



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

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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 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Douglas Park.

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to be able to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Legislative Assembly a group of approximately 15 students who are seated in your gallery. These are students who are enrolled at the University of Regina Graduate School of Public Policy, and they're pursuing their master's degrees in either public management or public policy.

They're accompanied today by Lynn Minja who is no stranger to public service in Saskatchewan. In fact I would go so far as to say there is no person better qualified to let people know about the ins and outs of public administration in Saskatchewan than Lynn Minja.

I look forward to meeting with this group after question period. I would ask the members to join me in extending a very warm welcome to this group of students who are not just from Canada but also come to us from countries such as China and Kazakhstan. So please join me in extending them a warm welcome, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Batoche.

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, through you and to you I would like to introduce in your gallery three gentlemen from Carrier Lumber stationed in Prince George, BC [British Columbia], and I'd ask them to stand please. It's Mr. Terry Kuzma and Mr. Bill Kordyban. And then there's Saskatchewan manager, Mr. Ed Kwiatkowski. It is indeed a pleasure to have them here. They've been in Saskatchewan since 1995 and are looking at one of our valuable resources — forestry. So good to have them here. Welcome to the House and thank you for being here, gentlemen.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to the legislature I'd like to introduce some people in your east gallery. I'd like to introduce you to Sinda Cathcart, president of CUPE [Canadian Union of Public Employees] Local 3967 and Scott MacDonald, vice-president. They are joined with other members from Moosomin, Broadview, Whitewood, Grenfell, Indian Head, Wolseley, Montmartre, Fort Qu'Appelle, Lumsden, Raymore, Balcarres, Cupar, Imperial, and the Regina health care centres. These are the people that work in our health

care centres in the Regina district and also joining them, Larry Hubich, president of the federation of labour. I ask all members to welcome these hard-working health care workers to our Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Energy and Mines.

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too, on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan, I'd like to welcome the gentlemen representing Carrier Lumber here this afternoon. We are looking forward to a meeting later this afternoon to talk about forest-related issues here in Saskatchewan and the opportunities that exist in that industry here in Saskatchewan. Look forward to meeting with you here later this afternoon and engaging in a very productive dialogue about forestry.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Humboldt.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great honour today to introduce to you and through you to all the members in the Assembly two gentlemen who are no strangers to the Legislative Assembly. In your gallery, Mr. Speaker, we have Mr. Bob Pringle who is the past MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] for Saskatoon Eastview, and beside him we have Mr. Ted Merriman who is the past MLA for Saskatoon Northwest. And I am looking forward to working with these gentlemen on a project that we just announced today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. LeClerc: — Mr. Speaker, through you and to you, seated in your gallery, I'd like to introduce my CA [constituency assistant], Ryan Long, a remarkable young man, a graduate of Teen Challenge, and a young man that makes me look good in my constituency as we attempt to follow in the footsteps of Mr. Ted Merriman. And I'd like to introduce his father, a good friend of mine, Bruce Long, a retired director of Crown attorneys for the province of Ontario.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As you'll know, this morning a number of us were visited by members of the realtor association in our province, and I want to in particular welcome Maria Ziegler to the Legislative Assembly. Maria is a realtor in the city of Saskatoon, working for Inovex, and I know that she's had an enjoyable morning. And I trust that she looks forward to question period, and this really is an opportunity to hear the thrust and parry of debate in our Assembly. So, Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all members to welcome Maria Ziegler to the Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you in the west gallery a good friend of mine, David Marit, who's the president of SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities]. With him is Doug Steele, a director of SARM. And the third gentleman, who isn't wearing the funny coloured jacket, is Larry Grant, a councillor with the RM [rural municipality] of Val Marie. I'd ask everyone to give them a warm welcome.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join in and welcome the members from SARM. Larry Grant is one of my constituents, as is Dave Marit, and so I'd like to welcome them to the Assembly here today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I 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 to the Assembly on behalf of residents of Moose Jaw and the surrounding district. Mr. Speaker, 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 . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I would ask the members to respect the right of the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow to present her petition. The member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, 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.

And I present this on behalf of all residents of Moose Jaw and the surrounding area. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Massey Place.

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

today and present a stack of petitions concerning student housing. The petitions read:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to commit to aggressively working with partners to expand on-campus and off-campus housing options for Saskatchewan students.

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

Mr. Speaker, these petitions are signed by individuals from throughout Saskatchewan, but they are collected with the assistance of the University of Saskatchewan Students' Union and the Graduate Students' Association of the University of Saskatchewan. Thank you.

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to present several pages of petitions to the Legislative Assembly today on behalf of citizens of province of Saskatchewan concerning the withdrawal of the proposed essential services legislation and withdrawal of the proposed amendments trade union Act. 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.

The petitions are signed by people from Regina, Saskatoon, and Dundurn. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Regional Economic Development Association Week

Mr. Bradshaw: — Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Enterprise and Innovation has proclaimed the week of March 16 to 22 as Regional Economic Development Association — REDA — Week in Saskatchewan.

This gives us the opportunity to celebrate the numerous achievements of the REDAs with the many people involved throughout our province. Mr. Speaker, economic development is about leadership. The REDAs have been instrumental in building partnerships and creating opportunities to strengthen local economies, and we celebrate their achievements.

The REDAs will play a significant role with Enterprise Saskatchewan. Their high performance will be very important in the future economic development of our province. Mr. Speaker, the REDAs are currently involved in 60 projects and 145 initiatives in our communities. Over the past five years,

REDA projects and initiatives have yielded investments totalling nearly 180 million, created 471 jobs, and maintained 397 jobs.

The REDA youth employment program has allowed 169 young people to pursue a career in economic development. Mr. Speaker, we thank and congratulate the many men and women throughout Saskatchewan who work hard every day to make the REDAs a success. Their continued commitment and dedication will be needed to help build the tremendous potential and future growth of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

2008 Global Citizen of the Year

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to recognize an outstanding teacher at Saskatoon's Bedford Road Collegiate — Sheelah McLean. She has been awarded Global Citizen of the Year by the Saskatchewan Council for International Cooperation this year. She was nominated by her students in the applied global citizenship 30 class.

Students and staff see Sheelah as a role model, mentor, and friend. Her powerful and innovative teaching techniques has inspired her students to be free, thoughtful, dedicated, critical thinkers and, most importantly, vehicles of positive action and social change in our world.

It is said that she is a pioneer in her field by co-developing and piloting a global citizenship class going where no educator has gone before, and her students definitely think it is a good thing. They are excited and challenged to be learning what it means to be a global citizen in this new century.

Ms. McLean has an outstanding resumé, receiving her Master of Education with a focus on anti-racist and anti-oppressive education. She has published numerous works on educational theory and policy. She has been an adviser to student groups, including the Gay-Straight Alliances and coordinated activities on the very important International Day to Eliminate Racism for the past 10 years. Mr. Speaker, she has also won several awards, including the 2006 Centennial Scholarship Award for Academic Excellence.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me and the students of the applied global citizenship 30 class in congratulating Sheelah on her well-deserved recognition. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatchewan Rivers.

Lakeland Citizens of the Year

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On March 15 I had the honour of attending the ceremony honouring the Lakeland Citizens of the Year for 2008, Don and Florence Dugan. I brought greetings on behalf of the province, a plaque, and a bouquet of flowers.

Don and Florence Dugan moved to Anglin Lake in 1997 after having a cabin there since 1989. Don had worked for Canadian National Railway as a conductor, as they raised their three sons who have now given them six lovely grandchildren.

Don and Florence are very humble people who don't like to brag about their work in the community, but it deserves to be said. They have both been known to be active at St. Christopher's Church at Christopher Lake where Don would even head down in his truck and clean up the yard after a tree fell down. Not to be undone, Florence would be inside making sure the inside was as clean as the outside. They never turned up their noses at a job that was necessary. Both even helped out during the construction of the addition to the church, later helping to form the odd job squad of church volunteers that would go out and help the elderly residents with their home maintenance.

I would like my fellow members to join myself and Lakeland area residents in congratulating Don and Florence Dugan on being named the Lakeland Citizens of the Year for 2008.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[13:45]

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

Spring Free From Racism

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on Sunday I, along with the member representing Regina Dewdney, had the privilege of attending the ninth annual Spring Free From Racism event. This event is held in recognition of the international day for the elimination of racism which is observed annually on the first day of spring. Mr. Speaker, this event brings various cultures together under one roof and celebrates the diversity of these cultures, thereby breaking down the barriers raised by a lack of trans-cultural understanding or knowledge unknown which is one of the root causes of racism.

Mr. Speaker, it is a celebration of food, culture, entertainment, and co-operation. Thanks to the efforts of event organizer, Barb Dedi, and her hardworking team of volunteers, sponsors have once again provided enough assistance to ensure that the event is, and has been since its inception, free of an admission charge. The event is open and inviting to everyone regardless of socio-economic situation. All profits from the display and food booths go directly to the participating organizations.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to invite all members to join me in thanking and congratulating the organizers and participants of this year's Spring Free From Racism event for once again hosting and providing such a wonderful forum. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Campfire Tax

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr.

Speaker, it's my extreme pleasure today to rise in the House to tell the people of Saskatchewan the dreaded wiener roast tax is toast.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Huyghebaert: — That's the comic relief of the 2004 provincial budget. This unfair levy for people trying to enjoy the splendour of our provincial parks has now gone the way of the dodo bird.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party government actually listens to people. When the NDP [New Democratic Party] first floated the idea of a tax on campfires, it wasn't just the members on this side of the House who were outraged. People across the province raised their collective voices in protest. Choruses of don't tax our wiener roast or don't tax our marshmallow roast, we heard that from throughout the province.

And also, Mr. Speaker, if you remember, the NDP also tried to shorten summer that year by not opening the parks early. Mr. Speaker, getting rid of this onerous tax was something this government campaigned on. And as we have 17 times before, we kept that promise.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Huyghebaert: — As this government works to sustain our current economic prosperity, we are more than willing to use the benefits to cover that bill and let people enjoy their campfires tax free. What that means, Mr. Speaker, is that we're making this change without increasing other fees.

In the spring of 2004, the people of Saskatchewan told the province, stay out of my campfires. Once again on November 7, 2004, the people of Saskatchewan spoke.

The Speaker: — Order.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I would call the member from The Battlefords to order. I've asked, I've asked, I've asked members . . . Order. I've called the government members to order. I've asked members to allow the member to be heard. And it is inappropriate to be hollering from your seat when a member's trying to speak.

I recognize the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

New Home for the Moose Jaw Pottery Club

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Moose Jaw Pottery Club . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I call the member from Cannington to order. The member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, the Moose Jaw Pottery Club search for a new location ended recently with the pottery club's relocation to a newly renovated space.

The new facility is an older home that sits on the edge of the Wakamow Valley. The property had been willed to the Wakamow Valley Authority by its original owner and had sat empty for the last couple of years. The pottery club president, Janice Schiman, felt it would be a perfect location and a perfect fit for the club's needs.

Mr. Speaker, the Wakamow Valley Authority agreed. Thanks to support from local Moose Jaw businesses, club members were able to completely renovate the home's interior. The main floor is a great space where the club will offer adult and children's classes and workshops as well as a space for club members to work. Located on the top floor are private studios that are rented out to artists.

I know that the pottery club is thrilled with the move. And this new location will continue to inspire the creation of beautiful artwork. Interestingly, the original owner of the home was an artist herself, and I'm sure she's pleased with the conversion.

I'd ask that all members join me in congratulating the Moose Jaw Pottery Club on their recent move to their new home. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Meadow Lake.

Federal By-election Results

Mr. Harrison: — Mr. Speaker, just seven weeks after the recent provincial election, former NDP MLA Joan Beatty turned her back on her leader. She turned her back on her party. And worst of all, she turned her back on the people who elected her — the voters of northern Saskatchewan.

Well, Mr. Speaker, yesterday the voters of northern Saskatchewan returned the favour by turning their back on Joan Beatty. Voters in Desnethé-Missinippi-Churchill River handed her a resounding defeat. And for the NDP, it was an even more dismal showing, as the NDP candidate finished a distant third, and just three days after NDP leader, Jack Layton, stopped in Saskatchewan to fire up the troops.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Saskatchewan's newest Member of Parliament, my friend, RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] officer Rob Clarke, and wish the new Conservative MP [Member of Parliament] well as he begins the important and challenging work of representing northern Saskatchewan in Ottawa. Congratulations, Rob.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Prince Albert Pulp Mill

Mr. Furber: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, given that today is the Saskatchewan Forestry Association AGM [annual general meeting] in Prince Albert, and given that it's

been some three weeks since Domtar accepted this government's belated, begrudging proposal regarding the reopening of the Prince Albert pulp mill, I think it's only fitting to find out just where the government is on this important file.

To the Minister of Energy and Resources: what is their timeline; what is their plan? When, if ever, can the people of Prince Albert expect that pulp mill to be reopened?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Energy and Resources.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to report that there's ongoing and continuing negotiations going on with Domtar. We presented a proposal to them some few weeks ago now. They got back to us on Friday with a counter-offer. We're looking at that very seriously, and we'll be making decisions with respect to that very soon. And those decisions, I think, will be very important to the people of Saskatchewan. They'll be a step forward in terms of relations with the forestry industry in Saskatchewan, and we're very much looking forward to it.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Furber: — Well, Mr. Speaker, here's their embarrassing record. The member from Batoche chaired a task force that has no findings. The Premier three times was in Prince Albert to promise they had a plan to open the mill. There's no plan. The member from Prince Albert Carlton took out ads in the newspaper in Prince Albert during the election and said he had a plan to reopen the mill. There's no plan there either, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Energy and Resources claimed to have had discussions with Domtar when clearly no discussions had taken place.

There's no transparency from the Saskatchewan Party on this issue, Mr. Speaker. My question is simple, fittingly: in light of these facts, why would anyone trust anything they have to say on this issue?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Energy and Resources.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think it's a well-known fact that after the first meeting that we had with the Domtar representative, Patrick Loulou, and after the second meeting that we had with Patrick Loulou, we were interviewed by members of the media on both occasions. And we most certainly did have a good discussion with him. We presented a proposal on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan. Mr. Loulou indicated that he wanted some time

to look at all of the details within it and that he'd be getting back to us in a timely fashion.

So it passes strange from that minister to suggest that none of this ever happened when indeed it did happen, Mr. Minister. We were interviewed by all of the people in Saskatchewan. We were interviewed by members of the media here in Saskatchewan. And the good news in this is, talks are going on. There's productive discussions about it. They got back to us Friday of last week, Mr. Member, and we will be moving things along in a timely fashion.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Furber: — I can tell you this, Mr. Speaker. It does not pass as strange to the people of Prince Albert that I defend their interests in this House.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Furber: — Mr. Speaker, they unilaterally ripped up an MOU [memorandum of understanding] that provided the pulp mill to reopen. They ripped it up with no plan to replace it. The only thing we've seen from them on this issue is a kneejerk reaction driven by ideology, and a litany of half-truths.

The P.A. [Prince Albert] pulp mill is not only important to the people . . .

The Speaker: — The member from Prince Albert Northcote needs to be very careful on how he words his questions and refers to individuals and whether they're presenting the truth or not. The member from Prince Albert Northcote.

Mr. Furber: — It's important not only to the people of Prince Albert and the North, but to all of Saskatchewan. My question to the Minister of Energy and Resources: with their government's embarrassment of riches, what has he done, and more importantly, what has the member from Prince Albert Carlton done to ensure that there's any money in tomorrow's budget to make sure that pulp mill reopens?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Energy and Resources.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at the outset of this very failed agreement, the MOU that the NDP signed with Domtar, we indicated, the Premier indicated at the time that this was something that we could not support. We indicated that through the election campaign.

Immediately after the election campaign I contacted the representatives for Domtar, indicating to them that in spite of the fact that the NDP wanted to put \$100 million of taxpayers' money at risk — in spite of that fact — we would not be prepared to go ahead with that.

And do you know what their response to that was? Is that they were still prepared to look at Saskatchewan because it's a great place to do business here in this province. They're prepared to look at it because they have a pro-business government in Saskatchewan now, and they look at it because of the resource that there is in Saskatchewan. And they most certainly are going to be looking at a very strong proposal from us that we have put forward, that they have countered most recently. And I dare say, Mr. Member, that in a few short weeks we think we will have conclusion to this, and I don't think you're going to like it much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Federal Funds for Child Care

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Premier has been busy trying to sell the federal budget, speaking in very glowing terms about his relationship with the Prime Minister and the great sign that his more-flies-with-honey approach is paying off for the people of Saskatchewan.

Yesterday the Premier referred to \$31 million in the federal budget for Saskatchewan child care. He claims the money is new and unique to Saskatchewan. The question is to the Premier: does he stand by his claim that Saskatchewan received new and unique funding for Saskatchewan child care to the tune of \$31 million and could he stand today and clarify his statements?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the money allocated to the province of Saskatchewan in the budget with respect to child care is very much part of a redress of a concern Saskatchewan raised with the government related to the social transfer that comes from the national government. And, Mr. Speaker, it's a welcome development because the redress occurred . . . the problem initiated under that party when they were in power, it needed to be fixed and like so many things, like so many things including the Domtar deal, Mr. Speaker, we're going to work very, very hard to fix the very long list of things left undone or poorly done by members opposite.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Higgins: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier had said to the media the other day, and I quote, "This child care money which is new, \$31 million, and uniquely for Saskatchewan . . ." The Premier went on to say that he was personally responsible for the child care funds because he raised the issue at 24 Sussex. Too bad he didn't raise the equalization while he was there.

But information from the federal Department of Finance shows that Saskatchewan will receive less money this year for child care than what it did last year. Now does that sound like new or unique to the Premier? To the Minister of Education: can the minister table documents today that shows this money is in fact new and unique to Saskatchewan or will he admit that the Premier got it wrong?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter here is that the federal government about two years ago signalled that they would be increasing the social transfer to the provinces. Our province, however, did not receive any intended increase, certainly not proportional in our view to what other provinces received. The issue apparently went unraised by members of that government or if it was raised it was not raised very effectively.

So in addition to issues around infrastructure, around our desire to pursue the uranium value-added chain and work with the federal government on that issue, in addition to our pressing the case for clean coal money — \$240 million which we received — we did raise this issue with the Prime Minister and the national government.

They have responded in kind in terms of what was in the budget. We would like to continue to pursue a greater amount of investment in this area — greater certainly than what the previous government was able to make. And one wonders if they even raised the point with the national government at all.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:00]

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

Ms. Higgins: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier seems to have no proof to back up his claims. There's absolutely nothing on the federal website that shows any increase on the child care, and the piece that he's talking about in the social transfer was announced over two years ago. In fact, the province of Saskatchewan should be receiving its second payment of seven and a half million dollars of a five-year program. That's not new. Just because he's never heard of it before doesn't make it new.

Mr. Speaker, people in this province and working families depend on child care to enter the workforce and build our economy. The Premier making light of it is not helpful. Will the Premier please clarify: is there \$31 million of new money for child care in the province of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, that member, that member sat in a cabinet that presumably knew that the province was not receiving its share of the increase in the Canadian Social Transfer. And if they didn't know, then they ought to be answering questions in terms of those who provide early child care, early childhood intervention in this province. They ought to be answering questions to the taxpayers of the province.

Exactly what were they doing that they fell asleep at the switch, that they were unable to make the case? The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that we discovered this. We were briefed by officials on it. We raised it with the national government. The national government has addressed it in this way, including a payment earlier this year in the amount that the member refers to.

I think that's what governments ought to do. There are many other things on the list that we have inherited from that government, things that were either poorly done, poorly done or not done at all, and we're working our way down the list, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Higgins: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier can stand and talk about other issues, but the question was: will this government have 31 extra dollars, new dollars as he calls them, for . . . \$31 million for Saskatchewan families to help with child care? That's a huge expansion, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, but all the details we've seen is Saskatchewan will be receiving less.

Transparency and accountability is not one of the commitments this government has worked hard to keep. Mr. Speaker, they've removed their code of ethics from the website, and we now know why.

But, Mr. Speaker, back to the topic. Would the Minister of Education please tell us how the 31 million new dollars will be committed to child care?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I can tell that member opposite that she has to stay tuned for tomorrow afternoon when we will define, the Minister of Finance will define exactly where the 7.525 million for this year will be spent. It will be allocated, Mr. Speaker, in a number of areas. It will meet the needs of many children and many groups who have been lobbying that former government for years.

Mr. Speaker, we are very happy that the federal government has announced an escalator clause, in fact, on each of the transfers that will occur over the course of the next five years.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Labour Relations Board

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Labour. Neither the Minister of Labour nor the Deputy Premier was able to tell reporters yesterday exactly what the new Chair of the Labour Relations Board, Mr. Love's involvement was in the Sask Party transition team. The minister has now had since yesterday to look into the matter. Can he now answer a simple yes or no? Did Ken Love, as a member of the Sask Party transition team, have any dealings with the Ministry of Advanced Education and Employment?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in response to questions from media members yesterday I think I made it very clear as to the involvement of Mr. Love with transition and the consultation that he provided to the various files that he was responsible for. I made it very clear that he was not involved in any of the discussions involving terminations of deputy ministers. I also made it very clear, Mr. Speaker, that at the time that Mr. Love was involved with the transition team, that that involvement should not and did not preclude him from being considered for the position of Chair of the LRB [Labour Relations Board].

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, when the Labour Relations Board Chair was first fired, someone from the Premier's communications office promised that the new Chair would have and I quote, ". . . a great reputation who has been around on both sides of the labour equation."

My question to the Minister of Labour: is he aware of the 1990 Saskatchewan Court of Queen's Bench case by the name of Roche Percee Coal Mines Union, Local 1623 v. Manalta Coal Ltd.?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Love graduated from the College of Law in 1971. He was a partner since 1981 in his law firm. He was appointed Queen's Counsel in 1989. We would spend a long time going through each and every case that Mr. Love participated in. Mr. Love has a strong career in the community and also in the legal profession. Mr. Speaker, we have lawyers that have been former prosecutors and have gone to the bench, former legal aid lawyers have gone to the bench

and have done a superb and impartial job.

It is the expectation of this government that Mr. Love will be hard-working, competent, professional, and will do his job without showing any kind of partiality whatsoever. I think it's incredibly unfair for the members opposite to try and raise that kind of inference for somebody that's going to go out and do a first-rate job for the citizens of this province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I want to table a copy of that judgment and also to summarize it for the members opposite. In March 1988 Mr. Ken Love was appointed by the minister of Labour to act as the Chair of an arbitration board established to consider a particular case. This case involved an allegation of wrongful termination. The applicant argued that he was not told of Mr. Love's appointment as the board Chair, nor of any hearings until after the board had dismissed the grievance. Mr. Speaker, the court ruled that Mr. Love's board had denied the applicant natural justice which resulted in an unfair hearing. A denial of natural justice — all about what The Trade Union Act is about.

The Chair of the Labour Relations Board needs to be above reproach and needs to be seen to be above reproach, not just to business but to labour as well. With such a record, how can the Minister of Labour possibly justify this appointment?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I suspect that there was some NDP staffers spent a goodly number of hours going through transcripts and case reports over the last number of years. Virtually every person that has sat on any kind of a court or tribunal has had cases overturned on occasion. Mr. Speaker, in fact Mr. Ball has an excellent and a superb reputation in this province and I would like to refer the members opposite to Dennis Ball, now with the Court of Queen's Bench. He was appointed during the previous Conservative administration and served for several years under that administration, and went on to serve under the Romanow administration, and had an excellent, superb reputation for being fair, impartial, and somebody that went on to Court of Queen's Bench.

Mr. Speaker, I suspect that that's exactly what's going to happen with Ken Love, that he too will represent the citizens of this province in a fair and impartial manner.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, order. While we're pleased to see guests here in the Assembly today, I just want to remind guests that guests are not to participate in any way or form in the debate. Thank you. I recognize the member from Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Atkinson: — So let's review the facts, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Love is the Chair of an arbitration board. One Dick Rendek is appointed by the employer. No one ever told the union or the dismissed employee that this hearing was taking place. The union was phoned and said, we didn't know about it. And what did Mr. Love do? He issued a decision, Mr. Speaker, without ever giving the union an opportunity, or the dismissed employee, to attend the hearing because they were never told, Mr. Speaker. And the court overturned his decision. That's called a denial of natural justice. How can the members opposite possibly, possibly argue that this man has the reputation to serve as the Labour Relations Board Chair, who is to be seen to be above reproach and be above reproach, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, the outgoing Chair of the Labour Relations Board had had decisions attacked in the Court of Queen's Bench, had had a decision overturned recently because they had sat on it for too long. If ever was a denial of justice, is one where justice delayed is justice denied.

It is the intention of this government and this Labour Relations Board to deliver fair and impartial decisions in a timely manner. We expect, we expect nothing less.

If the members opposite want to go back and review everybody's legal records over the past, they're entitled to do that. I would caution them — what they say inside this Chamber may not give them the same protection when they try and repeat allegations outside the Chamber. The judgment and the record that the people have written speak for themselves.

But, Mr. Speaker, we have every confidence in Mr. Love's ability to deliver fair, impartial, competent judgments in a timely member on behalf of both union and management and behalf of everybody that goes before the Labour Relations Board, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Atkinson: — New question. Mr. Love and the Deputy Premier weren't the only ones involved in the decision to axe the Labour Relations Board members. It seems that a key member of the Sask Party's transition team, one Doug Emsley, was the only person to have had discussions with the outgoing LRB members prior to the termination. Can the minister please explain what role Doug Emsley played in his decision to fire the LRB members and hire Ken Love, and can he tell us what advice he received from Mr. Emsley?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education, the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Emsley has been working with the transition team for months. He has provided advice to the transition team in a go-forward position prior to November 7. But most importantly, since November 7, he has given advice on moving forward, moving files forward and to determine what transition teams should be doing. That work is ongoing. It is nearly complete.

And in fact, I would dare say, Mr. Speaker, that by the end of March the entire transition process will now be falling on to the various ministers who are responsible for their files — whether that be within the ministry or whether that be within the Crown — and the services of Mr. Emsley will no longer be required.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Atkinson: — It's interesting that Doug Emsley was involved in the LRB firings, given that his company has actually appeared before the board on several occasions. I want to table two copies of two LRB decisions involving Mr. Emsley's company, Vision Security. In the first instance the board ruled that Mr. Emsley's company was in violation of the duty to bargain in good faith. In the second, his company's statement of employment was found without evidentiary value. Mr. Speaker, I think there's a bit of a smell here.

We know that the new LRB Chair was involved in the transition team that recommended he be hired. We know that the transition team is being led by an individual who has an axe to grind against the LRB. What we still don't know is why the firings took place to begin with. Will the members opposite just admit that its transition team pressured him into firing the board and hiring with Sask Party's connections?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely not true. Mr. Emsley has been involved in facilitating discussions and has been involved in advising the transition team on a go-forward basis.

Mr. Speaker, we have been making changes to the various agencies, to boards, to commissions, all of the ABCs [agency, board, commission].

The Speaker: — Order. I would ask the members to allow the minister to respond to the question that was placed.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, that advice and those recommendations were made to transition and to government and it is cabinet's decision on moving forward on the various recommendations. And that is what happened, Mr. Speaker. It is the government's decision on moving forward and building this province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

[14:15]

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, Doug Emsley has an appearance of a conflict of interest, given that he has been found in violation of The Trade Union Act of the province of Saskatchewan. Doug Emsley, as head of the transition team, was the person who talked to the Labour Relations Board members, who by the way were interviewed and went through a selection process, and ordered to be appointed. He has Ken Love involved in his transition team, acting as a lawyer on various files, Mr. Speaker, and Ken Love shows up as the new Chair without ever having gone through a selection panel process. How can the members opposite possibly justify letting Doug Emsley anywhere near the Labour Relations Board decisions?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to clarify for the member opposite. She used the term that Doug Emsley was the head of transition. I can honestly say to her that I believe that that was my role.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Speaker, there were different individuals who were part of the transition team. There were people who volunteered and provided services. There were people who were contracted. There were individuals who assisted from law firms throughout the province, Mr. Speaker. Those are individuals, those are individuals who have assisted the transition team.

I think I've even paid the former premier a compliment because the member opposite assisted the transition team in the very first step that we undertook, which was the change of the staff within this building. And that got off to a great start. And I've indicated that before, Mr. Speaker, that with the co-operation of the former government, and with the co-operation of so many different individuals, the transition has been a success, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Corrections and Public Safety.

Flood Protection Funding for Fishing and Waldsea Lakes

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On March 6 my colleague — the Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations, in a role as MLA for Kelvington-Wadena — and I met with local authorities and residents of Fishing Lake and Waldsea Lake to announce this government's provision of 4.2 million in flood protection funding for those areas.

Since the spring of 2007, for nearly a year, residents and local authorities of Fishing Lake and at Waldsea Lake have endured terrible conditions and suffered significant loss. We cannot replace all of their losses, Mr. Speaker, although the provincial disaster assistance program will provide funding, so a good portion of infrastructure and property can be restored. What we can do and what we have done, Mr. Speaker, as a government is to help make sure we reduce the chances of similar circumstances creating similar losses in the future.

We provided 4.2 million to the local authorities of the five communities around Fishing Lake and Waldsea Lake, not as compensation for damage already done, but to help them protect their property and the region against future flood-related disasters. We have told these communities government will provide them with support for developing their own flood protection plans and in recognition that at least half of the costs of implementing the plans need to be covered by the property owners and local authorities themselves. That way, flood protection planning becomes a community solution driven by the residents and administrators who know their own needs the best, Mr. Speaker.

The flood protection funding from Corrections, Public Safety and Policing helps Fishing Lake and Waldsea Lake ensure the future of their communities for tourism, for business, and for the potential of local growth. By helping these communities develop and implement their flood protection plans today, we are securing what is possible for tomorrow, Mr. Speaker. We are looking to the future, Mr. Speaker, a future where residents can return and prosper in these beautiful and vibrant communities, a future where businesses can grow, and all of the surrounding areas and residents can benefit.

We have also held several meetings with the Fishing Lake First Nations, Mr. Speaker. The purpose of those meetings, which will continue to take place, is to ensure the measures undertaken Fishing Lake have minimal impact on the fish habitat in the lake and to discuss remedial measures that can be undertaken to address any impact that does occur to the fish habitat.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the people of Fishing Lake and Waldsea Lake, and I want to thank the Fishing Lake First Nations who are an important user of the lake and whose concerns over retaining natural habitat there are vital. Their knowledge of the lake has been invaluable in this process, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank all of these people and organizations for their patience. We have learned many lessons from the lake, and the most important one may be that solutions haven't come easy because the circumstances are so complex.

When we took over administration of this province in November, Mr. Speaker, one of the commitments this government made was to the safety and security of Saskatchewan citizens. I am proud this government is keeping promises and is demonstrating our commitment with the announcement of funding for flood protection to the residents and communities of Fishing Lake and Waldsea Lake. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to start by thanking the minister for providing a copy of his statement in advance.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very significant improvement and move forward for the people of both Fishing Lake and Waldsea Lake. Those people in those communities — those cabin owners, homeowners — that experienced significant flooding just over a year ago have waited a long time to move forward to make their homes flood proof and the area in which they live less susceptible to future flooding. This money will help do that.

Mr. Speaker, as we move forward on this file, the actual damage to cabins and homes is of serious concern to those residents. It's a concern shared by members on all sides of the House, and this is a file that's been worked on by both sides, and we do appreciate the minister continuing moving this file forward.

We also continue to share with the minister, as he indicated last night in estimates as well, a desire to move the provincial disaster assistance program to cover preventative measures, that the federal government share in helping provinces deal with preventative measures in areas where disasters have occurred. And we know that, through preventative measures, we can prevent future disasters.

So members on this side share with the minister and the people of Waldsea Lake and Fishing Lake their support for this money, and we wish you continue helping those people in Waldsea Lake and Fishing Lake, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Social Services.

Task Force on Housing Affordability and Availability

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people are enjoying the benefits of a strong economic momentum and population growth. There are more people working in Saskatchewan today than ever before. Residential construction is up 40 per cent. Average wages have grown by 5 per cent in the last year, the highest growth in the country, and the province is expected to lead the country in new capital investment this year.

Our government is committed to sustaining Saskatchewan's economic momentum and to ensuring that all Saskatchewan people benefit from our growing economy. We are also committed to making sure our province is ready for future growth while preserving the quality and unique life of Saskatchewan people.

One of the fastest growing sectors, Mr. Speaker, is residential construction. Despite a 62 per cent increase in housing starts in Saskatchewan last year, according to RBC [Royal Bank of

Canada] Economics, ours is the only province expected to see an increase in housing starts in 2008. Mr. Speaker, for homeowners and housing developers, this is great news. Purchasing a home very often represents the largest single investment most people will ever make, and the increased value of housing, both exciting and new, has created increased wealth for homeowners.

But, Mr. Speaker, it also presents a tremendous incentive for developers to build new housing or make capital improvements to existing housing stock. However it has placed immense pressure on the rental market. Growing demand has reduced the available supply and contributed to low vacancy rates and higher rental costs in urban centres throughout the province. Overall, Saskatchewan cities have experienced a decline in the vacancy rate to 1.2 per cent, the lowest average vacancy rate ever recorded in Saskatchewan. The situation for renters in Lloydminster, Saskatoon, North Battleford, and Swift Current is even more challenging as the vacancy rates have fallen below 1 per cent.

The question facing our government today, Mr. Speaker, is how can we best ensure greater housing affordability and availability for individuals and families who are least able to afford the increased cost of housing. At the same time, we are seeking to ensure there is sufficient incentives in place to encourage private sector construction of rental and affordable housing.

The previous government made some progress in this direction, and I would like to acknowledge the work done in the area of affordable housing. Sask Housing has indicated that at the present time there are about 900 affordable housing units under development or at various stages of construction. We believe the increase to the housing rental supplement has been of considerable benefit to low-income families.

However much of the work done in the past didn't anticipate the impact of the economic and population growth in our cities such as Saskatoon. Our government believes Saskatchewan is entering a period of unprecedented economic momentum. We expect the economic and population growth to continue, and we want to look actively at new ideas and new ways to manage that growth.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce today the formation of a two-person task force on housing affordability and availability. Bob Pringle and Ted Merriman will meet with stakeholders in several Saskatchewan cities over the next two months to gather input and develop recommendations as to how we can best encourage greater housing affordability and availability. I have asked the task force to focus their effort on three areas and to report their findings and recommendations to me by May 30, 2008.

The task force will examine options and bring forward recommendations for encouraging more private development of new private rental housing. They will look at options that municipalities may be able to undertake in partnership with the provincial government to encourage new development. They will also look at provincial government actions and policies in the area of affordable housing to determine if there are ways that they can be more efficient and effective.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to addressing the housing challenges facing many of Saskatchewan's low-income individuals and families. The task force announced today is an important first step towards addressing that issue. I look forward to receiving their recommendations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in response to the ministerial statement regarding the establishment on housing affordability task force. Thank you to the minister for sharing the statement, so I may read it and prepare.

I must say that my first reaction is that of shock and disappointment. I know that many people across this province on the eve of the provincial budget being released tomorrow expected that we would see much more than more study. This announcement is truly inexcusable. We have known and in fact raised questions in December regarding Saskatchewan's housing crisis, and now the minister has taken three months to organize a study process that coincidentally will report most likely after the legislature has risen for the summer. This is truly disappointing.

Mr. Speaker, this is what one member of the task force said last summer about the housing crisis. Ted Merriman is quoted in *The StarPhoenix* on July 26 saying, "In an emergency situation you have to take proactive action. You can't sit back and do nothing." He goes on to say "You're not the one living on the streets."

Well, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you the time for action is now. Home ownership is becoming more and more out of reach, and we all know the vacancy rate for rental housing is at a crisis level. People are shocked at huge rental increases . . . and they're laughing across the way. And just last week, we all heard word about the potential Barry Hotel being closed and forcing as many as 40 people out on the streets. And what about the work about Saskatoon's SOS [Saskatoon Overnight Shelter] emergency shelter project. How's that coming along? And this is the list. And it goes on and on, and this is the best we get.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I am equally shocked not to hear anything in the minister's statement about the First Nations and Métis housing issues both on and off reserves. And what about the North? These people are clear partners in our province's future, and again the minister has forgotten them. When do they get to share . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. I believe the member from Saskatoon Centre deserves the opportunity to be spoken and heard. The member from Saskatoon Centre.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, another group was left out of this announcement today. Just last week a group of University of Saskatchewan students did a project called 5 Days for the Homeless highlighting the need for action around youth homelessness. Student housing is a real problem with real solutions. We could

and we should be acting. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has the resources. Let's get to it.

Mr. Speaker, last year at this time the NDP premier announced an increase of over \$100 million for renewing our communities, including \$60 million for housing initiatives. We need the same bold, strong leadership — not a smokescreen — for tomorrow's apparent do-nothing budget. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:30]

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 14 — The Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials Repeal Act

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 14, The Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials Repeal Act be now introduced and read a first time.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Minister of Education has moved first reading of Bill No. 14, The Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials Repeal Act. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — 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. Krawetz: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 15 — The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2008

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 15 entitled The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2008 be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Municipal Affairs has moved first reading of Bill No. 15, The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2008. 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. Hutchinson: — Mr. Speaker, Next sitting of the House.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from — let's see; I didn't have it here — Last Mountain-Touchwood. Pardon me. Pardon me. I apologize to the member. The Chair of Human Services.

Standing Committee on Human Services

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

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

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Chair of the Human Services committee:

That the second report of the Standing Committee on Human Services 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 Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of intergovernmental relations.

Mr. Kirsch: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice to report that it has concurred certain estimates and to present its second report. I move:

That the second report of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice now be concurred in.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Chair of Intergovernmental Affairs:

That the second report of the Standing Committee on

Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice be now concurred in.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to respond on behalf of the government to table answers to questions 219 to 293.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The member has tabled questions 219 to 293.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 3 — The Potash Development Repeal Act

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Energy and Resources.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of An Act to repeal The Potash Development Act.

Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation that we are presenting here this afternoon is in an effort to repeal the legislation that the NDP brought in the '70s through Allan Blakeney — a piece of legislation that started us down a very dark path in Saskatchewan's history, a period of time that said to the people all over North America and indeed the world that Saskatchewan was a closed economy, that Saskatchewan was an economy that didn't want to seek investment in this province, a province that didn't have any confidence, a government that said we don't need help from anywhere else. We don't want any investment in Saskatchewan, and in fact we're going to do the exact opposite. We're going to move forward and we're going to expropriate things from people that don't belong to us.

It was a dark age in Saskatchewan's history. It was an age that Saskatchewan lost tremendous amount of capital investment over the years, an age that we still are suffering from today, an age that the people all across North America have looked at and said frankly this is a province where you wouldn't want to invest in. Thirty-five years later, we're still suffering from the stigma associated with that type of legislation.

And in addition to the industry that was driven out here — and it's legion in number, the potash industry, the oil and gas industry that retreated dramatically at that time from Saskatchewan — there was a number of other industries that

looked at Saskatchewan and said we don't want to be a part of an economy that says those kinds of things, that sends those kinds of signals. But more importantly, more importantly than the industry that was driven out of this province, there was one other even more precious resource that was driven out of our province, and that was the sons and the daughters of people all across Saskatchewan.

Because what it said to those people at that time was, we don't want to be a part of a government that does that kind of thing in Saskatchewan. It doesn't want to create opportunity. It wants a closed economy. And so what we see today is young people that moved out of our province throughout the '70s and throughout the '80s, in senior management positions all over the world. That's what we see. We drove out some of the very best, the very best young brains out of Saskatchewan. And that's where provinces like Alberta benefited from, provinces like Alberta benefited from.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order. I would call members to order. There will be ample opportunity for all members to enter into the debate following second reading. I recognize the Minister of Energy . . . Order. I call the member, I call the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow to order. The minister responsible for Energy and Mines. Order. I call the government members to order as well. Member from Energy and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — A very dark time in Saskatchewan's history, a shameful past in the history of this province, a time that sent a signal of a government that just simply didn't have confidence in investment opportunities in Saskatchewan, a government that didn't want to see our province move forward in many ways. And at that time, as I said, young people moved out of this province in droves. And the interesting thing that we're going to see with this legislation is we're going to see what the NDP's reaction . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Minister Responsible for Energy and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we're going to see in 2008 what the NDP's reaction to this Bill is, whether they still are in favour of things like the *Regina Manifesto* that this thing was generated from, that this piece of legislation was generated from, or are they in favour of an open economy. Are they in favour of a province that's moving forward? Are they in favour of a province that's confident enough in itself to say to the people all across this province that we are open for business, that we are going to stand in the face of adversity, that we are prepared to move forward in Saskatchewan?

This is a government, this is a government opposite from those members that says yes to all of those things, that we are going to move forward. We have a Premier that's clearly set an agenda for this province, that has clearly set an agenda for this province that's based on three things: on hope, on opportunity, and on success.

And those are the kinds of measures that we should have been looking forward to over the past number of decades in Saskatchewan, but we simply haven't, but we simply haven't. It

is a dark time in our history. It's a time that we should all be ashamed of in this province, and it's a time that we should look back on and hope should never happen again, should hope that it will never happen again.

And you know what's happened ever since we sent that signal back in the fall, when the Bill was introduced back in the fall? Since that time, what have we seen? We've seen literally hundreds of millions of dollars of investment, looking at the potash industry alone — billions, in fact, of dollars of investment that have been announced recently for the potash industry in itself, billions of dollars of investment. We see companies from all over the world now in Saskatchewan. They're looking at mining opportunities in Saskatchewan right today. We will see, I dare say, in a few years perhaps, additional mines being created in Saskatchewan.

If you look at the map in terms of where the potash reserves are in Saskatchewan, literally every available opportunity has been staked in Saskatchewan because people in the last few months, in the last few months, have looked at Saskatchewan and said, now's the time, now's the opportunity to grow in Saskatchewan. Now is the opportunity to have a great . . . to build a facility in this province.

Well and the members opposite carp from their seat, Mr. Speaker, but the fact of the matter is really clear. In terms of potash reserves in Saskatchewan, I understand there are two townships approximately left where you might be able to stake a claim. Outside of that . . . Two townships in Saskatchewan. And for the members opposite that don't know what a township is — and I dare say there'd be quite a few of them — 6 miles by 6 miles represents a township.

So in terms of the overall province of Saskatchewan, there is a miniscule amount of area left that you could stake a claim in terms of potash in Saskatchewan. The entire rest of the province has been staked, and we will be seeing new mining opportunities come forward in Saskatchewan here in the not-too-distant future.

But in addition to that, what it has done for our province, Mr. Speaker, is one other very positive thing. It sent a very positive business signal to everybody, whether you're looking at potash, whether you're looking at forestry, whether you're looking at oil and gas, whether you're looking at anything you can name in Saskatchewan. Now they look at Saskatchewan and say, it will be a great place to do business. And that's why we're seeing literally hundreds of millions of dollars of investment pouring into Saskatchewan. And that's also the reason I would say to some of the members opposite, that's also the reason why we're starting to see young people coming back to our province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — The very same people that the NDP drove out are now starting to come back to Saskatchewan, and it's a very, very healthy thing. And we saw that no matter where we've travelled in the last little while, there'll be people coming up to us and saying the same thing over and over and over again — I left Saskatchewan in the '70s and the '80s and the '90s and into the 2000 years because there wasn't opportunity in our province, because we had a government that was not prepared

to look at opportunity.

We had a government that was prepared to look at expropriating things, taking away from others something that doesn't belong to you. And so we've made a very clear business signal to people across this province and indeed North America and we're very, very pleased, Mr. Speaker, to be able to put this legislation forward.

And as I said, we'll be very anxious to see and we'll be watching with great interest, and the business community in this province and outside of this province will be looking at this with great interest to see, when we call the vote on this ultimately and ask every member in this legislature to stand, where the member opposite will be standing.

Will they be with the opportunities that this government has presented? Will they be looking forward to the future? Will they be looking towards providing opportunity for the young people of this province? Or will they be looking backwards at a time that was dark and very, very a poor time in our history? A time that Allan Blakeney brought forward a piece of legislation — the same firebrand speaker that you had at your convention, talking about renewal, talking about renewal. Talking about renewal for the NDP party, a party that brought in this kind of heinous legislation in the past.

Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure on behalf of the government to move second reading of An Act to repeal The Potash Development Act.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Minister of Energy and Resources has moved that Bill No. 3, The Potash Development Repeal Act be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Regina Coronation Park.

[14:45]

Mr. Trew: — I thank you, Mr. Speaker. Potash is a very rich resource that Saskatchewan enjoys in huge quantity. The hon. member for Kindersley has just pointed out that potash is throughout much of Saskatchewan and indeed much of the land has been staked.

There's a few things I want to say around potash and this Act to repeal The Potash Development Act. One of the things I want to say is that the potash industry is enjoying absolute record success. Last year, Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan alone enjoyed net income of \$1.1 billion — \$1.1 billion. That was their net income for 2007. Not quite double, but nearly double what their net income had been in 2006.

I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, that even prior to the election, the potash industry was scheduled, was planning to expand by investing nearly \$1.7 billion in potash, in the potash industry in Saskatchewan. And they were going to expand by 4.8 million tonnes annually their production, bringing the total production to 22.1 billion tonne . . . pardon me, not billion, million — that's with an "m" — to 22.1 million tonnes by 2012.

So what I'm saying, Mr. Speaker, is clearly there is not, was not, any crisis of confidence in the potash industry. There is no crisis of dollars in the potash industry. It's an industry that is doing very, very well. And we're pleased as always to have corporations making profits.

Members opposite would have the world believe that somehow we're opposed to profit or that profit is a bad word. I will come back to profits and the profits that the PCS, Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan, was making at a time while it was a Crown corporation. That's part of the message that I have here today, Mr. Speaker.

But clearly no crisis; in fact exactly the opposite. There is a surplus of confidence in the potash industry. World demand is growing for potash. Potash producers and corporations are expanding their mining capacity to meet that. And what is the response of the members opposite? Well let us just roll over; let us roll over and they can tickle our belly.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to say that what we have is a fundamental difference in philosophy and it doesn't necessarily make the government wrong — doesn't necessarily make the government wrong. There's a difference, a fundamental difference in philosophy when it comes to our natural resources.

I think, I believe, I know I can speak for members of the New Democratic Party opposition. We believe that Saskatchewan's natural resources are the property of Saskatchewan's people and that the Government of Saskatchewan has an obligation to develop those very natural resources and to extract the maximum return for the people of Saskatchewan who we argue own those very resources.

I have heard from time to time members opposite say that natural resources are the property of the people of Saskatchewan. But they act like those very natural resources are inexhaustible. We argue that development should take place for the benefit of the people of Saskatchewan. They can benefit in jobs; they can benefit in money and other ways.

Right wing governments believe that the natural resources are unlimited and should just be developed as quickly as possible — full stop, period — always, Mr. Speaker, always to the benefit of the corporations. And they believe that that serves the public good. They believe in the trickle-down theory, Mr. Speaker, the trickle-down theory which says when a corporation is building a potash mine, in this case, that some of the profits will trickle down to the workers in the potash mine. That's in essence the belief. So there's a little bit of a fundamental difference.

I want to, Mr. Speaker, point out that I'm mounting . . . One of the arguments I have is around who benefits. And I'm going to, at some risk, dash ahead in my speech.

In 2007 Murray Dobbin, who is a freelance journalist and a member of both the Council of Canadians and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, in a letter-writing . . . He led a letter-writing campaign, a protest for what he called obscene — it's a quote — “obscene salaries.” He published reports on how long it takes for an average CEO [chief executive officer] from the list of 100 of Canada's best paid CEOs, how long it takes

those 100 to earn the average annual salary of a Canadian.

The average salary of a Canadian, Mr. Speaker, is just shy, in 2007, just shy of \$39,000 — 38,900 and change. Okay. And it took any one of the top 100 CEOs — of which the Chair, Mr. Doyle, of PCS [Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan] is in that list — it took any one of them, the longest it took was until about 10:30 a.m., January 2, at the rate that they're . . . [inaudible] . . . to earn the average income that the average Canadian makes.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that we're debating a Bill that's numbered 3 — Bill No. 3. One of the very earliest things that the incoming government did was introduce a Bill that they acknowledge is largely meaningless, largely ceremonial, and it's little more than gestures, little more than gestures. Clearly when the potash industry is enjoying record growth, record profit, is expanding, is planning to expand in any event, working relationships were very, very good — and I assume still are — with the Government of Saskatchewan, at that very point they introduce an Act to repeal an Act, interestingly an Act that was never utilized.

Members opposite, including the hon. member for Kindersley, would have us believe that somehow, somehow Saskatchewan was using The Potash Development Act as a tool to take over, to nationalize the potash industry. And nothing, nothing could be further from reality. Every single potash mine that became part of the then Crown corporations, Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan, was purchased — fair market value; willing buyer, willing seller. Willing buyer, willing seller.

So, Mr. Speaker, here we are with Bill 3, the third Bill introduced by the incoming government dealing with the repeal of The Potash Development Act.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — A meaningless gesture, there is no question. Even in members opposite, I can't believe that they would doubt, this is not the biggest issue of the day. This should not be the biggest issue of the day, Mr. Speaker — an industry that's doing very, very well, an industry that will continue to do very, very well with or without this Act to repeal The Potash Development Act.

The Speaker: — Order. It seems there are just a few too many debates going on from the one that we're actually supposed to be listening to, and so I would ask members to allow the member from Regina Coronation Park to complete his remarks.

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, regardless of our ideology, I believe that it is the responsibility of government, whether it be a right wing government or a left wing government, to maximize the return of our natural resources for the people of Saskatchewan. That's the job in a nutshell.

How do we best govern for the benefit of the people of Saskatchewan — not for Bay Street, not for the Ontario firemen's pension? I don't wish the Ontario firemen's pension fund any ill, but that's not who elected any government in Saskatchewan. It's the very people of Saskatchewan.

As I pointed out, we have a little ideological difference. It's interesting that right wingers go around saying that . . .

An Hon. Member: — They score a lot of goals.

Mr. Trew: — I have to chuckle at a heckle. I used to be in hockey a right winger, Mr. Speaker, and the heckle was that right wingers scored a lot of goals. Well I maybe never scored a lot of goals. I tried hard but I scored a few.

Anyway right wing governments and left wing governments have an obligation to maximize the return for the people of Saskatchewan. That's the point. The former right wing government, Grant Devine's right wing government, at least, at least had the courage to do something meaningful. It did what they philosophically believed in. They privatized a Crown corporation. They privatized the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan, took it away from being a Crown corporation and into the realms of a publicly traded company.

That's what they believed in. At least that was a meaningful act, a very meaningful act. I argue it cost the people of Saskatchewan hundreds of millions of dollars — hundreds of millions of dollars — and continues to cost us that every year. As I've pointed out, a philosophical difference in how this universe works.

Mr. Speaker, we've got a Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan that was put together, put together . . . I should go through a little bit of history. Potash, potash was . . . It was in about 1932 we first realized there was potash in Saskatchewan before virtually any of us, I think, before any of us in this Chamber were born . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well close, a few might have been. Anyway, the point is, Mr. Speaker, the history of knowing we have potash is relatively new.

In 1942 the socialist Government of Saskatchewan had drilling going on all across Saskatchewan. Ostensibly they were drilling to find out to prove where the oil was, but the reality was they were also looking at, where's the potash resource? What is available for development?

And so in the early '40s the potash resource was I want to say largely proved up but I don't know — that might be overstating it a bit. But certainly the extent of potash resource under Saskatchewan's ground was much, much, much better known than it had been before that. So clearly we'd identified where potash was, clearly we'd identified where it was likely in commercial quantity.

Clearly that had taken place under a socialist government and that CCF [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation] government invited private corporations to come and develop potash mines. Three — three — corporations answered the call. Three publicly traded, private corporations answered the call. And what was the exchange, Mr. Speaker? It was just this. We knew there was water formation to get through, most notably the Blairmore Formation. That was the most difficult, but there's water at various levels, all kinds of challenges to get down to the 3,000-and-a-little-bit feet that we have to get to mine potash.

So, Mr. Speaker, the CCF government of the day said to those

three corporations that look, we'll give you a royalty holiday all the way to 1981, which in the '50s they were essentially giving a 30-year or close to a 30-year royalty holiday, Mr. Speaker. That's the history of left wing governments, knowing that there's times when we can't just do it ourselves. So just get rid of that rhetoric that we somehow think we can do everything ourselves, because it's not, it's not there.

Mr. Speaker, I am keenly aware that there is a need to get to Premier's estimates and I have much to say on this Bill 3, so I at this point, I move that we adjourn the debate.

[15:00]

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The member from Regina Coronation Park has moved adjournment of debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Clerk: — Committee of Finance.

The Speaker: — I do now leave the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Supplementary Estimates — March Executive Council Vote 10

Subvotes (EX01), (EX07), (EX03), (EX04), and (EX08)

The Chair: — Today the Committee of Finance is dealing with the supplementary estimates for Executive Council. Before we carry on, I would ask the Premier to — if you'd like to — introduce his officials, and if you would like to make a few opening remarks.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I think the supplementary estimates are self-explanatory; however I know there will be questions. I'll do my best to answer them with the help of the officials who I'd like to introduce you, to introduce all of the members of the committee that have joined me here today. The deputy minister to the Premier, Garnet Garven; special adviser in the Premier's office, Joe Donlevy; and Bonita Cairns, the director of corporate services in Executive Council. We look forward to the questions from the Leader of the Opposition. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: — Central management and services. I recognize the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. And I want to, with the Premier, welcome the officials who are here to assist the House this afternoon as we work through these supplementary estimates for Executive Council.

We recognize that these estimates in many ways are involved

with the transition period between governments. Some of those expenditures would have happened under our government. Some of the expenditures in this package of supplementary estimates are happening under the new government, and so they essentially deal with the transition period. And so many of my questions today and observations that I'll make relate to the transition period.

I would ask the Premier if he would provide for the legislature this afternoon therefore a total list of the public servants who have been terminated, fired, let go during the transition period — a list of all of the public servants who have been let go as a result of the transition.

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. We'd be happy to supply that list to the Leader of the Opposition.

The Chair: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Calvert: — I wonder, Mr. Chair, if the Premier would provide it to the legislature this afternoon, now.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — It's over, Mr. Chair — thank you to the Leader of the Opposition — it's a number of people, obviously, including those that were severed by the outgoing administration from their work here in this Legislative Building primarily. We will endeavour to get the list today. Those elements, those parts of the list that we cannot provide to members today we will get to all hon. members of the committee as soon as possible.

Mr. Calvert: — Well, Mr. Chair, I thank the Premier for that commitment. We do know, and the broad public of Saskatchewan know, some of the names that were on that list. And obviously there were names will be on that list who worked in the political staff of ministers in the former government.

But there is another list of individuals whose employment was terminated by this government following the election, who have been widely recognized, Mr. Chair, as very valuable public servants who brought to their work no sense of partisanship and so on. And we know that some very significant public servants have been let go, fired in the transition. So perhaps I could ask a few questions about one or two of those public servants.

Perhaps the Premier could explain to the legislature today and the people of Saskatchewan why it is that he chose to terminate the employment, to fire Mr. John Wright. Mr. John Wright has been a career public servant, most of that career spent in Saskatchewan. He served a variety of governments and is recognized, if I may say, Mr. Chair, as a valued public servant, not just in Saskatchewan but right across Canada. Perhaps the Premier could explain to the legislature why he chose to terminate Mr. John Wright from the public service in Saskatchewan.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Chairman, it's certainly my view, and I think it's shared by others who observe transition processes in a parliamentary government, that there will be changes for one of two reasons. Certainly that would

characterize the changes that the new Government of Saskatchewan has made, Mr. Chair. The two reasons being: one is renewal; one is the interest on the part of a new government to renew.

It certainly does not take away in those instances from the service that has been rendered to the province and to the people of Saskatchewan by long-standing public servants like Mr. Wright, who has done an admirable job spanning different administrations, who did an admirable job as a deputy of Finance and then into Crown Investments Corporation and then SaskPower, where he was, I believe, then seconded to the Ministry of Health. And as we said at the time, we want to acknowledge his service to the province, thank him for that, and just note that there are going to be changes as a result of our desire to renew both the public service and the new government, especially in a key area such as Health.

The other reason for changes are in those instances where there is a clear political affiliation on the part of those working in government with the outgoing, the former government.

Those are the two reasons that we pursued changes and have pursued changes, and with respect to Mr. Wright, I would certainly classify him in the former, certainly a professional civil servant who rendered good service to the province.

But we seek renewal, and the transition that we saw, Mr. Chair, was balanced between status quo and some continuity — some deputies moving positions but remaining at the deputy level; others moving on to other things; and still others promoted, either from without or within the province. And I think that's reasonable in any transition process.

Mr. Calvert: — Is it therefore, Mr. Chair, the assessment of the Premier that, using Mr. Wright as an example, that he could not serve this government in its capacity to renew? Mr. Wright, among others whose employment was terminated by this Premier and this government, have served a variety of administrations. Mr. Wright worked in the administration of the Conservative Party in the 1980s.

Is it therefore the Premier's assessment, when he speaks of the need to renew, that Mr. Wright could not serve in that capacity, and the others who had no political attachments during their public sector career, that have been summarily fired by this government? Is it his conclusions they were incapable of providing the kind of renewal that he seeks, where others apparently were? And if that is the case, let me ask the Premier, were these discussions held with Mr. Wright or with Ms. Durnford or with Mr. Brooks, Mr. Gladue? Were there discussions held to determine whether or not they could serve this government and bring about the kind of renewal that the Premier seems to desire?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well I would point out, Mr. Chair, that none of this relates directly to supplementary estimates, which is the matter before the Assembly. We're prepared to answer these detailed questions on supplementary estimates today, Mr. Chair. Additionally the Leader of the Opposition is going to have the chance to ask much more general questions, as he is now doing, about transition or any other issue when we have the normal course of Premier's estimates towards the end of the

session.

Having said that, I think I've answered the question in a general way in terms of the changes that have taken place — that they are a combination of our desire to renew and also our desire to change those existing civil servants employed by his administration who were clearly partisan.

The Chair: — We are dealing with supplementary estimates but it does also mention severance obligation. So if it did fall in severance with that particular person, it would count. But I'd also remind the leader of the loyal opposition that we are dealing just with that, and we'll just stay with a severance that it dealt with in supplementary estimates. And I will leave that up to the Premier to lead me in that.

Mr. Calvert: — Well we can have the Premier try and dodge these — I know are difficult questions for him — by using some technicality around the supplementary estimates. But I, with you, Mr. Chair, read right here on the page that monies are included here under special warrant for severance. Now some of that obviously will be available to those who we severed as we left government — obviously.

Then let us put this question to the Premier: can he today give us an estimate of what the severance costs will be to the taxpayers of Saskatchewan for having fired these long-standing public servants? Can he give us at least an estimate today of what the severance costs will be? Because each of these, to my understanding, were fired without cause. And therefore the Premier perhaps could provide for this House today an estimate at least on what the severance costs will be.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Just for clarification, Mr. Chair, certainly we acknowledge that the supplementary estimates we're dealing with in Executive Council here are about severance — severance within Executive Council, the bulk of which are the severances executed by the Leader of the Opposition when he was the Premier prior to the immediate transition of the Government of Saskatchewan. Severances within the Ministry of Health or any other ministry with respect to deputies or others are certainly not what is contemplated here in the reference to severances. These are Executive Council severances, and I'd be happy to answer any questions the Leader of the Opposition may have about that.

Mr. Calvert: — Well it is very clear, Mr. Chair — and I'm sure the public will see this today, anyone who may be observing this discussion — that the Premier simply does not want to talk about having fired valuable public servants who have served this province and its people.

The Chair: — We are dealing just with the supplementary estimates. Under budget estimates we will be able to vary into the different departments, but right now we're dealing with just supplementary estimates that deal with Executive Council. So I will remind members, Leader of the Opposition of that.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I am fully apprised, fully apprised of the activities and the functions of Executive Council. And part of the function of this Premier and his Executive Council is to provide oversight for the entirety of government. That's what they get paid to do.

And we are fully aware that the Executive Council today is taking a very direct role in the transition, the transition period which is covered by these supplementary estimates. Therefore, Mr. Chair, this Premier should be prepared to answer to this legislature and the people of Saskatchewan questions about the transition that is being overseen by Executive Council, Executive Council which is being funded by the very estimate that is in front of us, supplementary estimate it describes.

In the estimate page you will see yourself, Mr. Chair — the Premier can see it — that this is related to the transition of government. It's right there on the page. So in this transition this Premier, this Executive Council has determined that a host of very valuable public servants who had no political engagement were to be terminated, were to be terminated.

His Deputy Premier has gone out and said that the criteria for now employment in the senior public service is a criteria which includes if or not the individual shares the philosophy of the Premier. Not just the philosophy of government, but the Deputy Premier has been before the press saying that these public servants must share the philosophy of the Premier.

So let me put this question to the Premier: under what criteria of your philosophy, how is your philosophy shared or described to these public servants who were then terminated? Because all that the public can conclude is that this has nothing to do with renewal, that it has to do in fact with their inability to share your philosophy. So, Mr. Chair, I put this question to the Premier: what process was used to describe for these public servants the so-called philosophy of the Premier and according to the Deputy Premier, this is now the test. Can he explain that to the people of Saskatchewan?

[15:15]

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, let me just be very clear. We are prepared to answer all of these questions in Premier's estimates. All of the questions that the Premier wants to answer, we are prepared to give the . . . or the Leader of the Opposition. We are prepared to give the former premier, the Leader of the Opposition, the same exact amount of time that he afforded to me when I was the Leader of the Opposition, at the end of session, to get into a wide-ranging discussion about the transition or about any particular ministry.

What we are talking about here today, what we are talking about today is the supplementary estimates related to Executive Council. The supplementary estimates of Executive Council do not relate to the severance of the deputy minister of Health. They don't relate to the severance in terms of any other deputy minister or official of the government.

Now we're prepared to answer all of those questions. But I wonder if the Leader of the Opposition, who's been in this Assembly for a lot longer than I am — think first elected when I was in third year university — should know what we're here, what we're met here to do which is to execute the supplementary estimates of Executive Council. If he's got any questions at all, I'd be prepared to answer those questions.

The Chair: — We are dealing with the supplementary estimates and I will read:

Additional funding [which] was provided by Special Warrant for common law severance obligations and leave entitlement payments to former employees of Executive Council and for costs related to the transition of governments.

Now the Premier has stated that some of the questions fell out of that, and I will take the Premier, for now, at his word at that.

Mr. Calvert: — Well, Mr. Chair, Mr. Chair, Mr. Chair, if this Premier is unable to answer questions or unwilling to answer questions . . . Now he says he's fully prepared to answer all the questions in a month or two when we do Executive Council estimates. Why not answer them today? We've got an hour. We've got an hour and a half. Why not answer them today?

You know, Mr. Chair, this is not going to work. If the Premier sends notes and letters to all of his ministers telling them they need to be open and accountable, he'd better adhere to the same policy in terms of his own performance in this House. Now we've already had the experience of one minister of his government who won't answer questions in this House or won't answer questions out in the rotunda. Now it looks like we're working on the President of Executive Council in the same fashion.

I'm asking some very simple questions, very simple questions, Mr. Chair, about the transition, the period of time that these supplementary estimates cover, some very simple questions about the transition. So let's try this one out. Let's try this one out.

I'll ask the Premier, in these numbers that we have before us in the supplementary estimates which are on your table, Mr. Chair, are the expenses of the transition team included? Are the expenses of the transition team included in the supplementary estimates that we have before us today?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Chair, the supplementary estimates certainly contained a number of elements including some of the transition costs. They contain, and we haven't got any questions on this yet, but I think it's fair to put it before the Assembly. They contain principally nearly \$3.1 million in severance for employees, severance that was undertaken by that member when he was still the premier.

They contain vacation and SDO [scheduled day off] payouts to employees of \$350,000. Mr. Chairman, they contain — and I hope we get to talk a little bit about this today because it actually is a part of supplementary estimates — a seven-month contract with Bernie Cherko totalling \$217,000. For what, we don't know, because there's this report, there's this report about Fishing Lake but there may be other reasons. There may be other reasons that you wanted to provide this contract to Mr. Cherko within your office when you were the premier. We'd be looking forward to that, Mr. Chair, if he wants to get into it.

There's also an over-expenditure resulting — an over-expenditure on his watch — of about \$60,000 applied in July 2007 for performance pay increases. And so there's a total here, the transition costs of government which include Information Technology Office costs, \$82,000; transition-related expenditures including costs associated with

setting up offices, employee relocation, and other administrative expenditures, \$185,000.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, the Premier has indicated that in fact that there are, within this supplementary estimate, dollars that will be provided to the transition team or for transition costs. So let me ask this question. He has committed today to provide a list of all of the public servants that have been fired, terminated in the transition period. Will he this afternoon now provide to the House therefore a list of all of those, all of those individuals who have been part of the quote, "transition team"? Will the Premier give us the list today in the House of the transition team?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, any official that is involved in the transition team who is reflected in the estimates that we are discussing and debating today certainly can be furnished to all members of the committee and that will occur. And there may be subsequent questions too about severance. We could deal with that in general terms.

But again the information in terms of these estimates is pretty clear: \$3.633 million in supplementary estimates and special warrant expenditures of the former administration, of the former administration; the remaining expenditures of \$267,000 of the current administration, including \$82,000 for Information Technology Office costs' and 185,000 — as I have just said in my previous answer — for transition-related costs. It includes costs to set up an office, to set up offices, employee relocation and other administrative expenditures.

Mr. Calvert: — So, Mr. Chair, for the public of Saskatchewan, never mind just for this legislature, for the people of Saskatchewan, will the Premier this afternoon tell us who is on the transition team?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, the transition team, before and after the election, consisted principally of the member for Canora-Pelly, the now Deputy Premier of the province. Who led the transition process? Myself.

Also assisting on transition throughout the process was the then chief of staff to the Opposition Leader, now chief of staff to the Premier, Reg Downs. And also of course, we had been advised by others as well, including Mr. Emsley who has been the subject of some debate and discussion here in this Assembly.

And then post the transition to the new government, of course the deputy minister to the Premier would also assist in matters of transition, in terms of ordering the new government and preparing our new government to enter its first legislative session and now of course on the eve of our very first budget.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, would the Premier provide to the legislature information on anyone who may have been contracted to assist his transition team?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. There was a number of individuals who were contracted to help with transition, including Doug Emsley, including Mr. Ron Larson, including Tracy Pugh, including Ruth Klassen-Burwell. Additionally services were contracted from TMC database development and support and KPMG audit services.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, were others involved in the transition process who may have been contracted or paid by other departments of government?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, it's my understanding that no, that's not the case, and were it to be the case, it would also be outside the discussion of Executive Council supplementary estimates. But the direct answer to the question is certainly that's not, that's not the information.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, the Premier has mentioned a group described as TMC data management. Would the Premier describe what services they provided for the transition in government?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I believe TMC is a very well-known, Regina-based company specializing in database and network solutions, in offering servers certainly to large organizations. In this case, there was the need to organize as a result of a brand new government moving in. There was the need for the databasing to occur, to inventory all of the various elements of government that we had come into having won the election. And so TMC was retained to do that function, as they are retained to do that function on behalf of many organizations — private and public — in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, would the Premier indicate whether this contract was tendered? Was it a competitive process?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, no, the amount was \$9,817 total. And so there was the need to move quickly, and that number appears to be very favourable in terms of just proceeding to develop a relationship for the company that has a track record here in the city of Regina and across the province.

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Today I am sure the Premier is pleased to read *The StarPhoenix* commentary by Mr. Randy Burton that talks about some very favourable polling results for himself and his government. Mr. Burton in his article today says, and I quote, "An internal poll conducted for the government recently shows the government is . . . enjoying a honeymoon with voters." Later in the article it's described as an Angus Reid poll.

Mr. Chair, I want to ask the Premier: was this poll commissioned by Executive Council?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — No, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I'd ask the Premier: does he know where this poll was commissioned in government?

The Chair: — He had said it didn't deal with Executive Council. We will just always stay within supplementary estimates of Executive Council.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, perhaps you could have someone who works in Executive Council, whose salary is being paid by this province, to please to tell him who in government conducted this Angus Reid poll.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, I think the answer is no. Executive Council did not conduct this poll. That's the answer,

and maybe the Leader of the Opposition doesn't like it but that's the answer.

Mr. Calvert: — Well, Mr. Chair, the Premier ought to know this. If his government is out polling, then the Premier ought to know who or where within his government this polling is being done. Now either Mr. Burton has got it wrong, that this is not a government poll, or he's got it right, and it is a government poll.

If it is a government poll, the Premier should be able to come to the legislature this afternoon and tell the people of Saskatchewan where in his government this polling is coming from. I ask again: is this a government poll? Is this a government poll, and who paid for it?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, first of all the poll references Angus Reid, and to be sure the Saskatchewan Party utilizes the services of Angus Reid. And frankly we appreciated the services of Angus Reid over the last little while.

[15:30]

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — I think the people of the province of Saskatchewan, those majority of the people of the province who wanted change and wanted to make sure that the then opposition party, Saskatchewan Party, availed itself of the very best, are also pleased that that occurred.

The answer to the former premier, the Leader of the Opposition's question, it was not conducted by executive government. It's not part of these estimates. The answer is no.

Mr. Calvert: — I accept the Premier's comments that Executive Council didn't pay for this poll. That's not my question. Did any agency or department in his government pay for this poll? Was this poll that's referred to by Randy Burton in *The StarPhoenix* today paid for by the provincial Government of Saskatchewan in any of its agencies or departments?

The Chair: — We are just dealing with Executive Council. I'll rule that question out of order.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I'm pleased to be ruled out of order by yourself, but I'll tell you, the people of Saskatchewan want to know the answer to this, and you won't rule them out of order.

Now the fact of the matter is we have a report today in *The StarPhoenix* that says this government is conducting polling of a political nature. The Premier should ought to know if they are or not. If they're not, it's a very simple thing for him to stand up today in the legislature and say, no we're not; this was a poll paid for by the Saskatchewan Party. Fair enough. But he won't. He won't stand up and say, this is not being paid for by the taxpayers of Saskatchewan, and therefore I can only conclude it is.

And if he refuses to answer who's paying for it, then I guess we will find out through a variety of processes, whether its freedom of information or whether it's through . . . Well now, who's the member over there from Cannington trying to shout me down?

It won't work. It won't work. It won't work, Mr. Chair.

A very simple question. Perhaps the journalists will want to ask this question. Who is paying for the polling that results in these kinds of political results being in the paper today?

Now I again want to return, Mr. Chair, to the Premier on the question of severance. It's clearly a part of this package. As they have fired public servants throughout the public service — we'll get the list later from the Premier; he's assured us of that — surely this Premier, surely this transition team and surely his chief public service and Executive Council have built some estimates on the severance costs. Would he today share with this legislature and the people of Saskatchewan at least an estimate on what the severances will be to these public servants who have been fired without cause?

And secondly, during the period under which is covered by these supplementary estimates, can he report to the House if agreements have been reached with these public servants? Have they reached agreements on severance with these public servants who they fired without cause and, in my view, without justification?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well in terms of what we're dealing . . . Let me just say this, Mr. Chair, because there was a bit of rant, a rodomontade from the Leader of the Opposition about the polling. And I'm not sure why he's so obsessed with it. This may be the same kind of Angus Reid polling that our party has done in the past. It might be a different one. I don't know. But I can see why he's upset by it, because what it says, what it says Mr. Chairman, is that the people of the province of Saskatchewan; they have no nostalgia for the past. The people of the province of Saskatchewan are looking forward to a bold future in the province. They like what they see from this new government, Mr. Chairman.

The people of this province, if this poll is an accurate reflection of the views and the feelings of Saskatchewan people, is that they have still had enough of the NDP, that they are glad that they made their decision on the November 7, that they see this province moving forward with a government that is looking out the front window — the windshield — not in the rear-view mirror; a government that's ready for growth and about to bring down a historic budget tomorrow to build on that, Mr. Chair. I can understand why he'd be upset and worried about the poll.

Now with respect to the question of severance. We're dealing with Executive Council severances, so let me answer the question of the Leader of the Opposition. The first special warrant was passed on January 10, 2008 and it includes \$2.71 million for severance and vacation, SDO payouts for employees of the former administration. That's not an estimate. That's the value.

The second warrant passed included \$646,000 for severance and vacation, SDO payouts for employees of the former administration. That is not an estimate. That's the actual cost. That's what we're talking about here in the estimates this afternoon, and I look forward to more questions from the Leader of the Opposition.

The Chair: — I recognize the member from Nutana.

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In the response to a question earlier from the member from Riversdale, the Premier indicated that Ron Larson is part of these spending estimates. And I would ask the Premier to please advise us what Mr. Larson is doing on behalf of Executive Council.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, Mr. Larson is no longer contracted as a part of any of the transition effort. His role chiefly, I am informed, was to prepare the new government in terms of inventory and preparing to deal with what is a huge list of agencies, boards, and commissions that the new incoming government inherited. We found — we discovered — Mr. Chairman, that there wasn't much organization inherited from the previous administration. There wasn't much of a database in terms of knowing even the nature and the extent of these agencies, boards, and commissions.

And that's serious enough, Mr. Chairman. But as you know, we found that also to be the case when it comes to children in the province, as the Minister of Social Services has highlighted. The same, the same kind of lack of care and attention to Executive Council, unfortunately, occurred . . .

The Chair: — Order. Order. Order. I would ask that just the members that are in the debate be heard rather than all the members, I know, that want to enter into the debate, but we will just do it one at a time.

Ms. Atkinson: — Well we know that Mr. Larson was on contract. Can the Premier advise us what he was receiving per month for that contract, and how many months was Mr. Larson paid?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Twenty-five thousand in total over two and a half months or so — 10,000 a month, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Atkinson: — Can the Premier advise us whether or not there are other people on contract particularly looking at procurement policy for the Government of Saskatchewan? If they're on contract, I'd be interested in the name of that individual and how much is being paid per month to that individual.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes indeed, we are undertaking a review of the procurement policy of the Government of Saskatchewan.

Again, what we found when we inherited the role of the new Government of Saskatchewan was a system put in place by the previous administration to procure advertising that seemed to be more about turn taking and perhaps some political influence on the part of the member of the . . . now the Leader of the Opposition and, I would imagine, particularly on part of the member for Saskatoon Nutana.

What we want to do is find a better way to do that. It is part of the, certainly part of the estimates that we're discussing today, and we'll get the number, the amount of money that is involved in this contract to this individual who is undertaking this review of the procurement of advertising communications for the Government of Saskatchewan.

Ms. Atkinson: — Can the Premier provide us with the name of the individual who's undertaking this review? When did this individual start his work, and when does the Premier expect that the work will be completed, and precisely how much is this individual being paid per month for this work?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — We're going to get the exact information on the date the contract began. It was late January. As to the term of the contract, the same applies. We'll get that information. The amount is \$10,000 per month. It's to Bob Anderson of Saskatoon. Bob, Mr. Anderson ran Shaw Communications in the province for some period of time. And he has been engaged and been working on this procurement issue on behalf of the new government. We look forward to his report.

Ms. Atkinson: — Now I want to move on to another person that has been hired in the Premier's office, and that's Ron Dedman. Can the Premier describe to us precisely Mr. Dedman's duties and how much Mr. Dedman is being remunerated for each month. And what are the results of his work thus far?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Dedman, who began with the Government of Saskatchewan through SaskPower in 1967 and worked through until 1974 with the Blakeney government at the Crown corporation, has also had a number of different roles within the private and the public sector, including work with the government in the 1980s.

He is — and this is not a secret; it was a matter of an order in council — he has been named the associate deputy minister to Executive Council for executive resourcing. And his title's pretty self-explanatory. He's helping the new government with respect to the human resource needs as we seek to ensure that we are attracting to vacancies very qualified people within the civil service, and also working with ministries to ensure that our government is providing the kind of, the kind of opportunity for training, for development, for furtherance in the careers of the civil service.

And so far I can tell members of this committee, Mr. Chair, the work has ... he has done excellent work for the new government. And we look forward to that continuing in the future.

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you. Can the Premier indicate to the legislature what work he has been so successful with, who has he recruited, and to what positions?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, there's been a number of new deputy ministers appointed by this government and, I mean, they're a matter of the public record. They're in orders in council, which that member will have access to as will all members of the public.

It's pretty safe to assume that, in some way, Mr. Dedman's counsel and advice has been helpful in retaining these new members of the civil service and will also be helpful as we continue to attract and recruit women and men from across the country to help build the province of Saskatchewan.

Ms. Atkinson: — I understand that there have been some assistant deputy ministers that have been relieved of their duties

in the public service, and I'm interested in knowing whether or not Mr. Dedman has recruited any new assistant deputy ministers to these vacant positions as a result of the change in government.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, it would be Mr. Dedman's duty and role to help the deputy ministers, to help my deputy minister, in the recruiting and sourcing of senior civil servants in Saskatchewan.

Ms. Atkinson: — We have in the province of Saskatchewan an independent commission called the Public Service Commission, which is in charge of recruiting public servants to various positions in the public service, not only including members who are in scope, members of unions, SGEU [Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union], but also out of scope.

And I'm wondering if it is the Premier's position, given that historically we have gone through a selection process for assistant deputy ministers, associate deputy ministers, whether or not it's his intention to have Mr. Dedman, along with his office, determining who the assistant and associate deputy ministers will be in the province of Saskatchewan.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, the Public Service Commission certainly is continuing, as we speak, its role in terms of recruiting people for the classified elements of the civil service. There is also the opportunity for advice from Executive Council with respect to levels of associate deputy minister and deputy minister. That has always certainly been the case. It continues to be the case with the new government. And the Public Service Commission's work is in no way affected by this. There certainly is a consultation process back and forth but the Public Service Commission continues to staff the government with respect to classified positions.

[15:45]

As for the competitive nature of the appointment of new associate deputy ministers or other senior level members of the civil service, there's a combination of things at work here including competitions and advertising, some promotions within government — exactly the kind of thing you'd expect when a large organization is recruiting to its senior management levels.

Ms. Atkinson: — I just want to understand what the Premier just said. Is it his intention to have ADMs — assistant deputy ministers, associate deputy ministers — go through the public service process when those appointments are being made? I think I heard him say that's his intention. I just want to make sure I heard him correctly.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chair, backing up to a question asked by the hon. member from Nutana regarding our procurement review. Mr. Anderson began on January 23. He will complete his work on May 22 for a four-month term, and he'll report to the government at that time.

Mr. Chairman, what we're saying is the process undertaken by this new government is not different than what previous governments have done. There are those senior levels, senior

positions in the civil service that are appointed by orders in council — your deputy ministers, your associate deputy ministers.

It's the intent of our government to use all the resources that we can in terms of executive sourcing. We're going to use all the tools at our disposal. We will advertise in some cases. There will be some promotions from within in other cases. And then, by order in council, deputies and associate deputies will be appointed. That was the path followed by the new government after the election of November 7 when changes were made. It's what should be expected.

There's an accountability measure built into that through Executive Council, through the cabinet, through myself, through the Premier's office, and that accountability will continue with the new government.

Ms. Atkinson: — Just so I understand the Premier: is this a new process to appoint assistant and associate deputy ministers by order in council? Is this the new policy of the new government?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well the hon. member sat in the cabinet and so she'll know in the case of Mr. Osborne, for example, that he was . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well we only did it once, they say; we only ever did it once. Also associate deputy ministers appointed by order in council. And so there is a practice of this in this government, by your government. It's true, it's true of other governments.

And you know, you know, Mr. Chairman, it's interesting that this is a point of contention with the opposition because I think it's reasonable to say you'd want the Executive Council that would be responsible to the people of the province of Saskatchewan for appointments, that would include the Public Service Commission input, that it would include competition and promotion from within, that it would include good advice within Executive Council. That's what the new government's getting, Mr. Chairman. It's a matter of practicality and common sense. These are foreign concepts to the members opposite, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Atkinson: — Just for the record, all assistant and associate deputy ministers were not appointed by order in council. And in fact Mr. Osborne, that was a very old order in council and unfortunately it's something our government missed, Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Osborne has now paid the consequence of that by being terminated.

But I just wanted to ask the Premier another important question in my view. There has been a recent appointment in the department of Advanced Education and Labour, a recent order in council. Is Mr. Carr an associate deputy minister or an assistant deputy minister?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, I think the member may want to check her facts because I believe if she checks, she'll find that associate deputy ministers were appointed by orders in council by her government at the cabinet table. Yes, I think you should check your facts. In the case of Mr. Carr, he's an associate deputy minister now in the department of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Ms. Atkinson: — My question for the Premier: was there a competition for the new associate deputy minister's position at Advanced Education and Labour?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, there are a number of appointments that have occurred. Some are the product of competitions. Some are the product of informal competitions. Some are promotions from within and some are not. In the case of Mr. Carr, given his considerable experience with respect to the area that he's now going to be working in government, clearly the government was satisfied that they had the right individual to be carrying out these duties and made its decision and followed a practice by order in council that the previous government also followed.

Ms. Atkinson: — Through the Chair to the Premier, can the Premier advise us of other assistant deputy minister or associate deputy ministry positions that have been appointed through order in council by his government and whether any of these appointments went through competition?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, notwithstanding the fact that this is not part of estimates today, I will say this as an answer. All the orders in council are public and available to the hon. member.

Ms. Atkinson: — I appreciate the Premier saying that, but I'd like to have it on the public record in *Hansard* whether or not . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh I think what we . . . You don't ask the question unless you know the answer.

So I would like to ask the minister, I would like to ask the Premier to advise us . . . Oh yes, oh yes. I'd like to ask the Premier to advise us: are there any assistant or associate deputy minister positions that have been appointed by the new government that did not go through a selection or the public service process?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — You know, Mr. Chairman, you'd think an election defeat on November 7 would take the hon. member down a notch, but it hasn't — not at all. There's still some hectoring and some lecturing and some, well finger pointing, I guess.

Mr. Chairman, this information is a matter of the public record. It's not frankly a part of the estimates today that we're discussing. These are ministerial estimates. If the member for Nutana, if the former premier of the province, the Leader of the Opposition wants to get into a wide-ranging discussion about who's in orders in council and who's not, we can do that at the end of the session. These questions are asked and answered as a matter of the public record in the orders in council published and hidden, Mr. Chairman, on the Internet and in the media that widely reports them.

Ms. Atkinson: — Well, Mr. Chair, my understanding is that the Sask Party came to office indicating to the public that they were going to be open and accountable to the public. And so I expected that, given that this is certainly what the Sask Party said to our citizens — and certainly the citizens agreed with the open and accountability policy of the Sask Party — that we would have the benefit of that open and accountable position of the Sask Party in this Legislative Assembly.

Now I've asked the Premier a very specific question. There have been appointments. Associate deputy ministers have been appointed. There have been assistant deputy ministers that have been appointed. I asked the Premier a very simple question: have any of these folks gone through a process where the jobs were advertised in the paper, all people across the country and in Saskatchewan have the opportunity to apply for those jobs? What kind of selection process occurred, or were these people appointed by the new government simply because, as we've heard from the Premier, he wants people in senior positions that adhere to the philosophy of the Sask Party?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well first of all, Mr. Chairman, that last remark, that last little . . . The hon. member tried to slip in a little remark that's just frankly not true and misrepresents what has been said by the Deputy Premier and by myself with respect to transition.

Now what the hon. member might be getting confused about though is comments from her former leader, the government she was a part of in 1991 when Roy Romanow had this to say. He said about people that they were firing at the time, he said, if they are politically incompatible with an NDP administration, quote, "it makes the person not competent to carry out the job." That's her party's approach. That's not been the approach of this new government.

Mr. Chairman, with respect to these appointments, even though they're not included in the estimates that we're supposed to be debating today, I'll say this: the orders in council that she's referring to are sent or couriered to her office as soon as they are available, Mr. Chairman. To her office. And yet she wants to waste the time of the committee and go over the content of the orders in council that she already has.

Moreover, Mr. Chair, soon, soon — we don't have a date yet but soon — we will post these orders in council on the government's website, or as we've heard hon. members say, on the Interweb. They'll be able to dial up the Internet, assuming they all can do that, because the other issue when we inherited Executive Council, Mr. Chairman — and the costs are a part of this discussion here — is the fact that Executive Council office, the Premier's office, weren't wired, weren't ready for any kind of technology or the Interweb because apparently this kind of technology escaped the former members opposite.

The OCs [order in council] have been sent to the member. Soon they will be on the Internet and available for discussion. I will say with respect to appointments that they are a combination of promotions from within, they're a combination of competitions that we've held, and some . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well the member for Riversdale is not listening because I'm answering his question.

And finally, and finally some of them are direct appointments made by a new government seeking renewal, seeking to change from what was a tired, old NDP government; seeking new ideas to carry this province forward, new ideas to continue the momentum we see in Saskatchewan today, Mr. Chairman; new ideas to sustain growth.

The poll that the former premier refers to I think says it pretty clearly. The people have weighed in again, not just on

November 7 but here in March, four months later. They like the new approach. They reject the old approach, Mr. Chair.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Ms. Atkinson: — You know, Mr. Chairperson, I have served with four premiers in this Legislative Assembly in my time in this Assembly. And I have to tell you, it's the first time that I have ever heard a premier say to another member that their questions are a waste of time, Mr. Speaker. So I would just like to say that to the member opposite. I have never heard a premier say to another member of this House that their questions are a waste of time.

The member did not answer the question. Of all of his appointments, all of his appointments to the various senior positions of the public service, has there been one competition? And the Premier has failed to answer that question. So I will ask it one more time. In terms of his appointment to senior positions in the public service, did any of these positions go through — and these appointments — go through a competition?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Of the new appointments to date, none have gone to a competition process. That may well be the case in the future, Mr. Chairman.

And with respect to the member's preamble where she said she's never heard a member of this Assembly say, never heard a . . . Well I want to remind the hon. member then of the words of the former premier when questioned by the current member for Martensville about the Murdoch Carriere scandal, about the Murdoch Carriere scandal when he said precisely the same thing. You want to talk to your colleague beside you before you say something in the House that's not true.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Chair: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Massey Place.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. With the change in government, Mr. Chair, as you're aware, there are a number of policies and programs that will certainly be affected. And I know on the opposition side we've had the opportunity to ask a good number of questions, Mr. Chair, over the last few weeks. And sometimes we get a glimmer of hope. Sometimes we don't get all the information that we're wanting, all the information that's required.

And with this transition, Mr. Chair, a lot of the answering that we've been seeking, a lot of the information that we've been seeking has not been falling on the actual line ministries, on the ministers. But the slack has been picked up by Executive Council because we've seen the situation where ministers aren't prepared to answer or they're afraid to answer or they just simply don't know because they're not involved with the details of their ministry.

[16:00]

One example of this, Mr. Chair, would be the changes to the grad tax exemption program. Before Christmas, Mr. Chair, I had the opportunity to ask a question to the Minister of

Advanced Education, Employment and Labour. It's a very long name . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . This is my preamble. If the members would listen, they'll see the connection to Executive Council.

And when these questions were asked to the minister, Mr. Chair, there was no answer. No information was provided. The members on this side, the members in the press gallery, the public that was there, the people at home watching on TV, they gained no information. They gained no insight. They don't know what the outcome of the question was.

The question that I asked the Minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour was why the changes that took place to . . . the proposed changes of cancelling the grad tax exemption and replacing it with a tuition rebate scheme, why would that exclude individuals that receive their training outside of the province? Or perhaps individuals — that through no fault of their own, good Saskatchewan people — have to study outside of the province because a program is not offered in Saskatchewan.

One example, one example of that might be speech-language pathologists. Many speech-language pathologists have to go to the University of Alberta. So when I asked this question to the minister, I received no answer. Instead what's happened through scrums outside of this Chamber, through other communication efforts of the government, the minister's shortcomings, how the slack has been picked up by Executive Council.

Because I could not get any information from the minister, I will ask the Premier because Executive Council has been fielding the questions. Everything's being run through Executive Council. Was the omission of changes to the grad tax exemption program, the omission of people that have to study outside of province or people from outside the province wanting to come in, was that an intentional omission, Mr. Chair? To the Premier: was that an intentional omission or simply an oversight? Thank you.

The Chair: — I will caution, though those are valid questions, I will read again that this is dealing with supplementary estimates, dealing with “additional funding . . . provided by Special Warrant for common law severance obligations and leave entitlement payments for former employees . . .”

I will leave it if the Premier wants to answer it, but I believe that the question is outside of this, of the supplementary estimates.

Mr. Broten: — Well, Mr. Chair, the impetus for that question, the reason for my concern is that, as the critic for a portfolio, I have received letters; I have received phone calls from people who want information on programs. They want information from ministers on program changes. That information has not been forthcoming. As a result, the details, the explaining has been picked up by Executive Council.

Mr. Chair, the members opposite are asking how this relates to (EX08) and so on, House business, House research, all these — vote 10 — you can see in the book here. The expense is for the costs related to the transition of governments. With the

transition of governments, there's been program changes . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . It's very true. And the ministers, the ministers, the ministers are not answering questions. Executive Council is picking up the work. They're de facto those responsible for it.

The Chair: — I know the Executive Council has always been a little more lively debate than it has been in other committees, but I would like to be able to hear the question put and also would like the answer to be heard. And I will expect that all members will just let the people that are on the floor talk. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Chair, let me just say that I think that hon. member that just asked the question has a lot of, has a lot of promise. We don't agree on a lot of things, I don't think, about policy, but certainly we see a lot of . . . more so than the member for Prince Albert, I would say. A lot more promise than the — what's the name of his constituency again? — than Prince Albert Northcote, more so perhaps than even some veteran members on the front benches of the government.

But I would say this. I would say this. The question's valid. It's an important part of the discussion in terms of plans to recruit the young people to the province.

It'd be a great question for, it would be a great question for question period. And if he can convince those cagey veterans on the front bench that have been here since I was in third-year university and since the hon. member was probably still in high school, who have been here for that long and won't, and won't let any of these new, young members ask questions, if he can convince the deputy leader from Nutana to allow him to ask this good question in question period, it would be dealt with.

And, Mr. Chair, if I could just back up to a comment I made in a previous answer about whether or not premiers have ever dismissed or said that hon. members' questions were lacking substance or perhaps wasted time. The former premier of the province of Saskatchewan, at the end of the last session that dealt principally with the Murdoch Carriere scandal, simply wrote off all of the questions as lacking substance in his summation over and over again in debate. And so again, I think the member from Nutana needs to be a bit more circumspect when it comes to the rhetoric she uses in this Legislative Assembly.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Chair: — Order. Order. Order. I recognize the member from Massey Place.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I thank the Premier for his willingness to answer questions and shedding some light on an area where a lot of people have been having some serious questions.

One other area, Mr. Chair, that the people of Saskatchewan have had some questions about, and an area, Mr. Chair, where the ministry has not been providing information is tied to today's announcement of the task force on housing, Mr. Chair, that will be operating. I would assume, Mr. Chair, that communications officers within Executive Council were

certainly involved in the press release.

The Chair: — Sorry, I was just going to caution the member that even though these are valid questions, the budget will be tabled tomorrow. Some of these, you'll be able to answer them. We will be sticking to the supplementary estimates. If you can tie your question to the supplementary estimates, I would ask the member to do that.

Mr. Broten: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I apologize for the confusion, Mr. Chair. My light was off so I sat down and did not relinquish the floor.

My question, Mr. Chair, is concerning the announcement today about a task force on housing. The news release that was issued, I am sure had ... a role was played through the communications officer through Executive Council which is included in these estimates, some of the costs associated with that.

And my question concerning the housing task force is that for some time the students in this province have had some serious questions about housing, questions about the availability of housing on campus and off campus. With an economy that is doing well, with the prosperity that we are experiencing at this time, there are certain pressures on the housing market. This press release, which was released today concerning the housing task force, which Executive Council played a role in the communications officer, I saw no reference on that press release, Mr. Chair, concerning the mandate of the task force in addressing student housing issues on campus. And my question to the Premier is, was that an oversight? Or was that an intentional omission? And will he be tabling the terms of reference for the task force on housing?

The Chair: — I'm not quite sure how that ties into supplementary estimates although you did mention it a couple of times. But you are talking about programs. I will leave it if the Premier feels that it doesn't deal with supplementary estimates. I will leave that up to the discretion of the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, you know, it's interesting. The opposition asks for a certain amount of time for these estimates, and they come completely ill-prepared to deal with the matter at hand. They want to, they want to talk about all manner of all of these other issues — some that were announced today, an excellent announcement by the Minister of Social Services, employing the services of two former members from both sides of the aisle to deal with the housing taskforce. And it would have been the perfect opportunity to have this debate and discussion — it's an important in the province — in question period on the day it was announced.

But they didn't have time for housing in Saskatoon or Regina — the issue — when it came to question period today. They didn't have time for the issue of keeping young people in the province, when it came to question period today.

We're dealing with the estimates for Executive Council. I am prepared to answer all of the questions they have, and then to get into this general discussion. And I think it is unfair of those senior members opposite, some who have been here for a long time, to set up the new young member from Saskatoon as they

have today.

The Chair: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Centre.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I continue on questioning about the supplementary estimates, executive council vote 10. I appreciated the comments earlier today from the Minister of Social Services, recognizing the good work of the former government, particularly the former premier and the work that he did last year after the third quarter numbers were announced, and that we did some good work in terms of supporting inner-city communities — so, \$110 million; \$60 million of which went to housing.

The question I have for the Premier is, why was housing not a priority for this government, this Premier to go right into it? And why are those numbers not appearing in this supplementary estimates?

The Chair: — Member, same thing. I'm quite not sure how that ties into supplementary estimates. I think the Premier has answered quite a few questions outside of that. I think this deals with a program. The budget will be announced tomorrow.

Order. Order. The budget will be announced tomorrow; some of these deal with programs. The budget will be debated fiercely on this floor for the next month and a half, and I think that's where some of these questions need to be directed. Right now we are just dealing with supplementary estimates. I would ask the member if he has a question dealing with Executive Council supplementary estimates.

I recognize the member for Saskatoon Fairview.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour says that they were studying essential services legislation for some time. The former Health critic and now Minister of Health said that legislated essential services was not necessary. The Minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour said that the Ministry of Justice drafted the legislation for essential services. Now we hear that the government had hired someone else, a Mr. Wilson, to do this.

The question for the Premier. There seems to be quite a bit of confusion as to what direction the government is taking in this area. Could the Premier answer as to what instructions he actually gave to the minister.

The Chair: — The same thing. We're dealing with supplementary estimates, not with ministries here. If you have a question that deals with supplementary estimates, Executive Council, the chief of communications, cabinet secretary, cabinet planning, the funding was provided by special warrant for common law severance obligations and leave entitlement payments for former employees, the Executive Council for costs related to the transaction of government — I will ask the member, if you have a question that deals with Executive Council, to ask it.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — I tabled an email the other day which directly linked Executive Council with these issues. Mr. Chair, the email directly linked the Executive Council with these

decisions. My question to the Premier is, what direction did he give in regards to these issues?

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Chair, I think I earlier heard the previous member from Saskatoon who was asking questions say that this was all about choices. I hope that next time the opposition is preparing for estimates that they choose to get ready for estimates, that they choose . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[16:15]

Hon. Mr. Wall: — I hope that they choose to come before this Assembly and prepare to use the people's time at the highest value knowing full well that there are important issues to discuss here. There are issues of severance. My predecessor, the member for Riversdale, when he was the outgoing premier — and I have commended him publicly for this — made the right decision. They severed all of their political staff in this building. That's a part of this estimate. We may want to talk about the cost there. We may want to talk about the scope of it.

The hon. Member, when he was the premier, chose to fire every one of his employees including secretaries, some of them brand new to the building who probably weren't necessarily very political at all, but they chose to sever them all. That would be a good question to ask.

What's a part of these estimates that we're talking about today is a \$199,000 consulting contract paid by that former premier, the now Leader of the Opposition, to the husband of a former NDP cabinet minister. There is \$18,000 of a remainder payment in addition to the \$199,000 paid to the husband of a former NDP cabinet minister. We could talk about that. These are in the estimates. Alternatively and to be fair, you could also talk about costs of the new government that are related estimates. You can talk about relocation costs and moving employees to work for the new government. We can talk about the administration costs of estimates.

These are the kinds of questions that, well, a responsible and prepared opposition would come prepared to ask and fairly, and fairly that a government would need and a premier and with the help of officials better be prepared to answer. But that didn't happen today. Probably of the — I don't know — 15 questions asked today, 20 questions asked. There were maybe 3 that were on point, and this is precisely why, Mr. Chairman, the people of the province had enough of them and they voted for positive change on November 7.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't believe my questions are maybe as adversarial in nature, but I do have some questions about the estimates, and I do want to thank the Premier's officials for being here today. Now it stems out of committee last night and rather forthright sharing from the Minister of Education last night which I thank him for and I thanked him for last night as well.

Speaking to the piece of the Education property tax relief, I believe three point . . .

An Hon. Member: — What number is that?

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Line number (ED09), \$3.2 million. Now this is to, I guess, is to address unbudgeted dollars. From our government, it has been announced that, you know, it was a 2 per cent increase and also some economies of growth.

What I would like to ask, but was also clarified in our committee meeting last night was that we will be seeing a 2 per cent increase in the coming year on property tax relief and that we're aware that there's a Legislative Secretary which has been appointed to study this task of more long-term, more substantive property tax relief which property owners and people of the province are asking for. But what was clear and what was . . . by the minister last night, is that he is comfortable with that, I guess, the implementation of that report, the more substantive broader changes to come until 2011.

So my question for the Premier is, does he share the same comfort? Is he comfortable with the plans from the Reiter report of the Legislative Secretary to be implemented in 2011?

The Chair: — So remember. This question, I believe, is to deal with education committee. I haven't seen where you could have tied this to Executive Council.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — I misunderstood it then. I thought that vote . . .

The Chair: — If the Premier wishes to respond, I would let him.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Again, Mr. Chairman, this is not on point. It's not part of estimates. We're going to have the chance to debate all of these issues throughout the course of the session, throughout the budget debate, then through Premier's estimates and the estimates that each minister will appear before committees appropriately and defend.

However, the hon. member wants to talk about education portion of property tax relief. Fair enough. We can talk about that, I guess, though it doesn't relate necessarily to the matter at hand.

Certainly the question's been asked. And the answer would go something like, for I don't know how many years and how many elections, the NDP leader — first Mr. Romanow and then the current member for Riversdale — would appear before any convention that would have them, but principally municipal conventions like SARM, and he would make solemn promises to the people of this province that his government would deliver meaningful education tax relief for the province. They said the status quo is not on.

There was this report commission by Ray Boughen, an eminent citizen from the city of Moose Jaw, who concluded that you could provide some education tax relief, but you would have to increase the PST [provincial sales tax] by a point. And what did the government do with that report, Mr. Chairman? Well they cherry-picked. They cherry-picked the nasty part. They

increased the PST a point, provided zero property tax relief to the people of the province.

Then we saw through a number of rebate programs that were subsequently clawed back by reassessment, again we saw the NDP's failure to deliver on solemn promises for meaningful property tax relief in the province.

Then in the election that we just came through, there was the NDP talking about increasing the amount of education property tax relief in the province should they get elected on November 7, '07, but for whom? Was any of the money going to be earmarked for agricultural producers in the province? Was there one single dime of relief for where the problem is most acute, the education portion of property tax on farm land? The answer to that is no.

So if that member or any member over there wants to debate their track record versus what you'll see from us tomorrow in our budget, the beginning of our track record on property tax relief, we say bring it on. We're here to serve all of the people of the province of Saskatchewan, rural and urban, north and south, and that will be the nature of our property tax relief program.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Chair: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, any objective observer of this Assembly would wonder what has just happened. All afternoon, all afternoon the Premier says he will not address subjects which are not part of Executive Council estimates. All afternoon he refuses to answer questions on that basis. Now all of a sudden just as we get close to the end of this discussion, he now thinks it's time to talk about other issues, and so we get a tirade about education tax on property in the former government.

Well isn't that interesting, Mr. Chair. Won't answer questions about polling, won't answer questions about why he fired valuable public servants or how much this is going to cost the people of Saskatchewan, won't answer questions about how he and his Executive Council and his transition team have been influencing labour legislation that's being developed in this province, can't stand up in this legislature and talk about a housing announcement that was made this morning because he says that's all out of order.

But during his comments, he's quick to refer to social service issues. He's quick to stand up and try and re-fight an election campaign that was held in November. He's got to get it through his head, Mr. Chair. He's now the Premier. And you can't get away with this. You can't get away with this.

Now I know his friend in Ottawa tries to do this with committees. They've got a playbook down there in Ottawa, and the playbook in Ottawa tells the Chair if the opposition's asking something difficult, shut the thing down. Shut it in committee. Use the rules. Shut it down. That's the kind of playbook they've got in Ottawa, and I'm afraid that's the kind of playbook that this Premier's trying to insist on in the legislature of Saskatchewan.

Well it won't work. It won't work, Mr. Chair. The people of Saskatchewan now look to this group of men and women to give them the leadership and to give them accountability, answers to the questions that they have been asked by members of the opposition. I too had not heard a premier suggest that a member's questions are a waste of time, a waste of time.

Now I will then go back to the Premier, now that he's much more forthcoming in his answers, now that he has opened the door in these supplementary estimates to any field of discussion, since he's railed on about the property education tax. Let me go back to where we started.

Can he tell us why, can he tell us why, specifically, long-term public servants were terminated? And don't give me this argument, Mr. Chair. He doesn't need to give me that argument. Let him explain, let him explain, Mr. Chair, why it is . . .

The Chair: — Order. Order. Order. Order. I know that we're getting near the end of estimates, and I know it always gets a little more noisier, but I would ask that it be quiet so that I can hear the question and the answer.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, my question to the Premier is to do with the firing of valuable public servants. And I tell you no one is going to believe that John Wright, that John Wright with his experience in government couldn't be part of a renewing that the Premier seeks. Nobody's going to believe that.

I want the Premier to explain why it is that he has fired these valuable public servants who have this long-term experience. And then will he explain for this Chamber, since he wants to explain everything now, will he explain precisely what it is that his Deputy Premier meant when his Deputy Premier was out in the rotunda speaking to journalists — when I've heard him live on province-wide radio — saying that a test now of the public service of Saskatchewan is whether or not they share and agree with the philosophy of the Premier? That's what his Deputy Premier said on many occasions.

And today is an opportunity for the Premier to tell us what does that precisely mean. What does that precisely mean? Does it mean that you now need to pass not only the political litmus test of the Saskatchewan Party; now you've got to pass the litmus test of the Premier?

So would he please address again why it is that he chose to fire a host of valuable public servants and what it is of his philosophy now that is the litmus test on whether you can serve in a senior public service position in the province of Saskatchewan — those two very specific questions, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Chairman, permit me to deal with some inaccuracies in the preamble from the hon. member for Riversdale, including his assertion that none of the questions — though they've all, though most of them have been out of order — have been answered. Certainly the last, the last, the last answer is an example of that.

There was also a question on polling, that was not relevant to this estimates, asked. And it was answered. There was a

question with respect to assistant deputy ministers and whether or not they have been hired with respect to appointments or competition — asked and answered. There was a question with respect to order in council appointment of associate deputy ministers — also not part of these estimates, also not part of these estimates — asked and then it was answered.

And his first question with respect to Mr. Wright, the long-time civil servant in the province, severed from the Ministry of Health, not related to Executive Council estimates, was also asked and answered, even though they were not part of the work of this committee.

And it speaks, I think it speaks volumes, about the degree and the quality of opposition that the people of the province have now. I've been watching some letters to the editors all across Saskatchewan questioning whether or not that opposition has their priorities right when it comes to work in this Legislative Assembly.

But what I will say in answer, in direct answer to the hon. member's questions — which again do not relate to the matter at hand — but our government will pursue change based either on renewal, in the case of our effort to attract new women and men to our civil service, and renew and respond to the new mandate that we have received from the people of the province on November 7.

And if there are those like the former NDP campaign chairman that's working within a Crown corporation, there's probably going to be a change there as well, Mr. Chairman. It makes complete sense. And when you look at the numbers and you compare transition today with this government, compare it to the bludgeoning of the civil service that occurred by the members opposite when they won in '91, and let's review the record.

On the November 29, 1991 after the NDP assumed office, they fired the deputy minister of Social Services. In 1991 they fired the presidents of SEDCO [Saskatchewan Economic Development Corporation], STC [Saskatchewan Transportation Company], the Crown Management Board.

On December 3 they fired the president of SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance]. On December 6 they fired nine departmental staff, were dismissed. On the 7th, six more government jobs axed by the NDP. On December 10, six SaskPower employees were also dismissed. On December 14 the deputy minister of Health was dismissed. All of these questions are about the deputy minister of Health.

On December 14, by a government for which he sat on the Executive Council — the hon. member and so did his seatmate — on December 14, 1991, they fired the then erstwhile hard-working deputy minister of Health, because I would assume, because I would assume, his government — the government of Mr. Romanow — was pursuing renewal.

On December 19 they fired Ted Urness, head of the Saskatchewan Liquor Board. The NDP had fired, by December 23, 200 employees of provincial departments, of Crown corporations.

And when asked about it, the then premier, the leader of that party that's been sent to those benches by the people of the province, said this. He said if they are politically incompatible with the NDP administration, quote: "it makes the person not competent to carry out the job."

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — And moreover, and moreover if the member for Riversdale would have looked behind him and have a look at his former Justice minister, the now Justice critic, he will be looking square into the visage of the young erstwhile New Democrat whose job it was to deliberately and callously and without much class, frankly, fire professional civil servants in the province of Saskatchewan.

[16:30]

You know, Mr. Chairman, if that member, if that member is going to lecture any government, any government at all, or any premier about transition, he ought to call the former member for Riversdale, Mr. Romanow.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Chair: — Order. Order. I will ask the members to come to order so we can carry on.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, this will be my last question because . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — Well, Mr. Chair, the opposition . . . the government members seem to, are encouraging me. This will be my last, Chair. We made an agreement; we'll stick to that agreement.

Now we just had a rant. We just had a rant and then we had this great round of applause from the cheering section over there.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — But do you know what, do you know what we didn't have, Mr. Chair? You know what we didn't have? We didn't have an answer to the question. We have rants, we have cheers, but we have a Premier who won't answer the question.

Now, Mr. Chair, the Premier rants on. He goes back to 1991. I'd be very pleased to debate 1991. I'd be very pleased to debate the 1980s when, by the way, he was working in this building at the same time I was elected, Mr. Chair. So let's go back if he wants to debate 1991. I'll tell you the difference. I'll tell you the difference.

When we came to government in 1991, we had to do what I did before we left government, and that's to remove the political staff. We did it before we came to government. They did not. They did not. Our new government in 1991 had to remove all the political staff back in those days. That's the difference, Mr. Chair.

But here's the question the Premier refuses to answer all

afternoon. Right from start to finish, he refuses to answer this question. Maybe he'll do it this time. His Deputy Premier, at the time he was busy firing the public servants of Saskatchewan said, and said on more than one occasion, that the public service of Saskatchewan, in his view, one of the criteria for their involvement should be their willingness to be in agreement with the philosophy of the Premier. He said it many times.

I invite the Premier to make it very clear to the people of Saskatchewan and the public service of Saskatchewan, just what does this mean? And where in the selection process, because clearly, we're not having competitions. We've learned that this afternoon. Clearly we're not having competitions any more. We hire our friends without competition. So I guess for those who are going to be hired, how does this work? How does this work?

Will the Premier explain to this legislature how it is that his philosophy now is part of the criteria on whether you can serve in the public service of Saskatchewan? That's the question.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman, let me be very, let me be very, very clear about the intention of this government with respect to the civil service. We signalled this intention, by the way, some time ago when we were still in opposition, that what we seek for Saskatchewan is a civil service that is respected by the government and by the opposition, that what we seek is a professional civil service that is afforded opportunities to advance, that's afforded opportunities for training.

We signalled — more than signalling it — we backed up that intention when we campaigned on a platform that included increased funding for the Shoyama-Johnson institute of public policy at the University of Regina. And there's only one more sleep to the budget, but we'll see if that's one of the many, many campaign promises that will be kept in that budget tomorrow.

We seek for Saskatchewan to attract women and men from all over the province and outside Saskatchewan to help us, to help us renew the government, to help us deliver on our plan to secure the future, to help us deliver on our plan to make sure Saskatchewan is ready for growth. That is what we seek. These are the criteria for the civil service in Saskatchewan. And it will be a far cry — it already has been — our transition process has been a far cry.

And I should say, I want to clarify something in terms of a previous answer about releasing the names of severed employees, that they are considered . . . the severed employee situation, their track record is considered part of their employment history and is considered personal. That's a legal opinion we have. Once severance settlements are reached, then everything can be released. And we will do so, and we will do so at that time . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Well, well what a smoking gun that is.

The hon. member for Riversdale is going, oh. What I just said, for the record, Mr. Chairman, to clarify an answer, is that when severance, when severance settlements are reached and agreed to by the parties — by the same civil servants that he purports

to stand and defend, by the way — when their information is not in a sensitive state, then we'll release it for the public record, including the costs incurred by the government.

What we will not see in terms of transition from this government that we saw from the government that he was a part of, we won't see articles from January, like we saw January 4, 1992 that reported Saskatchewan Liquor Board employee — a single mom, a single mom — who was dismissed on Christmas Eve. You didn't and you won't see that from this government. You won't see articles in the paper from January 11, 1992 that six more government employees were fired, including the president of Crop Insurance. They all lost their jobs. You won't see articles from January 16, 1992 or like that article that highlighted the NDP government release of 45 more fired employees, including the Chair of the Public Service Commission, or 10 SaskEnergy employees fired, or 10 SaskEnergy employees fired on January 23, or three SaskWater employees fired on January 28, or SGI claims managers fired and reported in the paper on January 29.

You won't see, you won't see the kind of conduct that this province saw, that this legislature saw from the former minister of Justice, now the Justice critic for the opposition, whose job, whose job on behalf of those members opposite was to perpetrate this kind of bludgeoning of the civil service. You will not see that from our government. What you will see is our commitment for renewal.

There will be changes to be sure. There was an election November 7. People made a choice. And those changes will reflect the priorities of the province, and that is a new government intent on ensuring that we sustain the growth, that we are ready for growth, and that we are building the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Chair: — Executive Council, vote 10, supplementary estimates for March, central management and services (EX01) 1,286,000; 576,000, is that sum agreed to?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — The sum is carried. Premier's office (EX07) 314,000, is that sum agreed to?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Chief of communications (EX03) 204,000, is that sum agreed to?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. House business and research (EX08) 315,000, is that sum agreed to?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Is the cabinet secretariat 420,000 and cabinet planning unit (EX04) 527,000?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Committee resolutions:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31, 2008, the following sums, for Executive Council, 3,645,000.

Is that sum agreed to?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

[Vote 10 agreed to.]

Motions for Supply

The Chair: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would move General Revenue Fund, no. 1:

Resolved that towards making good the supply granted to Her Majesty on account of certain charges and expenses of the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008, the sum of \$160,195,000 be granted out of the General Revenue Fund.

The Chair: — Regarding resolution no. 1:

Resolved that towards making good the supply granted to Her Majesty on account of certain charges and expenses of the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008, the sum of \$160,195,000 be granted out of the General Revenue Fund.

Is that sum agreed to?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you. I move resolution no. 2:

Resolved that towards making good the supply granted to Her Majesty on account of certain charges and expenses of the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008, which to the extent that they can remain unexpended for the fiscal year are also granted for the fiscal year ending on March 31, 2009, the sum of \$9,000,000 to be granted out of the General Revenue Fund.

The Chair: — Will the members take resolution no. 2 as read?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. If I may, through you, I'd like to thank the members of the Executive Council

staff who joined us to answer questions today: Garnet, Bonita, and Joe. Thank you for your attendance.

I want to thank hon. members opposite for their questions and the debate that ensued. I know we'll do this all over again in just a month or so. And I know in answer to the member from Nutana's questions, I know they will be better prepared, and so will I, Mr. Chairman.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Chair: — The loyal opposition.

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I want to join with the Premier in extending our thanks and the thanks of all members to the officials who have joined us today. And whenever we thank Executive Council officials, we know that we're thanking not just those who are in the room with us, but others who work both in Executive Council and through them to all the public servants of Saskatchewan. And it will be the anticipation of this opposition that when we do come back to the Premier's estimates or any other estimates, that they will come better prepared to answer the questions. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Chair: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I move that the committee rise and that the Chair report that the committee has agreed to certain resolutions and ask for leave to sit again.

The Chair: — It has been moved that the committee rise and that the Chair report that the committee has agreed to certain resolutions and ask for leave to sit again. Is that motion agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

FIRST AND SECOND READING OF RESOLUTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of committees.

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Finance has agreed to certain resolutions and has instructed me to report the same and ask for leave to sit again.

The Speaker: — When shall the resolutions be read the first time? I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the resolutions be now read the first and second time.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Clerk: — First and second readings of the resolutions.

The Speaker: — When shall the committee sit again?

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Later this day, Mr. Speaker

The Speaker: — Later this day. Minister of Finance.

APPROPRIATION BILL

Bill No. 16 — The Appropriation Act, 2008 (No. 1)

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — By leave of the Assembly, I move that Bill No. 16, The Appropriation Act, 2008 (No. 1) be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Finance has asked for leave to move that Bill No. 16, The Appropriation Act, 2008 (No. 1) be now introduced and read the first time. Is leave of the Assembly granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Granted. 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? Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By leave of the Assembly and under rule 72(2), I move that the Bill be now read a second and a third time.

The Speaker: — Is leave of the . . . Order. Is leave of the Assembly granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 16, The Appropriation Act, 2008 (No. 1) be now read a second and third time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

[16:45]

Clerk: — Second and third reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — His Honour is here for Royal Assent.

ROYAL ASSENT

[At 16:47 His Honour the Lieutenant Governor entered the Chamber, took his seat upon the throne, and gave Royal Assent to the following Bill.]

His Honour: — Pray be seated.

The Speaker: — May it please Your Honour, this Legislative Assembly has voted the supplies required to enable the government to defray the expenses of the public service. In the name of the Assembly I present to Your Honour:

Bill No. 16 - The Appropriation Act, 2008 (No. 1)

to which I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

His Honour: — In Her Majesty's name, I thank the Legislative Assembly, accept their benevolence, and assent to this Bill.

[His Honour retired from the Chamber at 16:48.]

The Speaker: — Pray be seated. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that this House do now adjourn.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has moved this Assembly do now adjourn. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to accept the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried. This Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 16:49.]

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS	
INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS	
Van Mulligen	339
Kirsch	339
Iwanchuk	339
Boyd	339
Harpauer	339
LeClerc	339
Atkinson	339
Reiter	340
Huyghebaert	340
PRESENTING PETITIONS	
Higgins	340
Broten	340
Iwanchuk	340
STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS	
Regional Economic Development Association Week	
Bradshaw	340
2008 Global Citizen of the Year	
Forbes	341
Lakeland Citizens of the Year	
Wilson	341
Spring Free From Racism	
Morin	341
Campfire Tax	
Huyghebaert	341
New Home for the Moose Jaw Pottery Club	
Higgins	342
Federal By-election Results	
Harrison	342
QUESTION PERIOD	
Prince Albert Pulp Mill	
Furber	342
Boyd	343
Federal Funds for Child Care	
Higgins	344
Wall	344
Krawetz	345
Labour Relations Board	
Atkinson	345
Krawetz	345
Morgan	345
MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS	
Flood Protection Funding for Fishing and Waldsea Lakes	
Hickie	347
Yates	348
Task Force on Housing Affordability and Availability	
Harpauer	348
Forbes	349
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS	
Bill No. 14 — The Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials Repeal Act	
Krawetz	350
Bill No. 15 — The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2008	
Hutchinson	350
PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES	
Standing Committee on Human Services	
Hart	350
Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice	
Kirsch	350
ORDERS OF THE DAY	
WRITTEN QUESTIONS	
Weekes	351

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 3 — The Potash Development Repeal Act

Boyd351
Trew352

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

**General Revenue Fund Supplementary Estimates — March
Executive Council Vote 10**

Wall354
Calvert354
Atkinson359
Brotten362
Forbes364
Iwanchuk364
Wotherspoon365

Motions for Supply

Gantfoer369

FIRST AND SECOND READING OF RESOLUTIONS

Gantfoer369

APPROPRIATION BILL

Bill No. 16 — The Appropriation Act, 2008 (No. 1)

Gantfoer370

ROYAL ASSENT370

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