



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of

The Honourable P. Myron Kowalsky
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Addley, Hon. Graham	NDP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Atkinson, Hon. Pat	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Beatty, Hon. Joan	NDP	Cumberland
Belanger, Hon. Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornrud, Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
Borgerson, Lon	NDP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
Calvert, Hon. Lorne	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
Chisholm, Michael	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
Cline, Hon. Eric	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Crofford, Joanne	NDP	Regina Rosemont
D'Autremont, Dan	SP	Cannington
Dearborn, Jason	SP	Kindersley
Draude, June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
Duncan, Dustin	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
Forbes, Hon. David	NDP	Saskatoon Centre
Gantefoer, 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 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in view of the rally outside regarding saving our schools, I read a petition and I read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary actions to ensure that the Limerick School remains open.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by folks from the communities of Regina, Assiniboia, Lafleche, Limerick, and Gravelbourg. I so present.

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

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition again today. I believe there are six full pages of signatures by citizens of Cypress Hills concerned about the impending closure of the SaskPower office in Shaunavon, 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 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 numerous pages are signed by individuals from the communities of Shaunavon, Frontier, Eastend, Val Marie, and other communities in the vicinity. I so present.

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 that are extremely concerned regarding school closures throughout the province. This petition, 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 the Imperial, Govan, Nokomis, and Drake schools remain open.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by people in the Imperial and Stalwart area. I so present.

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

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to rise today on behalf of people who are concerned about the school closures in rural Saskatchewan. I read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause this government to take the necessary action to ensure that the Willow Bunch School remains open.

The people that have signed this petition are from Willow Bunch, Coronach, and Scout Lake. I so present.

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

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition to keep the Willow Bunch School open. This petition states that the closure of the school would cause undo hardship to residents particularly young students. 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 actions to ensure that the Willow Bunch School remains open.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, all of the signatures on this petition come from the community of Willow Bunch, and I'm pleased to present it on their behalf.

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

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by individuals concerned with the practice of transferring patients from one ambulance to another on the highway. 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 cease the transfer of patients from one ambulance to another while en route.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals all from the community of Chaplin. I so present.

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

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unbelievably today I have a number of petitions again on the citizens who are concerned about the safety of Highway No. 5. And the prayer

reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to upgrade and widen Highway No. 5 from Humboldt to Saskatoon.

And to demonstrate on how well travelled this highway is, Mr. Speaker, the signatures are from Humboldt, Bruno, St-Denis, Watson, Kamsack, Aberdeen, Colonsay, Canmore, Prud'homme, Lake Lenore, Saskatoon, and Calgary, Alberta. I so present.

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

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise proudly today on behalf of citizens of the community of Melfort to present petitions concerning the pending closure of the Broadway Community School. 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 stop the closure of the Broadway Community School in Melfort, Saskatchewan.

Signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, number in the hundreds, and they are of course from Melfort, but they're also from all of the communities surrounding Melfort who share the citizens' concern. And I'm pleased to present on their behalf.

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

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of folks from Willow Bunch who are concerned about the closure of that school. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary actions to ensure that the Willow Bunch School remains open.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this is signed by the good folks from Willow Bunch. Thank you.

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

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

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

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

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to present a petition from people across Saskatchewan who want to keep rural schools open. And I'll read from the petition:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary actions to ensure that the Imperial, Govan, Nokomis, and Drake schools remain open.

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

Today the petitioners come from the communities of Imperial, Liberty, Davidson, and Simpson. I so present, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I rise with a petition from constituents in my constituency who are very, very concerned about the possible closures of school services. And the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary actions to ensure that the Limerick School remains open.

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

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by the good citizens of Flintoft, Stonehenge, Limerick, Wood 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 concerned with the closure of schools. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause government to take the necessary action to ensure that the Limerick School remains open.

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

Mr. Speaker, signatures on this petition are from Wood Mountain, Limerick, and Assiniboia. I so present.

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

Mr. Kirsch: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to read a petition from citizens of this province that are concerned with school closures. 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 prevent imposed school closures.

And as duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

And, Mr. Speaker, it is signed by people from all over this province. I so present.

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

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here with citizens concerned about this government abandoning rural Saskatchewan:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to ensure that the Imperial, Govan, Nokomis, and Drake schools remain open.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

This is signed by the good citizens from the town of Imperial and Liberty, Holdfast, Penzance, Watrous, and Simpson. I so present.

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

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to rise in the House today to present a petition to keep rural schools open. I will read the prayer for relief:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to ensure that the Imperial, Govan, Nokomis, and Drake schools remain open.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by good citizens from Imperial and Liberty. I so present. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too rise today about the closures of rural schools in the province of Saskatchewan. 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 ensure that the schools of Imperial, Govan, Nokomis, and Drake schools remain open.

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

From the good people of Imperial, Saskatchewan. I so present, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the Assembly today to present petitions calling on the government to keep the school open in the historic community of Willow Bunch. 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 ensure that Willow Bunch school remains open.

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

Mr. Speaker, I have 20 pages of petitions signed by people from Saskatoon; Pense; Fairview, Alberta; Crane Valley; Cardross; Willow Bunch; Coronach; Bengough; Pangman; Lower Saxony, Germany, Mr. Speaker; Assiniboia; St. Victor; Moose Jaw; and Fife Lake. I so present on their behalf.

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.

[13:45]

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — The Chair of the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies is recognized.

Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies to report Bill No. 24, The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2006 without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall this Bill be heard in Committee of the Whole? The Chair recognizes the Minister of Learning.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Learning has requested leave to waive consideration of Committee of the Whole on this Bill 24. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. When shall this Bill be read a third time? The Chair recognizes the minister.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 24 — The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2006/Loi de 2006 modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la réglementation des boissons alcoolisées et des jeux de hasard

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Learning that Bill No. 24 be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — Third reading of this Bill.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — The Chair of the Standing Committee on the Economy is recognized.

Standing Committee on the Economy

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am instructed by the committee to report Bill No. 32 without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall Bill 32 be read in Committee of the Whole? The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, with leave I would ask that we waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill. With leave.

The Speaker: — Order please. The minister has requested leave to waive consideration of Committee of the Whole on this Bill. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. When shall this Bill be read a third time? The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 32 — The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Amendment Act, 2006

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill 32 be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — Third reading of this Bill.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 42 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister for Immigration: what did the department spend on immigrant settlement services in the '06-07 budget, with a breakdown of funding to each organization?

Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet I also have additional questions for the Minister for Immigration. I give notice I shall on day no. 42 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister for Immigration: how much money did the department spend on marketing and promotion of the Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program in 2006-2007?

And I have the same question for years going back to 2000-2001.

I also have that I will give notice that I shall on day no. 42 ask the government the following question:

Also to the Minister for Immigration: in 2000-2001, what was the department's immigrant retention rate?

And I have the same question for the fiscal years from 2000-2001 through to 2006-2007.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 42 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister for Immigration: in 2006-2007, how much money did the province receive from the federal government for the Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm really pleased today that we're joined by a group of 21 students from Grant Road School in the heart of Regina South. They are seated up here in your gallery. We are joined today by two of their teachers, Miss Reid and Ms. Desjarlais, who have brought with them these students. They are also joined by a group of chaperones, Dave Reid and Carol Powell and Cyndi Lewis.

I'm really happy they're going to be here today to watch some of the proceedings. And later we'll go get our photos taken, and we'll have a chance to answer some of their questions. So if all members would join with me in welcoming this group of grade 4 students I'd be most appreciative.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Gantefer: — Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon to welcome guests in both galleries and also in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. They're members of the Save Our Schools action committee that have come to Regina today. You can easily tell who they are, Mr. Speaker. They have the rosy cheeks and the parkas and mitts on because it was really a little bit fresh out there.

I'd like to acknowledge in particular in your gallery their spokesman, Mr. David Gleim from Chaplin, Saskatchewan. And I know that their day here will be interesting, and I ask all members to welcome them to their Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

The Importance and Future of Schools

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to commend all of the individuals involved in the Save Our Schools initiative and to thank them for getting involved in their communities.

They have an intimate understanding of the importance of a school to its community. After all it is truly the heart of a community. Mr. Speaker, I think that many people find it frustrating that the 16 years of neglect from this NDP [New Democratic Party] government has resulted in thousands of people leaving our province for opportunities elsewhere. When a family leaves, they take their children with them which in turn leads to the depopulation of schools throughout this province. Mr. Speaker, it is my hope that the NDP government will listen to some of the Saskatchewan Party's proposals in this area.

We have suggested the government should provide school boards with a few more tools when it comes to making the difficult and emotional decisions about the future of a school. These tools include the designations of schools of necessity and schools of opportunity. Our leader has also proposed that before any decision is made on the future of a school status, the school board must prepare and release a utilization report to the community detailing possible partnerships and alternative usages for the school in the community.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I would invite all members of this Assembly to thank the members of the Save our Schools initiative for the work that they are doing for the children of today and for the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order please. I too wish to welcome all citizens to the gallery and to this Legislative Assembly, but I would request that they observe our parliamentary practice which is to observe, not participate in any way.

Next statement. The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Eastview.

Junior Achievement's Business Hall of Fame Awards

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, over the past weekend Junior Achievement Saskatchewan held Business Hall of Fame Awards dinners in both Saskatoon and Regina to celebrate the achievements of students involved in the Junior Achievement company program and to acknowledge the contributions of the dedicated men and women who volunteer their time and expertise as company program advisors.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier and I and many of my legislative colleagues had the privilege and the great pleasure to be among the capacity crowd in attendance at the event at TCU Place in Saskatoon on Friday. I also know some of my colleagues were at the Regina event.

Since 1977, Junior Achievement Saskatchewan has been educating young people about business and economics, inspiring them to develop entrepreneurial, leadership, and workforce skills that will guide them into the future. I want to take this opportunity to commend the members of the business community and organizations who have developed the foundation that these young achievers will build on and who so generously offer their guidance and support.

Mr. Speaker, our government's focus is on making Saskatchewan the best place to live, work, and raise a family. And those who participate in Junior Achievement are being well prepared to serve as community leaders in the days ahead.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating the award winners from both the Saskatoon and Regina events, to those who were inducted into the Business Hall of Fame, and, Mr. Speaker, I particularly want to take this opportunity to congratulate Junior Achievement Saskatchewan on its 30th anniversary. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Equality

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to talk about the issue of equality. I fail to see the issue of equality when a SaskPower recent basic charge increase is up 50 cents compared to somebody living in residential Saskatchewan. Does the NDP view this as equality?

Let's talk about another example: property tax. The NDP government tries to convince us that the funding split between the government and school divisions is 40/60 which would be close to equal. However I have one school district in my constituency receives only 27 per cent. Another one only receives 12 per cent from this government.

Recently the Premier announced he is going to provide free wireless Internet access to a few residents in the city, which is fine. But in my constituency, I still have people that are paying

for outdated dial-up Internet access. When is he going to make that equal? Also I have no cellphone coverage throughout my constituency. When is he going to make that equal?

So with the issue of equality, I still feel this government is not addressing that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Saskatchewan Protective Services Medal

Hon. Mr. Addley: — Mr. Speaker, this past Friday in Saskatoon I had the privilege of attending the Saskatchewan Protective Services Medal ceremony. Established by this government in 2003, the Saskatchewan Protective Services Medal, presented by the Lieutenant Governor, recognizes exemplary long service for individuals working in a direct capacity to protect people and property. These individuals are charged with ensuring the safety, security, and protection of Saskatchewan citizens.

Mr. Speaker, the brave recipients of this medal are recommended by a committee of protective services professionals called the Saskatchewan Protective Services Medal advisory committee. And they receive a circular medal surmounted by the St. Edward's crown. It bears a shield with a lion on a stylized western red lily. Recipients also receive a miniature of the medal and certificate.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people rely on the contributions and sacrifices made by safety and security personnel. The Saskatchewan Protective Services Medal honours these people and focuses attention on the efforts and work of police, fire, and emergency professionals along with the countless others working in the field of safety and security. This is a high honour and a much deserved one.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all honourable members of the House join me in congratulating all these true Saskatchewan heroes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Oxbow Physicians Honoured with the Healthcare Excellence Award

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure I rise in this Assembly today to congratulate two physicians from my constituency who were recently honoured with the Saskatchewan Healthcare Excellence Award.

Dr. David Hyman and Dr. Nicholaas Botha, both originally from South Africa and now practicing in Oxbow, were honoured with the award in late February at a ceremony here in Regina. Nineteen individuals and teams were nominated, and Drs. Hyman and Botha were one of the 10 to receive an award.

The following information on the award recipients was provided at the ceremony, and I quote:

Always seeing the good in everyone and in all situations are the hallmarks of both Dr. Nic Botha and Dr. David Hyman's approach to their work and to their lives.

It goes on, Mr. Speaker, and I quote:

They consistently place the patients first and foremost, attending patients from pre-hospital situations through . . . to regional hospitals . . . Dr. Botha and Dr. Hyman aspire to the highest standard of work ethics which carry through to the staff at the clinics, this represents a win-win environment for both patients and staff.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, both of these doctors are also actively involved in their community. The award literature states, quote:

They both are elders of their faith and [serve] . . . their values through the way they live their lives and practice medicine in the community.

Mr. Speaker, my family used Dr. Botha when the kids were attending Oxbow, and they were excellent. So congratulations to both Drs. Hyman and Botha on this well-deserved award.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Agenda for Crown Corporations

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member from Saskatoon Silver Springs for being the first member of his caucus since the last election to reveal the Saskatchewan Party's real agenda for Crown corporations.

At the end of last year, the SGI's [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] Auto Fund rate stabilization reserve was \$206 million — the highest balance in a 61-year history. The Finance critic, I'm sure that the member from Saskatoon Silver Springs understands that the SGI Auto Fund is designed to be financially self-sustaining and work on a breakeven basis over time. It does not receive nor contributes money to the General Revenue Fund. In fact it is prohibited by legislation to contribute to the GRF [General Revenue Fund].

Despite knowing this, the member from Saskatoon Silver Springs says that the \$100 million rebate SGI customers will receive this year is \$100 million that they would not have spent if they had been more prudent. The Saskatchewan Party opposes the SGI rebate to Saskatchewan people with insured vehicles.

Mr. Speaker, the statement defines the fundamental difference between the NDP and the Saskatchewan Party. The NDP believes that the Crown corporations are businesses that serve the people of Saskatchewan. And the Saskatchewan Party believes the Crown corporations are political piggy banks to serve the Saskatchewan Party. Mr. Speaker, what the Saskatchewan Party has never understood, as evidenced by the

bleeding of the Crowns in the '80s, is that Crown corporations are businesses managed by professionals for the best interest of Saskatchewan people — not the Saskatchewan Party. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:00]

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

Public Reaction to the Carriere Scandal

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of the Public Service Commission may think the Murdoch Carriere scandal is old news, but that's only because she wants the opposition to stop asking questions about this scandal.

Mr. Speaker, despite the minister's assertion, people across Saskatchewan continue to ask questions about the scandal and express their outrage and disgust at the way it was handled by this NDP government. Just this morning, there was a letter to the editor in the Regina *Leader-Post* that states, and I quote:

How can any government have such a warped sense of right and wrong?

I certainly hope Saskatchewan voters, especially women voters, remember this disgusting decision at election time and develop a "zero-tolerance" policy toward the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, I think people are going to be even more outraged when they read the front page of the *Leader-Post* today where one of the victims in the scandal speaks out. The victim told the *Leader-Post*, and I quote:

We were ignored . . . We laid complaints and they said we weren't going through the proper channels . . . which we thought we were doing just by going to (our) . . . supervisor.

It makes you feel really worthless.

The woman also talks about the fact that, and I quote, "Some of us were harassed by Murdoch Carriere as early as 1994." She goes on to say, Mr. Speaker, that when supervisors raised their concerns, they were told, "That's just Murdoch."

So much for zero tolerance.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

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

Rural School Closures

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, at the legislature today are members of the save our schools committee. These are men and women trying desperately to maintain the viability of their communities and keep their schools open.

Mr. Speaker, while this latest NDP budget calls for spending increases of roughly 9 per cent, there's not one thin dime dedicated to addressing the issues of rural school closures. Mr. Speaker, can the minister of Education explain to these people why keeping our schools open is such a low priority for this NDP government?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is totally inaccurate. There is a number of factors that have been put in place and have been in place to address the specific issues with rural schools.

We all recognize that there is a number of issues, a number of costs in rural Saskatchewan that are higher than what they would be in urban areas of the province. There is the small school factor. There is the new geographic factor. There is extra resources for rural schools. And the member knows that.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Gantefer: — Mr. Speaker, the current process for closing schools is moving far too quickly. This NDP government pushed through the amalgamation process. Now communities are not being given the time and resources they need to gather information and explore other options.

Local school community councils formed in the wake of amalgamation are only now beginning to establish themselves. The schools will be closed before the consultation and community input can really begin.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: why are these important decisions about the future of rural Saskatchewan schools being rushed?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, within the legislation there is a process for when notification has to be given and the process that is followed. When you look at the web pages from each of the school divisions they will also have more particulars on how they follow through and follow the legislation, and what criteria they follow within their divisions. It is clear.

Mr. Speaker, what I do need to say though is we all understand that this is a very emotional time and that we are particularly at a difficult point in all of this because while notice has been given for the reviews, we are not yet at the step where there is any definite decisions made. Mr. Speaker, it's almost as if the communities, the families, the teachers, the parents, the students, there is a bit of a limbo right now as to what the final decisions will be. It is emotional time and we need to let the school boards make their decisions.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Gantefer: — Mr. Speaker, the Role of the School report was released in March 2001. That report contained 165 pages worth of ideas on how to improve the quality of education. The report calls all schools to adopt a, quote, “Community School philosophy” that encourages families, neighbours, businesses, churches, and other organizations to become involved in school events and make use of the facilities in the school building. But that takes time, Mr. Speaker, time this NDP government doesn’t want to give local school boards.

Mr. Speaker, why is this tired, old NDP government once again ignoring the recommendations of its own report and why are they writing off rural schools in Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite would take a little bit of time and look at the education system across the province of Saskatchewan, he will see many innovative projects that have been put in place. Mr. Speaker, it has been this government that has facilitated this, working with communities, working with other partners to provide viable schools.

Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite can’t think of any of these projects, I have a list of two pages which is by no means a comprehensive list of all of the joint-use facilities in this province. Mr. Speaker, it’s a direction we’ve taken over the last number of years, and it’s a direction we’ll continue to take to make sure we have viable schools in every area of the province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Future of Former Weyerhaeuser Mill in Prince Albert

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister Responsible for the Forestry Secretariat. Is there an emergency meeting of the Forestry Secretariat called for tomorrow, and what is the purpose of that meeting?

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

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I can tell that member that the Forestry Secretariat has been meeting since its inception. We regularly update the Forestry Secretariat or the task force through the secretariat on the work of the government and the work with industry. That process continues and there will be further meetings in days to come.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, the member for Prince Albert Northcote often has a difficult time keeping his story straight. Friday was no exception. In the morning he was telling people about the deal to open the Prince Albert pulp and paper mill; in the afternoon he was denying it. Mr. Speaker, why can’t this minister get his story straight?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister Responsible for the Forestry Secretariat.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I’m pleased for the opportunity to inform that member that I shared information on Friday with a young lady who asked me about the future of the forestry industry in the province. I shared information with respect to process, Mr. Speaker, as it related to the merger of the Domtar, Weyerhaeuser assets. I indicated that discussions were ongoing and that that process would require any decision made by the new company would be made by their board of directors. I indicated that that board was established on March 7.

Mr. Speaker, I indicated that I had some degree of belief that we would be successful in putting together an active operator in the Prince Albert pulp mill assets. I believed that on Friday. That’s what I said on Friday, and that’s what I repeat again today.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker there’s an old saying in the navy: loose lips sink ships. Did the minister sink this deal? This time the minister’s loose lips are causing fear and confusion in Prince Albert. People deserve better than confusion and contradiction from the NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, what is it? Is it a deal or no deal on the Prince Albert mill?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister Responsible for the Forestry Secretariat.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, let me say to that member, I was at a post-budget meeting last Friday in Prince Albert — probably attended by 70, 80 local people — at which we discussed a number of issues, one of them being the future of the assets. Let me ask this member . . . And he knows so little about our community, so let me share with him this. Had anyone announced that there was an agreement in principle for the sale of the assets and the start of the assets, I can tell him the hats would have been flying in the air. I can tell him that there would still be applause in the streets.

Mr. Speaker, what I indicated was a process by which a decision would be made, if one were to be made. That’s what I said Friday. That’s what I said yesterday. That’s what I say today. And that’s what I’ll say tomorrow.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Performance of Government and Opposition

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday we learned that Murdoch Carriere's harassment victims and some of their supervisors tried to get high-ranking officials in the Department of Environment to listen to them for years. As early as 1994 some victims went to the supervisors for help. Then they went to deputy ministers and associate deputy ministers and were repeatedly told, that's just Murdoch. No one would listen.

Mr. Speaker, why were these women ignored? And more importantly, what is this NDP government doing to find out why they were ignored?

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I spent five years in this Assembly as a member of the opposition, and I'm absolutely shocked that we have dozens of guests in the gallery and we only had three questions on an issue of major importance to rural Saskatchewan.

The members of the opposition have asked literally dozens and dozens of questions about Murdoch Carriere, and I think I've answered them all. But they are afraid to ask more questions on rural school closure, and that is very surprising.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, if the minister ignores a lot of the people in the gallery . . .

The Speaker: — Order please. Order. The member for Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Draude: — A lot of the people that are here today are women and they're very concerned about harassment in the workplace.

On behalf of all nine of Murdoch Carriere's harassment victims, one of them wrote directly to the Premier of our province. The letter was dated March 10, 2003. It states, and I quote:

A private investigator (Robert Gillies) was hired . . . to look into our complaint . . .

In December 2002 the final report was completed. The final report also stated that sexual abuse and abuse of power had taken place.

It goes on. To quote:

A number of the complaints against Mr. Carriere do fall under the criminal code and a complaint has been laid with the RCMP.

Mr. Speaker, this is the letter the Premier said he did not understand the seriousness of. How can anyone claim not to understand the seriousness of this letter?

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I happened to spend some time out front of the Assembly at noon and I could tell that there are young people that travelled many miles to be here at noon to let their position be known to all members of the legislature. I note those young people have taken time off school and their parents have taken time away from work, yet the members of the opposition only asked three questions on rural school closures and this is . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order please. Would the minister complete her response, please.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And yet the members of the opposition — when these people have travelled hundreds of miles to be in this Assembly — ask only three questions. Well, Mr. Speaker, there's a lot more questions the opposition could ask about education policy in this province. But they don't want to do that, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, this government doesn't want to deal with this issue at all. One of the reasons the victims wrote this letter was because everyone high up in the NDP government said, that's just Murdoch, every time a complaint was brought forward. Then they decided to promote Carriere with the same salary to just another office.

Mr. Speaker, the letter states, and I quote:

This is where we the complainants feel that an injustice has been made. A number of female employees who work in the Regina office . . . have also experienced incidents with Mr. Carriere . . . We feel as employees that the females of 3211 Albert Street are being placed into an unsafe environment.

The Premier didn't think that this was serious enough to address, Mr. Speaker. Where was the NDP government's zero tolerance policy that this minister boasted about yesterday?

[14:15]

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — All of the issues that have been asked by the opposition have been spoken to in this Assembly.

But let me say this about people who are living in rural Saskatchewan that have travelled hundreds of miles to speak about rural school closures. Mr. Speaker, one of the questions that the opposition might have asked is, how long do you think a young person should be on a school bus going to and from school? Did they ask that question? Not at all.

The other thing that they could have asked . . .

The Speaker: — Order please. The Minister for the Public Service Commission.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, the other thing that they might have asked about if they'd chosen to ask about — but which obviously they don't want to ask about, and they have put it on the public record — is which schools would they keep open and which schools would they close, Mr. Speaker. They might have asked how many schools in the province of Saskatchewan are naturally closed every year and have been doing so since 1944. But the members of the opposition chose not to ask those questions.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, it's so glaringly obvious this government and this minister does not want to speak about the issue that's affecting women in Saskatchewan. Anything to divert the attention from what's happening that's not good for their politics.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to reread that quote that was made from the women who had the nerve to write to the Premier and try and get help from the person who is the highest official in this province. I'm going to reread this letter and see if maybe the minister will have an answer to the question. Answer the question. Any thoughts at all would be welcome. The letter states, and I quote:

This is where we the complainants feel that an injustice has been made. A number of female employees who work in the Regina office . . . have also experienced incidents with Mr. Carriere . . . We feel as employees that the females of 3211 Albert Street are being placed into an unsafe environment.

The Premier didn't think this was serious enough to address, I guess. Yesterday the minister talked about and had boasted about zero tolerance policies. Where was the NDP government's zero tolerance policy when it came to Murdoch Carriere?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — So, Mr. Speaker, this Assembly has been open in the province since the beginning of March and practically every day in the Assembly we've had a discussion about this issue. The discussion that has not taken place in this

Assembly is about rural school closures, Mr. Speaker. That discussion has not taken place. In fact, Mr. Speaker, they've only asked three questions.

Well I would say this — and this really does speak to the members of the opposition's credibility — apparently the member from Canora, in December 2, 1992, he says:

The province is too small in terms of population for all of the educational facilities it provides. There must be less duplication and a greater sharing of services.

That's what the member from Canora said. And then the member from Melfort, he admits that his proposal of having schools of opportunity and schools of necessity is unrealistic, Mr. Speaker. That speaks to their credibility on rural school closures.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, that minister's response was just as disgusting and embarrassing as the Premier's response to the women when they talked about Murdoch Carriere. What was the Premier's response? The Premier sent the victims a three-sentence letter thanking them for writing and telling them to keep bringing their concerns forward. Ten years, bring their concerns forward.

The victims went to their supervisors. They went to their union. They went to the department. They went to the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police]. And then they went to the Premier of the province and the Premier wouldn't even listen to them. It seems obvious that this NDP government is more interested in protecting Murdoch Carriere than women in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, why did this NDP government continue to ignore complaints about Murdoch Carriere and why didn't the Premier act in early March when he received the letter?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I really do want to speak to the members of the opposition's credibility because they go outside and say all kinds of things about rural school closure. But here is what their critic, the member from Melfort, had to say on March 15, 2007: "We're not saying any of these schools should remain open." That's what he said on the CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation]. And then . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order. Order please. Order please. Order please. There have been several personal remarks thrown across the floor which I believe would be unparliamentary being on record. I would ask members to refrain and stick to issue debates in the legislature. Would the

Minister of the Public Service Commission complete her response, please.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — And so, Mr. Speaker, and then what does the Education critic say in *The Nipawin Journal*? He said, and I quote, and this is January 31, 2007, “It’s up to the School Board to weigh it all out and decide.”

Well, Mr. Speaker, he’s not saying any school shouldn’t be closed. He’s saying it’s up to the school board to decide. That’s their policy, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, today we see more evidence that Carriere’s victims were nothing more than an afterthought to this NDP government in its rush to pay off Murdoch Carriere. A few days ago the Saskatchewan Party submitted a written question asking the NDP government when it signed the settlement agreement with Carriere and the answer was, January 9. Yet they didn’t tell the public until seven weeks later, and even worse they didn’t tell the women victims until seven weeks later, the day the settlement was announced.

Mr. Speaker, why did the government wait seven weeks before it told the public and these women about its \$275,000 payoff to Murdoch Carriere?

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — So, Mr. Speaker, we have a 25-minute question period each and every day in the province of Saskatchewan when this Assembly is sitting. And how many minutes did they spend on rural schools and rural school closures? Six minutes and three questions, Mr. Speaker.

They have spent more time in this Assembly in this question period on an issue that I’ve already answered all of the questions when they have not bothered to ask more questions about educational policy when it comes to rural Saskatchewan. I find that shameful, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, on the first day that this legislature sat, the minister told the Assembly, and I quote, “. . . the complainants were checked with before this was given to Mr. Carriere.”

Mr. Speaker, that’s just not true. The settlement was reached on January 9. The \$275,000 cheque was sent to Murdoch Carriere on January 26. That’s a full month before anyone spoke to these women about this outrageous payoff. Once again these women were nothing but an afterthought for this NDP government. Its first priority was taking care of the harasser.

Mr. Speaker, why weren’t these women checked with before Murdoch Carriere got his big, fat reward from the NDP? And why did the minister tell us that they were?

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — So, Mr. Speaker, we have an opposition that has spent most of question period today, when rural citizens have travelled hundreds of miles to this Assembly to ask their opposition to get the government to account for its educational policy in rural Saskatchewan, and how many questions do they ask on that? They asked exactly three. Well, Mr. Speaker, we know their policy. They say that they’re not saying any of these schools shouldn’t be closed, and they’re saying that it’s up to school boards. Well I think the public in Saskatchewan needs to know where this Sask Party opposition really stands when it comes to rural Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, we have a government that has spent the last half an hour refusing to answer questions. Not only do they not care about the school closures in this province, they don’t care about these nine women who were harassed by Murdoch Carriere.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Ms. Heppner: — I’ll go through this timeline again so that the minister can get her story straight. The minister told the House that the government checked with these women before the settlement was given to Murdoch Carriere. The settlement was reached on January 9. The \$275,000 payoff cheque was dated and delivered January 26. No one talked to any of these women prior to February 27, just minutes before the NDP announced this payoff of Murdoch Carriere.

Why did the NDP keep this disgusting settlement a secret from the public for over a month? And why did they keep it from these women?

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, I’ve already made my point about the opposition refusing to ask questions when we have dozens of guests in the gallery that have travelled hundreds of miles. But I will say this: in 1993 the Government of Saskatchewan, an NDP government, introduced amendments to the occupational health and safety legislation to make harassment as a grounds under the occupational health and safety legislation. And what did the member opposite do, from Cannington? He tried to eliminate it from the legislation and then he voted against it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, every workplace in Saskatchewan’s supposed to have a harassment policy. We asked the Sask Party caucus to table their harassment policy three years ago or four years ago. We haven’t yet seen it. And I would like them once

again to table the Sask Party caucus anti-harassment policy — if they even have one — because it is the law, Mr. Speaker, to have one.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Government Whip.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government I will be tabling responses to written questions 640 through 744.

The Speaker: — Responses for questions 640 through to 744 have been submitted.

Members of the Assembly, I wish to announce that His Honour will shortly be here for Royal Assent.

ROYAL ASSENT

[At 14:29 His Honour the Lieutenant Governor entered the Chamber, took his seat upon the throne, and gave Royal Assent to the following Bills.]

His Honour: — Pray be seated.

The Speaker: — May it please Your Honour, this Legislative Assembly in its present session has passed several Bills which in the name of the Assembly I present to Your Honour and to which Bills I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

Clerk: — Your Honour, the Bills are as follows:

- Bill No. 24 - The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2006/Loi de 2006 modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la réglementation des boissons alcoolisées et des jeux de hasard
- Bill No. 32 - The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Amendment Act, 2006

His Honour: — In Her Majesty's name, I assent to these Bills.

[His Honour retired from the Chamber at 14:31.]

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Thomson that the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Mr. Cheveldayoff.]

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for

Humboldt.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure today on behalf of the Humboldt constituency to enter the debate on the deficit budget that the government has introduced this year, and there's no doubt that it was a deficit budget. They have opened the purse, quite frankly, and they are trying desperately to gain support before an election. They've been falling quite drastically in the polls. They know it. They know it and so therefore they are going to just spend money and try to buy the voters. And it's not going to work, Mr. Speaker.

There was a lot of money spent in this budget. And I went through it and just sort of with the idea in mind, how will this budget help the constituents of the Humboldt constituency? And as everyone in this House knows, a huge concern and a priority for Humboldt is the Humboldt hospital. So I was pleased to see that there was money allocated towards the Humboldt hospital. There was ... \$6.9 million is dedicated towards the new Humboldt hospital. I haven't talked to the CEO [chief executive officer] of the Saskatoon Regional Health Authority, but I will be within the next week or so, I hope, to know if that amount of money is what they need to go to the next stage. It will be important to know whether or not the 6.9 million is adequate funds for the Humboldt hospital to proceed.

It's sad and we've talked about it a number of times in this House, Mr. Speaker, that it has taken so many years for this hospital to get to even this stage. There hasn't been any sod turned by any means on the hospital. And the other part that is truly devastating to the community of Humboldt and the surrounding communities is that, because they've had to wait well over a decade now for the NDP to come through with their promise to build a new hospital in Humboldt, it's going to cost dramatically more than what it should have cost had they built it in a more timely fashion. That is not only poor planning on the government's part — which I think everyone just takes for granted by now — but it costs the communities a great deal of money because they have to come up with 35 per cent of the funding.

That wouldn't happen, Mr. Speaker, if it was a city because in the cities it's 100 per cent funded. But because it's health care in rural Saskatchewan, the rural residents have to come up with the money. So if the costs go through the roof and skyrocket such as they have for this Humboldt hospital project, it costs each and every taxpayer within the Humboldt constituency, that are involved in the hospital region, a great deal of more money.

Health care in general is an area that is near and dear to my heart. We all know in this Assembly that I used to work at the Royal University Hospital as a laboratory technologist at one time. And I've always had an interest in health care and health care workers. I was very disappointed, Mr. Speaker, to see that the budget only increases the nursing training seats by 18. I think that is a drastic, drastic oversight on the NDP's part, but yet another demonstration that they do not plan ahead. They have no clue of a long-term vision for health care in this province, or they also have no long-term clue as to what type of catastrophe is ahead for health care.

We are experiencing a shortage of nurses; the nurses are telling us time and time again. They're giving us the statistics, the

numbers. They're telling us what other provinces are doing to address this issue, and yet this NDP government still doesn't seem to get it. They still don't have a plan. They're still not understanding what it's going to take to stop this train wreck that is about to happen in health care in Saskatchewan. It isn't just the nurses, Mr. Speaker. It's also doctors. It's laboratory technologists. It's radiologists. It is . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Why is the member for Regina Dewdney on his feet?

Mr. Yates: — With leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The member for Regina Dewdney has requested leave for introductions. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. The member may proceed.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I was looking up at the gallery, I noticed three long-time friends of mine sitting in the west gallery: Mr. Chuck Ames, Ms. Isabelle Musichuck, and Ms. Linda Tate. I think all three were here today to watch the proclamation and Royal Assent of the superannuation Bill. We're very pleased that we're able to do that today and give Royal Assent to that Bill just a few minutes ago. And it's always nice to see friends like them in the Assembly. Thank you.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Thomson that the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Mr. Cheveldayoff.]

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

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and welcome to the guests as well. The concern in health care is the shortage of professionals, the front-line workers. And it is such a serious state right now. Humboldt should have 12 doctors. They have had two move on. One moved to Saskatoon. One has recently retired. They had the threat of two resignations, but I think that will soon be rectified, and that will not be an issue. But there are a number of positions that they need to fill in Humboldt.

Lanigan has been struggling with doctors and bringing new doctors to Lanigan, and it is crucial that we have these doctors.

You know, the government can introduce a drug plan for the seniors, and I think the most vulnerable of people in our society that can't afford drugs should have help and assistance. I'm not questioning that we look at programs for the vulnerable people within our society, but if we don't have doctors to prescribe those drugs that are needed, then we have a fundamental problem that needs to be addressed first.

Mr. Speaker, the other issue in the Humboldt constituency, and indeed for the province as a whole, is the funding for education. And we've just gone through a fairly disruptive forced amalgamation of school divisions, and the school divisions are struggling to make the new, much larger divisions work within the restraints of the budgets that they have. And they're finding it increasingly difficult. A number of these school board members are telling me that they're going to be looking at increasing the taxes because they will not be able to continue to offer the programming that the schools have been able to offer in the past with the budgetary restraints that they're now under.

We've heard earlier in question period the concerns of schools that are looking at closure to address the lack of funds that the school boards are facing, and it's not entirely the answer, Mr. Speaker.

Again the NDP have no long-term vision, and in this budget there is nothing to address this issue at all. There is nothing to give relief to these school boards that are now finalizing their budgets and trying to offer the best programming possible to the students within their divisions. So that is lacking for the Humboldt constituents.

Agriculture is also extremely important to the Humboldt constituency. It's largely a farming constituency. And I wasn't surprised because they've done it year after year after year. I do not understand why, but again the agriculture budget was cut by nearly \$68 million. So the question will be to the Agriculture minister when we are looking at this budget more closely and by department, what is he going to cut? What more can he cut from agriculture and the different programming that it needs?

We've already devastated crop insurance. The premiums have gone up each and every year. The coverage has become less and less and less. It is not a particularly effective program by any means, and far, far weaker program than our neighbouring provinces, either Alberta or Manitoba. If you take your existing farm — should any of them have a farm, which they don't — but if they did take their existing farm and run the numbers through the Saskatchewan crop insurance program, the Alberta crop insurance program, and the Manitoba crop insurance program, I think that even they would be quite surprised at how ours falls seriously short of any support.

I find it whenever I . . . You know, agriculture absolutely is very near and dear to my heart, and I understand and have followed it very closely. I find it amazing, Mr. Speaker, in an industry that is fairly dependent on partnerships with the federal government — and agriculture in this province is indeed dependent on partnerships with the federal government — that even when we may not agree with all of the federal government's decisions that we would continue to egg on and irritate the relationship with the federal government, which I've seen each and every member on the NDP side of the House try

to do. They keep irritating it, and so how are we going to work with them? And we need to.

If we want to have a good, comprehensive, encompassing agriculture program within this province, we best find a way to work with our federal government, whoever they may be at the time. And we cannot continue down this road of blaming them and screaming outside to the media and to the public continuously, constantly blaming the federal government, and then turn around and say, but give us a good program. It just doesn't work that way. You've got to learn to work with people. You may not agree with them at all times, but you have to learn to work with people and we have to learn to work with the federal government.

And the fact that the federal government isn't giving us the time of day for any of the needs that we have in agriculture is largely due to the NDP government. The NDP government has treated them with an absolute, total, unacceptable lack of respect. So therefore it shows in the way that we are treated in negotiations at agriculture programs. It's unacceptable. It is disrespectful to the federal government, whoever they may be, and it's disrespectful to the producers of this province who are very dependent on agriculture policy.

[14:45]

The Speaker: — Order please. I would ask that the people engaged in the side debates take them outside the doors and allow the member for Humboldt to complete her remarks.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The other issue or, you know, very important concerns of the Humboldt constituency of course is highways. It is a rural constituency, and economic development is dependent on the highway system that goes throughout the Humboldt constituency. Unfortunately — and it shouldn't be this way, but it is — that the highway system has also become a safety concern because some of the highways are in such poor shape that now they are also a safety concern as well.

I've read — I can't even think of how many — petitions in this House on Highway No. 5 and the fact that it is the major corridor. It is well travelled, and yet it has no shoulders. A large stretch has no shoulders, and so therefore there is no mechanism to defensive drive which . . . It is a safety concern. And it's also a very hilly region, so not only can you not pull over if you see oncoming traffic, but you may not even see them till the last split second because of the hill. So that is a concern.

And obviously from all of the petitions that I've read and the vast number of communities that have signed that petition demonstrates how that is a well-travelled highway.

Highway No. 27 is another highway that I have brought up in this Assembly. It's not a particularly long highway, but it is in very, very, very bad shape. It is a kind of a spoke highway — if we may call it that — that travels into Saskatoon. And the majority of traffic would be going to or from Saskatoon.

There are a number of industries along Highway No. 27 that are dependent upon that particular corridor to transport goods and services and the products that they manufacture, and yet they're

finding it increasingly difficult to do so because the highway is literally crumbling around them and is no longer safe to drive. It is probably only one stage better than the infamous Highway No. 368.

Now Highway No. 368 isn't in the Humboldt constituency, but many of the Humboldt constituents work in the industries along Highway No. 368 and live in Humboldt. So they are very familiar with the cow trail that Highway No. 368 has become.

So does this budget address those highways and the needs of the communities for those highways to be brought to better standards so that they are safe, so that they can encourage economic development instead of being a huge detriment? And I would say not. Although the budget is increased slightly, so are the costs involved with highway construction increased and that's increased dramatically. So this budget is not going to meet the demands of our highway system. And it's particularly not going to meet them because this government has neglected those highways for so many years that it's going to take an enormous amount of dollars to even bring major corridors up to the standards which they should be brought to.

Mr. Speaker, before I close . . . And my colleagues have all spoken to this and I will briefly because so many of them can do so better than I. But there can be no doubt that the NDP government has absolutely blown the boom. It's a deficit budget. It's a deficit budget at a time where the province is experiencing a boom. It's experiencing a boom in spite of the NDP government quite frankly. The oil and gas revenues have been high. Potash has been high. There are a number of factors that have been very economically good for our province. We have revenues higher than anticipated, quite frankly, four or five years ago. And what has the NDP done with that? Well they blew it. They absolutely blew it, is what they did. They spent \$701 million more than what they took in.

And as I went through all of the things that are important to the Humboldt constituency, I see that they haven't addressed any of the things that will be important to the Humboldt constituents. They absolutely, simply blew the number. They grew government; that was not a problem. They grew government. They threw out some real great election vote-buying programs for . . . and schemes for the election that we have to question whether or not they'll be sustainable. Definitely a 9 per cent increase in spending is not sustainable, Mr. Speaker.

So I'm wondering how the Humboldt constituents are going to receive deficit financing yet again. The NDP talk about the '80s and how the budget was never balanced and it was deficit financing and how that was absolutely horrible and it wasn't acceptable. And yet, that's exactly what they're doing themselves. They can't have it both ways, Mr. Speaker. They can't go out into the public and try to fearmonger among the citizens of Saskatchewan about deficit funding, when they themselves are deficit funding and they're running a deficit budget.

Mr. Speaker, I would like just to read into the record a couple of articles because I don't think they can be read enough and I don't think they could be in the record often enough. And one is Murray Mandryk's article and he said, and I quote:

The numbers that really matter are the \$8.35 billion in spending, [and] the \$7.87 billion in revenue, the \$701 million 2007-08 deficit once all government operations including the Crowns are calculated, and the increase in Saskatchewan's debt to \$11.4 billion.

These are the numbers that apply to the real world of whether we can afford this budget.

Sadly, the numbers in the brave new world of Thomsonomics, where you can increase spending by nine per cent when revenues are only increasing by 1.8 per cent and still claim a surplus, are a bit scary. In fact, it's hard to see anything particularly good emerge from the numbers presented by the New Democratic finance minister.

This was the commentary in *The StarPhoenix* on March 23, Mr. Speaker.

Another article that I think tells it like it is and explains it to the public is *The StarPhoenix* editorial on, again March 23, 2007. And the editorial states, and I quote:

Any time a government that expects its revenues to rise by less than two per cent goes on a pre-election binge that hikes spending by nine per cent, then says its actions are sustainable for the long term, it's time to worry.

Saskatchewan was on the verge of bankruptcy 15 years ago but today has reason for optimism that the personal . . . [services] and hard-nosed public decisions could lead to unprecedented economic success. Thursday's budget by the Lorne Calvert government was a giant step in the wrong direction.

The last quote I want to use because I find it interesting that the NDP members time and time again, as each one joins the debate, defends that this is not a deficit budget. And yet the Finance Minister himself, in an interview with Don Newman, admitted that it's a deficit budget. So it's amazing to me that the member from Walsh Acres will sit there and say this isn't a deficit budget. You'll have the member from Coronation Park saying it's not a deficit budget. Well does he listen to his own Finance minister? He definitely . . . They don't listen to their past Finance minister, Janice MacKinnon, who said it's a deficit budget. But they don't even listen to their existing Finance minister. And I will quote into the record that interview, the exchange between Don Newman of CBC *Politics* and the NDP Finance minister on — I'm not even too sure the date of it, Mr. Speaker.

But Don Newman said, and I quote: "But you're having an operating deficit and you are having a balance sheet balanced budget." The Finance minister replied, and I quote: "There is a balance in the General Revenue Fund although we will, we will be drawing down on the savings out of the summary financials, but that happens. The moment you take money out of your savings account, it is just the way the accounting principles work." I find that in itself quite amazing, Mr. Speaker. If we spend more than we earn and we have to dip into our savings, I'm concerned — I'm concerned. And I certainly wouldn't say that I balanced my cheque book if I have to draw money out of my savings to put money into my chequeing account because I

have written too many cheques. That's a concern.

Mr. Newman went on to say, "I understand that, but you're going to spend more money in the coming fiscal year than you are going to collect." And the minister responded, "yes that's right." Yes that's right. I'll repeat it again. The host said, "I understand that, but you're going to spend more money in the coming fiscal year than you're going to collect." And the Finance minister said, "yes that's right." That says it all.

I will be supporting the amendment. I will not be supporting the budget.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's certainly a pleasure for me to rise today and to enter into this the budget debate.

First of all I want to congratulate the member from Martensville for her election to this Assembly. I'm sure that she'll serve this Assembly with the same vigour and dedication that her father did before her.

Mr. Speaker, I think all members would agree that it is truly an honour for any of us to serve in this constituency and to represent the fine people of Saskatchewan. In my case, Mr. Speaker, my constituency, Regina Northeast, is made up of the areas of the city known, commonly known as Uplands, Eastview, and everything north of Dewdney Avenue from Winnipeg Street to Prince of Wales. And this includes, of course, the Ross Industrial Park, Mr. Speaker, so when there's something happening in Regina it's usually happening in Regina Northeast.

And I think it's fair to say and all of us would agree that when we travel across Saskatchewan, wherever we go, we meet fine, fine people — friendly, hospitable people that are always there to give you a hand if you need one. And the same for the fine people in Regina Northeast, Mr. Speaker. As there are fine people in Saskatchewan, there are no finer people than those in Regina Northeast. And it's my pleasure and privilege to represent them.

Mr. Speaker, the goal of any government should be to make life better for the people it represents. Mr. Speaker, the goal of this government is to make life better for Saskatchewan people. There are many ways of improving the lives of Saskatchewan people and this budget has certainly taken giant steps in that direction.

Mr. Speaker, I want to touch on another way that we are moving forward to improve the lives of Saskatchewan people. This last summer I was tasked with the responsibility to carry out consultations in northern Saskatchewan in regards to the issue of the northern overtime exemption.

The labour standards regulation, commonly referred to as the northern overtime exemption, exempted some employers operating north of township 62 from adhering to a regulated

hour work week or the pay of overtime rates. However it does not apply to La Ronge, Creighton, and a 10-kilometre area around those two communities or Uranium City. The exemption was put into place in 1953 and Saskatchewan is the only jurisdiction in Canada to have an exemption to labour standards based on a geographic location.

In the last 50 years northern Saskatchewan has opened up and developed in many ways including communications and transportation infrastructure. Today most northern communities have cellphone coverage. Today a semi-load of building material can move from Prince Albert to Ile-a-la-Crosse with the same ease and speed as it could move from Prince Albert to Moose Jaw.

The northern overtime exemption which exists north of township 62 provides workers with inferior work condition protection. Workers north of 62 have no statutory rights to an eight-hour day, no statutory rights to a 40-hour work week, no rights to one and a half times overtime compensation, no rights to refuse an overtime after 44 hours.

Mr. Speaker, last summer in carrying out my task I asked anyone who had an opinion on this issue to please share their thoughts with us. They were encouraged to attend one of the 15 public meetings we held across northern Saskatchewan. They were encouraged to contact us either through our website or our email address or use a toll-free telephone line that we'd set up or simply to mail us their thoughts through regular mail.

[15:00]

I also felt it was important to meet people on their own turf to get a feel how they were affected by the 53-year-old regulation and to do so right in their own communities. Once again Saskatchewan is the only jurisdiction in Canada to distinguish between workers based only on a geographic location.

In order to get a real sense of what was the feeling of the people on this exemption by the northern workers, I travelled over 17,000 kilometres in northern Saskatchewan by vehicle and another 5 to 6,000 by air. I held 15 public meetings, 2 of which were on First Nations reserves, and numerous private conversations in coffee shops, community stores, and community centres. We met with support workers at the uranium mines as well as those who have businesses in the North. I met with town councils, economic development authorities. I met with workers and representatives of workers. I met with those businesses who are in the South but do business in the North. I met both publicly and privately with stakeholders of northern Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, in all of our meetings we looked for answers to two main questions and they were: how does the exemptions affect you? How would its removal affect you? What impact would removing of the exemptions have on a broader northern economy? And what alternatives or options should the government consider, if any?

Mr. Speaker, I heard from a lot of people who hold strong opinions on this issue. And they expressed them either through the public forum by attending one of our meetings or through the numerous emails that we received.

They shared with me some of their personal experiences. And one lady told me of her experience of leaving her employment. She gave her month's notice to her employer of her plans to leave his employment. When the end of the month came her employer refused to pay her her last month's salary. She did not know that there was a method through labour standards that she could collect the unpaid wages.

Another story was a single mother working at a lodge along Hanson Lake Road. A young lady born in Sandy Bay, by her own admission left school at a very young age and entered the service industry, first working at a resort at Jan Lake where she experienced the same experience of the lady I just mentioned of having not received her last month's pay that she was entitled to.

Now working at a resort along the Hanson Lake Road, her duties included waitress, cook, operating the till in the confectionery, pumping gas, and tending bar in the evening. Her day of pay, or paid day, was 12 hours long. She worked 13 though, Mr. Speaker, because she was expected to cash out and clean up afterwards. Her work period was 10 days on and four days off, but the particular day that I spoke to her she was on her 12th consecutive day on duty because her relief help did not show up.

When I asked her if she got overtime, she looked at me with a puzzled look on her face and said, what's overtime? When I explained to her that if she was doing the same job in southern Saskatchewan she would by law be getting a time-and-a-half rate for anything after eight hours, she looked at me with a look that I will never forget. And she said to me, if they can get time and a half in the South, why can't we get time and a half in the North?

Yet another story from one of our public meetings at Ile-a-la-Crosse was from a gentleman who worked for most of his life in the construction industry. He told me about working on a construction site where the general contractor was from the southern part of the province. On this particular site the contractor had about 60 workers working on a continuous basis. They worked 12-hour days, five days a week for 60 hours a week.

The contractor had 15 workers on-site from southern Saskatchewan while the other 45 workers were from the North. The workers from the South were paid time and a half for their duties and their work after 40 hours a week, while the northern workers were paid — doing the same job, working on the same site — were paid straight time for the 60 hours.

Mr. Speaker, it became apparent to me, and very quickly so, that there was a huge lack of understanding of labour standards in the North, the right of employees and the duties of employers. The northerners who understand this issue were quickly to express frustration, impatience, and anger that such treatment of people was being allowed to take place in this day and age. Mr. Speaker, charges of systemic racism and human rights abuse were commonly raised at our public meetings.

Mr. Speaker, I was excited to have had the opportunity to travel to northern Saskatchewan and to view the many beautiful sights up there. Quite frankly it doesn't matter, when you're in

northern Saskatchewan in the summertime, where you're at, which direction you look; you basically have a picture postcard view. But also you meet so many warm and friendly people, and I was gratified to be able to capture their opinions and their suggestions and to share them through my recommendations and my report to the Premier. I now look forward to see what the government's action will be in the future on this file.

Now with what time I have left, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a few comments on the other parts of our budget. This budget is all about making life better for Saskatchewan people. We're building on our current successes and ensuring that Saskatchewan people benefit in our booming economy.

We're making this the best place in the country for young people to live, work, study, and build their futures. We are continuing the growth of our strong economy. We are increasing access to health care for Saskatchewan seniors and families. For families we are beginning with the basis, focusing on a strong start for children at home and at school. We are continuing to make post-secondary education and skills training more affordable and accessible.

Health care remains the largest investment in our budget. This year's initiatives continue to address the waiting lists through increased testing by attracting and retaining health care professionals and by training more doctors, nurses, and other health care workers. Our NDP government is building a better future for our communities and rural residents through increased revenue sharing, property tax relief, and a large capital budget in the history to improve highways, roads, schools, hospitals, and other infrastructure.

Some of the other highlights of our budget to make Saskatchewan a better place to live is creating a five-year, \$10,000 graduate tax credit for our young people graduating; freezing university tuition fees for the third consecutive year; implementing year two of the business tax cuts, enabling businesses to expand and create opportunities for young people; providing more than \$107 million in education property relief for Saskatchewan residents; maintaining the PST [provincial sales tax] rate at 5 per cent, the lowest it's been in 20 years, and the lowest provincial sales tax in the country. And, Mr. Speaker, something that I am very proud of is introducing a better, more affordable seniors' drug plan. For those people who have worked, sacrificed, and built this great province, we should be able to provide them that little bit of relief in their golden years.

Saskatchewan is currently experiencing unprecedented economic success. This is no accident. When we took office we faced a \$14 billion debt. But with hard work, smart investment, and solid management, we fixed the fiscal crisis and we have since received 16 credit upgrades.

Mr. Speaker, I've just touched on a few of the points that the fine people of Regina Northeast have brought to my attention and have requested that I will be voting for the budget on their behalf. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble): — I recognize the hon.

member for Cypress Hills.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a privilege for me to join the debate today on this 2007 . . . well we'll call it a budget. I think that there are other terms that are being bandied about as it refers to this particular financial document, some of which are less flattering than a budget. But it's a privilege for me to enter the debate today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on behalf of the constituents of Cypress Hills for whom I have a great affinity.

And I really want to address most of my comments this afternoon to the failure of this budget as it relates to the people of Cypress Hills. I know there'll be arguments made on the government side that this budget addresses the needs of people in various age groups and in various positions regarding education, and it might help this person or that person, and it might be good for this group or that group.

But in my particular case, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm really only concerned at this point for how this budget will or will not affect the people of Cypress Hills. They're the individuals who expressed enough faith in me to represent them during the last election and I need to speak on their behalf. And in doing so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could draw no conclusion after having looked at this entire document than to say that this is an abysmal failure on behalf of the people of Cypress Hills.

This budget does not address the core needs of the people of Cypress Hills in three specific areas. And I'll address them at greater length, but they are in terms of agriculture; in terms of education, particularly K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] education; and in terms of highways even. Although this budget does project a \$5 billion expenditure in Highways and Transportation over the next 10 years, the needs of the southwest area are so specific and extensive that I don't think the amount of spending attributed to highways for this year, in this particular document, will come close to addressing the needs of the Southwest in any specific way.

So those are three areas which I want to look at this afternoon, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There are other, more general and broader-based programs that I think I would like to make comment on as part of today's speech with regard to this spending document.

When I looked at the agricultural estimates in the minister's budget documents I see that, while they had three different columns here, there was an estimate of expenditure for 2006. There were the actual 2006 spent items in another column, and then an estimate for 2007.

And while I don't have the page open right now to where it is in this particular document, I made a couple of handwritten notes here and we're looking at 2006 estimate figures of approximately \$265 million. And when the final tally for 2006 came in, the figure jumped to \$369 million. But now we have an estimate going forward for the 2007 fiscal year of just over \$301 million.

That, Mr. Deputy Speaker, represents a drop or a retrenchment of spending in Agriculture of some \$68 million. And when that was brought to the minister's attention, he said that that's not a

decline, that that \$68 million shortfall from what was actually spent last year to what is budgeted for this year in Agriculture is not a shortfall, is not a decline in spending.

Now I don't know anybody in any business or anybody's personal financial affairs who would say that \$68 million less this year compared to last year isn't a decline. I think the minister was trying to make the point that it wasn't an actual decline from what was budgeted a year ago. But the point of the matter is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that what was spent last year is the benchmark by which this year's expenditures will be gauged. And this year's expenditures are down by \$68 million.

Now I think the minister also said that we should wait to see because his government, his department might spend considerably more in terms of agricultural programming in the next 12 months. Well if that's the case, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I guess the question becomes: what's the purpose of a budget? Is a budget not intended to lay out the spending plans of a government over a 12-month period with some predictability, with some accuracy? That I think would be the understanding of the average person in this province. I think most people have an expectation of a budget; that if you create a budget, it's a plan for spending over a certain period of time and people can with some predictability and expectation see that money spent.

But the minister is saying that it's not a shortfall. We're \$68 million less than we were last year in terms of agricultural spending. But it might not be a shortfall because the minister and his government might spend more money in Agriculture in the days and months to come.

Well if that is the case then this is a wasted exercise. What are we debating here? If the minister has that kind of flexibility in agriculture with the estimates and the spending opportunities in the next 12 months, what's to prevent the Minister of Health from doubling the health budget? What's preventing any government minister from spending considerably more than is in the estimates?

[15:15]

The fact of the matter, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that if we can't trust with some certainty and reliability the figures that have been put forward in this budget document this time around, we have nothing to gauge the full intentions and the full spending opportunities and priorities of the government. And I thought that's what a budget was supposed to do.

But we have a situation here in agriculture where there's less money going in this year than was spent last year, and there may or may not be more money spent going forward. That is not very reassuring for the people of the province. And it's certainly not very reassuring for the people of my constituency because we don't know what's going to happen. But we do know as a result of what is in the budget so far that the worst affected area for drought — which comprises large parts of my constituency and the constituency of Wood River just to the east of us — there is no money in this budget to help those producers. Not a nickel was set aside to help those producers in this time of disaster.

We find it patently unfair, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the

producers of southwest Saskatchewan can suffer the kinds of losses they have because of two years of drought, and not, and not get any response from this government, not get any assistance from this government. They can hardly get their attention on the topic. And producers in the northeast part of the province, when they were flooded out last year, were rewarded with a support package, a disaster package of \$25 an acre cost shared on a 60/40 split with the federal government.

And I know the argument about crop insurance being available to the producers of the Southwest. But here's a pragmatic and business-based decision for producers in the Southwest as it relates to that topic. What producer — when margins are tight, when cash flow is minimal — what producer is going to buy crop insurance to protect themselves against drought when the cost of the insurance and the protection offered by the crop insurance program won't even address the very bare minimum required by that producer?

I mean, it wouldn't make good business sense to buy insurance that does not provide coverage. And that is what crop insurance, that's the reality for producers in the Southwest when it comes to crop insurance right now. So to say that they have the privilege of being protected by crop insurance when in fact it doesn't work is really a moot argument. And I don't think it's an appropriate argument to be made.

Now I understand there's some improvements being made to crop insurance. I'm not sure that they will benefit the producers of the Southwest. I don't know that the impact will be significant in terms of drought. But nevertheless to expect the producers of the Southwest to carry crop insurance that will not meet their basic needs is just foolishness. And the producers are smart enough to realize that and have avoided crop insurance for that very reason. If you have virtually no money now, you're not going to spend what little you have buying insurance coverage that does not assist and protect your operation.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm finding that this particular financial document put forward by the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Agriculture as it relates to Ag expenditures for the next year is particularly disappointing to the producers of southwest Saskatchewan.

I understand also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that one of the largest expenditures in the Department of Agriculture's budget this year is the full funding of CAIS [Canadian agricultural income stabilization]. And while that accounts for a large portion of the budgeted expenditures, as you probably are aware if you've had any contact with rural producers, CAIS is probably the most vilified farm program that's ever been produced. It has been an absolute disaster for most producers. They are very disappointed in it. There's been a huge lobby of the provincial and federal governments to either get rid of CAIS or modify it so significantly that it would be unrecognizable. But at this point it is a complete and total failure for the vast majority of producers.

And it's based on declining revenues. That's the way the program has been designed. And if you're trying to stabilize a declining revenue, the only place you can stabilize it is at a lower level yet. It's like a geotechnical engineer that's trying to stabilize a slide on the side of a cliff. The only place you can

stabilize that slide is at this point down here where you might be able to offset the movement. And CAIS, as a farm support program, has been a failure because it hasn't stabilized incomes for farmers. It's moved them even lower, to a lower level than they were experiencing as a result of falling commodity prices.

And so while I think, you know, the government has an obligation to participate in this program, I think it has to come with the realization that it is a failed program, and that the sooner this program can be changed to address the realities of farmers and the farm community, the better off we'll all be.

I want to move rather quickly to education. We had the galleries half filled today with individuals, many of whom came from the constituency of Cypress Hills. They were here from communities right on the Alberta border, the town of Richmond. The town of Climax, close to the American border, was represented here. Tompkins was represented here. I think many other communities just on the edge of Cypress Hills whose schools are under threat of closure because of the ongoing review were represented here.

And their attendance here on a day that has been particularly troublesome for travel, where snow and icy roads and bad conditions would have prevented most people from making the trip of 4 and 500 kilometres to this legislature — they came. That would say to me that the issue for them is very, very critical. And they came by bus. They came by car. They teamed up together and got in vans. They made the trek here to Regina to plead their case. They held a rally on the front steps of the legislature over the noon hour today to make the point that this government has failed to fund rural education at a standard necessary for their schools to be maintained.

The legislation says that school boards ultimately are responsible to make the decision as to whether or not a school continues to operate. But the fact of the matter is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that those school division boards are only able to make that decision in an appropriate manner based on the level of funding they get. And the funding for rural schools has been eroded by this government.

And I know that as the squeeze happens in these large, amalgamated, rural school divisions, the boards are obligated to try and balance their budgets. But it's impossible to do it based on the kind of funding they get for their divisions. There are some idiosyncrasies in the foundation operating grant that impact rural school divisions, especially large ones like the one in the extreme Southwest, that just simply do not take the realities of geography and distance into consideration.

And I think the other part of this whole thing that's very unfair is the uniqueness of the formula which sees the provincial government and the Department of Learning funding almost 100 per cent of busing costs but not funding fully the school program delivery costs in those very schools.

So there's naturally a bias built into the system, built into the foundation operating grant, that would see it preferable on the part of school boards to close schools and transport students much greater distances than to keep the school open in any given community. That has to be addressed. That type of inequity and idiosyncrasy has to be addressed, Mr. Deputy

Speaker, so that the smaller communities don't have to feel that they are under threat and a threat perpetrated on them by the Department of Learning and by this particular minister's budget this year. I think the small amount of money that's going into offsetting property taxes in rural Saskatchewan is a pittance compared to the economic and social impact that school closures throughout rural Saskatchewan will have.

And I don't think that anybody who gets that money would say that it is money well spent if it's going to cost them their school. I think the trade-off is more than most communities want to bear. And if you ask them I think that they'd be happy to tell you exactly what they're prepared to accept in terms of school taxation if they got the assurance their school would remain open.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in most of the schools that are being considered for closure right now, the sad reality is they've been dealt a double whammy by this government. First of all they've had amalgamation forced on them and their taxes have gone up.

For instance in the school division of Chinook, Chinook School Division, the average mill rate, the average mill rate — thanks to this minister who's beaking from his chair right now — the mill rate went from 18 as an average to 21.3; 21.3 mills in the Chinook School Division. I'd like to know what the mill rate is in the community that he represents. What is the mill rate in Regina? How much does the average taxpayer in Regina contribute in terms of mill rate to schools? And in the Chinook School Division it's at least 3 mills higher.

Now while you've got taxes going up, the people are insulted, adding insult to injury by the fact that their schools are being closed, their schools are under threat. And to make matters even worse, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're going to see as a result of this particular scenario schools that are closed and consolidated in another community without any assurance that the programming will be better.

In fact we've got a situation right now where the community of Climax, where the community of Climax is being threatened with closure. The school division is looking at its programming and making a decision as to what needs to happen in that community. If the people of that community see their kids go to the community of Frontier, which is not that far down the road, it won't be a bad thing from the standpoint of those two communities. They get together and do a lot of things between them on a variety of occasions for all types of reasons.

But the real disappointment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that they've been told by the school division that when the kids go to Frontier, their programming will not likely improve. There will be no additional teachers hired. There will be a few extra kids in each class but their programming will not improve. So not only have their taxes gone up, not only will they have lost their school, but the new school they go to will not produce better programming or better results educationally for those students.

Now how much more do you expect the people of rural Saskatchewan to take? And if there's no assurance that things will get better by this process, why are we undergoing this process? It really requires a much better rationale than we've

got from this government.

I want to talk about highways a little bit, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Here we've got a \$5 billion budget over 10 years. You know, I'm reminded, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of the last big, grand plan for transportation we got from this government. It was under the Romanow administration and — I don't recall — maybe it was the member from Meadow Lake who was the minister at that time. I believe so.

We had the promise of 2.5 . . . was it \$2.5 billion expenditure over four years? It was something of that nature. Maybe 5. Well you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't think we ever got to the full funding. We never did see that announcement realized in its ultimate expenditure. In fact the very first two years of the long-term plan, the expenditures for Highways and Transportation were significantly less than the \$250 million average that had been promised at that time.

And I'm afraid, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we're going to see that again even though this is a grandiose plan and it has a lot of money attached to it — \$5 billion over 10 years. They might as well have said \$10 billion over 20 years or \$20 billion over 40 years. The fact is that it's almost impossible to plan expenditures in a 10-year time frame. And even though it looks pretty good on paper right now, we have yet to see, we have yet to see whether or not the \$500 million will be spent this year and, if so, where and on what projects.

And frankly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, part of the problem with this whole plan is that there are so few specifics and there's no clear indication from this minister or this government how that \$500 million is going to be spent. I would postulate this afternoon that most of the increase will actually go to inflationary costs — increased costs for oil, increased costs for tar, increased costs for labour — so that for \$500 million expenditures on Highways and Transportation this year will be a very little difference than \$400 million might have been last year or the year before.

So while this is a grand scheme and while it sounds great and glorious, there's no evidence, there's no clear outline of whether or not and how this particular budget will benefit rural Saskatchewan or the Saskatchewan infrastructure plan as a whole.

[15:30]

I think the other thing that I'm troubled by, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the concept of these rural economic corridors where we're going to take a lot of the heavy traffic off of the TMS [thin membrane surface] roads and put them on gravel roads.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't believe you've probably ever been a truck driver before. I don't think anybody in the crowd on your side has ever driven a truck before. But if you take a 40-tonne Super-B and put it on a gravel road, things might go okay until it rains. And when it rains a gravel road, no matter how well it's built, is impassable, especially with a fully loaded transport truck — a Super-B, whether it's a 3-axle trailer, whatever the capacity of the unit might be. When it rains, rural gravel roads are impassable by big trucks.

So that would suggest to me that these economic corridors will come to a complete standstill. Is that what the government wants? Is that what the Minister of Transportation wants? Does he want to see the rural economy put on hold each and every time it rains? I mean if that's the best plan we can come up with, we're in serious need of better ideas. And I think this is a complete and utter hoax being perpetrated on rural Saskatchewan. We need good quality roads, and we especially need them in the areas that are generating so much wealth for this province.

The Saskatchewan Party's view of highways and transportation is that roads need to be built on the basis of the best economic return and there are roads in the southwest part of the province that are returning huge dollars to this government's coffers.

The Swift Current area of Industry and Resources — they have an office out there — they keep tabs on how much money is generated by royalties in that southwest district. In 2005 southwest Saskatchewan produced about \$265 million in royalties — just the southwest part for royalties alone. That area would include up to the South Saskatchewan River, down probably Highway No. 4, maybe a little east of Swift Current, to the Montana border, out to the Alberta border. Just a little area larger than the Cypress Hills constituency — \$265 million in royalties in one year alone.

That didn't include the value of lease sales or any of the other attendant costs and benefits that accrue to the provincial government as a result of the development of the oil and gas industry. And so if there's any area that you could justify the expenditure of significant money for infrastructure for highways and good quality roads, it's in southwest Saskatchewan.

Now when the minister was asked about his grand plan by one of the local media outlets in the Southwest, he identified Highway 13, Highway 21, and Highway 32 as his three priorities there. I think, well I hope he's making that statement conscientiously and deliberately. If he is I'll be the first to congratulate him, but I really have, I have some question as to whether or not, whether or not that's going to be a reality because Highway 13 is not really the highway of most economic importance down there. Highway 13 between the community of Cadillac and the community of Shaunavon does not serve a significant economic purpose. So if he's going to spend money there, that would be probably a lower-priority road.

Highway 21? Well it depends where he's talking about spending it. But they reverted most of Highway 21 to gravel just last year. I don't think he's going to be rebuilding that particular road. Highway 32? There's a solid case to be made for rebuilding that entire length of that road, about 120 kilometres from Swift Current to Leader.

And if the minister can, as part of his plan, show me where over the next four years they will rebuild that entire highway to a primary weight stretch, I will be the first to say thank you. And we'll acknowledge that in our legislature reports and so forth. But I don't for a minute think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that that \$500 million is going to reach the constituency of Cypress Hills. And I don't think the people of Cypress Hills believe that

either.

If you recall a week or so ago, some of the people from Leader renamed Highway 32. I don't think I'll raise that issue in detail here today, but there was a group of people in the community of Leader who had a big sign put up. They attached it to a trailer, parked it beside the road. In fact a group of four people set a card table up in the middle of Highway 32 and started playing cards because they felt that if the government thought there was gambling potential in Leader, they'd probably get a road faster than they'll get under the circumstances of the economy that prevail there right now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to address just a couple of other things. I'm thinking that I'm going to run out of time before I get a chance to develop this theme, but I notice that yesterday the Minister of Justice was saying there were some things he couldn't understand about the official opposition's position on some of the budget proposals. And of course the one that he was most concerned about I guess was the stance we've taken on the program for graduating students as they leave school and as they make their decision as to where they will settle down and undertake or take up employment, and undertake a search for a career.

And the existing program for the government is basically a \$10,000 income deferment. And it allows you to put away or earn up to \$20,000 a year for five years and pay no income tax on it. And the Minister of Justice was saying that we had panned that. Well I don't know that we have panned it. I don't think it's as good an idea as there might have been constructed for graduating students.

And he also made the assertion that we were trying to create a wedge between university grads and vocational grads and people in the apprenticeship program. That's simply not true. You know, if you go to any of those programs, you accrue some kind of tuition cost and there are other ways of addressing it.

The reason why we weren't as convinced as to the success of this program as what might have been developed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is we talked to students. We went and talked to students one-on-one. We talked to student leadership at a couple of the universities and college campuses. And when we asked them what was important, they told us that they wanted student tuition relief. That was first and foremost: give us some relief on the cost of tuition. And so it was only, I think, practical and appropriate that we would try and work on a plan that would address that issue. This will help to some extent, but it only helps to the extent of \$1,100 a year.

Now I don't know too many young people; when they graduate from university with a 20, 30, \$40,000 debt or greater, that are going to make their career decision based on \$1,100 net in their pocket. You know, they're looking for the best opportunities, the best places to develop careers, the most significant opportunities. They are interested in seeing their careers develop and having the opportunity to pay off their student loan and the most part . . . their student loan, the biggest part of their student loan is related to tuition costs. And so if you can tailor a program that would address tuition, I think students by and large would find that more appropriate than the particular program the government has introduced.

I wouldn't say this is a complete loss, but it's just not as specific or directed as it might have been. And I think the difference between what we're proposing and what the government has in this budget is that they saw this as something that they could create and do pretty easily. But we went and talked to students and got their first-hand testimony as to what they felt was most beneficial.

The other thing I want to talk about is sustainability. We've made the argument that this budget isn't sustainable, and I think that it's an argument that's picking up momentum. The anecdotal evidence is that the majority of commentators, both in the electronic media and the printed media, have looked at this budget and they've said it's not sustainable. I think that . . . Oh there's been a few bankers who thought it might be, but you know, bankers have a vested interest in governments running debt because that's how they make their money. If there was no debt . . . Oh Janice MacKinnon I forgot about. She was the other one who said it was unsustainable. You know I think that that's a pretty telling bit of testimony from somebody who really knows what sustainability means when it comes to budgeting on behalf of this provincial government. The lack of sustainability is pretty clear, Mr. Deputy Speaker, just in the big figures, the big picture.

The budget I'm told has increases in spending amounting to 9 per cent — 9 per cent. What was it last year? What was the increase in spending last year, Ron? The increase of 9 per cent is huge. The increase in revenues is less than 2 per cent — 1.8, I believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And if you look at that 7 per cent gap and ask yourself as a layman, as somebody who's balancing their own chequing account, their own monthly expense versus income picture, how long can you sustain 9 per cent increase in spending when your revenues are only going up by less than 2 per cent?

And to make this point more specifically, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is exacerbated by the fact that the minister will not release his predictions and his forecasts for the next several years. If he would do that so we could look at that series of projections, it might be easier for him to make the argument. But as it stands, a 9 per cent increase in expenditures will not be sustained by a less than 2 per cent growth in revenue.

And so we haven't even got to some of the big spending items in this budget that will undermine the sustainability of this particular document.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, while I had much more to contribute to this debate, others want to take part of the time that's left this afternoon and so I will be supporting the amendment to the budget. And I thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble): — I recognize the hon. member for Cumberland and the Minister of Northern Affairs.

Hon. Ms. Beatty: — Tansi eglanete. Good afternoon. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a good day in a province that has many good days. But before I go to talk about the government motion in support of the budget, I want to pay tribute to my father who

is celebrating his 83rd birthday today.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Beatty: — It is a good day for sure, and like my niece Gina often says, we are not lucky; we are blessed. It was through the hard work of so many respected leaders and elders like my father who paved the way for us in the North. They worked so hard to give a voice to northern people and to ensure we have services that so many often take for granted today.

I also want to pay tribute to those elders who are no longer with us: Nap Johnson, Jim Carriere, Lawrence Yew, Vital Morin, Pierre Carriere, Allan Bird, Louis Morin, just to name a few.

I honour those still with us today like my father, Oscar Beatty, Janet Feitz, Frank Mirasty, Mary Ann Morin, Elizabeth Charles, John Morin, Angus Merasty, Catherine Charles, Leonard Ray, Henry Roberts, and the list goes on. Mr. Deputy Speaker, these men and women live their lives with respect and integrity, with love and kindness and in true humility. As is the ways of our ancestors, not once did these men and women ask for recognition. They emerged as elders because of the lives they led. I thank and honour them today.

I would also like to extend a special greeting to all my constituents, especially those in Sandy Bay who have been going through some tough times but who are determined to work together in moving forward.

I especially want to acknowledge the leadership of Mayor Ina Fietz-Ray and her council and PBCN [Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation] councillors, Roland Natewayes and David Caribou and especially to the Sandy Bay youth council.

[15:45]

[The hon. member spoke for a time in Cree.]

Madam Deputy Speaker, the budget last week was full of good news for the North. It responds to what northerners want and need. They want to live in safe, healthy communities. They want to make a good living to make the North an even better place to work and raise a family. They want to have a prosperous future. Madam Deputy Speaker, northerners not only want a good life now; they want a better life for their children and grandchildren, just as our elders planned for us. And that was what our budget is about.

This is good news for everyone: drug coverage for seniors; consultation dollars for First Nations and Métis communities; shorter medical waiting lists; money for recreation and cultural facilities; tax cuts; more funding than ever for municipalities; funding for community access roads on- and off-reserve; and, last but not least, tax breaks to convince young people to stay and work in Saskatchewan.

And let me tell you it is so important to work with our young people, nowhere more crucial than with First Nations and Métis youth. They will not only be our workers; they will be our leaders. They deserve to be recognized and we do that. We do it with a graduate tax exemption which means a tax break up to 100,000 of income over five years. We do it with a third

consecutive freeze on university tuition fees, and we do it by funding for 31,000 training spaces in Saskatchewan. Madam Deputy Speaker, northern Saskatchewan in particular has a very high number of young people.

I would like to note for the Assembly some of the budget highlights for the people of the North. Residents of the North are often at a disadvantage when it comes to education, jobs, and even basic infrastructure and services, so this NDP government is working hard to close that gap. We could do so much more if the federal government would join us in investing in our First Nations youth and committing to infrastructure costs, housing, roads, and education.

This year we are putting in \$23.1 million for the northern Roads to Prosperity program. This is also called the northern economic infrastructure strategy. It will improve access to communities and reduce the transportation costs of goods and groceries. Some fly-in communities pay as much as \$4 for a single litre of milk. A new road will change that.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we will also improve key economic corridors for northern businesses, which are essential in a time of very high activity in mineral exploration. These roads will open up job opportunities for northerners and provide better services for northern communities. Some of these opportunities will be in construction itself during our five-year plan. With new roads to Wollaston, Stony Rapids, and Fond-du-Lac, northerners will have a better quality of life.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, while we're talking about quality of life, this budget also devotes \$3.7 million to new water and sewer projects in the North. Since 2001 this government has now allocated approximately \$38 million towards such projects and we're going to keep on going. Northern municipalities, like those in the South, will benefit from this budget. In the North unconditional revenue sharing will increase to \$10.2 million, a 30 per cent increase to allow towns and villages to build services according to their own priorities.

What's more, what's more, construction will start this year on a natural gas pipeline from Montreal Lake up to Weyakwin and La Ronge. This is great news for homeowners in those areas, and it's great news for entrepreneurs and industry.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Beatty: — It's the best news for those who work so hard to make this possible, and a special thank you goes out to the regional natural gas committee and the La Ronge Indian Band. Let's not forget that this project was supported by a business plan which demonstrates not only cost savings for northern residents but also the potential for new businesses to start up. Madam Deputy Speaker, this project and many others is about promoting opportunities for jobs and businesses.

This is also the mandate of my department, employment and business opportunities for the North, and this budget maintains Northern Affairs' core programs. We support traditional activities such as commercial fishing which provides seasonal jobs for more than 600 people, something which has sustained northern families for many years, including mine. We support entrepreneurs with loans, grants, business counselling, and links

to other businesses. And we support economic development corporations in the North, building an economy that responds to local hopes and local needs. Northerners want to take advantage of the opportunities in our growing economy and our department is there to help. We are partners in the development of the North, and by working together towards a common goal, we will see northerners realize their dreams.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, there are many other ways this budget supports the North. There are new Justice initiatives and staff, funding emergency preparedness training for First Nations, establishing a labour standards office in La Ronge, directing money for northern recreation facilities, and continuing to invest in forest fire protection. And our government in this budget has increased base funding for the three northern health districts and to northern school divisions.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Beatty: — All of this speaks to our desire for all Saskatchewan people including those in the North to live in a nourishing, secure environment. Saskatchewan is where people want to raise their families. It is a place where young people want to stay and our budget supports them.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the North has a growing young population. More than 40 per cent of northern residents are under the age of 20. Many of these are First Nations and Métis youth. They face the greatest challenges, but they also present the greatest opportunity. We are committed to providing our northern youth with training so that they can fulfill our growing labour needs in Saskatchewan, whether they live on- or off-reserve, so they too can enjoy a good quality of life.

The North does not have a labour shortage, Madam Deputy Speaker. It has a skills shortage. That is why we continue to invest more money in northern training programs. We will fund the expansion of the bachelor of northern studies program, building on our \$4.5 million investment as part of the labour market strategy. We will back a northern construction careers project to assist up to 40 northerners. We will provide \$2.3 million for training for the northern health access program. And we will provide 2.4 million for northern skills training to support 600 existing training opportunities.

We are committed to regional training programs that bring education closer to the students who need it. And as our labour market changes, we will help our young people prepare for their futures right here at home. Again we would ask members opposite to urge the federal government to invest in First Nations youth, especially in post-secondary education.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the North has been a leader in many ways. We have long believed in an economy that is not only prosperous but green and sustainable. Indeed this is what our elders have always said, that we must protect and manage our resources and our lands for future generations. We have long believed that the path of success is through working and sharing with others, partnering to make the most of what we have for the benefit of all. This is how we have survived for generations, and we believe as do all Saskatchewan people in making things better for the next generation.

This NDP government has brought forward a balanced budget that delivers for our families and pays down our debt. It delivers for our young people and our elders. Madam Deputy Speaker, this budget is based on the belief that Saskatchewan is the best place to live and raise a family in Canada. I am proud to be from Saskatchewan. I am especially proud to be from our beautiful North. And I am proud to support this budget, Madam Deputy Speaker. And I will be opposing the amendment. Thank you. Tiniki.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member for Carrot River Valley.

Mr. Kerpan: — Thank you. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to talk today about the 2007 budget.

Madam Speaker, before you took your position in the Chair this afternoon, I noticed the member for Greystone was in the Chair which would obviously be very appropriate except I had a major déjà vu when he took his place in the Chair as the Speaker this afternoon. Because it was just about a year ago when I responded to the provincial budget of '06 that that particular member was in the Chair, and it didn't work out that well for me that particular afternoon. Madam Speaker, I can assure you that there will be a different result here this afternoon.

The member from Sutherland, it happened that he was speaking just prior to me on that particular day a year ago, and I noticed this year that he's speaking right after me. So, Madam Speaker, I think I'm pretty safe today as far as I know. Perhaps it'll be his turn today.

But I wanted to say a few remarks about the budget, the '07 budget. And, Madam Speaker, you know, this will be my fourth budget in this particular legislature, the provincial legislature of Saskatchewan. It's most likely going to be my last provincial budget in this legislature. And I've also seen seven in the federal House of Commons. So in all told, I've seen 11 budgets from governments, either the federal Liberals or this New Democrat Government of Saskatchewan.

And I don't want this to become so much a partisan debate today or what I want to talk about. It's more a symptom of what I see as the weakness in politics, in government in this country more so. I think this particular budget, the '07 budget, is simply a product, a by-product of what I see as what is wrong with politics in Canada today under the system that we live in.

Far too often, Madam Speaker, from my perspective — and I'm speaking, you know, for myself here obviously today — far too often many things are done only for the sake of politics and that whether it be at this level or the municipal level or the federal level. And then every government of any level is attempting rather than to do things that are good for the people that they represent or good for the jurisdiction that they represent, they must be good for themselves first.

And I think that's where the whole system starts to fumble or fall apart, Madam Speaker, is that — and I guess I always say it this way — that the business of politics would be a very

honourable business if politics didn't get involved, which obviously doesn't happen very often. Far too often governments will bring down budgets for their own use, for their own attempts to get back in power or to win an election or to win the support of some particular group. And that's where I see our system in general as being weak.

Mr. Speaker, I look back at examples throughout the years of different governments. And I think back to my days in Ottawa, and I think back to a federal government who campaigned hard on a promise of removing and getting rid of the GST [goods and services tax]. Jean Chrétien in his pre-'93 election said that we are going to kill, abolish, remove the GST, and he didn't do it. And when in fact when he was called upon to do it by the opposition parties of the day, he said he never made that promise, Madam Speaker. He wouldn't admit to have ever making that promise.

Save for what I believe to be the credibility of a couple of their MPs [Member of Parliament] . . . and I give these couple of people a great deal of credit, Madam Speaker, for having the willpower, the intestinal fortitude, to stand up, Madam Speaker, and to accept the words that they had made and the promises they had made. John Nunziata for example refused to sit in Liberal caucus because he had felt that his government had broken a promise on a federal election campaign. Sheila Copps — for what anybody may think of her — had the intestinal fortitude to step down and run in a by-election when she could not agree with her government saying that they never, ever promised to get rid of the GST.

I look at the federal budget here in Canada — and somebody from the government side just mentioned it a couple minutes ago — certainly there is a perception that the Harper government did not fully live up to their election promise on equalization.

What could be so easy, Madam Speaker, for this government or any other government would be just to have the willpower to stand up and say, you know what, we made a mistake. We promised this. We couldn't deliver on it. Here's why we couldn't promise. Here's why we couldn't deliver on it, and go on. And I think I believe, I believe the people of Saskatchewan and of Canada would appreciate that, and they would actually respect and reward any government that would be able to stand up and say and do that.

[16:00]

And that brings me obviously to this budget. And more specifically about this budget, when I look at what's in it, I find it passing strange, Madam Speaker. I cannot get my mind wrapped around the fact that the government, the socialist government of today in Saskatchewan, could spend so much money and yet affect so many people, real people's lives. And, Madam Speaker, that's the thing that I can't understand.

We've got a plus 9 per cent increase in spending. We're going to run about a \$700 million deficit, and yet we have not . . . I don't see any areas where anybody has been truly really affected. Yes, I know that two or three of the biggest issues that were in the budget were things like the cap on seniors' prescriptions of \$15 but . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Which

my colleague says is not sustainable. And many people would argue that — you know, smarter economic people than myself — would argue that that kind of a plan, that kind of a promise is not sustainable for the long term.

The other sort of big spending item was an attempt to attract and keep students who have recently graduated from post-secondary education home in Saskatchewan by way of a tax credit. And that's all well and good, Madam Speaker. I have a son who is 24 and recently graduated from the U of S [University of Saskatchewan]. I'm not sure he'll qualify or not. But having said that, those are good, reasonable, positive steps.

But I'm not sure that that is going to be enough to turn this province around as it relates to keeping our young people home or bringing young people back who have moved to other jurisdictions in search of jobs or futures or careers where they've already made that move. And frankly for \$1,100 net in their tax I don't see them coming back, Madam Speaker. And once we lose them, once they go to another jurisdiction and raise a family and settle down and make friends and get involved in new communities, it's very difficult to bring them back.

So my point being though, Madam Speaker, is that the two major spending items from this year's budget don't really seem to have had what the impact on the province that I think spending that much money should've had. I guess in my mind, in my mind I'm thinking there are other ways that, you know, that things could've, this money could've been spent, could've been allocated, that might've been far more effective, that might've reached more people.

Even if you look at . . . If you tear away all the smoke and mirrors that's involved with presenting a budget — all the trappings, all the decorations, the wrapping — if you tear all that away and leave simply just the raw budget by itself and you look at it without any of the PR [public relations] that goes along with trying to sell a budget, and you looked at that budget and you said it's purely an election budget — there's really no big secret, Madam Speaker, that most likely there will be an election in Saskatchewan sometime in 2007; almost no one would argue with that — this truly then does become an election budget.

My point being, Madam Speaker, I don't see this being effective even as a purely election budget because I don't believe that there will be any kind of decent value gained in return in the numbers of votes from any particular group of people. Because if you look again at the two major spending items, Madam Speaker, the cap on seniors' drug cost, there are already some safety nets built into the system to protect low-income seniors from high costs of drugs . . . It's not perfect. I'm not saying that. Could it be better? Yes it could. But there are already some of those safeguards put in place. So from a purely political side of it, I don't think this is going to have that much mileage.

If I look at the other big spending item that I talked about, the tax credit as it relates to students or to young graduates, young people, again if I have a person, — any person, I don't think you can pick — that's working in Alberta for a decent wage or working someplace else, that \$1,000 tax credit is not going to

bring them home. And I don't think that it's going to purely get any more political attention in an election campaign.

And if you look at then, at a whole bunch of the other announcements, Madam Speaker, I just don't believe the people of the province are going to buy this and make them have an idea or have a change of heart and decide to re-elect a tired, old government that's proven that it's out of ideas.

Madam Speaker, you know, look at things like highways. And there was of course the big announcement, and that was prior to the budget but . . . And the Premier actually even came out one day. He was quoted on CBC news March 6, and he says how we have been doing things in the past has been in many cases ad hoc and without a long-term plan. And that was a quote from the Premier.

Madam Speaker, my point being is if this government has been in power now for 15-plus years, why didn't they come out with . . . Why didn't they have a plan before this? Why all of a sudden did they . . . They said well it's election year; we'd better come up with a plan. Because people don't buy that, Madam Speaker, I think that the days of trying to trick the electorate with their own money are long past.

And that's what I'm saying here, is that if you're going to spend 700 . . . If you're going to spend that much money and spend \$700 million more than you're going to take in in a blatant attempt to get re-elected, then at least I would have thought that their political advisors, the strategists from the government side of the House, would have sat down and tried to come up with a better way to reach a bigger portion of the people of the province rather than trying to appeal to so few with so much.

The other thing that always strikes me, Madam Speaker . . . and again this government I think is guilty of it, but they're not the only ones. Previous governments have been guilty of the same thing, and federal governments have been, and other provincial governments have. So again I'm trying not to make this so much of a partisan thing here today but rather a problem with the system as I see it and that being the idea of deficit or balanced budgets.

You know, members from the opposite side in their speeches have claimed that this is their 14th straight balanced budget, Madam Speaker. That's the claim they've made. And I tell you, Madam Speaker, I wish that I could run my business that way. I wish that I could go to my banker and say . . . My friend Garth, my banker who's Garth Lewis or Mike Menzies who looks after my business, I would like to go to Mike some day, and I'd say, Mike, you know what? I'm going to take in \$50,000 this year, but I'm going to spend \$100,000. Could we consider that a balanced budget?

Now, Madam Speaker, there's not a banker in the world that would allow me to do that for very long, and nor would they believe me when I said that I'm breaking even, even though I'd be losing \$50,000 a year but . . . So it's all, again it's wrappings. It's smoke and mirrors. It's trying to convince people that what they're saying is actually true. And, Madam Speaker, that's the problem I have. That's the problem I have with the political system that we work in, we live in. Again, again, Madam Speaker, this is not a problem with this particular

government. They are part of the problem, but they are not, not the entire problem.

Madam Speaker, it's good to see that other members in the Chamber are waking up finally this afternoon. It's been a bit of a slow afternoon.

But I wanted to just end with a couple of ideas. I know my time is getting short, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, at the outset of my remarks I mentioned that I had the opportunity to listen now to 11 federal or provincial budgets. Madam Speaker, this is liable to be my last, will most likely be my last provincial budget. And I wanted to say, I wanted to obviously thank the people of Carrot River Valley for allowing me to represent them certainly over this last four years. And we're looking forward, I'm looking forward to bigger and better things from Carrot River Valley in the future.

But I also wanted to sort of express my disappointment, Madam Speaker, when it comes to budgets of all political parties that I have witnessed. It's been a disappointment that any of these particular governments would not try to do something that has a larger, broader impact and positive effect on the people, the total people that they represent. Somebody with a vision, somebody with an eye for the future, the hope and the dream that they could make their jurisdiction — whether it be in this province or the country — better after having presented a budget, and frankly, Madam Speaker, I just don't see that in this particular budget, and that's the disappointment.

Will I be voting against this budget? Yes, I will, Madam Speaker, for lots of reasons, not the least of which I don't think it's an honest budget. I don't think it's a sustainable budget. And I think it's a budget aimed directly at re-election. And my last words to the government would be — on this issue — that if they're strongly in support of this budget and they feel that it's that good, then let's get at it. Let's have that election. Call it right away. Let's let the people of the province decide on the value of the budget rather than the debate in this House. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I'm honoured to stand today in support of this NDP government's next balanced budget in a long string of balanced budgets.

Before I begin speaking specifically about the budget, I want to start by thanking some of the people who've helped me along the way and who've been able to be supportive so that I can serve the constituents here in Regina.

First of all I want to thank the constituents of Saskatoon Sutherland for giving me the honour of serving them for these past eight years. I'd also like to thank the executive for all of the help that they've been able to provide in ensuring that I'm re-elected in 2003. And of course all the members here, Madam Deputy Speaker, know that being an MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] can be a very busy job and requires the help of an understanding family, and of course I'm no

exception. So I'd just like to thank my wife, Karen, and my three kids for helping me to make public service possible here in Saskatchewan.

Madam Deputy Speaker, my constituency's a microcosm of the province. It covers all range of individuals. We're very fortunate to have the University of Saskatchewan. The synchrotron, Innovation Place, Muskeg Lake First Nation are all within the constituency of Saskatoon Sutherland. And it's my honour to serve them.

I'd also like to thank the staff here in Regina for all of the work that they do. As a new minister, it's a real learning experience. And they've been very supportive, and I just want to pass on my appreciation to them.

I'd also like to thank the staff in my Saskatoon office — constituency assistant, Connie, and her fill-in, Susan — for all of the work that they do in serving the constituents of Saskatoon Sutherland. And I'd also like to just send my best wishes to Connie and get well soon and a speedy recovery.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this budget is committed to making life better for Saskatchewan families by keeping the economy strong and by improving infrastructure, including Saskatchewan's highways. This budget goes a long way towards increasing access to health care for Saskatchewan families and for Saskatchewan seniors.

This budget is an example of just how far this province has come under the leadership of this NDP government. After nine years of fiscal mismanagement perpetrated by the former Conservative government, this province was crumbling under the weight of an over \$14 billion debt. In stark contrast, this NDP government has committed to being both fiscally and socially responsible. In fact during this term of office, we've paid down over a billion dollars of debt.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[16:15]

Hon. Mr. Addley: — And I know that gets the opposition upset, and they're wondering why we've got these new programs this year and why not sooner. Because this is when we can afford them, Madam Deputy Speaker. As the Premier said, with social progress comes economic progress; with economic progress comes social progress. Mr. Speaker, this NDP government has taken Saskatchewan from bankruptcy to boom times. The hard work and sacrifices of the early 1990s is starting to pay off for Saskatchewan families.

And I'd just like to single out and thank former Premier Roy Romanow. He was an excellent Attorney General in the 1970s and early '80s. He had a long career helping repatriate the constitution and, Madam Deputy Speaker, he worked extremely hard to bring Saskatchewan back from the brink of bankruptcy. And then in his retirement, what does he do? Under the direction of Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, he does a consultation and issues a report that, in my opinion, has helped save medicare for this generation.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this year Saskatchewan families benefited

from a reduction of the PST to levels that have not been seen in more than 20 years — this on top of reduced income taxes, reduced business taxes, and significantly more competitive royalty rates from past budgets. Because of this NDP government's commitment, Saskatchewan continues to be the best place in Canada to live, work, and raise a family.

As Minister of Healthy Living Services with the responsibility to seniors, I'm extremely proud of this budget. With almost \$170 million invested in programs that fall under the Healthy Living Services umbrella, an increase of almost \$13 million over last year, it's clear that this NDP government is committed to leaving no one behind.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this NDP government is committed to improving the lives of our seniors to whom we owe so much. Under the leadership of this NDP Premier, the enhanced prescription drug plan included in this year's budget is the most significant expansion of health services for seniors in a generation. Effective July 1, Madam Deputy Speaker, seniors will pay no more than \$15 for a prescription, an average savings of \$400 for the more than 115,000 seniors.

We're investing \$2.25 million this year to improve access to children's mental health services and children's therapies. This will reduce waiting lists and provide additional specialists while increasing capacity.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also very proud to say that this budget is the first in provincial history to have dedicated funding in support of autistic children. The \$3 million committed will go towards developing and expanding services for autistic children and their parents.

Mr. Speaker, this budget continues the commitment of Project Hope. This year's budget provides almost \$15 million to the Premier's Project Hope, an increase of \$1.3 million over last year. This money will go towards, among other things, a detox facility in Regina, a 24-youth stabilization unit in Saskatoon, a youth treatment facility in partnership with Prince Albert Grand Council, and a family treatment centre in Saskatoon — this along with continued programming for high-risk, hard-to-engage young people who are severely affected by substance abuse.

This government is spending \$3.5 billion on our health care budget to ensure Saskatchewan people continue to have the best possible care. Mr. Speaker, this budget recognizes the health care needs of this province. This budget commits to recognizing the diverse needs, the diverse health care needs of Saskatchewan people, including the unique health needs of Aboriginal people. This health budget will also improve access and wait times along with recruiting and supporting health care workers throughout this province.

Mr. Speaker, this NDP government has also made a commitment to our students by freezing tuition for the third consecutive year. This will ensure that post-secondary education students . . . and the education for these students will remain affordable and accessible.

To ensure that our young people choose Saskatchewan after graduation, this government introduced in this budget a special

\$10,000 annual graduate tax exemption that, coupled with other credits, will permit recent post-secondary graduates to earn \$20,000 tax-free each year for five years after graduation. And this can be carried over, Mr. Speaker, for up to 10 years. So if young people upon graduation want to travel for a year or two, see the world, they can bring back those experiences and help make Saskatchewan even better.

All this helps make Saskatchewan the best place to live, work, and raise a family in Canada.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Addley: — But, Mr. Speaker, the opposition refuses to support this government and this budget. Well, Mr. Speaker, that brings me back to a flyer and a pamphlet that was recently distributed in Saskatoon by the Leader of the Opposition. It included a text in the line that says the Saskatchewan Party is committed to, and I quote, “A strong social safety net which protects those who truly need support . . .”

Well I wonder, Mr. Speaker, who does not truly need support in the eyes of the opposition. Is it seniors in this budget? Is it parents of children with autism? Is it recent graduates who are trying to get their lives started? Or is it parents of children who suffer from mental illness? Who is it, Mr. Speaker, that the opposition says does not truly need this support?

This tired and old opposition Sask Party, when they were asked what they would cut, Mr. Speaker, the opposition Finance critic said there's too many civil servants and there's too much money spent on health care. Those members opposite continue to try to cover their spots but they cannot, Mr. Speaker. They continue to attack civil servants and to attack health care professionals.

Mr. Speaker, one of the earlier speakers indicated that this government should just get along with the Prime Minister and the federal Conservatives. We should just stop aggravating them. We should just work with them and maybe they'll give us some money. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's the blame-the-victim mentality. The Conservative government made a promise; they said they would provide \$800 million each and every year. And they've reneged on that promise, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Addley: — But I have a question for them, Mr. Speaker. Do we honestly believe that if prime minister Stéphane Dion was the prime minister, would they be saying the same thing? Would they be saying oh Mr. Goodale, it's okay? We'll just work with you. I know you promised us \$800 million but that's okay. We'll only raise one question in the House and then we won't bother any more.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that was \$800 million for Saskatchewan people and for Saskatchewan families. What did they do with that money? They sent it directly to Quebec to try to buy an election, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, a number of years ago during the crisis in Quebec, there was a line that went around Canada that said, my Canada includes Quebec. And I agree with that, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, my Canada also includes Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Addley: — Mr. Speaker, we have a Prime Minister of Canada, Mr. Harper, who's starting on a daily basis to sound and look and act more like a former prime minister, Mulroney. We've seen that story where money goes down to eastern Canada — it goes to Quebec, it goes to Ontario, and that's where the money goes. What does the opposition say? We should just get along with them. We shouldn't aggravate them. Mr. Speaker, that tired, old opposition Sask Party has got it wrong.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't think there's a debate. The federal Conservatives broke their promise to Saskatchewan people, and they should be held accountable, and they will be held accountable. In fact, the Sask Party shamefully wouldn't even allow this Assembly to debate and discuss that issue. When we asked for leave, they listened to their masters in Ottawa instead of the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I was reading a novel the other day written in the early 1940s by a German writer, Hesse. And there was a line in there that I think is applicable. The Saskatchewan Party, their ultimate goal is to rule Saskatchewan. They want to rule Saskatchewan. Well the NDP, Mr. Speaker, they want to serve Saskatchewan and serve Saskatchewan people. Mr. Speaker, our pamphlet here, instead of talking about truly needs support and the ideas that they were talking about, let me just review some of the things that we're doing to make life better for Saskatchewan.

We're, number one, introducing a new drug plan for seniors. We're creating new five-year \$10,000 annual tax credit for new graduates. We're freezing university tuition at 2004 levels into 2008. We're funding our largest budgeted capital program for improvements to roads, highways, schools, hospitals, and other community . . . [inaudible] . . . And finally, Mr. Speaker, we're cutting taxes. In fact we have provided the lowest PST rate in 20 years at 5 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, it's obvious to me who this budget represents. It represents Saskatchewan's families. And that's why I'm proud to say I will support this budget and not this opposition. Saskatchewan has a choice: they can be ruled by the Saskatchewan Party or they can be served by the NDP. Mr. Speaker, that choice is clear, and I will be supporting with this government and I will not be supporting the opposition's motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Morgan: — Madam Deputy Speaker, it's my privilege to enter into the deficit debate today. This is a time where members usually make comments about other things that take place in their constituency and in their personal life. There was enough things going on in this budget, I was actually sometime compelled not to even talk about those things. But I would be somewhat remiss if I didn't mention my constituency assistant, Rita Flaman Jarret, who does a superb job of looking after my constituents and my scheduling. And as some of the other

members here said, does a very admirable job of making me look good, and I thank her for that.

And Shannon Hardy and Lynne Agnew, Gene and Pat Humenny, Gary Machishnic, Albert Johnson, Abe Kroeger, Rene Stock, Patrick Bundrock, Kay Robertson, and Stew Foster, who are volunteers and members of my executive who are actually out this week, Madam Deputy Speaker, doing a turkey sale and turkey promotion. And I think part of the program is they sell the turkeys with the idea that they will bring home turkeys from Regina. And I think it's referring to some of the NDP MLAs. So actually we call it a turkey sale and a turkey demotion. So we're looking forward to having highly successful results from that.

I would, Madam Deputy Speaker, like to use this opportunity as well to make some reference to the two by-elections that took place earlier this year — in particular what we call our junior achievement project. The member for Saskatoon Eastview made reference to having attended the Junior Achievement banquet in Saskatoon. I attended, and I want to thank her for her remarks. I agree with them. It was a wonderful event.

But on this side of the House we have a junior achievement program within our caucus, and we have two members that are sitting here today that are the successful recipients of our junior achievement award. We call them new MLAs, and we're pleased to have them as part of our caucus.

I did a lot of door knocking in Weyburn, and I think most members, as they've spoken in the House, have made reference to the fact that it is the hometown of Tommy Douglas. And I actually found virtually no Tommy Douglas roots left there. I found a lot of people that knew our candidate, knew our candidate's spouse, spoke well of the candidate, and made reference to our candidate as being the local candidate, notwithstanding the fact that the NDP literature made reference to their candidate as being the local candidate.

As a matter of fact I never saw their candidate. I saw some Liberals out working occasionally, but I never did see any NDP folks out working. And maybe that was reflective of how the results came out.

I also spent some time — and it was a considerably colder by-election — working in the Martensville one. And I think maybe it says something about the commitment of the people in that area when they're able to get out 77 per cent of the vote. What an overwhelming endorsement of this candidate and what an overwhelming statement about where the NDP exists in the polls.

[16:30]

I think, Madam Deputy Speaker, it's worth noting that not only did they not get their deposit back for filing their nomination papers, they also don't get the sharing money back for the expenses. So those members over there will probably have to write some personal cheques or go back to their regular donors and saying, we lost another one and this time it was worse than the Weyburn one. So anyway I guess I leave them with that.

And we've done some door knocking in some other

constituencies, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I have the same sense of excitement when I go and knock doors there than I have in Weyburn and in Martensville, in particular some of the Regina constituencies. Regina South with a dynamic, strong candidate, Bill Hutchinson, superb candidate, works very hard. And when you knock doors in that constituency, there's a real sense that the people want to make a change. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, Regina Wascana Plains with Christine Tell is another constituency that we're getting a very warm, favourable response, Madam Deputy Speaker. That's one that if I was a member of the NDP, I would be certainly concerned about. It's the same sense of enthusiasm, the same sense of excitement that exists there that does in Weyburn and does in Martensville.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to make another comment or two about my own constituency. It's in a rapid growth mode right now. I have a new neighbourhood of Stonebridge that is growing south of the city, with Saskatchewan's newest Wal-Mart. There is the Willows subdivision which backs on to a golf course and I've been out door knocking in that area, both of those areas and getting a very favourable response. And people in that area saying, let's have an election, let's get on with the process.

I listened with some interest last week when the Finance minister presented his deficit plan for the province and I had some thoughts about it. It's easy when you have no money, you just say no to everything. It's a little bit more difficult when you've got a little bit of money, because you've got to pick and choose. You've got to pick and make choices which things you do and which things you don't do. And it reflects on a government with the choices that they make, particularly the things that they don't do.

But in this particular situation, Madam Deputy Speaker, they had an enormous amount of money as a result of the revenue boom in this province from the resource windfall, which was certainly nothing to do with the NDP government. They had a lot of money. They had \$1 billion surplus, not to mention the amount of money they withdrew from the fiscal stabilization fictional fund that they talked about. They had an enormous amount of money. And in spite of the fact that they were able to run the province \$700 million further into the hole than it was when they started, they were not able to achieve anything of any significance whatsoever. They didn't even make their own core supporters happy.

The previous Finance minister at least tried and made an effort. This minister just sprayed money around with no plan, with no vision, and we know that the only one person that had any benefit from this budget whatsoever will be Murdoch Carriere because he received over a quarter of a million dollars of money that's going to come out of this budget.

They had once-in-a-lifetime of literally \$1 billion in unplanned revenue, probably the largest amount of cash that the Saskatchewan government and the Saskatchewan Department of Finance has ever had to handle and never had to manage. And they had wonderful opportunities. They could have done something for the health sciences building. They could have done one-shot things for infrastructure. They could have repaired and updated correctional centres. They could have built drug treatment facilities. They could have made some real

commitments. They could have done south bridges. They could have done highways.

What they've done is they've talked about a 10- or 15-year plan. And if nothing else, if they didn't have the imagination, the plan, or the vision to do anything, what that Finance minister could have done was he could have taken the entire amount of money and dumped it against the provincial debt and at least helped our children and our grandchildren.

But no, he took the spray approach and sprayed it all over the province and managed to achieve absolutely nothing that was of any long-term and permanent benefit for this — nothing that is sustainable, nothing that is realistic and nothing more than is a bunch of desperate promises. What we have right now is a transparent, desperate, pathetic, and surely unsuccessful bid to stay in power by this NDP government.

I'd like to quote Winston Churchill, Madam Deputy Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I'm not going to quote the member from Carrot River Valley. But they run the very grave risk of falling into senility before being overtaken by old age, Madam Deputy Speaker. And that's the situation that they're finding themselves in now.

What they need right now, Madam Deputy Speaker, is a plan that will attract and retain young people in this province. What we need to do is find jobs that are in the fields that those young people want to work in. What we want to do is give employers an incentive to hire the people that will work in their fields.

We've done consultation with young people. And university students say, while it may be nice to have some incentives after they graduate and after they start working, what the young people that are in universities right now, what they want is jobs. They want to have a job that they can go to that's in their field. They want to know that there's a pool of employment opportunities that they can work in. They know that there need to be a focus on technologies. There need to be a focus on entry programs to get right into the workplace.

What we expect to have this government do is work with SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology], work with the University of Regina, work with the institute of Indian technology, work with the U of S, work with some of the private vocational schools in this province to try and match the resources and match the programs to where the employment needs are and the employment opportunities are.

In some situations with SIAST, they've got 15- and 20-year waiting lists to get into some of the programs. They've demonstrated that they have absolutely no plan, no vision, and right now are running around playing catch-up. They're playing Band-Aids and prop ups and doing nothing that's going to benefit the province in the long run.

And one of the things that this budget absolutely missed that should be the biggest embarrassment to this government is the issue of property tax. It's the biggest disincentive to improve or to purchase a new home. The education component is the problem with property tax in this province. It pits school boards against ratepayers. It pits school administrators against parents.

Right now we should have a shift away from property tax as the primary source of funding for education. Had they chosen to listen to the Boughen report or the statements that were made around the time of amalgamation . . . they had opportunities and options to do that.

The Boughen report's in place right now; the amalgamation is done right now. They could do something that would be of some benefit to homeowners. And they've done nothing for homeowners. They've done nothing for businesses that want to purchase or expend in regard to their property tax. And they're being crippled, and they are being hobbled by excessive property taxes.

And you want to know who some of the people that are going to be the most victimized by the property tax in this province will be the senior citizens. Senior citizens have fixed income. They pay thousands of dollars a year in property tax. These are people that might want to improve their homes. They might want to add on and build a deck or a garage or something like that, but they know when they do that they will in perpetuity have to pay more money in their property taxes because that Finance minister from Regina South — who will likely lose his seat in the next election — did not have the courage or the will to try and do something that was going to help them, because he was too busy spraying money around on bizarre other things. So he did nothing for those people.

What about some business entrepreneur that wants to come in and buy a hotel, build a restaurant, or do something else with a mine or some other business project in the province? They can't or they won't because they'll be crippled by the oppressive property tax in this province. It's a tax on ownership. It's not a tax on income. It's not a tax on your earnings. It's a tax on owning and it's a direct disincentive.

What they did instead, Madam Deputy Speaker, is they gave money to municipalities. Municipalities need the money. They want the money, and they will probably put it to good use, far better use than the NDP would. But they did absolutely nothing to address the problem of the education component of property tax.

Another thing that this NDP government chose not to do, to absolutely ignore it, and it is one thing they should be ashamed of, is they did not address the issue of children not in school. By their own estimates, there is approximately 5,000 school-age children in our province that are not enrolled in any kind of a school program or school curriculum. They will not set out to try and develop a database or develop the data that will identify those children so that those children can be brought back in school.

Those children who are not in school are the ones that are prone to be victims of sexual exploitation, become involved in drugs, become involved in gangs and youth criminal violence. They have no plan to try and identify those kids, and the reason they don't have a plan is because they don't have the willingness to try and develop a plan that will reintegrate those children back into school, to deal with substance abuse, to deal with career training, to deal with life skills, family issues, and the various issues that those families have got to deal with around those young people. And we can't afford not to do that. Those young

people deserve a chance to participate fully in this province as does anyone else.

They had an opportunity to partner with FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations], with tribal councils, and with local organizations to develop plans that would reintegrate those students back into school if they had the courage to try and identify who those kids are, and to try and do something with them.

Madam Deputy Speaker, our children are the greatest resource that we have. And they may ask, can we afford to do those things? I challenge back to them, can we afford not to do that?

It is an embarrassment for any government that wants to call itself compassionate or even human. They have not addressed nor considered any of this in the mad dash to try and stay in power. What people will look at when they go forward, Madam Deputy Speaker, is a strong desire not to vote for the NDP government in the next provincial election.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we had a promise in 1999 dealing with crime. We had a promise from the Finance minister at that time to increase the number of police officers in this province by 200. In 1999 we had 1,930 police officers by Statistics Canada figures; 2006, we had 2,030. We had increased by 100 — a promise that, after seven years, has only been half fulfilled.

Madam Deputy Speaker, if we want to address the issues of crime in this province, one of the things that we need to do is we need to have more front-line police officers. It's been demonstrated to be effective in cities like New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and a variety of other American cities and large Canadian citizens as well. What we have right now is the tragic situation where Saskatoon and Regina compete to be the murder capital of Canada. Something that is absolutely not acceptable to the citizens of this province to be vying for the title of murder capital in the world.

And one of the places that's most tragic is the Premier's own riding of Saskatoon Riversdale. We have a fine candidate there by the name of Fred Ozirney who will work hard and may well become the next MLA from that constituency. And I can tell you this, Madam Deputy Speaker, Fred Ozirney will work hard to deal with crime in the area of Riversdale in Saskatoon. He's a fine gentleman, will work hard, and the people of Riversdale are listening to what he's got to say. If I was the Premier, I would start spending some time in Riversdale and start listening to people that are there.

There's no money for the additional police officers, little or no money for addictions treatment. We understand there's some contemplation that they may be able to create a treatment centre, and they're out shopping for land trying to find a place for it. No sense that they might want to look for an existing facility that could be converted or upgraded. Nothing that's taking place on that.

Nothing that's being done in this budget for inner-city schools. SchoolPlus has now become school minus because the program has been gutted because of lack of funding.

The one thing that they did do, and I will give them credit for it,

Madam Deputy Speaker, is they did give some money with regard to inner-city housing. And I commend them and I thank them for that small step. Unfortunately you need to have the rest of the supports to go with it. You have to have the social skills that will come with it, the drug treatment, the employment skills, the opportunities that will come with that.

It's a start, but they need to deal with the other issues that are in those inner-city neighbourhoods. Those inner-city neighbourhoods are crime ridden. Most people would not want to walk down one of the Riversdale streets after 5 or 6 o'clock at night. There's a huge problem with drugs, with prostitution, and they need to do some serious work in that area. And it's a problem that the NDP government is absolutely ignoring by not going there, not looking at it, and denying it.

There's serious issues with gangs, and what they need to do is develop some aggressive programs that are there. And I want to urge them to do that.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I notice as well when we go forward and we deal with the deficit issues that are there, one of the things that is not being brought forward is the mandatory gunshot and stab wound reporting Bill. That's not on the list of Bills to be dealt with right now, and we expect that it will be. We're hearing from police officers that that's one of the tools that the police officers want to have so that they can move forward with aggressive crime reduction. And it's our hope and expectation that this government will bring forward that Bill so it can be debated, and we want to know that that Bill is going to be in place.

[16:45]

Madam Deputy Speaker, we want to know as well where they're at with other legislation that's come forward this sitting on the order paper where they need to have . . . And what I'm talking about specifically, Madam Deputy Speaker, is the need to have the regulations that will allow the Bills to be brought into force. Because the gunshot wound and reporting Bill requires us to have regulations to make that work and make that in place. So that cannot work without it. And we're also looking at the human rights legislation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we have as well a serious issue in our problem with autistic children and we need to know that there's going to be an aggressive program. We saw in this budget a small announcement of some additional funding that will be of some assistance to families with autistic children but we want to know where that money is going to be spent, how it's going to be spread around.

We also have serious issues and things with cancer treatment. We have people such as Terry Rak that are having very serious health problems and have spent literally tens of thousands of dollars on Avastin out of their own pocket. It's a huge burden to families that are trying to wrestle for drugs so that they can deal with their own lives.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we also have highways in this province. We had a major announcement from that government that they were going to implement a 10-year program to try and deal with upgrades to highways, and so far we haven't seen

where the plan is or the strategy. And unfortunately what it is, it's an announcement that something is going to take place over 10 years. The large amount of it will take place after the next election when that government will likely not be there.

There's a saying that one of the airlines used to use that getting there is half the fun. Right now in this province getting there is no fun at all because the highways in this province are a disaster to travel on. The potholes are there. We hear regularly from people that the highways are not adequately maintained. So right now, Madam Deputy Speaker, we expect to see something from this government with regard to highways. And the sooner we see it frankly, Madam Deputy Speaker, the better because the people of this province are discouraged and quite angry about that issue.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to read briefly from a *StarPhoenix* editorial that was in . . . [inaudible] . . . and I will read from the March 23 article in *The StarPhoenix*, and it will deal with debt:

For Thomson to brag that the current government has paid down the debt by \$1 billion, with \$158 million dedicated to debt repayment coming from the 2007-08 one-time equalization payment of \$226 million (the other \$68 million is earmarked for property tax relief over two years) makes no sense when this year's financial performance adds \$700 million to the debt.

And that's the reality that we're facing. They've taken a \$1 billion surplus and turned it into a \$700 million deficit. Something is seriously wrong with a government that can take the biggest surplus in this province's history and turn it into one of the biggest deficits in the province's history.

David MacLean of the Canadian taxpayers association:

This budget is unsustainable in the long term. We've got a \$700 million deficit in a time when revenues have never been so high. This is serious trouble.

We all know there's an election coming. It's almost like they're salting the earth for if there is a change in government or if the NDP is re-elected. We're going to see massive deficits in the years coming forward unless some serious spending restraint occurs.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is a leaky budget. We saw leaks coming forward from the Finance minister in the days preceding it when they were trying to deflect issues on the Carriere thing. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, leaky budgets are like leaky ships. They will ultimately sink those that are inside them. So we're expecting that's going to take the situation that's there.

And then I want to say one more thing. In the Premier's *Partnership for Prosperity* document released in 2001, the NDP had a goal dealing with net in-migration of youth by 2005. He has missed that goal by literally thousands of people. We have Manitoba, which does not have the resources, does not have the ability to attract people that this province does, and what's happening is they are outperforming this province in in-migration from immigrants by a massive amount.

I want to conclude by a quote from Oliver Cromwell that I've used before and I'm going to use it again, Madam Deputy Speaker. And Oliver Cromwell said to the Rump Parliament, "Depart, I say, and let us have done with you. In the name of God, go."

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Yes, Madam Deputy House Leader. As the members will know, the Saskatchewan legislative internship program has a program over the supper hour to which all hon. members are invited. And so accordingly I would request leave of the House to recess until 7 o'clock.

The Deputy Speaker: — The Government House Leader has asked for leave to recess the House now until 7 p.m. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to agree with that motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — This House does now stand recessed until 7 p.m. this evening.

[The Assembly recessed until 19:00.]

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GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

CABINET MINISTERS

Hon. Lorne Calvert
Premier

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

Hon. Pat Atkinson
Minister of Advanced Education and Employment
Minister Responsible for Immigration
Minister Responsible for the Public
Service Commission

Hon. Joan Beatty
Minister of Northern Affairs
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women

Hon. Buckley Belanger
Minister of Community Resources
Minister Responsible for Disability Issues

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

Hon. David Forbes
Minister of Labour
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Water Corporation

Hon. Glenn Hagel
Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation
Provincial Secretary
Minister Responsible for Gaming
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Government Insurance

Hon. Deb Higgins
Minister of Learning
Minister Responsible for Literacy
Minister Responsible for Liquor and
Gaming Authority
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Telecommunications

Hon. Eldon Lautermilch
Minister of Highways and Transportation
Minister of Property Management
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Transportation Company
Minister Responsible for the
Forestry Secretariat

Hon. Warren McCall
Minister of Corrections and Public Safety

Hon. John Nilson
Minister of Environment
Minister Responsible for the Office of
Energy Conservation
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Power Corporation

Hon. Frank Quennell
Minister of Justice and
Attorney General

Hon. Clay Serby
Deputy Premier
Minister of Regional Economic and
Co-operative Development

Hon. Maynard Sonntag
Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations
Minister of Crown Investments Corporation
of Saskatchewan

Hon. Len Taylor
Minister of Health

Hon. Andrew Thomson
Minister of Finance
Minister Responsible for Information Technology
Minister Responsible for
SaskEnergy Incorporated

Hon. Harry Van Mulligen
Minister of Government Relations

Hon. Mark Wartman
Minister of Agriculture and Food