



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

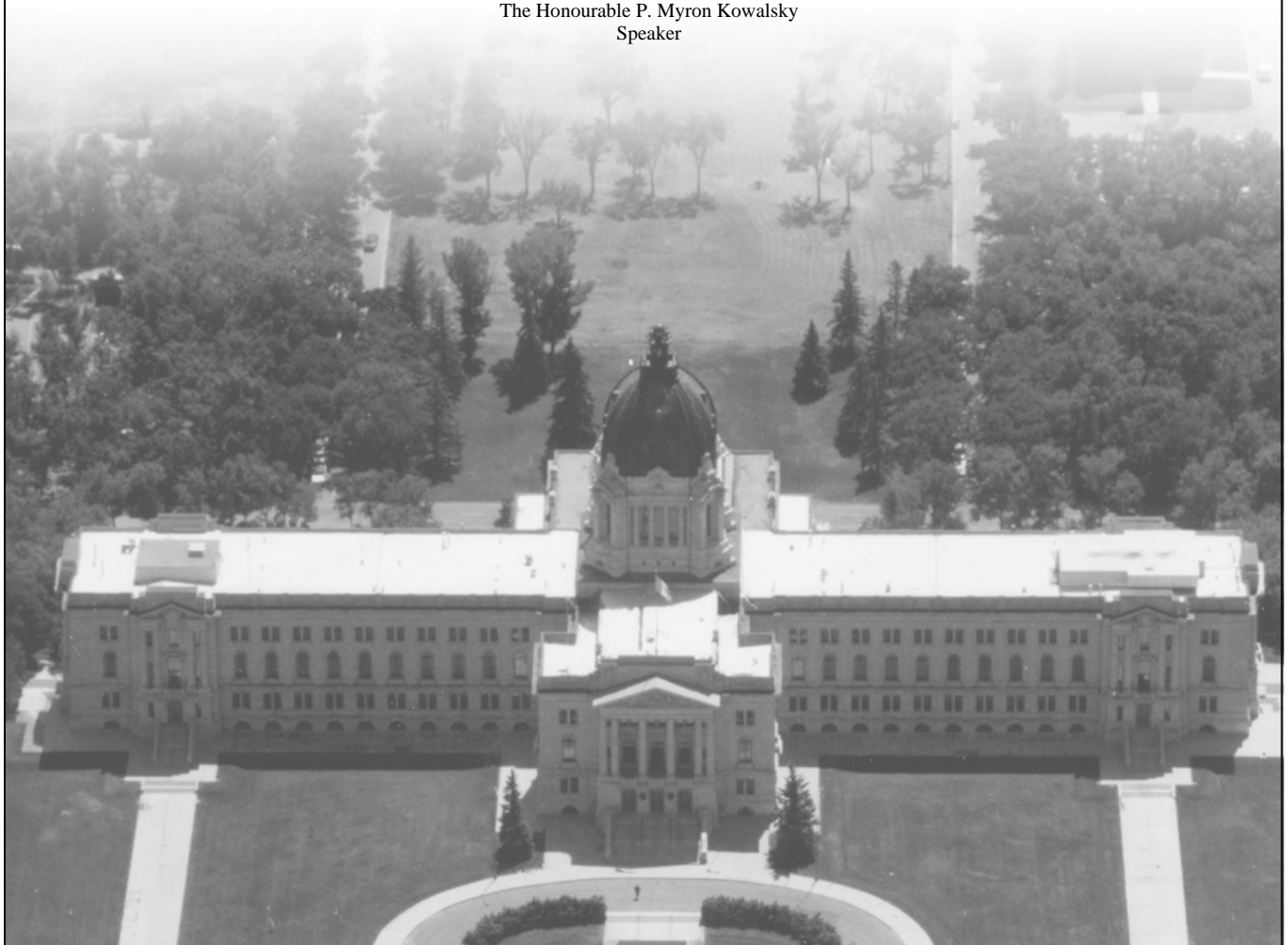
Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of

The Honourable P. Myron Kowalsky
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

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

[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure again to present more petitions in the Assembly regarding the availability of dialysis units in the province of Saskatchewan and in particular to the community of Broadview and the surrounding area. And I read the prayer:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the petition I present today is coming from the communities, signed by people from the communities of Whitewood, Broadview, Winnipeg, Cowessess. I so present.

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

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we're one day away from the planned closure of the SaskPower office in Shaunavon. I have a petition on behalf of constituents of Cypress Hills with that closure in mind. 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.

Mr. Speaker, I have another four pages of signatures here, most of them coming from the community of Shaunavon but some from outlying communities. I so present.

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have petitions to present today on behalf of citizens concerned about their schools. 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 Maryfield School remains open.

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

These petitions, Mr. Speaker, come from the good people of the

community of Fairlight. I so present.

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

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on behalf of people who are concerned about another one of the deplorable highways in my constituency, Highway No. 49. The prayer reads:

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

People who have signed this petition are from Kelvington, Okla, Preeceville, Lintlaw. I so present.

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

Mr. Hermanson: — Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to present another petition by people who want to maintain full service of the SaskPower office at Rosetown. Mr. Speaker, these constituents are concerned that if the office closes there will not be immediate receipt of payment for customers. The prayer of the petition reads:

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

And as in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, there are three pages of signatures on this petition. And I believe every one of the signatures come from the fine community of Rosetown. I'm pleased to present this petition 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 citizens concerned with the dangerous practice of transferring patients from one ambulance to another while 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 city of Moose Jaw. I so present.

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

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again today I rise with petitions with citizens concerned about safety when driving on Highway No. 5. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

And the signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from Colonsay, Saskatoon, Sunset Estates, Meacham, Lloydminster, Kelvington, Quill Lake, Bruno, St. Gregor, and Spalding. I so present.

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

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again today I rise to present a petition on behalf of constituents of mine who are very concerned about the condition of Highway 18. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to invest the needed money to repair and maintain Highway 18, so it can return to being a safe and economical route for Saskatchewan families and business.

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

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

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

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present another petition from citizens opposed to possible reduction of health care services in Biggar. The prayer reads:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

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

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition surrounding the truly tragic circumstances around the death of Doug Bonderud and the lack of acceptance of responsibility by this NDP [New Democratic Party] government. I will read from the prayer for relief:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary actions to reimburse the Bonderud family for out-of-country treatment costs and improve the future

communication and coordination of cancer services for all cancer patients.

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

The petitioners today come from the communities of Tisdale, Watson, and Naicam. I so present.

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

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I rise with a petition from citizens that are very concerned if the lab services are withdrawn from the Lafleche and District Health Centre, the undue hardships it would cause, especially seniors. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by the good citizens of Fir Mountain, Gravelbourg, Lafleche, Woodrow, and Meyronne. 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 this morning to bring forward a petition signed by citizens of Saskatchewan that are concerned with rural 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 actions to ensure that the Limerick School remains open.

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures to this petition are all from Limerick. I so present.

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

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise with a petition concerning Highway 368. And it's concerned with the 4 miles south of Lake Lenore to 4 miles south of St. Brieux. And they have seriously declined and they are endangering the safety of drivers and it harms the economic growth of the area. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take immediate action and make necessary repair to Highway 368 in order to address safety and economic concerns.

And is duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And, Mr. Speaker, it is signed by the good people of Humboldt and Prince Albert. I so present.

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

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

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

This particular petition is signed by the good citizens from Jansen, Wynyard, Lanigan, and Lockwood, and Wilkie. I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel: — According to order a certain petition regarding Piapot School presented on March 28, 2007, has been reviewed and pursuant to rule 15(7) is found to be irregular and therefore cannot be read and received.

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 44 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister for Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming: what is the winning percentage range for non-lottery retailers?

I give notice that I shall on day no. 44 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister for Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming: what percentage of lottery winners do lottery retailers represent?

I give notice that I shall on day no. 44 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister for Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming: what percentage of lottery players do lottery retailers represent?

I give notice that I shall on day no. 44 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister for Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming: what percentage of the general population do lottery retailers represent?

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and, through you, to all members of the legislature 23 students from Sheldon-Williams Collegiate. This is the grade 10 social studies class, and their teacher is Delaine Anderson; she accompanies them. I ask all members to welcome them here.

I also ask all members to acknowledge the good work that Sheldon-Williams has done in raising funds for the Wilma Downing scholarship which is at their school. Last night they had an event which I think raised thousands of dollars for the scholarship fund in honour of Wilma Downing. Their high school basketball team beat the Roughrider basketball team, and I think that we need to congratulate Sheldon-Williams both on winning the provincial championships for basketball and for football for the men. And they came in second for the women in basketball. So I ask all members to welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[10:15]

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

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased today to stand and introduce to you and, through you, to all members of the House a friend of mine, Bob Bymoen, who is sitting in the west gallery. I think he's here today to buy me lunch — I'm not sure — or it could be to collect the \$20 I probably owe him. But one way or the other, he's here to watch question period today, and I'd like to introduce him to all members.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Outstanding Events in the World of Politics

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the last couple of days there's been two outstanding events happening in the world of politics. One is the leader's dinner in North Battleford on Tuesday evening. It was a huge success. There was at least twice the number of people that were there from previous years. And especially noteworthy, Mr. Speaker, was the number of young people in the community anxious to see a change both in the leadership and in the direction of this province.

Our leader didn't disappoint them, Mr. Speaker, giving them a message of hope and vision, not only for these young people that are in our province but for all those who have and continue to be the strength of our province.

Now the second event was held in Saskatoon last evening, the North Saskatoon Business Association banquet and awards of distinction presentation. A room was full of about 700 people, all part of the sector that actually continues to make the potential of this province come alive, and that's the business sector. Congratulations to all the winners and of particular note was the introduction of the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] members, with polite applause for the NDP colleagues compared to a wild ovation given to our leader. Well done and . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Population Increase in Saskatchewan

Mr. Yates: — Well, well, well, Mr. Speaker. The Saskatchewan Party likes to talk population. The numbers they use aren't particularly accurate but they do like to talk.

A couple of weeks ago, the members opposite were complaining loudly about Saskatchewan's population and basing their complaints on last year's stats even though they knew full well they were no longer accurate. Mr. Speaker, it's true. Good news for Saskatchewan is bad news for the Saskatchewan Party, and so they used outdated numbers to make their case.

Two weeks ago they said the province's population was 968,157. Well, Mr. Speaker, the real number is just a tad shy of 988,000 — 987,939 to be exact, a difference of about 20,000 people, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the fourth quarter of 2006 saw Saskatchewan's largest population increase since 1986. And the fourth quarter of 2006 also saw Saskatchewan's largest net interprovincial migration gain since 1983. For the first time in over 10 years, in-migration from Alberta exceeded provincial out-migration to Alberta. And we also made gains from BC [British Columbia], Manitoba and Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's population numbers are up and job numbers are up. So are manufacturing shipments, oil production, urban housing starts, international exports of goods, value of building permits, retail sales, and average weekly earnings, Mr. Speaker.

Pretty much everything in Saskatchewan's up, Mr. Speaker, except . . .

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Saskatchewan Party Nominates Two Candidates

Ms. Draude: — Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last night the Saskatchewan Party nominated two new candidates. Former Saskatchewan Party MLA Arlene Julé was nominated in the constituency of Saskatoon Nutana.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — We are very excited to have Arlene back on the team. Mr. Speaker, while she was an MLA, Arlene Julé fought on behalf of children who were being exploited in the sex trade. She was also the first MLA to take this government to task for its decision to keep Murdoch Carriere on the job, despite several complaints of harassment that had been lodged against him. I think it's only fitting that she challenges the Minister for the Public Service Commission for her seat.

Mr. Speaker, last night we also nominated realtor, Laura Ross in the constituency of Regina Qu'Appelle Valley. Laura is actively involved in a number of women's organizations, including the Canadian Federation of University Women, the Regina women's council, and provincial women's council.

In the release announcing her candidacy, Laura said and I quote:

I think all women of Saskatchewan have been done a disservice by the current NDP government. I expect the government to stand up for what is fair and what is right. The women . . . had to go through this ordeal and they must feel completely betrayed.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues and I are very excited to have these two dynamic and vivacious women on the Sask Party team. Their wealth of knowledge and experience will be a huge asset in a Sask Party government. I'd like to ask all members to join me in congratulating these two women on their nominations.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

First Nations and Métis Juno Awards Nominees

Hon. Ms. Beatty: — Mr. Speaker, a ceremony honouring First Nations and Métis nominees has become a part of the Juno Awards. Last evening I, along with some of my caucus colleagues, attended the Aboriginal honouring ceremony at the Saskatoon Indian and Métis Friendship Centre.

I was very pleased to be part of this event recognizing the achievements of outstanding artists like Northern Cree, Digging Roots, Susan Aglukark, Jason Burnstick, and Leela Gilday.

Mr. Speaker, First Nations and Métis artists and musicians play an important role in the Canadian music industry, not only because of the cultural perspective that informs their work but also because they serve as very visible role models.

Mr. Speaker, two other events will showcase First Nations and Métis musicians at this year's Juno Award celebrations. *One*

Show in Two Cities will be held tonight in Prince Albert and tomorrow night in Saskatoon. Tonight's show will be hosted by local actors, Gordon Tootoosis and Tantoo Cardinal, and tomorrow's show is hosted by Billy Joe Green and Tantoo Cardinal again.

Mr. Speaker, these shows will feature 2007 Juno Award nominees and also includes performances by Saskatchewan-based artists. Mr. Speaker, First Nations and Métis musicians, performers, and artists contribute so much to the cultural fabric of this country; I am pleased to see these contributions recognized at the 2007 Juno Awards. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Highway 32

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this week I was cc'd on a letter to the Premier and the Minister of Highways on the status of Highway 32 from Sister Rosetta Reiniger, the executive director of St. Angela's Academy in Prelate.

Sister Rosetta has written "Highway 32: a petition in the 'Key of P' from Prelate," part of which I would like to share with the Assembly today and I quote:

The path to Prelate from places like Pennant is positively a perilous pilgrimage. In the present paper a phenomenon of four people playing poker on 32 was pictures and that personified the personalities of the pundits pressing to prevail on the personages in the provincial precincts to put their philosophical pathos to peace and perform purposefully, and not with perfunctory plans.

It perplexes the people from these picturesque places that the principle path that permits purposeful and pleasant pursuits is punctured with so many pathetic patches of potholes. Potholes are reverse pyramids protruding perpendicularly, penetrating into the pits, and providing punishment to all who plunge through.

Please, parliamentarians promise to promptly protect the psyche of this population by pursuing the prestigious principle to proclaim that pavement will be procured and placed properly with particular purpose on pathway 32.

We posit our poignant "please" with our premier not to put off, nor prolong, the prospect of peacefully punishing piles of pavement, otherwise we will not be placated, and your election plans may not be pleasing to you.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

The Arts' Role in a Healthy Community

Ms. Crofford: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. One of the reasons this government worked so hard in investing to bring the Junos to Saskatchewan was that we know the important role the arts play in creating and maintaining a healthy community. Mr. Speaker, the music industry . . .

The Speaker: — Order please, members. The member for Regina Rosemont.

Ms. Crofford: — Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. Contrary to popular belief, the party this weekend is in Saskatoon not on the floor of the legislature here this morning.

The music industry contributes significantly both to the quality of life and to our economy. Hosting events like the Juno Awards provides an opportunity to showcase Saskatchewan's incredibly talented and vibrant artistic community. Mr. Speaker, the excitement generated by the Junos and the other award shows being held in the province this year is translating into opportunities for Saskatchewan musicians. I hear that people in Saskatoon have gone without sleep for three nights now to be out listening.

A recommendation in the *Music Industry Review* that I submitted in January to the Premier was to create a school tour and to connect students to opportunities in the music and other cultural industries.

Thanks to quick action from the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation and Saskatchewan Creative Music Inc. 2007, these school tours are a reality today. Over 70 Saskatchewan schools have subscribed to the program, and I'm happy to inform the Assembly that these tours are fully subscribed and operating with fantastic initial feedback.

Mr. Speaker, this tour is having a profound effect on communities around the province, I might say, reminding us of the vibrancy of people expressing themselves. So it's one more reason that Saskatchewan is the best place to live, work, and raise a family.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Saskatchewan Agriculture Week

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this week is Saskatchewan Agriculture Week, a week in which we recognize the many contributions of farm families, producers, and the agriculture industry that make our province grow.

It's really interesting though, Mr. Speaker, that I heard on the radio this morning that the Saskatchewan Ag minister is threatening to take the federal government to court over the barley vote — so much for respecting the will and wishes of Saskatchewan producers. For the minister to say the question wasn't clear is simply an insult to farmers' intelligence.

I also find it interesting, Mr. Speaker, that this government is

willing to go to court over the results of a democratic vote. Yet the same government refused to go to court to stand up on behalf of nine female victims in the Murdoch Carriere scandal.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Especially given the fact, Mr. Speaker, that the former Justice minister, the member for Saskatoon Massey Place said the following in the legislature in 2003, and I quote:

In the event that there is a lawsuit against the Government of Saskatchewan, it will be the position of the Government of Saskatchewan that the termination of Mr. Carriere was justified. We will defend that position vigorously in the courts. And in due course, Mr. Speaker, the courts will make the determination.

Mr. Speaker, it's clear this government doesn't have its priorities straight and has lost its moral compass.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

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

Tabling of Legal Opinion Regarding Settlement with Murdoch Carriere

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the NDP continues to hide behind its secret legal opinion with respect to the Carriere scandal where the government paid \$275,000 to someone who was convicted of assault and fired for harassment. The NDP is refusing to release that secret legal opinion to answer some questions for taxpayers. And yesterday the minister said, and I quote, "I don't recall any government ever tabling a Justice opinion . . ."

Mr. Speaker, let me refresh the minister and the Premier's memory. On April 8, 1998, this Assembly passed a motion calling on the government to release all legal opinions related to the Channel Lake scandal presided over by the member for Prince Albert Northcote.

Those legal opinions were then tabled in the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations, and they were released to the public. There has been a precedent for legal opinions to be tabled in the matter of an NDP scandal. Will they do that with this case, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I don't recall any Justice opinion from the Department of Justice being tabled. Now I may be incorrect. I know that there may have been some private sector legal opinions that the member may be referring to. But I don't recall a Department of Justice legal opinion, advice given to the Government of Saskatchewan, ever having been tabled in this Legislative Assembly.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, here are the 19 legal opinions tabled in this Legislative Assembly as a result of the Channel Lake investigation. Nine of them are from the Department of Justice, Mr. Speaker — nine of them.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — And so we ask again the minister or maybe the Premier — if he wants to weigh in on this issue — why will he not table the legal opinion that led this government to pay \$275,000 to someone, Mr. Speaker, who was fired for harassment and convicted of assault?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[10:30]

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I believe that there was a special committee that was struck to look into Channel Lake, as I recall, through the Crown Corporations Committee. They were looking at a specific issue. But I do not ever recall a legal opinion from the Department of Justice being tabled on the floor of this Legislative Assembly. Now I may be wrong. My understanding, those legal opinions were tabled in a Crown Corporations Committee. I do not recall them ever having been tabled on the floor of the legislature.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, what a weak, what a lame answer to the people of this province on an issue for which they want some answers from that minister and this government. They say they have a legal opinion that justifies why they would spend, pay \$275,000 to Mr. Carriere. There is precedent for the government releasing Justice legal opinions. We made that very clear today.

The question to the Premier is this: in light of what the minister has answered, will he ensure that that legal opinion in the Carriere scandal case is tabled in the appropriate committee of the legislature?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have stated in this Legislative Assembly that we were advised by the Department of Justice to settle a statement of claim with Mr. Carriere. We were advised . . . For a number of reasons, Mr. Speaker. We were advised because the personnel file, the

contents of the personnel file had been made public, Mr. Speaker. And as the members will know, that when there are allegations of harassment, both the complainant and the alleged harasser are entitled to have confidentiality. That did not happen, Mr. Speaker.

As well, Mr. Speaker, there were a number of issues around defamation of character because at that time Mr. Carriere had not been convicted of any alleged sexual assault, Mr. Speaker. And in fact he was never convicted of sexual assault. As well, Mr. Speaker, there was a view . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The member's time has elapsed. The Chair recognizes the member for Canora-Pelly.

Results of Joint Job Evaluation Process

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last week the Minister of Finance gave the taxpayers of Saskatchewan the bill for the next election. However I read on the front page of the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* today that the taxpayers and our health care professionals are still paying the bills for the last election.

Mr. Speaker, this NDP government slapped together an agreement five days before the last election in a crass attempt to buy the votes of some health care workers. Now the human wreckage continues. Some workers are saying they may be thrown into bankruptcy as a result of this politically motivated and completely flawed process. Mr. Speaker, why did this NDP government fail to follow the proper collective bargaining process for joint job evaluation?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The questions asked opposite have been answered on numerous occasions in this House and I will repeat what has been said previously, Mr. Speaker. This government entered into the joint job evaluation process and, Mr. Speaker, we are continuing to support the joint job evaluation process.

It is interesting to note today, Mr. Speaker, that on a day when the opposition members' single biggest issue for the last few months — the number of people in this province, the population of this province, Mr. Speaker — the number one issue that they've been talking about in the last year and a half, today, Mr. Speaker, they are strangely silent and going back on old news, questions that have been asked and answered. Instead of coming to the people of Saskatchewan and saying, by golly, this government is doing the right thing, at the right time, in the right place. Population numbers are up, Mr. Speaker, and we're very proud of that.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Canora-Pelly.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what the Minister of Health doesn't recognize is that people are being punished and it's all because of politics. This deal was signed five days before the last election but the interference, the interference didn't stop there. The Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations, SAHO, was directed by this NDP government to begin payments before the job classification process was complete. Mr. Speaker, that's a rush job and now some health care workers are suffering the consequences because this NDP government didn't follow the proper process. Mr. Speaker, why did the government order SAHO to start paying out money before the classification process was complete?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This process was anything but rushed, Mr. Speaker. The record is very clear. 1997, Mr. Speaker, this government committed to deal with equal pay for work of equal value. 1999, Mr. Speaker, we entered into a joint agreement with the unions and the health care sector in order to deal with equal pay for work of equal value.

By 2003, Mr. Speaker, there had been money committed by government into the pool for the joint job evaluation outcome. It was not complete at that time, Mr. Speaker. There was an agreement between union members and the government to proceed. Mr. Speaker, that's what took place.

Today, Mr. Speaker, today the government is responding to grievances, to matters in front of the Labour Relations Board. Mr. Speaker, this case is continuing to go through the normal channels. We're committed, as we've always been, Mr. Speaker, to the joint . . .

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Canora-Pelly.

Mr. Krawetz: — You know, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting how the Minister of Health has a limited memory. And I want to quote one line that I have put on the record before, Mr. Speaker, and this is from the dispute resolution tribunal that dealt with this issue between SAHO and the three different unions. And this is a quote on page 1, and it says this:

This document . . . was hurriedly put together, and not actually negotiated, was signed by the parties on October [the] 3rd, 2003.

Rushed, hurried, not put together by the proper process. This government didn't follow the rules. Payments were pushed out before the process was complete. That resulted in some people being overpaid. Then the department was told, collect that money. And now health districts are being told not to collect that money. It's a gong show, Mr. Speaker.

On October 4, 2006, the Premier ordered a moratorium on collection of those overpayments. Mr. Speaker, why is the Premier continuing to interfere in this process?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This from a party whose campaign platform was to freeze the health care budget and today indicates that their health human resource plan is to hire auditors, Mr. Speaker. Auditors — not nurses, not technologists, not physicians . . .

The Speaker: — Members will come to order. Members on both sides of the House. The Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So at a time when they're talking about the workforce in Saskatchewan Health, the joint job evaluation process, Mr. Speaker, affected 25,000 workers in 12 health regions through three different unions. Mr. Speaker, this was a long and complex process that unfolded by agreement.

Mr. Speaker, today we are asked to answer questions that we have asked and answered on numerous occasions, Mr. Speaker. We are committed to the joint job . . .

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Wait Times for Medical Treatment

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Health said that he'd be making an announcement today on guaranteed wait times with the federal government — something that he said a couple weeks ago was an absolutely silly idea.

Federal funds will be allocated to provinces that outline a plan in one of the five priority areas: cancer treatment, cardiac procedures, diagnostic imaging, joint replacement, or sight restoration. I think the people will be very interested to know that the only area that Saskatchewan actually meets the benchmarks is in cardiac care. According to the Wait Time Alliance report card last year, Saskatchewan received an A in cardiac care, but failures in the other four areas. Given this government's poor track record on wait times, which of the five areas will he be allotting this money to?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, an interesting day. The member's leader, just the other night in North Battleford, said, we don't just criticize; we provide alternatives. Mr. Speaker, in the health care field, since

I've been in this House, not one alternative idea's been suggested from the other side on health care. Mr. Speaker, the opportunity for the members opposite to stand up and offer alternatives . . . Instead what do they say about health care? No to seniors . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order, please. I invite the Minister of Health to complete his remarks.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. So while we are committed to health care professionals in the province of Saskatchewan, the members opposite are committed only to auditors in the health care field, Mr. Speaker. That's shameful.

And the member opposite continues to read accurate media reports incorrectly, Mr. Speaker. The process that the federal government engaged in, in this wait time guarantee, Mr. Speaker, I said was a silly idea. Mr. Speaker, the advancing of money to assist Saskatchewan to enhance its wait time reduction process is not a silly idea, Mr. Speaker. We're happy to work with our partners in the federal government to further our work in reducing waiting times.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday Adeline Gagnon came to the legislature to ask this Health minister why Saskatchewan had the longest waiting list in the country for orthopedic surgery. Unfortunately she got absolutely no results from this minister.

Today I want to raise the issue of an 81-year-old man, William Ermel from Cupar. His tear ducts are blocked and he can't see. He requires sight restoration surgery and he is being told that he'll have to wait up to two years for this procedure. He's already waited a year and a half to see the ophthalmologist and for x-rays. Will the minister start targeting sight restoration as part of the guaranteed wait time announcement so that people like William Ermel do not have to wait three and a half years to have his sight restored?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This government has been committed in all fields, Mr. Speaker. We have been committed to reducing waiting times and increasing access. And, Mr. Speaker, other provinces are looking to the work being done in Saskatchewan in terms of the leadership that we are provided.

Mr. Speaker, today the federal government will provide the province of Saskatchewan with additional resources to allow us to continue our work. Mr. Speaker, the federal government is asking us to target one area with guarantees attached to it. But, Mr. Speaker, we aren't committed to one area where there'll only be one guarantee. Mr. Speaker, we are committed to reducing waiting times throughout the whole system of

Saskatchewan health. And, Mr. Speaker, we've been doing that on our own up to this point with dollars negotiated by agreements by the premiers three years ago, Mr. Speaker. And we are going to continue to do this . . .

The Speaker: — . . . time has elapsed.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, out of the five areas, we are reaching the benchmarks in cardiac care. The other four we received a failing grade — such as sight restoration. William Ermel's quality of life is severely affected. His son insists that they should look at going out of the province for care. His son lives in Ottawa. Listen to the wait time in Ottawa for sight restoration. This procedure would be six weeks. If he happened to be in Quebec, it would be six months. But because he lives in Saskatchewan, it's two to three years for this procedure.

Does the minister think that is acceptable in Saskatchewan? How have we fallen so far behind all the other provinces? Is two to three years for sight restoration acceptable under his watch?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[10:45]

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Across Canada over the course of the next three years various provinces are going to address the issue of waiting times within their provinces. Mr. Speaker, a number of provinces will choose to provide . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Members will come to order. Order, order. Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In this budget this government has committed to provide additional resources in the Department of Health for a number of things including support for seniors. Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have said on numerous occasions in their speeches that they do not support the efforts that this government is doing in health in the area of seniors and the seniors' drug plan. Mr. Speaker, we are committed to assist seniors in this province. We will continue to be committed. We will reduce waiting lists, we will improve access, and, Mr. Speaker, we will reduce the cost of prescription drugs for seniors in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Compensation to Forestry Secretariat Executive

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt that this has

become a tired, old NDP government but what they don't seem to get tired of is looking after their NDP buddies. And some of the best NDP buddies are in the law firm of Olive Waller Zinkhan & Waller. Wil Olive was the Chair of Crop Insurance at the same time his firm was billing Crop Insurance for hundreds of thousands of dollars. Zinkhan was the SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company] lawyer and we all know how that turned out. And now, Mr. Speaker, now we have Tom Waller who's been given a huge sweetheart contract to run a five-person Forestry Secretariat.

Mr. Speaker, Tom Waller's original contract paid him \$200 an hour which worked out to \$180,000 in total for six months work. He then got a contract extension which bumped his pay to, Mr. Speaker, \$300 an hour and that put another \$230,000 in his pocket for seven months work. That's \$410,000 for 13 months.

Mr. Speaker, why is Tom Waller being paid twice as much as the highest paid deputy minister? Why is the NDP breaking the rules for their NDP buddy?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, again the members opposite will put forward numbers that will have to be double-checked because they do have a history of the facts being somewhat inconsistent with what they report to this House.

Yesterday that member was making an accusation that \$180,000 contract was overextended to the point where 278,000 was paid out. Mr. Speaker, she had the correct information in her hands when she laid those figures out, and I contend, Mr. Speaker, she knew it. If she didn't know it, what she should have done was she should have had her researchers explain to her what she was saying in this House. The facts are that the 278,000 were for two separate contracts. The \$188,000 contract was in fact expended in the way that it was designed to do, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Harpauer: — Well I'm really glad that the minister in his answers brought up that issue, and I value my researcher a great deal.

But, Mr. Speaker, here's another way that the NDP is breaking the rules for their buddy, Tom Waller. The Crown employees contract Act requires that the head of every department, Crown agency, or secretariat to file his or her contract with the Clerk of Executive Council within 14 days of the contract being signed.

There was a problem, Mr. Speaker. Tom Waller started his new contract on September 1, 2006 but it was not filed with the Clerk of Executive Council until three days ago, on March 26.

So NDP lawyer Tom Waller is being paid over \$30,000 a month. That's twice as much as the highest paid deputy minister, and he gets to file his sweetheart deal six months late. Why is there one set of rules for the NDP's friends and another set of rules for everyone else?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I can tell that member that the contract she referred to yesterday had been tabled with the Clerk. I will check the facts, Mr. Speaker, as one would want to do when their allegation . . .

The Speaker: — Order please. Order please. Members will come to order. The Chair recognizes the minister.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I will check the facts, and I will check the allegations. And then I, sir, will report to the general public.

I want to say this, Mr. Speaker. That opposition Saskatchewan Party has maligned more professional people of this province than I think is acceptable — from the former president of SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] to Mr. Waller, who is a well-respected professional in this province, who has served as president of Crown Investments Corporation, and who is well respected within the legal community.

Mr. Speaker, I say to the members opposite, shame. We are getting our value for our money on the contract that Mr. Waller has assumed. He is doing a good job in keeping . . .

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

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I don't even know how the minister can justify this exorbitant amount of money that's being paid for a short period of time of work. The minister keeps telling us that Tom Waller is worth more because he's a lawyer. Well I believe the deputy minister of Justice is a lawyer, and he has to follow the salary grid of deputy ministers. So why does Tom Waller get to break the rules?

Why does NDP lawyer Tom Waller get a sweetheart deal from this NDP government — \$410,000 for 13 months work to run the Forestry Secretariat? And, Mr. Speaker, the last time I checked, the P.A. [Prince Albert] pulp mill is still closed. Mr. Speaker, \$410,000 to run a five-person office. Why on earth should the taxpayers be shelling out that kind of money to look after one of this government's buddies?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — You know, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite asks if we're getting value for the money.

The Speaker: — Order. The Chair recognizes the minister.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite asks if we're getting value for our money. I want to tell you that we're getting value for every nickel that we're spending on a contract, and on a consulting contract. I want to ask the members opposite if they think they're getting value for the money that they spent on Conservative Stephen Harper members of parliament.

The member from Silver Springs, \$500 to Brad Trost. Do you think you got value for your money? What did you get on equalization? You got nothing. A bad investment for that member and all the rest of you who have been supporting them. And I want to say as it relates to forestry, on equalization this province got took to the cleaners by your federal counterpart and you said nothing.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Okay, the House will come to order. And why is the member for Regina Qu'Appelle Valley on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — With leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Order please. The member for Regina Qu'Appelle has requested leave for introductions. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. The member for Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and to the members of the House for granting leave. It is with pleasure that I would like to introduce a long-time friend, Kim Tucker, who is in the west gallery. Kim's family had a farm just north of North Battleford when I was a teenager and that's where I kept my horse when I first got it. We've been very good friends over many years, Mr. Speaker.

They're farming north of North Battleford at this point. Kim is very involved in her community and I'm very happy to welcome her here to the legislature and I ask all other members to welcome Kim to the legislature as well. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Charitable Gaming Grant Program

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to rise today to tell you that the cheque is in the mail. And not just one cheque, Mr. Speaker, but approximately 2,000 cheques will be in the mail starting next week on their way to groups and organizations from across

Saskatchewan as part of the first grant payment from the province's charitable gaming grant program.

Mr. Speaker, the charitable gaming grant program gives groups and organizations licensed by the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority a grant equal to 25 per cent of the net revenues they raise from charitable gaming activities. These activities include bingo, break-open ticket sales, raffles, Texas hold'em poker tournaments, and Monte Carlo events. This first round of payments is based on all licensed charitable gaming that has taken place between April 1, 2006 and December 31, 2006.

After the first payment, charities will receive grants every quarter in which they report their net proceeds. Mr. Speaker, the first grant payment will see approximately \$2.4 million paid to more than 2,000 groups and organizations throughout Saskatchewan. The lists of beneficiaries include friendship centres, cadets, Scouts, Girl Guides, 4-H clubs, community associations, service clubs, hospital foundations, volunteer fire departments, and on and on.

All of these groups, Mr. Speaker — big or small, in urban or rural areas — do much work to make their communities and province a better place to live. We are proud with the work they do and proud to be able to provide them with this grant to allow them to continue to support the many worthwhile projects and services they provide in communities throughout Saskatchewan.

These charitable gaming grants are just another way that our government is making Saskatchewan the best place to live, work, and raise a family. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Cannington on the ministerial statement.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the minister for sending the statement over in a good time so that I could take a look at it.

The community organizations that will be receiving these funds are the backbone of our communities, both rural and urban, Mr. Speaker. They're what make the community a community. They're the glue that holds the communities together. They're the ones that keep the rink open. They're the ones that provide the additional support to our school kids, so they have the proper uniforms and can travel to the various sporting events. They're the ones that provide the training to our young people such as 4-H and Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, Mr. Speaker.

But when I listen to the minister talk about this and she says the cheque is in the mail . . . There's another saying that goes along with that, and that's, I'm from the government and I'm here to help you. When people across Saskatchewan hear that, the first thing they do is clamp their hands over their wallet because whenever the government is there to help you, you know it's going to cost you money.

Mr. Speaker, this NDP government has been promising support to communities from the lottery funds ever since they got into electronic gaming more than a decade ago, Mr. Speaker. And fact is, the member from Regina Rosemont was the minister at the time that promised 10 per cent of the lottery funds would be

distributed back to the communities. It was just before an election. Mr. Speaker, it never happened.

Then the next promise from that same minister of the day was that the money from the lotteries that was supposed to be going to the communities was going to be used for the 911 with SaskTel. Well, Mr. Speaker, that gets paid every month on everybody's telephone bill by the telephone subscriber, not the money that was supposed to go to the communities.

[11:00]

So again just as we go into an election campaign, this government is now promising to provide lottery fund monies to communities, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, across Saskatchewan, people have no confidence that this payment will continue. Yes, the cheques are going to come out now prior to the election. But like so many other things — like the joint job evaluation in 2003, promised before the election, paid out before the election, and then the bill comes due and the government is asking for money to be sent back — there is no confidence, Mr. Speaker, across Saskatchewan that this program will continue if the NDP win the next election. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Why is the member for Meadow Lake on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — For a ministerial statement.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister for CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan] on a ministerial statement.

Office of the Treaty Commissioner

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to draw the attention of the members of the Assembly and the people of Saskatchewan to the impending last official day on the job for Judge David Arnot, Treaty Commissioner. Saturday, March 31 will mark the end of more than 10 years in this position.

And the Office of the Treaty Commission or the OTC, as we often refer to it as, was established in 1989 by the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and the Government of Canada to review treaty land entitlement and education. The mandate was later revised, as many will know, to focus on the nature of the treaty relationship and the specific treaty issues, including education and justice, and to explore the requirements and implications of treaty implementation.

Judge Arnot's position involved facilitating treaty discussions between the FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations] and the Government of Canada. The provincial government sits as an observer at the exploratory treaty discussions out of respect for the special treaty relationship between First Nations and Canada, and because the province could be impacted by those discussions.

In January of 1997, Judge Arnot was first appointed as Treaty

Commissioner in Saskatchewan. Since then, he has played an integral role in raising awareness about First Nations issues and treaties. The OTC has done excellent work with a range of parties, including work in the K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] public school system in partnership with Saskatchewan Learning to educate children, young and teachers and . . . youth and teachers, I should say, about treaties and treaty relationships.

During his tenure, he has also written several important reports, media opinion items, delivered lectures, and worked tirelessly to increase public understanding of the importance of treaties.

Mr. Speaker, members of the Assembly will recall that exactly a year ago today, actually, in these legislative chambers, a historic event took place to honour the important foundation of Saskatchewan and the enduring treaty relationship between First Nations and the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly. Judge Arnot and his office helped to organize that event, and he spoke eloquently at the ceremony, stressing then as he does today that all Saskatchewan residents are in fact treaty people.

He talked about his own ancestors who, as newcomers, settled into this territory as a direct result of a treaty that had been made with the First Nations who occupied the land before their arrival. This is the important message Judge Arnot never grew tired of delivering and one I am sure he will continue to deliver no matter what lies in his future.

As the Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations, Mr. Speaker, I thank Judge Arnot for his 10 years of superb service to the people of Saskatchewan as the Treaty Commissioner in our province. I believe that through his leadership, the Office of the Treaty Commissioner has provided valuable services to all of us. Mr. Speaker, the Office of the Treaty Commissioner has made a significant contribution to improving relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal individuals and organizations.

Mr. Speaker, it is concerning to this government that the federal government has allowed the Office of the Treaty Commissioner to cease operations. It is my hope that the federal government will recognize the valuable work of the OTC and ensure the office and the position of Treaty Commissioner continues in Saskatchewan.

I would like to thank Judge Arnot and wish him all the best in his future endeavours. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the minister for sending a copy of the statement regarding outgoing Treaty Commissioner, Judge Arnot.

Our leader, my colleagues, and I have the utmost respect for the gentleman who has worked tirelessly for the past 10 years to educate both First Nations and non-First Nations on our treaty relationship. A decade ago I daresay the majority of people in Saskatchewan knew little, if anything, about the treaty in their

area. Too many people believe that the treaty is a document that benefits only First Nations people.

Now, 10 years later, there is a growing number of people who realize the treaty is more. It is a sacred contract that is the basis for our land ownership in this province. The history of our province is rich because of the diverse background of our citizens. And all of these citizens are fortunate to have had the First Nations to help them build our province.

Last year, through Judge Arnot's efforts, we had the honour of celebrating in this legislature the historic relationship between First Nations and the Legislative Assembly. We believe that the OTC, through Judge Arnot, has been successful in helping the people of Saskatchewan understand the history of Saskatchewan through treaties. The Office of the Treaty Commissioner is essential in continuing the education. We are hopeful that the efforts of Judge Arnot will be continued and expanded in the future through the OTC.

On a personal note, we the official opposition would like to send our best wishes to Judge Arnot. All people in Saskatchewan have benefited from his dedication to the province, and we wish him personal happiness that reflects his dedication to this province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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 no. 851 through 885 inclusive.

The Speaker: — Responses for questions 851 to 885 have been submitted.

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 Saskatoon Northwest.

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed an honour and a pleasure to stand today to respond to the budget.

Prior to my comments I would like to thank the people in Saskatoon Northwest for their confidence in sending me to this House to represent all people in the constituency of Saskatoon

Northwest.

I'd like to also congratulate my new colleagues — my colleague from Martensville who won in a landslide by-election just recently, as well as my candidate from Weyburn. You know, it's been very fascinating since they both had the opportunity to enter our caucus to see new and vibrant young people who bring a new vision of this province — a vision as they understand it, a vision as they can see from the young people in this province.

You know, the Finance minister's already starting to beak and his arrogance is only exceeded by his rudeness.

You know the vision that these young people bring to this province, into our caucus, and to the Saskatchewan Party is a great opportunity. It's an opportunity for us to learn, to learn from them what the young people in this province truly want. You know, Mr. Speaker, when I listened to the budget and I saw the presentation, what I didn't see was a vision, a vision that was delivered from this government on how they would enhance the lives of people in this province. Not only did I not see a vision; I saw no plan. I saw no plans that incorporated into there how this money was to be utilized.

In the housing program is an example. We're putting 110 million into housing of which 50 million come from the federal government. And yet when were questioned in the estimates portion of it, they demonstrated absolutely no plan or no vision on how this could be done.

The plan that they had was to go out and seek consultation from the community which means . . . when questioning that this plan is really to be over the next three years. There was no plan consisted in there for seniors' housing. There was limited plans in there on looking after the 37,000 homes that this government has in its current portfolio.

In any . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, we will and we'll get to that right in a minute. We'll get back to the Finance minister. We certainly will because you know where it's going, is in the Premier's riding and since this man, the Premier, who was in Saskatoon at the high school saying that "I've waited 21 years to make this announcement," who has been the Social Service critic, the Health critic and the Premier of this province. And what's he done for his riding of Riversdale? He built a liquor store with a heart on it. Well isn't that just terrific. Waited 21 years to make this announcement. He had the ability to do it. If they hadn't wasted the \$50 million they spend annually on missed business adventures, what could that \$50 million done in our inner cities in this province of Saskatchewan?

So when they say what have they done, for 14 years they've done nothing — absolutely nothing. And then they come out with a plan of \$60 million from them and \$50 million from the federal government . . . what has no vision, no plan, and if it was taken to a bank in that format wouldn't get past first base.

You know, Madam Speaker, they can say what they want on this issue, but we know for a fact that they are talking with groups in Saskatoon to develop a plan. There was no plan in the beginning, and there was no vision. And this still will never be done in 21 years from now if this Premier is still there.

You know, Madam Deputy Speaker, when you see a plan and you have no vision of where you're going, it's not really a plan. This government has not had a plan or a vision since its inception.

An Hon. Member: — Or an idea.

Mr. Merriman: — Or an idea. You know, they came along and they gave seniors a drug plan. And then what did they do? They turned around and they raised SaskEnergy rates. They're about to raise SaskPower rates. Then it'll be SaskTel rates. And where will we be at the end? The seniors will be no further ahead, not one nickel ahead. Not one dime will they gain by the end of this calendar year when they're finished increasing the utility rates that'll take the money back right out of their pocket.

You know, Madam Deputy Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . You know, sharp businessman. I can absolutely say I've signed paycheques in my life, which is a lot more than most people on the other side of the thing. You know, money spent . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. I would remind all members there's an opportunity to enter into debate. The member has the floor right now, would like to continue with his address.

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. You know, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Community Resources launched a program a while ago on the advertising for foster families in this province. And the net effect of all of that advertising showed no increase. But what it did show in the new plan that came out, with everything this government does, is no consultation. They had absolutely no consultation with foster families' associations or other groups associated. And this is systematic throughout everything they do.

The Minister for Healthy Living is looking at, through the Health department, building a new detox centre, Calder Centre, in the city of Saskatoon. No consultation with the community. And where do they decide to put this? Right next to a grade school. Right next to a grade school, of all the locations. Now he'll hide behind the guise that this was the health district.

When I've talked to the parents that have called our offices, they said there was no consultation prior to this going on. And this is systematic with this government — no consultation. No consultation on the budget. No consultation on a vision. No consultation on a dream.

You know, the Minister of Community Resources got up and promised that we would have a report on the Red Willow facility, which we questioned in this House in December, and we still haven't got that. And the reason we don't have these things that we bring up in the House is that there is no plan. There is no concept within this organization to provide a vision and a plan that can be financed, can be created, and can show results.

[11:15]

In all the questions we ask, whether it be in this House or whether it be in committee, to show us the measurable goals and objectives that they've created or achieved over the time —

they don't have them. And why wouldn't you keep measurable goals and objectives so that you can know whether you're succeeding or not succeeding? Very evident why they don't — because they're not succeeding, and they don't want to show that. No matter what questions I asked in the estimates, of measurable goals and objectives, there wasn't one answer. There's never an answer on that.

Any business person that's successful in the province or in this country will tell you, you need measurable goals and objectives so that not only can you look at the critics to say what you're doing, but so you can garner the program for yourself whether it's successful. Not once in any question that I've asked has this government been able to say, we have a measurable goal and objective.

I heard the Minister of Health say, we're going to study a new . . . and put in \$1 million through a new health facility in North Battleford. Well I applaud him for the study. I wish it had happened a while ago, and it wasn't just an election ploy to put the study money in.

But I also heard him say — which triggered my ear — they were going to have two psychiatric nurse bases. Well if you're building a new facility and you're planning to have two psychiatric nurse facilities, how many years is it going to take to fully staff that facility? Once again, where's the plan? Where's the vision? And where's the tie-in . . . be training the professionals to fulfill that facility's dream of being a fully funded, fully operational, fully staffed facility. Two psych nurses a year. I don't get it. I just don't see how it can be done.

I also noticed that there was 250,000 for the Saskatoon Food Bank. And I'd just like to explain a little bit about that one. Last year the Regina Food Bank got \$500,000 for capital project on theirs. And the reason they got it was because of their head of their fundraising committee was from the firm, from the firm Olive Waller, the firm.

Saskatoon was there, and they got nothing. Not a cent. Other food banks didn't get a cent until we complained, until they started raising a . . . [inaudible] . . . for this. And the reason that they did was because there was no consultation — no consultation whatsoever.

You know, if you're going to do it for one food bank, do it for across the province. Why should one be different than the other? Where is the need greater? And why do we have such a great need in this province for food banks? Why do we have in the city of Saskatoon 1,200 young people from the university using the food bank? Why is that happening? Why do we have so many families? It is a growth industry in this province in a boom. And why is that? Why can that possibly happen that we have so many of our young people need to go to a food bank for assistance?

You know, Madam Deputy Speaker, it's very disappointing to sit and listen to a budget that provides dollars with no plans, for a budget that has no vision on how to create a society that we all want.

You know, this government has done very well in losing money in business ventures — \$50 million a year. Can you imagine

over the last four years of this Premier's reign what that \$200 million could have done for people who really need that money — for the poor, for the elderly?

You know, when I talked about the housing issue, I heard no vision in there for housing for seniors, which our demographics show that we have the largest senior population coming up. And yet of the 110 million, there was no allocation for seniors' housing for those who required it — not one dime. When asked about housing for special needs people, what were we going to do for them? Are we putting some of that money aside? Well you see no questions could be answered because there's no plan.

So how can you possibly answer the question when you don't have a vision of what you're doing with it? And the answer comes, we're in consultation. You know, when you look at that in the consultation side and you say that you're going to put 110 million over three years, we know what the rate of inflation is. We know. When I ask a simple question: how many units do you plan on building with that money? There's no answer. We don't know. It's a shame. You know, when we ask the simple question: how many seniors will be housed from this? There's no answer. When we ask, how much is going into special needs housing? No answer.

There's no answers because there's no plan. We have no vision on what we're doing. This government has lost its way. The only reason that we're seeing the numbers in the budget we're seeing today, Madam Deputy Speaker, is because we're coming into an election. You know, and it's terrible that we would put out money into programs where we have no plan or vision simply to buy votes. This is a vote-buying budget. It has no reality. It has no substance. It would not pass in any financial institution as a budget where money should be spent, with no plan and no structure. How can you take \$100 million for housing without a plan?

You know, we talked about the money for highways, you know, that we're giving — \$5 million over 10 years. We're already giving 400. It's an additional \$100 million. Well by year seven we will be putting less into highways than we are today just due to inflation. So what kind of vision is that? Where was the escalator in there for inflation so that at least we knew that we had the full funding plus escalation into it? Well we don't.

Where's the vision on which highways go first? Where's the idea? Where's the concept? Where's the time frames? People are asking the question. They don't have it because they don't have a strategy on what to do. They never did have a strategy.

You know, if they stopped flying around the province and started driving around the province, they may see what's going on. You know, the Premier in his own riding, which is so pleased to make this . . . Well it's not really his riding because he lives in Moose Jaw. But where he's supposed to live, if he were walking around the streets, he would see what is going on in his own area. He would see that he has done nothing in that area for the last eight years. And now we're going to have a project with no plan.

You know, Madam Deputy Speaker, this budget's all about elections. It is all about elections. It has no vision. It has no

plan. It has no strategy, and if left unto its own, it will fail dramatically. You know, Madam Deputy Speaker, based on this, there is no way that I can support this budget. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Community Resources, the member for Athabasca.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I just want to point out that I rise in proud support of the budget that was tabled in this Assembly last week, and there's a number of reasons why, Mr. Speaker. And we'll certainly allude to those reasons why I've done so.

And I'll continue doing so and stand in proud support of this government and to tell the people of Saskatchewan that whatever the doom and gloom that we hear from the members opposite, just chalk it up to doom and gloom because that is their job, is to bring down Saskatchewan and bring down the people of Saskatchewan and call down the province and not defend the province. That's their job, Mr. Speaker, and they do their job very well in spite of some of the work that we're trying to do to raise the province to a great province that it is, to a level it should stay, and a level it will stay for many, many years, Mr. Speaker.

I was very happy this morning, Mr. Speaker. I asked a friend of mine, Donna Easto, for a quote. And she'd mentioned that she had a lot of Native American quotes. And one of the ones that I want to use today in response to some of the points raised by the opposition — and certainly in support of our budget — and it goes . . . It's a Navajo quote, Madam Speaker. It goes: "You cannot wake a person who is pretending to be asleep." And, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly why I think that it's appropriate that we point that quote at the Sask Party opposition because quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, they are trying to get the people of Saskatchewan to forget their past and to forget what they may have said in the past and really not to pay attention to what they are all about, Madam Speaker.

And I'll point out I'm very, very pleased, Madam Speaker, to be here on behalf of the constituents of Athabasca to support this budget because if not for the people of La Loche, of Pinehouse, of Buffalo Narrows, and many communities in my region, I would not be here today to support and see the progress this government has made and thus certainly benefit the North and the province from every corner of this great province as possible. The benefits are certainly there.

Madam Speaker, I was very happy to hear the Premier say on the radio before this session started that this was going to be a session of definition. A session of definition where we point to the people of Saskatchewan what exactly those guys across the way stand for and what they plan on doing if they ever — and I point out if they ever — form government in Saskatchewan, but I don't see that happening at all, Madam Speaker.

And now I think it's our turn. And I tell my colleagues on the table we have been sitting back and watching the manipulation from across the way, from the right wingers — their agenda manipulation to try and confuse the facts and to try and do all they can in their quest for power — to try and achieve power so

they can go on with their agenda. I remind the people of Saskatchewan a number of things as who put this province in the mess that it was in when we took over. It was those guys, Madam Speaker. It was those guys. And since then we have reduced our debt, Madam Speaker. We've done a much better job than ever, not that there's much room for improvement from those guys. But we have done a much better job at building this province, reducing its debt, and providing hope for the people of Saskatchewan, not doom and gloom like the members opposite often like to preach.

From my perspective I tell the people of Saskatchewan this, and the people of Athabasca, don't buy into their agenda of manipulation and mistruths. First of all I look across the way and what do I see, Madam Speaker? What do I see? I see people out there that are liberals when it's popular to be liberals. Then I see the people across the way that are conservatives when it's popular to be conservatives. I see those guys . . . Whoever is in the gallery, that's who they'll talk to. That's what they'll fight for their issue. Whoever's in the gallery that day, that's who they'll jump onside, and they'll play to the crowd as well, Madam Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, the other thing too . . . Now what they're doing, Madam Speaker, is they're twisting stories and they're throwing allegations all over the place, Madam Speaker. And more so, Mr. Speaker, what is really totally disgusting is that they're promising everything to everybody. They're promising everything to everybody.

And last but not least, Madam Speaker, let's throw in the name change. Let's throw in a name change. Maybe that'll confuse the people of Saskatchewan because we're pretending to be asleep from our past. Well, Madam Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan don't buy that agenda, and I urge them to watch very carefully because right across the way there's a party that will mutate to anything. They'll mutate to being Liberals, or they'll mutate to being Conservatives, or they'll mutate to the crowd in the gallery, or they'll mutate to whatever story's in the paper. They'll do what they have to do to try and be everything to everybody. They'll throw in allegations and they'll change their name and they'll do all these things. But, Madam Speaker, I tell the people of Saskatchewan, do not buy into that agenda of manipulation and mistruths as represented by the Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Speaker.

And one of the things that I think is important as well, when I sit here and people ask me, well why do you not support some of the positions that the Sask Party has taken on the budget? Well first of all, Madam Speaker, they haven't taken any positions. I look at the Finance critic. That's got to be one of the worst Finance critics in the history of this Assembly, and right across the country, Madam Speaker.

Because last year I listened to him on the radio — the Finance critic — and he says, a mountain of money, we got a mountain of money. What are the NDP going to do with it? Well I listened to that Finance critic, and he spent \$1 billion a block, Madam Speaker. I put on the radio and I went one block; he spent a billion there. I went the next block, another billion. And I went to the third block, another billion. I finally got to the fourth block, he spent 4 billion and thank goodness, Madam Speaker, I arrived at my destination because he would've went

on.

And one of the things that's really important now, is today, is today, 12 months later . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Right. Last week, last year he said, we'll remove the, we'll put on PST [provincial sales tax] on restaurant meals or we'll . . . There is no PST on restaurant meals. Get with the program.

And now today he says, oh but it's not sustainable now. Oh they're not sustainable or where are you going to cut? So last year they're spending billions and billions. Today now it's not sustainable.

He wants to raise the SGI Auto Fund. He wants to . . . more taxes cut. They're promising more money to the teachers and to the nurses. And, Mr. Speaker, they're trying to do everything to everybody. It depends who walks in the gallery. Next week it might be a totally different group. Guess what? Those guys, that little puppet will get up and say, well let's help these people out.

[11:30]

Well that's not leadership, Madam Speaker. That's not leadership. That is just a quest and a hunger for power, and they will do anything to try and achieve it. And, Madam Speaker, that is why the people of Saskatchewan don't trust the Saskatchewan Party, because the Saskatchewan Party will do what's good for them and not for the people of Saskatchewan.

And the other thing that's really, really difficult, Madam Speaker, as I sit in my chair and I listen to what's happening from across the way — and you know what's happening? — is we have this huge fight with Ottawa. They took out 800 million bucks from Saskatchewan, \$800 million. That could have went a long ways, could've done a lot of things with 800 million.

What did they do, Madam Speaker? Oh we don't want to fight. We want to sit here, want to be nice little boys and girls. We don't want to fight the hand that pats us on the head, as the member from Saskatoon Massey Place pointed out. And that is not the Saskatchewan spirit. We're going to manage our money. We're going to build on our economy. We're going to make great things happen. And we're fighters. We're fighters.

They don't want to fight because why? Now I hear the member, the member from . . . the Finance critic, they gave a \$500 donation to one of the PC [Progressive Conservative] federal MPs [Member of Parliament]. They're not only not fighting these guys, but they're helping them win. And when they help them win, Saskatchewan loses, Madam Speaker. And we stand up to fight for Saskatchewan people. Those guys are fading away, fading away.

And I say to the people of Saskatchewan, where is our fight? Where is our fight? Where's our fight? It's not across the way. It's in these government benches, and we'll continue to fight — despite dragging a big pile of wasted political fat, if you like, on that side — on our way to fight Ottawa to make sure things are happening, Madam Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — And I'll point out as well their agenda, their agenda of manipulation, mistruths, allegations — you know, promise me everything. And I was just sitting here, and there's about three or four groups that walked into the Assembly one day after another. And every group, every group, those guys jump to their side promising them everything.

And you know, Madam Speaker, it just totally disgusts me to sit here in this Assembly, watch that kind of antics from a party that hopes to be government. And I say, no way should we ever let those guys back in because they got us to where we're at in the early '90s, and they want to now come back and finish off Saskatchewan. They want to finish their job they started. And I'd tell the people of Saskatchewan — I'm going to send them a big, loud message — no way. No way are we going back to that party ever again, Madam Speaker.

And I'll point out as well if you look at the positive, powerful sides, the powerful, positive sides of this government and its spending, Madam Speaker, people in Saskatchewan ought to know that there's record spending in health care. And the Minister of Health has alluded to all the different surgeries. There's hip and knee replacements, the eye surgeries. There's thousands performed every day, every week, Madam Speaker; it's a wonderful system. And yes, is there challenges and problems? Absolutely, absolutely, because we have an aging population and it's always a challenge to make sure we're able to meet all those demands. But is it a good system? Madam Speaker, the answer is yes. And this government is putting more resources with this budget to make sure we continue bringing that level of care as best we can to the people of Saskatchewan.

The education budget — at one time I was told in this Assembly that the interest on our debt when we first assumed the government in the early '90s after those guys were in power, it was almost twice as much. The interest on the debt was almost twice as much as our provincial education budget — isn't that amazing, isn't that amazing? — thanks to those guys. Today now it is almost three times our provincial interest payment, Mr. Speaker.

So I think if you look at the proof, you look at what's being spent, what's been done, Mr. Speaker, how could you even give consideration that the Saskatchewan Party is a successful alternative to what this government has done for the people of Saskatchewan? It's just not reasonable at all to think about that, Mr. Speaker.

Last four years we have cut over a billion dollars from our debt — a billion dollars. We could have used that money elsewhere, Mr. Speaker, but we cut because we know that saves money for Saskatchewan people for years to come. The austerity budgets that we had to put in place, whether it is the former minister or the minister before him and this current minister, we will continue focusing on slaying that PC debt left to us by those guys opposite.

Mr. Speaker, we have the most connected province. Whether it's Internet or whether it's telephone, cell phone use, we've got the most connected province in the country. We have an ambitious 10-year highways plan. Last four years I think that the price is \$600 million in tax cuts by this Premier alone. And

we mustn't forget, we mustn't forget, Mr. Speaker, the economy is hot, hot, hot.

And, Mr. Speaker, if you look at all those good, wonderful stories, all the good stuff that's being done, the only people that just don't get it are the people opposite because they don't want to get it, Mr. Speaker. They don't want to see the good that this government is doing because all their agenda is, is not about the good of the province but what's good for the Saskatchewan Party.

So looking at the overview . . . we have good education. We have good management. We have a good plan. We have good health care. And Mr. Speaker, there's prosperity and there's hope and there's vision for the people of Saskatchewan. And every time there's a grey cloud on the horizon, that grey cloud across the way is putting that grey cloud over the people of Saskatchewan and shame on them, shame on them, shame on them.

And I'll say again, Mr. Speaker, what's really important that this government on this side . . . what I say to the opposition and to all those who may be manipulated by them and may be somehow convinced by them, it's time for you to come back to reality because now it's our turn on the government side to tell the people the real story behind the Saskatchewan Party and what they plan on doing and what their strategy is.

I know and I say it very openly, that in terms of some of the agendas that we ask for them to clarify — whether it's the health agenda or the economic agenda, whatever the agenda may be — we are asking for clarification, and guess what? They are not giving us any clarification because they don't have a plan.

And I tell every Aboriginal person that I meet, don't buy into their agenda because they have no agenda. They have no plan, and we're much smarter than that to simply go to them because they want to promise us some great things. And we don't see nothing written down and no commitments.

And I will close, Mr. Speaker, on some very important notes, very important notes. In the last 16 years that this opposition has told us we're a tired and old government, the last 16 years we have paid, according to my calculations and information I received from Finance, over \$12 billion in interest alone — \$12 billion in interest alone in the last 16 years, \$12 billion in interest alone. Imagine for a moment, Mr. Speaker, what we could have done with \$12 billion that we had to pay as a government. And that's why many years, the first few years, 10, 12 years, we were busy cleaning up their mess.

And finally we get a little bit of daylight. We're starting to do some of the things that this budget speaks of, Mr. Speaker. It talks about some of the valuable things that we are trying to do, and I will point out again some of the valuable things that this budget proposes.

Of course there's a \$15 prescription cost for seniors, which is going to help a tremendous amount of people. From now on you go see your doctor and you got a prescription. It's not 100, 300, or \$500 a month. It's \$15 per prescription, and it's covered under a drug plan thanks to this government. You look at the

20,000 over five years for the young kids making their careers here. You look at record seats for your people. You look at housing in the inner city and the North. And this is a fantastic budget.

And finally in my final minute, I'll basically thank some of the folks that have worked with us and continue to work because their work will be felt for many years. I thank the member from Saskatoon Greystone who has announced that he's retiring. And such a strong human being, very strong, and this party and this province benefited from his work. The member from the Regina Rosemont who's done a lot of work and is a champion fighter, she will be missed. And Mr. Speaker, I want to thank her for her incredible amount of work. As well the member from Saskatoon Massey Place, there's no question that some of the work in tax cuts and the red-hot economy . . . must be the most bored economic minister in the country because the economy's so hot. I want to thank him for his service and to the people of Saskatchewan, the legacy that all three of these individuals have left and something that we're very proud of as a party.

And I look across the way, there's nothing there, there never was anything there, and there never will be anything there. And, Mr. Speaker, come next election — it's going to come — I tell the people of Saskatchewan we're confident. We're working hard. We're coming back, and come next election we are going to rock them. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it was really good to hear the member's voice from Athabasca. We haven't heard that voice for awhile. We certainly haven't heard it answering questions in question period with the Murdoch Carriere scandal.

And I noticed in his comments today, he has a short memory. He forgets that not that many years ago he sat on this side of the House and, along with everybody over here, criticized the same government he's sitting with, the same government he's in bed with today, in fact was even more boisterous on this side saying that everything that NDP government was doing was hurting the North. It's really surprising how now he's changed his tune when he's sitting on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, just as I start I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the new member for Martensville — by the way, one of the biggest hammerings the NDP has taken in the history of the province of Saskatchewan. It's so good to see her in here. We miss the former member very, very much, but it's good to see her here, and it's also good to see her join the member for Weyburn. Two young dynamic MLAs, both two by-election MLAs that have sent the NDP a very, very strong message: what's to come in the province should they ever get the intestinal fortitude built up to call a provincial election. The Martensville numbers were astounding, Mr. Speaker, and I think that's why the Premier is already hinting there may be no election till the spring of 2008.

Mr. Speaker, speaking about this budget, the first thing I think

that has to be said and re-said, as many of the members on this side have talked about, is the \$701 million deficit. Mr. Speaker, it's amazing that even the NDP — a government that can squander money at a rate faster than any government in this country or for that matter probably than any state in the US [United States] — can blow money at the speed they can.

How at a time when revenues are higher than they've ever been in the province's history — I believe the revenues right now are up to about 7.7 billion — how at the same time they can spend about 8.4 billion in a budget except for the fact that they're trying to buy votes for this election, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to talk about the Ag budget. But I think I would be remiss if I didn't make a few comments on the situation with the Canadian Wheat Board and some of the things that the Ag minister has actually been talking about in the last few days. And this is the survey or the vote that farmers had whether they wanted to keep the barley market under the wheat board's realm or whether they wanted to do away with it.

And, Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting that this morning even Ken Ritter from the Canadian Wheat Board — chairman of the Canadian Wheat Board — says that these numbers are actually consistent with its annual findings, its annual surveys that they do. So I got looking at it a little closer in some of their surveys, Mr. Speaker. And the question that the Canadian Wheat Board has asked in the past number of years has been very much identical to what the federal government asked in the barley plebiscite that they just did.

So for the Minister of Agriculture, the Saskatchewan Minister of Agriculture, to be saying in the media that he thinks that he will sue the federal government, take them to court, because the system is flawed, well it's the same question that the Canadian Wheat Board was asking and the numbers are very . . . [inaudible] . . . of what the Canadian Wheat Board has got over the last couple of years.

I'll just give you the Canadian Wheat Board numbers, Mr. Speaker, and these are from Saskatchewan. The people that voted to keep the barley in the wheat board, 32 per cent; dual marketing, 46 per cent; open marketing, 16 per cent. So the numbers vary a little bit, Mr. Speaker. But when you add them up and tally the total of the number of farmers that want to keep barley under the wheat board, it's about 38 per cent. When you look at the farmers that want it opened up, and this is what they voted was 62 per cent.

So that's a very clear message from the farmers of Saskatchewan today, Mr. Speaker, saying to this government, who has spent taxpayers' dollars from the province of Saskatchewan lobbying to keep it under the wheat board, the farmers have sent them a clear message. They've sent the federal government and Mr. Strahl a clear message — we do not want barley under the wheat board.

They haven't said take it away from the wheat board. They said we want our choice. If they keep the wheat . . . barley under the wheat board that's fine with the majority of farmers, but we want our choice to market our grain as we see fit, when we want to market it, and for how much we want to market. And that's what the whole issue comes down to, Mr. Speaker.

And I believe down the road that the farmers will be talking about wheat in that same type of voice when they find out that barley, probably they will get a better return when they can market it themselves and not be locked in under the Canadian Wheat Board, which I might add, Mr. Speaker, we all know — as many of us as farmers in this province — that it's not really a Canadian Wheat Board. It's a western prairie province wheat board. Ontario and Quebec take no part in it, want no part of it, and want to market their own grain. And they're doing very well at it.

[11:45]

I think, Mr. Speaker, and especially in light of the Agriculture minister cutting the Ag budget about \$67 million this year, that even he is optimistic about what's going to happen with barley prices now that it won't be under the wheat board, because he's estimating that revenues from farm income will be up this year. Well probably part of that reason will be because farmers can market their own barley and the odds of getting a better price are far greater. Even the minister, I think, realizes that. Although you certainly won't hear the minister saying that because he wants everything locked under the wheat board and keep walls up around Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the numbers as I said before, there was 29,067 farmers cast votes and of that, 15,327 were from Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan was very similar to the overall trend although the numbers were down a bit. I believe it was 45 per cent said they want to keep the wheat board in Saskatchewan. But, Mr. Speaker, I think surprising to that minister — I'm sure surprising to that minister and very disappointing to that minister because this was certainly not what he was lobbying for — 55 per cent of Saskatchewan farmers said we want the choice to market our own grain, grown on our own land, inputs paid for by us. We want the right to do that and I think finally they're going to get that right, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, I might add to that too, before I leave the wheat board plebiscite, that where the minister is saying that vote was flawed, he might take into consideration how the vote . . . the ballots were sent out. You could be a farmer in the province of Saskatchewan that had 100 acres of barley in last year or the last few years, or you could also be a very big farmer; we're getting many of them in the province today. You could have 10,000 acres of barley. And, Mr. Speaker, each of those farmers got one vote.

So I don't know. I can't even understand how that minister says this is flawed in favour of open marketing, when many of the big farmers that I talked to in this province want to market their own grain. Because number one, they have a great volume of barley in this case and they feel that they can get a better price for that barley if they have the option to market it on their own.

And, Mr. Speaker, now with technology as it is, farmers can sit at home in their office or their kitchen table, and everyday they can check prices for every commodity — be that whether it's barley, wheat, canola, whatever it is. And after barley is removed from the monopoly of the wheat board, the only thing left will be wheat that's left that they can't really go out and look for a price that they can receive for their product because they're still locked under the wheat board.

And the minister, Mr. Speaker, has said in the past that the wheat board is doing such a great job for us. He has also said that when the monopoly is taken away from farmers, those farmers in Saskatchewan are going to lose \$600 million. That's an amazing quote, Mr. Speaker, because no one would know if we're going to gain more, if we're going to lose, because we've never been in a situation in this province for the last 60, 70 years, where we've had the right to market our own products at a time we want to market them and for the price that we feel is the one we want to sell for.

So those numbers that he's using — and I've heard others use those numbers — are completely false because there's nothing to compare it to. We will soon know though, Mr. Speaker, as farmers start this next fall. After August I believe Mr. Strahl said, changes will come. I believe farmers will see and really enjoy marketing their own grain for the best price they can receive.

And, Mr. Speaker, if prices go up . . . And I think the minister thinks that's going to happen because why else would he cut the agriculture budget in the province of Saskatchewan to the tune of \$67 million? Mr. Speaker, he's making those cuts to Saskatchewan agriculture budget by saying well last year we forecast \$264 million for agriculture. Actually we put more in. This year we're estimating 301 million.

What he's forgetting to tell farmers that Saskatchewan Agriculture, Sask Ag and Food last year spent \$368 million on agriculture. Now that included money for the Northeast for flooding — \$10 an acre, much appreciated by the farmers in the Northeast. But what do we hear on the radio this morning, Mr. Speaker? The flooding has started again. And yet in that minister and that NDP government's budget there's not one red cent in this budget allotted for flooding in the Northeast. Something that on this side we know is going to happen and something very definitely the farmers in the Northeast know that's happening. In fact it's starting to happen today.

Mr. Speaker, where on earth will that Ag minister and that government get the money to help those farmers out when this flooding really gets to the point where maybe . . . And we hope this doesn't happen but it looks to me like it could happen again where thousands of acres cannot be seeded because they'll be under water. Where will that government get the money?

Mr. Speaker, remember that this is a government that's just come out with a budget with \$701 million deficit. They already have a deficit of \$701 million, and should they have to put money in . . . And I believe they're going to have to put money into disaster assistance like the Northeast, like the Southwest for drought. Mr. Speaker, actually \$701 million is not the actual number. That number, if you add in what they're going to have to put in for agriculture — we're very sure they're going to — the deficit will actually be bigger.

In fact if you added the amount they spent last year on agriculture in the province of Saskatchewan they'd have to add another 67 million to that deficit. Now we're up to almost \$800 million deficit in the province of Saskatchewan at a time when we have an oil and gas windfall money coming in. And this government, because there's an election may be coming if the Premier screws up the courage to call one, we want to buy votes

so let's blow the bank. And that's exactly what they've done, Mr. Speaker.

They are the first ones to criticize the '80s and criticize the past Devine government and guess what that government's doing today, Mr. Speaker. They're doing exactly what happened in the '80s, in fact actually at a higher rate, a faster speed that they're putting this province back into debt. I heard one of the members — I believe it was the member for Athabasca — talked about, talked about, Mr. Speaker, lowering the debt for Saskatchewan. Well when it comes to believing that Finance minister or believing the member for Athabasca, I will believe the Provincial Auditor.

And you know what he says, Mr. Speaker? The Provincial Auditor last year said that the debt, the debt for Saskatchewan . . .

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

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I needed that break. Mr. Speaker, when we come to talk about the debt for Saskatchewan, before I will believe that Finance minister or the member for Athabasca who was talking about it, the Provincial Auditor last year said, I believe, the number was \$12.1 billion debt in the province of Saskatchewan. That's not the number they're telling anybody. In fact in this budget they're spinning that they're paying the debt down.

If they're paying the debt down and have been paying the debt down, why in 1991 was the debt about 12.1 billion, and the auditor, the Provincial Auditor says that's what the debt was last year? That debt has gone down by nothing, Mr. Speaker. And if you add in 700 million more that they're taking now, some out of the rainy day fund, but as that rate of spending continues into the next few years, Mr. Speaker, the next government in this province is going to have to start cleaning up the mess that these people are making, that Finance minister's making, and that Premier is making in the province of Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have a big job to do on this side of the House, and we're preparing for that job. And I just wish the government would call the election before they create any more misery in the province, dig us into a bigger hole than we're already in, and we have to do even more than we know we do now to clean up the mess, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about our municipalities. And I was up at SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] convention, Mr. Speaker, when the Premier come up there and the Minister for Government Relations come up there, just beaming, Mr. Speaker. And they were announcing \$10 million for RMs.

And I thought, you know, I was standing at the back of the hall, Mr. Speaker, and I thought now this is really going to be a positive announcement for the ratepayers, the councillors, the reeves from every RM in the province were in the room. The hall was packed because they have a lot of concerns with what's happening in the province.

And do you know, Mr. Speaker, when they made that announcement, there was really just a cordial hand for the Premier and the Government Relations minister. But they were not as enthused as the government had hoped they would be. And do you know why that is, Mr. Speaker? Because for the last 15, 16 years, this government has been downloading on municipalities.

I remember back. I was a reeve and a councillor in an RM in the early '90s when this government helped balance the books on the back of municipalities. And that money that they have taken away on municipalities in the '90s has never been returned to the extent that it should be.

If you add inflation into the numbers, they should be receiving a far higher number of dollars to keep the municipal infrastructure up. The same infrastructure that the Premier's talking about when he made his highways announcement.

Well, Mr. Speaker, RMs [rural municipality] out there, us as local taxpayers out there with municipal taxes to pay every year, have had to carry the load for infrastructure out there and try and help keep Saskatchewan from . . . rural Saskatchewan from dying out there with very little help from this government.

Mr. Speaker, what we would like to see on this side of the House is a formula for revenue-sharing for municipalities. And we've been saying this for a number of years. We would like to see a revenue-sharing formula that's tied to the income for the province of Saskatchewan so that when the revenues are up like they are now, municipalities would have that benefit — whether you're a city, a town, or RM. And when they go down, the revenue-sharing would go accordingly. From what I hear from reeves and councillors and mayors and aldermen, at least then they would be able to plan over long-term and know exactly where they stand and be able to provide the infrastructure that they have to.

And, Mr. Speaker, when we get to be government — whether it's this spring, this fall, next spring — we will certainly be working with municipalities and again towns, villages, cities, RMs, everybody out there to grow the economy. Because, Mr. Speaker, we know when we get to be government, this province is actually really going to start to grow. And we have to provide the infrastructure dollars for that increased volume of traffic and people and businesses that are going to come to the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, as I said before, the Ag budget is cut for this year in this budget and I find that amazing. But I guess the question then to the minister is: what programs will not be funded by the NDP government this year that they funded last year? Mr. Speaker, as we know, the CAIS [Canadian agricultural income stabilization] program was not fully funded to start with last year and they had to put it in. So I guess it's either run a \$67 million deficit on top of what they already have or funding cuts to programs out there.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to talk about education tax on property and especially when it comes to farm land. But really when you look at the education tax, Mr. Speaker, all across this province — whether you're a young family trying to buy your home, first home — the education tax on properties is a big expense. I also

get calls from seniors out there, Mr. Speaker, where possibly one of the husband or the wife has passed away and the widow is trying to stay in her own home, but when it comes to the education tax part, she cannot afford to stay in her own home. I go back to young families out there, Mr. Speaker, one of the biggest handicaps to owning their own home is the cost of education tax. And it can be in the city of Regina. It can be any one of our towns out there.

Or it can be on the farm out there. Because a farm out there right now, Mr. Speaker, if they have 10 quarters of land, five, five fifty a quarter just in education tax, are looking at a bill of probably 5,500, \$6,000 in education tax. And at a time when we've gone through in agriculture . . . Times haven't been all that great. That's a big expense for many out there in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. So we would like to see that addressed and not, Mr. Speaker, as the government has done.

We'll have . . . I think four years ago they had \$25 million a year for two years, then a year ago they put in \$55 million. But people out there that are paying taxes have no idea where they're going with this. They do with education tax; they deal with education tax, the NDP do, as they do with everything else. Let's fly by the seat of our pants. Let's deal with it for one year and then, Mr. Speaker, we'll see what happens down the road.

Actually what we're seeing this year in many areas — not just with education tax but many others — it looks to me like they're dealing with the problems they have today with no vision what's to come down the road. And we hope to get by the next election and then you know what we'll do, Mr. Speaker? As they've done in the past, I believe it was the last election where they said no new taxes. And then as soon as they got elected they raised taxes in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I think we're going to see the same thing happen again, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, I could go on here for hours. I have a lot more to say and I'm sure the members opposite would like me to go on but I'd like to let some of my colleagues take part in the debate. So thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak my support. And I support the amendment, and I will not be supporting the budget, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Massey Place, the Minister for Industry and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise and participate in the budget debate. And I'd like to thank my constituents in Saskatoon Massey Place for providing me with the opportunity to do so. And I'd also like to say how much I consider it to be a privilege and an honour to serve them in the Legislative Assembly.

I have announced of course that I'm not seeking re-election in the next election after four terms here. And I certainly have enjoyed my time here and I have found it to be most rewarding. And mainly, Mr. Speaker, I've found the opportunity to serve the public and to devote part of my life to public service to be

very rewarding and I certainly encourage others to do so.

I'd like to thank my wife, Pauline, and my family for all the support I've had over the years doing this job. I'd like to thank my constituency assistants, Treena Dobson, Donna Rederburg, and Lynda MacPherson, who have done such a good job for me helping me in my constituency. Certainly my supporters and the members of the New Democratic Party in Massey Place. I also am very thankful to the staff of this Legislative Building, Mr. Speaker, and also my ministerial staff who have served me very well, and also the public service with whom I've had a good relationship and certainly enjoyed working over the years.

[12:00]

I also would like to say that I've enjoyed meeting so many colleagues on both sides of the House. Even though we have a lot of debates, Mr. Speaker, and have differences of opinion, I do have many friends on both sides of the House and I certainly will miss them as I move on to other challenges.

I want, Mr. Speaker, to concentrate my remarks today on the question of equalization and the response of the federal government to the equalization question and the request by the province of Saskatchewan through our Premier and other ministers, like the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Government Relations, that the Prime Minister keep his promise to the people of Saskatchewan and the promise that was made to the people of Saskatchewan by the 12 Conservative members of parliament that were elected from Saskatchewan.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I am just a very simple prairie lawyer and I don't always understand all the nuances of the arrangements between the Saskatchewan Party and the Conservatives, and the Leader of the Opposition and the Prime Minister, and so on. It all gets a bit confusing for me, Mr. Speaker.

I know that there may be things that I don't know about and maybe the Leader of the Opposition could help me. And the Saskatchewan Party, who support the Conservative members of parliament we have, could help me understand. Because I think the Leader of the Opposition is a good friend of Prime Minister Harper, who is a good friend of the Premier of Ontario, Dalton McGuinty. And I think he's a good friend of Jean Charest, the Premier of Quebec — and I'm going to have more to say about that, Mr. Speaker — and then of course Mario Dumont in Quebec who's like-minded conservatively. And so I think, you know, the Leader of the Opposition and the Prime Minister and the Premier of Ontario and Jean Charest and Mario Dumont, they have an understanding of things that I may not understand, Mr. Speaker, and maybe they could probably help me.

I mean, the question I would want to put to them is fairly simple and I'll elaborate why I would ask that question and that is . . . My question, Mr. Speaker, is: why is Saskatchewan so different from other provinces in the eyes of the Conservative government, Mr. Speaker? Why are we so different? And, you know, we could start with, we could start with reference to the province of Alberta, Mr. Speaker.

And one thing that people may not know, Mr. Speaker, is that

when Alberta became a have province — like Saskatchewan is — because of oil revenue, the federal government allowed the province of Alberta to keep its revenues from natural resources for seven years so that they could build up their economy, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to repeat that because the members of the opposition — even though they say they support our government and the people of Saskatchewan on the equalization question — they continue to yell and heckle me as I try to hold Ottawa and the Conservatives to account. And I think that's telling, Mr. Speaker, but I'm going to repeat. Alberta was given seven years to keep their revenue from natural resources as they were becoming a have province. Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, is not given the same deal.

And my question is, why? Why is there one rule for Alberta and another rule for Saskatchewan? And why does the Conservative government and the Conservative Party and the 12 members that represent us in Ottawa that are Conservatives, why do they treat Saskatchewan differently than Alberta? Why is that?

Now I want to say a few words about Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. Manitoba, which is a similar province to Saskatchewan, will this year and every year — and I have nothing against the people of Alberta or Manitoba — but they will receive from Ottawa in equalization, Mr. Speaker, close to \$2 billion a year. Two billion dollars a year, Mr. Speaker. And what will Saskatchewan receive? Next year, Mr. Speaker, zero.

People should know this, Mr. Speaker. Manitoba, 2 billion. Same economy, same population basically. Saskatchewan, zero. And, Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons is Manitoba has a renewable resource which we know is hydroelectric power that they make a lot of money from. That is not counted as income to Manitoba. Yet in Saskatchewan where we have non-renewable resources like oil and gas, uranium, potash, those are counted, Mr. Speaker.

Now one rule for Manitoba: you don't count their revenues. Another rule for Saskatchewan. Now why a different rule? And why, Mr. Speaker, does the Conservative government in Ottawa — with the support of the Saskatchewan Party and their Conservative friends — have one rule for Manitoba and a different rule for Saskatchewan? The question again is, why is Saskatchewan treated differently by the Conservatives? Why is that?

Now we move on, moving east to the province of Ontario, Mr. Speaker. And here, here, Mr. Speaker, what do the Conservatives tell us in their budget? This is what they tell us. They said we cannot have the deal we promised for the people of Saskatchewan because it would make them better off than people in Ontario. I'm going to repeat that, Mr. Speaker, because it's almost unbelievable. The federal government said, in their response and their denial of their promise on equalization, the people of Saskatchewan could not have a new deal on equalization because they might become better off than people in Ontario.

Now why, Mr. Speaker, is there one rule for Ontario people and another rule for Saskatchewan people, just like we see in Alberta, just like we see in Manitoba?

The reality is, Mr. Speaker, in the eyes of the Conservative Party, Saskatchewan is treated differently and not equally with other parts of the country. And that's a serious issue. And the people of this province, Mr. Speaker, are going to have to seriously examine whether they want to keep traipsing to the polls and loyally electing Conservatives to Ottawa who, when they get there, turn their backs on the people of Saskatchewan. That is a question that has to be asked — and notwithstanding the protestations of the Saskatchewan Party over there, Mr. Speaker, that somehow they're not supporting the Conservatives in Ottawa. There isn't a thinking person in this province that doesn't know that they support the Conservative government in Ottawa, Mr. Speaker. There isn't a thinking person that doesn't know that.

Now we move on, moving west to the province of Quebec. We all . . .

An Hon. Member: — That's east, Eric.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — East. East. That's right. The member from the opposition points out that it's east. It depends which way you're going around the world, Mr. Speaker. But the closest way is east.

Now we saw that Alberta had a seven-year holiday from counting their royalty revenues. What holiday did Saskatchewan get? Zero years. We saw, Mr. Speaker, that Manitoba gets exclusion of some of their revenues and they get \$2 billion. What do we get, Mr. Speaker? Zero. We saw the Conservatives say that the people of Saskatchewan could never be allowed to be better off than the people of Ontario. So from their point of view, next year we get zero.

Now moving east into Quebec. You know, I'm looking at an article from the *Edmonton Sun*, dated Sunday, March 25 — that was just the day before the Quebec election. And Greg Weston is writing there on national affairs. And he says this, Mr. Speaker, he says:

Stephen Harper's clever attempt to cook up a federalist victory in tomorrow's Quebec election . . .

And note his words:

. . . with gluttonous servings of political pork . . .

Gluttonous servings of political pork to whom, Mr. Speaker? To the people of the province of Quebec through Jean Charest, because that is what the Conservatives see as in their political interests. They are trying to get more seats in Quebec and Ontario and everybody knows that. And if they have to forget about Saskatchewan, notwithstanding our 12 Conservative MPs, they're prepared to do so.

Now unfortunately, from the Conservatives' point of view, their attempt to buy the Quebec election did not work — although they have two allies, Jean Charest and Mario Dumont, leading large contingents in the Quebec National Assembly. But, Mr. Speaker, what is clear about this is, just as the Conservatives turned their backs on Saskatchewan people, contrary to what they did in Alberta, contrary to what they did in Manitoba, contrary to what they're doing in Ontario — which was a big

winner in the budget also — Quebec was a big winner too. Because while they were catering to Central Canada and trying to get the votes and the seats in Central Canada, Mr. Speaker, they turned their backs on the people of this province. That is what they have done.

And the member from Wood River says, am I going to get to this budget? Mr. Speaker, there is nothing more relevant to this budget and the people of Saskatchewan than the taking away of \$800 million by Ottawa and putting that money in the province of Quebec.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — There is nothing more relevant to this budget than that question. And what I find most amusing here, Mr. Speaker, is that the member from Wood River and other members are yelling from their seats because they're upset that I am pointing out what the Conservatives in Ottawa are doing. And they don't want to have it discussed because they are complicit. Because who put the Conservatives in power in Ottawa, Mr. Speaker? They did. And they don't want to be held to account for the fact that our 12 Conservative members of parliament have turned their backs on the people of Saskatchewan, people that they elected, Mr. Speaker. So they don't want me to talk about it but I'm going to talk about it.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — And so Mr. Weston points out that Quebec, which has 25 per cent of the population of this country, before the Conservative budget, Mr. Speaker . . . after the Liberals they had 49 per cent of the federal transfer payments for equalization. Now they have 56 per cent. And do you know where that other 7 per cent came from, Mr. Speaker? It came from the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — And that's where it came from. And if anybody doesn't want to believe that, Mr. Speaker, let me quote the Prime Minister before he was elected prime minister, and this is what he had to say. He said, and I'm quoting, Mr. Speaker:

The Prime Minister [he was referring to Paul Martin then] is also failing Saskatchewan on equalization. The government promised to reform the equalization program in 2004 . . . The government now says it will not get to that until at least 2006 [well we're past that], costing Saskatchewan over \$750 million in lost revenue.

When will the Prime Minister overrule his finance minister and make the changes necessary, so Saskatchewan does not lose this money?

He said before the election. Now others said, and this is interesting because the MP from Regina, Tom Lukiwski, has a letter in the *Leader-Post* today where he talks about how Saskatchewan shouldn't be complaining because we didn't get our equalization money.

This is what he said before the election. On January 12, 2006 he

said, Mr. Speaker, and I'm quoting:

We would withdraw the non-renewable natural resources from the equalization formula, thus allowing the province [Saskatchewan] to retain 100 per cent of its oil and gas revenues. And that would also trigger equalization payments. The end result would be simply this, under our formula, [he says] once we change it, it would mean an additional 2 to \$2.5-billion in revenue for the province. A Conservative government is committed to that change. And a Conservative government will make the proper changes.

That's what he said before the election. And I could go on, Mr. Speaker, with quotes from Brad Trost, who's now a Conservative MP; Dave Batters, who's now a Conservative MP; and Carol Skelton, our cabinet minister in the federal government whose name the Prime Minister did not know and could not remember when he made his agriculture announcement in Saskatoon. That's how much influence Conservative MPs have in Ottawa on the Conservative Party, Mr. Speaker.

And then what did Carol Skelton say? She said this. She said this before the election: we want a fair . . .

[12:15]

The Speaker: — Order please. Order please. This business of shouting out and trying to shout down the person who is in the chair is patently unfair, and I ask members to restrain their heckling so that the member who is on his chair can be heard. The Chair recognizes . . . Order. The Minister of Industry and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — As I said, Mr. Speaker, they are yelling from their seats because they do not want this to be heard. They do not want the people of this province, over 40 per cent of whom they convinced to support the Conservatives in the last federal election, to hear the truth. And the truth is, Mr. Speaker, that we were sold a bill of goods. We were given a promise by the Prime Minister. We were given a promise by each one of those 12 Conservative MPs that they were going to honour our request for a fair equalization deal. And now they have betrayed the people of the province, Mr. Speaker. And I am not going to be shouted down in this House when I point that out, regardless of how much they yell, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — We were not sent by the people of this province to this legislature to go cap in hand to Ottawa or to get down on our knees to Ottawa, Mr. Speaker. We were sent here to stand up for the people of this province, and that is what we are going to continue to do.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — And I have heard the members opposite suggest in this House, and everyone else has too, that the reason they're breaking their promise to us is — there are a variety of ways they put it — but basically that we are not as nice to Stephen Harper as we should be. That's what they say.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this is a nation. It is a nation in a federal system, with a government in Ottawa and provinces, that should be based upon principles — not personalities, Mr. Speaker. And if they are right that the reason that the Conservatives had broken their promise to the people of Saskatchewan is because somehow somebody personally offended the Prime Minister, if that was true, Mr. Speaker, that would mean that the Prime Minister was a bully. That's what it would mean. Because you cannot operate a country on the basis of your personal or political preferences about the political party in office in a particular province. That is not how a country operates, Mr. Speaker.

And that's why, Mr. Speaker, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, referring to the broken promises of the Conservative Party and the Prime Minister, asks this question. They say, "Is this what Canada stands for now?" By which they mean that you can't take the word of the Prime Minister. You cannot take the word of members of parliament. He's saying, "Is this what Canada stands for now?"

But I would add this for the benefit of those members who just two days ago in this House were telling me that we would get our money if we would be nicer to Stephen Harper. And I said, no. We have to stand up as proud Saskatchewan people, stand up for our province, not get down on our knees to Stephen Harper. But I want to say this. If they were right, Mr. Speaker, that the Prime Minister was just a bully, if that was correct, we also would be asking the question, is this what Canada stands for now? And I don't think it is. I don't think it is.

Now I want to say, Mr. Speaker, I had pointed out how we are treated differently than Alberta, differently than Manitoba, differently than Ontario, differently than Quebec. And finally I want to refer to Newfoundland and Labrador, and Nova Scotia. And they're yelling from their seats trying to drown me out again, Mr. Speaker, and I want the people to know that. And we are not going to be silenced by any bullies in Ottawa or in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I want to say that a deal was made with Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker, and Nova Scotia, that they could keep, they could keep their revenue from their non-renewable natural resources, specifically oil and gas — the same deal that Alberta had. Now the Prime Minister said he was going to improve on that deal, and he has broken his promise to them.

But my question today, Mr. Speaker, is simply this: why is there one deal and one rule for Newfoundland and Labrador and one deal and one rule for Nova Scotia and another deal for Saskatchewan? Why is Saskatchewan different in the eyes of Conservatives, Mr. Speaker? Is it really, Mr. Speaker, as the opposition suggests, because we have a democratically elected New Democrat government, and the Prime Minister doesn't like that because we're not the same party? If that was true, Mr. Speaker, then it's a very sad day for Canada.

And I just want to point out again, because now they're yelling again, Mr. Speaker, that they like to say they support the people of Saskatchewan in their effort to have a fair deal from Ottawa.

That's what they like to say. But on the one hand when you point out what is actually going on under the Conservatives in Ottawa, they want to shout you down and drown you out so that the people will not know the truth about what the Conservatives are doing there and how the 12 Conservative MPs that we elected, with their encouragement, have turned their backs on the people of Saskatchewan.

And I will say this in closing, Mr. Speaker. They can say whatever they want. They can yell as loud as they want. But as long as I stand in this House and as long as people on this side of the House stand in this House, we are going to continue to stand up for the ordinary people and the families of this province. And, Mr. Speaker, the day will come when this dark era in Canadian history will end. And that party and its philosophy will be rejected federally and provincially, and we will once again have a fair, just federal system in this country. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Canora-Pelly.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure this afternoon in the last hour of sitting on this Thursday that I have the opportunity to put on record some comments about the budget that was presented a short week ago.

Mr. Speaker, before I begin my remarks relevant to the budget, I do want to indicate that every time that, you know, we rise in the Assembly to give a budget address or a Throne Speech address and we look back over the course of the last year, a lot changes, a lot changes, Mr. Speaker. And this year is no exception, Mr. Speaker.

I note that as we look around the Assembly today, there are two members that are not present today: one on our side, the member for Kindersley; and one on the government side, the member for Yorkton — both incurring some difficult times in their lives. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to extend my personal best wishes to both of them so that they can, you know, proceed with what they want to do after the Legislative Assembly.

I know my colleague in Yorkton. I've known him for probably 35 years. And I want to wish him all the best.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, I also note, as indicated by some of the members in their responses to the budget address, that a number will not be seeking re-election on both sides of the House. And, Mr. Speaker, I do want to say that I've really appreciated this place and working with all individuals. It's a situation where we have different philosophies, whether we're on the opposition side or the government side, but the end result is we're here to work for the people of Saskatchewan.

So I want to extend, on behalf of the official opposition and myself, the best wishes to: the member for Prince Albert Carlton, the member of Saskatoon Massey Place, member of Saskatoon Greystone, the member for Regina Rosemont, the

member for Kindersley, the member for Lloydminster, the member for Rosetown-Elrose, and the member for Carrot River Valley. These individuals have all indicated that they're not seeking re-election.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we don't know when the next election will be called — that's up to the Premier — and between now and then, there may be others who choose that they do not seek re-election. So I want to wish them well as well.

Mr. Speaker, you know, there's much to do outside of this Assembly. Life is too short. And I believe very sincerely that people who give much of their lives to the people of Saskatchewan, who give their time, give their effort, should be recognized. And again, I extend my best wishes to those individuals who are not seeking re-election.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, this June 2007, June 21 as it is for myself and a few other people in this Assembly, this will be the 12th year of being the Member of the Legislative Assembly for the Canora-Pelly constituency. Mr. Speaker, as my colleague from Cannington says, yes that seems like a long time ago and maybe we were young pups when we were elected 12 years ago. But much has occurred in the Canora-Pelly constituency that I do want to extend my heartfelt thanks to all of the people for their efforts.

Mr. Speaker, I am served so capably in my office by my constituency assistant, Bob Blahay, who is my full-time assistant. And I have the capable help of Renee Parsons who also works on a part-time basis. And of course we also have another individual when we need additional help due to illness or other circumstances that come about, holidays. I also call on the services of Carol Sleevea to help in the office as well. Those three individuals understand rural Saskatchewan. They understand Canora-Pelly, and they understand the concerns of many, and they solve a lot of problems that are brought in to my office, as individuals come in and seek help. So I want to extend my thanks to those members as well.

Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not mention the addition of two new members in this Legislative Assembly, and in this instance both happen to be on the opposition side. Last June we were very fortunate to elect a very capable young man from Weyburn-Big Muddy who has shown maturity as he's moved along, and he's a tremendous asset to our caucus. And, Mr. Speaker, of course this spring in March, just before we began our session, there was a by-election in the constituency of Martensville. Mr. Speaker, we truly miss, we truly miss our colleague from Martensville but, Mr. Speaker, we have just a fine young lady representing Martensville now.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about Canora-Pelly constituency in terms of the constituency that we find today in 2006 and the constituency demographics of 2001 because, Mr. Speaker, they're startling numbers. My colleague from Biggar noted yesterday some of the situations in his constituency. And I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, that in the constituency of Canora-Pelly there are six towns, and there are

a number of villages and a number of RMs, probably the same kind of demographics that we see in most rural constituencies. But, Mr. Speaker, the StatsCan numbers that came out that showed the census numbers in the constituency of Canora-Pelly, the total amount of population loss for towns was 663 people, 9.6 per cent down. The total population for villages in the Canora-Pelly constituency dropped by 154, 11.1 per cent. So, Mr. Speaker, when we look at those totals, the overall totals, we have dropped from around 8,300 people to 7,500 people, a loss of 817 people just in the urban communities.

[12:30]

Now, Mr. Speaker, the RM loss is also very significant, the RM loss across this entire province. If you look at those numbers, the populations in RMs has dropped by nearly 13,000 across those 298 RMs, I believe . . . 297 I think might be the number. But that's the total number that is declined across this province.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about a province that needs a growth agenda . . . And we campaigned on this back a number of years ago where we said there should be no reason why the province of Saskatchewan should not be able to grow at at least the rate of Canada. And that rate, Mr. Speaker, is 1 per cent; 1 per cent growth rate is the average across Canada. And 1 per cent for the province of Saskatchewan, just under 1 million people, that means we'd growing by at least 10,000 people. That's not reality, Mr. Speaker. In fact the numbers that are indicated as my colleagues, many of my colleagues have pointed out, the total population of Saskatchewan has dropped by nearly 11,000 people from 2001 to 2006.

But more startling, Mr. Speaker, more startling when we take a look at what has happened in rural Saskatchewan, in rural Saskatchewan the population has dropped by nearly 20,000 individuals, while in the urban part of Saskatchewan in fact — as designated by this census — urban Saskatchewan has grown by about 9,000. So the result is, Mr. Speaker, that twice the loss of people is occurring in rural Saskatchewan than it is in all of Saskatchewan on the whole because it's being balanced off by the urban growth.

Now we're seeing a little bit of growth in some of the urban communities like Saskatoon and Regina, but when we take a look at rural Saskatchewan . . . And Mr. Speaker we've had a number of discussions about health care, about schools, about the growth of rural Saskatchewan. But when you're losing 20,000 people in a short five years, 2006 based on 2001, and you see that kind of loss, there are many ramifications, Mr. Speaker.

There will be situations where schools are going to be losing significant numbers of students. Mr. Speaker, on the whole in the province of Saskatchewan, the decline year-to-year of the K to 12 numbers, those students in kindergarten to grade 12 in the province of Saskatchewan, still continues to drop between 3,000 and 3,500 students per year. Now those are staggering numbers because, I mean, when you talk to teachers . . . And teachers understand that of course pupil/teacher ratios are important. That's what boards of education look at as they plan to deliver a program. And as you lose students, it becomes more and more difficult to deliver program. And that's what's occurring in the province of Saskatchewan. But this government

does not understand that.

We've been talking about a growth agenda ever since the Saskatchewan Party was formed. And we need to have a growth agenda because clearly the development of Saskatchewan is dependent upon the North. It's dependent upon the rural Saskatchewan, and it is dependent upon urban Saskatchewan. And we're not getting that kind of growth plan from this government. And clearly, Mr. Speaker, we sure don't see that kind of plan in the budget.

Mr. Speaker, I want to spend a bit of time talking about how this budget in fact was delivered. There's no other way to describe this budget as, first of all, leaky and, secondly, a deficit budget. Those are the two words.

Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest last fall when this session began under new guidelines now where the Throne Speech is delivered in the fall. And we listened to a Throne Speech talking about the Premier's vision. And it wasn't more than four or five days later when the Minister of Finance suddenly said, well you know, we've come up with a really great idea. We're going to reduce the provincial sales tax. Not a mention in the Throne Speech as far as a vision, as far as a plan, as far as a direction that would put Saskatchewan in the situation where investors, potential people that are going to return to this province, can say, this government has a plan. They've got this going and this going.

We saw a rushed plan that suddenly said, well now we have to look at PST. We looked at PST because, yes — as my colleague has indicated — we had an earth shattering experience in Weyburn-Big Muddy. We recognized that we as a government in the heart of Tommy Douglas country have finished third — third, Mr. Speaker. So as a result, all of a sudden there had to be some additional information put forward. And that was the 2 per cent cut to the PST.

So, Mr. Speaker, this budget has been released many times over since last fall. We've seen announcements of highways last fall. We saw announcements throughout the winter in Saskatoon and in Regina. There was a buildings initiative, a program. But, Mr. Speaker, I just want to make a comment on that buildings program.

Many organizations have contacted me and they've looked at that building program, community buildings program, and they note that the minimum project is \$1 million. If you don't have a project bigger than \$1 million, don't come to the community buildings program.

And, Mr. Speaker, I just indicated to you what is really occurring in rural Saskatchewan, in my constituency in Canora-Pelly, how difficult will it be for those communities to maybe do a renovation to an arena or a curling rink or some other public facility that needs \$500,000 to do an upgrade. But that \$500,000 isn't eligible to be even applied for under the communities grant program. One million dollars, Mr. Speaker, and there are a lot of communities now that are just starting to understand that, that in fact their projects who they . . . Initially they thought they would qualify. They don't, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about health care. Health

care is a very, very important issue in my constituency, and I've raised the concerns about the facilities in Canora-Pelly. There are three hospitals in Kamsack, Preeceville, and Canora — and they're on bypass more than once, Mr. Speaker. And I can indicate to you that, you know, in 2004 there's an article here in the *Canora Courier* that says, "Canora without resident doctor for two days." This is May 5, 2004. This one's October 13, 2006, Kamsack: the town of Kamsack will now be forced to restrict hours for some services. There's another article that is on November 16: Preeceville hospital on emergency bypass.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, I was quite disappointed to receive a public service announcement this morning. It stated, Wednesday, March 28, 2007, for immediate release from the Sunrise Health Region and it says this:

Preeceville and Kamsack hospitals to go on reduced services . . . due to a lack of physician availability there will be no emergency or outpatient services at: The Preeceville Hospital from 2 p.m. through 10 p.m. on March 29 . . . [and at] The Kamsack Hospital from 5 p.m. on March 29 . . . through 8 a.m. on March 30.

Mr. Speaker, you know, I said in this Assembly a number of months ago — I said sort of I think tongue-in-cheek — that there should be a hospital hotline just like we have a highways hotline because people need to know when their facility is opened. I have examples of people who have written me at different times when the facilities in Preeceville or Kamsack were on bypass, and people who incurred a very serious injury — a young boy had a very seriously broken arm — could not get that attention because the hospital was on bypass. Why, Mr. Speaker? Because of the lack of physicians.

And, Mr. Speaker, I raised that in an article in the Yorkton paper. I raised the fact that the three facilities were under closure numerous times. And the heading in the paper at that time when I gave my release, it said, "Government ignoring hospital closures: Sask Party." That was the heading. Well you know, the response was by the Health minister, and the heading on the article in response was "Zero equalization may limit money for physicians." So says the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, in this article, the Minister of Health clearly said that there are seven locums . . . And everyone I think in the province, I know on this side of the House, understands what the term locum means. Seven locums. These are physicians that travel around the province; that these seven locums should be able to keep all of our hospitals operating when a doctor wants to take a break. Now, Mr. Speaker, I don't know how many different hospitals have had bypass in the last while, but there's been a number. I think we were up around 12 or 14 hospitals in various parts. And the Minister of Health, says, well the locums can take care of that. That's not the fault of the system.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it is the fault of the system. Clearly we know that there is a need for additional trained doctors in this province. And we have been asking for that. The college has been asking for that. I believe that their request was that we should be increasing the current 60 seats to as high as . . . by at least 20 to go up to 80 seats. And what did the budget say, Mr. Speaker? The budget said four — four seats, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I was also in attendance at a response that was entitled the ethical recruitment of foreign-trained doctors. And there was some concern being expressed as to how Canada as a nation is recruiting doctors that are foreign trained, whether they be South African or from England or Scotland or Wales.

So, Mr. Speaker, if indeed rural Saskatchewan, which relies on foreign-trained doctors to the tune of about 80 per cent . . . And we don't have locally trained doctors because even if we had those four spots this fall, we're not going to see those doctors as physicians ready to go into Preeceville Hospital, we're not going to see that until seven years from now. Mr. Speaker, we are in dire straits in rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the community of Preeceville is very excited for the fact that after having their Preeceville project announced and reannounced and reannounced I believe seven times, that finally there is hope that the Preeceville project is moving forward. You know, and I have to be very optimistic, as is the administrator of the town of Preeceville who says, right now we're facing a doctor shortage. We understand that. But maybe a brand new facility will do that, will encourage doctors.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, the cost now after seven years of reannouncement after reannouncement is now going to be \$10.4 million. Initially it was announced at about a \$4.5 million project. So as a result the community is responsible for 35 per cent. Now the community was very, very hopeful, Mr. Speaker, that this government would recognize that it's difficult, extremely difficult for small communities to come up with 35 per cent, Mr. Speaker, of a project as large as 10 million, \$10.4 million. But that didn't happen.

This budget has again said to rural Saskatchewan, sorry. While Regina and Saskatoon get dealt with differently, in rural Saskatchewan we're going to wait seven years. We're going to make sure that the costs are up much higher. And now we're going to tell you, you still have to put in your share. Mr. Speaker, that's not acceptable. That's not acceptable because it's not a vision.

Mr. Speaker, this is a deficit budget. There's no question about it. It doesn't matter whether you turn to the summary of debt pages or whether you rely on the auditor's report. When expenditures exceed revenue, by all people in the industry — whether they be chartered accountants, whether they be the Provincial Auditor — you are in a negative position and that means that you are in a deficit position. And that is exactly where this budget is; it is a deficit. And the people of Saskatchewan understand that, Mr. Speaker. They understand that.

Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting this budget but I will be supporting the amendment.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[12:45]

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

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to

rise in the House today and speak in favour of this NDP budget. Before I begin my remarks I'd like to extend my sincere appreciation to the constituents of Regina Walsh Acres who've entrusted me with representing their concerns.

I would also like to thank the exceptional work of my constituency assistant, Sharon Lindgren, not to mention the wonderful support she provides to me personally. I would also like to list the NDP caucus staff — Jim Fodey, Gail Fehr, Gina Mitchell, James Burton, Tim McCashin, Steven Lloyd, Heath Smith, Margaret Hermann, and Val Stevenson — and thank them for the tremendous support that they provide to all of us. We have two other support people in my constituency office who provide support services for the community office, Sherry Morin and Lynn Woods-Nordin, and I would like to thank them for their capable assistance as well. I would also like to extend my sincere concerns and heartfelt wishes to the member from Kindersley and also the member from Yorkton and their families.

Mr. Speaker, this year's budget is a variety of things for the province of Saskatchewan. Not only does this continue to build upon initiatives that this government has established in the past but it also establishes new programs. This budget helps to turn new, progressive ideas — ideas that this legislature can only see from an NDP government — into a reality. Mr. Speaker, we have addressed a number of issues in order to make Saskatchewan the best place in Canada to live. I'd like to focus my remarks today on three major areas that the 2007 budget addresses.

The first of these, Mr. Speaker, is a green and prosperous economy. We have this year continued in an NDP tradition of environmental responsibility. This government believes, unlike the myopic members across the way, that Saskatchewan cannot have social progress without economic progress, but also that Saskatchewan must not have economic progress without social progress.

Mr. Speaker, to the Sask Party governing is simple. You simply abdicate any social responsibility and hire a group of smart people to run the province. This NDP government has a different vision, a vision of continued environmental progress complementing a strong economy. Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan we are enjoying one of the hottest economies in Canada. The numbers speak for themselves unless of course you are a member of the Sask Party. As the member from Saskatoon Silver Springs has said, their entire purpose is simply to oppose.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's job numbers have continued to sizzle for months. This past February was the best ever for employment. We also enjoyed the lowest unemployment rate on record for that month. Statistics Canada figures show that 492,500 people were working in the province last month. That's up over 20,600 people for the figure of February 2006, and beats the old record for February set two years ago by 16,200. It doesn't stop there, Mr. Speaker. February was the 11th consecutive month of record job numbers for Saskatchewan. Full-time jobs in Saskatchewan were up 15,700 over last February. Youth employment increased by 10,100 over February 2006, and Saskatchewan's youth unemployment rate was the third lowest in the country.

Mr. Speaker, jobs were up last month in construction, services, the oil, gas, and mining industries, trade and finance, and insurance and real estate. Oil production, farm cash receipts, urban housing starts, international exports, retail sales, building permit values, and average weekly earnings are all up.

Saskatchewan had the lowest unemployment rate in Canada in February, Mr. Speaker, at 4.2 per cent — down 1.6 percentage points from February 2006 and below the national rate of 6.5 per cent.

The list of positive economic indicators in our province goes on and on and on. Saskatchewan's unemployment rate for February was the lowest that Statistics Canada has ever reported for that month. Our very own city of Saskatoon had the fourth lowest unemployment rate among major Canadian cities at 3.9 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

It's clear to absolutely everyone except the opposition that Saskatchewan's economy is on a roll and this NDP government is going to keep it going, Mr. Speaker. And this NDP government is going to ensure that it's done in the context of environmental progress.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Ms. Morin: — The 2007 budget is a blueprint of just how we're going to do it. Mr. Speaker, this year we've committed to again fully funding the CAIS program, to providing 5 billion to a 10-year plan for Highways and Transportation, and to funding a record 128 million in revenue sharing for municipalities.

We have also made changes to allow for pension income splitting for seniors, freeing much needed money for those on fixed incomes.

This is our first full year at a 5 per cent provincial sales tax, Mr. Speaker. It is important to note that this is the lowest rate that the PST has been in 20 years. The reduction from 7 per cent to 5 per cent is expected to save the average family around \$300 annually. It is also important to note that a cut to the PST also affects business in Saskatchewan. They too will enjoy the cut in 2007.

Mr. Speaker, these are just some of the measures that this government has taken to ensure that our economy stays hot for the next fiscal year. But a prosperous economy is not enough. This government has also allocated \$33 million for cities and communities to provide for projects that contribute to clean air, clean water, and a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, Mr. Speaker. We've announced \$8 million for green and climate change initiatives and contribute 152,000 to the Office of Energy Conservation to continue climate change activities.

This NDP government takes climate change very seriously, Mr. Speaker, and does not believe that the science of greenhouse gas emissions is contentious or debatable. This government does not pursue ideological agendas at the expense of Saskatchewan people. This government acts.

Compare our record to that of the opposition, Mr. Speaker. The member for Biggar once said that, quote:

There's also a significant debate within the scientific community about the validity of the conclusion that made greenhouse gas emissions . . . are causing climate change to global warming.

The member for Kindersley once positioned that, quote:

. . . volcanic eruption alone can emit more CO₂ into the atmosphere than the entirety of what human beings have done since the industrial revolution.

The member for Estevan went as far to say that, quote, "Scientists don't agree. They can't assure us that there is a trend to global warming."

Mr. Speaker, this government, this NDP government is taking steps to address the environment, including climate change.

The 2007 budget also commits \$2 million to upgrade government facilities for ongoing energy efficiency and conservation. It contributes \$200,000 for Green Team employment to provide students with environmental sector summer job opportunities and \$400,000 in rebates to customers who replace old toilets with new water efficient, low-flow models.

Mr. Speaker, we have also allocated \$1 million for SaskPower's new sustainable supply development program and \$840,000 for SaskEnergy's environmental stewardship programs and \$500,000 in rebates to residential, institutional, and commercial customers who install solar water heating systems. This government is committed to ensuring environmental progress accompanies our great economic development, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the second era of the 2007 budget that I would like to discuss today is that affecting working people, youth, and families. This government is committed to ensuring that Saskatchewan remains the best place to live, work, and raise a family. And this year's budget helps to ensure that our commitment is kept.

The 2007 budget allocates a \$60 million increase for the Saskatchewan prescription drug plan to provide supplementary coverage for individuals and families with low income or a high drug cost and \$2 million to provide eye care and enhanced prescription drug coverage to roughly 30,000 vulnerable workers in the province, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Ms. Morin: — Of this we are very, very proud.

Mr. Speaker, we have contributed 1.5 million for additional licensed child care spaces and \$422,000 to offset the child-related costs of working for low-income earners. We care about the vulnerable people in our province, Mr. Speaker. Initiatives like this ease the cost burden that faces modern families.

But of course, Mr. Speaker, that is only the beginning. Families will also benefit from the contributions that this NDP government has made to education in this province. Education is vital to encouraging the innovation, creativity, and quality of

services that our great province is known for. Because of the importance of this issue, we have committed to yet another year of a tuition freeze at the universities in Saskatchewan. Students will now enjoy 2004 tuition levels until 2008, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this NDP government has created over 2,000 new training spaces in health care, education, and skilled trades, over 100 new early childhood education training spaces, and 500 new licensed daycare spaces.

We have also contributed \$3 million to literacy funding. Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party may not agree with expenditures on literacy — after all conservatives don't seem to hold much values for those sorts of programs, as the member for Martensville will well know. The federal cousins to the opposition, the Harper Conservatives, made some of the most sweeping cuts to literacy programs in the history of this country, Mr. Speaker. If the role of the Sask party is simply to oppose, as the Finance critic has said, why could they not have opposed the cuts to essential programs perpetrated by the federal conservatives?

Mr. Speaker, it has been said that there is no thought without language. Literacy is an absolutely essential element of making Saskatchewan the best place to live. Being literate is fundamental to enjoying a high personal and professional standard of living. The work world is changing, Mr. Speaker. Workers are increasingly being expected to fill roles that require high levels of skill and education. This is not the time to allow or force education programs to erode.

This NDP government is committed to ensuring that the people of Saskatchewan enjoy every opportunity for education and ultimately every opportunity to ensure that this province retains the envy of the rest of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, the 2007 budget also presents a plan for a new five-year graduate tax exemption. The exemption will make Saskatchewan's first \$20,000 tax-free for five years after graduation. New grads, and those who emigrate from elsewhere, can receive \$100,000 of tax-free income, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Ms. Morin: — Not surprisingly, the Sask Party believes that a \$100,000 tax exemption for students is not a good idea. The Leader of the Opposition, in an interview with Craig Wallebeck, said that he had gone directly to young people on the issue, Mr. Speaker. He said that students weren't concerned with rebates, that \$100,000 in tax-free income wasn't the sort of issue that students were interested in, Mr. Speaker. When I read the transcript of the interview, I was shocked. Where did the Leader of the Opposition find students that didn't appreciate such a large tax incentive?

The Sask Party leader's peculiar statement did eventually come to make some sense, Mr. Speaker. Immediately after saying that he went, quote, "directly to young people on the issue," he listed only a single source. That source, Mr. Speaker, was none other than the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy. It seems that when the Leader of the Opposition consulted with the member from Weyburn, who is a former student, the member agreed

with his leader. The student that this Sask Party leader consulted with was a member of his own caucus, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it's not surprising that the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy agreed with his authoritative leader. After all, no one wants to suffer the same political fate as Brenda Bakken did. No one wants to be ostracized from caucus for the simple vice of independent thinking. The Leader of the Opposition may have found 100 per cent support for his resistance to this tax incentive for students, Mr. Speaker, in a very limited sample. But the young people of Saskatchewan say otherwise.

Mr. Speaker, the third area of the budget that I would like to address today is health care. This NDP government is committed to ensuring quality of health care in Saskatchewan that is second to none. To do this, we are shortening wait times with more MRI [magnetic resonance imaging] scans.

Many more MRIs have been announced over the past several weeks and more hip and more knee replacements and more surgeries. Four million dollars have been allocated for new initiatives to ensure wait time reduction. These initiatives will result in 160 additional hip and knee surgeries, 3,117 additional MRI scans, and an additional 5,455 additional bone mineral density tests per year.

We have committed \$80 million to cancer agency funding, target children's dental sealant programs in community schools, and expanded health benefits for low-income workers including \$2 million to provide eye care and enhanced prescription drug coverage.

Mr. Speaker, \$4 million has been added for new or expanded initiatives in the children's health agenda, and 15 million has been allocated for the continued implementation of Project Hope, a comprehensive plan to prevent and treat substance abuse. Mr. Speaker, all of the health provisions in the 2007 provincial budget will contribute to allowing Saskatchewan people to access the quality health care that they have come to expect in this province.

But I would like to suggest that the new prescription drug plan for seniors is among our most remarkable. Mr. Speaker, as of July 1, 2007 approximately 115,000 senior citizens will be able to fill their prescriptions for no more than \$15 each. To seniors, a segment of our population that relies more greatly on accessing health care, this budget is a boon.

Prescription drug costs are increasing by an average of 13 per cent per year — much higher than general inflation — making it difficult for many senior families to cope with the cost of prescription medications. The seniors' drug plan will save seniors approximately \$35 million in 2007-2008 and 53 million in 2008-2009. Mr. Speaker, the plan should result in a savings of roughly \$400 for each senior citizen on average.

Today those over 65 years of age account for 15 per cent of the population of Saskatchewan. StatsCan estimates that by 2031 one in four Saskatchewan residents will be over 65. The seniors' drug plan is a program that will directly affect the lives of an increasingly large portion of our population, Mr. Speaker, and I am proud to say that it will soon be a reality.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, the 2007 provincial budget establishes effective new programs, as well as expanding and continuing these commitments that this NDP government has made in the past. We are building on the momentum of a strong economy, sound social policy, and fiscal responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, this government year after year and budget after budget is helping to make Saskatchewan truly the best place to live, work, and raise a family. I am proud to stand in support of my constituents, I am proud to stand in support of Saskatchewan, and I am therefore proud to stand in support of this budget.

I'd like to now at this point, Mr. Speaker, move adjournment of debate.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Regina Walsh Acres that debate be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I stand to move adjournment. But before I do, I would like to point out to members of the House on Sunday, April 1 two very profound events will take place. One we're well aware of is the Junos will be here in Saskatchewan for the first time ever.

But the other thing that will happen on Sunday, April 1, is that it will mark the exact 20th anniversary of the arrival at the Table of our Clerk, Greg Putz. And I think all hon. members would want to wish him a happy anniversary and celebration this weekend on Sunday.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

[The Assembly adjourned at 13:00.]

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Premier

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Minister Responsible for Seniors

Hon. Pat Atkinson
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Minister Responsible for Immigration
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