieving the lowest rate in a generation.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — In the past year alone we've cut capital taxes, corporate taxes, small business taxes, property taxes, income taxes, and sales taxes. I don't think there's a tax that we missed.

Since the current Premier took office, our NDP government has cut over \$650 million in taxes to help create jobs and opportunities and to share the benefits of a growing economy with Saskatchewan people. Our tax cuts have been sustainable, affordable, and have helped make life better for Saskatchewan families.

Today taxes for an average family are \$1,200 a year lower than when this Premier took office. In this budget we are going to act to protect these Saskatchewan families. Today I am pleased to announce that we will legislate the indexation of income tax benefits to protect these benefits from being eroded by inflation.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce today that, starting this year, we will permit income splitting for seniors to assist them in dealing with the financial situations that they are facing and to provide a

fairer tax system for them. These two measures combined will provide nearly \$40 million in annual tax cuts for Saskatchewan families in addition to the \$350 million we've undertaken since mid-year alone.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — As promised, we continue to work towards reducing education property taxes for Saskatchewan residents through meaningful tax relief. This budget commits more than \$107 million in education property tax relief through the continuation of the 8 per cent credit and the deepening of it to 10 per cent for the next two years.

We have also continued the 38 per cent credit for agricultural land owners. Additionally, this budget provides over \$100 million in support for crop insurance and an additional \$118 million to fully fund CAIS [Canadian agricultural income stabilization].

Mr. Speaker, this budget recognizes the importance of the rural economy as an engine of growth in our province as a whole. We know it's important to make sure we've got a modern infrastructure and transportation network that's available to move goods to market and allow people to access services in larger communities. We know our highways and transportation need to be upgraded and improved. As such, this budget provides record support for highways and other infrastructure because we recognize the need for a strong transportation network to support the continued growth of the province as a whole.

This past fall, I introduced The Fuel Tax Accountability Act to ensure that money that was raised from the on-road gas tax was spent on transportation and highways. That Act, the first of its kind in Saskatchewan, ensures that over \$300 million will be allocated to highways infrastructure this year. We believe the legislation will provide an important foundation for establishing a long-term plan for upgrading our highways and transportation networks but we also know that these plans need money to succeed. That is why we have committed to investing \$5 billion over the next decade to support an innovative new highways and transportation strategy.

This budget includes a record \$433 million to help realign and rebuild our highways and transportation network.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — This funding is going to help us complete the twinning of Highway No. 1, the Trans-Canada Highway; to help complete the twinning of No. 16 West, the Yellowhead. And it's going to continue work on twinning No. 11 North, the Louis Riel Trail.

It's also going to support further work on allowing greater access for our northern communities through our northern infrastructure program. It's going to continue the work on the First Nations road access that is helping erase the boundary between on-reserve and off-reserve funding, and it is going to continue to commit money to the Prairie Grain Roads Program.

As well, Mr. Speaker, we've committed an additional \$10

million this year to help RMs [rural municipality] improve roads under their authority. This includes \$5 million to help move forward the very innovative program that SARM has called Clearing the Path. We have also committed \$5 million to help select RMs deal with the heavy oil road maintenance that they are feeling up in the northwest corner of the province.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — This money, this \$10 million, will double to \$20 million next year. We also recognize that our urban, rural, and northern municipalities have an important role to play in fostering a strong and safe set of communities that are welcoming to our families and encouraging for small business growth. That's why I'm pleased to announce today that we will provide a record \$30 million increase in ongoing, unconditional revenue sharing for our municipalities.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Mr. Speaker, this brings our revenue-sharing commitment on an annual basis now to a record \$127 million. This \$30 million is the largest single increase in the history of the revenue-sharing program and far exceeds our election commitment to provide 85 million in revenue sharing.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — I'm also very pleased to announce today, Mr. Speaker, that municipalities will receive \$58 million this year for specific infrastructure support. In addition to the traditional support for municipalities, we also recognize that sport, culture, and recreation play an important role in Saskatchewan when it comes to the quality of life for Saskatchewan families. That's why we established the building communities fund. We want to assist communities in undertaking new construction and upgrading of facilities that provide benefits to the larger regions they serve and indeed the province as a whole.

In the past year we've provided grants to Swift Current for the Centennial Civic Centre, the Common Wealth Centre in Lloydminster, the Gallagher Centre in Yorkton, and to communities in the North. This year we are providing \$40 million in support through the building communities program to support anticipated projects like the expansion of IPSCO Place here in Regina, that's home to the important provincial attractions and trade programs like the Royal Red and the Western Canada Agribition and the Farm Progress Show.

We expect other communities . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

[11:15]

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Mr. Speaker, we expect other communities like those in Moose Jaw, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert to provide additional submissions for projects in their regions for the coming year.

Supporting communities in this province is an important part of



our plan to make life better for Saskatchewan people. We believe that the best way to make sure that we have strong communities really is to start by investing in young people. Our commitment starts with accessible, affordable, good-quality child care which is a priority of our government. It helps families participate more fully in the labour market and it allows, I believe, for a much more fulsome role for children in terms of establishing early learning and development. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce today that we will create 500 new licensed child care spaces this year.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — This brings our total number of spaces, Mr. Speaker, to 9,300 which is almost one space for every four children under the age of four in this province. And I'm very pleased that we have been able to commit that.

I am also pleased to announce that for the first time we'll provide funding for ongoing capital construction for new spaces and renovation costs for existing child care facilities.

Mr. Speaker, as children grow and gain new skills, we have an important opportunity to invest in their futures and to make sure that they can get the most of the education system that our schools will provide. Research shows that early intervention programs such as pre-kindergarten and our innovative KidsFirst initiative help children succeed in school and in life. That's why I'm very pleased today to announce that we will fund 15 new pre-kindergarten programs in our community schools.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — This brings our total number of programs — pre-kindergarten programs — to 134 throughout this province and increases the number of pre-kindergarten spaces to over 2,000 in our urban, rural, and northern communities.

This budget also deepens our commitment to help assist in the building of literacy skills so that all people in this province are able to take full advantage of the opportunities that a strong economy is providing. Today's budget includes more than \$3 million for adult and family literacy programs. These funds will assist the newly established Literacy Commission and a network of provincial training institutions and community-based organizations to undertake literacy programs.

Literacy, numeracy, and a strong sense of citizenship, Mr. Speaker, begin with ensuring that young people have access to the highest quality education possible. This budget is making Saskatchewan an even better place for young people, starting with our provincial K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] system.

In 2007-2008 we are providing over \$600 million in operating and capital funding to our schools and pre-kindergarten system in our 28 school divisions. This funding provides a \$646 increase to the basic per pupil rate which represents an 11 per cent increase over last year.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — This significant investment of funds in

education for our over 163,000 school-aged children in more than our 750 schools throughout the province is a strong support and shows the support of this NDP government that has increased education funding by more than 50 per cent in the past decade.

Education is an important investment we make not only in young people but can make in ourselves and in the future of Saskatchewan. We want to help young people start their careers here in Saskatchewan and to ensure we're in a position to meet the needs of a growing workforce that can fill the jobs of a growing economy.

We're committed to making it easier for young people to remain in Saskatchewan and study for their careers. That's why this budget includes nearly \$200 million for the training sector. This investment includes nearly \$24 million to create over 2,100 new training opportunities. This includes opportunities targeted to fields like health care and the skilled trades.

I am very pleased to say, Mr. Speaker, that this increase will bring us to a total of over 31,000 seats which is a 24 per cent increase since this NDP government was re-elected.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Mr. Speaker, post-secondary education and training are vital parts of building a successful future. And we believe education must not only be accessible, but affordable. That's why, in addition to the more than \$110 million that we're providing to student support in the forms of scholarships, bursaries, and loans for 14,000 students, this budget also includes \$41 million in income support for 2,800 very low-income students to access the basic skills training and employment programs.

This budget also provides \$21.6 million in new money to keep undergraduate tuition rates frozen at 2004 levels.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — This is the third year in a row now, Mr. Speaker, that we've been able to freeze tuition. And tuition will stay frozen at 2004 levels until 2008. Students are saving \$1,500 this year because of our tuition freeze. And since we implemented this fully funded freeze, we've committed about \$92 million to help keep education both accessible and affordable.

Mr. Speaker, education is an important part of what we can do to help build the skills it takes to participate fully in community life and to start a career. For young people, the opportunity of choosing a career is an exciting one. For those of us who live in and love this province, we know the benefits of building our future here at home.

We want to help make Saskatchewan even more attractive place for young people to build their careers and start their families. Mr. Speaker, that's why I am particularly pleased today to announce that this year recent graduates will not pay provincial income tax on the first 20,000 of the income they earn in each of the five years following graduation.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — This is going to be accomplished by establishing a special \$10,000 graduate tax exemption and by permitting the unused portion to be carried forward for up to five years. This gives a 10-year window of opportunity for recent graduates to take advantage of this program. This exemption applies to graduates in our universities, our technical schools, our trade schools, and other qualifying programs not just here in Saskatchewan but all across this country.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Mr. Speaker, this exemption gives young people one more reason to build their future right here at home in Saskatchewan, and it gives businesses a valuable tool to help attract more employees from across Canada.

You know, for those of us who grew up here and those of us who have chosen to move here, we know that Saskatchewan really is the best place in Canada to live, to work, and to raise a family. And it is so because we believe in working together, in sharing in the opportunities our province provides, and in making sure we put people first. This has long been a value shared between the New Democratic Party and Saskatchewan people.

It's in part why Saskatchewan was able to pioneer medicare and why we made medicare a priority long before there was a federal support for the program. This budget provides a number of measures to increase access to medicare for Saskatchewan families. This year we are going to provide a record \$3.45 billion to deliver health care services to Saskatchewan people. This funding will provide comprehensive, universal, publicly accessible, publicly funded access to more than 5.6 million visits to doctors and specialists, nearly 73,000 surgeries, and almost 140,000 advanced diagnostic procedures.

Furthermore it's going to allow us to employ the services of some 37,000 doctors, specialists, nurses, and health care professionals, and support workers. Mr. Speaker, the regional health authorities this year will receive \$90 million more to enhance wages and benefits for unionized health care workers and over \$22 million more for physicians and other health care professionals.

This budget provides \$78.5 million for our cancer agency and a 17 per cent increase for cancer drugs and medical supplies.

This budget also does more to support children's health, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to announce today that we are targeting a dental sealant program for children in grades 1 and 7 in our community schools. We're doing this because we believe dental sealant provides effective protection against tooth decay, and that in turn helps provide better overall dental health and physical health of children as they grow older.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — This program is going to help ensure that children that might not typically have access to dental care, that they can get the benefit of this preventive measure.

This budget also provides 2.25 million in new funding for access to children's mental health services.

We're implementing coverage in this budget for insulin pumps for children under the age of 18 who require this item to regulate insulin levels.

And for the first time we are going to implement respite benefits for parents of children with complex medical needs.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased also to announce today that we will provide \$3 million in this budget to develop an intensive autism treatment program for children moderately to severely affected by autism.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — This package of funding is going to help improve access to services and significantly reduce wait-lists and wait times for people in Saskatchewan. Access for many of us begins with a simple visit to the doctor's office, and sometimes it progresses to the need for access to specialized diagnostic imaging to detect specific conditions. This year we expect to fund about 117,000 CT [computerized tomography] scans and 24,000 MRI [magnetic resonance imaging] scans. This budget provides funding to extend the shifts and hours of operation to help reduce wait times for these procedures.

Our \$3.45 billion commitment to medicare this year will also provide for an additional 3,100 MRI scans. This, by the way, has more than doubled the capacity of MRI scans since our election in 2003. And we will provide an additional 5,400 bone mineral density tests. We're also going to provide \$3 million in this budget, Mr. Speaker, to allow doctors in local communities to get greater access to the testing results that these scans . . . by improving their access to electronic health records. This will help patients, particularly those in rural Saskatchewan, get better quality and more convenient access to test results.

This health care budget also includes funding for up to 2,000 more surgeries, 160 more hip and knee surgeries, for a total of 3,275 procedures there.

We're going to increase our renal dialysis capacity to accommodate 20 per cent more patients, and we expect to establish our eighth satellite unit for renal dialysis in Estevan this year.

Supplementary eye care and enhanced drug coverage for over 30,000 low-income workers will be enhanced. There will be 12 per cent increase in the base budget for the drug plan. And there'll be planning in this budget for the children's hospital in Saskatoon. Mr. Speaker . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Mr. Speaker, health care is important to all of us, but probably no more so than to those of us as we grow older. Life expectancies are growing in this province, and the health of our older citizens is improving. It's improving in

part because of the role of pharmaceuticals and drug therapies are playing in managing chronic conditions. While these therapies can extend our life expectancy, they are also growing in cost and often put real pressures on Saskatchewan seniors. That's why I'm very pleased to announce today that we are introducing an enhanced seniors' drug plan.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Mr. Speaker, this plan will mean that no senior over the age of 65 will pay more than \$15 in prescription drug costs for drugs covered in the formulary plan effective July 1 of this year. And that will provide an average annual saving of \$400 to the 115,000 seniors we expect to access this program.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Mr. Speaker, in 2003 Saskatchewan people elected our NDP government to help insure Saskatchewan would remain the best place in Canada to live, to work, and to raise a family.

Today Saskatchewan families are paying on average \$1,200 less in taxes than they were when this Premier took office. Today there are record number of people working — people who have jobs as a result of the changes we've made to encourage a stronger economy. Today young people are saving about \$1,500 a year because of the NDP tuition freeze program. Today businesses are able to grow and expand because of the tax reforms we've begun. Today because of this budget, seniors are going to save on average \$400 a year in prescription drug costs.

Young people graduating from across Canada will be able to earn up to \$20,000 tax-free in each of the next five years after graduation just for starting their careers and their families here at home. Families are going to get better access to health care because of incentives and increases in support for surgeries, diagnostics, and therapies. Children are going to have increased access to quality child care so their parents can participate in the growing economy. And parents throughout the province are going to be able to know that specialized health care services for their children can be provided right here at home.

This budget continues to build a better future for young people, for seniors, and for families. This budget, Mr. Speaker, makes life better for Saskatchewan families, and it deserves the support of Saskatchewan people. As such, I am pleased today to move, seconded by the member for Saskatoon Nutana:

That this Assembly support in general the budgetary policy of the government.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

[11:30]

**The Speaker:** — Order please. It has been moved by the Minister of Finance, the member for Regina South, seconded by the member for Saskatoon Nutana:

That the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed an honour today to rise in this Assembly on behalf of the official opposition Saskatchewan Party to respond to this year's budget.

I'd like to take a moment to welcome all our guests to their Legislative Assembly. Thank you for taking time from your busy schedules to come to this important Assembly to watch a very important part of our democratic process today. Welcome.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend a special thank you to the people who allow us to do our job. To my family — to my wife, Trish, who works hard balancing a television career and a life as a mom, making sure that the kids are able to attend every hockey game, every gymnastic lesson, every piano lesson, you name it. Our son, Carter, is in grade four and is nine years old. Our daughter, Paige, is seven and in grade one. Both children attend Cardinal Leger School and are in the French immersion program. A special hello today to my mother, Lucy Cheveldayoff, who is watching in Blaine Lake. And a thank you goes out to my constituency assistant, Beth Epp, who works very hard in my constituency office.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Today, Mr. Speaker, I want to send some get well wishes to my friend Jim Rhode who is recovering in a hospital in Las Vegas after a serious motorcycle accident. Jim, best wishes to you and your family. Mr. Speaker, a thank you to the men, women, and children of the Saskatoon Silver Springs constituency who sent me to this Assembly to be their voice. Thank you for that privilege.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to begin my official response to today's budget by setting the record straight, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — On a summary basis, the way the Provincial Auditor, the only way the Provincial Auditor advises budgets should be judged, this budget, what we heard delivered this morning, is a \$701 million deficit.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Mr. Speaker, this budget, Mr. Speaker, this budget is clearly not sustainable. It is clearly not responsible, and it is clearly not supportable.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Mr. Speaker, for the last few months this NDP government has been on a desperate, reckless spending spree with the taxpayers' credit card. Every time the polls have dropped, their response has been to spend more money. Last June when the voters of Weyburn-Big Muddy decisively

rejected the NDP, this desperate government reacted by cutting the PST, a \$321 million annual commitment. That was followed by a \$1.5 million exclamation mark advertising campaign.

What were the results of that, Mr. Speaker? Then after the NDP suffered their worst electoral defeat since 1944 in the Martensville by-election, it announced the \$5 billion for highways over 10 years. And now, with the NDP embroiled in the Murdoch Carriere scandal, we have seen millions of dollars shovelled out from government coffers — anything and everything possible to distract the people of Saskatchewan from the record of this tired NDP government.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, today taxpayers got the bill. The Visa bill came in. The Visa bill came in and it's huge, Mr. Speaker. Frankly it's worse than we could have imagined. This NDP government has now saddled the people of Saskatchewan, the people that are watching today, with a \$700 million deficit.

Revenues of the province have shrunk by a half a billion dollars, but the NDP have increased operating spending by some 9 per cent. And over \$500 million from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund is gone — that rainy day election slush fund — \$500 million gone, true to form, Mr. Speaker. And the Auto Fund, the Auto Fund is plunged into a deficit, Mr. Speaker.

The government has done some good in the past, Mr. Speaker, I will admit that. But that all changed today — a \$926 million increase in the province's net debt and 19 million more in debt-servicing costs. Mr. Speaker, not only is the cupboard bare, they have ripped out the kitchen cabinets. If you watch HGTV [Home & Garden Television], an extreme makeover is necessary, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, and it begs the question, it begs the question, it begs the question, what do Saskatchewan people have to show for it? Well precious little, Mr. Speaker, precious little: 52 schools closing, no new schools, our highways are still crumbling, surgical waiting lists continue to grow, and property taxes are still rising.

Worst of all, Mr. Speaker, this government has presented no plan to grow Saskatchewan's population which has shrunk to its lowest level since 1976, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at a time when our province desperately needs a growth agenda and a focused, accountable approach to public spending, the Minister of Finance has presented a budget that is drowning in red ink, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the only way to characterize this budget is reckless and irresponsible — the worst budget, Mr. Speaker, the worst budget in 25 years; a desperate government, a desperate attempt by a desperate government to buy votes, Mr. Speaker.

It's a budget that grows the number of people working in government at a time when the population is shrinking. It's a budget that once again increases the budget for the Premier's office, for Executive Council, and does precious little for ordinary families across Saskatchewan. It's a budget that increases government spending and yet forecasts only 4,000

new jobs in the province this year — 10,000 graduates; only 4,000 new jobs. It's a budget that increases the net debt — the net debt — for every man, woman, and child in this province by almost \$1,000 per person.

Since the Premier took office, Mr. Speaker, government spending has gone up by 32 per cent — \$2 billion, Mr. Speaker — and the size of government has grown. All the time when Saskatchewan's population has shrunk by more than 10,000 people since this Premier took office. Some legacy, Mr. Speaker. Some legacy. What we now have in NDP Saskatchewan is fewer people paying for more government. There is something very wrong with this picture, Mr. Speaker. There is something very wrong with this picture.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — Order please. Order. Member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Mr. Speaker, we're hearing a lot from former Finance ministers today. It's no wonder that people like former Finance minister Janice MacKinnon are sounding the alarm bells and calling this budget unsustainable.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Premier and the Finance minister today to answer the question that everybody will be asking — how is this budget sustainable? How can the Finance minister possibly bring forward a budget with spending increases and new programs at a time when by his own admission he has no idea how they're going to be paid for?

Mr. Speaker, the Premier and the Finance minister owe the people of Saskatchewan an explanation. Where is the plan for sustainability? Where is the accountability in spending? And where, Mr. Speaker, where are the results?

It's hard to imagine how this NDP government could spend so much money and have so little to show for it, Mr. Speaker. For the hard-working men and women who pay their taxes and expect this government to act responsibly, this budget is a betrayal.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — It is unsustainable, Mr. Speaker. It is the last gasp, the last gasp of a tired NDP government that knows that it has lost the trust and confidence of Saskatchewan people. It has lost the trust and confidence of Saskatchewan people.

Over the past few months the Saskatchewan Party has talked about creating a sustainable growth agenda for the province. The foundation of a growth agenda is a government that lives within its means. The foundation of a growth agenda is fiscal responsibility — and I hope they're listening; I hope they can hear this — balanced budgets, Mr. Speaker.

Today the Finance minister took a jackhammer to that foundation, Mr. Speaker. And what about the future, Mr. Speaker? What about the future?

There is little money for technological developments and innovation. There's next to no money for new spaces to train

doctors and nurses. Mr. Speaker, in fact, in fact if members will look at the very budget in front of them, if they will look at the numbers on page 88 you will find that this NDP government is creating 18 seats for nursing education programs — 18 seats, Mr. Speaker. At that rate it will take 18 years to fulfill the commitment to nurses that we need today — shame, Mr. Speaker, shame.

Mr. Speaker, how will rural hospitals stay open? Will seniors get the treatments that they need in hospitals if there's no health care professionals to assist them, Mr. Speaker? Instead of a complete growth agenda for Saskatchewan and a real plan to fix health care, we have an NDP budget today that grows the size of government.

And it's not the first time, Mr. Speaker, that this NDP government has come before this Assembly to present a budget that just doesn't add up. Four years ago during his budget address the NDP Finance minister of the time rose in this Assembly to say that and I quote, "Our government has a proven track record of funding and maintaining key priorities." This of course was before the last election. After the election, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people found out that the NDP hadn't been telling them the whole story and in fact the cupboard was bare.

So what did the NDP government do to pay for the promises it couldn't keep, Mr. Speaker? They raised the PST. And why did they do that, Mr. Speaker? They did it because they couldn't deliver on their promises. They're the architect of broken promises, Mr. Speaker.

It's four years later, Mr. Speaker, and Saskatchewan people again find themselves at the mercy of a tired and desperate NDP government clinging to power by its fingernails, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is a government that has blown the boom, spent the mountain of money, and put the province's finances in a downward spiral, Mr. Speaker. They will say and do anything to try to hold on to power. And yet with all this unsustainable spending in this budget, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people haven't seen a long-term plan for education property tax relief, the first promise that they made, the promise that they continue to break, Mr. Speaker.

For years we have heard promise after promise from this NDP government that property tax was a priority. In 2003 Premier Calvert told the SARM convention, and I quote, "Our priority in tax reform [for government] over the next several years must be the matter of the funding of education." He also stated that the status quo was not on, Mr. Speaker. And yet in this last budget before an election, this . . .

[11:45]

**The Speaker:** — Order please. Order please. Order please. All members will certainly have the opportunity to state their remarks in due time. And I ask members and I ask order of the Assembly so that we can hear the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs who has the floor.

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Mr. Speaker, in this last budget, this last — hopefully last — budget of this NDP government, the Premier and his government has failed to deliver on a plan, a

long-term plan for property tax relief just as it's failed to deliver on a plan to keep young people here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan people have had enough. They're tired of broken promises by this NDP government. They're tired of crumbling highways. They're tired of waiting for better health care. And most of all, Mr. Speaker, voters in Saskatchewan are tired of this government spending more and more of their hard-earned tax dollars to deflect away from their record of scandals and broken promises, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — There indeed is one piece of good news, Mr. Speaker. The people of Saskatchewan today have witnessed this last budget from this NDP government and this tired NDP government. The bad news, Mr. Speaker, as everyone now knows, the NDP government has plunged the province back into a deficit and grown the debt. They have, Mr. Speaker, they have blown the boom. They have turned the boom into a boomerang, Mr. Speaker. Make no mistake about it, Mr. Speaker, make no mistake about it, the people of Saskatchewan deserve better. Only an election will bring around the change that is needed, Mr. Speaker. Only elections will bring around the change that is needed.

The people of Saskatchewan deserve better and for that reason this official opposition will not be supporting the budget. And, Mr. Speaker, I move that this debate do now be adjourned. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — Order please. Order. Order. Order please. Order. The member for Saskatoon Silver Springs has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

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

### Resumption of Budget Debate

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, the hon. member for Regina Dewdney:

That debate on the motion that the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policies of the government be resumed on Monday, March 26, 2007.

So moved.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Government House Leader, the member for Moose Jaw North, seconded by the member for Regina Dewdney:

That debate on the motion that the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government be

resumed on Monday, March 26, 2007.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

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

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Speaker, I move that this House do now adjourn.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

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

[The Assembly adjourned at 11:46.]

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# GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

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