



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
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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. It's my pleasure again to present more petitions in regards to a dialysis unit in the Broadview Union Hospital. And I read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary actions and 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 signed by the good folks of the community of Broadview. I so present.

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

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to present a petition on behalf of constituents of Cypress Hills in protest of the recent closure of the SaskPower office in Shaunavon. The prayer reads as follows:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, today's presentation includes six fully completed pages of petitions from individuals in the communities of Eastend, Shaunavon, Frontier, and other small communities surrounding that locale. I so present.

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

Mr. Hermanson: — Well good morning, Mr. Speaker. I have yet another petition asking that the government maintain full service of the SaskPower office at Rosetown. They note that the Rosetown SaskPower office currently supplies personal service for SaskEnergy and SaskTel customers, making it a one-stop office for payments of all three Crown utilities. 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, the signatures on this petition come from the community of Rosetown. I'm pleased to present it on their behalf.

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

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by 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 community of Chaplin. I so present.

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

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to present another petition from citizens from Wilkie who are concerned about the level of health care services in their community. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Wilkie Health Centre and special care home maintain at the very least their current level of services.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

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

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to present yet another petition in this House, a petition on behalf of frustrated parents across Saskatchewan who for the last eight years have been lobbying this government for a dedicated children's hospital within a hospital in Saskatoon. The prayer of the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to implement an allocation of financial resources to build a children's hospital in Saskatoon.

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

The petitioners today come from the provincial constituencies of Saskatoon Meewasin, Saskatoon Nutana, and Saskatoon Silver Springs. I so present, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I rise with a petition from citizens in the South that are very concerned that the withdrawal of lab services in the Lafleche and District Health Centre would cause undue hardships to residents, 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 Lafleche, McCord, and Gravelbourg. 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 forth a petition signed by citizens of southwest Saskatchewan that are concerned with the government's handling of rural school closures. And I'll read the prayer. The prayer reads:

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

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

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

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

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to read a petition today from citizens deeply concerned about the presence of sexual predators that are present as a threat in our communities:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take all steps available to speed up the public disclosure process so that the communities are alerted to the presence of known sex offenders in their community as soon as possible.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, it is signed by the good people of Cudworth. I so present.

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

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition calling on the Government of Saskatchewan to 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 in the surrounding areas.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

This particular petition is signed by the good citizens from Govan and Duval. I so present.

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

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to present a petition on behalf of Saskatchewan citizens concerned about maintaining a Department of Highways section shop in Watrous, Saskatchewan. I will read the prayer:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 50 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Corrections and Public Safety: how many tickets has the department purchased to the upcoming Al Gore presentation? How many does it intend to purchase, and to whom will the tickets be distributed?

And I have questions for similar departments, Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Regina Wascana Plains.

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you to all

members of the Assembly some special guests who are bearing cookies and telling us that May 12 they and their partner, Tim Hortons, will be cleaning up Saskatchewan.

We have this morning in the west gallery Alice Gravoronski, Regina public relations Co-Chair and Saskatchewan provincial cookie advisor; Lisa Wilde and Jennifer Wilde from the Uplands Guide Unit No. 11; Annette Lang, Regina public relations Co-Chair with Sparks No. 27; Cydney Weir, Guides Unit 27; and Madyson Hautz, Sparks No. 27. They are also joined this morning, or have been joined by someone who's no stranger to the Assembly, Morgan Morin, a former Spark — there she is.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned to them that I would make sure to get them copies of the member's statement yesterday — the member from Estevan — and my statement today, for their archives. I'd ask all members to join with me and warmly welcome the Guides and Sparks this morning.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce — my family's in the gallery today — my wife and daughter who have been here several times before, but for his first time into the House is my son Jonathan. So I'd ask the House to join me in welcoming them to their Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Regina Douglas Park.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, seated in your gallery, I should like to introduce to you and, through you, to all the members a group of students from the Graduate School of Public Policy at the University of Regina.

This is a group of 14 students. They are doing either a master's degree in either public management or public policy. The name of the class is How Government Works. I appreciate that might raise questions in here. Mr. Speaker, they are accompanied by someone who is no stranger to public service in Saskatchewan, Ms. Lynn Minja.

They're here to observe the proceedings. It will be my pleasure after their tour of the building to meet with them, try to answer any questions they might have. And I would ask all members to join with me, and also recognizing that about half of these students are students from other countries — China, North Korea, Kazakhstan, Tunisia, Colombia — and to wish them all a very warm welcome. Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[10:15]

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Cypress

Hills.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join the minister in welcoming the students from the graduate school to the Legislative Assembly today.

I understand that they're participating in the public management and public policy program. I want them to be aware, if they're not already, that Saskatchewan has a wonderful tradition of creative public policy. And they're learning in a school that can build on that particular reputation.

And the public management element of their education can be put to very good use in the countries from which they have come, but here in Saskatchewan as well. We understand that the public service is going to be losing a number of people over the next few years. There'll be opportunities with the Government of Saskatchewan. We'd like to make them aware of that. This is a recruiting announcement. And we'd also like to welcome them once again to this legislature.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you and to you to the rest of the Assembly, I'd like to introduce a few folks in your gallery.

First of all, nine-year-old Adele Sawatsky is here — if she'd just stand. She wasn't so sure she wanted to be introduced. But I said it's not going to be painful; you just have to stand and give a little wave. She's here today to study this beautiful building, the Legislative Assembly, and also learn more about the building and what goes on in the building. It's her first visit to the Legislative Assembly. Joining her are her mother, Pam, and her younger sister, five-year-old, Catherine. I'd like all members to join me in welcoming them to their Legislative Assembly.

And while I'm on my feet, I also wanted to introduce a couple that are here with them: Mr. and Mrs. Sean Quinlan who are in the gallery as well. I'd like all members to join me in welcoming them here.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Swift Current.

Holocaust Memorial Day

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. "The first to perish were the children . . . From these a new dawn might have risen." These are the words of the Yiddish poet Yitzhak Katzenelson in a poem about the Holocaust.

Although it has been commemorated across this nation for years, Holocaust Memorial Day was formally recognized through an Act of the House of Commons in 2003. The date is

determined each year by the Jewish lunar calendar and coordinated to mark the date of April 19, 1943 — the Warsaw ghetto uprising.

This year we will commemorate the day on Sunday, April 15. This is a day to reflect on and educate about the lessons of the Holocaust and to reaffirm a commitment to uphold human rights in Saskatchewan, across our country, and around the world. During the Second World War, six million Jews were put to death in concentration camps in a genocide described by many historians as a program of deliberate extermination planned and executed by the Nazis. One million of these victims were children. Many were subject to torture, medical experiments, all manner of inhuman conditions, and worse before their tragic deaths.

There are some who today would deny the Holocaust, Mr. Speaker. In some corners of the world, there are those who would argue that we shouldn't perhaps be educating about the historical fact of the Holocaust. Mr. Speaker, although the atrocities that were committed by the Nazi regime against millions of Jews are unspeakable, we must not stop speaking of them, and we must never forget about the new dawn that never rose. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Regina Wascana Plains.

Girl Guides

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the last couple of days, the Girl Guides have been here at the legislature bringing us their tasty cookies. Mr. Speaker, the Girl Guides and Girl Guide cookies are associated with a couple of Saskatchewan firsts.

Did you know for instance that first Girl Guide unit in Canada was formed in Moose Jaw in 1910? And did you know that those cookies we all buy and should be buying again this week were first baked here by Christina Riepsamen and sold in Moose Jaw and Regina area to send girls to camp 80 years ago? Did you know that annually the guides in Regina collect about 50 tonnes of food for the food bank and that they are partners in the Second Glance magazine reuse program and that assists over 35 community agencies and a variety of literary purposes? And did you know that this year, national AGM [annual general meeting] of the Canadian Girl Guides will be held in Regina, June 1, 2, and 3 with representatives from all the province and territories?

Mr. Speaker, for nearly a century the Guides have been an integral part of our province as well as our national community. As the Chair of the Premier's voluntary sector initiative, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all the wonderful people involved with the Girl Guide movement, in particular the girls' parents and the many workers who volunteer their time and energy to help make organizations so successful. And of course I want to thank the girls themselves for all the work that they do in our communities. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Best Wishes to Legislative Interns

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I arise in the Assembly today to offer thanks and best wishes to the three legislative interns that have been serving with the Saskatchewan Party caucus since January of this year. They are Justine Gilbert who is my intern, Lucy Pereira who worked with the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy, and Jonathan Selnes who worked with my colleague from Last Mountain-Touchwood.

During their three-month stint with us, they have been busy with a variety of projects as assigned by their members: trips out to the constituency, fundraising efforts for their upcoming comparative study trip, and research for their intern research project. Mr. Speaker, in fact I've been spoiled. Now I'm going to have to start writing my own member statements again. That's how much work they've done.

It's been an absolute pleasure to have these three young, keen, and bright individuals working in our office for the last three months. We were pleased to be able to thank them for all their work in our caucus this morning. I know that they will come away from the program with a better understanding of the legislative and political process here in Saskatchewan, and hopefully one day we'll see them working in their respective fields right here in Saskatchewan.

Our caucus is also looking forward to welcoming two new interns after the study trip: Kiley Frantik who will be working with the member for Moosomin and Jarita Greyeyes who will work with the member for Rosthern-Shellbrook. I wish them well on their study trip to Ottawa, England, and Scotland. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Property Sales Booming in Southern Saskatchewan

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, members across the way have been predicting doom and gloom for this province for longer than anyone cares to remember. Despite the fact that the NDP [New Democratic Party], the NDP has taken this province from bankruptcy to boom times, the members opposite just keep predicting the worst.

Let's compare their dire predictions with what's really happening in this province. Here's an excerpt from the March 29 edition of the *Deep South Star*, and I quote:

In many centres across Southern Saskatchewan there has been a large influx of home and acreage buyers from out of province. In Radville, there is also [been] a boom of property buyers as there are virtually no homes left.

Town officials even had houses on the chopping block that are now sold and being renovated.

One homeowner east of Radville had a small package . . . sale that received 28 hits of interest. It sold to the top bidder.

The article goes on to say:

Who would have thought this? What this also means is there are folks moving here, more shoppers, more tax dollars, more folks using our recreation facilities, churches and schools . . . and hopefully more workers to fill the vast list of job opportunities. It's great to see this for all of the communities [Mr. Speaker].

That's the Saskatchewan reality under the NDP, Mr. Speaker — so much for the Saskatchewan Party and their ridiculous predictions. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Kahkewistahaw Hurricane Wrestling Team

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, 49 students from Chief Kahkewistahaw Community School in my constituency recently travelled to Saskatoon to participate in the Saskatchewan Amateur Olympic Style Wrestling Provincial Age Class Championships.

In total, 256 wrestlers competed in this event from all over Saskatchewan. The Kahkewistahaw Hurricane wrestling team has only been in existence for two years but has already made their mark on wrestling in this province. This year the team successfully defended the team championship it won last year in freshman, novice, and peewee girls. Mr. Speaker, the Hurricanes brought home 10 gold medals from the provincial championships.

The wrestlers who won gold are Kennedy McKay, freshie girls; Leilani McKay, Jalysa Kaysaywaysemat, and Shante Sparvier, novice girls; Elisha Bobb, Alexi Richter, and Adrian Taypotat, peewee girls; Kyle Campeau and Dwayne Taypotat, novice boys; and Tristan Alexson, novice boys. Mr. Speaker, it should be noted that the team also brought home 13 silver medals and 15 bronze medals for a grand total of 38 medals.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate all 49 wrestlers and thank their coaches, Tonny Peel, Brian James, and Don Thompson, parents, volunteers, chaperones, and fans for all their contributions in supporting these young students in their wrestling careers.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Federal Conservatives in Saskatchewan

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party and the federal Conservative Party have a politically incestuous relationship. To quote the Regina *Leader-Post* from May of last

year, "It has been increasingly hard not to notice that the Saskatchewan Party and [the] federal Conservatives in Saskatchewan have had virtually interchangeable parts . . ." And is there any wonder why the media might leap to that conclusion, Mr. Speaker?

Conservative Member of Parliament Tom Lukiwski was a former general manager of the Saskatchewan Party. He also served as an executive director of the former Progressive Conservative Party of Saskatchewan. The Conservative candidate in the last two federal elections in Regina Wascana has been Brad Farquhar. He was the executive assistant to the former leader of the Saskatchewan Party, the member from Rosetown-Elrose. And Farquhar has worked as the interim director for the Saskatchewan Party.

Federal Conservative Revenue Minister Carol Skelton was a member of the Saskatchewan Party executive and ran for president of the Saskatchewan Party at one of their conventions. Conservative Member of Parliament Lynne Yelich worked for the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] from Carrot River Valley when he was the Conservative Member of Parliament.

This explains the opposition's stance on equalization. Mr. Speaker, to quote from one of their Conservative brethren, former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney: "Ya dance with the ones that brung ya."

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

A Memorable Hockey Season for the Cupar Canucks

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Cupar Canucks, the senior hockey team, certainly had a memorable hockey season that ended this past Saturday. Back in January they celebrated their 100th anniversary Mr. Speaker, and they went on to finish first in the Highway Hockey League. But their claim to fame this hockey season, Mr. Speaker, was in the Senior A provincial playoffs where they defeated such teams from Indian Head, Langenburg, and two games straight in the southern playoffs, and won the southern championships in a hard-fought series with the Southey Marlins where the Canucks won the final game in front of a capacity, home crowd.

After winning the southern championships, Mr. Speaker, they went on to play the Kindersley Klippers in the provincial championships. It was a very close series, Mr. Speaker, with each team winning their home game, and the final game being played this past Saturday in Kindersley. The game was a close game back and forth with one team leading in one period and the Canucks leading in the third period, but Kindersley came on late in the third period to tie the game, Mr. Speaker. And unfortunately the Canucks lost the game in the third period, third overtime period, Mr. Speaker.

But congratulations to the Canucks and all those people associated with them, particularly manager Kelly Findling, the coaches, Jamie and Wade Herauf, and Rob Wolsley, Kevin Bonish, and Neil Schulhauser. Mr. Speaker, way to go,

Canucks.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

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

Medical Coverage in Prince Albert Parkland Health Region

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, the doctor shortage in Shellbrook is going from bad to worse. Two physicians from South Africa had been lined up to relocate in the community. Now they are no longer coming. This is an additional problem to the doctor who will cease to practise in Shellbrook effective the end of May. So instead of five doctors in Shellbrook, there will be only three. Mr. Speaker, what is the government doing to fix this problem?

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the member opposite knows, recruitment initiatives supported by this government and undertaken by regional health authorities, the Saskatchewan Medical Association, and communities, Mr. Speaker — and I do applaud the work that's being done at the community level in Shellbrook with regards to recruiting efforts, Mr. Speaker — these efforts have all been undertaken, recognizing the competitive nature of physician recruitment and retention.

Mr. Speaker, the efforts that we've undertaken are extensive. The member knows how extensive they are, and we will continue to work with the region and the community, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that there are sufficient numbers of health professionals working within the community.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[10:30]

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

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, my hometown of Spiritwood, the hospital's been shut down to emergency services for six months. How is the recruitment services working in Saskatchewan, especially rural Saskatchewan?

The problem is not limited to Shellbrook alone, Mr. Speaker. The lone physician in Big River is leaving for seven weeks effective May 1 and it doesn't look like any replacement has been found. Efforts on the part of the health region have come up short and now it looks like the people of Big River will be without on-call service for all of May and half of June.

Mr. Speaker, what will this government do to fix this unacceptable and potentially dangerous situation?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And of course this government recognizes the challenges that are faced not only by the communities represented by the member opposite, by other communities throughout Saskatchewan.

But the area that the member represents does have some specific challenges. And I'm assuming that the member opposite has met with the community groups that are actively engaged in the recruitment process, Mr. Speaker, because I think that's a role that members of the legislature should be engaged in at the community level.

But, Mr. Speaker, specific to the Prince Albert Parkland Regional Health Authority, in recognition of the challenges that are faced there, Saskatchewan Health has now funded an additional four nurse practitioners specifically to help address the shortages that exist in physicians in those communities while the recruitment efforts are undertaken — additional funding for Prince Albert Parkland Regional Health Authority, Mr. Speaker, for those communities to assist them in this time of challenge.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, let me give you an outline of this region. It's a huge region with no doctors. The situation is unacceptable. Big River has no doctor. Spiritwood has been without emergency services for over six months and now emergency services likely will no longer be offered in Shellbrook. It's an hour and a half drive from Spiritwood to Prince Albert. It's also the same distance from Big River to Prince Albert. Those in surrounding communities will have an extra longer drive to access emergency services.

Mr. Speaker, why has this situation been allowed to deteriorate so badly, and when is the government going to fix the problem?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite knows, as do members of the communities of Big River, Shellbrook, and Spiritwood, Mr. Speaker, that this government and the regional health authority has been very active in the recruitment efforts in that area for quite some time, Mr. Speaker. This is a hard-to-recruit-to area of the province. There are significant challenges that present themselves.

Mr. Speaker, we have recently funded four additional positions for nurse practitioners — one for Shellbrook, one for Spiritwood, one for Big River, and one for the Big River First Nation, Mr. Speaker — to alleviate some of the stresses that exist there.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition the other day said, we don't just criticize; we provide alternatives. The member

opposite has not provided a single alternative to help with this situation in all of the time that we've been working, that we've been working with the region and the communities, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Forest Fire Fighting Policies and Plans

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Speaker, last summer Saskatchewan was plagued with an intense forest fire season. In November the Minister of Environment told the House that he would be conducting an internal review, Mr. Speaker. My question to the minister is, did he do that review and, if so, what changes is he planning to his forest fire policies, Mr. Speaker?

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the provincial wildfire policy is a comprehensive plan that we have as a government that's been implemented for quite a number of years, which includes an annual review of the previous year's forest fire fighting season to see what you've learned and then make changes as you move forward.

Mr. Speaker, these items have all been reviewed over the last three or four months, and the plan for the firefighting season will be laid out very shortly. And I'll be pleased to provide information to that member and to the public as we normally do.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister says that he's completed his review and will be laying out the policy soon. The residents of northern Saskatchewan would like to know whether he will still be adhering to that rigid 20-kilometre zone around northern communities.

Mr. Speaker, the current policy calls for the department to let the forest fires burn unless they come within the 20-kilometre zone. Last summer the community of Stony Rapids was nearly burned to the ground because of this policy and this minister's inaction. Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is, is he still adhering to that rigid policy of allowing forest fires to burn outside the 20-kilometre zone?

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, as I've explained it a number of occasions in the House and to the public, is the overall policy has a system whereby values of protection are provided throughout the whole forest fire risk area, and primarily it relates to protection of people, protection of homes, businesses, and activities. And we'll continue to proceed with

that policy.

Mr. Speaker, last year's fire season had 501 fire starts compared to a 10-year average of 643 fire starts. Unfortunately many of them were right all at the same time and that ended up putting great pressure not only on our firefighting response but the firefighting response of all of Western Canada and the United States. Mr. Speaker, we have a very good system and we're going to continue to make sure that it's well supported.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Speaker, the minister said that he has a very good plan in place and that the people of particularly northern Saskatchewan should be assured that they will be adequately protected. Yet the minister has also said that last season they were challenged when all the forest fires broke out in the La Ronge area.

For a number of years, Mr. Speaker, the Aerial Applicators Association of Saskatchewan have been talking to that minister and his government about using single air tanker planes to supplement the firefighting resources. Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that that minister has any intention of accessing those resources. And I would like to know why he hasn't made arrangements to access all possible resources in case we get into a jam like we did last season, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, we have been working very carefully with the experts in this area and they have laid out a plan whereby we're doing a combination of things involving everything from the fire towers across the North to the new aircraft that we have been bringing on board. And we know that the new chemical firefighting aircraft will be coming in the coming weeks, and I know that the public will be happy to see all of that when it comes.

Mr. Speaker, the real question here is, what does that member opposite say that we should do as far as how much money we should spend in this whole area? We have had very good support from our Finance people in providing the resources that we need and we'll continue to do that. But the member opposite, he needs to tell us how much more money he thinks we should be spending in this area.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Compensation for Former Deputy Minister

Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, when a person receives a severance it's for the purpose of severing ties with their former employer. That's not the case for former deputy minister of the Environment, Terry Scott, one of the people who ignored harassment complaints about Murdoch Carriere. Scott was not

only given a \$200,000 severance, he also received a guarantee from this government that he would be making the same deputy minister's salary regardless of what job he found. So Terry Scott was told to take the fall for the Murdoch Carriere scandal and this NDP government would take care of him for months, maybe even years.

Will the Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission table Terry Scott's settlement?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I took notice of the member's question yesterday and I do have the answer. Mr. Scott was provided with a structured severance comprised of a 10-month lump sum payment totalling \$115,430 plus an additional seven mitigative payments totalling \$63,195.43. Mr. Scott received in total \$178,225.43.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Management of Harassment Complaints

Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for her answer. We understand that the NDP ordered civil servants to work over the Easter weekend to quickly put together some sort of additions to the harassment policy. In estimates yesterday the Labour minister said there would be no outside consultation on legislative changes. But before any harassment legislation can be changed, all the details about what went wrong in the Murdoch Carriere scandal have to be found out. Has the NDP government . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order. Members come to order. The Chair recognizes the member for Martensville.

Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, my question is, has the NDP government undertaken an internal investigation of when . . .

The Speaker: — Order please. Order please. Order please. I'd ask the member to come to order and stay in order. The member for Martensville.

Ms. Heppner: — Has the NDP government undertaken an internal investigation of when the first allegations against Murdoch Carriere came forward? Who knew about harassment complaints and didn't act upon them? And how could this go on for years and not be addressed?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, in addition Mr. Scott received \$4,664.92 in the form of the government career assistance. So, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to fully answer the

question.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what the Government of Saskatchewan is trying to do is to look at our harassment legislation within the occupational health and safety legislation. We're also reviewing our anti-harassment policy that applies to all people that work within the public service. And we're also looking at the structure of how we deliver human resource information and advice to managers that cross all departmental lines.

So what we are attempting to do, Mr. Speaker, is to take a broader approach to this issue of harassment in order to ensure that people who work in the province of Saskatchewan, both in the public service and the private sector, have protection.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, if the NDP government has not undertaken to find out answers to the questions of what went wrong in the Murdoch Carriere scandal, it is not only irresponsible but it's reprehensible. If this government has undertaken an investigation, they owe it to the victims and the people of this province to report those findings.

Today I will be moving a motion to have the Murdoch Carriere scandal investigated by an all-party committee of this legislature. And if this government truly wants to ensure that nothing like this happens again, this government will support that motion. Mr. Speaker, will the NDP government be supporting the motion today to find out the details of the Murdoch Carriere scandal?

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, after it became evident to the Government of Saskatchewan that we needed to review and substantially strengthen our anti-harassment policy, we did so. What I can say now is that if a person has an allegation of harassment, and if indeed that harassment is found to be substantiated, there is a group of deputy ministers that review what the discipline should be, including firing, Mr. Speaker. I believe that our policy has been greatly strengthened.

However I think that we can do more. And we are in the process of reviewing our policy as well as legislation to ensure that workers in this province are not subjected and do have rights to bring forward allegations of harassment that go beyond what we presently have in policy and the legislation. So what we are attempting to do, Mr. Speaker, is to strengthen the legislation and the policy to protect workers.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

[10:45]

Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, the government could be doing

more. They could support this motion so that we can get to the bottom of what went wrong in the Murdoch Carriere scandal.

The victims tell us that this NDP government had no intention of getting rid of Carriere. In fact years after the first complaints were made, and months after several managers met with the associate deputy minister about the harassment, Murdoch Carriere was being moved to a larger office space because he didn't think his current office was big enough. That was in August 2002. It certainly doesn't sound like a man the NDP were holding accountable for years of harassing women.

What is necessary is for the details of this issue to be brought to light. How many times were harassment complaints brought forward and . . .

The Speaker: — Order please. Order. The member may proceed.

Ms. Heppner: — Why Murdoch Carriere wasn't disciplined and then fired with cause in the first place. And internal legal opinions that rewarded a harasser instead of firing him.

Will the NDP support a motion to have this issue examined before a legislative committee?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, the member asks an interesting question, and I can only reflect on the nature of the debate and comments made by some of the opposition members during a similar kind of debate just a week ago.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, we will certainly be interested in seeing what the Sask Party members have to say in debate today. And I would ask the hon. member whether she would arrange to ensure that the Saskatchewan Party members would allow, would take their place and allow government members to enter into debate on the motion that she proposes today. Would she be willing to allow government members to enter into debate on the motion that she proposes today?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Government's Settlement with Murdoch Carriere

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's pretty clear that the Premier of the province of Saskatchewan is unable to keep his story straight with respect to the Carriere scandal.

Yesterday he absolutely insisted that he was being misquoted by the Saskatchewan Party. But when a reporter asked him if he had to do it all over again, would he still pay Murdoch Carriere \$275,000, Mr. Speaker, the Premier said he would do that — that he would do it again. That's what he told the media outside the legislature.

Mr. Speaker, four years ago the NDP said they were going to fight Murdoch Carriere in the courts. Instead they decided to reward harassment as has been clearly pointed out in this session. And the Premier has still never explained why. There are still unanswered questions. He's hiding behind the secret legal opinion. He refuses to refer the matter to the appropriate committee of the legislature.

To the Premier, Mr. Speaker, why? What is he trying to hide?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Well I see that the member opposite is continuing to misinform the public and to mislead the public, Mr. Speaker.

You know what's curious, Mr. Speaker, is that their members stood in this House in April 2003 and demanded, demanded — not once, not twice, not three times, but four times — that Murdoch Carriere be fired. Mr. Speaker, he was fired. He was fired. He had been disciplined, but the government of the day . . .

The Speaker: — Would the minister complete her statement.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — He was fired. And Arlene Julé knew, Mr. Speaker, as did the previous leader of the opposition, that this was a cause of action on the part of Mr. Carriere. Well Mr. Carriere launched his cause of action, and at the end of the day, the Government of Saskatchewan chose . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order please. Now I may have to repeat this several times, but it can be avoided if members just contain themselves so that the member who are speaking or asking the question can do so without being impeded. Would the member please conclude her remarks.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — At the end of the day, the government received legal advice to settle. And we settled as did *The StarPhoenix*. We all settled, Mr. Speaker. I can say this: that it was in the interest of the public to settle because to go to court would have cost us a lot more.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In this case the NDP said that they would fight harassment. Instead, they rewarded harassment. They said they would fight Murdoch Carriere in the courts.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — They said they would fight Murdoch Carriere in the courts. That's what the current Minister of Industry said when he was the Justice minister. Instead they wrote him a cheque for \$275,000.

They said they consulted with the women before they paid Carriere. They never consulted with the women, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier said he never heard about the case before he read it in the newspaper. He had to call a press conference to confirm that that wasn't true either, that he had heard about it prior to it breaking in the news.

Mr. Speaker, wouldn't it be easier, wouldn't it be better for everyone concerned if the Premier, if the NDP could simply tell the truth? Why won't they do that?

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order please. Members will come to order. I wish to quote — order please — to the member from Swift Current from Montpetit and Marleau, page 522:

Remarks directed specifically at another Member which question that Member's integrity, honesty or character are not in order.

I find that the remark he just made does exactly the opposite. I would ask him to withdraw that remark before he continues.

Order. Order. Order. Order. The Chair recognizes the member for Swift Current.

Mr. Wall: — I withdraw the remark, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I do want to say to the members opposite is this: that Mr. Carriere . . . a formal complaint was launched by women in the P.A. [Prince Albert] fire centre in, I believe, September 2002. Mr. Carriere was removed from the workplace, suspended with pay. Mr. Carriere on February 12 was advised that he was suspended without pay for three months, demoted, and sent to Regina. And he had no staff under his employ.

On April 1, Mr. Speaker, we read about the Gillies report on the front page of *The StarPhoenix*, and on April 2 Mr. Carriere was terminated, Mr. Speaker. I believe those are the facts of the case, regardless of what the opposition has to say.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, here's the facts of the case. The fact of the case is that a former senior manager under the employ of this current government — related to an NDP cabinet minister, with ties to other NDP cabinet ministers — was fired for harassment, was convicted of assault, of . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I invite the Leader of the . . . Order. Order. The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, who was convicted of assault and then fired for harassment of nine women, Mr. Speaker. The other facts of this case include the fact that the government

won't table a legal opinion that would justify them paying \$275,000 to the one that did the harassment while the women got \$15,000 each. Mr. Speaker, the facts of the matter is that question after question on this scandal have gone unanswered by this government for some reason. We'd like to know why that is.

Why does the Premier change his story on this? Why does he say that he would repeat this issue again with respect to the settlement or with the firing? Why is, Mr. Speaker, why is the minister refusing to answer questions in this Assembly about the scandal? That's the question to the government. If they truly have nothing to hide, why won't they answer a question on the Carriere scandal, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — You know, Mr. Speaker, I think there isn't a member in this legislature, let alone a member of the previous legislature, including Mr. Goulet, that supports any kind of abuse of power in the workplace where people are harassed. There isn't one of us, not one of us. And if the members of the opposition can offer up any proof that any of my colleagues — one of them — supports abuse in the workplace, I would ask them to do so. Now, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, we had a deputy minister that was responsible . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order. We cannot have three or four debates taking place at the same time. The Minister for the Public Service Commission.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that the government believe that the deputy minister did not handle this properly by suspending Mr. Carriere for three months only. That was not acceptable to the government members and, Mr. Speaker, the Premier ordered that he be fired.

Now if we were ever in this situation again, it is the Premier's due that if some deputy minister made a mistake, didn't handle it properly, a person that had that kind of action in the workplace should be dismissed, Mr. Speaker. And I believe that anybody who harasses people to that extent needs to be dismissed from the public . . .

The Speaker: — Member's time has elapsed.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day . . . Order please. Order. Order please. Order. Order. Order. Before orders of the day, I wish to table a report to the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan on the 2006 financial statements of the CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan] Crown corporations and related entities, dated April 2007, from the Office of the Provincial Auditor.

And I wish to table a report in respect to The Health Information Protection Regulations amendments from Mr. Gary

Dickson, the Saskatchewan Information and Privacy Commissioner.

Why is the member for Saskatoon Southeast on his feet?

Mr. Morgan: — Leave to raise a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Would the member from Saskatoon Southeast please state his point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Morgan: — During the question period exchange, Mr. Speaker, the member from Nutana made an accusation directed at the members opposite, accusing the members opposite of “misleading the public” which is exactly the same type of situation that the Speaker made a ruling on regarding the comments made by the member from Swift Current. We think it would be appropriate if the member from Nutana would apologize and withdraw the statement, the words “misleading the public,” Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, without intending to comment on a Speaker’s ruling, I note that in your ruling that was made, and the reference you referred to, it specifically brought to the attention of the House that it is not appropriate to cast aspersions on the character of another member. And that is a long-standing principle, and it is the principle that I believe the Opposition Deputy House Leader is attempting to refer to.

Mr. Speaker, there is a . . . it is clearly, it has been ruled many, many times in this House and others that it is improper and casts aspersions on the character of another member to suggest that another member is intentionally misleading which is equivalent to use of the phrase lying or intentionally and so on. But, Mr. Speaker, what the minister did in referring to the actions of the opposition was refer to the consequences of their actions which is to present information that is not factually accurate and is therefore misleading.

[11:00]

The Speaker: — Order. The member is getting into debate at this stage and would he just stick to the point of order, please.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, the minister expressed an opinion about the representation of the facts, an opinion about the representation of the facts, as expressed by the opposition. And I can tell by their reaction, Mr. Speaker, that they’re feeling a tad guilty. If you toss a rock into the . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Order. Order. First of all I want to thank the member for Saskatoon Southeast for raising the point of order. I did notice during the debate that there were two times that members’ remarks had caused considerable uproar in the Assembly. Ordinarily the comment of misinforming, using the comment misinforming, I have allowed that many times.

Right now I think it’s a matter of a context. The debate is very

heated and sparks fly very easily. The comment before that was one about a member referring to another member keeping his story straight. Again that’s the kind of remark that, taken in different context, probably would not make any kind of an impact.

So I think that the best advice I can give at this stage is just for members to calm down and try not to be inflammatory. If the member or any one of these members wishes to withdraw a remark, I would accept that at this time although I will not rule on it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government I’ll be tabling responses to written questions 1,042 through 1,099 inclusive.

The Speaker: — 1,042 to 1,099 have been submitted.

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

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

Seniors’ Drug Plan

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the end of my remarks I’ll be moving a motion that strongly endorses the seniors’ drug plan unveiled in the provincial budget.

Mr. Speaker, my constituency of Saskatoon Eastview has the highest concentration of seniors in the country. This is according to Stats Canada information shared with me by the Saskatoon Regional Health Authority. And as a province, we have more seniors per capita than any other province. Approximately 15 per cent of our population are age 65 or older.

Mr. Speaker, I have visited with many seniors over the last nine years in my capacity as an MLA, minister responsible for seniors, and associate minister of Health, responsible for the drug plan, long-term care, home care, and primary health care.

The one constant complaint I can say with confidence that I heard is the cost of their drugs. Most seniors are on fixed incomes, and the rapidly rising cost of drugs is alarming for them. Prescription drug costs are increasing by an average of 13 per cent per year. Eighty-seven per cent of seniors’ families in Saskatchewan have at least one prescription per year that costs \$15 or more.

Mr. Speaker, in 2004 there were 147,780 seniors in Saskatchewan who filed income tax. Based on that information, their average income was \$26,767. Of those 147,000-some seniors, there were 65,860 males and 82,120 females. According to Stats Canada, the average income for elderly married couples in 2003 in Saskatchewan was \$35,000; for

unattached elderly men, \$21,000 per year; and unattached elderly females, \$16,900.

As we can see by these figures, there are not a lot of rich seniors in Saskatchewan, although all of us know some. My point is that when developing a policy that affects the majority, consideration must be given to the fact that it is more onerous and therefore more costly to identify and eliminate the minority.

There's a recent United Kingdom study that was recently released about means testing and that it has forced administration costs up from 5 per cent to 20 per cent, taking money directly from health services. That is why, Mr. Speaker, the new Saskatchewan seniors' drug plan is for all seniors over 65.

The new plan will benefit 115,000 senior citizens by reducing their cost to no more than \$15 per prescription. This plan will save seniors approximately 35 million in 2007-08 and 53 million in 2008-09. The seniors' drug plan will result in an average of \$400 per year saving for each senior.

Mr. Speaker, on average seniors receive more prescription drugs than non-seniors, therefore incurring a higher average annual prescription drug cost. For this reason, some seniors experience difficulty paying for their prescriptions. Stories are told anecdotally about seniors who choose to fill only some of their prescriptions so that they may eat and/or pay for their accommodation. The new drug plan for seniors is designed to reduce out-of-pocket expenses so that cost is not a barrier to accessing their prescription drugs.

Mr. Speaker, the seniors' drug plan will be implemented July 1, 2007. No application is necessary. Individual seniors will receive coverage in the month they become 65 years of age. The plan will provide a cap on seniors' prescriptions so that no senior will pay more than \$15 per prescription for drugs in the Saskatchewan formulary. The program includes prescription drugs that are benefits under the Saskatchewan drug plan as well as drugs approved under exception drug status. The benefit will be calculated automatically as pharmacists submit prescriptions electronically to the Saskatchewan drug plan.

Mr. Speaker, there are ongoing concerns on how many prescriptions seniors receive, but that is a separate issue and is being addressed by pharmacists and in long-term care facilities with medication reviews. There is still much work to be done on this front, but the seniors' drug plan will not be the culprit for inappropriate or over-prescriptions.

Nearly half of our government's annual expenditures on health, 49 per cent of 3.46 billion, directly benefit older persons. Home care expenditures are up in this budget by 2.4 million. In 2005-06 older persons — that is 65-plus — accounted for 72 per cent of all home care clients in the province. Mr. Speaker, long-term care's budget is up 6.4 per cent. As of March 2006, persons aged 65 and older accounted for 91 per cent of institutional long-term care residents in Saskatchewan. While the majority of residents in long-term care are seniors, this only represents 5.5 per cent of the total senior population. Most seniors are living in their own homes, seniors' complexes, assisted living accommodations, or personal care homes, to mention some of the options.

Mr. Speaker, although there are resident fees in long-term care, the government subsidizes about 77 per cent of the total cost of providing that care and accommodation in a special care home. Sask Housing also plays a big role in providing low-cost housing for seniors and grants for assisted living complexes, such as the new addition to Columbian Manor in my Eastview riding.

Primary health care is a key part of providing better coordinated disease management, improved case management for clients with complex needs, care provided by the professionals who can best meet the needs of the client, and health services that are continuous with and complimentary to other community services — not to mention all of these delivered as close to home as possible.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to tell the Assembly about the primary health care centre in my riding of Saskatoon Eastview. This centre is located in Scott-Forget Towers, a seniors' high-rise that offers subsidized housing through Sask Housing. This primary health centre is the first of its kind in Saskatchewan and was one of my first proud achievements as an MLA.

It directly targets services to the 280-some seniors in the towers as well as the surrounding seniors' complexes like St. Volodymyr. The primary health nurse travels out, sometimes on foot. I see her walking around the constituency to offer services to the seniors community. The centre is also open to anyone who wants to walk in and receive the services. It's not just for seniors, but it certainly benefits seniors, especially in Scott-Forget where they can go and get their services in their housecoat and slippers.

Seniors also benefit from access to Saskatchewan's HealthLine that offers immediate, confidential, professional health advice and information by registered nurses 24 hours a day.

Last year we introduced the seniors gold plan which grants seniors free provincial park entry, free angling licenses, 30 per cent discount on bus fares from Saskatchewan Transportation Company, free non-driver photo ID [identification] from SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance].

And as we continually announce, we are continuing to shorten wait times with more MRI [magnetic resonance imaging] scans — a new one coming in Saskatoon — more hip and knee replacements, and more surgeries. In 2006 we completed 22 per cent more MRIs, 18 per cent more CAT [computerized axial tomography] scans, and 37 per cent more bone mineral density tests. In spite of rising demand, the wait lists for these tests are dropping. Waits for an MRI have dropped most dramatically — 42 per cent over the past two years.

Mr. Speaker, millions of dollars of investments to expand surgical capacity are making a difference. In the past two years the surgical wait list has dropped by about 3,000 cases. It is now the lowest it has been since September 2004.

In the six months ending in September 2006, 86 per cent of surgeries were completed within six months and 93 per cent within one year. The biggest rate increase for priority areas in Saskatchewan were for knee and hip replacements which — even though I had both my knees done in the last year — the

surgery is usually done on older persons.

Mr. Speaker, in 2005 and '06 the Saskatchewan senior citizens ambulance assistance program paid approximately 6.2 million and handled approximately 22,960 claims. This plan limits the cost of road ambulance services to \$250 per trip per person 65 years and older.

Older persons have access to a range of rehabilitation services such as physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech-language therapy. Services are provided through the regional health authorities and facilities in . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. I would like to bring it to the member's attention — the member who's, I believe, the mover of the motion — that the motion is actually quite specific, related to the seniors' drug plan and prescription drugs. I would ask her to relate her remarks to the motion before us.

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will talk about why seniors are most benefited by this and why it is such a necessary thing for seniors. We do have, as I said, in the province the most seniors per capita than any other province. Fifteen per cent of our population are aged 65 and older. And when I talk to seniors they talk about the high costs of drugs, and they talk about how sometimes the choices are whether they get the prescription filled or whether they eat. So I can say that this program is going to benefit many seniors.

Seniors have come up to me already and have said, some of them — when we say we're saving on the average of \$400 a year for some seniors, for the average senior — some of them are saying they're going to be saving \$400 a month. And this is a huge difference in fixed-incomes families.

And when I talked about how the Stats Canada stuff has shown us how seniors in this province don't have very much money — 20,000 for an elderly male living alone and 16,000-some for an elderly female . . . And of course females are going to be, there's more females and they're going to be targeted even harder with trying to make ends meet buying drugs. So what I was talking about all the things that benefit the seniors is because we have targeted the seniors in this province, who have built the province and who have a great stake in how good it is today. That some of the things that, some of the money that we have should be turned back into programs that will benefit seniors.

And more seniors of course use prescription drugs than non-seniors, and of course then have higher drug costs for the year. And when I talked about the seniors' drug plan, I want to just repeat that it will be implemented July 1, and there will be no application process. Seniors can get their drugs at the pharmacy as the pharmacist will be submitting those drugs immediately upon the prescription.

[11:15]

Now the means test: I think that is my point when I talked about what seniors make. It's very difficult to find a line. Who's going to pick the line of cut-off? When the average income for seniors paying income tax is 26,000, we hardly have a lot of

rich seniors in the province, even though many of us do talk about what seniors we know and how that will affect some of them and some of them should have income testing.

What really disturbs me . . . And my mother is a senior living in a high-rise with many other seniors, and they're talking about this. And what I get the feeling of is they're starting to feel guilty, that we have made them feel that because we have money that they shouldn't get it, that some other program should get it, is more deserving of it.

And when we talk about sustainability and those sorts of things, these seniors are telling me that they feel guilty because they don't think that this will be sustainable, and they really shouldn't have it. They don't think that they deserve it. Students is fine. They think students should get money, that keeping young people is fine. But somehow when we talk about this isn't sustainable, we have made seniors feel guilty for getting a program that is specific to their needs.

And when they're seniors making \$16,000 a year and having to buy high-cost drugs, even with some of the assistance programs that there are in the province, they cannot survive that way. And if they don't take their drugs, we end up having people come into the hospital. They have more complications, and then our costs rise. So I don't think we should be talking about seniors making this an unsustainable program. I think they feel guilty.

And I think it's really unfortunate that we have put in programs all across the board, including business tax cuts, and have not made anybody feel guilty about that — and those are sustainable — and why the pioneers of our province who have made this province such a great place to live, work, and raise a family and retire and enjoy the fruits of that labour, feel guilty that we're giving them a program.

When my mother says people in her building talk about how can it be sustainable, well sustainability is about choice. And when we make choices every year in our budget process, we decide what we're going to keep and what we're going to not keep. This is sustainable because we choose to do it.

We choose to recognize our seniors and to give them this program because we value their contribution, and we value that they keep healthy as long as they possibly can and live in Saskatchewan in a healthy atmosphere and a healthy lifestyle as the rest of us hope to do. So none of those things should be said that make seniors feel that they're guilty and that they don't deserve this.

And when we talk about income testing, when studies like in the United Kingdom have just come forward and talked about means testing has raised the administrative cost of the program, why would we bother doing that? When there's so few seniors that have a lot of money, why would we raise our administration costs and take money out of our health system into programs that could be beneficial to many other people? So I don't think that income testing would stand the test of a good review by any financial institution.

And, Mr. Speaker, with that — and I think that my comments about seniors deserve something in this province because they have built it; it's a great place to live, work, and raise a family,

and also to retire and enjoy the benefits of your lifelong work — I move then, seconded by the member from Saskatchewan Rivers:

That this Assembly strongly endorses the seniors' drug plan unveiled in the provincial budget; the plan's universal application will ensure cost-effective access to all prescription drugs under the formulary plan for every Saskatchewan person over the age of 65.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Saskatoon Eastview, seconded by the member for Saskatchewan Rivers:

That this Assembly strongly endorses the seniors' drug plan unveiled in the provincial budget; the plan's universal application will ensure cost-effective access to all prescription drugs under the formulary plan for every Saskatchewan person over the age of 65.

The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatchewan Rivers.

Mr. Borgerson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to stand to second the motion put forward by the member from Saskatoon Eastview. Mr. Speaker, in recognition of our seniors and elders, this government is introducing a seniors' prescription drug plan, the first of its kind in Canada. Like medicare, it will be a universal plan. Every person over the age of 65 qualifies for the program, and no senior will have to pay more than \$15 for a prescription.

Mr. Speaker, with the high cost of prescription drugs nowadays, this is a groundbreaking initiative. At more than \$15 billion a year, prescription drugs are the second highest health care cost in Canada. And this cost has been rising rapidly at a rate of 13 per cent a year — far greater than the rate of inflation. No one is more affected than seniors.

For many seniors who have carefully planned their retirement years — some with registered pension plans, some relying on Canada Pension and old age security— for many seniors these years also bring with them the unexpected, some things that can't be planned for, health issues. And when these health issues come with a price tag, it can add a stress to their lives that is unfair. Mr. Speaker, with 87 per cent of the seniors in Saskatchewan having at least one prescription a year that costs more than \$15, this plan will make a real difference for seniors.

Mr. Speaker, we all remember the introduction of medicare in the province and how the rest of Canada followed. The result is a public health care system that is the envy of many people in the world including our neighbours to the south. The seniors' prescription drug plan follows in that tradition. It is a signature piece for Saskatchewan New Democrats and for Saskatchewan and, most important, it honours those who have given us all that we have, our seniors and elders.

So why would the Saskatchewan Party oppose such a plan? Well first of all, Mr. Speaker, I hear members opposite say that

it should be needs-based; there should be an income test. So, Mr. Speaker, I asked a few of my constituents what they thought. One of my constituents in the Spruce Home area said, and I quote:

I don't believe in means tests. Cause you spend a lot of money and time trying to establish it and it becomes one of those silly things. It really should be universal.

A senior in White Fox who has about \$70 a month in prescription drugs says, and I quote:

I'm not in favor of tests because they never seem to be fair. People with the most money seem to make things work to their advantage. Maybe I'm biased because I don't have much money.

A senior in the Wild Rose area talked about how the prescription drug plan would help him. He said some of his prescriptions are as high as \$80. His prescriptions last year added up to \$2,624.

A senior in the Big River area said that it's a good plan. She said her prescriptions amount to about \$60 a month but she knows other seniors who pay \$200 and more a month.

A farm couple residing in Canwood . . . Well first of all, Mr. Speaker, they had to talk about the federal Conservative position on the Canadian Wheat Board, but when we talked about the drug plan they talked about how appreciative they are. And both of those seniors have more than \$1,000 in prescription drug costs every year and believe that, like medicare, it should be universal.

Mr. Speaker, our seniors' drug plan will assist more than 115,000 seniors such as those in my constituency at an average of \$400 per person per year, and it will be universal.

Mr. Speaker, I found the Saskatchewan Party's focus on sustainability amusing. First of all, for a politically modified version of Devine's Conservatives to be lecturing anyone on sustainability is hugely ironic. These are the guys that saddled this province with a \$14 billion debt that we're still paying off today. Transport those members opposite back in time 45 years ago when medicare was introduced, and I'm sure we would have heard them saying then, ah, medicare will never work. It's not sustainable. We can't afford it. It should be needs-based. It should be income tested. And yet here we are 45 years later with one of the best public health care systems in the world.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Borgerson: — Mr. Speaker, I was reading a letter in the *Leader-Post*, April 11, 2007, from a Wes Norheim, and the letter is titled "Share the wealth." And I'll just read a small part of it. I quote:

The assistance to those over 65 with drug costs will be a big boost to the health of the province and will mean their scarce dollars are spent on other essentials in our economy.

Of course this budget is sustainable; its only shortcoming

is that Ottawa has yet to be convinced of its share of the responsibility, as in medicare.

But until then, I recall the birth of a hospitalization plan, and then medicare, both much greater leaps when we had much less. And by the way, to the naysayers who worry about the budget's sustainability, I can report that . . . age 65 we do not stop paying income tax.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Borgerson: — But, you know, Mr. Speaker, when the opposition raises questions about the sustainability of a new seniors' drug plan, I think the public can read between the lines. This isn't really about sustainability. It's about public health care. The Saskatchewan Party doesn't like the public health care system because it's a public health care system.

As the Premier pointed out in his budget speech to this Assembly, it is interesting that the Saskatchewan Party applauds business tax and corporate tax reduction and finds them perfectly sustainable, but when it comes to a drug plan for our seniors or a graduate tax credit or daycare spaces or training spaces, well then these are unsustainable. If we budget for business, it's sustainable. When it comes to making life better for Saskatchewan families, well then, Mr. Speaker, they say it's unsustainable.

Mr. Speaker, this is all part of a privatization agenda that the members opposite have carefully veneered over. They have a new paint job — a nice, glossy, friendly face paint job — but it's wearing a little thin. When something like a seniors' prescription drug plan comes along, we see their true colours.

Mr. Speaker, every day in this province healthy children are born, people receive emergency care, people undergo successful heart surgeries and joint replacements, and some seniors receive long-term care, and some seniors receive caring, competent, palliative care — and all of this with no health premiums. Is it sustainable? Of course it is.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Borgerson: — As long as we as a people choose to provide it, it will be sustainable. And, Madam Deputy Speaker, as long as we as New Democrats sit in government, you bet it's sustainable.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Borgerson: — And that is true for our new seniors' prescription drug plan as well.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, I'd like to close by saying a few words about the dental sealant program for students in community schools. Now you may wonder why I choose to end a speech about the seniors' drug plan by talking about a children's dental plan.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, there are lessons we can learn from history, even recent history. You will know that we once had a full-fledged children's dental plan in this province. It was introduced to schools by Premier Blakeney's NDP government,

and it was well received and highly successful. It was a program for children ages 5 to 17, and by 1986 there were 578 clinics in schools across this province.

It was cut that year by the Devine government which is no surprise really. The children's dental plan was exactly the kind of program that would be initiated by a social democratic government but would never reach the radar screens of conservatives like the ones opposite.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, while they were selling off provincial highway equipment and other assets at fire sale prices, and selling out health care education and social services for those in need, the Conservatives of the day dismantled the children's dental program. Five hundred and seventy-eight school dental clinics were closed, Madam Deputy Speaker, more than half of them in rural Saskatchewan. Four hundred and eleven employees were laid off and dental services shifted to private dental offices.

The Deputy Speaker: — I'm waiting as the member is closing his remarks that he is going to link that to this very specific topic in front of us, and if he would do that to make the linkage to the motion that he would be speaking to, please.

Mr. Borgerson: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. The point is that if the Saskatchewan Party were ever to be elected, you can expect that the seniors' drug plan would meet the same fate as the children's dental plan. It would be renamed, redefined and un-privatized into non-existence.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the seniors' drug plan, along with this new dental sealant program, speak to the incredible distance between our parties in a way that is both real and symbolic. You know, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party may try its best to sound like born-again social democrats in support of public health care and support of public utilities, but these two programs — one for seniors and the other for children — mark a great divide between a New Democratic Party government that focuses on the people of this province and a tired, old conservative party that focuses on itself and its friends and its for-profit privatization agenda.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as seniors and elders fought for medicare and pioneered this province, they created a better life for their families, children, and grandchildren, and we stand on their shoulders. This seniors' drug plan honours our seniors and elders who have given us all that we have.

I second the motion from the member from Saskatoon Eastview. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — Recognize the member for Indian Head-Milestone.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. It's a privilege to enter into the debate and speak to the motion that was put forward by the member from Eastview and seconded by the member from Saskatchewan Rivers.

You know I've been here in this Assembly for about seven or

eight years, and I can honestly say that that was the first time that I have seen a motion put forward by a member and the Speaker had to draw that member back to the motion. She didn't have, the member didn't have enough information or enough to say about the motion to fill 15 minutes and was asked over and over again . . . well a couple times — once — and certainly could have been called on about four or five times to bring the debate . . .

[11:30]

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. The member is commenting on a Speaker's ruling, so I'd ask him to get back to the motion in front of us. Thank you.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I just find it very interesting when members of the government side cannot speak for 25 minutes without having been drawn back to their very own motion. Each speaker had to be brought back to the motion, and I find that really quite amazing that they don't have enough information that they could speak for 25 minutes on their own motion.

And when you listen to what they had to say, they really didn't support or defend. Many times — and both speakers spoke this way — many times they would stand in their place and they would say it is sustainable, it is sustainable, it is sustainable. Why? I would ask the question, and they would say because we're saying it is sustainable.

But it was very interesting that not once in the budget documents did the Minister of Finance ever give any projections of what this would cost into the future. Many, many people, when they saw the government introduce this prescription drug plan for seniors — which I totally agree that there should be a prescription drug plan for seniors — not once did they stand in their place and give a rundown on what the costs will be into the future.

So when we ask the question — is it sustainable? — they'll say yes it is. We say where are the documentations to show it's sustainable? They don't have it because they say just trust us; this is what it's going to be; we can sustain it. They don't have any documentation.

And it's also very interesting that, you know, we've got a tired, old NDP government here that's worn out, and what they're doing over and over and over again is simply trying to buy votes. And it was interesting that the member from Eastview would start her comments by using her constituency as an example. It has the highest number of seniors per population of any constituency in the province. Well now if a person was skeptical and said you're trying to buy votes, it would really tend to prove the point. We know the polling in Eastview, and I think the government would know what the polling is like in Eastview. The polling for the NDP, the governing party, is going south. So what they have to do in a budget, just months before a general election, is try and buy some votes.

Again we don't disagree that there needs to be a drug plan for seniors. But this is so obvious. And especially when the member from Eastview is talking about it with the numbers sliding like they are for that member, it would make perfect

sense that she would stand in her spot and talk about how important this is — yes, for seniors, but more importantly how important it is for her electoral success. And that's what this is based around, at least for that member, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And I was also very interested to listen to the member from Saskatchewan Rivers, and I don't know how many times he talked about sustainability. He never once used the number of what it's going to cost this year, what it's going to cost next year, and what it's going to cost five and ten years into the future.

In the year 2007, which we're in right now, is the leading edge of the baby boomers. In the year 2017 is when the bulk of the baby boomers are going to be going through the system. So that would be the highest cost of the system.

Does the government have any projections on what this program will cost 10 years down the road? Absolutely they don't. They don't have any projections of what it's going to cost two years down the road. Well they're . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . The member from Moose Jaw is going, aw, give me a break. Well if you have projections, why wouldn't they lay them on the Table? It would have been a perfect opportunity. They had 25 minutes to talk about how much it's going to cost five and ten years into the future about their motion and their plan, and they couldn't fill the time. They had to be brought back to the subject.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, you know, it's really interesting that they won't lay out the projections into the future. The member from Sask Rivers talked many times about . . . he's talked to people in his constituency, and they don't think it should be income tested or anything like that. And you know, that might be very well true. But I'm amazed that he wouldn't stand and correct them and say we already have an income testing for the drug plans that we have in Saskatchewan.

Did he not correct that person to say that we already do have programs for low-income seniors? And how is that tested? It's tested on income. So he's standing in his place saying, I can't believe you would want to have an income test because they never seem to work and it wouldn't be fair. And his government has those programs already in place.

Now I really would hope that he would have been honest with the constituents and told them we have an income-based program already. Low-income seniors, seniors that are getting social assistance, there are many, many programs . . . I shouldn't say many. There are some programs that will certainly help low-income seniors.

Well you know, you had 25 minutes to talk about them. Members had 25 minutes to talk about the programs that were in place and failed to do it, you know. And it's just, it just is absolutely amazing.

But I really think it's important that we talk about what this government has done. Now I mean, they're within months of an election. It's interesting they announce it in budget, not to come into effect until July which, you know, could be as much as a month away from the next general election. You know, I mean

it would be a major plank in their election platform.

But I think it's really important when, when the . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well they're questioning whether it could be August. I would probably think they won't go in August. The last time they called an election in August they almost lost government. I think it was under the former premier, Roy Romanow, they called an election in August, so it's not unknown to the NDP to do it.

But I think it's very important that we look at what the NDP have done for seniors over the last 16 years of their government. When they came into government, there was a \$75 deductible for seniors who then had to have a copayment of 20 per cent. That was a program in place when this NDP government came into power.

Shortly after they were elected, instead of a 20 per cent copayment, the NDP, the government raised it up to 35 per cent and increased the deductible. So all they did when they became government . . . Now they're saying we're the big defenders. We're the . . . you know, we're going to defend and stand up for seniors. That is not what they did when they came into power in the early '90s.

So then in 1993 they weren't getting enough out of seniors at that point. They weren't getting enough. So what did they do . . . is they raised it up to a \$1,700 deductible from . . . They took power and it was \$75. They raised it up to \$1,700 with a cost share of 35 per cent. Now it's obvious that the polled numbers are showing that they're not doing very well. They have to do something to shore it up because I really believe the true feelings of this government is back in 1993 when they were charging seniors a \$1,700 deductible and a 35 per cent cost share.

That wasn't quite enough. They weren't quite finished then. So in 2002 they changed the formula. They changed the formula so that 3.5 per cent of income is what they have to pay towards drug costs. Now the member from Sask Rivers again says we can't go on income. That's exactly what their program is based on now. It's based on a 3.5 per cent of your income.

Now we don't want to go income tested, and that's fine. That's the program that they put in place. I would say that if a person, a senior, is bringing in \$500,000 of income that perhaps he could afford some of his prescription drugs. Now the member from Saskatoon Eastview says we don't have very many rich seniors in Saskatchewan, and I can agree with her. Unfortunately so many of them have been under this government and have moved out of the province. They followed their children and are living out of the province.

But the point of an income test is that high-income people may not need this program. But the real issue is the issue around sustainability, and this government continues not to release its information in that area.

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

Hon. Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. As the Minister Responsible for Seniors in Saskatchewan, I'm

proud to stand today to speak about the most significant expansion of health care services to seniors in a generation.

This program is designed to reduce out-of-pocket expenses for Saskatchewan's seniors to \$15 per prescription for every fill, ensuring that cost is not a barrier to their accessing prescription drugs. This will ensure that seniors never have to choose between groceries and prescription drugs. This is just part of this NDP government's commitment to making life better for all of Saskatchewan people.

The seniors' drug plan will benefit an estimated 115,000 seniors an average of \$400 annually. This is a significant savings for many of our seniors who make up one in seven Saskatchewan residents. This NDP government outlined our plan in the Throne Speech when we committed to strengthen Saskatchewan's leadership in public health care and when we committed to ensure Saskatchewan families benefit from our strong, prosperous economy.

Mr. Speaker, with the \$400 saved annually by seniors under this plan, the \$300 saved annually by the average family with the PST [provincial sales tax] cut, and the continued commitment of this NDP government to providing the lowest-cost utility bundle in the country, Saskatchewan people will continue to prosper from the current boom.

Mr. Speaker, it is no surprise that the members opposite are opposed to the seniors' drug plan. When asked what they would do differently on budget day, the opposition Finance critic didn't seem to know. All he could come up with was that they would cut health care and get rid of civil servants. Now what kind of vision is that, Mr. Speaker?

Now, Mr. Speaker, the statement by the opposition Finance critic saying that this is not sustainable and it should be income tested basically would have removed this program and cut almost all of the seniors off in his riding from this program. I wonder if the seniors in his riding know that their MLA is endorsing cutting them out of the seniors' drug plan. And why would he do that, Madam Deputy Speaker?

Whereas I am proud, Mr. Speaker, that here in Saskatchewan — the birthplace of medicare — this NDP government continues to be a leader and a pioneer in the area of health care. We're committed to doing what's right and what's good for Saskatchewan people. The members of the opposition unfortunately seem to be focused only on what's good for the Saskatchewan Party.

This is why, Mr. Speaker, they've refused to stand up to Stephen Harper, Prime Minister Stephen Harper and the Conservative government in Ottawa. Rather than support a seniors' drug plan, they'd rather be silent than anger their bosses in Ottawa. They're more committed to their party and to their mother ship in Ottawa than they are to the seniors in this province, and won't support this seniors' drug plan. They cannot admit, Mr. Speaker, that things are going well here in Saskatchewan because it may affect their own political fortunes.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the people aren't buying this Sask Party negativity. The people can see that this is a time of unprecedented prosperity and growth here in Saskatchewan. In

fact, the members opposite said this may not be sustainable, is not sustainable, should be cut back, and we can't prove that it's sustainable.

Well it's going to cost approximately \$35 million this year, \$53 million next year. And what does the Bank of Montreal say about this budget which includes the seniors' drug plan? They have given this government top marks for our commitment to cutting taxes, for intelligent spending and maintaining fiscal stability. Nothing in what they've said in the banks would cast any light negatively on whether this government and this province can afford to support the seniors through the seniors' drug plan.

Madam Deputy Speaker, people are now beginning to see that Saskatchewan is the best place to live, work, and raise a family and retire, Mr. Speaker. This government, to seniors, is another part of that strategy. Along with the seniors' drug plan, this government has also developed low-cost seniors housing so that our seniors may enjoy their lives without worrying about utility bills or living conditions. Mr. Speaker, this government has also created the seniors gold plan which grants seniors free access to our provincial parks, free fishing licences, a 30 per cent discount on STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company] service, and free non-driver photo ID from SGI.

[11:45]

This has come after much sacrifice by our seniors. Support for a seniors' drug plan is important because you'll remember, Mr. Speaker, that in 1991 when our government was first elected, Saskatchewan was at a crossroads. The province was near bankruptcy from 10 years of rule from those members opposite and a government that they supported. At that time we couldn't afford a seniors' drug plan like we can today. But the people of the province sacrificed, and they improved the economic condition in this province so that now that this NDP government and the people of this province have turned the province around.

And the opposition just can't handle it. They can't handle it, Mr. Speaker, because they're the very same people that put this province into debt. They supported a government that ran up debt after debt.

They don't support seniors, yet they blindly support Prime Minister Harper in Ottawa even when he breaks an \$800 million promise to Saskatchewan. Imagine, Mr. Speaker, how much better the seniors' drug plan could be if we had a Prime Minister that kept his promise and provided \$800 million. So they will quibble over a 35, probably \$50 million program and take this government to task that that's not sustainable, but they won't say anything to the Prime Minister about breaking his promise for \$800 million ongoing.

Mr. Speaker, this drug plan is sustainable. This government has had 14 balanced budgets, 16 credit . . .

The Speaker: — Order please. Order. I ask all members to allow the member to speak. Member for Saskatoon Sutherland.

Hon. Mr. Addley: — Mr. Speaker, I have lots to say, so with the agreement of the opposition I could extend my time to a full

25 minutes if they'd like.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Addley: — And I see leave has not been granted. But, Mr. Speaker, this drug plan is sustainable. This government has had 16 credit rating upgrades, 14 balanced budgets. This is in stark contrast to the days when the opposition members were in government and supported the government of the 1980s. After all the years of sacrifice and hard work the seniors of Saskatchewan are now seeing the benefit of good, responsible government.

Mr. Speaker, what are some of the things that the opposition has said on budget day about the seniors' drug plan? The member for Cannington said this is an unsustainable program. Well, Mr. Speaker, we've shown with the credit upgrades, with the balanced budgets, with the banks saying that this is a good budget, that this is sustainable. Well let's hear from the members with their evidence as to why this is not sustainable. This drug plan is sustainable.

Mr. Speaker, the Finance critic from the opposition says that he feels the seniors' drug plan, the post-secondary tax credit will increase drastically in the coming years, becoming totally unsustainable. Well I wonder if he's put that in his householder and sent it to all the seniors in his riding, saying if he had his way he would cut their drug plan. Because most of the seniors in his riding would be probably a little more affluent than the general public, seniors in the rest of the province. And so does he support cutting . . . He does support cutting the drug plan for seniors. And do the seniors of his riding know about that?

Mr. Speaker, not long ago the Leader of the Opposition and the Sask Party released some information to the constituents saying that they would provide support, social programs, to those who truly need the support. Now they're saying today that seniors do not truly need this support and that this program is not sustainable and that if, when they're in power they're going to cut this program because it's not sustainable.

The other thing that they said is they would hold the line on increases to government spending and continually reduce government spending after an audit in the health care. So are they saying that the seniors . . . Well they are saying that the seniors are the area that they would want to cut back on funding for seniors.

Mr. Speaker, the member for Eastview, the member for Saskatchewan Rivers have laid out a program of why this program is sustainable, why we need a drug plan for seniors. In the consultations that I've had with seniors this was one of the number one issues that they've raised for sustainability and they wanted some help. And this government and this Premier have stepped forward to the plate and have provided this support. It's up to the opposition to show what they're going to do.

And in conclusion the seniors' drug plan will benefit all seniors and I'm proud to be part of this pioneering government and its great . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and join in the debate on the topic of health care for seniors in this province. Mr. Speaker, I certainly would like to iterate a bit of a personal story. My mother lived to the ripe old age of 82 years of age, and so it was an interesting observation for me to be close to her and to listen to what her concerns were in her future. She also did not have particularly problematic health conditions, although she did require medication, and she was able to live very independently on modest means for those 82 years.

Mr. Speaker, seniors have a lot of issues that they face as the so-called golden years approach and one of them is their concern about health care. And certainly the topic of the debate today touches on a part of that whole health care debate concern that seniors do have in this province.

Last night when I was at home, I noticed an ad that was sponsored by the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses and in it, it said that there were 579 unfilled nursing positions in Saskatchewan. And I thought, you know, if there's anything that should bring some fear into the hearts of our seniors in this province is the fact that this government has so badly mismanaged the health care and human resources file that there is a real possibility that seniors are going to have a hard time getting the health care they need in a timely fashion as their years advance.

Mr. Speaker, on top of that reality, we've heard day after day in this Assembly of hospitals in this province that are closed or closing and closed part-time, that are not able to give emergency services as doctors are not able to fill the available positions. We are told that there are, I believe, eight locum doctors in the province and that's supposed to fill the gap that there is right in this province. Mr. Speaker, it points to the fact that in addition to badly mismanaging the health care human resources for the nursing profession, they have also mismanaged the health care requirements for doctors in this province.

Mr. Speaker, this vaunted budget that we have — and the Health minister shakes his head as if this is no — we have a three and a half billion dollar health care budget. We told the government almost a decade ago that their human resources plan was going to create this kind of a problem, that it was going to be the lack of human resources — doctors and nurses — that the shortage of them are going to close hospitals, not governments. And it's coming to be true, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Mr. Speaker, at the same time the Saskatchewan Party was raising the alarm about the unsustainability, about effective human resources program in the health system, other provinces were taking action. In Manitoba, for example, there are 101 medical training seats for doctors in that province with a population virtually identical to ours — 101, Mr. Speaker.

What have we got? We have 60 and an announcement of a whole four more seats in this budget to move to 64. That means

that Manitoba, with a similar population to Saskatchewan, a similar percentage of seniors in their province, has got 36 more doctors each and every year in that province than what we have in this province — training seats.

Mr. Speaker, all of these issues point to the concerns that seniors have about the health care that they are going to demand.

Mr. Speaker, in her leadoff speech the member from Saskatoon Eastview said sustainability is all about choices. And I think that's absolutely true. It is about choices. The choices this government has been making in regard to health care have created an environment of concern and fear for seniors in our province. And, Mr. Speaker, that is a great concern to our seniors. It's a concern that they have.

Certainly seniors are concerned about a great number of things as they face their future. They're concerned about housing. They're concerned about personal safety. They're concerned about mobility. All of these issues impact on seniors.

And the member from Saskatoon Eastview is absolutely right. It's about choices. Sustainability is about choices. And this government has to make choices that are appropriate to seniors right across this province.

When you think of, from a seniors' perspective, of what it means that there is no hospital in Shellbrook available to them at this point or that there's a shortage of doctors in those communities, where are they supposed to go? Many seniors are not as mobile as other people. Many seniors require bus trips to get to a doctor. Many seniors are isolated in their homes where family may or may not be living in the adjacent community.

And many times these seniors live at home and they're concerned about their health care. It's absolutely true. And yes, they are concerned about the cost of their medical prescriptions. That's also true. And I do believe that it's an absolute essential fact for our province to make sure that the most vulnerable and needy seniors in our province have got the kind of health care that they need — and not only prescriptions, but accessibility to competent doctors and nurses.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — That is absolutely a necessity in this province and it's absolutely important that governments make the balanced choices that need to be made in order to take those concerns away from our seniors. It's absolutely essential that that balance is created in our province so that seniors from one end to the other, in urban and rural centres, are making sure that they have the health care they need.

It's much more than just prescription drugs, Mr. Speaker. It certainly is about sustainability, and it's certainly about choices.

The member from Indian Head talked about what the demographic realities are going to be in 17 years or 20 years. I mean, most of the members in this Chamber in 17 or 18 or 20 years are going to be seniors and are going to require the help and the support of the medical system in their time of vulnerability. And so we're not talking some theoretical

perspective for people that don't involve us. They're either our parents or our grandparents, or indeed they're going to be ourselves in not too many years forward. And we simply have to have an environment where the balance is created and sustained. There has to be the health care professionals to deliver the programs.

I recall a number of years ago we met with the college of pharmacy, and they were concerned about the number of pharmacists that were being trained and how many were being retained in our province. And in many communities in this province, there was a real difficulty in getting pharmacists to dispense prescriptions in these communities. Well where are seniors supposed to go for their prescriptions if they don't have enough pharmacies in our communities and pharmacists to give this kind of advice?

Mr. Speaker, the point I think that is so important to make in this whole debate is — while it's important to talk about the needs of seniors to have prescription drugs, it's important to talk about the needs that the most vulnerable and the most exposed seniors have to making sure they can afford these drugs — it's also a question of balance because this is not the only thing that is needed that creates that uncertainty and the instability for our seniors.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Saskatoon Sutherland said that the government is committed to make the right choice for Saskatchewan people or something to that effect. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's easy to say that that is a commitment, but it's much more difficult to deliver that balance that is needed for our seniors so they can be assured that they're going to be able to access the type of health care that they require when the time comes.

Mr. Speaker, my mother never drove a vehicle. She never drove, so she relied on the buses. And when in Watson the doctor moved away from being a resident physician in Watson and an itinerant doctor came from Humboldt, she was concerned because it was now going to have accessibility once a week instead of once every day virtually — Monday to Friday when the resident doctor had his hours in that community. And when she required any more services, when her cataracts needed replacement, we had to drive her to Saskatoon, and she had to wait for a fair bit of time in order to have that service provided. And all through that time, there was always that period of concern and worry about, is it going to happen soon enough? Are my eyes going to deteriorate to the point that they will not work as well even though the surgery may happen?

[12:00]

And so, Mr. Speaker, the point I'm trying to make in the time that I have is I agree that we have to make the right choices for our people. I agree that we need a proper, sustainable health care and drug plan and make sure that people that are vulnerable get the services and the drugs they need.

But we also have to make the responsible choices to make sure that we have the doctors and the nurses and the pharmacists and the other health care professionals that this province needs so that our seniors feel safe and secure, that the health care system, the whole health care system is going to be there for them when

they need it, and that they can live their retirement years in peace knowing that the people of Saskatchewan have made the balanced and proper choices. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to enter into the debate today on the drug plan and the expansion of medicare in Saskatchewan because this debate, as members have indicated, is in fact about more than just the provision of quality drug therapy at an affordable price to senior citizens. This is a debate about the basic principles of medicare in this province.

And I was interested and was listening to the comments by my colleague, the member for Saskatchewan Rivers, as he was talking and saying that he suspected if we looked back in the record of this House, back to the time as medicare was being first proposed by the Douglas administration, ultimately implemented by the Lloyd administration, by two NDP governments — CCF-NDP [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation-New Democratic Party] governments — but he suspected the debate would probably not have changed much.

I fear that what he says is absolutely accurate because what we have continued to hear from right wing parties, whether they were Conservative or Liberal or Sask Party, is that medicare itself is not sustainable. We have heard this in debate after debate. And I was shocked, shocked when we introduced the seniors' drug benefit in this budget, that would cap the benefit, cap the costs to seniors at \$15 a prescription, that the first thing the Sask Party said is, it's not sustainable.

I ask this question: how is it, in a \$3.45 billion health care budget, that we cannot find \$35 million to support the low-cost provision of drugs to our seniors? How is it that the members opposite can stand and oppose the provision of this expansion on a universal basis to senior citizens? How is it the members opposite can claim that they're protecting medicare while at the very time they're undermining one of the most, single most important values of medicare which is its universality. How is it the Sask Party thinks they have any credibility as they continue to fearmonger in this Assembly about the provision of health care services?

There is a huge disconnect between what it is that these members opposite say in question period as they attack the health care system and introduce a level of fear about the provision of services compared to what they stand . . . And I listened to the Opposition House Leader stand in his seat today and say that, no, in fact they care about seniors. They care about the drug plan. They believe in medicare. They just aren't prepared to fund it.

And it was, I thought, a very telling difference in the values of these two parties — the CCF-NDP that have bought forward medicare on a universal basis and the Sask Party in their tradition to the Liberals and the Conservatives of this province that have always opposed it.

What is it that they propose? What is it that they proposed as an alternative? If they had more money to spend in health care, the first place they'd spend it is to do what?

An Hon. Member: — Auditors.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Audit. They would undertake an audit of the health care system. They'd bring in accountants and auditors to take a look at how the doctors and the nurses and the patients are using the system.

They say there's no money for a drug plan. They can't support a drug plan because it's not sustainable. They say \$35 million out of a \$3.45 billion budget, the Sask Party claims is not sustainable. But they seem to think that there's enough money in there that they can go and hire auditors.

And what is it they believe that they will find? As they said at their convention, they believe that by hiring these auditors they'll be able to find up to a quarter billion dollars a year where the savings of the health care system so that they could then spend that on the demands of the union of nurses.

Isn't that interesting? They cannot seem to find enough money to support seniors who are increasingly dependent upon drug therapies to maintain the quality of life, to be able to stay in their homes and stay out of the acute care system, but they are quite conveniently able to find the money to hire accountants and auditors and management specialists to go in and audit the doctors and the nurses and the patients who are using the system.

It is amazing that the first thing they want to do is to hire auditors rather than support front-line services. Unbelievable. But it tells a very . . . It is the same tale that we have heard in this province for a generation, two generations, frankly, three generations, ever since the CCF-NDP proposed a universal medicare system. The cry from the right wing parties always, always is affordability.

And they pick the most ludicrous examples to criticize. I listened to the member for Indian Head-Wolseley say, why should somebody who makes a half million dollars a year be able to get free medicare? Why is it that they oppose this with the drug plan, but they seem to be silent in terms of whether we should be checking to see whether these people can afford to go to the doctor? Is this really what their agenda is?

Isn't this really what the right wing is suggesting, is that those people with the money should be able to get the better services? Isn't that really what they're suggesting, that as they go into a doctor's office, we should be looking in their wallet to see whether they should be paying? Is it going back to the plan that the Liberals, one of their forefounding parties supported, which was to provide a deterrent fee? Is that what they're providing and proposing? It is one of the oldest debates that we have had in this historic Assembly.

This NDP government, this government is going to expand our health care system to provide better health care to all Saskatchewan people, and in particular to our seniors through the expansion of programs like a universal drug care program that caps the fee at no more than \$15 a prescription.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, as I have travelled the province since the budget, and as we introduced this, many, many seniors have come up and have said, you know what? We really appreciate this.

Now the member opposite, the Finance critic, who has not been able to find his feet for six — well six weeks, three weeks at least — three weeks to stand up and ask a question in the Assembly says what about the sustainability? What about the sustainability?

And what is it that we have said? The drug plan will cost \$35 million this year, \$53 million . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Just allow . . . There will be a time for questions. The Chair recognizes the member for Regina South.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, as I said when we introduced the plan that this plan would cost us \$35 million this year. It will expand to about \$53 million next year. And we expect the costs to rise somewhere in the range of 8 to 9 per cent, which is what health care costs are rising. That is what we are believing.

But the members opposite say that in a \$3.45 billion budget there is no money that they could . . . to support seniors get universal drug care. But they think that they would be able to find savings by hiring their auditors and their accountants. What an underhanded way to undermine a basic principle of medicare.

We should be working together in this province to build a stronger medicare system, to make sure that we've got better access to new therapies, to those items that will help keep seniors out of the acute care system where we know the costs are higher, provide a better quality of life so they can stay in their homes, and to be able to support the basic principle that this province has always supported, which is medicare.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The 65-minute portion of the debate has ended, and we will now have a 10-minute period where any member can ask question of any of those members who have spoken. The Chair recognizes the member for Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to put my question to the member from Saskatchewan Rivers. Mr. Speaker, the government floated a trial balloon before the budget saying that their political drug plan announcement was going to cost \$60 million. Then they came out with a \$35 million budget item. Then it was also put out that it would probably be around \$100 million next year, and then in the budget document it came out it would be around \$53 million. So we really don't know what the cost of their political drug announcement will be.

What I would like to ask the member from Saskatchewan Rivers, what is their political drug announcement about their drug plan going to cost in year one, year two, year three, year four, and year five?

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

Mr. Borgerson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Finance minister already answered that question, Mr. Speaker. He indicates that because this is a partial year, 2007-2008, cost is \$35.7 million. Next year we're looking at a cost of \$53 million, and then as the Finance minister indicated, we're looking at a 8 to 9 per cent increase for the year after that.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to add as well this is, as the Finance minister has indicated, a possibility to expand medicare. And it does raise the question, Mr. Speaker, in terms of how far we could move that expansion of medicare if the federal Conservatives, who are good friends of the members opposite, would keep the promise they made in terms of the \$800 million. Just think about what we might do in terms of expanding medicare in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is many quotes that the opposition has indicated that this program is not sustainable. Yet last year the Finance critic kept saying on many, many occasions — more than just once anyway — that this government seems to be sitting on a mountain of money. The NDP shouldn't be building up a mountain of money. We know that you have a mountain of money that you're sitting on.

And recently they released a document that indicated that they would support a safety net which protects those who truly need support. Given that according to the opposition that we have a mountain of money and that they believe that this isn't sustainable, why do they not think seniors do not truly support this drug plan? Why are they attacking seniors, Mr. Speaker?

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay and thank you very ... Mr. Speaker, my question is to the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

Drug plans are very important for all members of society including seniors, Mr. Speaker. But I find the NDP's doublespeak very interesting that the NDP have supported means testing in the past, especially the member from Regina Qu'Appelle, Mr. Speaker, who in a debate over the cost of supporting seniors in long-term care said that having a means test in place was the right thing to do, that seniors should pay up to 90 per cent of their income towards the cost of their long-term care beds.

To the member from Saskatoon Eastview: does she support that view, or is it her belief that seniors should choose between their drugs and long-term care beds, or does she continue to support her previous policy of let them die sooner?

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for

Saskatoon Eastview.

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to clarify that what I said last year, that I think people should be given the means to live healthier longer which everybody wants to do. And when they do die, they die quicker. And all seniors' groups understood what I meant. Unfortunately the opposition didn't understand that.

But in long-term care, people don't get to ... have to choose between their accommodation and their drug costs. Their drugs are paid for. And in long-term care, we still subsidize 77 per cent of the fees that people pay for their accommodation and their drugs.

And I think that it's very telling that the misunderstandings that are going on have an effect on seniors who are vulnerable and who feel that they need to support everything we do to make sure the province maintains its strength and that somehow they don't deserve something good for them. And I think that's extremely unfair of the Sask Party to make them feel that way and to continue to make them feel that they're the problem for anything that would be unsustainable.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the member for Indian Head-Milestone, the opposition Health critic. I would like for him to stand today in the House and explain how much it is that party plans to spend on an audit of the efficiency of what our doctors and nurses do today, and why he would rather spend money on accountants and auditors than on a seniors' drug plan that'll support our senior citizens.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do know that if we were and when we become government and we put out a plan for a senior drug plan, we're not going to have projections for one year, maybe know what the number is for the second year, and not talk about year 3, 4, and 5 because what they're doing is nothing more than trying to buy votes. They've set out a program that is only one year down the road or two years down the road, and they haven't looked any further than that, Mr. Speaker.

What they tend to do is just fear monger, fear monger, fear monger and that's continually what they do. And that is their defence, Mr. Speaker. That's their defence for a health care system that's failing miserably, because the health care professionals — as we have said — should have been put in place 10 years ago. Now we're paying the consequences. And they're trying to put a stopgap with this drug plan and not dealing with the real issues that we're facing in health care, and that's a human resources shortage.

[12:15]

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask my question to the member from Saskatchewan Rivers again since he didn't answer it last time. First, the Saskatchewan Party believes in a sustainable seniors' prescription drug plan within a balanced budget. Obviously those are fundamentals that we believe in, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the government came out with a budget that by all accounts shows a \$700 million deficit. Their own former Finance minister, Janice MacKinnon, said that the seniors' drug plan that they announced is unsustainable. I'd like to ask the member from Saskatchewan Rivers: how much debt is he prepared and the NDP government is prepared to run up to be paid for by future generations of Saskatchewan residents?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Borgerson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to answer that question by reading something. And I'm going to start the quote with this:

The removal of clawbacks would give Saskatchewan approximately \$800 million per year in additional revenue. What could Saskatchewan do with this money? Here are some examples. Saskatchewan could purchase 260 MRI machines. Saskatchewan can educate and train approximately 40,000 licensed practical nurses. Saskatchewan could hire approximately 5,000 medical doctors.

Mr. Speaker, this is from Brian Fitzpatrick, MP [Member of Parliament], from one of his mailouts to his constituents. And so, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. There come times when it's easier to hear members that are not having the mike than members who have the mike. That shouldn't be the case. I invite the member to continue his remarks, the member for Saskatchewan Rivers.

Mr. Borgerson: — And so, Mr. Speaker, \$800 million — I would think that that would contribute significantly to the sustainability of this province. I would like to know what the members opposite are doing to see that the Conservatives in Ottawa keep their promise. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — The member for Indian Head-Milestone dodged the question last time. I'm going to ask him again: why is it the Sask Party's priority to hire accountants

and auditors and not to support a \$35 million expansion of the drug plan to support low-cost drugs for our senior citizens? Why are their values so out of step with Saskatchewan people?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McMorris: — Well the Minister of Finance likes to stand in his place and — even when he isn't standing in his place — lecture from his seat about answering questions. He has had many opportunities to come clean on how much this drug plan will cost, and never has he done it. He will not touch it because he realizes five and eight years or ten years down the road it may not be sustainable. He only has a short-term view to get him passed the next general election.

We heard it from the member from Saskatoon Eastview. We know the polls are showing that she is going down miserably. So the only way to try and prop her up is to implement a program months away from a general election . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Member for Indian Head-Milestone.

Mr. McMorris: — Implement a program months away from a general election that may save her hide, Mr. Speaker, because quite frankly, the polls don't look very good at all. And so the Minister of Finance refuses to answer the long-term question because it is a short-term program for this government, and that's all it is.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Last question. Member for Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the member from Saskatoon rivers who says that the Saskatchewan Party only talks about grow, grow, grow . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Saskatchewan Rivers, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the member read a quote that the person did not support means testing. Yet the NDP government, including the member from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley, continues to support means testing for seniors in long-term care. They continue to support means testing for children's drugs. Does that member support means testing, or are they going to eliminate means tests in the entire health care system?

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

Mr. Borgerson: — Mr. Speaker, of course there are needs-based programs throughout government. But I would say this, I would say this. And now, Mr. Speaker, we have reached the point where we have the financial situation in this province where we can bring in a universal seniors' drug plan. But I'd like to remind the House of the reason why we have not been able to act on these kinds of things earlier . . . is a \$14 billion debt that this government inherited from the Conservative government under Grant Devine. Think about what we might have accomplished if we had not incurred that debt. Think about where we might go now with pharmacare, as a national

pharmacare in this program in this country. Think about where we might go now under this government and under the financial strength that we have at this time. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

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

Motion No. 5 — Undertaking an Inquiry into Management of Harassment Complaints

Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The motion that I'm introducing today calls on the Murdoch Carriere scandal to go to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

We feel that this is important for several reasons. We've been asking questions in the House since the session resumed in the beginning of March, and we feel that there's many questions that are left unanswered about how the government handled the Murdoch Carriere case, how the complainants were treated, why this went on for so long without any kind of resolution, why complaints that were brought forward as early as 1994 were ignored, and for other reasons as well. And we would hope that the government would support this motion to bring this issue to committee to make sure that we find answers to many of these questions.

As I said, these women were being harassed by Murdoch Carriere for years. It took almost a decade for anything to happen. One of the earliest complaints was in 1994. We have a good idea of what happened after 2002, but there's many questions left unanswered as to what happened prior to 2002, and I'm just going to run through the timeline of what we know from 2002 and on.

December 20, 2002, Saskatoon mediator, Robert Gillies submitted a report on his investigation into harassment complaints made by six female employees against Murdoch Carriere who was at the time the director of fire management and forest protection with the Department of the Environment. And the reports concludes and I quote, "... that harassment did occur both in terms of abuse of authority and in terms of inappropriate sexual behaviour." The report is commonly known as the Gillies report.

On February 12, 2003, a memo was sent to the fire management and protection staff from then deputy minister of the Environment, Terry Scott, that says that Carriere will be and I quote:

... assuming new responsibilities as a senior advisor to the ... [administrative] Deputy Minister of Operations. We expect that Murdoch will commence these responsibilities in early May and he will be spending a part of each week in our Regina headquarters offices.

Carriere was to be back in the Prince Albert office when not in Regina. And the Prince Albert office is where many of his victims continued to work so they were planning on putting Carriere back in the office where he had originally harassed his

employees. The letter goes on to say, from Terry Scott and I quote:

I want to thank Murdoch for his valuable contributions to the Fire Program. Under his leadership, there have been some major accomplishments which have earned considerable recognition with the public [that] we serve.

The very same day that that memo was sent out, Terry Scott sent a letter to the women who had filed complaints. And I quote:

It is in this context that I have decided that Murdoch Carriere will be removed from his role as Director of Fire Management and Forest Protection and will be assigned alternate responsibilities within the department.

And after moving Murdoch Carriere, the women were instructed to not speak about the matter. And I continue to quote from the memo sent from Terry Scott:

I want to specifically caution you to treat this decision and any information related to this matter with strict and absolute confidentiality. As a complainant you will have been provided with a copy of the investigator's report and the information it contains must remain confidential. You have a very significant personal responsibility to ensure that this requirement is satisfied. Any circulation of this material or discussion of the investigation carries a very real potential for further damage to the working relationships which have been impacted by this unfortunate occurrence.

In April of 2001 the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* published an article based on a leaked copy of the Gillies report. It detailed how that, despite the findings of the report that harassment did occur, that Carriere had simply been transferred to another department. The article states, and I quote:

... sources say the women are outraged by the government's handling of the case. They are concerned that by reassigning Carriere, the Environment Department is putting the safety of other employees in jeopardy. They want him fired or [at least] given early retirement.

The complainants involved launched a complaint with the province's Human Rights Commission, and one complainant asked the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] to investigate. And at the same time it was the Saskatchewan Party that called on the government to terminate Carriere, especially given the government's zero-tolerance policy on harassment. That day the then minister of the Public Service Commission tells reporters that she did not become aware of the allegations until she read the article in the paper. *The StarPhoenix* publishes an editorial that states:

Rather than place a premium on fostering a safe workplace where female employees are valued, the government is signalling that a boys' club atmosphere prevails in the department. Rather than enforce the rules, it conveys the impression that Carriere's touted political connections are covering up for him, to the detriment of the women who dared to complain.

In addition to providing assurance that Carriere will remain off the job pending a police investigation, the government needs to explain the department's handling of this mess and the silence from the minister on a situation that's been simmering for a long time.

On April 2, 2003, the then PSC [Public Service Commission] minister announces that she has stepped in to have Carriere terminated, citing that she did not believe Carriere's punishment was strong enough given the findings of the Gillies report. She also notes that by firing Carriere in a public fashion that she has opened herself up, and the government, to possible legal action.

Also on April 3 the Premier insists that he has never heard of these issues or harassment complaints prior to reading it in *The StarPhoenix*. But we know that that's not the case, Mr. Speaker. One of the victims sent a letter to the Premier dated March 10 and told him of her concerns, but I'll get to that letter in a minute. When asked about the possibility of legal action by Murdoch Carriere against the government, the then minister of Justice actually had the right approach. And I'll quote his statement from *Hansard* on April 3, 2003, and he said, 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 . . . Carriere was justified. [And] we will defend that position vigorously in the courts.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Ms. Heppner: — But, Mr. Speaker, we know that that did not happen. On April 23 Terry Scott, the then deputy minister of the Environment, who made the decision to transfer Carriere instead of fire him, takes a separation from the province. According to *The StarPhoenix* the package was broken into a 10-month period at full pay and another seven months depending on what job he got.

On May 13 Carriere officially files a lawsuit against the then PSC minister, the Government of Saskatchewan, and various media outlets. On November 28, 2003 the RCMP charged Murdoch Carriere with six counts of sexual assault following their investigation into allegations that he sexually harassed six female employees under his supervision.

On May 11, 2004 the provincial government pays \$135,000 to nine women who complained of sexual harassment at the hands of Murdoch Carriere. That's a payout of \$15,000 each. It's a mere pittance compared to what the government paid Murdoch Carriere.

On September 9, 2004 a preliminary hearing is held into the charges laid against Murdoch Carriere. On September 11, 2004 the judge decides that there isn't enough evidence for Carriere to go to court. Instead he reduces two of the charges to common assault and leaves two charges of sexual assault standing.

January 10 to 19, 2006: the trial of Murdoch Carriere is held in Prince Albert. Two women testify that Carriere groped and kissed them on numerous occasions in the workplace. One of the women complainants testifies that she had sent a letter to the Premier in March 2003 to bring the issue to his attentions.

According to the *Prince Albert Daily Herald* the women who testified, and I quote:

The woman who testified Wednesday said some of the women were unhappy with the decision and felt the move was a promotion for Carriere.

"We wanted Murdoch removed from the workplace because of his negative actions," said the woman . . .

"But by just removing him to another location, we knew the activity would continue on other women."

In the end, she said [that] the women felt Carriere should be fired completely. When the government's decision to move Carriere was announced, the woman said [that] she was disappointed.

[12:30]

And I quote:

"The initial memo made us feel like there wasn't any discipline involved," she said, adding they didn't feel the punishment was enough and that the issue was being "swept under a rug."

Deciding to see if [there was] other action could be taken, a letter was written to the premier. When asked if the purpose of the letter was to get Carriere fired from his position, the woman responded: "Yes."

They went to the Premier of this province trying to get Murdoch Carriere out of the workplace so that other women would be saved. They fought for other women when this government didn't. And I go on to quote this woman:

"I thought it was a horrendous decision," said that woman, explaining that one of the complainants was from Regina and it wasn't fair that she would have to work near Carriere.

The woman said that she felt that whoever in the department had read the report [Gillies report] didn't feel Carriere and his actions were an issue. That's when she decided to write . . . [to the Premier] to see if he would intervene.

And her quote is, "I was trying to keep women safe."

In February 16, 2006, Carriere is convicted of two counts of common assault and acquitted on two charges of sexual assault. And then on February 27, 2007, the NDP government announces it has settled with Murdoch Carriere for the sum of \$275,000. Mr. Speaker, these are the things that we do know, but as I mentioned at the beginning of my remarks, there are many questions that are left unanswered and questions that we need answers to. And that is why the motion is before the Assembly today.

And I'll go back to the quote, the statement by the former NDP Justice minister, which I believe was the right approach at the very beginning and it's what the NDP should have done from

the beginning. And I'm going to quote him again:

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 . . . the courts will make the determination.

But, Mr. Speaker, that's not what happened. The government did not stand up for these women. They did not take this to court. They backed down. And I find it interesting, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP sells themselves as the defenders of women in light of this case.

I am fortunate to be a woman in politics, to be in this Assembly. I don't take my position lightly and I'm honoured to be here. And I have to say that there are many women who came before us that paved the way and opened doors to enable people like me to be here. Canada has a history of very strong women who dreamt of a better life, not only for their generation but for generations to come.

And one of those women was Agnes Macphail. She was the first woman to be elected to the House of Commons. She was also one of the two first women to be elected to the Ontario legislature. Interestingly she was elected as a member of the CCF, the forerunner to the NDP.

And in her lifetime, she did great things and fought on behalf of all people. She fought for human rights. She fought for reforms and improvements to Canada's prison system. She worked to advance women's issues. She founded the Elizabeth Fry Society that helped out women and girls in the justice system. She fought for women. She opened doors, like I said, so that people like me could be here today.

One of her quotes is: "Do not rely completely on any other human being . . . We meet all of life's greatest tests alone." And, Mr. Speaker, I would submit that for these nine women, that statement couldn't be more true. When they needed their government to defend them, they were left to stand and face this test alone. And I'm pretty sure that Agnes Macphail, if she were here today, would not be pleased with the actions of this NDP government.

I'd also like to talk briefly about another Agnes, and this Agnes was Agnes Heppner. She is my grandmother. My grandma was born in 1901 in Rosthern, North-West Territories. She was born before Saskatchewan was even a province. And she was born at a time when there were very little options for women beyond getting married and raising a family. And although that was one of her dreams, she had other dreams to pursue as well.

In 1919 her father paid for a train ticket and she went down to the United States. She went to Bible school and to nurses' training and worked in the United States as a registered nurse for many years before returning home. She was full of adventure. She was a very stubborn woman. She was sick for most of her life. She overcame cancer and other ailments, and she returned back to Saskatchewan at the age of 38. She married my grandfather at age 40 and had my dad at age 42.

And grandma was the very definition of feisty. And most of you know my father, and even my father couldn't stand up to my grandma most of the time. One of the greatest compliments my dad ever gave me was to tell me that I reminded him of her. And I think there's a lot of her in me, and I see a lot of her in my nieces as well, Mr. Speaker. And it's strong women like her that I thank for helping me to become the person that I am today.

There's a few other women that I would like to acknowledge. They are known as the famous five: Nellie McClung, Emily Murphy, Irene Parlby, Louise McKinney, and Henrietta Edwards. They fought what is commonly known as the Persons Case.

Women weren't recognized as persons under the law, and therefore couldn't sit in the Senate. And they fought from 1927 to 1929 on the Persons Case. They took it all the way to London to petition England's Privy Council to challenge section 24 of the British North America Act to ensure that women would indeed be considered persons.

I had the privilege to visit the monument that's set up in Ottawa in their memory and it's inspiring to know that these five women fought for my future rights to be considered a person. They fought an uphill battle in our country when women's rights were not a priority for the majority of the population.

And I wonder what would have happened if they would have sought legal opinions or legal advice as to what the outcome of their fight would have been. And had they taken a legal opinion, I'm wondering if they would have been told to just stand down and let it be. And where would any of us be then? Luckily for us they had the fortitude to follow through. And because of their opening doors for people like us, as I said I am here today.

I was privileged to participate a few weeks ago at a forum at the University of Regina called "Chicks and Politics." And while not everybody may not enjoy the name of that, it does catch your attention and the point of it was to get women involved in the political system and to understand that politics was a place that women could participate.

We discussed a variety of things — difficulties that women face in politics, whether or not they feel that the doors are open to them — and I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that I'm very fortunate. I have never in my life faced any discrimination based on gender and I would like to believe that I am the norm. If I'm the exception, I find that sad. But in my caucus, in the Saskatchewan Party caucus, I feel that I am accepted, that my views are listened to and that my full participation is important to the rest of the members in caucus.

I find it very disturbing however, Mr. Speaker, that at that forum at the University of Regina there were sitting NDP MLAs, women MLAs, who quite openly and candidly expressed to the people that were visiting the forum and listening to our views, they were talking about their own struggles in their own NDP caucus.

They stated quite clearly that unless a man says it in the NDP caucus it's like it hasn't been said; that women are not taken seriously in the NDP caucus and it's like talking to a wall. The

member from Regina Walsh Acres and the member from Wascana Plains were in agreement on that point. And although I appreciate their candour at that forum, I find it very sad that this would be indicative of how the NDP views women. I was shocked to hear it, Mr. Speaker. But I am pleased as I said that that is not the situation that I face in the Saskatchewan Party caucus.

I find it also interesting, Mr. Speaker, that I did a search through the NDP's platform that is posted on their website and I searched for two things: either the word woman or women. And guess how many times it appeared in that document — once. And I find it interesting in that it would only appear once in a document that is supposed to be benefiting both men and women in this province.

And one of the issues where I believe the NDP have failed, and I think this goes to their attitude towards women in this province and whether or not that affected their handling of the Murdoch Carriere affair. We know that women use food banks exceptionally in this province. And we have seen the use of food banks go up over the years under the NDP government.

In 1991 the now Premier vowed that food banks would be a thing of the past. And he said, and I quote from *Hansard*, December 11, 1991: "We in this government dream of a province where at the turn of the 21st century, like the soup kitchens of the 1930s, the food banks of the 1980s and '90s will be a thing of the past."

Well I find it interesting, Mr. Speaker, that under this NDP government food bank usage in this province is the second highest increase in the entire nation.

And, Mr. Speaker, there is a quote too from Bob Pringle, the executive director of the Saskatoon Food Bank — and interestingly a former NDP cabinet minister — and he said, and I quote:

We're located in the Premier's riding. I haven't been able to get the Premier here for two-and-a-half years . . . I'll just say it . . . [like] it is. We've had more interest by the Opposition in these issues than by the government.

An Hon. Member: — Bob Pringle.

Ms. Heppner: — Yes, and that was from Bob Pringle. The reality of the NDP's record is that food bank usage is on the rise.

This is the legacy of the NDP when it comes to social justice and women's issues. And I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that people in glass houses shouldn't be throwing stones. On the issue of women's issues, it is interesting to note that the Women's Secretariat received over \$1 million in the 2001-2002 budget, yet in the following year, 2002-2003, the NDP not only cut the budget for women's programs to \$257,000; they completely dismantled the Women's Secretariat altogether. Women's issues, whether the Women's Secretariat or the office of the Status of Women, wasn't even mentioned as a separate line item in the budget in 2002-2003.

So I went through the NDP speeches. I went through budget

debate. I went through ministers appearing at committee. I was looking for the appropriate outrage from the members opposite, considering that this would be an issue that they apparently would be concerned about — that they gutted the Women's Secretariat and completely dismantled their offices.

But I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that my search was in vain. Actually the only defence that I found of the Women's Secretariat after the NDP gutted it came from a member on this side of the House. The member for Kelvington-Wadena repeatedly questioned the minister in charge as to budget cuts and dismantling of this office but received very few answers. And I would like to commend the member from Kelvington-Wadena for her faithfulness in defending women.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, the Carriere scandal and this government's mishandling of this issue affects a lot of us. And I have to say from a personal perspective, I have nieces — Jasmine is 13; Sharmaine is 10; and Mileva just turned 3. And I want to make sure that they can grow up and work in a place where they are free from harassment and where they feel safe.

I spend a lot of time with my nieces. They're all very unique people, and they bring a lot of joy to my life. We have sleepovers, and we go shopping. We go shopping a lot. And . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes. We have movie nights. And as soon as the weather gets a little bit better, we'll be going camping.

And I hope, Mr. Speaker, that I've set a good example. I've taken a lot of chances that others wouldn't have and jumped at opportunities that many would have said no to. And I want to make sure that my nieces grow up knowing that they can do whatever they want, regardless of gender, and that being a woman does not tie them back.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, the NDP say that more legislation is needed. We heard the Labour minister in committee yesterday saying that they're looking at new legislation.

The proposed legislation however, according to the Labour minister, he said that there is no outside consultations being involved in this. And I would think that considering that we have nine women who were harassed by Murdoch Carriere and were completely neglected for eight years, they would know better than anybody else the deficiencies in the system, the gaps that need to be filled, and possible legislative changes that could be made to make sure that people like . . . so that what happened to them doesn't happen to other people. But, Mr. Speaker, the NDP aren't consulting with people like that. They're doing internal consultations. So they are talking to themselves about what they should be doing.

And I also find, Mr. Speaker, that without looking back to find out what went wrong in the first place, it's impossible to go forward and figure out what we need to fix. They've asked us to support amendments to any legislation. And, Mr. Speaker, I think that we need to have a full investigation into this matter.

We haven't seen the proposed amendments by the NDP. And we'd be willing to support anything that would actually fix, to improve the situation. But, Mr. Speaker, I think more importantly than that, the NDP need to look at what happened over the last 10 years and look at what went wrong to see why legislation and rules and regulations that were in place at the time, why those things were not followed.

And, Mr. Speaker, Carriere's victims reported his behaviour to numerous people over almost a decade, and nothing was done for them. They went to deputy ministers, to associate deputy ministers, to their supervisors. They even wrote the Premier of this province, and still nothing was done. This is in a direct contradiction to the rules that are already in place for their superiors. And I'm going to quote from the Public Service Commission's rules and regulations, PS 807-C, and it says: "It is misconduct for managers and supervisors who know of workplace harassment not to take immediate corrective action."

[12:45]

Well, Mr. Speaker, there were numerous people who knew that this harassment was going on and nothing was done to these people. Terry Scott is the only person that faced any kind of reprimand whatsoever, but there were other people other than Terry Scott who knew of these things going on and chose to do nothing. And, Mr. Speaker, we need to send this to committee to have this investigated to find out why nothing has happened to those people. These are the questions that we need to have answered.

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With leave, to introduce guests.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. The Chair recognizes the member for Cannington.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the Assembly I would like to introduce my constituency assistant who is in here today, Jean Ball, with her son, Aaron.

Jeannie took a day off today from work to bring her youngest son, Garrett, and his girlfriend in from the farm to Regina to catch the bus back to Calgary. Garrett and his girlfriend, like many young Saskatchewan people, are now living and working in Alberta, and that's the kind of young people that we need to have returning.

So I would like to ask the House to welcome Jeannie and Aaron to the Assembly today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 5 — Undertaking an Inquiry into Management of Harassment Complaints (continued)

Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, what is needed is to have the proper procedures that are in place to make sure that those things are being followed. One of Murdoch Carriere's victims in an interview with the *Leader-Post* said, and I quote . . . This is from March 27, 2007:

"We were ignored" . . .

"We laid complaints and they said we weren't going through the proper channels . . . which we thought we were doing just [that] by going to (our) superior."

"It makes you feel really worthless" . . .

And I find that sad, Mr. Speaker, that in this day and age women would be so ignored to the point where they would feel worthless.

Mr. Speaker, an all-party committee to investigate what went wrong is necessary. I hear about the situation when I go home. Both men and women are disturbed by the government's actions or lack of action on this file. And as I said earlier, there are questions that have been left unanswered. I'm going to go through some of those now.

The first question is, why weren't earlier harassment complaints taken seriously? We've heard from at least one of the victims that she was originally harassed by Murdoch Carriere as early as 1994. Yet nothing was done until the Gillies report came out in 2002. And the NDP didn't act until this became a political liability for them. And we need to know why these women were ignored for almost a decade.

Another question is, why did the NDP, despite their own harassment legislation stating otherwise, refuse to take action against the numerous individuals who ignored the harassment complaints? And as I stated earlier, there was policies in place where it is misconduct for supervisors to not take any action. And those people have not been disciplined.

Another question is, when did the former Environment minister learn of complaints against his friend, Carriere? And I know that members on the other side keep saying that they're no buddy of Murdoch Carriere. Well I wouldn't want to be a buddy with him either.

But the reality of the situation, Mr. Speaker, is that on December 2002, Murdoch Carriere phoned the former Environment minister asking for help in light of these allegations. And I don't know about other members of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, but if I was facing something as serious as that, I wouldn't be calling the minister. I would be calling my friends to find out exactly what I should be doing. And who did Murdoch Carriere call? He called the former

Environment minister.

How many other people did Murdoch Carriere harass? There are nine that we know of. But considering that these complaints went unanswered for almost a decade, I'm wondering if there were other women who were harassed by Murdoch Carriere, who saw the futile fight that these women were in, trying to be heard, and thought that it was just easier to stay quiet. And if there are other women, Mr. Speaker, we need to make sure that they're taken care of as well.

And why wasn't Murdoch Carriere fired years before 2002 when his peers and supervisors knew of these complaints? The harassment of these women wasn't a secret from the people who were required to help them, and those people failed to defend them. How many other complaints were filed prior to 2002? As I said, we know that there was incidents in 1994 and 1997. And we need to know how many other complaints went ignored.

We also would like to know why the Minister for the Public Service Commission continues to tell us that the nine women were checked with — and those are her words, not ours — checked with before Carriere was given his \$275,000 payoff, when we know that they weren't checked with. The minister was very clear when she told us that the victims were checked with, but we know that that isn't true. His settlement was signed on January 9. The cheque was dated and delivered on January 26, and the women weren't notified, some of them, until after the NDP sent out a press release on February 27.

And why did the NDP keep their settlement with Carriere a secret from his victims? Again, Carriere's victims weren't told of the deal that the NDP had struck with Carriere. The press release went out, and some of these people only found out by voice mail.

And why didn't the NDP fight for these women in court as they promised to do in 2002? And I go again to the former NDP Justice minister who promised that the NDP government would fight this vigorously in the courts.

Mr. Speaker, these are just some of the questions that require answers. These answers are required not only for us but for the nine women who were victims at the hands of Murdoch Carriere.

The NDP say that they have a zero tolerance. But if you'd ask these nine victims, they would tell you otherwise. They went to the Premier. They wrote him a letter to notify him of what was going on. They were even trying to look out for the other women in Regina who could potentially be harassed by Murdoch Carriere when Carriere was going to be transferred to Regina.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP talks about having a zero tolerance policy, so I went online and found a brochure that's put out by the Public Service Commission about myths and facts about harassment in the workplace. And I'll quote from that. The first says, "Myth: Ignoring harassment will put a stop to the behaviour." And it goes on to say:

Fact: Ignoring the harassment may actually encourage the

harasser, who may interpret the lack of protest as acceptance of the behaviour.

Well, Mr. Speaker, Carriere's victims didn't ignore this harassment that they faced. They talked to people. They talked to supervisors. They talked to the deputy minister, to the associate deputy minister, and they even alerted the Premier. The only people who ignored this situation were the people in positions of power — people who were in the position to protect these women. And that didn't happen.

It goes on to say, another myth, "Managers are not responsible for the behaviour of the staff who commit harassment." And it says:

Fact: Managers who are aware of harassment are responsible for stopping the harassment and preventing it in the future. Supervisors who knowingly tolerate harassment may be subject to disciplinary measures.

Mr. Speaker, that didn't happen.

I also found a report called the *Action Plan for Saskatchewan Women* on the Status of Women office website, and I quote:

Harassment is a growing problem in the workplace that is affecting the health and safety of workers. The Government of Saskatchewan wants to be a role model for healthy and safe practices in the modern workplace.

I don't think that if you talk to any one of Murdoch Carriere's victims that they would say that the NDP has been a role model in addressing harassment in the workplace. But this is the information that the NDP government is providing, but they are not backing up their own words with any actions.

And as I said, Mr. Speaker, the government wants to introduce amendments to the occupational health and safety guidelines, but we need to know what we need to fix before we can introduce new legislation. And, Mr. Speaker, I believe that's why we need to send this to committee so that we can look into this to find out what went wrong so that we can fix it so we can protect women in the future.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm not the only one and this party's not the only one who's upset by this. There's other groups, organizations, individuals who are concerned. And I'll read a press release dated February 27, '07 from the SGEU [Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union], and it says:

News that government settled out of court with Murdoch Carriere and provided a \$275,000 ... [payout] plus pension repayment options was greeted with outrage and dismay at SGEU.

"We're appalled" ... "I can only imagine the pain and suffering the women he harassed have felt, and now they see him being compensated. This will be ... very painful ... for them."

And he goes on to say:

"This is a precedent that never should have been set . . . By this action, the message that [this] government is sending to women who are sexually harassed in the workplace is that the government won't take their complaints seriously and their harasser will be rewarded in the end. It's a sad day for Saskatchewan government workers, but especially for women who work in executive government."

And, Mr. Speaker, I also have a press release from the north Saskatchewan business association which states:

The NSBA would like the Provincial Government to come clean about their reasons for paying Carriere an out of court settlement.

The NSBA is also concerned about the cost and the message it sends to the victims that were involved.

Executive Director of NSBA Shirley Ryan says once the dust settles, the taxpayer will . . . [be] . . . on the hook for about half a million dollars, which is a substantial amount.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP have said repeatedly that they had to settle, that they had no choice. And by the way, it would have been insensitive . . . As the member for Regina Wascana Plains said last week, it would be insensitive to drag these women through further court proceedings. The problem with that, Mr. Speaker, is that the NDP never asked them. They never asked these women if they wanted this to go to court. These women weren't given the option of being defended.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I said, there's many questions that are left unanswered. There's a precedent set from the Channel Lake affair that allows the government to release its legal opinions, whether from the Justice department or otherwise, and have this sent to committee for an investigation.

And because of these questions that are left unanswered, Mr. Speaker, I move today, seconded by the member for Kelvington-Wadena:

That the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies undertake an inquiry pursuant to rule 146(1) to consider and report on the following matters:

the government's handling of harassment complaints made by various government employees against Murdoch Carriere;

the government's treatment of the complainants before, during, and after the Murdoch Carriere harassment investigation;

the government's initial disciplinary action taken against Murdoch Carriere on February 12, 2003;

the government's subsequent decision to overturn the initial disciplinary action and fire Murdoch Carriere;

the government's decision to provide Murdoch Carriere with a \$275,000 out-of-court settlement and full pension; and

that once the said committee is satisfied it has verified the facts of the matter, it will make recommendations in its report as follows:

the steps that should be taken to learn from and act on mistakes made;

what should be done to ensure the greatest extent possible

a safe and harassment-free workplace for all employees; what should be done to ensure that when harassment allegations are made, they are dealt with appropriately; and further

that pursuant to rule 146(5) the committee be instructed to initiate its inquiry immediately.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I would hope that the members opposite would support our motion today.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — On the motion by the member from Martensville, seconded by the member for Kelvington-Wadena, will members take it as read?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of the official opposition to second the motion moved by my colleague, the member from Martensville. I'd like to start by telling her . . . by thanking her for outlining in detail the issues surrounding this case and bringing the timelines forward so the people of the province can understand the issues; so that they understand what we've been talking about and the fact that there are many, many questions that have to be answered in some manner.

Since the first day of this session we started asking questions about the issue of harassment in the workplace — specifically harassment in a government workplace. I mentioned this last week when we talked about the fact that this NDP government tries to show that people in the workplace are often not harassed, in a government workplace. Mr. Speaker, this happened in a workplace in a government department.

We have so many questions that need to be answers. Questions like the NDP's government refusal to come clean on why they won't table the legal opinion on the \$275,000 payout to Murdoch Carriere that led the government to decide not to take the issue to court, to fight it in court like they promised they would do. The member from Martensville mentioned the number of times that the former minister of Justice stood in this Assembly and declared that he would fight for women in the House. He would fight for women in the workplace, and he would defend it on behalf of his government.

But there seemed to be a change in opinion of this government. They seemed to have decided that this wasn't an important issue and it's one of the many things that we need, the people in the province need to have an answer for.

Mr. Speaker, we need answers to questions like, why did this government say they'd consulted with women who were harassed when they . . . when we know, when the women know, and when the people in the province know that they were never talked to. Why did harassment complaints that were brought forward to the supervisors, to the ADMs [assistant deputy minister], and to the deputy minister since 1994, why were they never acted on? Who had the authority to decide that these

didn't have to be acted on?

In fact the women were told . . . Women who had been sexually harassed in the workplace, women who were hurting and knew that something had to change, they had the courage and strength to go to their supervisors and they were told, that's just Murdoch. Mr. Speaker, that's the kind of thing that adds insult to injury; that made women feel like less than lower life when they can't even go to their superior and be protected.

Why was Murdoch given a top-up to his pension even though people of Saskatchewan were told that he was fired? The people of Saskatchewan, not just women but all citizens know that if someone is fired for cause, they don't get a top-up on their pension.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to get a . . . go through the timeline a little bit just so people understand that there is an issue that this government has known about for many years. We know from the letters that have been given to the members on this side of the House that since 1994 there have been women who have been trying to get the attention of this government to know that there's been problems in the workplace.

Back in 2002 Murdoch Carriere was the provincial director of fire management and forest protection in Prince Albert, and there was a report . . . when a report by a government-appointed mediator alleged he had been . . . had sexually harassed or intimidated six female employees. Carriere was disciplined and transferred to another position.

After the newspaper story the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission at that time was . . . fired him in April 2003, despite warnings from government officials a minister should not get involved in personnel matters. Carriere contended that the investigator's report was inaccurate and did not contain his full response to the allegations against him.

In February 2006 he was acquitted of six sexual assault charges but he was found guilty on two counts of common assault and he was given a six months suspended sentence. Just two days later, a few days later, the provincial government settled the litigation with a \$275,000 payout to the man.

Mr. Speaker, today we heard a government minister wonder out loud if the NDP would be given time or would be speaking to this motion. I'd like to bring to the attention of the House, to the members opposite, that they've had a number of private members' days. The minister had time in question period. But they have had time and opportunity themselves to bring this issue up where they could have clarified — not just for the members in the House, but for the general public — all these questions that we've been asking.

There was lots of opportunity to do that and they have never taken that chance. They have never spoke in the House and said let's us talk about this today. They've waited for us to bring this up and asked it to go to the Crown and Central Agencies Committee so we can get the answers that not just we want to hear, but that the people of the province wanted to hear. They had the opportunity. But did they do it for the women of this province? No, they did not; they refused.

My colleague from Martensville has brought forward a motion that would allow this whole issue to be taken to an all-party committee. We learned yesterday that this government is looking at new anti-harassment legislation. We're looking forward to seeing their ideas. But we need to know, the people of . . . and the people of Saskatchewan need to know what the problem is with the current legislation.

The question that is asked most often, is there anything wrong with this legislation or is this . . .

The Speaker: — Order. It now being the hour of 1 o'clock, I must bring this debate to an end.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — This House will stand adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

[The Assembly adjourned at 13:00.]

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CABINET MINISTERS

Hon. Lorne Calvert
Premier

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

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

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

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

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