



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

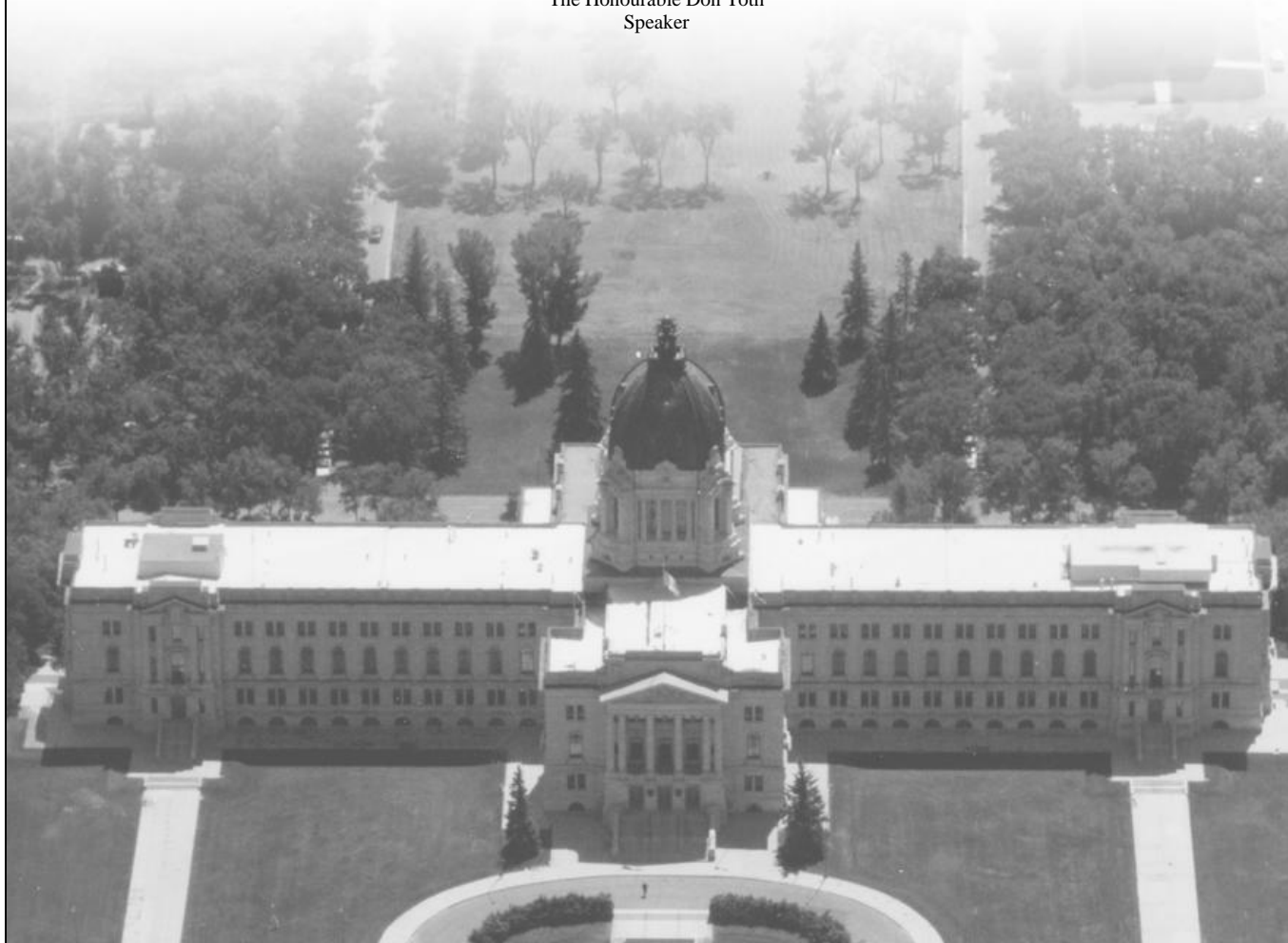
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Speaker — Hon. Don Toth
 Premier — Hon. Brad Wall
 Leader of the Opposition — Lorne Calvert

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Atkinson, Pat	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Belanger, Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornerud, Hon. Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
Boyd, Hon. Bill	SP	Kindersley
Bradshaw, Fred	SP	Carrot River Valley
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
Brotten, Cam	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Calvert, Lorne	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Hon. Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
Chisholm, Michael	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
D'Autremont, Hon. Dan	SP	Cannington
Draude, Hon. June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
Duncan, Dustin	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, Hon. Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
Forbes, David	NDP	Saskatoon Centre
Furber, Darcy	NDP	Prince Albert Northcote
Gantfoer, Hon. Rod	SP	Melfort
Harpauer, Hon. Donna	SP	Humboldt
Harper, Ron	NDP	Regina Northeast
Harrison, Jeremy	SP	Meadow Lake
Hart, Glen	SP	Last Mountain-Touchwood
Heppner, Hon. Nancy	SP	Martensville
Hickie, Hon. Darryl	SP	Prince Albert Carlton
Higgins, Deb	NDP	Moose Jaw Wakamow
Hutchinson, Hon. Bill	SP	Regina South
Huyghebaert, Yogi	SP	Wood River
Iwanchuk, Andy	NDP	Saskatoon Fairview
Junor, Judy	NDP	Saskatoon Eastview
Kirsch, Delbert	SP	Batoche
Krawetz, Hon. Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
LeClerc, Serge	SP	Saskatoon Northwest
McCall, Warren	NDP	Regina Elphinstone-Centre
McMillan, Tim	SP	Lloydminster
McMorris, Hon. Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
Michelson, Warren	SP	Moose Jaw North
Morgan, Hon. Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
Morin, Sandra	NDP	Regina Walsh Acres
Nilson, John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
Norris, Hon. Rob	SP	Saskatoon Greystone
Ottenbreit, Greg	SP	Yorkton
Quennell, Frank	NDP	Saskatoon Meewasin
Reiter, Jim	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Ross, Laura	SP	Regina Qu'Appelle Valley
Schriemer, Joceline	SP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Stewart, Hon. Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Taylor, Len	NDP	The Battlefords
Tell, Hon. Christine	SP	Regina Wascana Plains
Toth, Hon. Don	SP	Moosomin
Trew, Kim	NDP	Regina Coronation Park
Van Mulligen, Harry	NDP	Regina Douglas Park
Wall, Hon. Brad	SP	Swift Current
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Wilson, Nadine	SP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Wotherspoon, Trent	NDP	Regina Rosemont
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney
Vacant		Cumberland

[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cypress Hills.

Hon. Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you I'd like to introduce to the Assembly a large contingent of guests in our gallery today. I'd like to set the stage for this introduction by informing you that the weeks of March 7 to 23 have officially been proclaimed Les Rendez-vous de la Francophonie 2008 in Saskatchewan. For these two weeks, 9 million francophones and others who have learned to speak the French language will get together to celebrate the francophone culture and heritage throughout our great country.

Mr. Speaker, this year's theme, From Past to Future Generations, truly speaks to the strong francophone heritage we have here in the province of Saskatchewan.

So it is my pleasure to introduce to all members of the Legislative Assembly a group of young francophone students from École Monseigneur de Laval and also representatives from the francophone community that are here today as part of the celebration. Would these honoured guests please stand.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Elhard: — We welcome these guests to their Legislative Assembly today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Mr. McCall: — Merci, Monsieur le Président. Je voudrais dire pour l'opposition officielle une grande bienvenue et bonjour à tous les étudiants fransaskois à l'Assemblée législative aujourd'hui. C'est avec beaucoup de fierté, et je suis très heureux, pour dire bienvenue en vérité à l'Assemblée législative. Et aussi je voudrais dire une grande félicitation pour la semaine de Rendez-vous, et aujourd'hui c'est un beau jour. Merci bien, Mr. Speaker.

[Translation: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to say on behalf of the official opposition a big welcome and hello to all the Fransaskois students at the Legislative Assembly today. It is with much pride, and I am very glad, to truly say welcome to the Legislative Assembly. And also I would like to say a big congratulations for the Rendez-vous Week, and today is a beautiful day. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.]

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Kelvington-Wadena.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you I'd like to introduce to the members in the legislature 21 Grade 8 students from the beautiful town of Porcupine Plain. With them today is the teacher, Lawrence Schmidt, and we have the chaperones Anna Bolvin, Ashley Messner, and Grant Ziola. I'm looking forward to meeting with you later on. Welcome to your legislature.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Yorkton.

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you and to all the members of this Assembly, I'd like to introduce a young man who is no stranger to this Assembly — I've had the pleasure to work with him as a legislative intern — Mr. Patrick Button. A little wave there, Patrick.

He's a product of Regina, a U of R [University of Regina] student, involved in many volunteer and school activities and organizations. He's received much recognition and many honours in his career as a student and what he's done in life so far. In 2006 — as I say, he's no stranger here — he was a Page in this Assembly and has participated in youth parliament. I've had the privilege and pleasure to work with Patrick over the past couple of months. He's been in my constituency for a week, and I'm very thankful for his computer expertise and his assistance with my duties as Legislative Secretary to Social Services. So I'd ask all the members to welcome Patrick here today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Rosetown-Elrose.

Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you it is my privilege to introduce to you some friends of mine from Harris. In your gallery, Mr. Speaker, is some representatives that are here attending the SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] convention from the RM [Rural Municipality] of Harris — Administrator Jim Angus, a long-time friend and colleague of mine, and with them are Reeve Ted Gross, councillors Dan Mireau and David Husband. And I'd ask you to please welcome them to our Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Rosetown-Elrose.

Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While I'm on my feet, I'd also like to introduce to the Assembly another intern, Dwayne Meisner. I've had the privilege of working with Dwayne over the past few weeks. He's a fine young man with a tremendous work ethic. He also is in the intern program. And as luck would have it, he's also originally from Eston, which is home to one of our fine young MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] in the Rosetown-Elrose constituency. So anyway, Mr. Speaker, I'd ask the Assembly to please welcome Dwayne as well.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In your gallery today is Ruth Robinson of Saskatoon. Ruth, if you would wave. Ruth is no stranger to the legislature. She has been here before. She is the past president of the Consumers' Association of Canada, Saskatchewan Branch.

For more than 60 years, the Consumers' Association of Canada has worked to ensure that consumers are treated fairly. They do an outstanding job of working with government and business to ensure fairness in educating the public as to their rights. Ruth is here today to see the introduction of amendments to The Consumer Protection Act. Please join me in welcoming Ruth Robinson to her legislature.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Estevan.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all members of this honoured Assembly, I'd like to introduce a young man that is very special in my life. Seated in the west gallery is my grandson, Beau Duckarmie. Beau, if you could give us a wave or stand up.

Beau has just turned 13 in January. He's in grade 7 at Macoun School, and he is very, very interested in history and politics. And he's just hoping he gets a chance to visit with the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy a little later on. And, Mr. Speaker, Beau has also stated that one day he may seek a seat in this very Chamber, but he's also stated which side he would be seated on. And he's made that very clear. So I ask all members to join me in welcoming my grandson. Thank you.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to join with the Minister of Justice in welcoming Ruth Robinson to our Legislative Assembly. I have known Ruth and Sam for a number of years, and Ruth does wonderful work in the whole area of consumer protection, but she also is well known in our city for being an advocate for those people who need an advocate when it comes to mental health issues.

And I know that Ruth is so pleased that we finally in the city of Saskatoon are about to have a facility for people who require hospitalization for the mental health issues available to them. It's been a long time, and I know Ruth has been a significant advocate to making sure that that facility is built. So welcome, Ruth.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's with a great deal of pleasure that I present a petition in these very substantial financial times in the province of Saskatchewan that would . . . with prayers from the citizens of Moose Jaw for an increase to, or improvements done to our Moose Jaw Union Hospital, providing delivery and reducing our wait times but providing better services. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to provide funding for the expansion and renovation of the Moose Jaw Union Hospital.

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

Mr. Speaker, I proudly present this petition on behalf of Moose Jaw residents.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, I stand to present petitions on behalf of concerned residents of Saskatchewan. It is well known that inadequate access to quality and affordable child care is a major roadblock for parents who want to access the labour market and that our Premier has called the labour shortage a crisis and that today many Saskatchewan families struggle or are unable to find child care for their children.

The Speaker: — Order, order. The member is aware of the fact that the petitions are presented by reading the prayer.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — I apologize, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to add at least 2,000 new child care spaces in Saskatchewan by 2011.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Saskatoon Fairview.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to present several pages of petitions to the Legislative Assembly today. The prayer reads as follows:

We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan urge the new government to withdraw both Bills and hold broad public consultations about labour relations in the province.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And the petitions are signed by people from Saskatoon and Regina. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Prince Albert Northcote.

Mr. Furber: — I'd like to present a petition today calling for immediate reduction in education portion of property taxes for Saskatchewan families. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately implement its promise to reduce the education portion of property taxes for Saskatchewan families by doubling property tax rebates over four years.

As is duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by folks from the centres of Prince Albert, Spruce Home, Melfort, Birch Hills, and Arborfield. I so present.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Yorkton.

Celebrate Success Awards in Yorkton

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yorkton, third largest trading area in the province where good things happen — well, Mr. Speaker, last night in Yorkton we had the chamber of commerce, the seventh Celebrate Success Awards. The chamber's celebrating 110 years this year, Mr. Speaker.

I had the honour of bringing greetings on behalf of the province. We were treated by a great supper at the St. Mary's Cultural Centre, and then we were treated by the start your business package that the chamber of commerce in Yorkton has put together to attract businesses to Yorkton.

Some of the key winners last night, Mr. Speaker: community merit, *Haunts of Yorkton*, boys and girls club, Kinsmen club. Property restoration winners sponsored by the City of Yorkton was the Yorke Inn. Community involvement, Cornerstone Credit Union sponsored this to L.R. Future Investments; business expansion sponsored by Bank of Montreal, EMW Industrial; new business venture sponsored by Key Chevrolet Cadillac, Yorkton Toyota; young entrepreneurs sponsored by Haas Nissan, Gardon Securities — which I was very warmed by his reaction, Mr. Speaker, when he thanked the Saskatchewan Party government for winning the last election. So I was really honoured with his speech.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Customer service, RBC Royal Bank sponsored that one, St. Mary's Cultural Centre a very, a very well deserved reward; wall of success winners sponsored by Parker Quine, Yorkton This Week and Independent Agencies, Morris Industries; and business of the year sponsored by SaskPower — I was honoured to present this award, Mr. Speaker, very deserving — Maple Farm Equipment of Yorkton.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Regina Coronation Park.

Z99 Radiothon

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, my friends, our friends CC, Lorie, and Buzz are at it again. For 36 straight hours from 6:00 a.m. today to 6:00 p.m. Friday from the Cornwall Centre in Regina, the 21st annual Z99 radiothon is happening. Z99 and its great audience are continuing the tradition — the tradition of supporting and caring, the tradition of sharing and preparing for tomorrow. Three of Regina's nicest leading citizens — our friends CC, Lorie, and Buzz — are again focussing their considerable talents and their time on saving babies' lives and making futures better.

This Z99 radiothon is all about giving Regina and southern Saskatchewan the opportunity to give of ourselves by donating our money to help buy baby heart, lung, and more monitors. Medical technology is getting better. Health professionals are getting better. Together we can and we are making all the difference for babies and their families. Rawlco Radio for 21 years has supported the Z99 radiothon, raising more than \$1.8 million for the Regina General neonatal intensive care unit.

Please listen to Z99 for details. Then let's help CC, Lorie, and Buzz raise money to support babies of Regina. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[10:15]

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Prince Albert Carlton.

Prince Albert Council of Women Honours Resident

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past Saturday afternoon the Prince Albert Council of Women's Hall of Fame honoured the life and contributions of Mrs. Melba Jenkins. Mrs. Jenkins is well deserving of this honour as her community involvement in Prince Albert has touched many lives.

After taking a look at the vast amount of her accomplishments, it's difficult for me to know where to begin. Mr. Speaker, Prince Albert is known for its volunteerism and community involvement. Many would agree that Melba has become a leader in Prince Albert when it comes to her fundraising efforts. As part of the board of directors of the Victoria Hospital Foundation, she was involved in the life support campaign, bed campaign, and maternity campaign among other things.

In 2005 Melba and her husband, Malcolm, were honoured with the Saskatchewan Centennial Medal. So while this is not Melba's first time being honoured for her achievements, you can bet this will not be her last. Recently Melba has had to scale back her activities due to ill health, but she's still doing what she's able to do.

So today, Mr. Speaker, as MLA for Prince Albert Carlton, I ask all members to join in with me in personally recognizing and thanking Mrs. Melba Jenkins for the hard work, time, and effort she has dedicated to making the city of Prince Albert a better place to live. Congratulations, Melba, on being the newest inductee into the Prince Albert Women's Hall of Fame.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Prince Albert Northcote.

Mr. Furber: — I also attended the event on Saturday, Mr. Speaker, and would like to join with the member from Prince Albert Carlton in congratulating Ms. Jenkins.

Mr. Speaker, the P.A. [Prince Albert] Women's Council Hall of Fame inductee, Ms. Melba Jenkins, 2008, she lives in Prince Albert Northcote and was honoured at a ceremony, fitting that it was March 8 as it was International Women's Day.

I was extremely pleased to be in attendance as Ms. Jenkins is an active member of our community and is most deserving of this recognition. She assisted in fundraising to establish the E.A. Rawlinson Centre, is a member of the international orders of daughters of the empire, serves on many committees, and assists the Coats for Kids committee.

Ms. Jenkins joined the board of directors of the Victoria Hospital Foundation in 2001, and since that time she's assisted in organizing many fundraising activities including the life support campaign, the bed campaign, the Give a Little Life radiothon. She's been active with the festival of trees, the snowflake gala, and the O.K. Hejertass annual golf tournament.

Mr. Speaker, what makes her accomplishments even more amazing is she's done all of this while overcoming personal adversity, celebrating her fourth year of remission from cancer in 2007. Mr. Speaker, Ms. Jenkins lives by a philosophy — and it's a philosophy that we could all employ — that is, life is 10 per cent what happens to you and 90 per cent what you choose to do with it.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join with me in acknowledging the contributions of Melba Jenkins to her community and congratulating her on being the 2008 inductee into the Prince Albert Council of Women's Hall of Fame. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Rosetown-Elrose.

SARM Convention

Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The annual SARM convention's been in town this week, and it wraps this afternoon. This is the 103rd annual convention for SARM, and as of this morning, I believe, they had about 1,800 delegates registered which I also think makes it, I believe, it makes it the largest annual convention in the province.

The convention includes a large trade show and has a huge economic impact on the Regina area. It alternates between Saskatoon and Regina; it'll be in Saskatoon next year. It's a chance for delegates to network with other municipal people from around the province, and also to network with government people.

We had a number of ministers give speeches to the convention. Minister Hutchinson, Minister Bjornerud had speeches that were very well received, and also Premier Wall had a speech on . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Just a reminder we're not to refer to members by their first names, but by their constituency.

Mr. Reiter: — The bear pit was also a huge success the other day, Mr. Speaker, as was a banquet, the annual social event that goes with the convention last night. Our delegates are looking forward to working with this new government. They have a sense of optimism and confidence in rural Saskatchewan. That's where our resources are. That's where our future is, Mr. Speaker.

We commend our rural leaders who are guiding the development of Saskatchewan's new rural economy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Saskatoon Centre.

Five Days for the Homeless

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week five brave University of Saskatchewan students are taking part in a bold new Canadian student movement called Five Days for the Homeless. Marc D'Eon, Mark Lepage, Shannon Heincke, Reem Matlak, and Carlene Deutscher — all students of the Edwards business student society — began their challenge at 5:00 p.m. Sunday, March 9 and will end it tomorrow.

This is quite a test with some very strict rules, including having no disposable income, no access to food or drink. They can consume only donated food and they cannot shower. And most importantly they must sleep outside. The only exception is if the temperatures are so low that the health is at risk. They must attend all their classes and complete all of their academic responsibilities including mid-terms.

The charity these students are supporting is Egadz, the Saskatoon community-based organization that provides resources and services that empower youth at risk to help themselves to reach their full potential. Egadz provides safe, acceptable place for youth with links to their families, and support of the community.

Mr. Speaker, these business students, both in the challenge and in support roles, want to raise awareness about youth homelessness, promote social responsibility, and to create a positive image for their school, university, and community. They're doing a fantastic job with a great idea. Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join in me to congratulating the five days for

the homelessness, Saskatoon, and wish them the very best. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

Recruiting Nurses from the Philippines

Ms. Ross: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Another day, another flip-flop for the NDP [New Democratic Party] on their position on the value of recruiting nurses from the Philippines.

Yesterday in the legislature, the member for Saskatoon Eastview responded to a ministerial statement announcing the Saskatchewan Party's recruitment of 297 Filipino nurses to help with the serious deficiency of nurses in Saskatchewan left by the former NDP government. Her quote, "Today we are seeing the results of work undertaken by the member from Saskatoon Nutana and our government and health care stakeholders . . ."

Now that's odd because a week ago the member from Saskatoon Eastview was quoted in the Lloydminster *Meridian Booster* saying just the opposite. She criticized the government for recruiting nurses from another country. Her quote, "I also want to caution people that we shouldn't move our system forward at the expense of some other country' . . ."

Mr. Speaker, did you know that the families of these Filipino nurses are depending on them to help pay the bills? Approximately 75 per cent of their net pay they send back to the Philippines. So, Mr. Speaker, this is not happening at quote, "the expense of another country." Not only is the NDP talking out of both sides of their mouth on the nursing recruitment issue; they don't seem to understand that this helps not hurts the Philippines.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Labour Relations Board

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a very simple question to the member from Greystone: will there be an open competition for the position of Vice-Chair of the Labour Relations Board, yes or no?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, in stark contrast to the optimism that runs across Saskatchewan, we find a pessimism in the official opposition. I think it's reflective of the election results.

What I can say, Mr. Speaker, is that a member opposite the

other day said there wouldn't be amendments to essential services. I then announced that there in fact would be. What I can say today is, yesterday we heard from the member opposite. She was concerned that there wouldn't be an open competition, and I'm happy to report that there will be one.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Atkinson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I think we've got our first victory on the opposition side of the House.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Ms. Atkinson: — Well we'll see. We'll see. Mr. Speaker, as the public will know, we have a minister that summarily fired three members of the Labour Relations Board — three members that were in the midst of either completing the hearing of cases or hearing cases or in the process of writing up decisions regarding cases they had heard. We have heard the minister indicate to the public that these people will be allowed to continue to hear the case or write up the case.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the minister speaks fondly of the Justice department. I'd like him to share the Justice department's legal opinion as to whether or not — given that their OCs [order in council] were terminated — whether or not they have the authority to do so.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the minister responsible for Employment, Immigration, and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the focus on this. It would be nice to be able to talk about the 15,000 people that have moved back to Saskatchewan in the last year, the 13,300 new full-time jobs in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this is going to be negotiated by the new Chair. And I'm not going to comment on what's going on within the LRB [Labour Relations Board] because it's a quasi-judicial branch that is taking care of itself.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I don't think the new Chair has the legal ability to determine whether or not these folks can continue. What I'm interested in knowing, whether or not the minister of, that we're referring to, has an opinion from the Department of Justice or the Ministry of Justice that, given that the order in council for these three individuals was terminated, whether or not he has to reimplement an OC in order for these people to continue their work so that both unions and employers don't have to spend thousands of dollars and either having the cases reheard or opinions rendered, Mr. Speaker.

So I just want the minister to be clear with the public. What is

the legal opinion? Do these people have the legal authority to continue or don't they? If they don't, what does the government have to do in order to allow these people to continue?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to answer this question. The Department of Justice was consulted extensively regarding these particular employees, and I want to be able to assure the members opposite and the members of the province of Saskatchewan, our citizens, that these particular applications that are before the Labour Relations Board will continue in the ordinary and usual manner. That was communicated to the board Chair and the Vice-Chairs prior to anything taking place with them.

And it is our full expectation that those, the board Chair and the Vice-Chairs, will continue with the hearings that they have started to undertake in accordance with The Trade Union Act. We have no intention of making any change with that. The Minister of Labour has indicated that earlier, and I want to be able to reassure people that that is the plan and that will carry on. And those people have been assured of that, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, The Trade Union Act is clear that if a member of the board's order in council is expiring, that they can continue. In this case, these three members did not have their order in council expire. They weren't able to go to the end of their term. Their order in council was terminated.

So I'd ask the government to clearly indicate to us what legal authority is there in The Trade Union Act that once a member of the Labour Relations Board has had their order in council terminated, what authority is there for them to continue to hear cases or render decisions.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Employment and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, what I can say — I'll reiterate — it was made clear that there would be continuity, Mr. Speaker. Once again we're finding a focus on issues that we've already addressed. Mr. Speaker, out of all the great news going on in Saskatchewan, we go back to this. We see that 13,300 new jobs, Mr. Speaker, full-time jobs in Saskatchewan. We find 15,000 people moving back to the province. We find success on the post-secondary side in training. Another announcement coming tomorrow, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the answer is the continuity has already been built in. They understood that.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Atkinson: — Now, Mr. Speaker, I must say to the House and to the public that the minister has not answered the very specific question. The Trade Union Act is clear that if the member of the Labour Relations Board's OC is expiring, has come to its end, that they can continue. But in this case, these three members did not have their OCs expire. They were terminated.

I ask the minister to point out in detail — and if he can't do it in the House, perhaps he'll do it outside for the journalists — where in The Trade Union Act is their authority for these three members, who have had their OC terminated before it expires, to continue either hearing or rendering decisions on cases.

[10:30]

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, there is a number of cases before these particular individuals. The applicants in those cases spent a significant amount of time, money, and resources to come before the Labour Relations Board with their particular applications. It is the intention of this government to ensure that there is continuity and that those individuals have every opportunity to complete those particular matters.

It is our understanding from opinions we've received from the Department of Justice — and we don't share written opinion on personnel matters — but it is our opinion and our expectation that we have the legal authority to do that, and that is what will take place, Mr. Speaker, is those individuals, provided that they are willing to, those individuals will complete hearing those applications; they will render those decisions. We will expect them to do it in a timely manner and, Mr. Speaker, that is how this government will do business. We will continue on and we will do things as we were elected to on November 7 of last year, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Atkinson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, it's quite clear that the member has had a conversion on the road to Damascus. He now doesn't share legal opinions when it comes to personnel matters. Now, Mr. Speaker, in The Trade Union Act, in The Trade Union Act it's very clear that there are two Vice-Chairs to be appointed. That's very specific to the legislation. The members opposite have indicated, because they've increased the pay dramatically for the Vice-Chair by some 60,000 — or the Chair — by some \$60,000, that they're going to reduce the numbers of Chairs and Vice-Chairs to two. Can the members tell us whether or not they're going to introduce amendments to The Trade Union Act, or are they simply going to ignore The Trade Union Act and only have a Chair and Vice-Chair?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister Responsible for

Employment and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. We'll be working to align the legislation to ensure that there will be room to go up to two Vice-Chairs.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

Process for Negotiating Nurses' Contract

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Saskatchewan Union of Nurses has posted a letter on their website dated March 10 of this year. The letter is addressed to the Minister of Health and relates to the SUN [Saskatchewan Union of Nurses] negotiations. In the letter, SUN claims SAHO [Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations] is refusing to negotiate on recruitment and retention pieces outlined in the memorandum of understanding signed by the minister and SUN just recently. In comments to the media, SAHO claims legislation precludes them from negotiating on these matters.

To the Minister of Health, the simple question: does SAHO have the legislative authority to negotiate on the pieces included within the MOU [memorandum of understanding]? If not, why did the minister provide false hope to SUN by signing the agreement while they were starting negotiations with SAHO?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really find it interesting that that critic and the former head, president of the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses would class a partnership with SUN, a historic partnership with SUN, as false hope. I guess the only false hope that SUN ever had is that they could ever find agreement with that former government. That was false hope, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the collective bargaining system, the collective bargaining arrangements or process will work as the collective bargaining process has always worked. There'll be differences in opinions between SUN and SAHO, and those differences of opinions will be worked out at the bargaining table, not with interference from the minister.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well too late, Mr. Minister. Mr. Speaker, the letter from SUN urges the Minister of Health to, and I quote:

. . . communicate immediately and publicly with Regional Health Authorities to advise them that they must comply with government policy and strategic direction as articulated in the SUN/Government Partnership . . .

To the minister: will you be instructing the employers and SAHO how to negotiate?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — I find it interesting, Mr. Speaker. Is that what that member would do? Would she inject herself into the negotiations? Would she inject herself into the negotiations and tell SAHO, the employer, the representative of the employers, the RHAs [regional health authority], on how they should negotiate? Is that what she's implying? Is she implying that the government should inject itself into the negotiations and dictate to the employer, the health authorities, through SAHO . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I would ask members to allow the minister to respond to the question. Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — To direct SAHO, the organization for the employers, the health authorities, on how they should negotiate. Is that what she's implying?

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The letter from SUN does not ask me what I will do. The minister is asked what he will do. Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I would ask members to allow the member from Saskatoon Eastview to place her question.

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The letter is addressed to the minister, not to me, so he has to answer what he will be doing.

Mr. Speaker, it seems in signing the MOU during the bargaining process, that the minister has created quite a mess. It would appear that the minister failed to communicate clearly to either the health regions or SUN. On one hand it seems the health regions were not part of the process of developing and signing the MOU, and on the other hand the minister has apparently failed to clearly define to SUN what elements of the plan can be addressed to negotiations and which cannot.

To the Minister of Health: what is going on? Why has the minister acted in a way that appears to be hindering the ability of employees and employers to negotiate?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I heard the member from Nutana, the former Health minister, talk about a little mess. I'll tell you about a big mess. A big mess is the health system after 16 years of that . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — There is a mess not only in rural

Saskatchewan but in urban Saskatchewan. We have a huge nursing shortage. We have a huge doctor shortage. And I will tell, through you, Mr. Speaker, to that opposition that in three months work this Saskatchewan Party has done more to fix that system than 16 years . . . [inaudible] . . . that government.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, I answered the first question that the bargaining process will work the way the bargaining process will work. There's going to be disagreements between employees and employers, and they're going to work through that in a proper, bargained, negotiated contract, Mr. Speaker. And I will not interject myself in that process. I don't know if they expect the government or minister to do that, but certainly that isn't the way this government will be working.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Saskatoon Eastview.

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm eagerly awaiting to see the results of this mess. Mr. Speaker, the SUN letter states, and I quote:

SUN entered into the SUN/Government Partnership in good faith, expecting that government commitments would be honoured by the . . . [minister] and the Regional Health Authorities.

Mr. Speaker, the frustration is evident in SUN's letter. From comments made by SAHO, it would seem that process is increasingly frustrating for them as well. My question is for the Minister of Health: how does the Minister of Health explain the frustration if he adequately communicated with SAHO, the employers, and SUN prior to the signing of the MOU?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, over the last three to four months we have done an awful lot to rectify some of the disasters left by that previous government in opposition now. And part of it was signing a partnership agreement with SUN — historic — which that opposition tried to do when it was government, but failed to do it, Mr. Speaker.

I would be very interested to hear from that member — the critic, who is a former president of SUN — what she disagrees about. What is it that she doesn't like about a partnership with SUN and government moving forward to address the recruitment and retention problems that we face in our province? What is it that she dislikes?

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would be very interested because what she says today may not be what she believes tomorrow. Because what she said yesterday didn't follow with what she said two weeks ago in Lloydminster through the *Meridian Booster*. Mr. Speaker, yesterday she supported Philippine nurses coming. Two weeks ago she said it was terrible, Mr. Speaker. You can't believe a word they say.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Building Canada Framework Agreement

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the people of Regina and the province are very concerned about the Sask Party's dithering and delaying when it comes to signing an agreement with the federal government which could be worth millions of dollars for Saskatchewan. The Building Canada framework is worth \$33 billion over seven years for municipal infrastructure.

The mayor of Regina, Mr. Pat Fiacco, has recently expressed his concern over how long it's taking to sign on to this agreement. The foot-dragging by this Sask Party government may put these Regina projects that have already been announced in jeopardy.

Now the infrastructure was one of the key platforms in the Sask Party election plan. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: why have you not signed on to the Building Canada framework?

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. The Speaker is having difficulty hearing the question. Would the member please place the question.

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Why have you not signed on to the Building Canada framework? What's the holdup?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister Responsible for Municipal Affairs.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Mr. Speaker, we certainly welcome the question from the member opposite. We're not going to be taking 16 years to sign a new agreement with the federal government.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — The member opposite and her colleagues are fully aware of the discussions started a long time ago. And they're continuing . . . doing the very best that we can to pull all of the pieces of a good deal together. We want to make sure that we have not just a deal; we want to make sure that we have the best deal for the people of Saskatchewan. And that's exactly what we'll do.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Ms. Higgins: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm a little concerned that this deal might go the way of the government's concern on

equalization. And we'd hate to see that happen.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Ms. Higgins: — So, Mr. Speaker, we do know that Newfoundland and Labrador have signed the agreement, and they have \$640 million for infrastructure. They take infrastructure seriously. And do you know who else has signed on to the agreement? Nova Scotia. They care about infrastructure to the tune of \$540 million. And do you know who else? BC [British Columbia] has already signed on to the agreement to the tune of \$2.2 billion for infrastructure in their province.

These provinces have all signed and the money is flowing to all of them. Why not Saskatchewan? When will this minister do some work in his portfolio and live up to the Sask Party's infrastructure promises?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the minister responsible for municipal government.

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, it was a little hard to hear the question due to the NDP members heckling their own member, but if I understood it, it goes something like this: are you going to be doing any better than we did with the equalization when we were in power, I think was the question. And the answer is, how could anybody possibly do any worse? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, cute answers are that — they're cute. And I have to say they wear thin fast. Mr. Speaker, this deal is of critical importance to the province, and it is of critical importance to the people who the minister represents here in Regina. This deal could be worth \$27 million for the intermodal facility. Why does the minister not care about that deal? This deal could be worth \$20 million for the new multipurpose facility at IPSCO Place. Why does the minister not care about that project?

The minister's photo ops are fast and furious and there's plenty of them, but when is he going to get down to some work, sign this agreement, and see some money flowing? So can he now please stand and explain why there's been no action on this file to the people of his constituency, Regina, and the province, and please tell us when this agreement will be signed.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the minister responsible for municipal government.

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the fact that the hon. member opposite isn't aware of all the efforts that are being concentrated on getting the right deal for Saskatchewan is disappointing, but I understand it. But she has, with respect,

said one thing that I think we can all agree with.

The Speaker: — Order. I ask members to give the minister the opportunity to respond. I recognize the minister.

[10:45]

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect, the hon. member opposite has indeed said one thing that I think we can all agree with. We all, in fact, are extremely concerned. We recognize the importance of this agreement, not only to the good people of Regina but to the good people of Saskatchewan everywhere. And that's why we'll keep working until we get the right deal.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Relationship with Federal Government

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, the minister has raised in the House this morning the question of this government's relationship with the national government, with the federal Conservative government, and he's raised the issue of equalization.

That provokes me, Mr. Speaker, to ask this government today — I expect the question will go to the Deputy Premier — this week, Mr. Speaker, the Government of Newfoundland tabled their Throne Speech. It was in the body of that Throne Speech, the Government of Newfoundland said as follows:

My Government has been deeply frustrated by the current Federal Government's refusal to honour — among other promises — their explicit written commitment to **remove nonrenewable resource revenues** from the calculation of equalization . . .

That is the position of the Government of Newfoundland. That is the frustration of the government, the people of Newfoundland. Does this government share that same frustration that the federal government of Canada has broken its promise to the people of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, we saw before the election an NDP government whose actions, the way they treated the federal government, was one of hostility, and one that they wanted to approach everything with the idea that they would litigate their way out of problems rather than sit down and attempt to negotiate a deal.

Unlike the previous NDP government who believed a negative, destructive, and pessimistic approach was the only way to deal with the federal government, it is the position of this government that we believe in rolling up our sleeves and want

to work with the federal government to help build our province. We are once again a have province and we are working very hard, Mr. Speaker, to lay the groundwork, particularly in terms of infrastructure, to ensure that we maintain Saskatchewan's rightful place as a have province in Confederation for the future. We want the federal government . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. I call members to order. I call members to order. Order. During question period we've had certain members interfering more often than other members of the Assembly. I'm going to call members to order in that regard, and respect the right of individuals to not only ask the question but to respond to the question.

The Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the humour and mirth that we hear from the other side is unfortunately representative of how that government treated things when they were dealing with the federal government.

An example of how the new approach is working with the government is the federal government contributing \$240 million to develop clean coal technology in Saskatchewan, a technology that was abandoned by that government over there. We will continue to work with the federal government to try and do everything we can for our province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the Leader of the Opposition. Final question.

Mr. Calvert: — For one, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the minister getting up and reading from the prepared answer to the question. He asks, how is this relationship working? We ask, where's the infrastructure deal for the people of Regina? Where's the infrastructure deal for the people of Saskatchewan? Why haven't you signed it? Mr. Speaker, the Government of Newfoundland, in their Throne Speech this past week, said as follows:

A Prime Minister who makes such a promise saying "there is no greater fraud than a promise not kept" stands condemned by his own words for refusing to keep it . . . Their actions are not only disingenuous but also dishonest. They have proved they cannot be trusted.

That's the Government of Newfoundland, in reference to Prime Minister Stephen Harper and the federal Conservative cousins of yours who sit in the national benches. Mr. Speaker, my question to this government today is: do they, today, suggest that the federal Conservative government have kept their promise to the people of Saskatchewan, or do they agree with the people and the Government of Newfoundland that they have not?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, that premier, and the Premier of Newfoundland, have done the most destructive

things insofar as dealing with the federal government. They have chosen to litigate. They have chosen a path of confrontation. This government will work to do the best that we can to ensure that we are most productive for the people of this province. Mr. Speaker, we've already negotiated \$240 million. We've already negotiated \$240 million for clean coal technology. We have ongoing negotiations. And our issue is not what happened with the equalization formula. We leave that to that premier — or that former premier — and his counterpart in Newfoundland. We will work to develop a positive working relationship with the federal government and we will deliver dollars to the people of this province, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: — Recognize the Deputy Premier.

Initiative for Children and Families Living With Autism Spectrum Disorder

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Assembly today to inform the House about an important, new initiative for Saskatchewan children with autism spectrum disorder and, of course, along with their families.

Today my colleague, the Minister of Health, the member from Indian Head-Milestone, and I announced over \$320,000 for supports for autism spectrum disorder or ASD. This is funding that will make a real, tangible difference in the lives of children with ASD and their families. It will help ensure that children with ASD reach their best potential. This investment will provide up to 21 children and their families with intensive home-based supports, supports that will help both family and child meet goals such as increasing communication skills and improving cognitive, fine, and gross motor skills.

To accomplish this, our government is providing \$50,000 each to the North Battleford, Regina, and Saskatoon region early childhood intervention programs or ECIPs. Mr. Speaker, this will allow five to seven families in each ECIP region to benefit from the help of an autism early childhood consultant. The consultant will work with children from birth to age five who have already been diagnosed or who are waiting to be diagnosed with ASD.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, there will be \$150,000 provided annually to the three ECIPs. We are contributing \$170,000 in one-time funding for two learning development conferences. These conferences will be organized by the Saskatoon region ECIP for professionals in the K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] and early learning and child care sectors. They will go a long way toward helping professionals who work with children recognize the signs of autism because, Mr. Speaker, as we all know, an early diagnosis can make all the difference to a child's success in the long term.

The funding announced today is in addition to \$64 million provided by the Ministry of Education through intensive supports funding recognition. This \$64 million helps boards of education provide programs and services to meet the needs of

all students identified as requiring additional supports, including those with ASD. As well the inter-ministry cognitive disability strategy supports individuals with unmet needs who have significant behavioural and developmental disabilities. Parents can apply for funds in this funding pool to meet the unmet needs of their children with ASD.

Mr. Speaker, this announcement today is an investment in the well-being of children, in the well-being of families, and in the future of Saskatchewan. It's an example of how Saskatchewan's residents benefit when our province is experiencing economic growth. And it's an example of the kind of initiatives that this government will continue to pursue to ensure that we secure the future of Saskatchewan. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for sending the statements over to me in advance; I do appreciate that. Thank you very much.

Families of children, individuals with autism spectrum disorder, face many challenges. Funding attached to assist and provide a wholesome life, a life which reduces barriers, is welcomed. Absolutely. I'm glad to see the government as well appears to be taking it seriously. It is important when the provincial government invests in these types of supports and as well taking advantage of the delivery mechanisms that exist within our communities.

I'm also glad to see that the government is providing funding for learning development conferences where people on the front line can receive training. That is of particular importance in the fields of education and health care, and this issue addresses both.

As I said autism is an important issue, one which the previous government also took seriously as evidenced in our last budget, which had particular emphasis on this issue. I'm glad to see that the new government is building on the successes of the previous government. I encourage them to make progress on this issue, and I'm encouraged by their words today. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 11 — The Enforcement of Canadian Judgments Amendment Act, 2008/Loi de 2008 modifiant la Loi de 2002 sur l'exécution des jugements canadiens

The Speaker: — Recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 11, The Enforcement of Canadian Judgments Amendment Act, 2008 be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 11, The Enforcement of Canadian Judgments Amendment Act, 2008 be now read a first time. Is it the

pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a second time?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 12 — The Consumer Protection Amendment Act, 2008

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 12, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act, 2008 be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice has moved that Bill No. 12, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act, 2008 be now read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed.

Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a second time?

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Wood River.

Standing Committee on the Economy

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on the Economy to report that it has considered certain estimates and to present its second report. Therefore I move:

That the second report of the Standing Committee on the Economy be now concurred in.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Chair of the Standing Committee on the Economy:

That the second report of the Standing Committee on the Economy be now concurred in.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Standing Committee on House Services

The Speaker: — Recognize the member for The Battlefords.

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on House Services to report that it has considered certain estimates and to present its third report. I move:

That the third report of the Standing Committee on House Services be now concurred in.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Deputy Chair of House Services:

That the third report of the Standing Committee on House Services be now concurred in.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

SEVENTY-FIVE MINUTE DEBATE

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Weyburn.

Benefiting from the Province's Economic Growth

Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be taking part in the 75-minute debate and to have been asked by my colleagues . . . Or I guess I nominated myself. I volunteered myself. But I thank them for allowing me to do this. And I'm looking forward to other members of the Assembly taking part in this debate.

Mr. Speaker, the motion that I'm putting forward is one that reads:

That this Assembly commends the government for ensuring that Saskatchewan families continue to benefit from the province's economic growth.

Mr. Speaker, first of all I want to start out by saying that, how honoured and how proud I am to be a member of this government and to be supportive of the initiatives that we've seen out of this government in only a short three or four months, little more than a hundred days. The initiatives that we're seeing put forward by this government, it's initiatives that I can go back to my constituency and be very eager to sell those plans that this government is putting forward.

And I first want to talk, Mr. Speaker, in my remarks I want to talk a bit about what is happening in the Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency. A lot of my remarks will be about the province as a whole, but a lot I will speak about my constituency. And, Mr. Speaker, Weyburn-Big Muddy — I think more than anywhere, or it could be argued that more than anywhere, the Southeast and Weyburn-Big Muddy as a large part of that — is really seeing much of the boom in this province right now. A lot of it

has been seen in our constituency.

[11:00]

And it really, Mr. Speaker, no matter where you go in the Weyburn area and Weyburn-Big Muddy, you speak to people that have been in Weyburn their entire lives, they've never seen things the way they are right now, Mr. Speaker. I live in the city of Weyburn, and when you drive through Weyburn right now, there's three brand new condominiums that are being built. There's a new Ramada Hotel that looks like it's going to be a very nice hotel for the city.

Mr. Speaker, the city is seeing record numbers of lots being sold, tripling what they did a year ago, and a year ago, 2007, was pretty good for the city. And yet in the early parts of 2008, they're tripling what they're doing for lot sales.

Mr. Speaker, and it's not just the city of Weyburn. It's places like Ogema, Radville, which is in the Estevan constituency, but I have some connection with people in Radville. Things are happening in those communities and all down the line. I know Yellow Grass, I don't think you could find a vacant house in Yellow Grass right now, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And, Mr. Speaker, the member from Indian Head-Milestone asked about McTaggart. In fact I believe . . . which is a very small community. They're looking at actually bringing more lots on for the first time in probably, you know, generations that they need more lots to service all the people that are coming back to Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And going back to the motion and how this all relates, and people would probably ask well, you know, how is the government ensuring that families are benefiting from this boom? And there's several issues that I want to talk about, and I think first and foremost the main one that I want to discuss right now is to answer that question of how families are benefiting, Mr. Speaker. They're benefiting from the promises that we are keeping as a new government, Mr. Speaker. We made commitments in the campaign that would benefit all the people of Saskatchewan.

And you know there's a number of them. I think it's probably close to two dozen, and I think, I believe that in the upcoming budget we'll see many, many more promises being kept by this government, Mr. Speaker. And I just want to talk about a few of those, how the good financial times of the province has given latitude to the government to ensure that everybody benefits from that, Mr. Speaker.

We are fully funding the cancer drug Avastin which was . . . I know that members on this side of the House, this was an issue that we talked a lot about, and I thank the Minister of Health. I have a constituent that I've become very close to that is now hopefully going to benefit again from this drug after he ran out of money and he couldn't afford it, Mr. Speaker.

And I find it interesting that the Leader of the Opposition, in his report card that he put out on our government a couple of weeks ago, he gave us an A for funding Avastin. And it's too bad that he wouldn't have done it when he was government, when he had the opportunity. And that's becoming sort of a theme, Mr. Speaker, with things that the opposition are now saying, that the

idea of funding these nurses' positions, things that they were going to do, they were going to get to, Mr. Speaker, but they, you know, ran out of time. Or, you know, the new tracking system that the Social Services minister announced yesterday, I heard a member of the opposition on the radio saying, well it was in the budget for this spring, but we just didn't get there; we weren't elected, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you know, close, you know, doesn't count in this business, Mr. Speaker, and I'm pleased that this government is coming through on this.

I'm very pleased to see that the government, with the work of the Health minister and the Legislative Secretary, we're going to see sizeable numbers of new nurses in this province, Mr. Speaker, something that, you know, will benefit all the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And now you hear, Mr. Speaker, well who started it? Who started? You know what, Mr. Speaker? They might have started it, but they never delivered. They never delivered on it.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Duncan: — They had the chance and they never delivered, Mr. Speaker. So it really doesn't matter who started it because this government did it. We set goals when their Health minister couldn't set goals because he didn't know if he could meet them. We set some goals, Mr. Speaker, and we're going to meet those goals, Mr. Speaker.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's some of the things that we've done as government to ensure that people are benefiting.

But I want to talk about something that happened right off the start, Mr. Speaker. It happened almost, you know, immediately after, and it was a benefit to my constituency, but I think the province as a whole, Mr. Speaker. And that's when the Premier, he made a very important trip. He went to Calgary. He went to where the investment capital is for the oil industry, and he made some pretty clear statements about what our government is going to do that will be a benefit. And this is going to benefit all the people of the Saskatchewan, and we see it with the record land sales. We see it with the Crown lease sales, Mr. Speaker, what they're bringing into the provincial coffers. He talked about and he's talking about in wherever he can go, about the vast potential of our resources, Mr. Speaker.

From way too long, for way too long, Mr. Speaker, we heard from the NDP that well we can't compete with Alberta because we don't have the resources, Mr. Speaker. We can't, we can't, we can't compete on taxes. Mr. Speaker, the Premier was very clear that we will compete with Alberta. We will compete with other jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker, and that is already seeing benefits, Mr. Speaker. There are companies, Mr. Speaker, that are headquartered in Calgary, but they're investing almost all of their money for 2008 in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and that's going to be a benefit. That's going to be a benefit, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier's also been in Washington. He's been in New York. He's having some very good meetings, I understand, and trying to bring investment capital to this province, Mr. Speaker. And how is all this news being received? Well, Mr. Speaker, I follow the trade magazines pretty closely. *Powering the Patch* has some very good articles

on what the Premier has been doing and the positive results of what's happening not only in terms of dollars but what is that signalling to the future for the citizens of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to quote from FirstEnergy CEO Jim W. Davidson who said that the Premier's investment, and this is a quote, "... investment-friendly approach and its government's growth agenda will allow Saskatchewan to play an increasing role in meeting the energy needs."

Mr. Speaker, so this is all very positive news coming out of this government. So we're taking a step forward, Mr. Speaker. Our government is looking forward into the future, untapping the unlimited potential of our resources.

Where's the other side? Well of course they've got one foot firmly planted in the past, Mr. Speaker. In fact one of the first things that this government introduced in the fall was the act to repeal The Potash Development Act, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Duncan: — And I think this is very important, even though admittedly it was never used throughout the 1970s, the 1990s, by that government. It sent a chill. In fact, Mr. Speaker, what was the reaction to this government introducing the Bill? Well your reaction from the industry was this. The industry said, well you know even though admittedly it had never been used — that quote, "Investors have long, long memories," Mr. Speaker — it put a chill over investment.

Well what was the reaction from the members opposite? Mr. Speaker, the critic for Energy he said, you know he wasn't sure why the government was putting a priority on repealing this. Mr. Speaker, anybody in industry would know why we put a priority on it. Members opposite know why it was a priority, but of course they didn't really realize it. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the critic opposite wasn't even sure if the NDP would be in favour of repealing this, and he wants to see what was in the Bill.

Well I certainly hope that that party is in favour of repealing this legislation because, Mr. Speaker, we're seeing on one hand a new government that wants to be competitive, that is forward-thinking, that wants to build this province going forward in the future. And, you know, Mr. Speaker, on the other side we're seeing . . . In fact my understanding is that there's a resolution at their convention this weekend about raising royalty rates in the province of Saskatchewan, going back to the 1970s. And it's going to be very interesting to see how members opposite vote this weekend at that convention, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to move on. So that's what we're doing. We want to ensure momentum continues in our economy. But, Mr. Speaker, we're also signalling to the people of this province, to their benefit, that we are ready for growth in this province, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, the Premier has stated repeatedly — and members opposite firmly believe this — that it's not merely growth for the sake of growth but so that we can ensure that we can continue to pay for the services that people of this province want and deserve and that we can continue to attract people back to this province.

Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House I can tell you it's not

about, you know, whether or not we can grow at the national average or, you know, if it's a good thing if people actually leave the province. We're a government that wants to see people return to this province, which will be a benefit to all the people of this province, Mr. Speaker.

So how are we doing that, and how does that compare, Mr. Speaker? Well we have some ideas on that. I think, you know, we've made a commitment, Mr. Speaker, to assist with municipalities to . . . because right now there's a challenge. Whether you're talking about Weyburn or in any other place in this province, there's a challenge. Even if we have to talk about Estevan, Mr. Speaker, we will. But, Mr. Speaker, there's a challenge on right now for municipalities to actually be able to have the lots available for people to move in to.

I know that the city of Weyburn, I talk to the mayor of Weyburn quite frequently, and there's a concern that they will not be able to keep up with the demand. And certainly we want to work with them, and that's why our Minister for Municipal Affairs and this government is going to working with municipalities on this issue, Mr. Speaker.

But what do we get, Mr. Speaker, from the other side? So let's compare and contrast, Mr. Speaker. Well again, Mr. Speaker, we want to see more people come to this province. We want people to be able to build homes and increase their commercial assets, Mr. Speaker. Apparently though this weekend there's resolutions at the NDP convention calling for, quote, "severe" restrictions on property owners, Mr. Speaker. There's plans for government to purchase homes, Mr. Speaker, and quote — this is from *The Leader Post* — quote, "the overall agenda of an NDP government's housing strategy would be to lead to the end of private landlordship," Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, on one hand, we have a government that wants to see, you know, help with municipalities to bring on new home ownership, Mr. Speaker. On the other hand, we see policies that will take us, you know, Mr. Speaker, straight back several decades ago, Mr. Speaker. You know, from a party that brought us the Regina Manifesto, depending on how members and party members vote this weekend, we may have a housing manifesto come Monday, Mr. Speaker. And I don't think that's a signal that we want to send.

We're thinking forward into the future. We're going to move this province forward, Mr. Speaker. The NDP are firmly stuck in the past. These are just a couple of examples, Mr. Speaker, of what this government is doing to ensure continued economic growth in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, in stark contrast to what we see opposite.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I see my time is winding down here, and I know members on this side have a lot more to say on this topic. I certainly have a lot more too, Mr. Speaker. I've had to cut a few things out. But I do want to close with one thing, Mr. Speaker, before I get to the motion.

You know, in my mind there's two perceptions when you look at the two different parties. On one hand, you know, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the NDP are happy that we have a time of growth. But they're kind of . . . they seem — and this was the same when they were in government — they kind of seem like

they're holding their breath. They're not sure if it'll last. But, Mr. Speaker, when you talk to people on this side of the House, when you talk to our constituents, you know that, Mr. Speaker, that people on this side of the House, people across the province, our constituents know that we're just scratching the surface of what this province can achieve, Mr. Speaker.

And so, Mr. Speaker, at this time, I will move the motion:

That this Assembly commends the government for ensuring that Saskatchewan families continue to benefit from the province's economic growth.

Mr. Speaker, and I will move that motion at this time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The member from Weyburn has moved:

That this Assembly commends the government for ensuring that Saskatchewan families continue to benefit from the province's economic growth.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion? Recognize the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to enter the 75-minute debate in order to provide a more accurate portrayal of how Saskatchewan's prosperity is being shared with its citizens. Since being elected, the Saskatchewan Party government claims that its primary goal is to grow the province's prosperity and secure its future.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[11:15]

Ms. Morin: — Oddly enough, Mr. Speaker, they're the only ones in the province that seem to be clapping for themselves. What they failed to mention is that it is only their friends who are sharing in that prosperity. From forestry to child care, from housing to labour, from the equalization . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I would ask the members allow the member from Regina Walsh Acres to make her comments in the debate. Member from Regina Walsh Acres.

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. From forestry to child care, from housing to labour, from the equalization file to the cost of prescription medications, this Sask Party government, after only 100 days in government, is already picking winners and losers and choosing which families will benefit from the province's economic growth. Why would a government claiming to secure the future so coldly turn its back on the 700 people out of work in Prince Albert? How are they now sharing in the prosperity of this government has promised?

During the election, an ad was run by the member for Prince Albert Carlton saying, and I quote . . .

The Speaker: — Order. There will be ample opportunity for other members to enter the debate. Please allow the member

from Regina Walsh Acres to proceed.

Ms. Morin: — Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. During the election, an ad was run by the member for Prince Albert Carlton saying, and I quote, “a vote for Darryl is a vote for the mill open and people working.”

Well, Mr. Speaker, how did that turn out? After voting for him, these 700 people are still not working and are not benefiting from the economic growth of our province. The decision by this government to irresponsibly cancel the memorandum of understanding with Domtar without first carefully examining the agreement was a decision based solely on the mantra of a zero government investment and an unwillingness to use the tools of government to assist working people in this province.

As Ron Rucks, president of Local 1120 of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union confirmed, quote, “It was a political decision, it was a decision made with no foresight, nothing other than disproving the former government.”

Is it too much to ask that the government assume responsibility of securing prosperity for its citizens, Mr. Speaker? The workers of the Prince Albert mill and their families are not the only ones who are being left behind by the Sask Party government. Indeed the Sask Party has never hidden its agenda to attack the working men and women of the province. The actions of this government surrounding the P.A. mill is part of an obvious pattern to reward the business lobby at the expense of working people.

The proposed amendments to labour legislation represented by Bills 5 and 6 embodies systemic attack on workers’ constitutional and human rights. Under the guise of introducing more democracy and balance in the labour climate of the province, Bills 5 and 6 unmistakably represent an effort to destabilize the organized union environment, not to mention disadvantage those who seek respectful and fair treatment and organized representation.

And the members are, you know, crowing from the other side. And now I think they should listen very carefully because there are experts who agree with us on this, Mr. Speaker. This point is further elaborated by Dr. S. Muthu, professor emeritus, Faculty of Business Administration, University of Regina. Quote:

Both mandatory voting and increasing the ability of employers to communicate with workers during organizing drives is based upon the assumption of an imbalance of power between unions and employers. The Trade Union Act is assumed to have given too much power to unions and hence it should be rebalanced by strengthening the hands of employers.

However he goes on to say that, quote:

... the stated purpose for the amendments, namely, power balancing and democratizing the workplace, seems to be dubious and unsubstantiated. The unstated implications of Bill 6 is unmistakably de-unionization of Saskatchewan. The premise that “some other jurisdictions in Canada have such laws, [so] why not in this province” may be

seemingly logical but lacks necessary and sufficient justification.

Consequently the actions of this Sask Party government towards working people in this province is creating a toxic labour environment. *Planet S* magazine, dated January 7, 2008, makes the political analogy of the Sask Party’s actions being tantamount to that of a high school bully, stating that proposed Bills 5 and 6 are, quote:

... badly written ... [pieces] of legislation that ... [appear] to have been drafted with all the sensitivity and foresight of a high school bully sending a threatening note to classmates.

This analogy, while invoking humour, obviously, accurately captures the legitimate concerns and asymmetrical power relationships surrounding these Bills.

These concerns are further substantiated by Dan Cameron, lecturer at the Hill school of business and chief spokesperson for the employer in public service negotiations in that, quote:

It is unfortunate that the act has been introduced in acrimony, described in some circles as a settling of old scores and of favouring one collective bargaining party over another. The creation of a toxic relationship between government and labour is not a proper foundation for protecting the people of Saskatchewan from threats to their health, safety and security.

Premier Wall and the Sask Party’s drug plan is another in the long line of issues where they have decided to pick winners and losers in this province. Saskatchewan family members between the ages of 15 and 64 who require expensive medications certainly aren’t benefiting from our province’s economic growth. How can the Sask Party simply leave these people behind while they pick and choose who gets the benefits and who doesn’t?

The Sask Party government has disrespected seniors by forcing them to apply and qualify in order to receive the necessary prescriptions. One senior described the plan, in the *Leader-Post*, as, and quote, “repugnant to a senior.”

Statistics Canada reports that approximately 21 per cent of the Saskatchewan population is self-employed. This means that 21 per cent of farm owners and small-business operators are left to purchase their own drug coverage or pay for the expensive medications out of their own pockets. They don’t seem to like to hear that because, heaven forbid, their supporters might actually realize that. It certainly doesn’t seem like their growing economy is benefiting from the Saskatchewan families who are self-employed when it comes to paying for affordable medications.

The Sask Party drug plan includes the majority of families in this province ... excludes the majority of families in this province. Let me try that again, Mr. Speaker. The Sask Party drug plan excludes the majority of families in this province. Why does the Sask Party continue to pick winners and losers in our economy when it comes to the issues that are so important to Saskatchewan families?

The Sask Party is on the wrong side of the equalization issue as well. They supported the NDP's position of a strong stance and standing up to the federal government when the Liberals were in power. Premier Brad Wall, in his press release congratulating the federal Conservative government on January 24, 2006, stated, quote:

The importance of a fair equalization deal for Saskatchewan transcends provincial and federal politics and it needs to get done quickly. And I am committed to doing what ever it takes to make sure that happens.

Apparently even Premier Wall was duped into believing that the Harper Conservatives would keep their equalization promise, providing Saskatchewan with an extra \$800 million per year, as per the Harper Conservatives' calculation during election. Since their Conservative friends have taken power, the Sask Party is unwilling to stand up for Saskatchewan families and is more interested in defending Conservative ideology and concurrently doing the bidding for Stephen Harper, as we've witnessed today. Not only have they given up the fight to make the new formula retroactive, they have given up the fight altogether to give themselves time to be better apologists and cater to their federal cousins.

Premier Wall and the Sask Party are not ensuring that all Saskatchewan families are benefiting from . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Members need to realize while you're using a name in a quote, that is acceptable. However you cannot continue the use of a personal name following the quote. You need to refer to the members by their seat or their responsibility.

I recognize the member for Regina Walsh Acres.

Ms. Morin: — The Premier and the Sask Party are not ensuring that all Saskatchewan families are benefiting from economic growth. They are not interested in equalization. For once the Sask Party isn't picking winners and losers. In this case there are no winners — every Saskatchewan family loses out.

Why, in a time of record prosperity in our province, does the Sask Party see fit to start a war with working people? Why do they seek to poison a relationship that we should be strengthening in order to address our mutual prosperity? Moreover how will the Premier's war with labour help to attract the workers that we should be encouraging to join in Saskatchewan's momentum?

Unfortunately all that working people have witnessed thus far from this government is a blatant unwillingness to use the capacity of government to assist its citizens.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to take part in today's 75-minute debate, and I'm very pleased with the motion that the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy made. This motion really speaks to why we on this side of the

House went into politics, to ensure that Saskatchewan families continue the benefits from the province's economic growth.

Mr. Speaker, as we've seen in the past, the NDP over the last 16 years they played with the system. They played one part of society off against another. They played labour against employers. They had the Crown corporations doing all sorts of odd things that didn't benefit the people of Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, we are certainly going to . . . As you see, we're going to make changes for the benefit of everyone in Saskatchewan, not just for the good of urban over rural or pitting other groups against each other. Mr. Speaker, we certainly will, as you see, make the changes to ensure that families benefit.

One only needs to look at our campaign promise, *Securing the Future*. Mr. Speaker, time and time again people have asked, what are we going to do as government? Well, Mr. Speaker, what are we going to do as government is fulfill the promises in our campaign platform, *Securing the Future*, Mr. Speaker. Promises — there's a number of promises made and promises kept. We have outlined them again and again. But just starting off with a smaller cabinet, Mr. Speaker; we have two less cabinet ministers than the previous government had.

One of the first things we did, eliminate the PST [provincial sales tax] on used cars. Mr. Speaker, this is a tax that was just unbelievable. People in Saskatchewan would rail against this tax year after year after year, and the former NDP government would never listen to the people. We're going to tax these vehicles once. That's all they need to be taxed and will not be taxed again.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have talked about the Domtar, the pulp and paper in Prince Albert. Mr. Speaker, this government during the campaign or just previous to the campaign, election, just really were prepared to throw away \$100 million on a scheme, really, just to get re-elected. And we know, Mr. Speaker, that that MOU was not something in the best interest of families in this province or the province as a whole. Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the government, I am sure, will have a deal with Domtar that will benefit all of the people of Saskatchewan.

More and more promises made — getting tough on repeat drunk drivers, Mr. Speaker; more accountable government.

One of the first things we did was introduce the Saskatchewan growth and financial security Act, Mr. Speaker. And the creation of Enterprise Saskatchewan is really a unique creation that will drive the economy of this province in the future. This, Mr. Speaker, is where . . . that the government of the day will not be picking winners and losers. The representatives right across the economy will be there at the table, making those types of decisions for the benefit of everyone in the province, Mr. Speaker.

Just a few words about my own constituency. In the past 16 years, all I've seen in Biggar constituency is young men and women going to university or post-secondary education and then going outside the province to get a job. They couldn't get a job in Saskatchewan, let alone in the constituency of Biggar.

That was very hard on families, to see that the young people would leave the province and in many cases went to Alberta, but right across the country or around the world, to get jobs. And with them, you know, they went there, they paid their taxes in other jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker, in many cases started families and set down roots in other provinces. That was a real terrible tragedy to the province of Saskatchewan.

As we see now with the growing economy in Saskatchewan, many of those young people are coming back, and many of those young people that have been away for 20, 25 years are now coming back. And the province is going to reap the benefit of those people coming back to Saskatchewan.

[11:30]

Mr. Speaker, it only speaks to the policies of the former NDP government that they were on the wrong track. They drove people out of this province and did nothing for families because families were broke up, Mr. Speaker, when the young people left. In many cases their parents, when they retired, they went elsewhere to be closer to the families. And that was and is a tragedy, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we see now that the Saskatchewan economy is on a roll — 7,300 more people working in February compared to February 2007. That's an all-time record for the month of February. Unemployment rate, 4.1 per cent, second lowest in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, the province is really taking advantage of the resource boom that is taking place, and we in the Saskatchewan Party are going to secure that future for generations of Saskatchewan people.

What we are doing, Mr. Speaker? Well the first thing we do is our Premier is travelling to not only to Alberta, to the oil resource centres there, but he's also travelling to Washington, DC [District of Columbia]. He's in New York now with the member from Kindersley. He's selling Saskatchewan and the potential of Saskatchewan in the world global economy.

That's something that the NDP, Mr. Speaker, never did. They seemed to be ashamed of Saskatchewan. They were hiding the benefits of Saskatchewan. You only have to look at the uranium industry where that party was ashamed of the resource that we had in this province. They never could get their act together on what to do with the uranium industry. They pretended that well, we'll sell the natural resource, but we won't refine it. We won't do anything else with it. We won't create jobs in the province that were so necessary, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, people of Saskatchewan are waiting for the budget to come out on March 19. And that will set the course of this province to a more secure future for the benefit of all people in Saskatchewan. That, you will see, the members will see that families in Saskatchewan will benefit from that budget. How? Well the outline of what that budget's already pretty well clear. Infrastructure is such a major priority.

What we are going to do on this side of the House is set out the strategy to make sure that our development doesn't get ahead of the infrastructure that is needed to sustain that development. It's

going to be very clear, Mr. Speaker.

I've heard comments from members from the other side, you know, oh big bad government, big bad private enterprise. Well, Mr. Speaker, we're going to have private enterprise, private businesses — multinational, Canadian owned, Saskatchewan owned — working with our Crown corporations to grow this province in a sustainable way, Mr. Speaker. Why, Mr. Speaker? Well, we are going to tax those businesses. They're going to make money. We are going to tax them. Why, Mr. Speaker? To benefit the families of the Saskatchewan.

We're going to put money into health care. Our minister's already announced nurses coming from the Philippines to this province. That's what's important to this province — the families, adequate health care, Mr. Speaker. They want adequate, timely health care.

We on this side of the House will do that, Mr. Speaker. We are going to improve health care and reduce the waiting lists in all areas of the health care system, not only doctors and nurses but other areas as well, Mr. Speaker. That's the type of thing that we on this side of the House are going to do, with our growing economy and our resource wealth, to benefit everyone in the province, Mr. Speaker.

As we see, it's incredible to see that the NDP actually have a resolution coming up in their convention that speaks to stopping, really, private ownership of houses. It harks back to the days in the *Regina Manifesto* about land, farmers and land. It's actually within the NDP manifesto that farmers shouldn't own their own land. It's unbelievable they still have that type of thing on their books. Why are they afraid? Why are they afraid of getting rid of such an archaic thinking from their party constitution is unreal.

Talk about land bank. Well, Mr. Speaker, that was certainly a total disaster, Mr. Speaker. And the NDP still haven't learned from their past. Well the NDP have been in power for 16 years. They have certainly have a lot to learn. They still obviously haven't learned anything from the people of Saskatchewan and on November 7, when they were soundly defeated at the polls, Mr. Speaker.

And it's time that they look at the Saskatchewan Party. We are on the right track. And we're going to do the right things for the people of Saskatchewan and the families of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today in response to the Sask Party government's self-directed motion. It causes great concern for me that our new Sask Party government needs to stroke its own ego in an attempt to manipulate public opinion. This self-congratulatory, self-righteous motion dismisses real concern, real needs of Saskatchewan families. I stand here today to offer that so very many residents of Regina Rosemont and across this fine province see through this self-congratulatory, unsubstantiated motion. The motion is simply not true.

This motion makes it clear, crystal clear the Sask Party government would rather waste the time of this Assembly to engage in mockery and political games. Mr. Speaker, as the members opposite laugh it up, families in this province are facing real issues such as young mothers stuck at home who are trying to enter education but cannot find an open child care placement. As the members opposite laugh it up, families in the province are facing rents increasing beyond what families can afford. As the members opposite laugh it up, families in this province are facing school closures. As the members opposite laugh it up, families in this province are facing Sask Party-imposed loss of collective bargaining rights.

The motion put forward by the Sask Party government could not be more inaccurate. The government is not ensuring that all Saskatchewan families are benefiting from this incredibly robust economy set forth by the New Democrats. The change to a Sask Party government, a conservative government, at this time of growth is disconcerting for Saskatchewan families. Their very ideology and application will cause much hardship on these families. The change to a Sask Party government has caused some grief, some concern for residents of our province. The New Democrat government managed this province from destitution and receivership, caused by the last group of Tories, into a sustainable economic leader.

The fruits of New Democrats' economic policies and our position as a diverse, resource-driven economy are continuing to emerge. Economic growth has been bullish for some time, and it will continue to be. I can assure you something — the Sask Party are riding New Democrat coattails. They're even trying to claim recent economic and nursing recruitment achievements as their own. The Sask Party dismisses the intelligence of our voters by doing so.

The distinct difference is what families can expect from their new government. It has not taken the Sask Party very long to begin introducing its regressive policies for families. Resulting negative impacts and sharp edges are beginning to be realized, and they will only compound as we move forward and the Sask Party moves their conservative agenda. The Sask Party policies will ensure that only a select few benefit. This is not fair to Saskatchewan families and is damaging to our society.

Mr. Speaker, I'll highlight a recent example of these sharp edges within a recent article titled, "Big jump in new faces at Saskatoon Food Bank," by Benson McCulloch, February 22. Everyone has faced, and I quote the article:

Everyone is forced to make sacrifices in life. However, many in Saskatoon are being forced to choose between rent and groceries.

Saskatoon Food Bank C-E-O Paul Merriman says skyrocketing rents translates into a 30 percent increase in first time users to the food bank.

He says Saskatoon is beginning to experience what Calgary did a few years back.

Merriman says rents have almost doubled for many in Saskatoon . . . [wages dragging behind.]

Affordable and available housing was not even included in the Sask Party platform. It wasn't included in the government's first Throne Speech, and it's not included in the mandate to the Minister of Social Services by the Premier. This is a shame. It is hard evidence of the challenges for families that the Sask Party government has no plan to respond to. Stressed and hurting families deserve far more than silence and inaction.

The Sask Party government has also failed Saskatchewan seniors and taxpayers with their drug plan. Many seniors are losing prescription drug coverage that had been extended by the New Democrats. The Sask Party has taken away the support from seniors who, may I note, have paid taxes their entire life and have developed our province. They deserve to reap equal benefit.

In removing these prescriptions from our province's seniors, the Sask Party government displays its ideological bent and is unnecessarily creating a massive, expensive bureaucracy to administer tests of wealth, creating paperwork and hoop jumping for our seniors. The Sask Party has disrespected seniors by forcing them to prove poverty in order to receive prescriptions that will ensure their health and well-being. This is not the kind of Saskatchewan that I stand for . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Member from Wood River, it's not the kind of Saskatchewan I stand for.

The Saskatchewan Party claims to be working for families. They will not ensure affordable access to education. Families and students are distressed across our province with this Sask Party failure. It is essential that post-secondary education is accessible and affordable. It ensures that we can meet the demands of our knowledge-based economy and provide a rich education to all who desire, offering a whole society.

Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party is not committed to holding the cost of tuition and upfront costs. At this time of such provincial wealth and bounty, it would rather create barriers, again hung up on ideology to the detriment of the real issues facing our families. The Sask Party plan will only allow the wealthy to access education with a kickback rebate at the end. Students and student leaders are outspoken with their disappointment. University of Regina Student Union president Mike Burton is quoted in a February 29 *Leader-Post* as noting students' concern, and I quote:

We are supposedly a boom[ing] province right now. If we can't afford to say to our students [right] now, 'Here is a break . . . [he continues] I don't know when we'll be able to do that.

The Sask Party . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . The member from Wood River has a question. He can maybe frame that afterwards. And the answer would be, doesn't have one. The Sask Party government has an absolute pile of money in the bank and an incredibly robust economy handed to them by the New Democrats. Yet they will not take action to address education. The Sask Party approach to real issues facing families within our society are not well thought out.

The Speaker: — Order. It's getting difficult to hear the member who is in debate at this time, and I ask members to allow the member from Regina Rosemont to proceed. Thank

you.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know families think it's important that this is heard.

The Sask Party speaks of a labour shortage crisis. Yet they gut labour legislation, reducing the future comfort and security of workplaces and jobs. When we need strong, skilled labourers the most, the Sask Party government is introducing legislation that has been assessed by the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour the worst in Canada. The Sask Party speaks of a labour shortage crisis, yet they are creating barriers to education and to enter the economy. The Sask Party speaks of a labour shortage crisis but has committed no provincial investment into child care, limiting parents from entering work or education alike.

This simple-minded approach to real issues is a shame. The lack of support does not address the real labour needs of employers and business and does not allow us all to go forward in this economy. Specifically with regard to the new Sask Party labour legislation, it is not balanced as equalizing, as members opposite might propose. It threatens to disrupt a relatively stable labour environment, and it's not good for Saskatchewan families.

Saskatchewan families deserve fair treatment from Ottawa. They deserve a government and a Premier who will advocate and fight for this issue — fight if needed, be cordial if needed. Saskatchewan families deserve more than political leaders willing to flip-flop on promises that directly affect their well-being.

In 2005 our current Premier was adamant of the need for a strong voice in Ottawa with regard to equalization. In a letter to the current premier on February 4, 2005, our current Premier states, and I quote:

We are able to achieve success because of their relentless and direct involvement in negotiations. No less than your complete commitment will assure our success on this file.

Well upon election, our Sask Party Premier and the Sask Party has offered no evidence of this commitment of pressing the federal government. We hear nothing but silence on that side of the House on the issue of equalization fairness. The Sask Party's lapdog relations with the federal government are not serving families' needs.

[11:45]

Mr. Speaker, this Sask Party government is not ensuring that all families are benefiting from the strong economic growth set forth by New Democrats. This government is creating a divide in Saskatchewan that will offer only a select few to go forward.

I understand my time is ending. I will not be supporting the motion. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm certainly pleased to be able to enter into this debate on this motion, a motion which my colleague, the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy, moved, stating:

That this Assembly commends this Sask Party government for ensuring that the people and the families of this province benefit from the province's prosperity.

And this certainly . . . I listened to the members speak on the other side, and with their phony I think . . . [inaudible] . . . to the motion. Because it seems to me that they too realize that it's a good thing that families and working families and students and business people and people all across the spectrum in this province are benefiting from this economic growth and prosperity that we are seeing in this province at this time. They know that it's good for all people of this province. All they need to do is look at some of the headlines in the newspapers, and they soon realize. But they are opposition, and they feel that they must oppose, even though we have good things happening in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in last fall's election, after November 7, it seemed like there was a cloud was lifted from this province, Mr. Speaker. There was a number of things that were simmering below the surface, and all we needed was a change in attitude, a change in direction in this province. And the people, the voters of this province certainly realized that we needed that. And they came to the polls, and they demonstrated their wishes very strongly on November 7 with over 50 per cent of the popular vote going to the Saskatchewan Party. And they realized that we needed to have a new leadership in this province. And they went ahead. The voters of this province went ahead on November 7 and did that, Mr. Speaker.

And since that time, this cloud that has been over this province for far too long has lifted and what we are seeing is, we're seeing new enthusiasm, new optimism, and a lot of new things happening that are benefiting all the people of this province, Mr. Speaker.

We are seeing record job numbers. We're seeing record wage rates, salary for all working people in this province, Mr. Speaker. We are seeing increases in health care, Mr. Speaker — all those sorts of things that the average person benefits from, Mr. Speaker. And that is a good thing, and it's something that I think these people opposite are having a hard time accepting because they, for far too long, just couldn't handle success as my colleague says, Mr. Speaker, and it's a new thing.

And rather than being so pessimistic and trying to see the dark side of everything and the negative side of everything, I would invite them to get on the bandwagon and become part of promoting Saskatchewan and telling the rest of the country the great things that are happening here in this province. Unlike what they did in the past when they were in government and launched the various publicity campaigns so as they had said to tell the message of Saskatchewan, but they were directing their message inward to the people of the province instead of outwards, Mr. Speaker.

If we look at some of the things that has happened since last the fall's election, we readily see the evidence of this new renewed

enthusiasm and optimism. Shortly after last fall's election, we had a potash company in eastern Saskatchewan announce a \$1.8 billion expansion. You know, would have that announcement taken place if the results of November 7 election had of been different? I don't know, but I'm guessing that they would've had some real, serious reservations, Mr. Speaker, about these additional investments.

Another major announcement that happened here a few months ago was a \$1.9 billion expansion at the Regina refinery and upgrader which will result in 1,200 construction jobs, 90 full-time career quality jobs, Mr. Speaker, that I'm guessing will be those individuals who will be filling those positions, will be well paid for the services — as they should be, Mr. Speaker. They're not McJobs that these people used to boast about and those kind of jobs. They will be career quality jobs. And that is what our graduates of our universities and SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] and other post-secondary training institutions and young people that were apprenticing, they said, we want career quality jobs to stay here in Saskatchewan. And that is what is happening now, Mr. Speaker.

So it's no wonder that more of our graduates will be staying here in Saskatchewan because the economy is generating those career positions, Mr. Speaker, which will allow our young people to plan a future here and raise their families and contribute to our tax base so that we have a growing tax base, so that we will have the resources to address the shortcomings that was left by the members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday I was at a career fair in Fort Qu'Appelle that was sponsored and organized by the Prairie Valley School Division. Some 7 or 800 grade 11 students there. And, Mr. Speaker, walking through the hallways and listening to the students talk and visiting with some of them, it was absolutely refreshing and uplifting, Mr. Speaker, to be around those young people, to see their enthusiasm, to hear their optimism.

And as I told those young people when I was visiting with them, I said they have unprecedented opportunities for their generation here in Saskatchewan and in other places, but it's their choice. They will have the choice to stay here and benefit from the prosperity that is happening in this province, Mr. Speaker. But if they choose to, as many young people do, they choose to travel and live and work in other places in our country and around the world, that'll be their choice. They won't be forced to leave, Mr. Speaker.

So it's a new era in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and I invite the members opposite to take their heads out of the sand, leave that doom and gloom behind them, and get on board with the train and all the good things that are happening in this province, Mr. Speaker. And if they're not, if they are unaware of what's happening, all they need to do, Mr. Deputy Speaker, all they need to do is pick up today's paper and look at some of the headlines.

I have in my hand some news clippings of the positive headlines that are in today's papers. One is "Filipino nurses a big win for Sask." And then yet we hear members opposite saying, well we don't know if this is such a great thing. Well we have a nursing shortage in this province. It only took this Sask

Party government a few short months to roll up their sleeves and get to work, through the Minister of Health's leadership, recruit 300 new nurses that will be coming to Saskatchewan to alleviate the wait times. Is this not a great example of the people of this province benefiting from the prosperity and the leadership that's in Saskatchewan today, Mr. Speaker?

A second headline is, "Gov't to modernize tracking of children in Social Services' care." Those people were in power for 16 years, Mr. Speaker, and they talk about that they are defenders of human rights and of the less fortunate in our society. Yet they didn't even have the ambition or the ability or the desire to put a tracking system in place so that we can track those children that are in care. They had no idea of what children were in care, how many were in care, where they were, who was looking after them. It's not magic, Mr. Speaker. It's a desire to get the job done.

Here we have another announcement in today's paper. Agrium hopes to expand Vanscoy facility by as much as 800 tonnes a day, another major expansion which will result in hundreds of construction jobs and a number of career jobs, career quality jobs for our young people, Mr. Speaker.

And the good news continues. Again in today's paper, "Saskatoon poised to become mining capital of Canada." I mean, the good news is ongoing, and it's endless, Mr. Speaker.

All you have to do, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is open up the newspaper, open up your eyes and realize what's happening in this great province of ours, Mr. Speaker. And with the leadership of our Premier and our new Sask Party government, this growth will be sustained, Mr. Speaker. And next week's budget, the citizens of this province will realize how they will continue to benefit, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — Recognize the member from Regina Lakeview.

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The premise of this motion is the basic premise of any government in Canada, but especially a government in Saskatchewan, that is that the people of Saskatchewan should benefit from the good work of the government no matter what the stripe is.

I think what's so difficult about the tone of what I've heard this morning, about the tone that we've heard over that last 100 days is that there appears to be a lack of recognition of the hard work of all of the people of Saskatchewan whether it was the former opposition or the former government.

And I think the failing of a number of the people who have been given the great honour of being ministers in this new government is that they have retained that chippiness that they had as members of the opposition as they've moved into responsible roles in the government. And I say to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the people of Saskatchewan don't like this either. What needs to happen in any government, in any society is that there is a recognition that we always build on the work of those that have come before us.

Now I know it's quite a challenge to be a government when you've followed a government that has solved a lot of problems, moved through and come forward with an economy and a society that has resources to deal with issues that have been longstanding. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to continue to remind those members that they have a new role now. It's not their role to be continually being chippy around other people or sort of making comments that are of no assistance to the public.

So let's go back to what it is that government is all about. Government is about serving the people. That's what this motion talks about and that's important. So let's do that but do it with a sense of statesmanship, with a recognition of who has done what and when.

Now it's especially interesting as it relates to a number of the initiatives that were part of last year's budget which have now been rolled out over the last 100 days. And I think it would be quite simple for a minister to say, well this is work that's been done over many years, and we are now pleased to be able to announce this as the Government of Saskatchewan.

But every time that happens, there appears to be some kind of innate or inherent quality that comes out from being sort of an opposition-type person that everybody says, well why did they say that? Just go forward and say, look we now have the responsibility of leading this government to provide this work.

After five years of work, we've now been able to move forward with a computer plan that deals with children. Okay that's something that's very clearly been worked on for a long time, and it's something where when you have the resources, you go ahead and do it. Same thing with the midwifery plan, I think it's clear that that work took a long time, with many, many different groups of people working together. I had number of years of making sure that that moved forward. I know my predecessors did. I know my successors did. I know the present Minister of Health will work to make sure that that works.

[12:00]

Mr. Speaker, I think that a number of the items that have been crowed about, and one that kind of surprised me was this whole issue of well we got \$240 million from the federal government. Well guess what? As the former minister of SaskPower, I remember quite distinctly talking with members of the federal government at the ministerial level, at a local MP's [Member of Parliament] level, and all of these things were as part of the overall discussion.

Now we're waiting anxiously to see what happens with the Public Works program. And we're very hopeful for the people of Saskatchewan that this is done in a positive way. But I warn the minister responsible or the Premier, whoever else is working on this, that, unless they get past this chippiness that they have as former members of the opposition, the people of Saskatchewan are not going to respect them as a government.

And I know that oftentimes people will not listen to advice from former ministers from another government. I think that's a failing of what happens in our system. I also know that many of the members on that side of the House are careful and look at and have worked together to develop their new positions based

on the work that's been done before. I commend them for doing that. But I also warn the overall teams, especially the new members, that you're here for the long term. And the long term means that you need to be people who are leaders for all of the people in the province.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are a number of times when the rhetoric from some of the ministers ends up causing them great deal of difficulty. And I know that they are learning this new role. But it's important that they recognize who they're serving and why they're serving. And in this particular time, it's quite simple to think — if you're not really looking at what you're doing — that a switch was turned on or off in November. That's not true at all, and I think everybody recognizes that. We will all be better served as members of this legislature, as members of the government caucus, as ministers, if we build on the work that we've done together.

Our job in opposition is to be here and to ask questions about things that you may or may not know about because you haven't been in government before, but also to identify the things that we hear from our constituents that just don't ring true. And, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to do that as a loyal opposition.

But I think the important point that the members opposite — especially the ministers — should recognize is that the kind of thing that they're going forward with is based on much hard work by many of the members on this side of the House, but more importantly, on the hard work of people who work in the civil service or who have brought ideas forward as members of the public.

We can all do things for the benefit of all the families of Saskatchewan if we do it together. And I ask you to respect the role and acknowledge the role that we served as 16 years in government. But go forward with your vision. We will challenge that vision. And we think the people will choose soon.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — Debate has elapsed. Now there's time for question and comment. I recognize the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy.

Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, before I get to my question, I do just want to mention, the member for Lakeview mentioned that, you know, this government needs to be statesmen. And I want to quote from *The Financial Post*. They say that the Premier of Saskatchewan has taken over the energy statesman job. So we're well on our way to fulfilling that mandate, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Duncan: — My question is to my friend, the member from Regina Rosemont. And just a little bit of a preamble here. In the past in this province, at one point in the 1940s this was actually the place where energy was, the energy industry was. However that party's predecessors, the CCF [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation], passed a series of resolutions at their party's conventions through 1946 through to 1948 calling

for the nationalization of the oil industry. And we know what happened. They went to Alberta.

So, Mr. Speaker, my question to the member is: if a policy comes up for discussion, a resolution comes up at their convention this weekend that calls for increasing royalties on the oil industry or any other resource industry, how will that member vote? Yes or no?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — Recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a response to get a question from that member on a topic for which we have such strength. If we look at our economy right now, this is the strongest economy this province has ever had. It's on the tails of 16 years of New Democratic, NDP government. A government through time and through history changes to evolve to meet the needs of society. We are bullish on our position here in Saskatchewan right now. The difference is we truly, truly, truly believe that the booming economy needs to be placed back into the hands, the benefits need to be placed back in the hands of Saskatchewan people.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — . . . Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My question is for the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood. Mr. Deputy Speaker, my question is simple: why will the members opposite refuse to acknowledge the work that the previous government did in building the foundation of our economy that allows us to move forward today? Why did they refuse to admit that it was the members of the NDP government at the time that initiated the hiring of nurses in the Philippines, and in fact that the first nurses were actually hired prior to the election? Mr. Deputy Speaker, why will the members opposite not acknowledge what really happened?

The Deputy Speaker: — Recognize the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think the people of the province acknowledged the work that the members opposite did on November 7, and they actually gave them a failing grade, Mr. Speaker. However having said that, Mr. Speaker, I think fair-minded people will acknowledge that there was some good work done to lay some of the groundwork.

But it had to be this optimism also stems on a change of direction and a change of attitude. And that is what is most important, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And the people spoke very clearly on November 7 that the attitude and the direction that members opposite were giving, the leadership they were giving out to this province, wasn't where they wanted them to go. And they sought new leadership, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Wood River.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Well we know that for the last 16 years we've had a socialist government that was very inward-looking and not preparing for growth for this province, and where we are now preparing for growth and looking at growth in this province. And with the resource riches that we have, we wish to move forward and not do such things as they did in the past like SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company] and nationalizing potash and all of those good things. So right now we're on the cusp of actually really developing some great industry in this province, and specifically the oil sands.

And my question is for the member from Regina Rosemont: the NDP leader, federal, Jack Layton, he has declared or wants a moratorium on oil sands exploration and production. That would have a huge, huge impact on Saskatchewan. My question to the member is, does he agree with the federal NDP leader?

The Deputy Speaker: — Recognize the member for Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Again it's a pleasure to have a question from the member from Wood River. It's nice to also hear him in this Assembly.

I tell you our NDP government has created the wealth, the industry that's here today, because we're . . . co-operatively with the oil industry, has great relations across the board, has invested dollars into the North, including a road that's going to be all about prosperity. Thank you for your question.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Walsh Acres.

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This question is for the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood. So there is evidence that the Sask Party's committed to their promise of pressuring the federal government on the equalization file. And one might say that's already been broken. The Sask Party is too busy praising the Harper Conservatives and apologizing for them, as we saw again today in question period, than defend the rights of Saskatchewan families and what is owed to them.

Brad Wall stated that other premiers, quote:

. . . were able to achieve success because of their relentless and direct involvement in the negotiations. No less than your complete commitment will assure success on this file.

So I ask the question, does the Premier's silence and kowtowing to the Prime Minister qualify as, quote, "relentless and direct involvement in the negotiations"? Does he believe that his silence is benefiting the families of Saskatchewan?

The Deputy Speaker: — Recognize the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the member asks the question as to around the whole area of provincial-federal negotiations and transfers of certain sums of money for special projects and so on. And I guess the question that I would have for that member is, how well did the former premier and his cabinet do on this issue and how many

dollars did they, new dollars did they actually bring to this province?

Mr. Speaker, they walked away from the clean coal initiative because they realized that it was too large an issue to deal with on a provincial basis. Yet what do we hear from, what was the announcement, Mr. Deputy Speaker? \$240 million coming . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — I'm having trouble listening to the member's answer. I would ask that all members, quiet. There will be time to take part in it.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Two hundred and forty million dollars coming to this province for this very important project, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Municipal Affairs said that there is a great deal that's being worked on currently. And stay tuned because there's more good news coming.

The Deputy Speaker: — Recognize the member from Meadow Lake.

Mr. Harrison: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to pick up on the last answer from the member from Regina Rosemont, and pick up on my colleague's point about the oil sands.

The federal leader of the NDP, the member from Toronto-Danforth, has made very clear that if it were up to him he would shut down the oil sands. Not only that, Mr. Speaker, that member from Toronto-Danforth would confiscate every firearm in the country. They're clearly, completely out of touch, completely out of touch with the reality of Saskatchewan, I'm wondering if that member is going to disavow those positions of his federal leader.

The Deputy Speaker: — Recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Again a pleasure to take a question here, particularly from that member there. The biggest issue that faces provincial-federal relations — right here, right now — is the lack of dollars, the lack of results that the members opposite are bringing to the table. I'll also remind the member opposite of who the leader of our party is. He sits just right down there. And I'll also remind him that this is a provincial Assembly.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — Recognize the member from Prince Albert Northcote.

Mr. Furber: — I'd like to, if I could, ask a question to the member from Biggar, and it's regarding the pulp mill in Prince Albert. You know, they purvey themselves as being big proponents of business and driving business to the province. I want to read if I can from a letter from the editor in the *Prince Albert Herald*, December 3, and it says:

Hence, the government — and Hickie in particular — must prove in relatively concrete terms and in fairly short order that they are intent on finding alternative solutions with Domtar.

And I want to ask the question that's asked in the headline in this article because it deserves an answer. The headline reads, and I quote: "Was it just lies, Brad Wall?"

The Deputy Speaker: — Recognize the member from Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I gladly answer that question. What we've seen from the previous NDP government was that they were willing to throw away \$100 million on just an election scheme just to get elected up in that area. And we have seen that that MOU or the . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Time for the 75-minute debate has elapsed.

[12:15]

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney.

Motion No. 1 — Non-Partisan Civil Service and Crown Corporations

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm very pleased today and at the conclusions of my remarks will move the following motion:

That this Assembly calls on the government to refrain from the political destruction of the civil service and Crown corporations and, in doing so, keep the civil service and Crown corporations professional and non-partisan.

But before I make the motion formally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to talk or speak to the subject. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's a definition that's well accepted — accepted throughout governments in Canada, the United States — of the definition of a public servant or a civil servant. And it is, I quote:

The body of civilian employees of any level of government, not subject to political appointment and removal, normally hired and promoted largely on the basis of competitive examination.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a definition that's largely accepted by all governments across North America. A professional civil service is something that we as citizens in Canada strive to have. Saskatchewan has been known historically as a national leader, if not an international leader, in the quality of its civil service, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But what does that definition mean today in Saskatchewan? It means that these people are hired on the basis of merit and not political affiliation. It also means that these people should not be removed from their positions for any other reason than lack of competency. They should not be removed because of their political affiliation. They should not be denied the opportunity to be employed in the civil service because of political affiliation. They should not be denied the right to be members of our civil service. Patronage should not come into play. People should be hired on their merit, and they should be able to maintain their employment based on their merit.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to quote from the *Leader-Post*, on this very issue, just a few weeks ago: "... a provincial civil service is designed to provide efficient, effective government services for the best interests and benefit of the ... [entire] population."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we all know and understand that we need to have a professional civil service in Saskatchewan. And we need to understand and move forward with the intent of having a professional, qualified civil service. It's a tragedy, an absolute tragedy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we see professional civil servants removed or fired from their positions when a government changes.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we'll freely acknowledge, freely acknowledge that there are those who are political in nature. Those employees employed in ministers' offices in the legislature, those are political appointments. And it's fully expected when there's a change in government, those people will in fact change. People work in Executive Council and other branches directly related to the political operations of the government. It's fully expected that those people will lose their jobs with a change in government.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's not expected that civil servants — career, lifelong civil servants — that have spent more than 30 years in government of parties of every political stripe would lose their jobs with a change in government. Mr. Deputy Speaker, those are career, professional civil servants.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in an August 30, 2007 letter to the *Leader-Post*, the Premier described what he called the Saskatchewan Party's vision for the public service. He stressed the need to, and I will quote, maintain "... a professional and nonpartisan public service [which] is in the best interest of all Saskatchewan people."

I agree. I agree 100 per cent with the Premier's, the Premier's vision of a civil service. Unfortunately that vision was not maintained with the change in government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we saw career, professional civil servants lose their jobs. We've seen individuals who've spent 30 or more years working for the people of this province lose their jobs. And we see Saskatchewan taxpayers now having to pay tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, and in some cases perhaps more than \$100,000 in severances, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in this province, which is a relatively small province, it is very difficult for individuals not to have friends or be related or connected in some way to someone that has some political affiliation. My children or your children or the children of the members opposite should not be affected by what their family members do, what their parents do, or what in fact their friends do.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you have a true professional civil service, the children of any member of this House should be able to apply for a job in the civil service and get the job on their own merit. Mr. Deputy Speaker, merit should be the basis on which people are hired, not partisanship.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we saw in this last round of terminations

individuals who once worked in this building, some 16 years ago though, who had moved into the civil service by competition and had competed for three or four subsequent jobs — each one being a promotion — being removed from office, being terminated last fall. The new government terminated individuals who had competed for three or four subsequent jobs after being employed in this building. Mr. Deputy Speaker, they won each of those jobs on merit. They competed in a regular competition run by the Public Service Commission and won those competitions. Mr. Deputy Speaker, for them to lose their jobs is a shame.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Premier stated that under a Saskatchewan Party government any changes to the civil service, and I quote, "... should be based on merit, not patronage or partisan politics." Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I agree with that. Unfortunately that hasn't been the case.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need in this province to have a very professional, non-partisan civil service. We will all agree that there are those positions that are in fact political or partisan. And if those people are removed, that's fair game. Mr. Deputy Speaker, those who are in the civil service that have got their jobs through the normal hiring process, through a merit-based hiring process, should not lose their jobs with the change in government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we saw civil servants, career civil servants be removed from their positions, and what were they told? That the new minister of the department had no confidence in them. They didn't have the support or confidence of the new minister. That was the reason for being terminated, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would question how that fits in with the quote that all service "... should be based on merit, not patronage or partisan politics." How does that fit with that particular quote from the Premier? It doesn't fit. It's totally contrary to what he said to the public of Saskatchewan in the Regina *Leader-Post*.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the civil service should be above, the professional civil service should be above being interfered with by any government of any stripe. Those who are hired in political positions, those who are key individuals that set direction for departments, I will accept the argument that there may need to be changes. But in the civil service itself, in the lower levels, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that argument just holds no weight. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Premier assured the people of Saskatchewan, and I quote, "... in the case of a Saskatchewan Party government, there will be no 'wholesale purge' [of the civil service]."

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have already seen, we have already seen a significant number of people removed from the civil service. And in next week's budget, can the people of Saskatchewan, can the members of the civil service expect that there will be many, many more job cuts? We don't know. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have seen a purge of the civil service for political reasons that does none of us, does none of us proud.

It leaves the civil servants in this province wondering whether or not they're going to have a job next month. It leaves their children and their wives or husbands wondering whether or not their spouse will have a job next month or whether their parents

will have a job next month. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it leaves the children of those who have been affected or children of those who may have a political membership of one party or another wondering if they can ever seek a job in the civil service of Saskatchewan if their parents perhaps have affiliation with one political party or another.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's not fair. It's not fair to the people of Saskatchewan. It's not what they wanted. And it's not fair to those children or those individuals, those young people growing up in our province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party election platform reaffirms these promises that the Premier made publicly. And I quote:

A Saskatchewan Party government will support the development of a professional . . . [civil] service by:

Ensuring that promotion in the public service is based on merit, not patronage.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, those are good words. And we on this side of the House agree with them, that people should be promoted on their merit and on their abilities and their skills that they bring to the workplace, that they should not — and I stress, Mr. Speaker, should not — be promoted or denied employment or fired based on any political affiliation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we saw within just short days, if not weeks, after the election the Saskatchewan Party did an about-face. Their pre-election promises were forgotten. And the axe was quick to fall within the civil service as eight deputy ministers were fired.

Among those deputy ministers fired were some of the most senior civil servants of government who had worked under the previous Devine administration. Many had worked under the Blakeney administration, then worked under this administration. We are talking about career civil servants that brought a great deal of experience and knowledge about this province and how government works to the table. They were released. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they were released at a cost of literally millions of dollars to the taxpayers. These eight individuals will cost more than \$2 million in severance when it's finally completed, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

As many as 70 civil servants were dismissed by the government, causing the *Leader-Post* to note — and this is in the opinion of the *Leader-Post* who examined these issues — “. . . at least half of these dismissals appear to be life-long [career] civil servants with no political connections.” Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are the very people that should be protected by a professional civil service.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if any of these individuals were not in fact performing their duties, were not doing their jobs, they should have been dealt with in the appropriate manners. They should have been dismissed for cause for not doing their jobs, and we as taxpayers shouldn't be paying if that were the case. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that isn't the case. The new government didn't make that case with any of these individuals. They simply fired them for not having the confidence of the new minister. Mr.

Deputy Speaker, not having the confidence of the new minister suggests to me that these people were fired for partisan reasons.

Now how do you not have the confidence of the new minister? What criteria was used not to have the confidence of the new minister in the department? Could it be as much if it was one of my children that they had the same last name as me? Could that be enough that they should simply be fired? Or should my children never have the opportunity to seek employment in the civil service of Saskatchewan because they have the same last name as myself? Is that a professional career civil service, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we never behaved that way when we were in government. We would expect that the new government would behave in a similar manner.

In fact there are children and relatives of members opposite that are now in the government that were hired and remain in employment of the Government of Saskatchewan when we were the government, and as they should have been because they got their jobs because they were qualified. They got their jobs because they deserved to have those jobs. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they also deserve to continue to have their jobs. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, those same individuals that were hired as professional civil servants, if the government were to change four years from now, would still have their jobs because we believe in a career, professional civil service.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the *Leader-Post* acknowledges or recognizes that many of the people that were terminated were career civil servants and goes on to indicate that they were terminated simply because they no longer had the confidence of the minister, I think we all have to be concerned. And the civil service today, the civil service today is very, very concerned that these types of firings will continue. How long will the purge continue?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hope today that the members opposite will stand and say that this purge ends — it's done; it's final — and that next week in the budget we won't see hundreds of civil servants' jobs cut. But we don't know that. We'll have to wait till budget day, and we'll have to watch the operations of the government over the next three years to see just how they're going to deal with the civil service.

[12:30]

When questioned on the firings, the *Leader-Post* reported the government transition team, the Deputy Premier as saying, and I quote, “. . . all those dismissed — even those without identifiable political connections — did not fit with the direction and philosophy of the new government.”

Well how did they know that, Mr. Deputy Speaker? In a very short period of time did they review people's files? Did they talk to people? How do they know these things, Mr. Deputy Speaker? These were career civil servants. They should have been given the opportunity to do their jobs and then, if they don't do their jobs, be removed from their jobs. For then, Mr. Speaker, for reason, for cause, and then we as taxpayers wouldn't have to pay a significant amount of severance to individuals who in fact weren't doing their jobs. But instead,

because some minister didn't like them, some minister believed they didn't have the confidence of that particular minister, they were terminated, and we the taxpayers of Saskatchewan all have to pay for this.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the quote, "fit with the direction and philosophy of the new government," what does that mean? What direction and what philosophy? What does this entail? And how does that correspond with the creation of a professional, non-partisan civil service whose first purpose is to serve the people of Saskatchewan? Individuals in the civil service are employed to bring options to government, to challenge the politicians to examine and explore all the options open to them, to make sure that we as politicians make the very best decisions for the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, how could the new government know if these people fit their philosophy and direction? They just took over the reigns and in many cases, we're told, didn't even talk to the individuals, didn't even take the time to find out, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They were dismissed without the opportunity, without the opportunity to answer to those things that were being said about them. They were simply dismissed.

In the *Leader-Post* article, Ken Rasmussen, Mr. Rasmussen states, and I quote:

This government hasn't done anything yet. How would you know what kind of advice they're getting from the public service?

It's destructive for the professional civil service. Public servants are not supposed to fit in with anybody's philosophy. They're there to provide the best possible advice to any government. Civil servants aren't there to fit into any philosophy; they're there to provide the best possible advice.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Yates: — Ken Rasmussen, as you may well all know, is the director of the Johnson-Shoyama graduate school of public policy at the University of Regina and has questioned both the sense and necessity of these firings, as are many of the people in Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we in this province have strived to build and have been known across both Canada and the United States, throughout all of North America, as having one of the best, most competent civil service. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we pride ourselves and to those who are employed through the normal hiring practices have been done so without interference — political interference — and have not been removed.

Considering the fact the government haven't worked with the fired civil servants at all in many cases, how could they get a sense that these people couldn't or wouldn't work within their philosophy, couldn't or wouldn't be able to fit in with the new government?

And as I indicated earlier, Mr. Deputy Speaker, many of these people were not even given the opportunity or the chance to have a discussion. And of course the minister did the terminations and the minister didn't meet with any of these

people. And they were simply said they didn't meet the political philosophy or didn't have the confidence of the minister.

Were these hirings — or firings; pardon me, Mr. Deputy Speaker — preconceived? It raises the question about whether the Sask Party really had a hit list — a list of civil servants and Crown employees in which they simply wanted to get rid of. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, some of the terminations would indicate just that, that in fact there was a list.

And if that is the fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we all need to be concerned because that means that people are being let go because of who they know, who they're related to, or what they may have done as long as 16 years ago in working for one political party or another during an election. Is that fair? No it's not, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

A preconceived plan to fire certain civil servants, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that sounds very similar to the 2003 hit list that the *Leader-Post* printed and talked about. Preconceived firings, a hit list, civil servants being fired because they do not fit the Premier's direction and philosophy — that sends a very cold chill through the civil service and to literally 12,000 men and women of the civil service who are professionals, who provide those services day in and day out to the people of this province, and who today don't know whether or not they're secure in their futures.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they have a right to know, a right to feel secure in their futures. They have a right to know that we are going to continue to administer the civil service in a professional, non-partisan manner. And we need to have the Premier . . . The Premier needs to stand up and tell the people of this province and the career, professional civil service that that in fact is the case.

The *Leader-Post* reported the Deputy Premier as also saying that those civil servants who were fired will likely be replaced with people with ties to the Sask Party. This is contrary to what the Premier said prior to the election and contrary to what the Premier says a career professional civil service should be about. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is the Deputy Premier of this province being quoted in the *Leader-Post*. This isn't fictional; these are his own words in the *Leader-Post*, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Premier supported the Deputy Premier's view when he said, and I quote:

"We ran on certain commitments and on a platform," . . .
"We want to implement . . . So changes are made in that light."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, is this creating a professional, non-partisan public service, a public service which provides the government with the best advice possible? No, it's not, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What it is creating is a public service fearful of losing their jobs, a public service decimated and beaten to the point of being nothing more than yes-men to a government. Not willing to bring forward ideas that they think the government may not agree with. Not afraid to challenge a government to think beyond its own parameters. A civil service afraid to bring forward all the options because some of them the Premier and the cabinet may not like.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's a civil service that cannot do its job. A professional, non-partisan civil service has to put all the information before the government and before the cabinet so the best possible decisions can be made without fear of reprisal, without fear of losing their jobs, and without fear of not having the confidence of the minister.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party may only want to implement certain options. That is acceptable; they are the government. But to have a civil service that's afraid to bring all the options forward for fear of being fired means that you don't have the opportunity to even look at the full spectrum and to debate the full issue prior to a decision being made.

The Premier, the new government, has talked about a career, professional, non-partisan civil service. They need now to deliver on that. They need to encourage the civil service to bring forward the full diversity of ideas, options, so that the cabinet and government can make the best decisions. They need to be encouraged to continue to operate on a merit-based hiring system. They need to be encouraged to continue the development of the career public service.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the very firings that we looked at don't concur with the Premier's statements on the Sask Party's vision of a civil service. What happened to promotions, hirings, and dismissals being based on merit? What happened to that? We need to revisit that. And we need to ensure that that is the way the civil service will continue to operate.

The firings in the civil service raise a number of questions for members on this side of the House, for the people of Saskatchewan, but most importantly, within the civil service. Do employees have the confidence of the government to continue to do their jobs without fear of reprisal? That question needs to be answered. And it needs to be answered for all the employees of civil service.

It seemed that the only criteria being used by the government in this whole process of transition is whether or not the person has the same philosophy as the Premier and the Saskatchewan Party. Competency and ability don't matter. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, not only is that contrary to every, every conceivable notion of a career, non-partisan, non-political civil service. But it is very much about partisanship, if that's how you're going to move forward.

Is this a recipe for creating a professional, non-partisan public service? Definitely not. Is this in the best interests of the people of Saskatchewan? I don't think so. Not only are we removing highly qualified, professional civil servants from their jobs; it's costing the taxpayers a great deal of money. And as the Deputy Premier has confirmed, all are being let go without cause.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if this government believe that these individuals could not work within their philosophy, would not do their jobs, then they should have allowed them to show that and remove them for cause, saving the taxpayers of Saskatchewan a considerable amount of money.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it isn't their money. The money the government has belongs to all the people of Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that money should not be spent

without due consideration for what it's worth.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the next question that needs to be asked is, how is this in the best interest of the people of Saskatchewan, terminating senior civil servants without cause? But since Saskatchewan taxpayers are paying, they have to foot the bill, is that in the interest of the people? I say no.

The StarPhoenix article states, and I quote:

The public interest can only be served by competent professional bureaucrats whose sole . . . [purpose] is to do what's best for citizens [of the province] . . .

Nothing to do with partisanship. Nothing to do with the ideology of a particular political party.

Under a Saskatchewan Party government, the notion of doing what's best for the citizens has taken a back seat requirement to what's best for the friends of the Saskatchewan Party. We have seen a large number of Saskatchewan Party supporters, our constituency presidents and others, move into key roles within the government. How does that help maintain a professional, non-partisan public service? Does this build the confidence of the people of Saskatchewan? Does it in fact build the confidence of the civil service to know that they can in fact act in the best interests of the people of Saskatchewan? I say no.

What we have is a civil service that's at this moment afraid, defeated, and worried about their futures. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in that environment it's very difficult to get the best that any employee can offer to the people of Saskatchewan.

What it has created is a public service that concentrate on providing advice that follows the direction and philosophy of the government, and not putting forward all the options, and not necessarily advice that is in the best interests and the benefit of the people of Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a career, professional, non-partisan civil service is what the people of this province want. It's what we've been known for throughout our history. It's what we have in fact been able to achieve through much of our political history in this country. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need to continue that tradition, and civil servants need to understand that they have the support of their government and the support of the people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, at this time I'd like to move the motion, seconded by the member from Regina Coronation Park:

That this Assembly calls on the government to refrain from the political destruction of both the civil service and Crown corporations and, in doing so, keep the civil service and Crown corporations professional and non-partisan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Regina Dewdney has moved the following motion:

That this Assembly call on the government to refrain from political destruction of both the civil service and Crown

corporations and, in doing so, keep the civil service and Crown corporations professional and non-partisan.

There's no seconder for this, so. I recognize the member from Regina Dewdney.

[12:45]

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my great pleasure to follow the member, the hon. member for Regina Dewdney, in seconding this motion. I'm always pleased to stand up for Saskatchewan civil servants. And I'm very pleased to stand up on behalf of Saskatchewan Crown corporation employees today.

The hon. member for Regina Dewdney has very eloquently spoken about the Americanization of Saskatchewan politics. In the United States of America, they elect a new administration, and the administration changes wholesale. Many of the civil service change — what we call civil service — change when the administration changes.

In Canada and in Saskatchewan, we have a long history, Mr. Speaker, of we elect governments. The civil service and the Crown corporations are professional entities that do not just simply get swept out with the old and replaced by people who have passed somehow some blood test of the incoming government.

Mr. Speaker, we have a blessing in Saskatchewan. I want to speak primarily about the Crown corporations. We are blessed with Crown corporations. But in Saskatchewan, we're also blessed with huge geography. And this is part of where our Crown corporations come in so very, very valuably.

Mr. Speaker, we've got geography. That means we need many, many, many kilometres of power lines, distribution lines to reach our sparse and scattered population. SaskPower does a terrific job of doing just that.

What we have not been blessed with is an overabundance of hydroelectric opportunities, if I can describe it that way. We've utilized most of what is available so far, SaskPower has, and that's serving us very well. But we then bump to the slightly higher-cost coal to generate electricity, and that's serving us well. But we're not blessed with Manitoba's hydro resource, Manitoba Hydro where they generate huge electricity, volumes, quantities with their hydrology.

Mr. Speaker, I want to move to natural gas, SaskEnergy. We share the same huge geography. And SaskEnergy is a company that's noted throughout the world as a company that has the most miles, most kilometres of pipeline per employee. Pound for pound, if I can describe it that way, employee for employee — there's absolutely no corporation in the world that can match the job that SaskEnergy is doing. And that's a credit to the people that set it up, the people that run it, that day-to-day make the management decisions of how do you run that Crown corporation. But it's a huge, huge credit to the men and women that day in, day out, they get up, they go to work, and they make sure that that natural gas is delivered safely, efficiently, and at an incredibly low cost, Mr. Speaker.

Telephone is something that's near and dear to many of our hearts. SaskTel is just the sweetest little telco in the universe. SaskTel is responsible for many innovations, technological innovations that far exceed the size of a relatively small telco, relatively small in the world scheme of things, but a powerhouse, a powerful little telco. And why is it, Mr. Speaker? It's a credit to the employees, the management and the staff. The men and women that day in, day out, they get up and they try and figure out how can they make telephony services better for all Saskatchewan people. How can they add value? How can they make it better for us all?

Mr. Speaker, these people I'm describing in the major Crowns . . . I just realized I've neglected to speak of SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance], so I'll do that and then I'll come back to the total thing.

SGI was a Crown corporation set up because the private insurance companies wouldn't provide basic fire insurance on the farms of Saskatchewan. That's why Sask Government Insurance was first set up. The privates wouldn't do it, wouldn't provide the service at all. That's a part of history. SGI continues to be an absolutely major player in the insurance industry. They provide competition and in many places, many ways, the privates have competition with SGI, and this is fine. It's the evolution of that Crown over time.

Mr. Speaker, these men and women of particularly the four major utility Crowns — and I'll describe it as utility Crowns — day in and day out, they get up and they add value. These employees and these Crown corporations have provided for Saskatchewan people for many years now the lowest cost utility bundle in all of Canada, the lowest cost for years in all of Canada.

What's the first thing, one of the very first things that that Sask Party government did when they got elected, Mr. Speaker? One of the very, very early things they did, is they said, we're no longer going to honour the lowest cost utility bundle promised, that New Democrats had implemented, and we were committed to. We said we're committed to it on an ongoing basis. The Premier said, no more, no more.

Well what a difference a day will make, Mr. Speaker. What a difference a day will make, especially when that day is election day, especially when that day is election day for a Sask Party, and it's the incoming government because, Mr. Speaker, that's not what they were saying before the election. It was different then.

And a day after the election, things started to turn around, not just on the lowest cost bundle. But you look at, Mr. Speaker, what they were saying about the civil service, what they were saying about Crown corporation employees, what the leader and the deputy leader were saying in the media about our need to have a professional civil service, the need to have continuity, the need to have capable women and men running this province, running the government, and running the Crown corporations. That's what they were saying before the election. They needed professionals.

After one day, one single day, Mr. Speaker, imagine what a difference a day makes when it's an election day for the Sask

Party government. One day — complete flip. Now what do they do? They fired more than 70 professional civil servants and Crown corporations, more than 70. Some had direct ties with the former government.

But what your leader said, what your leader said was that . . . boy oh boy, he said that civil servants — this is in both the *Leader-Post* and in *The StarPhoenix* — civil servants should be given the opportunity to perform. Civil servants . . . It is widely agreed that if a civil servant or a Crown corporation employee blocks the will of the new government, then you've got to deal with that. And that may lead to termination.

But there is 70 people that didn't have, didn't have time to look at their watch, much less to disagree with the incoming government. They didn't have time to even have their first coffee break, and they're gone. How does that work? What's the message? What's the chilling message that that sends throughout civil service and Crown corporations throughout the province? I don't think it's a message that is conducive to a province growing. It's a message that sends a chill down the spines of the women and men throughout the province. And civil servants and Crown corporations, Mr. Speaker, are saying, who's next? Am I next?

Where does it stop? Where does the carnage stop? Where does the building start? When can they count . . . when can these civil servants and these Crown corporation employees start believing their government? When can they start believing the leader and the deputy leader of this government? When . . . who, as I point out . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . November 7, the member for Wood River says. Well isn't that interesting though because I've already pointed out before the election . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. I'm having trouble hearing the speaker that has the floor. I would ask that the members quiet it down.

Mr. Trew: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to refer to the Premier on August 30 *Leader-Post*, where he says and:

It is my belief that the current NDP government has too often manipulated the civil service for short-term political gain, stifled innovation, and overly politicized both department and Crown personnel decisions.

That was his words quoted in the *Leader-Post*, August 30, 2007 — August 30. Well that's before the election.

After the election he said something completely different. And his actions certainly speak something completely different than what he said before. He has said, amongst other things: "A Saskatchewan Party government will ensure we take full advantage of the talents of our professional public service to fulfil Saskatchewan's tremendous potential." Well these are words that in August were displaying huge confidence in the civil service, huge confidence in the Crown corporation employees, Mr. Speaker. But that's not what their actions have said. That's not it at all.

And what did the election platform say? I refer you to page 42 of the Sask Party's own election platform, page 42. And I'm going to read all three bullets, all three bullets that deal with

supporting a professional public service, is how you titled it, and it says:

A Saskatchewan Party government will support the development of a professional public service by:

[one] Ensuring that . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — Yes, well don't break your arms patting yourself on the back because the first thing you said is you're going to ensure ". . . that promotion in the public service is based on merit, not patronage."

Merit, not patronage — oh so how is it, how is it that the Premier's university buddy winds up working in Ottawa, comes back, becomes personal assistant to the Premier, now becomes personal assistant to the person in charge of the Crowns. Oh it's all merit based of course, no blood test there, no blood test there. It's all merit based they would have us believe, Mr. Speaker. The hypocrisy in their own words, in their own words, they're not even following their own election platform, Mr. Speaker. What a shame. What a . . . That is unbelievable.

Point two, point two, they're going to provide:

\$1-million over four years for the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy to assist in professional development opportunities for public servants and help educate the next generation of public service leaders in our province; and

[three] Strengthening protection for public servants and whistle-blowers in the workplace by establishing a Public Integrity Commissioner.

Well, Mr. Speaker, how can you, how can you ever blow the whistle when you can be fired for no reason at all just simply because you don't pass their blood test. How can that, how can anyone think that they're going to come forward and blow the whistle on somebody when you're fired simply for not passing the blood test.

Mr. Speaker, this new government is doing everything it can to decimate the civil service as outlined by the honourable member for Regina Dewdney. I submit they're decimating the Crown corporations. I urge them to just let the good women, let the good men of our civil service and our Crown corporations do what they do best. Let them provide advice. Let them deliver the services.

Mr. Speaker, I want to, today as my time winds down I want to say, when everybody is thinking exactly the same, when everybody always agrees, that means that someone's not thinking. I urge the government to at least, if you're not going to do some thinking on your own, at least allow others, allow the civil service and Crown corporation employees to do what they do best — allow them to do the thinking.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — It being 1 p.m., pursuant to rule . . .

subamendment 6, this Assembly stands adjourned until Monday 17th at 1:30 p.m. I wish all members a good weekend. Thank you.

[The Assembly adjourned at 13:00.]

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