



THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of

The Honourable P. Myron Kowalsky
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

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

[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's again my privilege to present a petition in regards to the need for 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 action to implement a strategy that will see a dialysis unit placed in Broadview Union Hospital.

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

Mr. Speaker, the petition I present today is signed by the folks from the communities of Grenfell and Cowessess. I so present.

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

Mr. Hermanson: — Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I have yet another petition where the people are asking the government to maintain full service of the SaskPower office at Rosetown. Mr. Speaker, they are concerned that, without an office, submission of electrical and gas permits will be more difficult and cause delays in customer hookups. 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 communities of Rosetown, Fiske, Swift Current, and Zealandia. And I'm pleased to present it on their behalf.

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

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with the dangerous practice of transferring patients from one ambulance to another on the highway. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to cease the transfer of patients from one ambulance to another while en route.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals from the communities of Riverhurst and Chaplin. I so present.

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

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

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

And the signatures are from St-Denis, Saskatoon, Humboldt, Muenster, Bruno, and Lake Lenore. I so present.

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

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

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

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

And this is signed by citizens of Radville. I so present. Thank you.

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to present a petition on behalf of people across Saskatchewan who for the past 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 this year to build a provincial children's hospital in Saskatoon.

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

The petitioners come from the provincial constituencies of Saskatoon Sutherland, Martensville, and Saskatoon Silver Springs. I so present.

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

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to bring a petition forward from citizens that are deeply concerned about the presence of sexual predators that are present or a threat to their communities.

And the prayer reads as follows:

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 communities are alerted to the presence of known sex offenders in their community as soon as possible.

And as is 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 here with citizens opposed to possible reduction of services to the Davidson and Imperial health centres:

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 Davidson and Imperial health centres be maintained at their current level of service at a minimum with 24-hour acute care, emergency, and doctor services available as well as lab, public health, home care, and long-term care services available to users from the Davidson and Imperial areas and beyond.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

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

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

Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to be able to rise in the Assembly today to present a petition calling on the government to fund the cancer drug Avastin. And I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to fully fund the cancer drug Avastin.

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

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

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

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

Standing Committee on the Economy

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am instructed by the committee to report Bill No. 54 without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall Bill 54 be considered in Committee of the Whole? The Chair recognizes the Minister of Labour.

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

The Speaker: — The Minister of Labour has requested leave to waive consideration of Committee of the Whole of Bill 54. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

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

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 54 — The Labour Standards Amendment Act, 2007

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

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Labour that Bill 54, The Labour Standards Amendment Act be now read the third time and passed under its title. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried.

Clerk: — Third reading of this Bill.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 54 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for SLGA [Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority]: when is the projected completion date for the review of The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Act, and when does SLGA expect to make this review public?

I also give notice that I shall on day no. 54 ask the government

the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for SLGA: what are the parameters of the review of The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Act, and specifically what issues are being reviewed?

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very proud and pleased to be able to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly some very special guests sitting in your gallery. We're all gathering to present the annual report of the Premier's voluntary sector initiative to the Premier in this, a very important, extremely important transition year for the initiative. And these members are part of the joint steering committee that have been working with not only government sector representatives but community representatives to prepare the report.

In the order that they are ... [inaudible] ... seating, sitting within your gallery, Mr. Speaker: Brad Lawrence ... [inaudible interjection] ... Thursday ... Brad Lawrence, Government House Museum and Heritage Property manager; Tracey Mann, director of community impact and investments, United Way of Regina, and Tracey has been a stalwart, steadfast supporter and Co-Chair of the initiative; Darlene Bessey, board member and treasurer of Canadian Crossroads International and Chair of Saskatoon citizens' centennial committee; Carol Smith, Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food, farm stress unit, coordinator of connection services directory; Betty Abrey, Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food, farm stress unit, connection services directory.

And not yet able to join us, there are a number of other steering committee members, but they will be with us or join us this afternoon. This is an important week, National Volunteer Week, so it's taken quite a few of them away to other events for the morning.

But right behind them would be Shianne Krause who is senior policy analyst and a superlative support person to this initiative, and Rick Fink who's manager of communications for CYR [Culture, Youth and Recreation].

I'd ask all members to give their warmest welcome to these people who've been working so hard on behalf of all community in Saskatchewan to strengthen the relationship between the government sector and the voluntary sector. It's been an extreme pleasure and a great deal of joy to work with them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to

introduce to you and through you, members of this Assembly, someone who likely needs no introduction at all. She is a former member of this Assembly. Seated behind the bar, a former member for Humboldt, future member for Saskatoon Nutana ...

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — She is currently involved in operating her own business. And I know members will want to welcome her to the Assembly.

But, Mr. Speaker, just before that happens, let me also just quickly add that recently there's been a lot of discussion about the role of women in politics in the province. And I think we will all agree that we need more women involved.

One political leader — I won't mention his name, but his initials are David Karwacki — said something to the effect that the women currently involved in politics in this Assembly are getting old and ready to retire. I think he said words to that effect. Folks might want to send cards and letters his way if they're offended.

For the record, we believe the women of this Assembly are young and vibrant and leaders. And we're looking forward to welcoming back Arlene in that capacity here in the near future, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and, through you, to all members of the Assembly a group of 14 students seated in the western gallery. They are from the Rainbow Youth Centre's most excellent Road to Employment program. Often that road to employment leads to the legislature where we have a visit, and I'm glad to see them here today. I look forward to meeting with them a bit later on. They are accompanied by their teachers, Shelly Christian and Raylene Bellegarde. And I look forward to meeting with them later on. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to join with the Leader of the Opposition in welcoming Arlene Julé to the Assembly. As the Leader of the Opposition has indicated, Ms. Julé will be running in the constituency that I presently represent. Obviously Ms. Julé will be a formidable opponent in Saskatoon Nutana.

But I do want to say this, that we have a pretty good political organization in our constituency, and our constituency association and our election planning committee is looking forward to another challenge.

And while I'm on my feet, I also want to welcome Grant Karwacki who was a political opponent on behalf of the Liberal Party in the last election campaign. And I think it's the first time that I can remember that both the Liberals and the conservatives have their prospective candidates in the Assembly, and I can say that I am looking forward, I'm looking forward to . . . or pardon me, the Saskatchewan Party, pardon me, the Saskatchewan Party. Both the Liberals and the Saskatchewan Party have their respective candidates in the Assembly, and obviously we're looking very forward to the next election campaign.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Chisholm: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to this Assembly, it's my pleasure to introduce two ladies in your gallery — Jeanine Howard-Tripp and Heather Chisholm. Jeanine is just recently moved to Regina with her husband Michael and their son Timothy. Regina's gain, Mr. Speaker, is certainly both Maidstone and Prairie North Health Region's loss. Michael served our region as a medical practitioner for the past number of years. Seated with Jeanine is my wife, Heather.

Both Jeanine and Heather have vested interests in the health care system in this province and are looking forward to this morning's debate and proceedings. Mr. Speaker, I would ask that we all welcome our guests to their gallery.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

[10:15]

The Environment

Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this coming Sunday, April 22 is Earth Day. The theme of this year's Earth Day in Canada is Take the Next Step. It's unfortunate that here in Saskatchewan this NDP government doesn't seem to have even taken the first step when it comes to the environment.

Last week we saw the NDP government release its so-called green strategy which got slammed by environmentalists in the province. The Saskatchewan Environmental Society thinks this green strategy is flawed because it lacks any targets. An editorial last week stated and I quote, "But if the goal is actually to build a green economy, the strategy is a non-starter."

Now, Mr. Speaker, the NDP government is bringing Al Gore to Saskatchewan in an attempt to distract people from their own dismal record on the environment. It should be noted, Mr. Speaker, that both SaskTel and SaskEnergy are sponsors of this event, but not SaskPower — the third worst polluter in the country.

After 16 years in government, this NDP has allowed 62 per cent increase in greenhouse gas emissions to occur in Saskatchewan, hardly a record to be proud of. It is clear, Mr. Speaker, that any action from the NDP now on the environment is nothing more than a deathbed conversion.

In keeping with this year's Earth Day theme of Take the Next Step, I would urge this NDP government to step away from the photo op and take a step forward towards a real plan that includes targets, goals, and measurability.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Earth Day

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This coming Sunday is Earth Day. Every year since 1970, Earth Day has served to raise awareness about humanity's growing ecological footprint and help stimulate positive actions aimed at local, regional, and global environmental issues.

Earth Day is now the largest, most celebrated environmental event in the world involving 500 million people in 180 countries. More than 6 million Canadians, including almost every schoolchild take part. Here in Saskatchewan a wide variety of events are planned around Earth Day, Mr. Speaker, including a visit from former US [United States] Vice-president Al Gore whose film, *An Inconvenient Truth*, offers a passionate look at his crusade to halt global warming by exposing the myths and misconceptions that surround it.

This week the Royal Saskatchewan Museum and the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority are observing Earth Day with a number of activities, including a performance of Don Waite's play, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Slough*, by the grade 4 class of George Lee School here in Regina.

As well there will be resource fairs, games, and crafts. Mr. Speaker, Earth Day is a time to recognize both our successes and our challenges when it comes to environmental issues, and there are plenty of both. But our government is committed to making life better for Saskatchewan families by conserving, protecting, and, when necessary, restoring this great province's environmental integrity.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Estevan Business Celebrates 40th Anniversary

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this year a business in my constituency is celebrating its 40th anniversary. Johnson Plumbing & Heating in Estevan, a Lennox dealership, has been serving the greater Estevan area since 1967.

John Johnson — affectionately known around town as Johnny — is the man that started the business, and he's now in his early 70s. He is as spry and energetic as the day he started the business. Mr. Johnson's sons, Rodger and Brad, now own the business and it continues to grow.

Mr. Speaker, not only do the Johnsons run a successful business in Estevan; they are also very active in the community. They are members of the local Lions Club, and every year they play a large part in putting on the club's annual lobster and steak fundraising dinner at the hockey arena. This dinner feeds nearly 1,000 people fresh lobster that is flown in the same day as the event, and the Johnsons help ensure it runs like clockwork.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of this Assembly to join me in congratulating John and Audrey Johnson, their sons Rodger and Brad and their families for 40 years of business in Estevan and their commitment to the community. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Lakeland Citizen of the Year

Mr. Borgerson: — Mr. Speaker, this past Saturday I had the pleasure of attending the Lakeland Citizen of the Year potluck in Christopher Lake. This is the 24th year for this community event, and as usual there was a huge turnout from the area — from Christopher Lake, Emma Lake, and Anglin Lake. There was an incredible selection of food as well as performances from a local choir and musicians.

Mr. Speaker, the 2007 Lakeland Citizen of the Year is Ina Toporowski. Ina grew up in the Beatty district nearby and operated local businesses for a number of years, but for 24 years she ran the local post office where she became a valued and trusted friend of everyone in the community. Last December Ina retired, but she is already looking for other ways to give her energy and time to the community.

Mr. Speaker, in rural communities all paths lead to the post office. It is a meeting place with the postmaster at its centre. Even with email and the Internet, the lives of every person in the community still pass through the hands of the local post office — from birth announcements to condolences, from paycheques to pensions, from special days to holidays. As I said to Ina on Saturday night, she has held the life of the community in her hands.

Mr. Speaker, congratulations to Lakeland for recognizing a role in the community that we often take for granted and for organizing such a successful evening, and special congratulations to Ina Toporowski for being chosen Lakeland Citizen of the Year.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Nellie Stevenson's 105th Birthday

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, Nellie Myring Southwick was born April 8, 1902, at 46 Albert Road, Tamworth, Staffordshire, England. And Nellie talks about beginning school in England, but in 1907 she arrived in Canada with her family, and they began residing at the Hopewell District, north of the community of Whitewood. Nellie talks about learning how to ride horseback — side saddle — fetching the cows, and learning how to milk cows, running errands to a community 10 miles away, at the same time delivering butter and eggs. She also mentions that in 1909 they moved to a farm four miles northeast of Whitewood, and in 1921 she married her husband Frederick Eady Stevenson. To this relationship were born two sons, Frederick Henry, Robert William, and a daughter, Helen Doreen.

Nellie talks about the '30s as hard years. She talks about the difficulties on the farm, the challenges, but how they made things work and how they got along very well. Unfortunately in November 1953 she lost her husband, but she said farm life was good. She moved with her son to town in November 1977. Nellie has always been an active person in the community and I want to congratulate Nellie Stevenson on her 105th birthday. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Accuracy of Advertisements

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, at the end of the spring session last year, the member from Thunder Creek was asked about the accuracy of the ads that the opposition was running that contained inaccurate job numbers. He wasn't too concerned and he said quote, "Maybe technically, mathematically we have to might have to review it."

At around the same time, the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party was asked about the ethics of advertising that claimed tuition was going up in the province when, thanks to the government tuition freeze, it clearly wasn't. The Sask Party leader wasn't too concerned about that either. And apparently he's still not because the Sask Party is continuing to run factually incorrect advertisements this year — one example, the Sask Party ad that claims that Saskatchewan's population is shrinking. Mr. Speaker, the members opposite must be unaware that the fourth quarter of 2006 saw Saskatchewan's largest population increase since 1986, not to mention the largest net interprovincial migration gain since 1983.

Mr. Speaker, there seems to be a pattern here of the Saskatchewan Party continually and conveniently getting their facts wrong, and it serves as another example of how the Sask Party's so-called code of ethics is a total facade. They ran unethical advertising last year and got caught, but that hasn't stopped them from doing it again this year. It's no wonder they don't enforce their own code of ethics, Mr. Speaker. They couldn't...

The Speaker: — Member's time has elapsed.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Public Response

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have some responses from the public, from Saskatchewan people, to our mail-out on the Murdoch Carriere scandal.

Mr. Speaker, from Regina, I quote:

Please be more responsible with my money. Shame on the NDP! That was a slap in the face of those women and all women in Saskatchewan.

From Estevan, I quote:

This man broke the law, acted in a very disgraceful way. He should have been fired with no benefits just like anyone else would have been. It is a waste of our money and an insult to the ones affected that this man was rewarded for his actions.

From Regina, I quote, "What recourse is there for mistreatment in the workplace if when you complain the boss gets paid off for life!! — after being convicted in the courts." From Fillmore, in my own constituency, I quote, "Rewarding men . . . [for harassing] women in the workplace is like telling them to do it because women don't matter." From the Queen City, I quote:

I agree that paying out that kind of money to Carriere is irresponsible government! I have supported the CCF . . . NDP for the last 50 years and will not vote for them again. I think government should look after taxpayers' money as if it were their own and not waste it like water. I voted for . . . [the Premier] but will not be voting for him again . . .

The last quote, Mr. Speaker, from Regina: "You, sir, have lost your moral mandate to rule." Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

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

Funding for Avastin

Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, in your gallery today is 63-year-old Keith Whyte from Bengough. Mr. Whyte is a constituent of mine. He'd been doctoring for almost three years to find the cause of his severe stomach pain. Finally last June, after he collapsed in a field one day, he was rushed to the hospital only to find out that he has cancer. He had a nine-hour surgery to remove a tumour the size of a grapefruit. But it didn't end there. He had to aggressively lobby to get into the cancer clinic, and when he did get in, his doctor told him that he had six months to live and recommended that he take Avastin with chemotherapy.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister reconsider his decision not to fund this cancer drug?

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank the member opposite for his question. And I commend the constituent for his continuing battle against a horrendous disease that affects all too many people across Canada.

Mr. Speaker, we have taken a position with regards to the drug Avastin. We continue to work with other provinces on developing a national or a pharmaceutical strategy that would include assistance on a national basis.

Currently, Mr. Speaker, I think the members opposite are aware — as the constituents in the gallery must be aware — Avastin is not universally available in any province in Canada, Mr. Speaker. Nothing new has come forward since our decision was made and therefore, Mr. Speaker, as of today I'm not in any position to announce any changes in our plans.

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

Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, Keith Whyte took Avastin for six months and his condition was improving, but in January of this year he had to quit because he ran out of money. The cost of treatment was \$5,000 per month.

This is the first time in Saskatchewan's history that a cancer drug was recommended by the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, but this government refused to fund it. Other provinces are funding it on a case-by-case basis.

Mr. Speaker, cancer patients say they are beyond begging this government for help. They are demanding action now. Why does this government refuse to help Saskatchewan people like Keith Whyte when they need it the most?

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and again I reference my comments from just a few moments ago. The members opposite and members of the cancer agencies across Canada are aware that there is a patchwork quilt of cancer drug funding across Canada. The latest review has indicated that as far as cancer drug funding is concerned, Saskatchewan funds the fourth largest number of cancer drugs in Canada. Mr. Speaker, only three other provinces in Canada support more of the new cancer drugs or cancer drug treatments than Saskatchewan does.

Mr. Speaker, we are continuing to review specific drugs and continuing to review a strategy on a national basis that will allow us to attend to new drugs like Avastin.

[10:30]

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

Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, Avastin is considered the

standard of care for colorectal cancer but this government refuses to give cancer patients the standard of care that health professionals say they need.

Had Mr. Whyte been diagnosed earlier, he might not be in his current situation, but he didn't get a CT [computerized tomography] scan and his test results were mixed up. And when he finally did get in to see an oncologist, he was only allowed less than 10 minutes. Staff told him because of the doctor shortage, that's all they had time for.

Mr. Speaker, why does this government refuse to give cancer patients in the province of Saskatchewan the help they so desperately need?

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — And again thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite states what the health critic of the party opposite has stated on a number of occasions, that Avastin is the standard of care for colorectal cancer. Actually, Mr. Speaker, Avastin is not universally available in any province in Canada.

An Hon. Member: — It's the standard of care.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — It is not the standard of care for colorectal cancer, Mr. Speaker. It is not available other than on a self-pay option.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Government of Saskatchewan — this NDP government — recognized that, to individuals, there may be a choice made with regards to taking Avastin. And we made available the ability of the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency and our regional health care authorities to provide a self-pay option for Avastin. Mr. Speaker, since that decision was made, four other provinces, Mr. Speaker, have taken and are doing exactly the same thing.

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

Physician Supply in Canora, Kamsack, and Preeceville

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, according to media reports last night, the Kamsack, Preeceville, and Canora hospitals are all on reduced services at the same time. In Preeceville, emergency services shut down Wednesday and won't be back in operation until tomorrow, Friday. There is no doctor. In Kamsack, all week long there has been no emergency services after 5 o'clock. There is no doctor.

Mr. Speaker, you can't have three hospitals all out at the same time. This is happening over and over and over again. Why has the minister failed to address this long-standing problem that now appears to be getting worse?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I notice on the order paper today that there's a motion regarding

health professionals. Mr. Speaker, I intend to utilize the time available to me to make some significant comments that are greater than the comments that I can make in this question period. But, Mr. Speaker, the essence of my remarks in debate later this day will be to show that we have not failed the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Our efforts have been substantial, substantive, and our commitment to the people of Saskatchewan also remains substantial, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, three hospitals all on bypass at the same time, and the Minister of Finance, the member from Regina South, refers to this as the fact that I am overreacting. Mr. Speaker, that's deplorable. The people of Canora and Kamsack and Preeceville and that entire area need better health care that this NDP government has not provided for 16 years.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, what this means with the three hospitals on bypass is that all patients, all people in that area have to go to Yorkton. That was what was said on the television. It was recommended that anyone with an emergency must go to Yorkton. Minister knows full well what will happen when Yorkton is stretched to the limit. The Yorkton hospital has trouble dealing with the number of patients it already has, and now there's this extra load. Mr. Speaker, why has the minister failed to effectively deal with this problem?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure that in a day or two the member opposite will also rise to congratulate the government for its increase in health professionals in the province, and particularly the increase, the increase in physicians in this province, Mr. Speaker. Because every month, Mr. Speaker, some community is welcoming a new doctor into its midst.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we recognize, we recognize that there is a continuing challenge to recruit physicians to hard-to-recruit areas in this province. And, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite also knows that the budget brought forward by this government contained not only \$90 million, Mr. Speaker, of new money for contracts negotiated for nurses and doctors and other health professionals, but it also contained additional recruitment and retention dollars.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite . . .

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Physician Supply in Spiritwood Area

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A group of women in my constituency are fed up waiting on this government to fix the doctor shortage in Spiritwood. They have gathered 1,700 names on a petition complaining about the lack of doctors in the area. These people have been waiting six months for emergency services to resume in the Spiritwood Hospital. And the problem is spreading, Mr. Speaker. Nearly every hospital in my riding now has a shortage of doctors. I welcome the comments from the Health minister later on today about recruitment and retention of doctors in rural area, especially in my area.

Mr. Speaker, why are these people waiting for answers from this government?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And in the Spiritwood area, like in the Kamsack and Canora area, Mr. Speaker, the regional health authorities have the day-to-day responsibility with regards to recruitment and retention issues, working with programs that are initiated at the provincial level. And, Mr. Speaker, I commend those who are working on the health boards and in administration of these two regional health authorities, Mr. Speaker, because they face very significant challenges in those areas.

Mr. Speaker, they are working very hard with programs that they have initiated, with programs that have been put in place by this provincial government. And, Mr. Speaker, I urge members of the community to continue to work with their regional health authorities to ensure that their community can attract physicians just as other communities in the province are doing, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there are no emergency services in Spiritwood as we speak. And in Big River there will be a shutdown of six weeks later on without services. Tomorrow afternoon, people looking for answers will be gathering at the Shellbrook Hospital to deal with this potentially dangerous situation. They wrote the minister on February 14 asking why they are so low on the government's priority list. They are still waiting for answers from this minister.

Mr. Speaker, I've arranged a meeting in Shellbrook at 2 o'clock tomorrow. The minister only lives in North Battleford. These people are looking for answers from this minister. Will the minister find time tomorrow to drive to Shellbrook and attend this meeting with me? Will he give that assurance to the people today?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am aware that the member opposite was once the mayor of the town of Spiritwood, and he represented the town well as the mayor of that community. And he knows that, as the mayor, that the communities do play a role, a very significant role in the recruitment of physicians to their communities.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows that the regional health authority has been working with the communities and with the current mayors and others. And, Mr. Speaker, I commend the member for organizing a meeting. I fully expect that the regional health authority will be in attendance to show that once again that the regional health authority is committed, has made a priority the recruitment and retention of physicians to that particular area of the province. Mr. Speaker, I commend the people of the communities for the work that they're doing, and I urge them to continue to work hard to help the regional health authority and the government to get physicians into that community.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Recruitment and Retention of Physicians

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when the minister was asked the same questions last year, this is what he had to say, and I quote in a newspaper article. Health minister Len Taylor said, "The suspension of hospital services in rural Saskatchewan is a fact of life."

Is that what he thinks, that these hospital closures are a fact of life for rural Saskatchewan? That's absolutely appalling.

Mr. Speaker, and it's not only these hospitals that are dealing with the problem and know the significance. So does the Saskatchewan Medical Association. This is what the Saskatchewan Medical Association had to say, and I quote: "... it's going to become a bigger problem over time."

Dr. Vino Padayachee, president of the SMA [Saskatchewan Medical Association], says, and again I quote: "We're doing a fairly good job in recruiting foreign doctors into Saskatchewan. What we're failing ... [to do is keep] them here ..."

Mr. Speaker, we have seen nothing from this minister on a proper recruitment program and especially training programs for our own Saskatchewan residents that want to become doctors. Is this the minister's plan to deal with the doctor issue in Saskatchewan? Is this foreign recruitment a revolving door?

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's comments just stretch the realms of credibility. On the one hand, he quotes the president of the Saskatchewan Medical Association saying our recruitment

efforts are working, and then in his next breath, he says the recruitment efforts aren't — his quote, not the SMA.

Mr. Speaker, we have a good working relationship with the SMA. We've worked on them in contract negotiations last year and received very good response from physicians with regards to the contract. We have a recruitment program in place. We have some retention initiatives in place. Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work with Dr. Padayachee and the SMA on additional recruitment and retention efforts, Mr. Speaker. The dollars are in place. The programs are in place, Mr. Speaker. Therefore our commitment is in place to ensure that these things will happen.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, what rural communities understand and what the SMA understands is it doesn't work when you recruit one doctor but lose two. And that is what's happening over and over again. And it leaves rural Saskatchewan short of doctors, which causes hospitals to close.

Many rural doctors come to Saskatchewan — and there's no secret; there are some issues around credential issuing — they come to Saskatchewan, and they are so overworked that they have a hard time studying to pass the CAPE [clinicians' assessment and professional enhancement] exam. And so what happens is after two years these doctors leave. And the government and communities work hard to bring in new doctors. But what that causes is an issue with continuum of care for patients, and communities are always left in the lurch to recruit more doctors.

What is this minister doing to ensure that when we do finally recruit professional doctors from South Africa, that they'll stay? What is he doing to ensure that they'll stay?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And again I acknowledge that on the order paper today there is a motion coming forward. And I will have the opportunity and intend to take that opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to outline the initiatives that have been taken, that are being taken, and that will be taken by this government, Mr. Speaker, in terms of moving forward.

The members opposite will have 25 to 45 minutes on their feet in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, to also address this issue. And I'm going to be taking very close, I'm going to pay close attention. I'm going to be taking notes, Mr. Speaker, on all of the alternatives that the members opposite are going to bring forward. I'll make a projection, Mr. Speaker: there will not be one alternative raised by the members opposite with regards to what this government could be doing differently, Mr. Speaker. Not one.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, the Saskatoon Health Authority is the largest in the province. And yet when we asked what type of a human resources strategy it has in place, in fact this is what they had to say, and I quote: "The exact number of physicians required and the number of vacancies in the region are unknown." Mr. Speaker, unknown. That is very interesting. Because a neurosurgeon . . .

The Speaker: — Order please. I would ask the members to show some restraint so we can hear the member for Indian Head-Milestone.

Mr. McMorris: — That's interesting, Mr. Speaker, because a neurosurgeon from South Africa was told by the Saskatoon Health Authority that there was no room for her to practise in Saskatoon, and she would have to look elsewhere. If you don't know how many physicians that you need and you don't know how many vacancies there are, how are you turning doctors away? Why are you telling highly specialized doctors that want to come back to Saskatchewan and practise to look elsewhere?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[10:45]

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let's also keep in mind something that the public, the media, and most members of this House know but the member opposite doesn't seem to understand — is that the business of recruitment and retention for physicians is a very competitive business across North America.

Mr. Speaker, just the other day I was reading the Alberta media. The shortage in Fort McMurray for physicians, Mr. Speaker — 47 in one community. Mr. Speaker, shortage of physicians, 47.

Mr. Speaker, the vacancies for physicians in the province of Saskatchewan today on healthcareers.ca, the government's website, Mr. Speaker — 84 for the entire province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, it's a competitive business, but we are remaining competitive, Mr. Speaker. And our programs will keep us competitive as we proceed into the future.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Dr. Suzanne Hattigh is a trained neurosurgeon. She worked in Saskatoon from March 1999 to March 2005. Her licence was revoked until she completed her family physician exam. So what she did is she returned to South Africa, she worked on those exams, and since has passed.

Now she's talked to the Saskatoon Health Authority and was

told to not bother coming back. They do not need her any longer. She was told that she couldn't even start her own practice in the city.

He's just finished saying how competitive it is to recruit these highly trained physicians. How in the world could we have, how in the world could we be turning away a highly trained specialist like this that will be needed in this province, absolutely needed in this province? How could he let that happen under his watch?

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 I will certainly be checking the facts because I know that the facts that the members have presented in the past have not always been completely accurate, Mr. Speaker. I will indeed be checking the facts on this.

But, Mr. Speaker, the province of Saskatchewan has 12 health regions, all of which are recruiting actively. Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency is recruiting actively. Mr. Speaker, there are needs in various parts of the province. The health regions, Mr. Speaker, have the responsibility for the recruitment, the delivery of programming.

But, Mr. Speaker, I do find it interesting that on this day when we're going to have a debate on health human resources, that in their questioning today the members opposite haven't once, once raised their one alternative, Mr. Speaker, to hire more auditors in the system. Mr. Speaker, that's an absolute shameful circumstance.

The Speaker: — Time has elapsed.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Government's Settlement with Murdoch Carriere

Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Throughout this session the Premier has been consistent in his message on the Murdoch Carriere scandal. He's refusing to back away from a decision to reward a man who was fired for sexual harassment and convicted of assault. Instead of having their complaints listened to, Murdoch's victims were ignored.

The terrible complaints brought forward by these women fell on deaf ears. They were told, "That's just Murdoch." Instead of being stopped in 1994 by a rigorously enforced anti-harassment policy, Murdoch Carriere was rewarded with \$275,000 and a top-up in his pension. And what does the Premier have to say about the payment? "Would I do it again? You bet . . ."

Mr. Speaker, so far almost 6,000 people have written the Premier with a clear and important message — this was wrong. Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: will he finally admit that what his government did was wrong?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — You know, Mr. Speaker, it's obvious that the members of the opposition have indeed raised this case since the beginning of this session, which I believe began on March 5 or 6. So we've had a lot of time to discuss this case in the Assembly, and we've discussed it in committee, Mr. Speaker.

What I will say to the member is this, that it is very clear that Mr. Carriere was punished twice. You cannot engage in what's called double jeopardy. He was suspended without pay and then when we came to know about this he was fired, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, according to employment law, the reality is that he needed to be paid because he was not properly fired. And we received that legal advice. I know that members of the opposition don't want to hear that, but those are in fact the facts.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, I want to relay some of the comments that we've received. Here's one from Oxbow, and I quote:

This shows how rotten our government is. What message are you sending to our young people who you are begging to stay in Saskatchewan? We are thoroughly disgusted with this government.

And here's one from Saskatoon, and I quote:

I have never been as saddened and disappointed by the actions of this government. I used to be a member of the NDP Party and am more and more disappointed with the way our tax dollars are being handled.

Mr. Speaker, people across this province still have questions that the NDP have refused to answer. This NDP government is still hiding the truth or hiding from the truth. So, Mr. Speaker, will the Premier agree today to refer this matter to a legislative committee so we can get to the bottom of the Murdoch Carriere scandal?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, the member of the opposition talks about tax dollars. Well we also have heard from taxpayers on two fronts; one, that they received a piece of information in their mailbox that is inaccurate and, two, ads are being run on radio that are simply inaccurate.

And what do I mean by inaccurate? They have referred to Mr. Carriere as an NDP insider. He was never a member of the

NDP. He has never been a candidate for the NDP. And he was never a personal friend of an NDP member, Mr. Speaker. So I will say to the members opposite that there is a lot of inaccuracies that are being perpetuated by the members of the opposition, Mr. Speaker, at a total waste of taxpayers' dollars.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order please. Order. Order. Order. Members will come to order, please. Order. I would . . . Order please.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Government Whip.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government, I'll be tabling responses to written questions 1,123 through 1,273 inclusive.

The Speaker: — Responses to questions 1,123 to 1,273 have been submitted.

Order. Why is the Leader of the Opposition on his feet?

Mr. Wall: — To ask for leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The Leader of the Opposition has requested leave for introductions. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition, the member from Swift Current.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members of this Assembly, it's a pleasure for me to introduce another Saskatchewan Party candidate who's joined us in the proceedings. She's sitting in the east gallery, Mr. Speaker, another leader within Saskatchewan, certainly within Saskatoon and among the First Nations community. The new Saskatchewan Party candidate for Saskatoon Fairview, Eileen Gelowitz, has joined us, and I'd ask all members to welcome her to this Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

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

Supply of Health Care Professionals

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker it's certainly a privilege to rise today and speak on the motion that we put forward condemning the government for not fulfilling its commitment to supply the province with an abundant number of doctors, nurses, health care professionals, which has resulted in ongoing disruption of service and patient suffering.

Mr. Speaker, certainly it is a privilege to rise and to debate this very, very important motion because it's a motion that people are living through and feeling the results of all throughout the province. And it isn't just in rural Saskatchewan. Today we asked a number of questions regarding the impact this is having in rural Saskatchewan. But it isn't just rural Saskatchewan that feels this impact. It's felt just as much in urban Saskatchewan.

I think the difference is, is when a doctor leaves in Regina or Saskatoon or even Yorkton or Moose Jaw, when you have one or two doctors leave that city, it doesn't necessarily close a hospital. It may close some beds. It may affect a number of people that were his patients. But the problem is in rural Saskatchewan when you only have two or three doctors in a facility and you have one or two doctors leave, or when you are relying on nurses that are close to retirement and are looking at retiring and they feel the pressure of the community that, if they retire, their whole facility may be shut down because they don't have the proper complement of nurses, for example.

So there is a huge impact on the health care professionals in rural Saskatchewan just simply due to the numbers. A doctor leaves in Spiritwood, and what does that do to the health facility there? A doctor leaves in Kamsack or Canora or Preeceville, and what does it do the facility there? And it has huge impacts.

We can talk about it as if it was just a facility, here in the legislature, but it's much more than that when you think about all the people that rely on that facility. Most people don't know, heading into a weekend, if they're going to need the services of a doctor or a nurse in that facility. And if an emergency comes up, they expect that facility to be open. They expect it to be there. Do they even know that the facility is closed? They get to the doors, and they find out that the emergency services have been discontinued. And they may have to go to Yorkton, and the impact that has on the regional facilities as well.

But, Mr. Speaker, before I get into that, what I want to touch on first of all, is this an issue that has come up fairly quickly that the government is going to have to react to? Has this happened just over the last year or two? I've been the health care critic for two years. Is it just simply because now that I've become the health care critic all these issues are happening, hospitals are closing? I sure hope it isn't.

So I certainly look at some of the newspaper clippings that have been over the number of years regarding this very issue. And when you look at what has happened from back as far as probably 1990-91 all the way to the year 2007, Mr. Speaker, this has been a slow-moving train wreck that has been so obvious to see. And unfortunately the government has decided to turn its back, to stick its head in the sand, to not address the real issue of human resources dating back to probably about 1991-92.

This government, one of its first acts after it was elected to be government in the early '90s was to close 52 hospitals. Mr. Speaker, that's amazing when I think back now. And I look at the state of the health care system in the year 2007, and we're having issues around hospital closures now.

How many health care professionals did we have in our province when this NDP party became government? Because at

that time we had 52 more hospitals operating. We had the complement of nurses. We had the complement of doctors. And this government then went and shut the 52 hospitals in rural Saskatchewan and the Plains — 53 hospitals.

So what happened to all those people that were working in the facilities, all those professionals? We had enough human resources in the early '90s to operate 52 more hospitals than what we're operating right now. And we don't have . . . Under this NDP government and 16 years of this NDP government, we do not have enough human resources. We do not have enough health care professionals to keep these hospitals open.

[11:00]

In the last year, Mr. Speaker, in the last year this is what we have seen, having not necessarily closures but discontinuance of services. We've seen Spiritwood. We've seen Big River. We've seen Shellbrook. We've seen Preeceville, Canora, Kamsack, Arcola, Bengough, Coronach, Broadview, Central Butte, and Vanguard. And I'd hate to say I believe there's more to come.

When you listen to what the Saskatchewan Medical Association has to say, Dr. Vito Padayachee, the president, says it is only going to get worse. If this is where we are in the year 2007, where are we going to be in two or three years if — if — this NDP continues to govern this province? It is going to be an issue that will be untenable.

I want to read a couple of newspaper clippings that go back. 1996, December 7, 1996, the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* states, and the headline goes, "Plight of rural doctors needs addressing, says the College of Physicians and Surgeons."

What I have been amazed at when I've looked over the last number of years the newspaper clippings that have come forward, often it will be individuals stating the plight of their community, whether it's a member from Rosthern-Shellbrook talking about the facility in Spiritwood. Often it's individuals, but also just as often the health care professionals, the organizations. Whether it's the Saskatchewan Medical Association, whether it's the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, whether it's the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses Association — every one of the health care professionals have been calling on this government to address the problem.

And in this article in 1996, it's the College of Physicians and Surgeons saying that the plight of rural doctors needs to be addressed. That's 11 years ago, and what we're seeing is absolutely a failure by this NDP government to address the situation.

On December 24, 1998, *The StarPhoenix* went on to say "Health-care workers frustrated with system," and that is something that we can hear on a continual basis. People that work in the system . . . You think it's frustrating, and it is very frustrating for people that are trying to access the system. We know that.

We had another person in the gallery today around the issue of accessing Avastin, and even before he got to the point of Avastin, accessing the health care professionals he needed to be treated properly. It's frustrating for patients, but I believe —

and according to the clippings and the health care professionals I've talked to — it's just as frustrating to them. It's extremely frustrating for registered nurses who are trained to not just care for the physical needs of patients but the emotional needs of patients, and that time has been taken away from them, and we hear it on a regular basis. They don't have enough time to deal with not only the physical need, but the emotional needs of patients. They just simply don't have the time. There just simply isn't enough staff.

And that's certainly what is said in *The StarPhoenix* in December of 1998, "Health-care workers frustrated with system"; 1999 the *Prince Albert Daily Herald*, "Nurse shortage forces operating room closure." Mr. Speaker, this trend can go on. I have two or three pages of quotes over the last 11 or 12 years from newspaper clippings that are just continually identifying the problem.

So I come to the conclusion that, should the government know that there has been a problem over the last 15 or 16 years? It's been in the papers for the last 15 or 16 years. I've used quotes back 11 years. I know I could go back more and find more issues. So should the government have realized there is a huge problem? And you bet they should.

But the bigger question is, have they addressed it? And that is a frustrating part for many, many health care professionals . . . is they simply haven't addressed it. You can talk to the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses for example. Here's what Rosalee Longmoore, the president of the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses has to say, "We feel . . . [that] our warnings have mostly fallen on deaf ears."

In other words the health care professionals have told this government they have to start addressing the problem because if you don't start addressing the problem, as I said earlier, it's a train wreck ready to happen, and we're in the midst of it. We're seeing it all over rural Saskatchewan right now.

They've called on the government to work together with them to find a solution. I find it really quite interesting that the minister is touting his recent recruitment and retention agency. And they've talked about their recruitment and retention agency, and he says just wait till next week because we're going to hear a number of announcements on recruiting more health care professionals. I'll be very interested to see that. But I find it very interesting that you cannot get the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses to join you at that table because of the sheer frustration they felt.

Well the minister puts his hands up and says, well I can't help that. The reason why they're not at the table is the very statement, "We feel . . . [that] our warnings have mostly fallen on deaf ears." In other words, the suggestions that they've made over the last 11 to 12 years, the minister has ignored. And I'll go back and talk about what a couple other previous ministers had to say regarding listening to the health care professionals.

But the minister says, I can't help it if they don't want to come to the table. It's what he has done and what the previous ministers . . . whether it's the former Health minister from Regina Lakeview or the former Health minister from Saskatoon Nutana. The fact's that they haven't listened to the concerns of

the health care professionals. And that's why we are where we are today.

Every professional organization, whether it's the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association, whether it's the Saskatchewan Medical Association, whether it's the College of Physicians and Surgeons, whether it's a dean of Medicine, whether it's the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, have called on this government — and whether it's the Saskatchewan Party because we have led this charge for 10 years that this party has been formed — that you have to start increasing the number of training seats.

And the minister smiles and kind of has a smile on his face as if, oh, as if that would solve the problem. Well I haven't seen any solutions from this government that has addressed the problem.

I think the minister should be ashamed of himself when you look at the number of training seats, when you look at the number of training seats for physicians across Canada. There is only one university in Canada that has a medical school that has fewer training seats than we do in Saskatchewan, and that's in Newfoundland. And they don't have fewer. They're at 60 right now, and that's where we are. So of all the medical schools across Canada, our medical school in Saskatoon has the fewest number of training seats, as well as Newfoundland's Memorial University, at 60 training seats.

And the minister says I don't understand why we don't have physicians that are trained in Saskatchewan that want to stay in Saskatchewan. He has been quoted as saying that we don't want to increase the number of training seats because we have no guarantees we're going to keep them, and we don't want to increase the number of training seats because that costs more money and we have no, no assurance that we'll keep them.

And that might be true, Mr. Speaker. But when you rely in rural Saskatchewan . . . when 75 per cent, 75 per cent of your doctors in rural Saskatchewan are foreign-trained doctors, I think we have a problem there. Not that there's a problem with foreign-trained doctors, but the problem is we're not training enough of our own Saskatchewan people to practise here in Saskatchewan.

If you want to solve the problem in rural Saskatchewan and urban Saskatchewan, start training more of our own; increase the number of seats. The Saskatchewan Medical Association was calling on 20 more seats. The Dean of Medicine is calling on far more seats, 20 to 30. There is absolutely no reason except this government seems to rely on foreign-trained doctors and does not want to rely on training our own.

It's not any different when you talk about the number of training seats for nurses. We were down as low as, we were down as low as about 60 . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . No, in 1991 we graduated 61 registered nurses in Saskatchewan — 61 nurses. And the government will tout, well you know, in a couple years later we increased the number of training seats by 125 per cent. That's still half, even by increasing by 125 per cent was still half as many as what they had in Manitoba.

So, Mr. Speaker, the issue is around training seats, and this government has fallen far short in that. So, Mr. Speaker, I think

it's very clear that the government has failed in this area. I'll be very interested to hear what the minister has to say addressing this issue but, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move, seconded by the member from Canora-Pelly:

That this Assembly condemn the government for not fulfilling its commitment to supplying the province with an adequate number of doctors, nurses, and other health care professionals which has resulted in ongoing disruption of service throughout the province and patient suffering.

Mr. Speaker, I so move.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Indian Head-Milestone and seconded by the member for Canora-Pelly:

That this Assembly condemn the government for not fulfilling its commitment to supply the province with an adequate number of doctors, nurses, and other health care professionals which has resulted in ongoing disruptions of services and patient suffering.

The Chair recognizes the member for Canora-Pelly.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to debate this issue this morning in the Legislative Assembly. This is an issue that is extremely, extremely important to all people in this province but most importantly I think to so many of the people that are located in the Canora-Pelly constituency.

Mr. Speaker, it's important for people to understand that in the Canora-Pelly constituency, after numerous closures since this NDP government has taken office — closures of hospitals in some of the smaller communities — there are now three health care hospitals in the Canora-Pelly constituency. They are located in Preeceville, Canora, and Kamsack.

Mr. Speaker, it has been common over the last number of months, in fact years, Mr. Speaker — I have press clippings dating back three and four and five years — where the headings on the various news releases are that doctor, nurse shortages forcing rural hospitals to suspend services. That's the kind of quotation that is contained on many, many press clippings.

Mr. Speaker, we've had numerous press releases — they're referred to as public service announcements — that come from the Sunrise Health Region. And it's interesting, Mr. Speaker. I went to the Sunrise Health Region website this morning and in fact under one of the links that they have there is a link that is called service reductions. So it enables people to be able to go a website to find out how they are being affected as far as health care. And, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in question period earlier on this morning, in the area that is affected by those three hospitals all three are on one form of bypass or another at the same time, which is during certain days of this week.

Mr. Speaker, that is unacceptable. We in the Canora-Pelly

constituency deserve better health care than that. I have raised the issue with the Minister of Health many times about the fact that even his officials will agree that about 11 or 12 practising physicians are required for that area but in fact the number of people that are actually practising is about half of that. The minister's indicated or his officials have indicated that, you know, there are nine registered doctors in the area. Well, Mr. Speaker, some of them are retired; they're not practising. So in fact there isn't the complement of doctors that are needed.

Mr. Speaker, a public service announcement of Monday, April 16 indicates that the Kamsack facility is on bypass for the 16th, the 17th, the 18th, and the 19th, and part of the 20th. The Preeceville Hospital is on bypass from April 18 to Friday, April 20. The Canora facility will have no emergency services after 5 o'clock on both Tuesday and Thursday, that day being today. So, Mr. Speaker, people have to I guess make a phone call when there's an emergency to determine which facility they're going to go to. As reported last night on the CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] television, the people of Canora-Pelly were encouraged to go directly to Yorkton because those three facilities are in fact on bypass.

[11:15]

Mr. Speaker, what does that do for the regional facility that is located in Yorkton when you have an entire region that now has to travel to Yorkton for bypass? Well it is an overcrowding, let me tell you, Mr. Speaker. I have been there on a Sunday morning when two of the three facilities were on bypass back last summer, and there are dozens and dozens of people in the emergency ward wanting to see a doctor when they know that there are limited doctors that are dealing with emergency services for that day. So it causes a tremendous problem.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the member for Indian Head-Milestone, indicated that we as an official opposition have been asking, have been pleading with this government to recognize that the shortage of health care professionals . . . And I use that term in a broad sense, Mr. Speaker, because I'm not just talking about nurses; I'm not talking only about doctors or laboratory technicians or X-ray technicians. It is the whole spectrum of health care professionals that are required.

And while I understand that the minister says, well this is a national problem, and we have to, you know, be aware that some of the concerns are outside of our borders . . . We understand that. But, Mr. Speaker, what we have asked this government over and over again is, what is your plan to address this?

Mr. Speaker, I want to quote from a document prepared by the Saskatchewan Party. And it's a long document, and I'm only going to quote from section 4, which was entitled "Recruitment and Retention of Health Care Professionals," and it's part B. And part B says this, Mr. Speaker, and I quote, "Increase the number of training seats for doctors, nurses and radiology and laboratory technicians to address long-term requirements of the province's health system."

Mr. Speaker, that presentation was made to the Fyke Commission, and it is dated February 15, 2001. Six years ago, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party recognized that we would

have a tremendous shortage of all of these health care professionals. And we said to the Fyke Commission, you better act now. You better increase the number of training seats immediately for all of those different sectors.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the member from Indian Head-Milestone also referred to some numbers about what is the current status of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, you know, when we look at the number of nurses that have been trained over the years . . . And the members opposite don't like Saskatchewan being compared to Alberta, so I won't. I will compare Saskatchewan to Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, at one time — and I will use the year 1997 when we had a degree and a diploma program — Saskatchewan graduated 130 nurses in 1997. In 1998, there were 105. And then it started to rise, Mr. Speaker. And if you look at Manitoba, Manitoba's followed the exact same pattern that we had. And in fact, they were training; in the same year that we graduated 145 nurses, Manitoba graduated 155 nurses. So they're very close.

But, Mr. Speaker, Manitoba recognized or Manitoba government must have listened to somebody who said, you better increase the number of health care training positions. Because in the year 2006, Saskatchewan will graduate 210 nurses, and Manitoba will graduate 489 nurses. Mr. Speaker, they recognized that 155 nurses was not going to meet the requirement. So they have increased that number of nurses so that now they are in fact graduating a total of 489.

Mr. Speaker, I don't want to compare us to Alberta, but I want you to listen to what Alberta has also done. And this is a press release of March 15, 2007 and the heading on this press release is, "Mount Royal launches its first university degree."

Mount Royal College is making history today. It will be offering its first university degree — a Bachelor of Nursing.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta has even recognized the fact that not only do they have to have additional spots at the University of Calgary and the University of Alberta, but they have in fact asked Mount Royal College to put in place a degree training program for nurses. And they are taking in, as this press release indicates, they will be taking in 50 additional nursing students per year for four years. So, Mr. Speaker, they will have 200 nurses being trained only at Mount Royal.

And what has this government done? This year we have a total of 18 nurses added to the list of training spots in this province. Mr. Speaker, that is deplorable when we look at the concerns.

I recall my colleague from Melfort rising in this Assembly probably 10 years ago. We've been here a long time, Mr. Speaker. And the comment then was, when we were going through closures of some of those 52 hospitals, the comment made by the member then, who was the Health critic, was that the province of Saskatchewan, the government, would not be closing hospitals because of a lack of dollars. Hospitals would be closed at the local level because of a lack of professionals. That's what was said almost a dozen years ago.

And we're starting to see that, Mr. Speaker. I can use the example, just a short while ago Foam Lake community, which had a hospital, had two nurses who wanted to retire. People said, no please don't retire. And they didn't for year after year and finally both nurses retired. And today, Mr. Speaker, there is no acute care services in Foam Lake and there hasn't been for a number of years because there are no nurses.

Mr. Speaker, I've raised a number of concerns that show that this government has not had a plan, has not listened to the people of Saskatchewan, have not listened to the health care professionals as they've raised concerns about their practices, and whether it's doctors or nurses, and they need to understand that.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to speak in this particular debate to set out how we as a government have continued to work with the professional organizations and with our training institutions across Saskatchewan and with the regional health authorities to make sure that we have a supply of health professionals for the decades to come. We're working in a North America-wide shortage of quite a number of the people that we need and so we have been able to work together to make sure that we will have the kind of people we need for the long term.

And, Mr. Speaker, at the end of my remarks I will be making an amendment to the motion that's before the House which will make sure that it's clear that this House supports the government's plan for strengthening Saskatchewan's leadership in public health care by not only improving access to service but also through a comprehensive program to attract and retain health care professionals.

Mr. Speaker, in this year's budget, which the members opposite seem intent on voting against, includes almost \$29 million for the retention and recruitment of physicians for this province. And, Mr. Speaker, I would like to outline how this money is going to be spent. This comes as a result of an agreement with the Saskatchewan Medical Association and this money is being spent in consultation with the Saskatchewan Medical Association and getting the advice from the professionals.

The first fund is a specialist recruitment and retention fund of \$2 million in this year's budget. This relates to the specialist resident bursary programs, the specialist physician enhancement training programs, and the specialist physician establishment grants.

Another area are rural and regional incentives. This is a total of \$3.14 million. The programs that are being funded in this area are the family medicine residency bursary program, the rural practice establishment grants, the regional practice establishment grants, the undergraduate medical student bursary program, the rural practice enhancement training program, the specialists' re-entry program, the rural emergency care continuing medical education fund, the locum service which provides rural relief and weekend relief as a province-wide

program, the rural travel assistance program, and the rural extended leave program.

And, Mr. Speaker, how are these programs working? Well let me give an update as of February-March of this year. The locum service program which provides practising physicians with coverage while they take vacation, education, or other leave — the number of replacement physicians that are part of this program are four to six at any given time throughout the year. The family medicine residency bursary program which are \$25,000 bursaries provided in exchange for rural service — as of February of this year, 47 residents are receiving funding under this program.

Under the rural practice establishment program which are \$25,000 grants available to Canadian-trained or landed immigrant physicians who establish new practices in rural Saskatchewan for a minimum of 18 months, 43 physicians have taken advantage of the program locating in communities such as Meadow Lake, Kindersley, Humboldt, Nipawin, Assiniboia.

The rural practice establishment grant program for foreign-trained physicians which is geared toward foreign-trained physicians setting up practice in rural Saskatchewan — as of February 2007, 34 grants have been awarded under this program.

There's a undergraduate medical student bursary program, and this provides an annual grant of \$15,000 to medical students who sign a return of service commitment to a rural Saskatchewan community.

There's a rural practice enhancement training program which provides income replacement to practising rural physicians and assistance to residents wishing to take specialized training in an area of demand in rural Saskatchewan. A return of service commitment is required on this program as well. To date 18 residents and practising physicians have accessed this program.

And, Mr. Speaker, there's a long service retention fund which is provided to the SMA, and the government puts in \$6.6 million this year into this fund. This recognizes the long service of physicians who have provided 10 or more years of service to the province of Saskatchewan.

As well, Mr. Speaker, there's a continuing medical education fund of \$2.8 million. There's a fund which is the liability insurance protection fund which is of assistance in recruiting doctors which pays the Canadian Medical Protective Association fees that's just \$7.08 million.

There's a program for Saskatchewan health re-entry training for international medical graduates, and in this year we're putting in \$1.9 million. And also there's a new initiative this year which is a program administered by the Saskatchewan Medical Association which is for parental leave which is a workplace issue, and that has \$700,000 allocated this year for new money. As well the SMA has a retention and recruitment initiatives that are funded to the tune of \$3.3 million and also in this area is a funding of \$2 million for information technology assistance to the SMA and to doctors across the province which also assist in the establishment of these things across the province.

As well, Mr. Speaker, there are new bursaries which are in this '07-08 budget which the members opposite have had a great deal of difficulty with. And the new bursaries this year total 65 which will be added on top of the 74 that are continuing bursaries which means there's 139 people getting bursaries this year. That's a total of \$4.5 million.

Where do these bursaries go, Mr. Speaker? There are 15 that are specialist residency bursaries. There's 10 that are the specialist position establishment grant bursaries. There's four family medicine residency bursaries. There's 10 rural practice establishment grant bursaries. There are four rural practice enhancement training bursaries. There's eight for undergraduate medical students. There's another two for Saskatchewan health position re-entry bursaries. There's two that are allocated through the committee on rural and regional practice position re-entry. And there's six for specialist position enhancement training and four for the international medical graduate for a total of 65 of new bursaries in this budget.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's incumbent upon the members opposite to say why they will not vote for a budget which includes these very important things for the people of Saskatchewan, that not only look at providing services today but look at the next 30 years of service to the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, this is an area where we have to work with the professionals like the College of Medicine and other health professional training schools, with the Saskatchewan Medical Association, with the regional health authorities, to make sure that we have a response which deals with all of the complexities that we have in this North American market.

[11:30]

And, Mr. Speaker, I would move an amendment to the motion from the members opposite, and this amendment is moved by me and seconded by the member from The Battlefords, and the amendment is this:

That all words after "that this Assembly" be deleted and replaced with:

support the government's plan for strengthening Saskatchewan's leadership in public health care by not only improving access to service but also through a comprehensive program to attract and retain health care professionals.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Regina Lakeview, and seconded by the member for The Battlefords:

That all the words after "that this Assembly" be deleted and replaced with:

support the government's plan for strengthening Saskatchewan's leadership in public health care by not only improving access to service but also through a comprehensive program to attract and retain health care professionals.

The debate will continue on the amendment simultaneously on the main motion. The Chair recognizes the member for The Battlefords.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this debate today and in support of the amendment, Mr. Speaker. Obviously I think the main motion that was presented is a ridiculous motion, Mr. Speaker. However I welcome the opportunity to talk about health human resources and the plan of the government, Mr. Speaker.

The opposition has asked me a number of questions over the time that I've been a member or the Minister of Health, Mr. Speaker. And there's just never enough time to put on the public record in question period, Mr. Speaker, all of the initiatives that we're raising. As the House will recognize, the member from Regina spoke for 10 minutes, only had time, Mr. Speaker, to outline initiatives that are being undertaken on the physicians' side, Mr. Speaker. So the opportunity to be able to utilize the House time to discuss the good work that's being done by the health professionals in the department and the regional health authorities, Mr. Speaker, is very useful.

So I want to take the opportunity while I have my feet, Mr. Speaker, to thank those health care professionals and providers throughout this province who have all contributed to the work that we have undertaken over the last number of years, Mr. Speaker. And this includes the representatives of the nurses in this province, Mr. Speaker. Whether it's Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, whether it's Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association, the Saskatchewan Registered Psychiatric Nurses Association, or the Saskatchewan Association of Licensed Practical Nurses — Mr. Speaker, they have all contributed to this process.

Mr. Speaker, I know that representatives of the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses are in convention as we speak, Mr. Speaker. And to them at their convention, I want them to know that their work has indeed influenced the work of this government both in terms of policy and spending. I thank them for their contributions to date, Mr. Speaker. And I encourage them to continue to work on these issues that are so important for their members and for the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, during question period I indicated that I was going to listen closely to the speeches opposite — 15 minutes from the member from Indian Head-Milestone, 10 minutes from the member from Canora-Pelly. And I indicated during question period, I was going to take copious notes, Mr. Speaker, on every alternative, every suggestion they had of something that we weren't doing, Mr. Speaker. And I predicted, I predicted that the members opposite wouldn't have one good idea, Mr. Speaker.

Well I admit I was wrong, Mr. Speaker. They had one idea, Mr. Speaker, both represented by Indian Head-Milestone and member from Canora. They say we need to increase the number of seats, increase the number of seats. Mr. Speaker, as the member from Regina had indicated, on the SMA they asked for 20. We provided 12 plus we added 12 residency seats, and we've committed to continuing to work with the SMA as resources are available to continue to talk about additional

physician seats.

Mr. Speaker, I'll talk later about nurses and nursing seats but, Mr. Speaker, we've taken that challenge. But, Mr. Speaker, the member from Indian Head-Milestone, when asked by the media out in the foyer of the Chamber here just a week and a half ago, Mr. Speaker, asked by the media, how many seats? Member from Indian Head-Milestone, Health critic of the Sask Party, you want more seats. How many? Twenty-five minutes today, Mr. Speaker, they spoke. Didn't put on record one single, new seat. How many, Mr. Speaker? Is it 10? Is it 15? Is it 20? And how do you fund it, Mr. Speaker? Instead the member from Indian Head-Milestone is touting these advertisements about government wasting people's money — a big fan, a big pile of money, blowing money out the drain — and he stands in this House, Mr. Speaker, and he says spend more money on health care, Mr. Speaker.

Well the only thing he said that is specific, Mr. Speaker, is that he would spend more money on auditors. Mr. Speaker, we are spending more money on nurses, on doctors, and other health care professionals, Mr. Speaker. And while the challenge remains significant — and it's not enough, Mr. Speaker — it is increasing year after year after year as resources become available to us.

They talk about the history, Mr. Speaker, and let's just remind ourselves of what this history has been. Mr. Speaker, we do find ourselves in a situation whereby we do need to increase seats. We do need to increase recruitment and retention initiatives because, Mr. Speaker, there were challenges in previous years. Where did this start, Mr. Speaker? It started during the 1980s when those people were in power, Mr. Speaker, and bankrupted the province of Saskatchewan.

When this government took over in 1991, Mr. Speaker, we inherited the single largest per capita debt of any province in this nation of Canada, Mr. Speaker. And as a result of that, for five years in the early 1990s, we were consolidating matters, Mr. Speaker. And municipalities know this better than most, where revenue sharing, Mr. Speaker, was reduced considerably. And in the health care field, Mr. Speaker, as we consolidated health care facilities because, Mr. Speaker, we did not have the fiscal capacity, the resources to move forward because we had to deal with that debt.

In the mid-1990s, Mr. Speaker, as we were getting the debts dealt with, the federal government threw another fly into this ointment, Mr. Speaker, by changing the way in which the federal government financed education and health care. And again for four years, Mr. Speaker, this government put together practical policies in order to deal with substantial reductions in funding for education and health care throughout Canada and in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. So once again the NDP stepped forward and took on the challenge, Mr. Speaker, and faced it head-on.

Well, Mr. Speaker, by 2000 when the member from Canora-Pelly is saying they were talking about more seats, Mr. Speaker, we had put together an action plan for health human resources, Mr. Speaker, and it did the same thing. It called for increases in seats, and we began to do that, Mr. Speaker, as we put the economy of the province back on an even keel and able

to function for the people of Saskatchewan and not for the bankers in New York and in Germany, Mr. Speaker, which is where they put us.

Mr. Speaker, we began working for the people of Saskatchewan. The economy was now functioning, and, Mr. Speaker, we began the incremental increase in spending in health care on nurses, on doctors, on training seats, Mr. Speaker, and for other professionals. And as a result of that work and that effort, Mr. Speaker, we have now been recognized by the Health Quality Council in Canada as having the best human resource plan in all of Canada, Mr. Speaker.

We put that together in the year 2000, we updated it with an action plan in 2005, Mr. Speaker, and we have been addressing that issue as resources have become available to us, Mr. Speaker. And have we been successful in any of this, Mr. Speaker? You're darn right we have, Mr. Speaker. We have become extremely successful on that.

I don't have a lot of time left, Mr. Speaker, but let me just say that during the course of the last year, as a result of new dollars brought forward in last year's budget, Mr. Speaker, we put the recruitment agency in place and we now operate health careers in saskatchewan.ca, Mr. Speaker, under saskjobs.ca. And what does that do, Mr. Speaker? It provides regional health authorities with the opportunity to further expand their recruitment efforts.

The recruitment agency and the website, Mr. Speaker, has been very active. As of April 18, Mr. Speaker — that's a date very close to today — as of April 18, there were 786 vacancies posted in the recruitment agency website, Mr. Speaker, for health professions right across Canada. Mr. Speaker, how many applications for those jobs are sitting active within the department right now, Mr. Speaker, for 786 vacancies? Applications submitted and currently under consideration, thanks to the work of the recruitment agency, 882 applications currently in front of the department and the regional health authorities, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Mr. Speaker, we are very, very proud of the work that we are doing and we recognize the challenges that we are facing. As everyone will know from my answers in question period, we are in a competitive environment in North America, Mr. Speaker, for all health care professionals and we are doing our best to ensure that we remain competitive in that environment.

Mr. Speaker, we are successful. You read the *Leader-Post* today, Mr. Speaker. A great big colour picture of two happy nurses, Mr. Speaker, working in the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region. A nurse from Alberta has moved back to Regina, Mr. Speaker, to work in the system, direct result of the efforts that have been undertaken by this government and the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region.

And what are the members opposite saying that we have to do, Mr. Speaker? Twenty-five minutes of speeches . . . increase the seats. That's the one thing that they've been able to offer in 25 minutes of speeches, Mr. Speaker — increase the number of

seats. We're very pleased to have been able to approach this issue on the incremental basis as resources have been available to us, Mr. Speaker. And we will continue to do that in conjunction with the action plan that's been presented and, Mr. Speaker, our commitment . . .

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Allchurch: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to have the opportunity to stand today and enter into this debate regarding the retention and recruitment of physicians in the province of Saskatchewan and especially to my area.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I listened in question period tentatively from the Minister of Health because he was going to tell us in the debate today what his plans are from the government as how we're going to deal with the recruitment and retention. And you know something, Mr. Speaker? I may have deaf ears but I didn't hear a darn thing from that minister what he was going to do.

The only thing, the only thing that he stood up and said, that was a great idea, came from this side. It came from the member from Indian Head-Milestone and also from the member from Canora-Pelly as something that we had put out back in the year, I believe it was 2000 or 2001, in regarding seats. That was the only thing this minister stood up today in the ten minutes, an address, and said that's a good thing.

My comment is if he has nothing more than that, then why doesn't he move aside and let a party get up and look after this province, especially in health care, the proper way? We supply all the answers. That minister over there comes up with nothing. But yet he talks the talk, but does not do the walk.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to be supporting this amendment put forth by the members opposite. I am going to be supportive in supporting the motion put forth by the member from Indian Head and second by the member from Canora-Pelly. The reason for that, Mr. Speaker, it is a good motion. It relates specifically to the . . . my problem in my area of the Rosthern-Shellbrook constituency.

Now in question period today, Mr. Speaker, I talked of the area that I am in that is short of doctors. Every or nearly every facility in my constituency does not have doctor or doctor services or is lacking except possibly Rosthern.

But there was a news clip in the paper that the officials said that recruiting in Saskatoon was going well, but recruiting in facilities outside of Saskatoon, like Wakaw and Rosthern, were having difficulty. But to my knowledge we are still full as far as doctors in Rosthern. But that's not likely the story in my constituency with Shellbrook, Big River, and Spiritwood.

[11:45]

To my knowledge, Mr. Speaker, there are temporary hospital closures in many rural communities. And that seems to be a trend and a problem in the province of Saskatchewan where the rural hospitals are having difficulty when it comes to recruitment and retention of physicians.

Now to my knowledge, Mr. Speaker, the temporary hospital closures are: Big River, Spiritwood, Shellbrook, Preeceville, Canora, Kamsack, Hafford, Arcola, Bengough, Coronach, Broadview, Central Butte, and Vanguard. That's just to my knowledge, Mr. Speaker. How many more out there are facing the same situation as we are in Spiritwood, Shellbrook, and Big River? There must be more. They're all rural Saskatchewan facilities that are being shut down or have a lack of emergency services because of a lack of doctors.

Now, Mr. Speaker, also in question period today I brought up in regards to petitions where there were 1,700 petitions sent to me from residents north of Spiritwood regarding the situation at Spiritwood. And, Mr. Speaker, this is a potentially dangerous situation and that's why these ladies decided to write this petition. Unfortunately it was not prepared properly for me to present in the House on a daily basis.

But the question is, Mr. Speaker, that Spiritwood doesn't have any emergency services because there's only two doctors where there should be three. But these ladies, and a lot of the petition names on this petition, come from places like Chitek Lake, Leoville. And those areas are not in my constituency, Mr. Speaker; they're in the member from Meadow Lake. But they cannot get across to Meadow Lake because there's no road there so they have to come down to Spiritwood.

Now with the situation we have in Spiritwood, Mr. Speaker, there is no emergency services so that means they have to go further to that for services. That means going to Shellbrook. Shellbrook, as we speak, have a full slate of doctors and they can provide the services. And thank God they can do that because once Shellbrook closes down to emergency services, where do the people go? Well they got to go to Prince Albert.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know that there are members here from Prince Albert and they know the problem that Prince Albert is having with the doctors and the load of services they have to provide — not just to the city of Prince Albert but to outlying areas, whether it be Birch Hills, whether it be Candle Lake, whether it be Spiritwood, Shellbrook, or wherever.

Couple that problem, Mr. Speaker, is the problem we're having in Big River. Big River again is not in my constituency but Big River is phoning me continuously about the doctor situation in Big River, and that's in the constituency of Saskatchewan Rivers. And I'm wondering if the member from Saskatchewan Rivers is hearing this and what is that member doing to help with the situation. I haven't heard nothing, Mr. Speaker. So now we have a problem with constituents from Big River and Spiritwood. With no services or emergency services, they're going to Shellbrook.

This also raises the point, Mr. Speaker, why I asked in question period today about the problem with Shellbrook and is the minister going to take the time to go to this meeting. It started out, Mr. Speaker, talking to some health care workers in

Shellbrook, some RN [registered nurse] nurses, and the potential for the problems in Shellbrook and how potentially dangerous it is going to get if this happens.

And I see the Minister of Health shaking his head. He knows this problem, but last week, last week on Thursday when I raised this issue the minister said that . . . If I could just find his quote here, Mr. Speaker. Here it is, Mr. Speaker. And the Health minister says, and I quote: "Health Minister Len Taylor said it was the first time he had heard about the Shellbrook situation". This is his quote. It's not my quote. This is your quote.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the reason I raise this is because it was in the Shellbrook paper on March 30. This here, this here was April 12. Twelve, thirteen days later and the Minister stands and says he doesn't know about the situation. So when I raised the problem about a serious situation and a dangerous situation, it is getting very dangerous when our own Minister of Health hasn't got the time or the facilities to look after this problem.

Mr. Speaker, this meeting that I'm attending in Shellbrook on . . . tomorrow at 2 o'clock, started off with a few nurses talking to me. Then the doctors decided if I'm coming to this meeting they want to be present. So I don't know, Mr. Speaker, if there's going to be a dozen people there or if there's going to be two dozen people there or if there's going to be 100 people there. But I can guarantee you from the answer the minister gave me today, he won't be there. And, Mr. Speaker, the member from North Battleford . . . The Minister of Health lives in North Battleford. It's only a short drive to Shellbrook.

Surely to goodness the Minister of Health can come to this meeting and address the issues. Especially, especially when the mayor of Shellbrook, John Young, the mayor of Shellbrook, members from the council of both the town of Shellbrook and the RM [rural municipality] of Shellbrook have written letters to the minister. And to date, Mr. Speaker, there has been no response. Absolutely none. Those letters were written way back in February 25, Mr. Speaker, and still today there's no response.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what is it going to take? What is it going to take for this minister to react to the situation that we have in the area west of Prince Albert? We know that this problem's going to escalate. We know that this problem is escalating as it is because there's one doctor that may not be providing services at Shellbrook. That brings a problem, Mr. Speaker, that the doctors will be down to three. In a facility where there's five, we're going to have three doctors.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I know, the minister knows that if that happens that hospital there will also be on no emergency services. Now we have Big River, we have Spiritwood and Shellbrook with no emergency services. What is this minister going to do to resolve the problem?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is

indeed my pleasure to enter the debate today and I will be speaking in favour of the amended motion.

I enter the debate on a significant challenge facing the province as well as all other jurisdictions. I say it is a pleasure, Mr. Speaker, because I know that the NDP government is working hard to address the issues we face when it comes to health human resources. We have made attracting and retaining health care professionals a top priority and we owe it to the people of Saskatchewan to become competitive as possible in light of the widespread national and international shortages, Mr. Speaker. We owe it as the current government of the medicare province, and we owe it as a party that truly has the interests of Saskatchewan people at heart.

Our recruitment and our retention initiatives over the past several months have been big and, Mr. Speaker, they've been bold. And most importantly, as the member from The Battlefords, the Minister of Health has said, they have been successful.

Just yesterday on the six-month anniversary of the recruitment grants announcement, the Minister of Health unveiled that we've received from 120 health care providers. That's right, Mr. Speaker. In six months, 120 health care professionals have been approved for return-in-service grants. We've recruited 80 from out-of-province — more than half of them from Alberta — 20 from this year's graduating class, and 20 more who are willing to relocate to northern and hard-to-recruit areas of the province.

Of these grant recipients, Mr. Speaker, 75 are nurses and 45 are from the broader health workforce and include professionals such as respiratory therapists, physical therapists, and medical laboratory technologists.

The Saskatchewan relocation program and the Saskatchewan rural, northern, and hard-to-recruit program flow from the government's 25 million retention and recruitment plan announced this past fall. Through these two grant programs, Mr. Speaker, we are targeting to recruit 600 new health employees to fill vacancies over the next two years — approximately 400 nurses and 200 employees from the broader health workforce.

And yet, Mr. Speaker, the opposition tell us that we are not committed to supplying this province with enough health professionals. Mr. Speaker, it appears that members opposite have either not bothered to read up on our initiatives or perhaps they have simply forgotten what we are doing to attract and keep health professionals in Saskatchewan. It is understandable, considering the lengthy list of good ideas and good results we have on the recruitment and retention side of things.

Mr. Speaker, let's start with the plan. We have a plan unveiled in December 2005. *Saskatchewan's Health Workforce Action Plan* received national recognition for being the most comprehensive plan in Canada — that according to the Health Council of Canada. Our government was applauded by the Canadian Nurses Association for a leading role in nursing and demonstrating leadership by delivering this plan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is an aggressive recruitment and

retention strategy built in consultation with our health partners and stakeholders. It is a strategy that is necessary, given today's competitive climate and a strategy that shows that we are committed to providing our residents with a strong and sustainable health care system, a strategy lauded by national medical bodies, and yet, Mr. Deputy Speaker, snubbed by the opposition.

Within this framework of the workforce action plan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have been able to allocate resources and set tangible goals for recruitment and retention. In September we unveiled our 25 million recruitment and retention fund. We clearly laid out our plans for this funding — 15 million was to go towards enhancing the nursing workforce and 10 million for other health professionals. We established two provincial committees to provide further advice, and as a result we targeted 6 million for our recruitment grants, 6 million for our retention program, and 500,000 for enhanced clinical training.

And still, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the opposition can't seem to grasp what it is we are doing to ensure that this province has an adequate amount of health care professionals. Perhaps, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the members opposite can, when they go back to their offices today, visit our easily accessible online recruitment agency so they can see for themselves what it is that is going on. The website for their information is www.healthcareersinsask.ca as was announced by Minister Taylor on October 18, 2006 to promote Saskatchewan to health force employees in the province, across Canada, and around the world. It is a one-stop job search service, where the regional health authorities and the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency advertise vacant career opportunities on this website. The applicants can apply online for positions of interest. And as mentioned by the Minister of Health, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to date the agency has received 882 applications for health workforce positions.

And Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are listening to what our stakeholders have to say when it comes to recruitment and retention. We're interested in what advice the front-line workers themselves have to offer when it comes to making Saskatchewan an attractive place to live and work in the health field.

We have heard the need to spread the word to those both outside and inside our provincial borders on why Saskatchewan would be an excellent place to begin or resume a health care career. Our billboards, television, and print ads have received favourable attention as seen in the response we are getting for our recruitment grants.

We also have in place, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a more direct communication with front-line workers when it comes to making Saskatchewan health workplaces ones that no one wants to leave. In the two months since our Health minister announced the health workforce retention program, we have received over 30 proposals from front-line workers.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I sure hope the members opposite have retained some of the information that each of the speakers today have presented on what we are doing to attract health professionals to Saskatchewan.

Before I finish today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to speak on the training initiatives our government has put in place and supported on a sustainable level to increase the number of health professionals entering the Saskatchewan health force directly from their post-secondary institution. Though we were left to clean up the financial mess initially, this NDP government recognized the need to increase training seats for our health professionals in order to replenish our retiring workers. And we did just that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As soon as we had the resources available, we targeted nursing, medicine, and the college of allied health professionals for increased enrolment.

In the last four years, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have seen a 55 per cent increase in nursing seats, a 70 per cent increase in LPN [licensed practical nurse] seats. And this year alone, we have promised a 20 per cent increase in the College of Medicine. We know that individuals are more likely to stay in a province when they have trained and will continue to work closely with our health partners as we consider future capacity enhancements.

While the graduate will likely stay where he or she has trained, cash incentives offer more promise to retaining our health professionals. Mr. Deputy Speaker, early this month the Minister of Health announced funding for 600 new and continuing return-in-service bursaries. This is a 6 million investment on behalf of the NDP government in response to challenges we are currently facing. The bursaries are awarded to students studying in health-related areas where shortages exist or are anticipated. In exchange these students agree to work in Saskatchewan's publicly funded health care system upon completion of their studies. Combined with the recent budget announcement giving tax breaks to keep graduates who settle in the province, we believe our bursary program is a powerful incentive to keep our young people in Saskatchewan.

[12:00]

So there it is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have more students graduating in related health fields, more graduates wanting to stay in the province.

The Saskatchewan Party loves to stand in the House and say that no matter how many spaces we announce, no matter how many bursaries we announce, no matter what programs we develop in this field, that we are not doing enough. But they have never come up with an idea of their own — nothing in the *100 Ideas*, nothing in the platform, nothing in the Assembly. And so my question is to the Sask Party: how would the Sask Party deal with this situation? How high is the priority of recruitment and retention when all they've talked about, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is privatization and audits? Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble): — I recognize the Minister of Health.

An Hon. Member: — Are we on questions?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble): — I'm sorry. I had not realized that we were on questions. But I think we are on questions, and I recognize the Minister of Health . . . [inaudible]

interjection] . . . Well no, it's an opposition motion, so we'll go to the government for the first question. And we'll do the opposite every time if it's a government motion.

So I recognize the Minister of Health for a question. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll try to ask a very clear question in hopes of getting a very clear answer. I have indicated frequently, Mr. Speaker, both in words and action, that I'm always looking for additional advice — constructive criticism and additional advice, Mr. Speaker — in order to assure the health system and the people of Saskatchewan can actually get the best bang for the dollars that are available to us.

And, Mr. Speaker, I have heard the member from Indian Head-Milestone, the health critic for the opposition, on a couple of occasions talk about . . . in reaction to some of the things that have been announced by this government on recruitment and retention, he said, this is a very good first step, Mr. Speaker. But yet he's never gone to say what the next step would be.

Mr. Speaker, his leader, in North Battleford, a while ago said, we don't just offer criticism; we provide alternatives. So my question to the member from Indian Head-Milestone, this . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble): — His time has elapsed. I recognize the hon. member for Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the member from Regina Lakeview, who was the minister of Health for most of this century and had the opportunity to fix some of these problems, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, foreign-trained doctors are a majority in rural Saskatchewan and a significant number in urban Saskatchewan. And I'll give you an example. We lost two doctors in Redvers, recruited two foreign-trained doctors, who in turn recruited another one, because the first original doctor left as well. Now we're in a situation where we're down to two doctors in Redvers and one of those is rumoured to be leaving — from three doctors to one doctor, Mr. Speaker, that's the recruiting of this government.

After 16 years of NDP government, why is this government not training more doctors from amongst Saskatchewan residents in this province? Manitoba is doing a much better job than we are in Saskatchewan. Why did that member, as the minister of Health, fail to increase the number of doctor trainings in this province?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble): — I recognize the hon. member for Regina Lakeview.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have worked with the College of Medicine and have increased the number of seats at the College of Medicine. It's four in this year's budget. I urge the members opposite to vote for that budget. Also there were five that we introduced a couple years ago. We recognize that that four means 16 people in the . . . because it's four in each year. Mr. Speaker, these people are very expensive to

educate but very crucial for our government. We are using our resources to make sure that we train them and make it entirely welcoming for them to practise in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble): — I recognize the hon. member for Saskatoon Fairview.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — To the member from Indian Head-Milestone. You see the member has indicated that more seats are needed and yet when asked by the media what number, he has said nothing. So would the member please answer the simple and straightforward question, how many seats?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble): — I recognize the hon. member for Indian Head-Milestone.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was interesting that the member would be questioning the exact number. What I want to do is recite where this government has taken the province. At 40 training seats a number of years ago, finally got up to 60, which is the least number of training seats in a college of medicine across Canada. It's absolutely pitiful, Mr. Speaker.

Now the Saskatchewan Medical Association is calling for 20 more seats. The College of Medicine is calling for a number of seats around that area, and we would have to talk with them and find out. But what we would do is take action in that direction and definitely increase by far more than four which does absolutely nothing to address the real issue.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble): — I'm sorry. I recognize the hon. member for Cypress Hills.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to address this question to the Minister of Health. Rumours are swirling around the city right now that there are a number of nurses coming to Saskatchewan from Third World countries trying to fill . . . as an effort to fill current vacancies. Yet every year in this province we have approximately 1,000 applicants to take the RN program of which there are only 400 seats.

The question, Mr. Speaker, to the minister, is: how does this government's plan to poach immigrant nurses from Third World countries square with this government's youth retention program, especially when we hear on a daily basis of graduates from our own schools that can't get full-time work in this province?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble): — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. This government continues to be committed towards increasing the number of positions available through the increased number of

seats, both RN seats and LPN seats. Mr. Speaker, we've got challenges that exist immediately as well, so our recruitment efforts are ongoing.

Mr. Speaker, this budget commits this government over the next four years to 152 additional nursing seats. Today, Mr. Speaker, there are 1,500 people on any given day in the NEPS program, nursing education program of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, in four years time we will have 1,680 individuals every year on any given day in a seat — a nursing seat, Mr. Speaker. Seats that are supported by this government. This is since 2003 when this government got elected — a 55 per cent increase in RN seats, a 70 per cent increase in LPN seats.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble): — I recognize the hon. member for Regina Lakeview.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have a question for the member for Canora-Pelly. On March 16, 2005, just over two years ago, he made a motion to amend a motion in this House that would ask for a value-for-money audit for the provincial health care system. This appears to be the one “brilliant” idea, and I put that brilliant in quotes.

And I ask that member to tell us where he's going to find the dollars in the health system so that they can maybe find the nebulous suggestion from the member from Indian Head as to how many more seats for nurses we're going to get?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble): — I recognize the hon. member for Canora-Pelly.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Chair, I guess. Mr. Speaker, the article on February 7, 2007, quotes . . . It's the Yorkton paper and it quotes the Minister of Health. The Minister of Health says this:

“We are aware that we need to increase the number of seats at the College of Medicine.” The Saskatchewan Medical Association has said it wants 20 more seats, to bring the total to 80.

Mr. Speaker, it's very clear that the opposition has pointed out for years that we need to increase the number of people. Mr. Speaker, I mentioned, I mentioned the Fyke Commission this morning in comments during the 75-minute debate. Mr. Speaker, the introduction of the Saskatchewan Party official opposition to the Fyke Commission is this, and I'll read the first paragraph. It says:

Saskatchewan taxpayers are paying more for publicly funded health services than ever before, yet people have lost confidence in our provincial health care system. The challenge of health care reform is therefore twofold . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble): — Member's time has elapsed. I recognize the hon. member for Estevan.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy

Speaker, my question is for the member from Saskatoon Fairview. And when he was up, during his speech, he was almost boastful of the government's commitment and successes, and I might add that that was his opinion and no one else's. But I would like to ask him this question: why are new nursing graduates still having difficulty obtaining permanent, full-time positions in our province?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble): — I recognize the hon. member for Saskatoon Fairview.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I truly was proud of the government's work and what we are doing. But what concerns me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the Saskatchewan Party position on health care.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we all remember the 100 ideas for Saskatchewan, and we haven't heard very much about those ideas lately. And I imagine that went seriously flat.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble): — Order. Other members are clearly interrupting the member for Saskatoon Fairview. And I recognize . . . I asked for order. And I recognize the hon. member for Saskatoon Fairview.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, do you remember idea no. 73, “Complete a value-for-money audit of the provincial health care system”?

And how about, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the member from Indian Head-Milestone when he had this to say:

If I remember, in the last provincial election we talked an awful lot about . . . [the] health care audit . . . we called all election to do some sort of a health care audit.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, you know what that got for them, Mr. Speaker? It got them sitting in the opposition backbenches. That's where it got them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is no plan over there that we have heard today, and the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will not be fooled. The people of Saskatchewan want solutions, and they want substance, which is lacking over there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble): — The time has elapsed. I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Quickly to the member from Rosthern-Shellbrook who is experiencing the challenges of dealing with community efforts, has he spoken with his colleague from Cut Knife-Turtleford where there is indeed some success in recruiting community efforts?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble): — Time has elapsed.

Hon. members, the 75-minute debate is concluded and we move to private members' public Bills and orders.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 4 — Equalization and an Energy Accord

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by Mr. Trew.]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble): — I recognize the hon. member for Saskatoon Massey Place.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is the resumption of debate on a government motion, private member on the government side motion that says:

That Saskatchewan's 12 Conservative members of parliament [should] provide an apology to the people of this province for breaking their election promise on the issue of equalization; and further, that this Legislative Assembly call upon the federal government to immediately negotiate a Saskatchewan energy accord.

And I'm certainly happy to rise again in this debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I want to remind the House and anyone listening or who may read my remarks that in the 2006 federal election, the Conservative Party of Canada, led by the present Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, made a promise. And it read as follows. They would:

Work to achieve with the provinces permanent changes to the equalization formula which would ensure that non-renewable natural resource revenue is removed from the equalization formula to encourage economic growth. We will ensure that no province is adversely affected from changes to the equalization formula.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as most people will know, what the federal government has been doing is that for every dollar earned by the people of Saskatchewan from oil and gas development, the federal government has been clawing back \$1 from our transfer payments from Ottawa. And in fact in some cases they were clawing back more than \$1 for every dollar we took in. So we raised this as being an unfairness.

The Conservative Party prior to the last election said that they would change this. They went to the people of the province. They promised that they would change it. They made similar promises to Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia, and they broke their promise. They broke their promise, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And not only do I believe they broke their promise, they have admitted that they broke their promise.

[12:15]

And I want to quote from something that one of their members of parliament, Mr. Lukiwski, who in the election promised that he would make a change to this clawback, Mr. Speaker, he said, quoted in *The StarPhoenix* on Tuesday, April 3, he said this, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Note the words: "If you want to say we

didn't fulfill the commitment or keep our promise, fair enough." That's what he said. I'm going to repeat that. He said: "If you want to say we didn't fulfill the commitment or keep our promise, fair enough."

Well you know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker? It's not fair at all. It's not fair at all. And what is particularly galling about that statement made by Mr. Lukiwski that they didn't keep their promise was that on the very same day that he made that statement in the news media, he ran — with taxpayers' money — along with two other Conservative members of parliament from Regina, they ran an ad that I heard on the radio that said, among other things, and I'm quoting: "The Conservative Party kept their promise." That's what they said in their ad.

And at the very same time that Mr. Lukiwski was saying, we broke our promise; fair enough — according to him — he was paying for an ad on the radio that said to the people of the province, we kept our promise. Now I mean, I think in politics, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we all engage in hyperbole and exaggeration and we all put our own spin on things from time to time. I don't believe I've ever seen a situation where a member of the Parliament of Canada was saying in the newspaper, we broke our promise, and running ads on the radio saying, we kept our promise.

And you know, this promise that they made in 2006 wasn't a one-time thing because the same promise was made in the 2004 federal election — that they would exclude non-renewable resource revenues from the equalization formula. In fact the present Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, said this to the former Prime Minister on November 16, 2005. He said:

The prime minister is also failing Saskatchewan on equalization . . . The government now says it will not get to that until at least 2006, costing Saskatchewan over \$750 million in lost revenue.

He complained about it. He complained about the former Liberal government. He said he was going to do something about it. He promised the people of the province he would do something about it. The people of this province went out and elected 12 Conservative members of parliament to Ottawa and then what did they do? They went to Ottawa and they turned their backs on the people of this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is what they did. They turned their backs on the people of this province — our 12 Conservative members of parliament. And they should be ashamed.

You know and it wasn't just Mr. Lukiwski and Mr. Harper that in the election said they were going to treat Saskatchewan fairly over the issue of our natural resources. David Batters, one of the current Regina members of parliament, had this to say in November 2005. He said, "Saskatchewan cannot afford to wait," he said, because it's costing "the people of Saskatchewan over \$750 million in lost revenue," he said.

And Carol Skelton, earlier than that, in March 2005, said this. She said:

Saskatchewan doesn't want a free ride. [We want a fair ride.] We don't want a special deal, we want a fair deal. We don't want extra money, we just want our money —

our fair share [she said].

Now she's our representative in cabinet and what did she do along with the other 11 Conservative members of parliament from Saskatchewan? She sold us out, Mr. Deputy Speaker, she sold us out.

In opposition she said this, our Member of Parliament, she said, "Saskatchewan is simply not getting its fair share out of equalization." Now in government along with her Conservative colleagues, she says this. Carol Skelton says that she "rarely hears about it in her conversations with her constituents." And then she goes on to say this, quoted September 13, 2006 in *The StarPhoenix*. She says, "The average person in the street doesn't understand it," she says.

And I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what this is about, this attitude that the average person doesn't understand it, is a view in Ottawa and of the Conservative Party that they can rely upon the people of this province to faithfully go out, election after election, to vote for Conservative members of parliament and that the people will not understand what the Conservative government is doing to them. And you know, one of the members says they may be wrong about that.

And you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think they may be wrong about that because I think the people of Saskatchewan are good and decent people. And when somebody makes a promise and they break the promise and they laugh at the people and say the people don't understand what they're doing, I think just when they're least expecting it, that may come back to haunt them and they may get bit in a place that they really don't want to get bit, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Because when people act like that and talk like that and turn their backs on their own constituents, it has a way of coming back at them.

Now Ms. Skelton goes on to say on September 9, 2006: "I don't know. I guess I haven't thought about it that much," referring to equalization. Well I think it's time to start thinking about it a little bit because as Brian Fitzpatrick, Conservative Member of Parliament for Prince Albert, said in April 2005, "Saskatchewan will continue to lose approximately \$800 million per year in equalization clawbacks on its non-renewable resource revenues," \$800 million a year.

Now it's interesting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that in the last federal budget, what did the Conservative Party do? It took 750 million or 800 million — depending on which Conservative you want to listen to — money away from the people of Saskatchewan by not keeping its promise that we would have that money, and it gave an increase of \$700 million to the people of Quebec so that the Premier, who was then in an election, could use it in his election to promise that he would cut taxes for the people in Quebec.

And you know, I think that the people of Saskatchewan are going to take note of that, a careful note of it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that they are being asked to pay for a tax cut in Quebec instead of having the promise that was made to them kept. And I don't think people are going to stand for that in the long term, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I know that the Conservatives think they can take all their seats

for granted. I would be a little bit more careful if I was them. One of our Saskatoon Conservatives, Brad Trost, said in the spring of 2005, "To the province of Saskatchewan this [their promise that they made before they were elected] would mean \$800 million a year . . ." He goes on to say:

What could \$800 million do for the province of Saskatchewan? What could it do for the people? What is it in practical, concrete terms? Let me give a couple of examples: Saskatchewan could have 260 MRI machines [he says] . . . It could have 26 four lane bridges with full cloverleaf entrances [he says].

Then he says, "We could completely abolish all the education property tax for everyone, farmers, businesses and homeowners, throughout the province of Saskatchewan." That's what he said, and then they promised to the people of Saskatchewan that that's what they would do.

Now he went a little further than that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because when he was asked, well do you think the Conservatives will keep this promise to the people of Saskatchewan, he said, quoted on CBC News, August 23, 2005, he said, "If it isn't, it better be better." He said if the promise isn't kept . . . it better be because they're giving us something even more than that.

And then he went on to say in the *Leader-Post* on October 30 that either the campaign promise would be met or it would "be an even better deal for the province." That's what he said. They all made similar statements, and certainly the Prime Minister made a similar statement when he was trying to get elected Prime Minister.

Well as I pointed out last time I entered into this debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, some people say, well if Saskatchewan is doing well — which we are doing well because we are a have province; we do have a booming economy — why should Saskatchewan be asking for this kind of treatment under the equalization formula? The answer, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that that is the kind of treatment that other provinces receive from our federal government. And what is a rule for one province, should be a rule for another province.

So as I pointed out in the last session where we had this debate, when the province of Alberta became a have province from oil revenues, there was an arrangement with the federal government whereby the province of Alberta would be able to keep its oil revenues and not have them counted as revenue for the purpose of the equalization formula for a period of about eight years. So that's the arrangement that the province of Alberta received.

And so the question has to be asked, why does the Conservative government treat Saskatchewan differently than it treats the people of Alberta? Why would that be? And how is that fair? Well obviously it's not fair, and it's not right.

And then we move on to Manitoba, where Manitoba derives considerable revenue from hydroelectricity — and hydroelectricity of course is a fully renewable resource — and the revenue that Manitoba gets from hydroelectricity is not calculated when the government takes into account, the federal

government, how much money they have. And yet we have a non-renewable resource, oil and gas, which someday will be gone, and in Saskatchewan it's counted. And you know, to put the matter in perspective, Manitoba next year will receive approximately \$2 billion in equalization payments from the federal government.

Do you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what the province of Saskatchewan will receive from the Conservative government in Ottawa? Zero. Zero. Manitoba gets \$2 billion. Saskatchewan, which is similar in population and size of economy, gets zero. Now is there anyone in this House, or indeed in this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who would think that that was fair? Is there anybody that thinks that's fair? I certainly don't think it's fair — Manitoba, \$2 billion; Saskatchewan, zero.

And again it raises the question why the Conservative government in Ottawa has one rule for Manitoba but a different rule for Saskatchewan, and what has the Conservative Party got against the people of Saskatchewan? Because it isn't just me saying that this state of affairs is unfair, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's what they said was unfair. The Prime Minister said it was unfair. Our member of the Conservative cabinet said it was unfair. All of the Conservative candidates said it was unfair, and they made a promise that they were going to fix it.

And now they've broken their promise, and they have turned their backs on the people of this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that is a serious matter. That, in my opinion, is a serious matter. It's a serious matter when we have members of parliament who are saying we broke our promise and using taxpayers' money to run ads on the radio to tell the people that they kept their promise, while one of their colleagues is saying don't worry about it because the people of Saskatchewan don't really understand the issue anyway.

[12:30]

That's not a satisfactory state of affairs because it shows a disrespect for the people of this province and a disregard for the people of this province. And the Conservative Party should not have one manner of treating people in the province of Alberta and another rule for the people of Saskatchewan. They should not have one rule for the people of Manitoba and another rule for the people of Saskatchewan while 12 of our members of parliament come from the Conservative Party. That's not a satisfactory state of affairs.

Now one of the reasons why the Prime Minister and the Conservative Party said that they broke their promise to the people of Saskatchewan was this — and this is public knowledge on the public record, Mr. Deputy Speaker — they said, we can't keep our promise because the effect would be that the people of Saskatchewan would have on average higher government revenues than people in Ontario.

Now let's consider that for a minute. The Conservative Party says to the people in Saskatchewan, we will not tolerate a situation where Saskatchewan could become more prosperous than Ontario. That's really what they're saying. And I think we have to think about the implications of that because what we see again is really a Conservative Party that represents the interests of Central Canada. That is what we see.

They take for granted the fact that Western Canadians elect a lot of Conservative MPs [Member of Parliament]. They expect us to go out and re-elect the Conservative MPs in British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan. But when they get into office, they turn their backs on the West, and in particular Saskatchewan, and they cater to what they consider to be the vote-rich Ontario and Quebec. Because let there be no mistake about it, Mr. Deputy Speaker — what is going on here — everybody knows what is going on here.

Never mind the promise to the people of Saskatchewan because we — speaking for the Conservative government in Ottawa — we want to get more votes in Toronto and Montreal, and so we're going to cater to Toronto and Montreal. That's what they're doing because they're trying to put together a majority for themselves. And we shouldn't be naive about it or pretend that that isn't happening. It is happening. It's gone on for a long time, and it's continuing to go on.

I think the sad part, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the people in Saskatchewan is that they have loyally elected these people — the Conservatives — thinking that things would be maybe a little bit different under a Conservative government, that Saskatchewan would have fair treatment. But it's not to be as of yet, and I think that that's very sad.

And so you have a situation where during the election campaign Mr. Lukiwski said this. He said, Calvert, referring . . . I'm quoting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from the *Leader Post*, November 10, 2005: “. . . Calvert [referring to the Premier] should offer support to the Conservative party's proposal to make changes to the equalization program . . .”

That's what he said. But then after the election, the story changed. He went on to, according to the *Leader Post*, December 12, 2005, Mr. Lukiwski pointed out “. . . the province's 13 Tory MPs have consistently raised the issue in the House of Commons over the last year,” he said. So the promise was apparently that they would continue to do so, but unfortunately they didn't do so.

What happened was . . . And now I'm looking at *The Globe and Mail* from April 5, an article by Gloria Galloway and she writes:

Last week, in a letter to the *National Post*, he [referring to Mr. Nicholls of the National Citizens Coalition], pointed out that the Prime Minister poured about \$3-billion into Quebec before the provincial election.

“If this was done to help the Jean Charest-led Liberals defeat the separatists, it worked. Mr. Charest ended up winning a minority government of 48 seats, which works out to about \$63-million per seat,” wrote Mr. Nicholls.

“Good thing Mr. Harper wasn't paying for a Liberal majority — that might have bankrupted the country [he says].”

And the point is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't agree with our representative in the federal cabinet, Ms. Skelton, who says that the people of Saskatchewan do not understand what is going on. I think they actually do understand what is going on, and what

is going on of course is what has gone on in this country before. We have a federal government — now Conservative, used to be Liberal — that cares more about pouring money into Central Canada, and especially Quebec, than it does treating the province of Saskatchewan fairly.

And when we're talking about fairness, I want to remind the House again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're talking about Saskatchewan people being treated in the same way that Alberta was treated and the same way that Manitoba is treated and, I might add, in the same way that Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador are treated because there, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when they receive money from natural resources it is not clawed back to the same extent as it is in Saskatchewan. They get to keep more of it.

Now they're upset because the Conservatives promised that a cap would be removed so that they would even get more. But my point is they already receive more than we do because they have a special deal with the federal government which again is denied to the people of Saskatchewan. And it's not fair.

I noticed something kind of interesting on some of the websites that the Conservatives have and some of their fellow travellers in the Saskatchewan Party. For example the website of Ted Merriman — I'm sorry I should say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the member from Saskatoon Northwest — used to have on it a little article, Saskatchewan Party Proposal for Equalization Reform which was dated February 18, 2005, which came from the Saskatchewan Party caucus. You know that member took that off his website after the promise wasn't kept.

And I wonder why that is, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think that the Saskatchewan Party doesn't want to talk about the broken promise of the federal Conservative Party, and there's a very simple reason for that. That is that the Saskatchewan Party worked, Mr. Deputy Speaker, through its members, and through many of the members sitting here today, to elect the Stephen Harper Conservative government in Ottawa. That's a simple fact. Everybody knows it. And they don't want to be held accountable for what their cousins in Ottawa are doing to the people of Saskatchewan. They don't want to be held accountable for that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I think they should be. I think they should be. Because I think when you support people who make a promise and then break a promise, that doesn't make you look very good either.

You know I have an article from the *Carlyle Observer* dated August 25, '06, and the headline of that article is "Tory MPs should stand up for Saskatchewan." And I think that's certainly true. The writer says this:

Well, maybe it's time for our province's 12 Conservative Members of Parliament to stand up for Saskatchewan and make good on their party's election promise for a new equalization deal that excludes non-renewable resource revenue.

Anything less than the complete exclusion of oil revenue from the federal government equalization formula that distributes excess tax wealth would be a betrayal of the voters of this province . . .

And that's very true, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Anything less than keeping your promise is a betrayal of the people of Saskatchewan. And you know, it's very sad when you read articles in newspapers like *The Toronto Star* where the headline is, "A year later, PM's promises not worth much."

And it says toward the end of the article:

A year into this government's life [referring to the Conservatives in Ottawa], Harper can't credibly claim take-it-to-the-bank honesty as a Conservative virtue.

Instead of "promise kept," it would be more candid to laugh off the record as "Just kidding."

Sort of like Mr. Lukiwski said about the promise, you know — oh, if you want to say we broke our promise, fair enough.

I think when Mr. Batters was being questioned about it, he said he couldn't answer the question because he had to go and get a doughnut. Well a doughnut is kind of appropriate because it's like a big, fat zero. And that really is what the people of Saskatchewan are getting from their Conservative government as a reward for electing 12 Conservative members of parliament. That's their reward, along with being insulted by our member of the federal cabinet who says we're too stupid to understand the issue. Well maybe we're not.

And then *The Toronto Star* says, "Perversely, it's in the national interest to take this Prime Minister with a lump of salt." And I guess that's true.

But you know it's really kind of . . . It would almost be funny, but it's just so sad that in the election, in the election campaign, the federal election, this is what the current Prime Minister had to say. He said, "There's no greater fraud than a promise not kept." Apparently that's a Gaelic proverb. But the Prime Minister said, "There's no greater fraud than a promise not kept." And yet he made a promise to the people of Saskatchewan, and the 12 Conservative members of parliament made a province to the people of Saskatchewan, and they didn't keep that promise. Well according to the Prime Minister's own words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's no greater fraud than that. That's what he said.

Now no wonder one of our local media commentators had this to say on the CBC TV. He said, referring to the Conservatives:

. . . the fundamental dishonesty, the fundamental justification, the complete untruths that we are hearing from the federal Conservatives right now . . . my goodness, like, I mean, this is just absolutely horrendous . . .

This is a journalist speaking on the television. So that's what it's come to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in this country it's okay to make a promise that you're going to treat the people of Saskatchewan fairly, and after that you just forget about your promise, laugh it off, and say that the people aren't bright enough to understand it. Well I think they are, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think they are bright enough to understand it, and I think that the people eventually

are going to tell the Conservative Party that they've had enough.

Yes here's . . . I'm reading from the *Leader-Post* now of April 11 . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble): — Why is the hon. member for Saskatoon Sutherland on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Mr. Chair of committees. With leave to introduce guests.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble): — The member for Saskatoon Sutherland has asked for leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble): — That is agreed. I recognize the hon. member for Saskatoon Sutherland.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Addley: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. This is something that I've been wanting to do for several weeks now. Joined in the Speaker's gallery is an employee in my office who's just started working in my office. And I'm quite happy . . . I thought now would be a very good time to do that. So I would just ask all hon. member to welcome and I'd like to introduce to all members through you to the Chamber, to his Legislative Assembly, Mr. Trevor Morin. He's been helping out in my office and has been doing a very good job, and I'm very happy to be able to introduce him today. So I would ask all hon. members to welcome him here today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ADJOURNED DEBATES

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 4 — Equalization and an Energy Accord (continued)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble): — I recognize the hon. member for Saskatoon Massey Place and the Minister of Industry and Resources.

[12:45]

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I was referring a few minutes ago to one of local members of parliament, Mr. Batters, who before the election said he was going to keep the promise to exclude natural resources revenue from calculation of equalization. This is what he had to say recently when he was asked why he didn't keep his promise, and I'm quoting. It says:

"I'm going to get a doughnut and I'm off . . . Thanks though." Palliser Conservative MP Dave Batters when confronted by reporters last week on whether or not his federal government had kept its election promise to Saskatchewan on equalization.

Well he had to get a doughnut, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And then Murray Mandryk writes in the *Leader-Post*:

When the next federal election campaign rolls around, may I suggest that you stockpile doughnuts, jelly rolls, jambusters, bearpaws, beaver tails, or sticky buns — good, old . . . Saskatchewan dainties may be equally effective.

But please keep an ample supply of goodies at the ready to detain Conservative MPs long enough to get them to explain how not receiving the \$800 million a year that they promised this province in the last federal election is now, as Batters claimed Thursday, "fabulous news."

They say it's fabulous news, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And you know I think I pointed out that Mr. Lukiwski was saying to the *Leader-Post* that the promise was not kept, and at the same time running radio ads paid for by the taxpayers which said our promise was kept. And this is described in the same article as worm-like behaviour. So I don't know what to make of the doughnut analogy, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It may simply be that, you know, the doughnut, as I said, is so much like the big fat zero that the people of the province are getting from the Conservative government.

But on a serious note, I think what people want to know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is why is Saskatchewan singled out for this kind of treatment from Ottawa? Why did the people of Alberta receive access to their natural resource revenue, not counted as part of their revenue for eight years, but no such rule for the people of Saskatchewan notwithstanding the promise of the Prime Minister and the 12 Conservative MPs? Why do the people of Manitoba get \$2 billion of equalization next year and the people of Saskatchewan zero? Why did the Conservatives say that they had to do this and break their promise to Saskatchewan people because they did not want to see a situation where the revenues of Saskatchewan were higher per capita than revenues to the people of Ontario. Why is that, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Why did the Conservative Party in the last budget cut Saskatchewan's share of payments by \$700 million but increase Quebec's share by \$700 million in the middle of an election? Why did that happen?

I think everybody knows why it is happening, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Everyone knows that the federal Conservative Party caters to Central Canada, not to the West, notwithstanding the number of members of parliament we send to Ottawa under the Conservative banner. Everyone knows that the Conservative Party caters to Central Canada, not to the West. And it is unfortunate in this particular instance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because it costs the people of the province \$800 million a year.

And I want to refer again to the federal election platform of the Conservative Party of Canada from the 2006 federal election. It was called *Stand up for Canada*, and it says this:

Work to achieve with the provinces permanent changes to the equalization formula which would ensure that non-renewable natural resource revenue is removed from the equalization formula to encourage economic growth.

I'm going to repeat those words, Mr. Deputy Speaker: "that non-renewable natural resource revenue [be] removed [note the

word removed] from the equalization formula to encourage economic growth.” To encourage what? Economic growth. And then the platform said, “We will ensure that no province is adversely affected from changes to the equalization formula.”

Then you know I want to refer again to some of the promises that were made by the Conservative candidates, now members of parliament, before the election. Now, Stephen Harper of course told the former prime minister that the prime minister was failing Saskatchewan and that Saskatchewan was entitled to another \$750 million a year. Dave Batters made a similar statement. I’ve already referred to our federal cabinet minister, Carol Skelton, saying before the election, then it was, “Saskatchewan is simply not getting its fair share out of equalization.”

Now after the election she says, “I don’t know. I guess I haven’t thought about it that much” — referring to equalization. Well why is the story one way before the election, another way after the election, Mr. Deputy Speaker? I think people in Saskatchewan are starting to wonder why. And, you know, before the election Ms. Skelton said, “We cannot afford to wait forever for this federal government to attend to this problem.” After the election she said, “the average person on the street doesn’t understand it.”

I think actually in fairness to Ms. Skelton and the Conservatives, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would say this. I think the average person on the street does not understand why the Conservatives have not kept their promise. I don’t think people do understand that, because before the election we were promised that this would be done.

You know, Brad Trost, now an MP, said that we would get \$800 million a year. He wasn’t content for the 750. He said it would be 800 million, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And then he went on to say, “What the Conservative Party campaigned on in the last election was that all provinces be allowed to keep their natural resources and not have them clawed back, like the agreements with Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia.” That’s what Brad Trost said before the election. He also said, let me give you . . .

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble): — Order. I apologize to the hon. member for Saskatoon Massey Place. Other members are yelling across the floor and making it very difficult for the member for Saskatoon Massey Place to be heard, so I ask for order. Order. And I recognize the hon. member for Saskatoon Massey Place.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — You know, I think the question to be asked, Mr. Deputy Speaker, among all the other questions, is: if the Saskatchewan Party supported the people of Saskatchewan in their quest for a fair deal, why would they yell so much any time anybody ever complains about the fact that that promise was broken? That’s the question.

And the Leader of the Opposition is yelling from his seat and laughing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at this issue at the same time that the Prime Minister of Canada has broken his promise to the people of this province that we would receive \$800 million a year. And they think it’s a joke, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And you know, I’ve tried to set this out in a non-partisan and logical way, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that a promise was made. It’s documented. The promise was broken; that’s documented. And I’ve tried not to engage the opposition in partisan debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but when I’m trying to raise this on behalf of my constituents and the people of this province and they are laughing at the people of this province over this broken promise, I find that shameful.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — And it may be, it may be, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and they can laugh from their seats and they can try to shout me down as we’re standing up for the people of the province. But I want to make this suggestion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they should be more concerned about standing up for the people of this province than standing up for their political cousins who just want to maintain power in Ottawa.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — And you know, you know, they laugh from their seats and say, oh well, you know, just see who wins the next federal election and who’s going to get elected in Saskatchewan. And I’ve heard that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because they think that they can take it for granted that the people of this province are going to go to the polls election after election and keep electing Conservative members of parliament who then go to Ottawa and turn their backs on the people.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that’s what they think, but at some point that is going to come to an end, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And when it does, we’re going to be there to see it end. Because this charade that’s going on in Ottawa with 12 Conservative MPs who are turning their backs on the people of this province — with the support of the opposition over there — that is going to come to an end at some point, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Because a promise was made to the people of this province. Whether the Saskatchewan Party likes it or not and whether they like to hear it or not, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a promise was made.

The promise made was that there would be a fair equalization formula for the people of this province. That promise has been broken by the Conservatives in Ottawa with the support of our members of parliament — and, by their actions and the way they’re acting in this House, with the support of the Saskatchewan Party that supports them, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And that’s why they don’t want this debate to take place. That’s why they have tried to shut this debate down, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They tried to shut it down last time it was in this House. They tried to shout it down today. And it will not work. It will not work, because we are not going to be shouted down.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble): — I ask members to please keep their voices down so that the member for Saskatoon Massey Place can be heard. Order. I recognize the hon. member for Saskatoon Massey Place.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But again, again, we have to ask the question. We have to ask the question. They say they support the government and the people

of Saskatchewan trying to get a fair equalization deal from the federal Conservatives. And yet when you try to mention it in the House here, they try to shout it down, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Why is that?

And the member from Rosetown is trying to shout it down because they don't want to hear that their Conservative friends in Ottawa have broken their promise. And they don't want to hear the people of the province told that our federal cabinet minister said that we didn't understand the issue; the average person didn't understand the issue. I think, watching them, we are starting to understand the issue, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think we do understand.

What we understand is they are more concerned about the Saskatchewan Party and the political fortunes of Stephen Harper and the Conservatives in Ottawa than they are about the ordinary families of this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They do not want to hold their Conservative friends' feet to the fire to keep their promise to the people of the province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And when I get up in this House to try to raise the issue — and it's the second time they've done it — they try to shout me down.

And I want to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's going to take more than them to keep me quiet on this issue because I'm going to keep raising the issue and the issue's going to come up again. And I'm going to speak to it again, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble): — Order, members of the Assembly. Order. Members of the Assembly, it now being 1 o'clock, this House now stands adjourned. And we will come together again at 1:30 p.m. on Monday. I wish all members a very good weekend.

[The Assembly adjourned at 13:01.]

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GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN

CABINET MINISTERS

Hon. Lorne Calvert
Premier

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hon. Eldon Lautermilch
Minister of Highways and Transportation
Minister of Property Management
Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan
Transportation Company
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Hon. Warren McCall
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Minister of Environment
Minister Responsible for the Office of
Energy Conservation
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Power Corporation

Hon. Frank Quennell
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Attorney General

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

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

Hon. Len Taylor
Minister of Health

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

Hon. Harry Van Mulligen
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Hon. Mark Wartman
Minister of Agriculture and Food