



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

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

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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 Minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly Mr. Jim Coutts. Mr. Coutts is the chairman and chief executive officer of Canadian Investment Capital Ltd.

As most know, Jim has led an active life, Canadian public life, first as secretary to the Rt. Hon. Lester Pearson and later as principal secretary to the Rt. Hon. Pierre Trudeau. In 2001 he received the Order of Canada.

Mr. Coutts, is also well known for his charitable activities with the Hospital for Sick Children, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, the Lester B. Pearson United World College. As well, he is the co-founder of the W.O. Mitchell Literary Prize for writers and mentors.

Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to welcome Mr. Coutts to Saskatchewan and to this Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you, through you, and to all members of the Assembly a number of individuals who took part in world Fossil Fools Day today and they're seated in the west gallery above me, and I would like all members of the legislature to welcome them to the legislature today please. Thank you.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford.

Mr. Chisholm: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you, Mr. Speaker, and through you to the entire Assembly, it is my pleasure to introduce with Mr. Coutts, who has been previously introduced, a member of the board of trustees from the Lester B. Pearson College of the Pacific and a graduate of the United World College of America, Montezuma, New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, let us all welcome to this Assembly my son, Ian Chisholm.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, I want to join with the member

from Saskatoon Greystone and the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford in welcoming Mr. Coutts and Mr. Chisholm. As I think the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford knows and some members know, my daughter is a recent graduate at the Lester B. Pearson College of the Pacific. What not as many members may realize is that a former chief of staff of mine is also a college graduate, not quite as recent, of the college. So I have benefited indirectly in many ways from the work that these gentlemen have done. My daughter certainly enjoyed her experience there, and I want to commend both Mr. Coutts and Mr. Chisholm for their public service and for their efforts on behalf of a very worthy institution in our country.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, to you and through I'd like to introduce a guest in the Speaker's gallery, Ms. Patricia Fraser. She's a constituent of mine. She's here for all of us. She's not a guest of mine. Patricia Fraser actually organizes the Saskatchewan House of Prayers in which that group gets together and then prays for decision makers within this province which includes all of us within this Assembly. I know when I sat down with Ms. Fraser, I was humbled by the prayers, and I know their wish is that we have the strength to make fair and responsible decisions.

I ask that we all greet Ms. Fraser here today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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 and the prayer reads as follows:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And the petitions are signed by people from North Battleford, Yorkton, Saskatoon, Regina, Davidson, and Kenaston. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition concerning Station 20 West in Saskatoon. The petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately restore funding to the Station

20 project.

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

Mr. Speaker, the people that signed this petition are from Saskatoon from a variety of constituencies on both sides of the river. Thank you.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Yorkton.

Cancer Awareness Month

Mr. Ottenbreit: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. April 1, April Fool's Day, a day of jokes and fun to be sure, but my look today is not a slight towards my learned friend, the member from Carrot River Valley. And no I do not use the same barber as the Hon. Minister of Justice. I'm on my feet today for a much more worthy reason.

April 1 is also the first day of Cancer Awareness Month, and I've chosen a verbal and visual statement, Mr. Speaker. I would argue that every person in this Assembly today, if asked, would agree their lives have been touched by this disease in form or another, whether it'd be a acquaintance, a friend, or a family member, whether it'd be by way of a battle with cancer or loss of life due to cancer.

In this month of April, we should not only recognize the disease but the people who volunteer and work to bring awareness to find the cure, whether it be the family of Terry Fox, the Canadian Cancer Society, or my family's own event named in honour of my son — Brayden Ottenbreit's Close Cuts for Cancer — which has raised nearly half a million dollars for cancer research nationally and local care and support in the Yorkton area.

Also we should recognize the people who strive to make more comfortable the lives of those fighting and also those who strive to make the passing of those losing their battle more comfortable. But mainly I want to acknowledge the most important people in this equation, Mr. Speaker: the victims, the ones fighting right now, the ones that have won, and the ones that have lost.

Saskatchewan people are a hearty and loving bunch, Mr. Speaker, and in many situations they will make good come from a bad situation. Very often it is a choice, the choice of one vowel. Bitter or better, Mr. Speaker, we in Saskatchewan fighting for a cure choose the latter.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Extremist Comments

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, everyone is entitled to their opinions no matter how cold, angry, offensive, hurtful, or hateful they may be. And in this Internet age, there's no shortage of opportunities for people to express their opinions.

Some are insightful, articulate, and thought-provoking. Others are small-minded and mean-spirited, and some cross the line.

Last week a right wing extremist and friend of the Sask Party whose name and whose blog do not merit mention in this Assembly clearly crossed the line with an offensive post regarding people in Saskatoon who would have benefited from the Station 20 project the Sask Party government has seen fit to cancel.

This blogger has been quoted by Sask Party members in this Assembly, and what's more, as of right now her endorsement of the Premier appears right on the Sask Party website alongside mainstream political commentators.

Just yesterday in speaking with David Ahenakew's reinstatement into the FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations] senate, the Premier had this to say, quote:

Given the extreme nature of the comments that were made . . . imagine the rightful indignation of any group in the province if . . . any individual . . . were to say these things about a definable group . . .

Mr. Speaker, where is the rightful indignation in this case? If the Premier truly believes those words, if he does not endorse or share the views expressed by this blogger, he needs to immediately and unequivocally distance himself from her extremist comments. I look forward to the Premier's response.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Canora.

Better Business Bureau Torch Awards

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of attending the fourth annual Better Business Bureau Torch Awards held on March 19 here in Regina. The gala event honoured businesses and individuals in the province who have consistently conducted their operations with the highest standards.

I would like to thank the sponsors of the Torch Awards and in particular major sponsor Jim Kellett and the K-Line Group of Companies for their continued support of this worthwhile event.

Seven awards were presented to the following businesses: M.C. Painting & Bodyworks, Nestor's Bakery, Cowtown, the Association of Regina Realtors, Expert Hearing Solutions, Performance Marine, and J.A.B.A. Construction Limited.

Keynote speaker Darci Lang touched upon the theme of the Torch Awards and its celebration of positive business and community relationships with her simple message: focus on the 90 per cent that is positive in your life rather than spending your energy on the 10 per cent that is not. This is a great attitude not only for businesses but also for individuals, families, and the province.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in thanking the Better Business Bureau for recognizing Saskatchewan businesses and organizations that are having a positive impact

in this province. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Fossil Fools Day

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today, April Fool's Day, there will be many jokes played, but there are many participating today in something that is no joking matter. I'm speaking of course of those individuals who are organizing and attending Fossil Fools Day rallies across the province and around the world.

Fossil Fools Day is an occasion to raise awareness of the environmental impact of fossil fuel production and consumption. In Saskatchewan, thanks to the hard work of the Energy Action Coalition, the rally is about lobbying the Sask Party government to show leadership in developing the tar sands in an environmentally friendly way — a way that will help grow the economy but one that is sustainable.

Mr. Speaker, we have the advantage of learning from the Alberta experience in order to avoid repeating many mistakes in this province. With any luck the Minister of Environment has finally had the opportunity to read up on the issue. Hopefully she now knows that the tar sands development involves more than just something to do with water. Although the minister and the Sask Party may see environmental issues as a joke, the good citizens of Saskatchewan certainly do not.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask all of my colleagues to join me in commending those individuals who, on this Fossil Fools Day, are raising awareness of this important issue and acting as environmental stewards for our province. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Arm River-Watrous.

Acknowledging Saskatchewan Hockey Teams

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I want to congratulate all the hockey teams in my constituency that provide many . . . makes the winter months go much faster. But I would like to in part congratulate a few teams, which is the Wynyard Monarchs Pee Wee which are provincial C championships over Maidstone. I would also like to congratulate the Davidson Cyclones and Kenaston Blizzards, two men's senior teams that were played off in the northern D men's final.

That provided excellent entertainment, also a little more for me because being so close I know most of the players on both of the teams. They provided some excellent, excellent games to watch. The first game, Davidson . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I'd ask members to come to order and allow the member to complete his statement. The member from Arm River-Watrous.

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, Davidson won the first game there, and then the second game moving to Kenaston where it went into overtime, where Sniper Kevin Johnson scored the winning goal to give Davidson the northern D championship.

Davidson then went on to play Eastend and it was an excellent game. The member from Eastend, I want to congratulate Eastend for winning. But it was an excellent game in Eastend; it was one goal. Coming back to Davidson, it went into double overtime before Eastend managed to win it. But it was excellent hockey on all parts, and the rinks in both of them were filled to capacity.

So I want to congratulate the Wynyard, Davidson, Kenaston, and all the teams throughout the province that play hockey and provide entertainment for citizens of this province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hindu Society's Annual Banquet

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you Mr. Speaker. On Saturday, March 29, the Hindu society of Saskatoon held its annual vegetarian banquet. A number of Saskatoon MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly] attended, including the members from Saskatoon Riversdale, Massey Place, and Nutana.

The annual banquet is a fundraiser for the Hindu temple, which is located in my constituency of Saskatoon Meewasin. And I consider this event to be a must-attend every year. The Hindu vegetarian banquet, as well as raising funds for the Hindu temple, provides an opportunity for the Indo-Canadian, and in particular the Hindu, community of Saskatoon to celebrate the contributions made by members of that community to the larger society. And those contributions are many.

In attendance are leaders of the academic, professional, business, and community leaders. The Hindu vegetarian banquet is also an opportunity for members of the larger society to acknowledge the contributions made by their Hindu neighbours in a friendly and informal setting marked by good food and entertainment.

I trust that members of the legislature will join me in congratulating the Hindu society of Saskatoon in its 23rd annual vegetarian banquet, and its members in their ongoing, extraordinary contributions to the intellectual, economic, and cultural life of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[13:45]

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

Saskatchewan Politics

Mr. Harrison: — Mr. Speaker, it's once again my regretful duty to inform the House of a sad event, namely the wake that was held this past week which signalled the end of an era in

Saskatchewan politics.

The NDP [New Democratic Party] held what is an annual rite of spring in the world of provincial politics — the leader's dinner. If mood and attendance were any indication, the NDP truly are dinosaurs firmly rooted in the past. Empty tables littered the hall. Indeed the brochure advertising the event did not even say NDP once. The few in attendance listened to the Leader of the Opposition give an astonishingly brief speech to list off seven things the NDP accomplished in power, taking credit for things like the Rolling Stones and the Grey Cup. Mr. Speaker, there was no mention of the legacy of hospital closures, crumbling highways, and deficit budgets.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to stand in this House today as a member of a government looking to the future. We're fixing highways, hiring nurses, and balancing budgets. We're committed to ensuring the current economic growth continues and that everyone shares in the benefits.

To the members opposite, we offer our condolences. To the people of this province, we offer a Saskatchewan that is not only a good place to make a living; it's a great place to make a life.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Environmental Impact of Oil Sands Development

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when reporters asked the Environment minister in February about an Environmental Defence report published relating to oil sands development in Alberta and the effects of that development on Saskatchewan, the minister had very little to say. In fact she said she wasn't familiar with the report at all.

The report suggests that 70 per cent of the sulphur entering Alberta's airshed as a result of the oil sands is transported into Saskatchewan, literally raining acid on our province. At the time the minister was too focused on her trip to Australia to do her job but maybe now she has gotten around to reading the report.

To the Minister of Environment: has the minister finally bothered to read the report and, more importantly, did she actually learn anything?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for the Environment.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member opposite for her question. I've been waiting. It's been about 140 days and considering the environment is supposed to be such a huge priority, I'm surprised it took them

that long.

However, Mr. Speaker, I have been reading up and I've been reading up on the NDP record while they were in office, and I would note to the member opposite that in the budget that was brought down on March 19 we committed to \$1 million for a northwest development plan — something that the previous administration didn't do. So, reading from my briefing note I will say this, quote, "... little data exist from the northwest where oil sands development will occur."

I will also quote from the previous NDP Environment minister who said, and I quote:

We don't have as much information as we need and we actually have to spend some taxpayers' dollars . . . to get a baseline of information on what's happening in the northwest.

We need that information because the NDP didn't get it done.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Morin: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, when asked by reporters about her current understanding of environmental impacts of oil sands development, the minister was at a loss for words. All she could say was, quote:

I've heard things that water is being contaminated and those sorts of things. I don't have any specifics.

Well unfortunately scientists in recent years have discovered many specifics such as the formation of toxic pools, oil spills, the destruction of Canada's boreal forests, the acidification of water and soil, and incredible emission rates. The Sask Party Environment minister may be among the few people in the country that know nothing about the potential consequences of unchecked oil sands development.

To the minister: why should the people of Saskatchewan feel confident that this minister is able to act in the best interests of the environment in their province?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for the Environment.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the member opposite is concerned about my reading schedule, I will continue to quote from briefing material. I will also remind the party opposite that it was under the NDP that the exploration permits for Oilsands Quest in the northwest of this province were issued in the first place. If they had such great concerns about this then, they should have probably addressed the issue starting back in 2005 when the first requests were being made.

Oilsands Quest was granted exploration permits in October 2005, and I quote, “. . . without being required . . .”

The Speaker: — Order. Order. It’s becoming a little more difficult to hear the question and the response. I’ll allow the minister to respond.

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, I thank you. I would point out to the member opposite that in October 2005 Oilsands Quest was given exploration permits by the NDP without being required to complete a full environmental impact assessment.

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

Order. The Minister of Health will come to order. The member from Regina Walsh Acres.

Ms. Morin: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the Environmental Defence report called the unchecked oil sands development in Alberta, quote, “the most destructive project on Earth.” When reporters informed the minister of this in February as she hadn’t heard of the report, she could only laugh. The minister simply wasn’t willing to let reporters bring her down with talk about environmental destruction when she was just hours away from boarding a plane to sunny Australia.

But she’s back to reality now, and today there are people gathering in Saskatoon and Regina to ask the government what they plan to do to ensure oil sand development in Saskatchewan does not produce the same harmful effects being observed in Alberta.

To the Minister of Environment: assuming the minister has bothered to read up on the issues, can the minister tell the people who are raising concerns today about the specific steps her government will undertake to ensure the protection of Saskatchewan’s environment?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for the Environment.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to once again point out what this government is doing. We are doing what the NDP failed to do. And I would remind the member opposite once again that if she reads through our budget that is only just a few weeks old, that she would find that we have put aside \$1 million for a northwest development plan, a plan that the NDP never got done.

Mr. Speaker, we are sampling lakes in the Northwest to watch for the acidification from wind coming in from Alberta. And, Mr. Speaker, I will repeat: we will do what the NDP failed to do.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Funding for Station 20 West

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Here is what one of the members opposite had to say about Station 20 West a year ago in estimates, quote: “So this Station 20 . . . is really unique then in the province, bringing in all the organizations as well as the health authority having a direct link.”

Well, Mr. Speaker, I don’t know if you’ll believe this — I found it a bit hard to believe myself — but that quote was from the member from Indian Head-Milestone, the current Minister of Health. That’s the same minister who, with over \$1 billion just sitting in the bank, ruthlessly took money from the Station 20 project and delivered a severe blow to the hopes and dreams of those who envisioned a better life for those living in Saskatoon’s poorest neighbourhoods.

To the Minister of Health: why this vindictive and harmful cut to a project that he saw value in just one year ago?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, March 19 this new provincial government released a budget that is being well received throughout the province — throughout the entire province, Mr. Speaker.

In the budget process, a government goes through many priorities, looks at what we can do and what we can’t do, looks at the commitments that this government will have to face going forward, whether it’s capital costs or any other issue, Mr. Speaker. And we have to make decisions.

It was not the priority of this provincial government to go along with funding Station 20, be it the auditor’s concerns or many individuals in that community’s concerns. It was the decision this government made in the budget process.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Health was asked why he would cut funding to a program designed to help some of Saskatoon’s most vulnerable families, help them build better lives for themselves and their families. He said the government had other spending priorities — as he’s just reiterated — and pointed to a new fire alarm for St. Paul’s Hospital as one of those priorities.

Perhaps the Health minister is still buying the Premier’s weary message of stark financial times, but the public certainly isn’t buying it, Mr. Speaker. With over \$1 billion surplus, it’s insulting to suggest he couldn’t have done both.

And it’s interesting. In the budget when you look, Enterprise Saskatchewan received an \$8 million transfer. I’m not too sure

from where, but it seems interesting that that's the amount of money that was taken from Station West.

To the Minister of Health, tell the people of Saskatchewan the real reason you cut the funding for this important project. Stop hiding behind imaginary budget constraints and tell us.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that that member should be very aware of a study that was done by the Saskatoon Health Region that looked at all the facilities, not only in Saskatoon but throughout the whole health region. And they would be very aware, because they were the government at the time, when that study came in and said there was about a \$404 million deficit, Mr. Speaker, as far as maintaining the facilities that are under this government's care.

Mr. Speaker, that member would know, but as well as the former minister of Health would know, that study was then conducted around the whole province, and he would know that there is a huge deficit.

Mr. Speaker, you know we talked about a fire alarm or air conditioners in our facilities. Last summer in August it was . . . July or August there was operations cancelled for three or four days both in Saskatoon and in Regina because our facilities were not properly maintained.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that the Minister of Health is quoting the study about infrastructure. Of course it's all about buildings to them.

The study that was done that is really of interest is the core study that was done in the *Health Disparity by Neighbourhood Income* study. And this study confirmed that higher rates of infant mortality, suicide, and illness were found in Saskatoon's poorest neighbourhoods compared to the rest of the population.

In opposition the Sask Party were up in arms over the report, with the member from Kelvington-Wadena calling the findings shameful and demanding the government to act. Now that they are in power, they cut all the funding to the very project that is part of the solution. And it's very nice to put it all into infrastructure. People are suffering.

To the Minister of Health: was the government mistaken in saying that they cared about the health outcomes of Saskatoon's most disadvantaged, or will he admit he's made a mistake and restore funding to the Saskatoon Station 20 West project?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Social Services.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, our government is very committed to helping families with low incomes, with helping those most vulnerable within our society, and we are investing dollars right in Saskatoon next to Station 20. Mr. Speaker, we presently have a 55-unit affordable rental housing project under way. It is 70 per cent towards completion. That includes, Mr. Speaker, an 18-unit complex of two- and three-bedroom townhouses as well as a 37-unit apartment building containing two-, three-, and four-bedroom units. Mr. Speaker, that's a commitment . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I'm having difficulty hearing the minister's response. The minister can complete her response.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's a commitment, Mr. Speaker, of \$4.72 million. In that building, Mr. Speaker, it houses a library and the library will go ahead.

Just yesterday, Mr. Speaker, we made an announcement of an additional \$500,000 given to Egadz to help the vulnerable youth in Saskatoon.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, it's really interesting that that minister would take credit for something that was clearly done under us. That project did not spring up since November '07.

But I do want to remind the Minister of Health of some of the findings of the report that I was just talking about, because he does seem to have lost sight of the issue. The report found that suicide rates were 15 times higher in low-income neighbourhoods than in the more affluent neighbourhoods, while hospitalization for diabetes was 13 times higher. There was a higher incidence of hospitalization and doctor visits for injuries and poisonings, coronary heart disease, mental disorders, and sexually transmitted infections. The report found substantially lower immunization rates among inner-city children and that babies born in the poorer neighbourhoods were more than five times likelier to die than an average city baby.

To the Minister of Health: the people who live these realities don't need rhetoric; they need a plan. What is the minister's plan for improving health outcomes in inner-city neighbourhoods now that he has axed the solution developed by the community?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:00]

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I agree it was the continuation of a project that was begun under the previous government that was not cut in this budget. We will continue the commitment to that project.

However the \$500,000 for Egadz is a new commitment by the new government to help keep youth off of the streets in Saskatoon. Egadz is for our vulnerable youth. They will get an additional \$500,000 for housing. The residents will get help for day-to-day living and access services, and they will get counselling for drug and alcohol addiction services. These are to help the vulnerable youth in Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Emergency Shelter Spaces in Saskatoon

Mr. Forbes: — Yes, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well the Minister of Social Services admits we have a housing crisis, but her actions certainly don't match her words.

For months we've been hearing about concerns with respect to the number of emergency shelter spots available in Saskatoon. Groups dealing with emergency shelter needs say they simply can't keep up with demands for their services. We've seen headline after headline that people are being turned away from shelters because simply there are not enough beds. Most recently we heard of a group of 14 people being referred by the Salvation Army to sleep in the emergency waiting room at St. Paul's Hospital.

To the Minister of Social Services: will the minister take off her rose-coloured glasses and admit that there is an emergency shelter problem, or does she believe there's enough rooms, shelter beds, in Saskatoon? Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the particular incident that the member opposite raised, there was an issue with the shelter not following protocol. That has been investigated and found that that was the case. They now have had that explained.

We have not had statistically . . . The ministry officials have assured me that we have not had an increase statistically of emergency shelter beds in Saskatoon or Regina for this particular winter.

Does that mean we do not have a housing crisis? Yes, we do, Mr. Speaker. That's why I have continued with the projects that were begun, and the programming, through the previous government. But we're going to strengthen those programs, and we're going to add initiatives for housing as soon as we get our report back from the task force.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well Saskatoon Overnight Shelter or SOS is one group that's very interested in working with the government to work on this problem. They have been working with the department to secure funding and a per diem support to establish additional emergency shelter spaces.

In a letter dated January 4, the minister's officials commit to providing SOS with \$3,000 per month and a per diem fee for all the individuals referred to the SOS shelter until the end of the fiscal year. However SOS never received the funding and they don't know why. To the Minister of Social Services: why would the minister send such mixed messages to the groups trying to be part of the solution?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's interesting that we have someone from the NDP standing on their feet — with their record of child poverty, with their record of the situation that the previous member had outlined in the Riversdale constituency, with their record of . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I'd ask members to allow the minister to respond to the question . . .

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With their record of the highest or increasing usage of food banks, with all of the record that they have, with the fact that on the eve of the election they finally woke up to the fact that we did have a crisis in housing, I am so surprised that that member stands on his feet to even begin to ask those questions.

I have met with SOS. My ministry officials are continuing to meet with SOS, and they will help work through the difficulties.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Forbes: — Very interesting answer, Mr. Speaker. In February SOS board members said they were told by the Minister of Social Services at a Passion for Action Against Homelessness meeting that there would always be a per diem funding for SOS.

When the group failed to hear from the government about their funding, they asked the Legislative Secretary to the CBO [community-based organization] sector, the member from Yorkton, to look into it. You can imagine their surprise when he told them the minister said there would be no funding for SOS. Days later they received a letter which said the ministry would

not be extending funding to SOS because, and I quote, “. . . immediate needs this year have been met by other means, those monies are no longer available.”

To the Minister of Social Services: how does she explain why SOS funding was not extended, even though she said it would be? Why has she mismanaged this very important file?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No, she did not say it would be. When I met with a member from SOS, I did not say we would be extending the funding. I asked them to bring forward their business plan.

Mr. Speaker, there are issues that the ministry has discussed with SOS, and that will be ongoing discussions. But what are we doing, Mr. Speaker? We have an expression of interest to partner with different groups, to add to the housing file, the affordable housing file, an additional close to \$50 million. As well as we have in Saskatoon, under construction, 506 units. We are doing an expression of interest to partner with Métis and First Nations to improve housing for Métis and First Nations of \$26 million. And I have a task force, Mr. Speaker, that's looking into even more that we can do.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

The Government's Performance

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, it's official. Either the Saskatchewan Party is incompetent or mean-spirited. Let's review. Today we hear from a Health minister who axed a popular and innovative program in Saskatoon targeted to Saskatoon's most vulnerable citizens. Is he incompetent or is he just plain mean?

We hear from a housing minister who, while acknowledging that the housing situation is a crisis, is playing politics with emergency shelters while bullying senior civil servants. Does she know what a crisis is, or is she sticking her head in the sand?

We even heard about a Premier who proudly boasts on the Sask Party website support from a radical conservative blogger. Does he have any idea how hurtful this blogger's statements were, or does he just not care? To the Premier: is the government he leads mean-spirited or incompetent? Which one is it, or is it both?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank the deputy leader opposite for the question. I would just, I would just say this. I think the budget introduced by the member for Melfort, the Minister of Finance, answers the questions that we hear from opposition members today and in previous days.

Here we have a government in its budget that has demonstrated a commitment to continue, to continue growing, to helping to grow the Saskatchewan economy, to sustaining the growth that exists in the province of Saskatchewan. Of course, Mr. Speaker, also balanced against that is what is action with respect to core neighbourhood issues in the province of Saskatchewan.

The Speaker: — Order. There are certain members who continue to interrupt, and whether it's government or opposition. And I think it's appropriate to at least allow the person responding to respond, as well as the questioner to place the question. I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Action, Mr. Speaker, on addictions treatment for people in this province; action, Mr. Speaker, on school lunch program and fighting child hunger and child poverty; action, Mr. Speaker, with respect to partnering with 5 million new dollars for food banks in this province and other CBOs who want to provide job skills, Mr. Speaker.

This side of the House has demonstrated in its first few months in office and in this budget that in the issue of social issues and on economic issues, we will choose to be about action. We'll leave the talk over there, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, it's action all right and this has been simmering since day one. The day they're sworn in, they have \$1 billion in the bank, and they call the province's finances stark. Is that incompetence? Then they start firing 30-year public servants and members of the province's Labour Relations Board who went through a selection process. I think that's called bully tactics. Then they dangle a carrot in front of communities facing school closures, but it's now clear that they're just false hope. Did they know that that promise would be broken when they made it? Incompetence or just plain meanness. Then they told us before the election there'd be no essential services. Then they introduced essential services. Is that incompetence or is that meanness?

A question to the Premier: how can he have any confidence in the government he leads when it's clear to the public that they are either incompetent or mean or both? Which is it?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — You know, you know, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting, the difference in the reality over there amongst the NDP benches and the reality right across this province where

people in Saskatchewan are excited not just about the momentum they see in the province, the common sense approach of the new government, its actual commitment to and follow-up actions on social issues for core neighbourhoods in our province, Mr. Speaker; the commitment of this government both to rural Saskatchewan, to urban Saskatchewan; the keeping of already 56 promises from the last platform, Mr. Speaker. There is a difference. There is a difference with respect to the reality that we find over on those benches opposite and the reality across the province. I think it was reflected in a poll not long ago that was in the, that was in *The StarPhoenix* where the people of Saskatchewan, if given the choice today, in larger numbers would choose the Saskatchewan Party over that tired, old opposition over there.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, they fired several senior public servants that had decades of service to the people of this province, and it's going to cost them millions and millions of dollars. In fact they acknowledge that five people will probably, or eight people will probably cost them \$4 million.

Then they fired the Labour Relations Board that went through a selection process, and they appoint their good friend at a \$60,000 increase. They say that they needed \$8 million for other issues in the health system. Well, Mr. Speaker, I think if you add up all the firings and the kinds of severance they're going to pay these people, it will mean \$8 million. They had a choice. They are mean-spirited and obviously they're incompetent. Will the Premier acknowledge today that it was mean-spirited and incompetent, or is it both, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I'll get to transition in a moment and the comparisons between that party over there and this party on our side. But before I say that, Mr. Speaker, let me just, let me just reflect again on the budget. The budget and the actions of this new government prior to the budget keeps almost all of the election promises already in the first four months of our government, promises we made to the people of the province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, that budget, that budget sees an important strategic increase in investment in health care. It sees significant increases in education. It sees increases, Mr. Speaker, in advanced education. It reduces some debt. It lowers property taxes and keeps a promise that we made there, Mr. Speaker.

That particular budget is why this side of the House continues to enjoy the support of Saskatchewan people. That side of the House is seen as out of touch and backward looking.

And with respect to transition, Mr. Speaker, you bet we did things differently. We didn't fire a single mom on Christmas Eve like the members opposite did when they did a transition. We didn't fire 200 provincial department officials with the help of now the new Justice minister, the way that opposite party did without any class at all. We have conducted this transition as we have the budget, Mr. Speaker — professionally and with respect to the taxpayers for whom we work.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 20 — The Administration of Estates Amendment Act, 2008/Loi de 2008 modifiant la Loi sur l'administration des successions

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 20, The Administration of Estates Amendment Act, 2008 be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice has moved first reading of Bill No. 20, The Administration of Estates Amendment Act, 2008 be now read a first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. Carried.

Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

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

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

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

[14:15]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure on behalf of the government to table answers to questions 418 to 450.

The Speaker: — Questions 418 to 450 tabled.

An Hon. Member: — Point of order.

The Speaker: — What's the member's point of order.

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. During question period today, the member from Martensville, the Minister of the Environment read from and quoted from, acknowledging she was quoting from a briefing note, Mr. Speaker. The rules clearly indicate that members opposite can

ask that briefing notes quoted from in question period can be tabled in the House. Mr. Speaker, we ask that the Minister of the Environment's material be tabled in the House today in its entirety.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of the Environment, we'll be very pleased to table the documents he referred to in the interests of making sure that the members opposite have the adequate information to have, to even mount a mediocre objection.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. While documents of this nature do not have to be tabled, I appreciate what's been moved by the Government House Leader.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Gantfoer that the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Mr. Van Mulligen.]

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

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to stand and enter into the debate on the budget.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to start my debate last night and my views on the upcoming budget or the budget that was presented, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to just summarize some of the concerns that I had, Mr. Speaker. And I think that there were four areas that this budget needed some additional work on before it would be a budget that was truly a budget that represented the needs of the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

One, Mr. Speaker, was that we needed to have an increase, an immediate implementation of the property tax commitment made by this government, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, they went into an election promising a 10 per cent property tax cut, Mr. Speaker, and they delivered a 2 per cent property tax cut — 2 per cent. Now, Mr. Speaker, it's only 2 per cent, less than what a pizza would cost, Mr. Speaker — 28 to \$30 in the city of Regina, Mr. Speaker. this at a time when they're sitting on a surplus of more than \$1.3 billion, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we saw nothing in the area of housing, Mr. Speaker. The issue of accessibility and affordability of housing for many of the residents in our larger urban areas and some of our smaller cities has outpaced their ability to pay. Mr. Speaker,

those who are on social assistance, those who are the working poor in our province can't afford either to buy or to rent accommodations in our province. Mr. Speaker, did we see any movement on affordable housing and the issue of accessibility for those people in this budget? Mr. Speaker, none. Did we see any movement on accessibility or affordability for students? None. Mr. Speaker, they fell far short in addressing the issue of affordable and accessible housing for those people in our province.

Mr. Speaker, on the issue of training seats, again we saw an increase of about 1,100 training seats — less than half of what was in the budget just one year ago. Mr. Speaker, at a time when we have the tightest labour market we've ever seen in this province's history, when we've had a situation where we have so many young people that need access, particularly Aboriginal young people, access to those training opportunities to be productive members of our labour market in the future, Mr. Speaker, we saw a measly 1,100 — measly 1,100 — new training seats at a time when we have unprecedented wealth and opportunity in our province.

Mr. Speaker, we have an economy that's firing on all eight cylinders, Mr. Speaker, throughout the province, one that's bringing unprecedented revenues to the province. And at this time we should see a greater, greater number of training seats in the province, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to just mention for a second the program that the members brought in, put into place, the graduate retention program, that would return up to \$20,000 for graduates of post-secondary education here in Saskatchewan. But, Mr. Speaker, it fails to address those young people who would have to leave Saskatchewan to get their education and then come to Saskatchewan for employment.

And there are a number of opportunities in our particular medical community where we don't educate and we don't train those people in our province. Respiratory therapist would be a good example. So if you want to become a respiratory therapist, you have to go to Edmonton. And we actually send students to Edmonton for their training, and then they come back to work in the province of Saskatchewan. Our young people, they should have access to the same opportunity for that \$20,000 program.

And, Mr. Speaker, they're denied it. They're denied it because they weren't trained in a Saskatchewan facility, Mr. Speaker. They weren't trained in one of our post-secondary education facilities. But, Mr. Speaker, they can't be because we don't have those training opportunities here. So those young people should be afforded the same, the same retention opportunities as other students would. Mr. Speaker, it's a very important issue.

Mr. Speaker, and last but not least, the budget failed to address the issue of environment and the environmental sustainability that we need to see in future economic development. Mr. Speaker, we want to leave our province environmentally more sound than when we found it. We want our children to have the same opportunities we had to have beautiful parks to go to, to have the opportunity to spend time in rural Saskatchewan and northern Saskatchewan and have a beautiful environmental environment to be in.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if these issues had been addressed, this would have been a very, very good budget. As I indicated yesterday, there are many very good things in this budget. And, Mr. Speaker, this budget is built upon a foundation of many previous budgets, Mr. Speaker. And it is a good budget to the majority of people in Saskatchewan. Many of my constituents are going to benefit from items in this budget.

But, Mr. Speaker, there are some flaws in this budget. If the members opposite, the government, would address these flaws, this would be an exceptional budget. And, Mr. Speaker, with that I am going to indicate that I will be supporting the amendment and not the main motion, and at this time take my seat.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Enterprise and Innovation.

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party's first provincial budget is the right budget at the right time. It's about keeping our promises and make sure Saskatchewan is ready for growth. This budget has already delivered on 40 of our government's campaign promises, and actually a number of the party opposite's promises as well, Mr. Speaker.

The mood of our province has shifted. Saskatchewan has shed its image as an NDP, have-not province, and is seen now as an economic leader in Canada and North America. While parts of Canada and much of the United States are now bracing for an economic downturn, Saskatchewan's economy will remain strong.

The investments in infrastructure in this budget will ensure that our province is ready for growth. Saskatchewan is among the nation's leaders in terms of recent economic activity and growth: retail sales growth, number one in Canada; wholesale trade growth, number one in Canada; international export value growth, number one in Canada.

And the experts agree on what lies ahead for us. RBC Financial Group and TD Economics both predict Saskatchewan will record the strongest economic growth in Canada this year. BMO Financial Group says Saskatchewan will be number one in Canada for economic growth, overtaking Alberta. And last week the Canada West Foundation forecast Saskatchewan to lead the nation with economic growth of 3.6 per cent in 2008. Its report says that the outlook for the Saskatchewan economy is very favourable for virtually every sector. From coffee row to corporate boardrooms, Mr. Speaker, people across this province are exuding confidence. Saskatchewan residents are genuinely optimistic about what their future holds.

This is a time of tremendous growth in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. It is critical that we be ready to accommodate this growth, to encourage this growth, and to stimulate even more growth in a sustainable and responsible manner. Mr. Speaker, the budget's key component is the \$1 billion ready-for-growth initiative. This is the largest investment in infrastructure in Saskatchewan's history. It's also a huge first step in repairing 16 years of NDP neglect of our ailing provincial infrastructure.

The budget outlines \$191 million for health care improvements, \$164 million for new education projects, and \$139 million for municipal infrastructure and community facilities. We have committed \$3.5 million to continue our Sask bio program which supports investment and ownership in biofuel facilities in this province, something Saskatchewan is uniquely positioned to explore and develop. All of these items represent key resources for capital and infrastructure improvements.

Mr. Speaker, businesses of this province need a transportation network which is an enabler of our economy and its continued development — not a hindrance or an obstacle. That's why the ready-for-growth initiative also contains \$408 million for improving our roads and highways. This will go far toward ensuring the safe and efficient movement of people, goods, and services throughout Saskatchewan and to markets beyond.

How are we encouraging our own Saskatchewan companies, Mr. Speaker, and not only these but the international companies and investors from around the world whose interest we seek and welcome here? We can look to the significant competitive business tax changes which are a prominent part of this budget.

As of July 1, 2008, the general corporate capital tax is being eliminated, although special tax rates continue to be applied on the taxable paid-up capital of financial institutions. In addition the corporate income tax — CIT — rate will come down to 12 per cent, among the lowest in Canada, with further reductions to CCT [corporation capital tax] resource surcharge rates. This is a major contributor to maintaining the economic momentum we have built and are building in Saskatchewan.

On top of this, Mr. Speaker, the income threshold for the current 4.5 per cent small business corporate income tax rate is being increased from 450,000 to \$500,000. Further reductions to the corporate capital tax resource surcharge rates have been made. And the 10 per cent mineral exploration tax credit is being reinstated. This, Mr. Speaker, is providing a significant economic stimulus at a crucial juncture in our provincial history.

People are coming to Saskatchewan in numbers we have not seen in half a century. Our province's population grew by 16,492 over the past year. It's the biggest one-year jump in population since 1952. The number of workers in Saskatchewan grew by 3.4 per cent in January 2008 over January 2007. The number of people employed in the province increased to 433,100 from 418,800 in January of last year.

Mr. Speaker, the business incentives I have described will not wedge the door tighter in the face of opportunity and investment. It will swing it open even wider. And while we welcome our new residents, we also congratulate those who have decided to stay here and build their lives and careers at home in Saskatchewan.

[14:30]

The new graduate tax rebate that we are introducing in this budget for young people staying in Saskatchewan is proof of that. So is the offer of a tuition rebate of up to \$20,000 for post-secondary graduates, alongside a continued freeze on tuition rates. And so are the major increases in training

incentives and expanded seat spaces in vocational trades which will help address the labour needs that have accompanied our remarkable economic prosperity.

Mr. Speaker, this ready-for-growth budget keeps no less than 40 of the promises the Saskatchewan Party made to the people of this province in the last election. We have delivered a balanced budget, which is one of those promises. The \$250 million debt reduction, Mr. Speaker, is another of those promises.

But there is one promise in particular that is quite significant: the big changes in the way Saskatchewan will be doing business from now on. These changes aren't coming somewhere down the road. They are already happening, and it represents an historic turning point for our province and our approach to economic development. I'm talking, Mr. Speaker, about the establishment of Enterprise Saskatchewan.

Our economy is on a roll in many sectors — in fact almost all sectors — and because of that, we are being called the rising star of Western Canada and perhaps the entire country. These are great days to be living and working in Saskatchewan. But we want to do everything possible to make certain that it stays that way. The critical quality for achieving this goal is to not be satisfied with the status quo.

Yes, we are enjoying record prosperity. But we want to do even better, and we want it to continue, and we want to broaden the base of this already dynamic economy. This will only happen, Mr. Speaker, if we encourage investment and innovation and support it in every way possible. Our ability to seek out and create new markets for our products, encourage investment, and stimulate growth will be how we sustain this economy.

Enterprise Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, will be the first of its kind in Canada, a special operating agency organized and based on the key sectors of our economy. It will — through its collaborative sector teams and other participants — identify, develop, and monitor competitive advantages and disadvantages in each sector. It will prescribe action, remove barriers to growth, and facilitate stronger economic planning by accommodating increased leadership and partnerships.

Enterprise Saskatchewan is a bold and innovative approach to creating sustainable economic growth in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, its emphasis will be on being quick and flexible.

It will be led by economic development and community stakeholders to coordinate the province's growth agenda. The Premier has made it very clear that our economic growth is too important to not involve strong input from industry and other partners in economic development. We need stronger credibility, idea generation, and genuine partnerships with all key stakeholders. We need more grass roots and open sharing of concerns and fresh policy thinking. And we need increased coordination and focus.

Mr. Speaker, all of these qualities contribute to the most important objective — an emphasis on outcomes and results, not just activities. An example of this is the enterprise regions program. This will see \$2 million to be provided to high-performing regions and \$1 million for development of tools and initiatives for regional capacity building, Mr. Speaker.

One of this government's highest priorities is getting the word out, far and wide, that Saskatchewan is the best place to live, work, and operate a business, and to invest, Mr. Speaker. Efforts to communicate this message will be led by Enterprise Saskatchewan and coordinated with other agencies. This will mean effective co-branding, co-marketing, and strategic and aggressive promotional and sales efforts.

Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to see the board hit the deck running with the inaugural meeting yesterday. Yesterday was a full and productive meeting of the board. We have very talented and well-respected individuals that are working together to establish a solid foundation from which Enterprise Saskatchewan will lead economic development in Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, I can say that I am proud to be associated with that board and those members.

The board's mandate, Mr. Speaker, is to pass along recommendations to cabinet as well as to provide direction to the CEO [chief executive officer] of Enterprise Saskatchewan. The board will also communicate its findings to the public on a regular basis. Public accountability is at the heart of the philosophy behind Enterprise Saskatchewan. This new approach is exciting, and we have high expectations of what it will mean for our future economic development.

Mr. Speaker, this budget goes a long way to seeing that these expectations become a reality. This budget benefits all Saskatchewan people in many ways in terms of business, careers, quality of life, and hope for the future. Our hope is that we have laid the foundation for continued growth with this budget, growth that is as smooth and responsible as possible. I think we've approached this challenge in the spirit of Saskatchewan: a spirit of common sense, optimism, and co-operation.

Mr. Speaker, the outcome will be the kind of province we know Saskatchewan can be and the kind of place we can be proud to tell the world about. Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased and proud to support the Saskatchewan Party's first budget.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Bradshaw: — Mr. Speaker, good day. And this being April 1, I actually wanted to have a little bit of fun here. I wanted to stand up here and say how we had such a deplorable, disgusting budget and how I wouldn't be able to support it. But that was . . . They told me April 1 ends at — or the joking ends at — noon time so I can't say that. What I can say, Mr. Speaker, is this is a fantastic budget, an absolute fantastic budget.

You know, I give credit. I give credit to our Finance minister. I give credit to the cabinet. I give credit to everybody that worked on this to move, to move Saskatchewan forward. As everybody knows, not everything is perfect. It's not the perfect budget, as the Finance minister said, but boy it's as close to being perfect as you can get. I'm telling you it's basically like our constituency assistant at home, as close to being perfect as you can get. And I have to say that, Mr. Speaker, because I know that she is watching, and she's as close to being perfect as you

can get.

Mr. Speaker, being from the Carrot River Valley out in rural Saskatchewan, one of the most beautiful parts in all of Saskatchewan, you have to realize how a budget like this is going to support us to move us ahead.

In rural Saskatchewan, or at least in Carrot River Valley we have lakes. We have trees. We have trees that . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . yes, we've got trees. It's not like the people from down south here, you know. These are trees that actually grow; people don't plant. We've got fantastic opportunities for hunting, for fishing. Everybody knows the story about Tobin Lake, how the fish are that big. And we won't get into that because I just about got myself in trouble last time, Mr. Speaker. But anyway, we have a fantastic outfitting business going on up there.

We've got beautiful parks, beautiful regional parks. And I should know. I sat as a director on Pasquia Park for quite a number of years. And you know, Mr. Speaker, these parks were being stymied. These small, small community parks, they didn't have the resources. In this budget, in this budget there is \$525,000 going into the regional parks to help out our parks and our small communities. This is something that we really, really need in rural Saskatchewan.

The other thing that we've got up there in Carrot River is we have some of the most progressive farmers, the most progressive farmers in I would have to say Western Canada and maybe all of Canada. These farmers work very hard at their jobs, and they do a good job. And they grow a lot of crops. They don't just rely on wheat and barley, Mr. Speaker. They rely on a lot of different things.

This budget is going to help out our farmers. We're going to be up to . . . It's going to save the average farmer just about \$2,100 on the education portion of their taxes, Mr. Speaker. This is going to be a great help, a great help.

The other thing that this budget does is it's going to fully fund, fully fund the ag stability, the ag investment, formerly known as the CAIS [Canadian agricultural income stabilization] program; 91.5 million total funding, Mr. Speaker. It's a campaign commitment, and we're going to keep it. Also, Mr. Speaker, we're going to look at the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance; \$129.8 million total funding. That's a \$25 million increase from the province's share of premium costs. And as promised, as promised, we will take a look at crop insurance and try and make it more fair and more equitable in the years to come.

We do this, spending money properly. The NDP, when they were there, pledged over \$100,000 in public funds to go and fight against the democratic will of the farmers when they funded the friends of the wheat board. We're not going to waste money like that, Mr. Speaker. We're going to put our money right where it belongs.

Also this budget, this budget is going to reduce the education portion of the taxes of our homeowners up in our area and in all of the province.

We're seeing people moving back, Mr. Speaker. Obviously

we're going to have to have money. We're going to have to have money for our small towns for our infrastructure. So towns like Carrot River and Nipawin and Tisdale, places like that, they can go out there and they can start putting up lots for the influx of people we know, for the influx of people we know, Mr. Speaker, that will be moving back — moving back and staying. And we have a \$300 million interest-free loan for these communities, specifically for these communities to go and do that.

We're also going to be putting money into health care, Mr. Speaker. And I've got a little story to tell you about in our constituency on health care. Mr. Speaker, a matter of just a few years ago, there was a hospital in Arborfield that was closed, that was closed by that government. And they closed that hospital. And they said don't worry, don't worry; Carrot River is only 15 miles down the road. Well then, then, then they got to Carrot River a few years later and they went into Carrot River, and that government closed down the hospital in Carrot River and said, don't worry, Nipawin's just a few miles down the road.

Mr. Speaker, we, we as a Saskatchewan Party government are going to make health care accessible to all. We're going to improve the health care. We're going to improve the infrastructure to make things work. We're not going to tell people, it's just a few miles down the road.

Some of the things, some of the things we're going to have in health care . . . just take a look at the nurses for example. How quickly, how quickly we've moved on our promises for nurses, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Bradshaw: — You know, we got \$20.7 million for nurse recruitment and retention, on top of the 60 million partnership with the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses funded in 2007 and 2008.

These are things that are coming out of our budget: 10.5 million for more nurse training seats; 6.1 million for more physician training seats, recruitment and retention; the new prescription drug plan . . .

[14:45]

An Hon. Member: — But none for grocery stores.

Mr. Bradshaw: — And none for grocery stores, unfortunately . . . 10.7 million increase for the cancer care; 6.1 million increase for new prescription drugs. Here's a real good one, a 10-year, a 10-year capital plan for health care, Mr. Speaker. This is only done by a responsible government — 250,000 to conduct patient exit surveys; 1.5 million for patient-first review of health care; 1 million a year in new funding to promote health and wellness. Mr. Speaker, it just moves on and on. This government is committed, is committed to helping Saskatchewan.

Going back to our constituency, I see big things happening in our constituency now that we have a what you would call a business-friendly government in power. In our Pasquia Hills

there has been a lot of forecasting, a lot of drilling going on out there and I don't think that these people are doing it just for the goodness of their heart. I think these people are going there because they know that the Saskatchewan Party government, the government that is in power, are going to help these people come in and move this province ahead.

We have logging up there. We have uranium. We have uranium that is right . . . We're basically at the bottom end because we're on the forest fringe. We have uranium that we could be, could be if looked at properly, we could be maybe one of the processing places to enrich uranium. And who knows, this may come. This may come to be.

We have the east-west corridor, Highway 55, running through there. Now Highway 55 is not exactly what you'd call in very good shape right now. Fact is, it is in deplorable shape. It has been promised for years that Highway 55 would be . . . They never ever kept it up. This highway, this highway should be redone. It's an east-west corridor. And I realize, being an MLA, that's one thing I want to push on, is get that Highway 55 redone.

This government, this government is committed, and I believe that they will do that eventually. When I say eventually, we have such an infrastructure deficit within this province, we have to get a lot of other places done first. And I realize that, but I want to push to get that done because we desperately need an east-west corridor there.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, we have to think about our children. We have to think about our children. That's one of the main things.

I have two, two children. One is in her first year of university, taking education. What we want to do is we want to see more people in Saskatchewan because when she comes out of university, I want to see her get a job in a school because I want to see new schools rather than schools closing down. Let's get the people here.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Bradshaw: — We have, Mr. Speaker, we have to do something to keep our children here, and this budget does it. This budget does it because we have a \$12 million graduation retention plan. Up to \$20,000 in tuition rebates, Mr. Speaker — that's what was brought out in this budget for post-secondary graduates of Saskatchewan institutions.

We have a 38.1 million funding increase in post-secondary institutions. We have 25.5 million to continue the university tuition freeze for 2008.

Mr. Speaker, maybe I'm a little greedy but what I want to do is I want to see my kids. I want to see my kids here looking after me when I get old.

Mr. Speaker, also, also in the Carrot River Valley, we have our First Nations people. We have the First Nations people of Red Earth and Shoal Lake. The First Nations people is one very large advantage that Saskatchewan has over other provinces. Here we have a young group, a young group of people just

sitting there waiting to go into our labour market. And, Mr. Speaker, this is going to help us in Saskatchewan move forward because we as a Saskatchewan Party government are willing to consult with our First Nations, are willing to consult so we can work together with them, not against them.

In this budget, in this budget on First Nations, for the First Nations people it provides a \$14 million increase for a total of 50.9 million for the First Nations Trust. This budget also provides 4.2 million to address provincial financial obligations for five treaty land entitlement agreements.

The Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party supports the continued success of the First Nations and Métis people. In this budget we provide 1 million of funding and add 200 new training opportunities for on-reserve adult basic education through the regional colleges. It is very important that we meet, that we meet with our First Nations people and that we have these training, these training spots available; that we get them trained because, Mr. Speaker, what we are going to do, what we are going to do is we are going to move this province forward. We're going to get everybody working here. We also will give to the Saskatchewan institute of technology \$500,000 to add 100 new seats.

In the 2008-2009 budget, Mr. Speaker, 50.6 billion of federal and provincial funding has been allocated for the affordable housing program and the Aboriginal housing program. Mr. Speaker, these are things that we are doing with our First Nation companions.

Now I happen to know that the member from Athabasca, the member from Athabasca said on December 13, 2007, he claimed that the Saskatchewan Party would neglect First Nations and northern communities. Obviously he's wrong. We are not. We're going to be working with them, Mr. Speaker.

On top of that, in this budget, Mr. Speaker, what we do is we see a \$250 million debt reduction — \$250 million. That's not small change. That's not small change. This ready-for-growth budget, Mr. Speaker, puts out \$1 billion, \$1 billion for capital and infrastructure improvements.

Now \$1 billion or 1 billion is a very large number. And let me tell you, let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, exactly how large a number it is. It's almost hard to comprehend, comprehend how large it is. Mr. Speaker, \$1 billion is one grain of salt, one grain of salt in an Olympic swimming pool that is filled with salt. One dollar is one grain of salt. A billion is a very large number. Mr. Speaker, that's what we're coming through with. That's what we're coming through with for capital in infrastructure.

This budget also, this budget also keeps 40 of our promises — fantastic, four months. You know, we've got most of our promises done in four months.

You know, Mr. Speaker, at one time the former premier, the former premier from that side said, well we are just a wee province. Well I'm saying, Mr. Speaker, we are a we province but I'm spelling it a different way. He's using w-e-e. I'm using w-e. It's a we province, Mr. Speaker, and I support this budget to my whole heart and I do not support the amendment. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise this afternoon to talk about the budget and deal with a number of the issues that are here within Saskatchewan. And I would like to start off my talk this afternoon by putting it into a bit of context by quoting one of my favourite poems here in Saskatchewan. And I know that people appreciate both in the legislature and across Saskatchewan when I identify the Saskatchewan poets that have done a good job here in Saskatchewan.

The poem I'm going to read is by Andrew Suknaski who now lives in Moose Jaw but he's from the southern part of the province, Wood Mountain area. And the poem is called "Indian Rings on the Edge of Tonita Pasture" and I will explain why this is my favourite Saskatchewan poem.

the meadow lark's song proclaiming spring
waters lazily flowing from wood mountain peat moss
springs
becoming five mile creek running north
through this coulee
where i caught fish and swam in boyhood unaware
of three indian rings that nearly vanished
beneath dust from a field
lee soparlo's father worked
trying to feed his family in the thirties — this
and standing here now in this great centre ring
where something holds
me around the heart the way
the wired stone anchors a cornerpost of the nearby fence
stretching north
and west to the village where i grew up — i claim these
things
my ancestral space to move through and beyond
chronicling the meaning of these vast plains
in a geography of blood
and failure
making them live.

Now I like this poem and I use it quite often when I'm talking to people because of the line about ancestral space. And a budget in the year 2008 is another chance for us for as Saskatchewan people to basically claim our ancestral space on this vast plains and make appropriate decisions that will allow us to build on the geography of blood and failure that makes this place come alive.

And so, Mr. Speaker, a budget — as we on this side know well, and I think that the members opposite are learning now — is about choices. And there was a great deal of fortune available for the Finance minister and the team of budget ministers and cabinet and caucus as they moved forward this spring to put forward a budget for Saskatchewan, because there were resources there. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that means that in some ways the choices have been harder, because basically the public are expecting a broad array of services that will be provided to them.

My first response in many ways would be to say thank you to the Finance minister and his people for listening very carefully to the advice that they received from senior civil servants right across the board as they developed the budget. It's very clear that they built this budget based on the format that we had used in government for quite a number of years. And that's very clearly acknowledged when in the press release announcing the budget they talk about the 15th consecutive balanced budget and the fact of all of the credit upgrades that have taken place as a result of careful planning.

Now this particular budget has many good things, as some of my colleagues have outlined and clearly as members of the opposite have outlined, but there are four gaps that can be addressed. It's our hope that they would do it this year and not wait. Obviously some of the choices that will be made may extend that time period to a longer time period.

But basically the four gaps are . . . not very much on property tax relief for individuals and families, probably a substantial amount in the agriculture side but not so much for ordinary people in Saskatchewan. The number of new training seats — there are some more, but there aren't sufficient numbers, and it would have been possible to put more money in that area. Also the whole issue of affordable housing has become even more important than it was a year ago, and this has not had the attention that it should have had. And finally the areas of green initiatives have been substantially changed and reduced, and there's many things that need to be done in that particular area.

[15:00]

So I would like to spend a little bit of time talking about how the government can take some steps to address some of these issues. Now the first one is the property tax relief. I think there was a miscalculation made there, that people expected that there would be substantially more dollars there, based on the words that we had heard for many years coming from the members who were then in the opposition. And this is an area where the government I think has made a miscalculation about the response.

I think that a number of people have indicated that the kinds of increases that will be coming on their property taxes because of the structural needs and other things that are there in municipalities or in smaller towns will eat up any of the kind of money that's returned in this way. And so I would urge the members opposite to take another look in this particular area and see if there isn't some way that they can move up the proposals that they have to deal with the property tax issue so that they're dealt with in a more expeditious fashion.

Training seats continues to be a challenge. It has been a challenge for every government for quite a number of years as young people complete their high school education or sometimes their junior college kind of education and are looking at what kind of training that they want to start and build their career. There were substantial numbers of seats added last year and the previous year. I think this year the numbers were not as many as had been added last year. That seemed a little bit counterintuitive, based on the numbers and the dollars available in the budget. And so I urge the members opposite to listen carefully to the people across the province and work to increase

the number of training seats at least to the level of the increase that was done last year and possibly more.

The whole area of housing and affordable housing has moved to the front of the concern. And it's tied in with the property tax relief issue as well. As the value of properties has increased across the province — whether they're people owning their own homes or condos or other things, or whether it's rental homes, rental properties — all of the costs around this aspect of living in Saskatchewan have increased dramatically.

And there is a role for the government to be involved in this whole field, and it has to be done in a way that encourages a long-term solution. And I know the Minister of Finance and others obviously figured out a couple of days before the budget was going to be released that there was a fairly major hole as it related to this area. So we did have an announcement of a study, another study. But we've heard time and time again from many of the members opposite over the last number of years — hey we know where the problem is here; time for study is over; let's get something done.

So it was quite surprising actually — to me and I think the public — that what was the response to what's obviously a major gap in this budget was another study and not necessarily very obvious to me and, I think, to others yet as to what the study will produce or where it's going to go. I think it's obvious that there's a whole number of things that have been done by people who have been working in this area for a long time, and that information would have informed some good policy.

Now it does also reflect the fact that many of the people that worked in some of the most senior policy areas in the government were released for whatever reason, and we're still waiting to hear some of those answers. But it's in some of these fields where some of the best minds that had been working on the problems for a long time are no longer here.

Now it's quite curious to me to listen to the speeches from the new members who have come to the legislature after the last election as opposed to those speeches from those members who have been here for a while. And I think the ones who have been here for a while in the same sense of those of us who had been part of the government before know that it's not as black and white on all of the issues that one is dealing with.

But I think it was especially curious yesterday when I heard some comments about the financial situation that the province was in back in 1991-92 when the last change of government took place. And so I thought, well I'll dig out some of my library materials. I think everybody knows that I collect a lot of material, and I also actually read it.

And so I went to the report of the Saskatchewan Financial Management Review Commission dated February 1992. And I will read from page 1 and 2 of this which is the summary and highlights because it's got a lot of detail. But basically starting out, "Contextual Considerations." So just think of this. This is February 1992 which is 16 years ago I guess it is now. I'm quoting now:

Saskatchewan faces a difficult financial situation. The main causes are weak markets and low international prices

for our agricultural and resource production and economic uncertainty due to worldwide political and market restructuring.

Government spending has been at levels which cannot be maintained based on the province's revenue-generating potential. To re-establish a more secure financial position the government must bring its spending back under control.

This report provides a benchmark. It has measured our Province's current financial position and has established a base upon which choices can be made for our future.

This report advocates allowing the residents of our Province and their elected representatives to participate more fully in the Province's decision-making process through public disclosure, thereby making the government more responsible and accountable.

And then it goes on to say that the accounting principles should be the public sector accounting and auditing committee of the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants guidelines and that it should be used in all government-controlled organizations including Crown corporations. Then it says:

By applying . . . [these Public Sector Accounting and Auditing Committee] guidelines, the accumulated deficit of the Province at March 31 . . . has been restated at \$7.538 billion, rather than the \$3.688 billion which has been reported in the Public Accounts. The 1990-91 deficit has been restated at \$975 million as compared to the \$360 million reported in the Public Accounts. The Commission believes that the revised amounts are a more complete and realistic reflection of Saskatchewan's financial position.

Then it goes on to say that as of October 31 the province's accumulated deficit, using these accounting principles, was 8.697 billion and that the province had incurred a loss over the seven-month period of that particular fiscal year of 1.154 billion. So this would increase the deficit that was there. And basically it also then went through to say that part of the work that was being done in this report was to look at a number of transactions that were not properly reported.

And, Mr. Speaker, I bring this forward and also the report from the Provincial Auditor which was then brought out a little later in 1992 to remind us here in the legislature that we had a major problem in 1992 around accountability and around the role of the legislature in keeping track of the funds that were entrusted to us as government — whether we're on the government side or on the opposition side. And there was a major failure of this institution, which everybody assumes is a building, but it's actually the people here. And we as people had a job to do back then — both opposition and government.

And I'm pleased to say that working together in the committees and in the way that we worked with the Provincial Auditor and with the various accountability structures, that over a 16-year period, we're not in that kind of lack-of-accountability situation that we were in 1992. But what happened in 1992 was there was a fiscal mess. There was a shortage of cash. There was an inability to meet the payments as they came due. There was a

necessity to get some help from the federal government to in fact just keep everything moving along.

The province pulled together — all the people of the province — to deal with this problem. And the government of the day spent much time working at making sure that they could make the right choices to keep the structures of the province going while at the same time bringing the costs of what was being provided more in line with the revenues that were there.

This was not an easy time for the province, and I often like to describe it like this. In that year it was very clear that there was no way of getting out of the responsibility of dealing with the fiscal deficit — in other words, had to get the books back in line. And in fact within a couple years, Saskatchewan produced the first balanced budget in Canada. A lot of people forget that, but we were the first province that actually went back on to a balanced budget. But we had a substantial amount of debt to deal with. And that debt was then tackled in a couple of different ways.

There were some choices made around dealing with the social deficit — education, health, social services, some of the people kinds of things that were needed to be done. And choices were made to make sure that those areas would get the funding. What ended up happening — and I think we all know it, and it was not necessarily only in Saskatchewan, but I think a little more drastic in Saskatchewan — was that a lot of the renewal of the physical structure of the province was delayed. Now the hope was always each year as you do the budget, that it'd only be a one-year delay. But unfortunately it doesn't always work that way because the demands that arise during the year still say, well you've got to keep those capital budgets down.

Now as the previous government, our NDP government, moved forward, we tackled a number of the issues as it related to the social deficit and we also dealt with the levels of taxation that had gotten us out of whack with our neighbours and with other jurisdictions around. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the types of things that ended up happening as we, in a very organized way, tackled income tax deductions, we looked at business tax reductions, we looked at the whole issue of property tax, which I said is a gap in this particular budget. We looked at the resource revenue, whether it's potash or uranium or oil. All of these things were looked at in a methodical way to make sure that the revenues that were going to come in would be sufficient to provide for the long-term health of the province, but that they would also be of sufficient amount to encourage the development and activity in the province of Saskatchewan.

[15:15]

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that the year 2007 — started in 2006 for sure but 2007 and clearly now in 2008 — the confidence in the economy, the way that things have moved, much of that is built on the work that has been done over many, many years as we tried to deal with the crisis time of 1992.

And I think it's disheartening to me but also I think disheartening to people who listen to members speak about this budget that there isn't a recognition of the hard work that we all did to get to the point where we are now. That inability to acknowledge the good work of others is one of the difficulties

that I see with the whole present government as we move forward because there are going to be times where it will take us all pulling together to deal with the issues that are coming.

I want to talk a bit more about this \$1 billion fund that's set up in this budget. And I'm sure, I've spent a fair bit of time working on developing budgets but this was clearly something that the Finance minister and his other ministers working on this budget identified, which was to have something that would look as a core proposal for this.

And so they've taken the ongoing capital spending which happens in any government and then increased it by the appropriate amounts based on the booming Western economy, which has increased the costs of doing any of this kind of work, and then added some money to get it up to \$1 billion spent in this year.

Well I went through quite carefully all of the documents, and I see basically that the ongoing spending is probably around 800 million. And that would have been money that was spent. And if you look at that, those are projects that have been worked on through the appropriate 17-step process in health, I'm not sure how many step process in education or in post-secondary, but those are all things that are moving along and this is the appropriate year to spend this kind of money in those areas.

What I do acknowledge and I applaud is in the area of education. They've actually moved up the K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] construction by \$100 million which then allows for more projects to get started in this year than there has been in other years.

Also in health, they have taken \$100 million to put into the life emergency area — the basically repairs of buildings — and that's basically I think an increase in that particular fund of probably 60 or \$70 million. Slight reduction probably in some of the equipment funds and other things, but there is an injection of cash into the Health budget which allows for that to go.

So those are positive things. But I don't think that the hype that we're hearing about \$1 billion spend quite matches what actually is happening when you look at the books of the province and of all of the education regions and the health regions as we move forward, that many of the amounts of money that are being spent are the amounts that were already planned as we moved forward.

I think that many of us who worked very hard in a number of these files are pleased to have acknowledged — sometimes grudgingly, but sometimes a little more openly — about how well the plans were there. Right now I'm involved as the Justice critic and so there are a whole number of things that the former Justice minister did and worked at in the budget which are now moving along. And so I'm pleased to see that those things continue to have the funding, whether it's some new court facilities or new security that's required, new staff, all those things. That's important that that continues along.

There are some areas where I'm sure later when we get a chance to get into committee we can get more detail which I won't talk about now, where I'd need to have a better

understanding of how all that works. But I think practically that many of the initiatives that have developed over many years and I guess — since I was Justice minister from 1995-99 and then 2000 and 2001 — that continue and provide good service to people, and that's been acknowledged. So I need to say thank you for that.

Now one of the areas that is outlined in the budget — and I laud because it's something that we were working on and this year is the right timing for it to go forward — and that's the whole concept of a provincial capital commission. This is something that has been in the discussion stages for quite a number of years, so I think it's helpful for the public to understand that this just didn't drop out of the air, and in actual fact it was part of an overall plan. And so maybe I can just give a little bit of a background here.

Basically back six years ago there were some discussions about how to change the Wascana Centre Authority Act that would allow it to become the Saskatchewan capital commission Act. And these were supported in the discussions that were going forward by quite a number of the ministers and caucus members, but there were some financial questions that were raised in the process through the various officials whose job it is to ask those questions. And so this ended up . . . I mean obviously the first go-round took a little bit longer. In April 1, 2003 — so that's five years ago today — the whole urban parks program was transferred from the Municipal Affairs and Housing area to Saskatchewan Environment, which included parks.

In that fall, the Wascana Centre Authority, and I know that some of the members here in the House were quite involved with this in various of their previous careers, took a poll of the Saskatchewan residents around Wascana Centre Authority and the Saskatchewan capital commission. And it was positive for a change, but it wasn't overwhelmingly positive, so it forced another look at this.

Then as we all know, the excitement around the digging of the lake here meant that the capital commission project was put on hold for a while. In the late 2005, both the present minister responsible and the mayor of the province were quite interested in restarting this whole process, and that's when the matter started coming back together so that in 2006 — and I think as we moved forward into 2007 — plans were continuing to be made around how there could be a capital commission for Saskatchewan.

I know that one of the original goals was to try to get this done by September 18, 2007, because that's when the Canadian capital commissions organization was having their annual meeting in Regina. Now that didn't quite happen, and a few other intervening things happened. But it's good to see that in this budget and what's happening here, all that work over many years, building on the good work that was done 40 years ago or more, is now coming to fruition, and there's actual dollars allocated to assist in that.

That I think is a common thread or is a common story which one would see in every single department and every single area as it relates to this budget. And I think that's a positive thing about the budget. But once again, I'll remind you that there are

four areas where some of that momentum wasn't followed up on — and that's the property tax relief, clearly the training seats, the affordable housing area, and then the green initiatives.

Now I have been looking at this budget, and I think the Finance minister knows — I'm pretty sure the cabinet knows — that as it exists today, this budget doesn't work. And the reason for that is that certain amounts of the money that are going to be used in the budget this year cannot be used until the law is changed. And I assume that's why the government introduced Bill No. 1 last fall, which was to change the law around the sale of capital assets and using that money for programming.

Now anybody who's had a history in working in a city or a town or municipality knows that you have certain funds where the money can't be used for operating funds. Well effectively that's the rule we've had around the sale of capital assets in the Crowns — that they can't be used for operating budgets — just as a common sense sort of governor on how the spending goes.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in this budget as it stands right now, it doesn't comply with the law of Saskatchewan. To make it comply the law has to be changed, and so that's something that we'll hear about, I assume, as we move forward in this particular session because the money that's sitting over at CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan] from the sale of the upgrader cannot be moved over to the General Revenue Fund until that particular law is changed.

And so one of the issues is, now as a policy has this government changed the perspective on the sale of capital assets within the Crowns or is this a one-time event, or what is this particular issue? And that says something that we will obviously talk about as we move into that particular legislation. But it is a bit of a cloud over this whole budget.

Now if you go back to my comments about the \$1 billion fund — which is actually 800 million in ongoing funding plus 200 million — well of the 200 million health and education, that probably does come from the sale of the upgrader money, the 320 million. We know that there's 40 billion spread out over 10 years that's going to green area and we know that there's some of that money which is not . . . which is capital money is going to be spent in the highways area. All of these things though raise questions about how this is planned.

When we set forward our climate change plan and our green strategy last year, we knew that it was not possible unless the Crowns had resources. And that was one of the reasons that we set up the kind of money that we did in CIC, to allow for the long-term transformation of how we provide energy in this province. That whole underpinning of those long-term plans has been gutted and that's a disappointment to me. I think it's a disappointment to many people across the province. I know it should be a disappointment to the Minister of Environment because she's the one that'll have to be responding about how we do the things that need to be done to meet the plans which have been wholeheartedly endorsed by the new government.

You can't . . . I think that one of the lessons that everybody learns is that you need to make sure that your budgets match the kinds of things that you say in what you do. And so, Mr. Speaker, there's a whole area here as it relates to the money to

allow for the transformation of Saskatchewan to be the energy centre for Canada that isn't in this budget. And I know that there are many people that are disappointed about that, especially the people that work so hard both in industry and in government and in our institutions across the province to develop a plan that would allow for that particular change.

[15:30]

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this budget, it comes in a long history of dealing with some of the major problems that arrived in Saskatchewan in the early '90s and it's, I think, the culmination of many good choices along the way.

I encourage the government to continue to make good choices. And I think they would be well advised to listen to the advice that comes from this side of the House because I hazard a guess that many people respect the kinds of decisions we've made over the last number of years and they would, as voters in Saskatchewan, encourage people to — the people opposite — to listen to what we have to say.

So I end my comments about this budget, and I thank you for listening to me this afternoon.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — I recognize the member for Cannington.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to speak on this historic budget, historic in the sense that it's the first Saskatchewan Party budget to have been presented in this province.

I know back in 1997 when the Saskatchewan Party was first formed, the members opposite who were in the government at the time tried to minimize that event and pretend that it did not have any significance in the province of Saskatchewan and would amount to nothing but a dust storm blowing by in the wind. Well thankfully, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan took a little more notice of the Saskatchewan Party over the years.

And yes, we had to spend some time in opposition and giving the people the opportunity to learn who we were, what we were about, and to give us some opportunity to learn how to operate in the sense of in the House and to learn some of the mechanisms of government, Mr. Speaker. But we've had that opportunity to do so now.

I found it interesting that the member from Regina Lakeview was going back in his speech for material back to 1991 when his seatmate sitting almost directly behind him, the member from Saskatoon Centre — I actually had that written down here just in case I didn't remember it — Saskatoon Centre said this in question period, it's about now, not about the past. So perhaps he needs to lean over and whisper that into the ear of the member from Regina Lakeview, that it's about now. This budget is about now, not about 1991.

I mean I could back to the budgets that came down, what the administration before the NDP won in 1991, go back to 1992 and talk about the \$6 billion in debt that was left there at 15, 20 per cent interest rates. But there's no point in going over that, Mr. Speaker. That has been debated for the last 20 years.

I know that the members opposite would like to go back to 1991 and refight that election all over again because then they were young and fresh and vigorous. But it's 16 years later, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that's not the case with them over there, Mr. Speaker. That's not the case any longer. Sixteen years, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has worn them down to a nubbin of their former selves.

And I know that some of them are excited about my speech. Well as they can tell, I haven't been worn down to a nubbin, Mr. Speaker. I'm as youthful and as enthusiastic as I was back in 1991 when I won.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, this is also a historical budget in the sense that as the member opposite was speaking about, it's a \$1 billion budget on capital, on construction in this province, Mr. Speaker — \$1 billion. That's with a "b." That is a huge amount of money, Mr. Speaker. And yes some of that was built into the process already, but it's the first time in the province of Saskatchewan that \$1 billion has been dedicated to capital construction in this province.

Those people that last fall made a decision at election time, they had a government opposite that had been in power for 16 years. They had a choice of a new party and to create a new government. And they looked at what was going on around the province. And as the member from Regina Lakeview was saying, it was about choices. It was about making decisions.

Well the people of Saskatchewan said, when they made their decision in November of 2007, that they didn't agree with the decisions the members opposite had made when they were in government. They said that the failure to fix the capital infrastructure of this province — the highways — was no longer acceptable. They said that the failure to provide proper educational facilities for our youth was no longer acceptable. They said the fact that we were 800 nurses short in this province was no longer acceptable. The people of Saskatchewan said that the NDP's failure to maintain the health infrastructure was no longer acceptable.

And we heard that message, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We heard that message, and that message is reflected in this budget today.

Mr. Speaker, we're addressing the NDP's failure to provide for highways and roads across this province so that we can grow this economy, so that we can get ready for the growth that will take place, that is already taking place and will take place in the future, Mr. Speaker.

We're going to be able to ensure with this budget that our children will have the proper schools and post-secondary educational facilities to get the education they need so that they will have the opportunities, not just to have jobs in the province of Saskatchewan, but to be able to build careers in the province

of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, to build careers for themselves and to raise their families in the province of Saskatchewan — which I'm sure everyone in this legislature acknowledges is the best place in Canada to be living.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the choices made by the people of Saskatchewan and this budget reflect very positively on my own constituency. Cannington is benefiting, Mr. Speaker, from the \$100-plus oil prices.

Right now in my constituency you would be extremely challenged to find any rental accommodations. Every possible home is being utilized, Mr. Speaker. It was amazing going around this past winter in the various communities and seeing how much renovation and construction is taking place. Every home . . . I shouldn't say every home. Every second home is being renovated, and many new ones are being developed. And fact is in the town of Oxbow they're developing two new subdivisions — two new subdivisions — which is extremely unheard of.

Last winter I was in the town of Griffin, which is just east of Weyburn on the very edge of my constituency. And while I was in there, a gentleman came in and bought the very last lot available in Griffin. I'm not sure when the last time there was a boom in Griffin, but my guess would be sometime in the early 1950s. Every lot is bought up in Griffin. Griffin is a very, very small community, probably 10 to 15 homes. They have an RM [rural municipality] office and a post office. They don't even have a grocery store, so they have to drive all the way to Weyburn or to Stoughton, more than 25 miles either direction, Mr. Speaker.

But the people in that area know and understand this is a community that has potential, and they're prepared to invest and build their homes there. Why? Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they're in the middle of the Bakken oil field which has huge potential for Saskatchewan and will aid in our prosperity in the coming future.

But Griffin's not any different than any of the other communities throughout my constituency. They're all enjoying the benefits of the resurgent resource revenues that are taking place across the province, in particular in southeast Saskatchewan, be it in the Cannington constituency, in Estevan or Weyburn, Moosomin, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or even up closer to Regina in the Indian Head-Milestone area where there is starting to be some oil development now as well.

And fact is there's surveying taking place along the entire east side of the province, even up into the Hudson Bay area looking for oil and oil field developments, Mr. Speaker. This development's also taking place in the Northwest up around the Lloydminster-Cut Knife area, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm not as familiar with that area, but I do know that there is a huge amount of development taking place, and it's going to benefit all of us.

However that means it creates its own challenges. Members opposite, when they were in government, in some ways they were successful in ignoring the infrastructure issues. But it meant at the end of the day that those infrastructure issues having been ignored means that they are now in critical need of

redevelopment. And this was the reason why this government put in place the \$1 billion capital that was needed to develop the infrastructure across the province.

We need that, Mr. Speaker, to develop the resource industries. We also need that in place, Mr. Speaker, to develop the agricultural interests across this province. When people are developing agricultural interests, when you have the transportation of our, now, very high priced agricultural commodities, when we're looking at secondary manufacturing of those products, we need the infrastructure and the highways in place to be able to move those products to market. And unfortunately for 16 years, that necessity was ignored.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that will no longer be ignored. I don't know about all of the other constituencies and what is happening in those areas, but I'd like to relate a little bit about what is being done in my own constituency when it comes to the infrastructure renewal.

Of the \$408 million going into roads and highway construction, there's some of that actually being spent relatively for some new projects that have not been done, Mr. Speaker, in my area — new in the sense that the previous administration generally tried to ignore our area.

But highways like Highway No. 8, Mr. Speaker, are being renewed. And I know that many people in this Assembly have driven on No. 8 and used words that would not be parliamentary in describing the shape of that road. And fact is the former minister of Finance, the member for Regina Albert South at the time, came down No. 8 from Moosomin to attend a health meeting in Redvers and ripped the muffler off of his car. I know that he was not appreciative of that fact and even said so at a meeting with the health boards here in the Assembly, and described the terrible conditions of that road.

Well the current government, Mr. Speaker, will be fixing that road this year.

As well there will be work on No. 48 from Wawota to No. 9. Yes, this project was started under the former administration. It's been ongoing for over five years. It's not that long a stretch of road, and it's still not done. That will be completed this year, Mr. Speaker.

No. 13 Highway will have work done on it. And fact is, Mr. Speaker, last fall after the election, the Department of Highways fixed a bridge west of Kisbey, between Kisbey and Forget, which had been out for six months. It was finally done last fall, and it's still in rough condition in the sense that the pavement hasn't been put over top of the bridge. That will be done this year, Mr. Speaker.

[15:45]

No. 33 Highway will have work done on it, Mr. Speaker. No. 47 Highway will have work done on it from Stoughton south towards Estevan.

There are many more highways in my constituency that I know that need to have work done on them. They have been ignored for years, and I am working with the Minister of Highways to

convince him that these roads and these highways need to be upgraded. But we can't do it all at one time.

The rest of the province has been equally . . . well maybe not equally from my point of view, but have been ignored, Mr. Speaker, as well on the infrastructure. And they need their roads and highways fixed as well. So we're prepared to wait a little bit as long as some is being done.

One of the other areas that the previous administration ignored was capital construction for education for the K to 12 system. The Oxbow school has been on the top of the B-1 list for about five years for new construction. It kept getting bumped off because of health concerns with other schools. Finally after five years, this school will be built this year, Mr. Speaker. And that is a huge benefit to the community of Oxbow and surrounding area especially with two new subdivisions going into that community.

But just to give an example of the condition of our schools and the impact that they have, there was a new school built a number of years ago in the Carnduff community. Last winter I was called to a meeting there, and you know what the concern was? The concern was they had too many children in kindergarten for the size of the school. I know in other areas of rural Saskatchewan that there is a concern of the lack of students and the closure of schools. But in Carnduff, that was not the concern. Their concern was they had too many kids in kindergarten and not enough room and not enough teachers.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's a good problem to have, one that the government was able to resolve, Mr. Speaker, by doing some adjusting within the school division. The school division looked after this, and they adjusted some of the teaching arrangements, and that will benefit Saskatchewan in the long run.

Now I know members in the past have seen me speak on their budgets, and I always have my budget book available with my sticky tabs on it to let me know where I want to go to where I want to speak. So just to make the members opposite feel at home and comfortable, I made sure I had my budget book with the sticky tabs.

So I would like to talk now about the areas of the budget that I'm responsible for, and that is Government Services. Government Services is doing some of those capital construction projects that are part of the \$1 billion.

We're completing the Regina Provincial Correctional Centre which is a \$51.5 million project that was started under the previous administration. We will be completing that. And we will be completing something that the members opposite seem to have missed in this construction, is they were building a new facility at the Regina Correctional Centre, but they forgot to put a kitchen in it, a new kitchen, Mr. Speaker. So we will be funding the new kitchen at the Regina Provincial Correctional Centre. You know, one would think that, when you're replacing a 1913 section of the correctional centre, that you might also want to change and upgrade the kitchen. So we're going to go ahead and do that, Mr. Speaker. I think the people that will be receiving meals from that will appreciate the fact that they're getting it out of a new and modern kitchen.

We're continuing with the upgrades to the Walter Scott Building which have been ongoing for a couple of years. The project is more or less just starting, and we will be continuing to work with that, Mr. Speaker.

One of the things that the members of the legislature have the opportunity to see on a daily basis is the scaffolding that went up here this winter in front of the building, on the east wing of the building. Government Services is looking at the outside shell of the building. Over time, over the hundred years of this legislature . . . We're actually built on the Regina gumbo, so it has a bit of a tendency to shift. And fact is over the years, the west wing has been jacked up. The east wing has been jacked up 6 inches, so the facade and the stonework on the building in that shifting has cracked, and now we're getting moisture in behind that, and that's causing problems and deterioration.

Because this is a heritage building, it takes certain criteria. You can only do the work in a certain manner. So we're taking a look at that, Mr. Speaker, and we will be doing so on an ongoing basis to renovate and renew the Legislative Building.

You know, when you're sitting in here in the wintertime in your offices or at meetings and you happen to be next to a window, you better hope that the wind isn't blowing from that direction because this building certainly gives each and every office a sufficient supply of fresh air through those windows. Whether they're closed or not doesn't seem to matter too much. We will be replacing those windows in the foreseeable future, Mr. Speaker. That will be part of the future upgrades that take place within the Legislative Building.

Some of the other areas that we're looking at, Mr. Speaker, is we continue to do work on the capital replacement of the Saskatchewan disease control laboratory and for more space for the nursing education programs at SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] and Saskatoon — very important programs, especially the nursing education one.

One of the issues, one of the problems we've had in the province of Saskatchewan over the last number of years is the lack of training seats for nurses, and that's why we have an 800-nurse deficit in the province of Saskatchewan. Soon we'll be receiving immigrant nurses from the Philippines. They will be carrying on that role thanks to the hard work of the Minister of Health and the member for Regina South who went to Philippines . . . no, Regina northwest; sorry, Regina northwest . . .

An Hon. Member: — Qu'Appelle Valley, Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

Hon. Mr. D'Autremont: — Qu'Appelle Valley, okay. It was up there someplace, Mr. Speaker, in Regina, the northwest corner.

So, Mr. Speaker, those members did a good job in recruiting nurses along with the Health department staff and representatives from the health districts. They went over and in one trip, Mr. Speaker, were able to recruit almost 300 nurses. Previous trips by the administration opposite resulted in very, very few recruits, Mr. Speaker. And I don't understand the reasons why, but it just didn't seem to work when they went

over, whereas when the Health department along with the member from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley went to the Philippines, they managed to recruit an appropriate number of nurses to stopgap the shortages that we have in Saskatchewan.

And what did those shortages mean to the rest of us? Well what it meant was — and still is, because those nurses haven't arrived here yet — is that 10 beds are closed at the long-term care facility in Carlyle. The Arcola hospital is open. It's not open. It's open. It's not open because they're short of nurses. The hospital in Redvers, if one more nurse left or got sick or for some reason was unavailable for work, the hospital in Redvers would've closed because of a shortage of nurses. And this wasn't just peculiar to my own constituency. This was the case across most of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. So those 300 nurses that will be arriving from the Philippines are certainly welcome here in Saskatchewan.

One of the things that the Premier did when we formed government and he formed cabinet was to give to each of those of us who were chosen to serve in cabinet with a mandate letter. And part of that mandate letter that I received from the Premier was dealing with Government Services and the environment.

He asked that I ensure that all of the vehicles purchased by Government Services — and Government Services purchases and supplies all the vehicles to government and a significant number of the vehicles to the Crown corporations — that those be fuel-efficient vehicles, that they be in the top 20 per cent of their class; if they're smaller passenger vehicles, that they be flex-fuel or hybrids. We're doing that, Mr. Speaker. Every one of the vehicles that we're purchasing is in the top 20 per cent of their class. Of the light vehicles, if they're not a hybrid then we're buying the E85 flex-fuel vehicles.

Now you can't buy E85 fuel in Saskatchewan, but we need to develop a critical mass that makes it worthwhile for someone — one of the oil companies, an independent operator, whoever that might be — to establish an E85 or E85 stations across the province. So they need to know that there is a fleet, that there are vehicles out there that will purchase E85 fuel if it's available. And so we're doing our part as government to try and ensure that there is a critical mass so that someone will supply the E85 to Saskatchewan.

We produce enough ethanol in Saskatchewan to provide that fuel to Saskatchewan, but no service station yet provides it, but we're hopeful that that will be occurring.

We're also ensuring that all of the new buildings that are being built for Government Services are LEED [leadership in energy and environmental design] certified so that they follow the best practices and the best environmental practices to ensure that they are as energy efficient as possible, Mr. Speaker.

One of the other areas that the Premier asked me to look after was Information Technology. And the mandate to that area was to carry on with being environmentally sound, being efficient in our operations, and we have certainly done that, Mr. Speaker. And fact is it was the former Finance minister who initially developed the ITO [Information Technology Office] and I was the critic from day one on that issue. And I gave him lots of credit at the time and supported this initiative because I believe

it had long-term, significant potential for the province of Saskatchewan and would benefit the province of Saskatchewan by the consolidation of IT [information technology]. And fact is, what it has meant is that now we have a savings of 12 to \$13 million per annum on IT services because of the changes that were made.

But there's still more things that we can do. And the Premier's mandate to me was to establish an electronic embassy or a one-stop portal for IT services with government. So if someone wants to come to government and says, you know, I want to know what the environmental issues are, they can go to that one-stop portal. They can look up Environment and start drilling down. And then they can say, what are you doing at X or how do I get information on Y or how do I get a hunting form through Environment. That will all be able to be done at some point in time through that one-stop shopping, you might say, through that one electronic embassy to the Government of Saskatchewan.

The other thing that the ITO was dealing with as well is, the Premier, as part of the mandate, requested that I make sure that all of the orders in council be put online. And that has happened, Mr. Speaker. Now whenever an order in council comes out, that is placed online. So it's accessible to government members. It's accessible to the opposition. It's accessible to the media or to the general public, Mr. Speaker, so that allows this government to be accountable to the voters, Mr. Speaker, to the people that we are responsible to.

I attended an IT function last night in Saskatoon. And one of the comments . . . and it was kind of out of the blue because we weren't talking about this particular issue, but it speaks to getting ready for growth in Saskatchewan. And what this young entrepreneur mentioned to me was that he thought the \$20,000 post-secondary graduate tax credits were extremely important in developing the IT industry in this province and in keeping our graduates here in the province. And I believe this is going to be one of the major initiatives that helps to grow this province.

The IT industry is very strong, has huge potential, and is just now starting to realize the potential that is out there, and is eager to grow and is eager to take advantage of the opportunities that we have here in Saskatchewan with a strong broadband base that has been developed across the province with CommunityNet II . . . CommunityNets I and II with high-speed Internet going to many communities and with many more communities having been supplied with wireless high-speed Internet. Unfortunately there are still communities that do not have access to high-speed Internet and that will continue to be worked on, Mr. Speaker.

[16:00]

But this young entrepreneur felt that the \$20,000 tax credit for post-secondary graduates was extremely important to keeping young people in Saskatchewan and allowing them to have their families here and to help to build and grow Saskatchewan. This, I believe, is going to have significant impact.

We're also putting a half a million dollars into the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technology to deliver 100 new training seats for on-reserve education. I think this is going

to also go a long way in developing the young people of this province and to help build the workforce that we need so that these people . . . as I said earlier, it's not just the job that they will be having; they will be building careers in this province.

The IT sector, in growing and becoming much more robust in this province, will provide the productivity and the innovation that will be the cornerstones of the 21st century. And we have an opportunity to play a leading role in that and to take our place on the world stage.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I've had some opportunity. I know that there are many more things that I would like to talk about, however, there are others who also wish to have that opportunity, Mr. Speaker. So this budget is good for Saskatchewan. This budget is good for Cannington. This budget will be a budget that will lead us into the future, Mr. Speaker, and I'm pleased to be able to support it. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise in the House today and represent the good people of Regina Qu'Appelle Valley — not Regina South — but Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Ms. Ross: — I'm very proud to take part in the budget debate today. This is a time of incredible growth in Saskatchewan. Prices for our natural resources are at a record high. As our Premier, the member for Swift Current, found out during his recent trip to the United States, our neighbours to the south are looking to Saskatchewan as a conflict-free source of their energy needs. Let's not let these opportunities slip through our fingers.

In January our population crept past 1 million people. For the first time since 2001, Saskatchewan's population growth rate is the third highest in Canada. For the first time in years, there were more people moving from Alberta than moving to Alberta. You can literally see the evidence of that in the number of Alberta license plates prowling the Saskatchewan streets. People realize Saskatchewan is not just a great place to make a living; it's a great place to make a life. Quality of life may well prove to be this government's most enduring legacy.

We talk a lot these days about maintaining the economic momentum, ensuring everyone shares in the benefits, and taking the steps necessary to avoid the problems created by unmanaged growth. So what does this mean? Let's make sure our kids have the best schools to go to. People shouldn't have to wait years to have surgery. There has to be a competitive business atmosphere.

Our roads and our highways have to be able to handle the increased traffic generated by this economic growth, which is why the theme of our Saskatchewan Party government's first budget is *Ready for Growth*. The centrepiece of the budget is 1 billion ready-for-growth fund, a capital infrastructure

investment that will see roads, hospitals, schools, and other key components get some long overdue attention.

Under the *Ready for Growth* budget we are spending a record of 408 million maintaining, repairing, and upgrading highways and roads. Now this is good news for the residents of our province who have been patiently waiting to have their roads repaired.

As you know, I've spent some time in the Philippines which is a Third World country. And as I was travelling on their roads that needed repair, I thought to myself that the new nurses will think they're back home in the Philippines driving over these bumpy roads. Now lucky for them and all the other residents of this province, our government in this budget has set aside the much-needed funding to undertake the much-needed road repairs that this province so richly deserves.

There is 191 million to improve hospitals and health care facilities, purchase medical equipment, and to continue construction of the new provincial lab building.

And under the *Ready for Growth* budget, over \$160 million will focus on important upgrades and repairs to schools in rural and urban communities, and make the improvements to our universities and training centres. It's necessary to make these investments. And is it necessary? Absolutely. Our government believes this investment is crucial to the future direction of this province. This is a tipping point. Today we can afford these upgrades thanks to our thriving economy and strong financial position.

It's also worth noting that this government's first budget is balanced. For the first time in many years, we are not spending more than we make.

The *Ready for Growth* budget increases the education property tax rebates by 156 million — increased revenue-sharing money for municipalities. And this budget will continue the university tuition freeze. And this budget provides up to 20,000 in tuition rebates to university grads who choose to stay in Saskatchewan.

My husband teaches at the University of Regina, and he has told me that many of his students are pleased with the commitment that our government has made — promises made, promises kept.

We are dramatically increasing the number of training seats for doctors, nurses, and other health care professionals, and we have embarked on aggressive recruitment and retention campaign for nurses.

As the Legislative Secretary to the Minister of Health, nurse recruitment and retention, it is my job to ensure that we fulfill our campaign promise of adding 800 nurses by 2011. Now this past February I was part of a delegation that consisted of government employees, five health regions, and educators from the University of Saskatchewan and SIAST. We went to the Philippines to recruit nurses. Three hundred Filipino nurses accepted job offers and will begin arriving Saskatchewan this summer.

Our approach to meeting promised health care commitments is

much broader. In addition to hiring 300 Filipino nurses, we plan to create 300 new registered nursing training seats, increase the use of nurse practitioners, bring Saskatchewan-trained nurses back home to work, recruit and retain a higher percentage of Aboriginal health care workers, and establish a bridging program to encourage licensed practical nurses to become registered nurses. Is this the right prescription for fixing the nursing shortage? We think it is.

I'm not a nurse, though Donna Brunskill is. Ms. Brunskill is the executive director of the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association, and she was working as an RN [registered nurse] when they were told there is no nursing shortage. Now what does she think now? Well this is what she had to say the day when the Saskatchewan Party government delivered its first budget, quote, "For the first time in a decade I am confident the RN shortage is getting the attention it deserves."

Now I'm sorry to see that the minister of . . . I mean the member of Saskatoon Eastview is not here today to hear my story . . .

An Hon. Member: — You can't say that.

Ms. Ross: — I can't?

An Hon. Member: — You can't say that.

Ms. Ross: — Okay, well whatever.

An Hon. Member: — Whatever?

Ms. Ross: — I'm sorry.

An Hon. Member: — They're just the rules.

Ms. Ross: — I apologize. Anyways I have a story to tell in that it was made mention that we were paying more attention to facilities than we are to people in health care. This past summer during an absolutely incredible heat wave, my cousin was admitted to the Pasqua Hospital with heart failure. It was so hot in that hospital. They were only allowed to use fans the size of, oh, about a bagel, to cool these patients — bagel fan. The sad part is that this was causing a health crisis in the Pasqua Hospital.

We care about people; we just do not care about facilities. The Saskatchewan Party government does not just pay lip service to health care. This budget has health care front and centre. We are rolling up our sleeves and getting the job done. Our government will continue to focus on sustaining growth and ensure Saskatchewan people share in the benefits of growth.

Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting the amendment to the budget. Mr. Speaker, I will be voting in favour of supporting the budget. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Morin: — Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to enter into the

debate concerning the budget delivered by the Sask Party government on the 19th of this month. First I must offer a confession. When the Sask Party delivers a self-professed *Ready for Growth* budget that by their own acclaim builds on a tradition of balanced budgets, it's nothing short of amusement.

In the 2008-2009 provincial budget backgrounder it states under the title sound fiscal management that the Sask Party budget is the 15th consecutive budget. Moreover it cites that the first Sask Party budget is one of 16 credit upgrades since 1985. Consecutive then must mean right after the 14 previous balanced budgets and 15 previous credit upgrades achieved by the former NDP governments after an era of Conservative disaster.

For a newly . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Thank you. I agree. It's worth clapping for. For a newly elected government, it must sure be interesting to publicly posture that you actually have credibility, citing the fiscal management of the former NDP government as proof that you can handle the job of leading a province. To be sure this seems like a good strategy, for their former claim when taking office of inheriting a stark treasury was met with a resounding laughter. Something needed to be done to explain why an economy is firing all cylinders and over \$1 billion is in the bank. I guess the redefinition of the word stark was unsuccessful after all.

That has not stopped the redefinition strategy of the Sask Party government however. They are determined to convince us that democracy or rebalancing can actually mean taking away the dignity and rights of workers with proposed amendments to labour laws represented by Bills 5 and 6 or further still, the redefinition of the word competitiveness when it comes to handing over decision-making capacity of an elected legislature to a non-elected group known as Enterprise Saskatchewan.

On the other hand, it would have been interesting to think what kind of bill of goods the Sask Party might have tried to sell the people of this province had they believed the initial, wild claim. As history proves with all Conservative governments, it all comes out in the wash.

Here we are several months later, and the story has changed. I guess a budget is more than simply an exercise in accounting. Rather, a budget is a living, social, and political document. It expresses the current government's intentions to address public concerns and deliver on policy commitments. Ultimately a budget expresses fundamental judgments about what kind of province we ought to have. In this light when assuming the meaning and acceptability of the Sask Party budget, one must take into consideration both what is said in terms of actual money commitments and what the budget does not say — in other words, who benefits and who is left behind.

Mr. Speaker, the budget that was delivered on March 19 told a remarkable narrative of kept promises and vision. The centrepiece of the budget is a large infrastructure initiative that tops a \$600 million mark that had all ready been in a component in past budgets. While overall spending has increased by approximately 10 per cent over last year's budget, there exists fundamental omissions. In fact there are even cuts.

Let me provide a brief portrait of the people these cuts leave out

of the overarching promise of the Sask Party to secure the future, supposedly.

[16:15]

Attending a women's dinner on March 27, I along with two other panellists addressed the issue of the economic inequalities experienced by women. In that discussion, I highlighted that the recent Sask Party budget embodies hostility towards women and asserts a disregard for women's issues. This, I argued, is evidenced in a \$300,000 cut to the Status of Women office and Ministry of Social Services cuts that, according to the budget, entail a decrease in the transitional employment allowance from 46.5 million to 23.8 million.

It is malicious cuts such as these, Mr. Speaker, that impact the most vulnerable in our province. Working people across the province, their families, and their friends are not alone in questioning these cuts. Why in a budget that delivers a slush fund for Enterprise Saskatchewan, that appeases corporate Sask Party contributors with tax cuts, and according to the literature keeps promises, do we find extensive cuts that beyond a doubt negatively impact women? I guess that is more than accounting; it is simple ideology.

Mr. Speaker, working people know that nothing comes for free. This is more than a common sentiment; it is a lived reality. They have worked hard. They have built the prosperity of this province. It is indeed from many people's strength that we enjoy the economy of today.

Yet although we understand that the economy is doing well, how are ordinary working people doing? What is being done by government to ensure that they enjoy the good times as well? Further, to what extent are we ensuring that the prosperity of today isn't simply passing on problems to future generations?

At the core of this Sask Party government's budget is a narrow conception of what governments can do for ordinary working people. Government, in light of the Sask Party budget commitments, picks clear winners and losers. The construction industry is a winner. The working poor and the environment are clear losers.

A headline in the March 29 *StarPhoenix* conveys a sentiment many people are feeling today. It reads, quote, "Government's actions signal trouble ahead." In the article, the paper explains that, quote, "If, as is generally the case, the Saskatchewan Party used its first budget to set the tone for its administration, the province has a growing list to worry about."

The article specifically cites the recent decision following the budget to deliberately cancel the former NDP government's commitment of \$8 million to what is described by many as a, quote, "much-lauded inner city redevelopment project" known as Station 20 project in Saskatoon. As the article relates, the fact that no one from the Sask Party government can get their story straight, quote, "... does little to foster confidence in ... [the Sask Party's] ability to manage public money."

Station 20, Mr. Speaker, Station 20 West, Mr. Speaker, is a unique made-in-Saskatchewan approach to urban renewal in the poorest neighbourhood in the city of Saskatoon. The

community enterprise centre would bring, among other things, low cost dental services, outreach clinical services, and other community services such as a library, a grocery co-op, and affordable housing units to one of Saskatchewan's most stressed neighbourhoods.

While the initial response provided by the government involved the inaccurate citing of funds that would need to be raised by the public for the project, it seems that to any sentient person the cancellation goes well beyond mere incompetence. Instead it is ideologically motivated.

In a March 28 *StarPhoenix* article, quote, "20th Street 'mall' not a priority" by the government, Premier Wall states that the government, quote, "ought not to be in the mall business and it's just, it's a different approach." He went on to say, we don't think, quote, "We don't think that the government of Saskatchewan should be ... competing with grocery stores, competing with others who are already renting ... now to community clinics in the area."

What Premier Wall unfortunately forgot to include in this quote, Mr. Speaker, is there has not been a full grocery store in the area for approximately 10 years now. And there appears to be no development on the horizon. As a result, many low-income residents are forced to travel unreasonable distances to get food and services they need, if they have the ability to travel at all.

As the author of the article, quote, "Wall has a strange idea of 'mall'" that appeared in the March 29 *StarPhoenix* rightly suggests, quote, if "Premier Brad Wall thinks the Station 20 West project is a 'mall,' perhaps he'd like to visit the day spa run by the Friendship Inn or tour the luxury condos being built by Habitat for Humanity."

Mr. Speaker, it is clear to many people around this province that the Sask Party government's notion that they are securing the future for everyone is a little short on change and a poorly constructed mask when it comes to hiding ideological orientation.

In the March 29 editorial of *The StarPhoenix* titled, quote, "Government's actions signal trouble ahead," an author sketches out the demonstrable right-wing agenda of the Sask Party.

The author starts by asserting that Premier Wall's, quote:

... clear lack of understanding about the dire needs of core neighbourhoods and the history of Saskatoon demonstrates just how out of touch he remains with urban Saskatchewan. Considering the role the province's largest city is playing in the economic revival of Saskatchewan, such ignorance could have dire consequences.

In response to the poorly crafted and dubious competing line given as the only real explanation for the government's inertia on the issue, the editorial explains, quote:

The proponents of Station 20 want a grocery store not because they want to compete with private industry but because many people in core neighbourhoods don't have

the wherewithal to keep hiring cabs to go . . . [to them].

Mr. Speaker, let us leave the ideologically motivated attack on poor people demonstrated by the denial of funding to the meaningful Station 20 West project for a moment. Instead let us quickly review the budget fundamentals.

The Sask Party budget assumes a conservative benchmark of a US [United States] oil price of \$82.36 a barrel, compared to the current price of \$110 . . . \$100 a barrel. In this context the government, despite its spending commitments outline, is projected to have a \$250 million budget surplus for 2008-2009. They have the money, Mr. Speaker.

In describing the Station 20 development, Mayor Don Atchison in a February 2, 2007 news release, reiterated that with, quote:

. . . the support of all our partners, it is the City's hope that . . . the recently announced Station 20 project, will demonstrate that the Pleasant Hill neighbourhood is leading the way in community renewal and revitalization.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this will not be the case. Although several years of work went into this project and co-operation between all levels of government had finally transpired, the Sask Party government's conservative ideology will not permit the project to proceed.

The Station 20 project had the potential to vastly improve the health and economic status of those it served. It in turn would have provided an opportunity for the disenfranchised and struggling, a place that took their needs and dignity seriously. Moreover it would have undoubtedly saved health and welfare costs in the future.

The decision of the Sask Party government to pick winners and losers, quite frankly, only confirms working people's notion of a greed economy — an economy that places the needs of the Sask Party corporate friends ahead of the interests of the working poor. In their short and, I fear, not too distant future, the Sask Party has been telling us that essentially only the private sector matters. More specifically, the well-being of their top corporate donors, who are primarily based in Alberta, matter.

These sentiments, Mr. Speaker, are not just confined to the Station 20 issue. Rather they are conveyed by many well-regarded and fair-minded stakeholders from across the province. In describing the budget, Peter Gilmer of the Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry confirms that the budget delivers, quote:

. . . very little in regards to putting resources directly into the hands of low-income people and ensuring that they will be able to afford rent. I don't think that this budget deals seriously with the question of poverty in Saskatchewan.

Larry Hubich of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour reminds us that, quote, "[infrastructure] . . . is more than bricks and mortar . . ." We need to also make sure we are investing in social infrastructure.

In other words, Mr. Speaker, why is the Sask Party government

abruptly and callously leaving behind the working poor and putting the brakes on community-minded development, given the budget surplus and given the admission by their own minister that there is a housing crisis?

Mr. Speaker, besides the working poor being left out of this budget, the Sask Party government clearly does not take the environment seriously. The larger environment and the issue of climate change is another shameful area of neglect by the Sask Party government in its first self-declared ready-for-growth budget. How can you be ready for growth if you do not take the environment and climate change into real consideration?

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party has come a long way on environment issues like greenhouse gas emissions and climate change. It used to be that they just flat out denied any kind of problem even existed. Now they don't do that any more — at least not in public.

The budget, I believe, delivers a clear message about the Sask Party's ambivalence towards the whole issue of climate change. It lacks the financial resources needed to meet the aggressive climate change targets adopted by the Sask Party from the now largely disregarded NDP green strategy, no less. While the Sask Party government is adding \$10 million in funding for green initiatives, the funding doesn't even come close enough, especially considering that this Sask Party government has completely scrapped the NDP's \$320 million Green Future Fund.

While the budget delivers a paltry sum for the environment, the Sask Party government has been preoccupied lately with a string of reannouncements alongside their Harper Conservative cousins in relation to the costly plan of a clean coal retrofit at the Boundary Dam power plant. Mr. Speaker, for all this government's cheer about this announcement, the clean coal project — once it is up and running and in the projected seven years, that is — will not come close to fulfilling its targets. Likewise the retrofit itself will only divert 1 million of the roughly 13 million tonnes of CO₂ as we as a province produce each year via power generation.

Also this project is, among all counts, financially irresponsible. The \$1.4 billion project, with likely cost overruns projected in the billions, would be chiefly financed by the province. According to the deal the Harper Conservatives will only give a one-time donation of \$240 million. The rest is up to the province to absorb. This type of announcement sure does conjure up images of the past, Mr. Speaker. Fortunately the overplayed message that a megaproject would be just the thing to bring this province closer to the divine is already wearing thin.

Also, Mr. Speaker, as I outlined earlier in my speech, when assessing the meaning and acceptability of the Sask Party budget, one must take into account both what is said in terms of actual money commitments, and what the budget does not say. What this budget says is that the Sask Party does not wish to reach greenhouse gas reduction. Concurrently what this budget does not say is that the Sask Party mantra of securing the future is only really about securing corporate profits indefinitely, and further, ahead of the interests of working people.

Mr. Speaker, the New Democrats know that we can't think about the economy and about prosperity without thinking about its environmental impacts. This province needs vision like the NDP's green strategy that was scrapped by the Sask Party government, a vision that reflects the realities of a complex 21st century economy. A government serious about climate change would recognize that the fundamental goals of an economy are simultaneously to create financial stability, promote human development, increase social equity, and improve environmental quality.

In the business community this is known as the new bottom line — the third bottom line approach — and it is a line that is taken seriously in the Scandinavian countries. A successful economy of the 21st century that is indeed ready for growth would consider the concerns of working people and the environment as priorities, as such would invest adequately in the needs of our community that people want and need. It would build rather than take away the ability of governments to provide a framework for our economy.

[16:30]

Someone has to look out for the common good, and that quite frankly is what working people expect from their government. The Sask Party has shown through such actions as their lump sum payment to Enterprise Saskatchewan in this budget that it is the antiquated 19th century notion of economics — greed before people. Why would the Sask Party government do this, Mr. Speaker, besides the esoteric Enterprise Saskatchewan that has as its goal to increase competitiveness that will ultimately make government less democratic, create a back door for decision making, and — not to put too fine a point on it — easier to pollute and easier for the government to shrug their responsibilities when it comes to the environment and ultimately the health of Saskatchewan people.

Health is more than just a number of nurses, Mr. Speaker. It is also the quality of our environment. The people of this province work hard. They know better than anyone else that nothing comes for free. We've seen that, having to climb our way back from the wonderful debt that the Devine Conservatives left us.

The economy of today should contribute in reducing social inequality, enhance democracy, and create good quality and safe jobs. Working people deserve a voice. Instead the Sask Party's budget is tantamount to affirming many people's concept of a greed economy. We need to support working people of this province, the people who built this province with their toil every day. Many of these people are ordinary, hard-working people who care for others. This budget does not adequately create opportunity for them to live better lives.

If the Sask Party really wanted to secure the future for people, they would not clearly leave out the poor and the working poor. If the Sask Party was really ready for growth, they would not have given the equivalent of pennies to an environmental issue that will undoubtedly pose the greatest challenge of our future, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I join my fellow New Democrats in demanding more support for working people and the environment. We call on the Sask Party government to get serious and invest in

affordable housing ventures such as Station 20 West and invest more in green initiatives with the goal of actually meeting climate change targets.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I stand in opposition of the motion and in agreement with the amendment. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Schriemer: — Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I rise today with excitement and a feeling of pride to have the opportunity to speak to the first Saskatchewan government budget.

Mr. Speaker, this government stands for hope, pride, and a bright future for our great province. This, our government's first budget, is based on two pillars. The first, Mr. Speaker, is the preparation of this province for economic growth. The Sask Party government introduced the most aggressive investment in infrastructure in the history of this province — the 1 billion ready-for-growth initiative. Mr. Speaker, a new report from the Canada West Foundation predicts Saskatchewan will lead the country in economic growth in 2008.

We look to the West, Mr. Speaker, and we made note. We are working hard and preparing this province for growth. We are preparing and paving the way so we can minimize the negative effect that comes with substantial growth.

The second pillar, Mr. Speaker, is to keep our promises. Mr. Speaker, we made promises in the 2007 campaign, and we intend to keep those promises. To date we have kept 40 of those promises made. Already, Mr. Speaker, we have fulfilled these promises made to the good people of our province.

The Saskatchewan Party government will provide \$3.2 million to implement the child and family service case management system, and this will upgrade one of the systems that was used in Social Services which was severely outdated.

Mr. Speaker, our budget speaks very well to addressing some of the social issues in our communities. And quite frankly, I'm getting really irritated by the sanctimonious, better-than-thou attitude of the opposition. It is something to speak about poverty. You can speak about poverty, and that's all you can do about it. You don't understand it. You've never worked in it. You don't know it.

One member opposite from Massey said that the Sask Party was going to war with the poor. It's absolutely ridiculous, and the other thing is . . . to not have any experience . . . or the behaviour of the government, the previous government, was less than stellar when it came to social issues.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Ms. Schriemer: — I've seen what the members opposite have done. In 1999, Mr. Speaker, while working for the Saskatoon Police Service, I was transferred into community services and I worked in inner-city schools, inner-city elementary schools. At that time I met a teacher by the name of Patti Sebestyen, a

winner of the Prime Minister's teacher of excellence award, and she taught me some very, very good things.

She'd been working for at-risk youth for 35 years, and her way of communicating with these youths was just amazing. She used a choice theory. She talked about what it means to be respectful. And some young at-risk youth involved in gangs, that's what they say to you. You say, okay, what do you expect out of coming to school? I want respect. Well she would say, all right, what's the behaviour that goes with respect? How does someone behave in a fashion that is respectful? You don't wear your gang colours. You say please and thank you. And eventually these kids would just step up to the plate and they did wonderful, wonderful work.

Between 2000 and 2003 the children-not-in-school issue was becoming very, very serious in Saskatoon. The community got together and partnered, and there were meetings at the regional intersectoral committee which the previous government had set up. Everybody in the community as well as government people had agreed to a plan to address truancy in our city.

What we did know about truancy at that time — and it continues today — is that in a group of elementary school children that were chronically truant, 53 per cent of these children were victims of crime. Fifty-three per cent of these children experienced violence in the home. Eighty per cent of these children live in poverty. They actually live it; they don't talk about it. Fifty-three per cent have been victims of sexual abuse. Seventy-three per cent of these children, either the child or the parent have a substance abuse issue. And 13 per cent of these children — and these are elementary children — are involved in the sex trade.

Now the average attendance for these kids was 56 per cent. You cannot get an education attending school 56 per cent of the time. Now what's very interesting, Mr. Speaker, is that all of the indicators for issues — health issues like substance abuse, social issues like violence in the home; addiction issues — these indicators of truancy are in the education domain. So the theory was and still is that if you can intervene and work with the child and the family, you can address the root causes of the behaviour or the root causes of the substance abuse, domestic violence, etc., and people will make different choices and things will get better.

Another study that wasn't done in Saskatoon but it was a study, a research academic study by Seng-Magnus. They researched school dropouts and they researched truancy, and this is what they found. 15.9 per cent of children, victims of sexual abuse, drop out of school. 55.2 per cent of child victims of sexual abuse are truant. So if you've got a truant child, you would look at the situation and question if there is sexual abuse. Forty-five per cent of adolescent victims of the sex trade drop out of school — 45 per cent. 77.8 per cent of adolescent victims of the sex trade are truant — 77.8, Mr. Speaker. That means that the kid that is truant has a 77.8 per cent chance of being involved as a victim of the sex trade. That's huge.

We should be working with education. We should be working with Social Services to look at the indicator to intervene and address these issues — not just talk about them.

The average age of girls entering prostitution in Canada is 14 years old. What does a 14-year-old do normally? They play baseball. They even might watch cartoons still, but they don't sell their bodies for sex. But in Saskatoon and Regina, that's exactly what they do. And what have we done? What has that government done? That past government has done nothing.

So the whole community was motivated and had a plan. And we went to work in Saskatoon to address the issue of truancy, to help the less fortunate. The community invited Education under that government, Health under that government, Justice under that government, and Social Services under that government to work with us on this issue. We asked the government for a tracking system for children. We do not have a tracking system for children in school. You cannot find out by running on a computer a child's name and discovering that they attended valley school, then red school, and now they're in blue school. It doesn't exist. Well it didn't at that time.

So in 2001 we said build us a system so we know how bad the problem is. That government said yes. Well in 2002, in 2003, in 2004, '05, and '06 they failed, Mr. Speaker. They did nothing. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, is this or that the behaviour of a government with a social conscience? No. So we asked Social Services: partner with us. The children that are chronically truant have child protection needs. Let's look into this. And the government said yes, but they did not follow through. They did nothing. Is that the behaviour of a government with a social conscience?

Our government, our Saskatchewan Party government fixed that tracking system. We now have a tracking system under a government . . . that the previous government accuses us of not having a social conscience. This government cares about children and cares about our community.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Ms. Schriemer: — So after four years — from 2000 to 2004 — of talking about children not in school, asking for support from the government, getting monies . . . We got monies from the federal government to work on this issue, but nothing from the province. Is that the behaviour of a government with a social conscience? No.

Around that same time, Mr. Speaker, a former MLA of the Sask Party by the name of Arlene Julé brought sexual exploitation to the forefront in this province. She fought long and hard with her party against the government of the day, the NDP. And finally an all-party committee was formed and recommendations were made. Less than 50 per cent of those recommendations to do with sexual exploitation of our young people were followed through upon by the former NDP government.

[16:45]

One of those recommendations was as simple as to dedicate one social worker in Saskatoon to work specifically with the Saskatoon Police Service and Egadz to work with the sex trade workers. That's simple. And guess what that government did, Mr. Speaker? That government, that NDP government did nothing. They did nothing. Is that the behaviour of a government with a social conscience?

Well around that same time, Mr. Speaker, another thing was going on: Role of the School Task Force. The Role of the School Task Force recommended after hearings that the Nutana model . . . or a model where the school is the centre of the community and that health workers would go into the school, social workers would go into the school and be able to work with the community at the centre of the community, as opposed to poverty-stricken people who don't have vehicles driving down to Sturdy Stone in downtown Saskatoon or taking the bus or whatever. And that was the recommendation. Did that government follow through? No.

They created SchoolPlus, gave a little bit more money to education, washed their hands, and walked away with zero — zero change, zero change. Is that the behaviour of a government with a social conscience? No.

So in Saskatoon, the health district in 2005 did a disparity study, a health disparity study.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. I know there's strong opinions on the subject, and members have the opportunity to enter the debate as well. I'd ask members to allow the member from Saskatoon to continue with her comments at this time.

Ms. Schriemer: — So the disparity study was done in 2005, inner city of Saskatoon. It was published in 2006 in the *Canadian Journal of Public Health*. I'm sure the minister of the day would have read it. However, however, Mr. Speaker, what they found was that 46 per cent, only 46 per cent of children in the inner city are immunized — 46 per cent.

The infant mortality rate in the inner city is that of a third-world country. And one of the reasons, one of the reasons, is because the mothers living in poverty don't have cribs. They sleep with their babies and inadvertently suffocate them. That's one of the reasons that the infant mortality rate is so high.

The HIV [human immunodeficiency virus] rates in the inner city, in the young Aboriginal population is growing at a faster rate than it did when it was discovered in the homosexual population in the '80s. So what does the NDP minister of Health, what does the socially-conscious NDP do? Well they refused to supply Egadz who drive around and give coffee and condoms to sex trade workers. The Health people refuse to supply Egadz with condoms, so Egadz gets, Egadz gets their condoms through money from the Muttart Foundation in Alberta.

Is that the behaviour of a socially conscious government? This government, in our budget, Mr. Speaker, just gave Egadz one half million dollars to do the good work that they do, besides what we regularly give them.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Ms. Schriemer: — So let's talk about Station 20 because you know, it's very different, Mr. Speaker, to sit and talk about . . . oh I've got a social conscience and you don't although I've never been in poverty, worked with poverty, smelled poverty. They throw that word around. So Station 20, granted, is a good idea. What's wrong with Station 20? What's wrong with the situation is that health care should be the centre focus. That

should be the focus because that's what the disparity study said.

This government had since 2006 — actually 2005 — to open up an immunization clinic in the inner city but they didn't do that. They want to open up a grocery store instead, and the people who are going to give the health care . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . The most important thing in Station 20 is health care. Absolutely correct. That health care is being provided by the community clinic today — today — at zero dollars.

And they do not want to relocate into Station 20 because Station 20 . . .

The Speaker: — Order. The members allow the member from Saskatoon Sutherland to present her remarks, and then other members will be recognized.

Ms. Schriemer: — Station 20, Mr. Speaker, what it will provide is less than what we can presently provide in the inner city. Community health is giving the health services that are needed and will be expanding those health services. We don't need a grocery store. Those kinds of services are also being provided at St. Mary School, the school that Mr. Calvert refused to fund, member opposite, former premier.

So you know, I think that the reason why the partners . . . If you've noticed anything, Mr. Speaker, you have to notice that the partners — these partners that the opposition talks about with Station 20 — have said zero in the news. They've said zero, zero, zero because they don't support it. If they supported it, they'd be talking but they're not. The support is all in your minds, is in the minds of the members opposite, not in reality, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: — So we want this; the community doesn't?

Ms. Schriemer: — Yes. So the school, St. Mary's is providing pediatric services. And it was so successful that they had to buy another examining room table to allow another pediatrician to come in and have more office. Does the Department of Health buy it? No. No. The school system buys it.

The members opposite need to get their facts straight. They're lost. They're lost, Mr. Speaker. They don't know what they're talking about.

So in our budget, Mr. Speaker, in our budget, a budget of a supposedly no-social-conscience party, in our budget there is 298.5 million in total funding for income assistance program, including 1.1 million for enhancement to rental housing supplements to address the former government's lack of future planning.

The Saskatchewan Party government will support those in need by providing 2.4 million to support a growing caseload of individuals with intellectual disabilities, accessing residential and day programs.

And let's take that a step further. A lot of these intellectual disabilities are from FASD [fetal alcohol spectrum disorder], fetal alcohol syndrome. So KidsFirst was supposed to address that. Now what I don't understand is that KidsFirst is not

available to all of the inner-city residents, and a lot of times they don't work with the moms prenatally. Now call me crazy, but how do you prevent fetal alcohol syndrome by working with a mom postpartum? You can't. You know, the simplest things just escape those people.

So this budget doubles the caregiver tax credit from 4,095 to 8,190. This budget doubles the infirm dependant tax credit from 4,095 to 8,190. This budget increases the disability supplement tax credit from 4,095 to 8,190. This budget increases the disability amount for self tax credit from 7,021 to 8,190. This budget provides 2.9 million for a 2.3 per cent increase for approximately 300 CBOs, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, is that the behaviour, is this the kind of budget . . . This is the kind of budget that is put forth by a party, a government, that truly understands and cares about its people. They don't . . . We're not just talking about it; we are doing it, Mr. Speaker.

I am proud to be a member of this government. I feel that this budget, Mr. Speaker, is fair, balanced, and responsible. I am proud of my leader, Mr. Premier; my cabinet; and my caucus. And I will be supporting this government's budget. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's an honour and a privilege for me to stand in the House today and represent the good people of the Rosetown-Elrose constituency. I'm very proud to take part in the budget debate today.

I've had the opportunity to speak to a number of my constituents over the past couple of weeks, since March 19 budget day, a budget that was very ably delivered by our excellent Minister of Finance. I listened very carefully to what my constituents had to say about the budget . . . overwhelmingly in favour of it, Mr. Speaker, different people for different reasons, things that touch them personally or people close to them. But the one thing that I kept hearing over and over from every single one of those people, the reason that they were in favour of this budget and appreciated this budget is because we were keeping our promises.

We kept a number of our campaign promises even before the budget, Mr. Speaker. But with the budget came many more promises kept. We're delivering on our promise to provide an extra \$5 million a year to community-based organizations that provide life skills and employment training. We're delivering on our promise to make children's activities more affordable by announcing the new active families' benefit starting in the 2009 tax year. We're delivering on our promise for an improved prescription drug plan, providing a \$15 cap on drugs for children age 14 and under.

We're delivering on our promise to make our communities safer by putting more police officers on the streets. We're providing an additional \$3 million to hire 30 more police officers. That's step one in our four-year plan to increase police officers.

We're delivering on our promise to get rid of the campfire permit fee, the wiener roast tax. People hate that tax, Mr. Speaker. We promised to get rid of it, and we're delivering. We're delivering on our promise to increase funding to school lunch and hunger programs. We're delivering on our promise to add more drugs to the prescription drug plan. We're providing \$6 million to make new prescription drugs available for many of our citizens.

We're delivering on our promise to double the caregiver tax credit for those caregivers that are helping family members. But we're doing more than that, Mr. Speaker. We're also increasing other tax credits that assist families who are caring for disabled family members.

We're delivering on our promise for initiatives to keep more of our educated young people in the province. We're offering \$20,000 in tuition fee rebates over seven years following their graduation. This is an important initiative, Mr. Speaker. We need to keep our bright young grads in this province. They're our future.

We're delivering on our promise to fully fund the agriculture risk management programs, crop insurance and the AgriStability and AgriInvest programs. Over . . .

The Speaker: — Order. It now being 5 p.m., the Assembly stands recessed until tonight at 7 p.m.

[The Assembly recessed until 19:00.]

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