



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

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The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

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

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

Clerk: — I wish to advise members that Mr. Speaker will not be present today to open today's daily sitting.

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Through you and to you to the rest of the Assembly today, there are 19 grade 8 students from the community of Milestone that are here today. Their teacher is David Hawkins. And I had the opportunity to meet with this group prior to coming into the House today, and they had some great questions. It was great to talk to them.

The interesting part was, as I mentioned to Mr. Hawkins, how long he's been bringing classes here because I remember him bringing a class here almost every year as long as I've been here. And it was coincidence enough that he has been teaching in Milestone for eight years, about as long as I have been here. So certainly great to see them here.

As I said they had some great questions. I know it's a great school. One of the questions was how did I ever get involved in politics or why did I think about getting involved in politics? And I said at the time there was a teacher that I had in Milestone High School that I think certainly lit the flame a little bit as to my interest in politics. And who knows, the next MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] for Indian Head-Milestone may be sitting in that gallery right now, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — I'd like all members to again welcome them here to their Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Kelvington-Wadena.

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you I want to introduce five very special people in your gallery. I'm going to ask them to stand. Starting with my oldest daughter, Angela, and my favourite son-in-law, Robert — he's also my only son-in-law. My oldest granddaughter — I forget your name — Brienne. And Jayden. And I want you to know that these two girls go to school in Martensville and Warman. And then my oldest grandson, Terrell, is here from Edmonton. He's a hockey player and he's spending his holidays out here.

And I just want to thank them for their love and their support and their patience with me. I know that being an elected person isn't always easy when it comes to family life. So in front of

everyone today, I just want to thank you for being here and helping me to balance work and family. Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today to you and through you I'd like to introduce, seated in your gallery, three employees from SaskEnergy who have joined us to watch the proceedings. We have Dave Burdeniuk, the manager of corporate communications. If you can just give us a wave there, Dave. Thank you. Seated with Dave are communications officer Rachel Sala and Rebecca Rogoschewsky. With a name like Cheveldayoff I should know that. Rogoschewsky is 12 letters, you know.

Rachel is the author of the SaskEnergy annual report. I'll have the honour of tabling this year's edition later this month. In fact, Mr. Speaker, Rachel won a national energy industry award for her writing of SaskEnergy's annual report last year.

This is also Rebecca's second day on the job as a communications officer, after recently moving to Regina from Saskatoon. I'm not sure if I totally agree with that, but we wish you well in your new surroundings. I understand her sister Jessica just received good news after recently returning to Saskatchewan from Edmonton, as Jessica has been accepted to a nursing training seat in Swift Current starting this fall. Way to go.

I'd ask all members to please join me in welcoming these three civil servants to their legislature.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Southeast.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, sitting in your gallery today are two representatives from the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission. As you know the Human Rights Commission does important work in educating and promoting the simple but powerful concept that every person is free and equal. The commission investigates complaints of discrimination, promotes and approves equity programs with employers, and educates people about human rights law in Saskatchewan.

And I'll ask them to stand up. Marilou McPhedran is the chief commissioner of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission. She has brought a tremendous blend of practical and scholarly experience to the Human Rights Commission. She is joined by Rebecca McLellan who is the manager of operation at the Human Rights Commission.

I will have a little bit more to say later on in a ministerial statement about the commission and about Ms. McPhedran. But I would like to ask at this time that all members of legislature make them feel welcome. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise here today to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Legislative Assembly a group of athletes seated in the Speaker's gallery. They are members of Team Saskatchewan which competed in the 2008 Special Olympics National Winter Games in Quebec City from February 26 to March 1.

These athletes, coaches, and mission staff have every reason to be proud of their achievements in Quebec City. There were 31 athletes competing in various events. In total, Mr. Speaker, they won 21 medals. There were twelve gold, six silver, and three bronze medals. As well as these medals, several of our athletes achieved their personal best performances at this meet.

I would ask each of these athletes to stand as I introduce you. And I understand Dwight Safroniuk had to leave today because of a family emergency, but Dwight Safroniuk; Adam Sanden; and Justin wasn't able to make it here today, Justin Duong was not able to make it; Terry Livingstone; Mike Martin; Robbie Bomboir; Lauren Weigel; and her mom, Beatrice Weigel.

Now Adam competed in alpine skiing and won three gold medals. Terry Livingstone competed in speed skating and won two gold medals and one bronze medal. Mike Martin competed in floor hockey. Robbie Bomboir competed in floor hockey. Lauren Weigel, figure skating team and did very well, she did place fourth. And she's the youngest athlete competing at the Special Olympics.

Also joining us today are alpine ski coach, Rick Sanden — please stand — floor hockey coach, Daryl Wiebe; team manager and director of programs, Crystal Thiessen; Howard Schweitzer, CEO [chief executive officer] of Special Olympics Saskatchewan; Roger Dumont, director of operations.

Special Olympics Saskatchewan is the organization responsible for all aspects of team development and participation at the Special Olympic Games. They receive annual funding from Saskatchewan Trust and supplement their operations with various sponsorship and fundraising efforts. The motto of Special Olympics Saskatchewan is, "Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt."

This is a pretty inspiring message, Mr. Speaker, for all of us, and I commend all the athletes who participated in the 2008 Special Olympic Winter Games for their bravery, their determination, and their self-discipline. Please join me today in welcoming them to the House and congratulating all the athletes, their coaches, the entire organization on representing Saskatchewan so well at the Special Olympics. You have made us all very proud. Thank you.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Furber: — Mr. Speaker, I would also like to join with the minister in welcoming guests to their legislature today. I have family who have participated in Special Olympics and as such have attended many of their events and fundraisers. I am also a former Team Saskatchewan competitor and understand the dedication and hard work it takes both by athletes, but also by the parents and volunteers that help with them as well. So I'd like to congratulate both the participants, but also the family members and volunteers that support them, and congratulate them on a very successful games in Quebec. And good luck in the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is one special friend of mine in that group, and that's the operations manager, Roger Dumont, who . . . The Dumonts have a cottage next to our cottage, and so we share some occasional campfire and that as the summer progresses. Anyway this is the first opportunity I've had to welcome Roger Dumont to the legislature. And it's good to see you. I look forward to seeing you a bit more in cottage season. Please welcome my friend and neighbour, Roger Dumont.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to present several pages of petitions to the Legislative Assembly today on behalf of citizens of the province of Saskatchewan concerning the withdrawal of the proposed essential services legislation and the withdrawal of the proposed amendments to The Trade Union Act. The prayer reads as follows:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The petitions are signed by people from Regina, Davidson, and Saskatoon. Mr. Speaker, I so present.

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

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have several pages of petitions signed by citizens concerned about the cancellation of funding or withdrawal of funding for Station 20. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your honourable 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.

[13:45]

And the petition is signed by citizens in every neighbourhood in Saskatoon and I believe one in Ile-a-la-Crosse. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair. I'm very pleased to present a petition that, if supported, would improve health care service and delivery in Moose Jaw and the Five Hills area. And the prayer reads:

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

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

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

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Canada's Next Great Prime Minister

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the accomplishment of Dr. Alika Lafontaine who recently won the CBC's [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] Canada's Next Great Prime Minister competition.

Alika was one of four finalists selected from hundreds of young aspiring politicians. The finalists had to face questioning from past prime ministers Turner, Campbell, and Martin, as well as current Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, Danny Williams. Alika's platform focused on the need for Canada to establish a new relationship with Aboriginal peoples.

Alika is originally from Regina and has most recently attended the University of Saskatchewan, receiving a medical degree. He is currently completing his second year of residency in the specialty of anaesthesiology, also at the U of S.

I do not know Alika well, but I have had the chance to meet him on one occasion. I found him to be an engaging person who truly cares for his community and province. Despite this notable accomplishment, Alika is not letting the win get to his head. He reports that his splurge item as a reward was a new four-slice toaster. So it sounds like he's staying well grounded.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure we can expect Dr. Lafontaine to make a significant contribution to our province in the years to come. I ask all members to join me in congratulating Dr. Alika Lafontaine for being named Canada's Next Great Prime Minister.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy.

World Autism Awareness Day

Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today is a very important day. On December 18, 2007, the United Nations General Assembly declared April 2 each year to be World Autism Awareness Day. It's a day to set aside to raise awareness about autism throughout society and to encourage early diagnosis and early intervention. In recognition of this day, the Government of Saskatchewan is pleased to announce that an advisory group representing health care and community-based organizations has been established.

This group will make recommendations on the most effective use of \$3 million in annual provincial funding for autism services. Mr. Speaker, about one in every 166 children born in Saskatchewan develops autism, and they need our help. This advisory group is a step in the right direction. The government will listen to the best advice on what combinations of therapies, training, and other supports will make the biggest difference for these children and their families. This newly formed advisory group will begin meeting this spring to discuss and provide suggestions for new autism intervention services and supports.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize World Autism Awareness Day. Our hearts go out to the children, adults, and their families dealing with autism. Mr. Speaker, as somebody with a family member who has autism, I'd like to extend my sincere appreciation to the stakeholders, advocacy groups, and health care professionals who work hard to bring awareness to autism day in and day out. Looking at the best ways to provide early diagnosis and intervention are key aspects to improving communication, socialization, and other abilities in autistic individuals. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

2008 Woman of Distinction Award

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I had the pleasure of attending the eighth annual Women with Disabilities luncheon on March 7. This luncheon, held in recognition of International Women's Day, celebrates the wonderful contributions women make, including those living with a disability.

The 2008 Woman of Distinction Award was given to Donna Duxbury of Saskatoon. First diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1977, Donna became active in helping others. She started a local MS [multiple sclerosis] support group, then a local MS chapter in Weyburn and area in 1985.

Donna went on to serve as president of the Saskatchewan Voice of People with Disabilities. During her time the North Saskatchewan Independent Living Centre was established. Work was done in northern Saskatchewan to educate First

Nations people with disabilities on how to establish a voice of their own. From those efforts, the Gary Pinker federation in La Ronge was established.

Donna went on to represent the Voice nationally on the Council of Canadians with Disabilities. She has the MS Society's Certificate of Merit and the Certificate of Inspiration and the Award of Distinction. All of these awards highlight just a few of the contributions Donna has made to the disability movement over the past 20 years. Donna is now semi-retired and is volunteering with new immigrants in a transition to life here in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating Donna on her very well-deserved award and wish her the very best in her future. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Melfort.

Special Olympic Silver Medal Winners

Hon. Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the pleasure today to tell this House about five young people from my constituency — a curling team who proudly are now sporting silver medals from the Special Olympic National Winter Games in Quebec City. The people of Melfort and area share in their pride and excitement. We are proud of their achievement in Quebec City, but we are also just as proud of the many tasks they accomplished in preparation for the winter games.

Since they qualified, skip Danny Fiedelleck and his team have spent many hours practising as a team. They also curled in regular leagues with people in and around Melfort. There were bonspiels to play, fundraising events to work at, and many things to learn. Coach Wikstrom said the preparation and travel experience was wonderful for her team. Through it all they were able to renew many friendships and make new friends, and have fun.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to ask the members of the legislature to join me in congratulating skip Danny Fiedelleck, third Scot Earl, second Lorin Bussiere, and lead and alternatives Rodney Mitchell and Rachel Lumberjack, along with their coach Dorothy Wikstrom. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Contributing to Community

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is indeed my honour to highlight the efforts and to thank Western Christian College and High School for their contributions within our community. President Mr. Kevin Vance shares that their programs promote learning in a safe, secure, and caring atmosphere with an emphasis on personal growth and maturity.

Mr. Speaker, Western Christian extends its contributions well beyond the classroom. Examples . . . a program called Encounter which is designed to help first-year students serve the world and experience their faith, a program called Reach invites at-risk students from the inner city and provides the supports necessary for them to finish high school.

Each year Western Christian partners with the Regina and District Food Bank to raise funds for the great Canadian benefit dinner. Western Christian also provides its facility free of charge to several charities each year, including the North Central Family Centre, Options Pregnancy Center, and Santa's Anonymous, among others. I should also make mention of its tremendous food services. I have a very fond heart of their kitchen.

Mr. Speaker, I thank Mr. Vance, the board of directors, all of the staff, the volunteers, sponsors, alumni, and students of Western Christian College, past and present, for their enriching contributions to our community. I ask all the members of this Assembly to join me in extending thanks.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Oil Sands Development

Mr. Harrison: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday we finally learned the true NDP [New Democratic Party] position with regards to the development of the Saskatchewan oil sands. The Leader of the Opposition, his Environment critic, and other members of the NDP caucus participated in a protest on the steps of this building, demanding our government shut down all oil sands activity.

For some time the NDP position on oil sands development has been ambiguous. Some might even say they were attempting to hide their true agenda. But now we know the truth. The NDP want to shut down all current and future oil sands activity. Maybe this shouldn't be a surprise though. The federal NDP leader has long maintained that all oil sands activity should be shut down. A former NDP cabinet minister, Peter Prebble, has even demanded that all oil sands exploration be shut down.

Well that's not the position of this government. We believe that sustainable and environmentally conscious oil sands development holds great promise for the future of our province. We believe that the billions of dollars of investment, thousands of jobs, and hope and opportunity for the people of northwest Saskatchewan is a positive development. Our government's committed to making it happen.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP didn't get the job done when they were in government, and now we know why. The NDP might ally themselves with the radical left, but we are going to ally ourselves with the future of the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Red Cross Honours Life Savers

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are not many that can say they had the opportunity to save a life, but recently the Red Cross honoured four Moose Jaw life savers in a ceremony held at the Cornerstone Christian School.

On October 18, 2007, Mr. Bill Green, a teacher at Cornerstone Christian School, saved a child from a flaming car crash. Mr. Green describes his response as automatic and said, “You see something that has to be done and you just do it.” Mr. Green said post-traumatic stress counselling allowed him to remain healthy after the accident.

Ms. Kristin Carter was at her shift at Harwood’s restaurant at the Temple Gardens Mineral Spa and stayed calm when she noticed a woman choking. She offered her help, but it was declined. But Kristin, a little persistent, called the front desk for an ambulance. Upon returning to the choking woman, her offer for help was then accepted, and Kristin managed to dislodge a piece of food. Ms. Carter’s comment was, “I didn’t realize what I had done until my co-workers said congratulations, good work.”

Sara and Johnny Renaud were visiting Johnny’s parents when a continued barking of the family dogs drew their attention to the pool. Their 16-month old son had fallen in. The father brought Dylan inside, called 911, and Sara performed CPR [cardiopulmonary resuscitation] to save her son.

Life-saving skills and training are critical in emergencies, and the average response time in Canada is eight minutes. Permanent brain damage can start in four to six minutes. Mr. Speaker, the Red Cross regional council vice-president, Scott Osmachenko, said the four had exhibited the power of humanity by volunteering to save lives.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of the House to please help me in congratulating these four outstanding citizens of Moose Jaw. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

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

Developments in Forestry Industry

Mr. Furber: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Today is a solemn day in Hudson Bay. Weyerhaeuser announced this morning that their OSB [oriented strand board] plant, directly employing 170 people, would be indefinitely shut down by early July.

Similar announcements have recently been made in other communities. The Saskatchewan Party has also abandoned the people of Prince Albert, the people of Big River, the people of Carrot River. There aren’t many Saskatchewan communities with forestry assets left for that minister to abandon.

Can the Minister of Energy and Resources reassure the people of Saskatchewan today that he hasn’t abandoned this file?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, I thank that member for his question. And our hearts truly go out to the workers at Hudson Bay facility today, and the whole community. It’s no doubt a very difficult announcement for them.

We will be working, Mr. Speaker, with Weyerhaeuser to help facilitate the reopening of that facility or hopefully to continue to keep it open. And failing that, we’ll help Weyerhaeuser to find new owners to reopen the plant if it comes to an actual closure. But rest assured, Mr. Speaker, that we will work with the community and Weyerhaeuser to alleviate this situation.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Furber: — I can assure you that they’re not resting assured now. When I last raised questions about the Prince Albert mill in this Chamber, the Ministry of Energy and Resources assured me that negotiations were taking place, and he promised that, and I quote, “. . . in a few short weeks we think we’ll have a conclusion to this . . .”

And he shouted across the way that when this happened I and my colleagues wouldn’t be happy. Well, Mr. Speaker, today we’re not happy, and neither are the people of Hudson Bay, the people of Prince Albert, or the rest of this province.

To the minister: if yet another plant shutdown is the result of four months of his work on this file, when will he admit that he’s the problem?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that question as well. The Saskatchewan Party is focused on making the forest industry more competitive, whether it be Prince Albert or Hudson Bay or any of the other plants in the province — mostly shut down by the NDP. The industry association and the Council of Saskatchewan Forest Industries seems to believe that we’re on the right track with that.

I’ve talked with the mayor of Hudson Bay this morning, Mr. Speaker, and together we’re examining ways that the community development trust money can be used to help affected communities. And that money will be dedicated almost entirely to communities that have been affected by plant

closures in the forestry industry. And I think that the mayor is quite satisfied with that approach as well.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Furber: — The member well knows that that funding is supposed to support these workers to find another industry to work in — cold comfort, I'm sure. Mr. Speaker, it's been over a month since the minister gave Domtar the government's proposal. For nearly three weeks they've been sitting on their counteroffer. In the meantime, the Hudson Bay OSB plant has been indefinitely closed.

Let me remind members at this time what that Premier said when he was in opposition. I'll quote. "Anything less than a timetable for reopening the Prince Albert mill will amount to a failure . . ." His words, Mr. Speaker.

Not only have they declined to set a timetable in this case, but their mismanagement has cost the people of Hudson Bay their plant as well.

Will the minister admit today that by his own Premier's definition that he is a complete and utter failure?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that question as well. Under the NDP government, Mr. Speaker . . . And this member hasn't been here long, Mr. Speaker, so I want to give him a little education on the NDP's track record in forestry. Under that NDP government, Mr. Speaker, five mills closed — Wapawekka, Carrot River, Big River, pulp mill in Prince Albert, and the plywood mill at Hudson Bay. That's the second, second mill that's under some threat in the town of Hudson Bay and the third one in the region.

Mr. Speaker, in 2006 the NDP Environment minister commissioned a competitive report and since then, and since then with more than a year, about a year and a half since that report was completed — before that government was defeated, Mr. Speaker — they made no moves to take action on any of those recommendations. Their only action was to hire their friend Tom Waller at \$400,000 for 13 months to look into . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:00]

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

Mr. Furber: — Mr. Speaker, we'll see tomorrow whether the members from Prince Albert Carlton and Carrot River Valley support a provincial budget which does nothing for forestry and which is anything but ready for growth in this industry.

Let's review their mismanagement on this file. The member from Batoche chaired a task force with no findings. Three times the Premier was in Prince Albert, during and before the election, to say that they had a plan to reopen that mill. There was no plan.

The member for Prince Albert Carlton took out ads in the newspaper in Prince Albert saying that a vote for him was a vote for the mill open and people working. Clearly that's not the case. The Minister of Energy and Resources claimed to have spoken with Domtar and had communications with them when clearly no discussions had taken place. Now another shutdown.

To the minister: why on earth should families and forestry communities have any faith in his failed leadership?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, people in forestry country should have faith in this administration because negotiations have been going on with Domtar, a plant that closed under their watch and because they wouldn't do some very simple things. Mr. Speaker, negotiations are going on to reopen that plant and I understand we're not far away from some sort of an announcement there. And I just ask that member to be patient.

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

Clean Coal Project

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier promised to get Saskatchewan a better deal than equalization. Well he did get us \$240 million and so far Saskatchewan taxpayers are on the hook for at least 1.16 billion additional dollars.

Surely the government wouldn't have put taxpayer dollars at risk without a plan. Surely the minister has a business plan, an MOU [memorandum of understanding], or even the napkin that the deal was drawn up on.

To the Minister Responsible for CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan]: where is the paper trail to show you've done due diligence? Or are you prepared today to admit that the Prime Minister pulled a fast one on the Premier?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the minister for the Crowns.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. I'm very pleased to talk about the clean coal demonstration project that was announced in the federal budget and officially announced by the Prime Minister and the Premier just last week in Estevan.

I'd like to remind all members that Saskatchewan lobbied for the \$240 million. It was a competitive process. Alberta wanted it; Ontario wanted it; other provinces wanted it. And we were successful here in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Two hundred and forty out of \$250 million in it were allocated to Saskatchewan. Yes, the federal government and the Prime Minister saw confidence in Saskatchewan, in SaskPower, and in this government, and we intend to take them up on their confidence.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, the clean coal prototype project for our province will cost in excess of \$1.4 billion. The Harper government committed only 240 million. Saskatchewan people are increasingly concerned about being on the hook for the more than \$1.16 billion that remain before there's a single penny in the cost overrun. In February the Minister Responsible for CIC said the government would look to the private sector for additional funding and that he hoped that there might be offset by the sales of carbon dioxide.

To the Minister Responsible for CIC: is there a single MOU with the private sector for the project, or are you telling the people of Saskatchewan to cross your fingers and hope that some private-funding white knight will come along?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Crown Corporations.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, it's quite clear that we couldn't have an MOU in place because there was a competitive process where we lobbied for this money. We were successful for that. The financing is very clear — \$240 million from the federal government; SaskPower is going to pay \$758 million. And I'd explain to all members that capital commitments within SaskPower are in the 400 to \$500 million range.

But the important question, Mr. Speaker, is, where do the NDP stand on this? Where does the NDP stand on clean coal technology? It wasn't too long ago . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. There's a few members having conversations across the floor. I'd appreciate it if they take it behind the bar. I recognize the Minister for the Crown Corporations.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It wasn't very long ago that the NDP put all their eggs in one basket. They looked at the cost. All of a sudden they went from 1.8 billion to over \$3 billion, Mr. Speaker. What did they do? They walked away. They washed their hands of it, and was there any

additional planning done after that? None. Is that a responsible way to conduct business? No. Is that something that this government will follow? No. You will see action on this project.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Coronation Park.

Mr. Trew: — So there's no due diligence having been done. Mr. Speaker, SaskPower president Pat Youzwa has been very clear that the \$1.16 billion price tag for the clean coal prototype project will be passed on to power consumers and that rate increases will come in waves. The Premier and his cabinet signed on to an agreement, apparently without a plan, that they now claim will be better than equalization somehow. And instead of getting \$800 million a year put into the provincial coffers, the agreement puts more than . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. Order. I'd like to hear the question being put, and I'd also like the answer to be heard.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And instead of putting \$800 million additional into the provincial coffers, the agreement puts more than \$1 billion at risk, and it guarantees Saskatchewan families are going to pay more for their power.

To the minister: when can consumers expect the first tidal wave of rate increases?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Crown Corporations.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan residents know that it will cost more money to reach these targets. They know that Saskatchewan residents as well as every other province in the country will have to pay more to reach these targets.

The more important question is, how could the NDP when they were in government set the targets with no intention of reaching them? How were you going to reach those targets without clean coal technology?

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. It's getting increasingly hard to hear the question and the answer. I recognize the Minister for Crown Corporations.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll just reiterate. If the NDP set these emission targets without clean coal, how were they going to ever reach these targets? That's the question, Mr. Speaker. And the question that is being asked — I believe by members of their own party and members that they've lost to the Green Party — is do they actually, do they actually support clean coal technology at all? We would like to hear an answer on that one.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

**Government Agreement With Saskatchewan
Union of Nurses**

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Speaking of due diligence, aside from being April Fool's Day yesterday, yesterday was significant in that it marked the first transfer of funds from health regions to the SUN [Saskatchewan Union of Nurses], regional health authorities fund that was agreed upon in the memorandum of understanding between the minister and SUN signed in February of this year.

The members opposite say they are transparent and accountable when it comes to taxpayers' dollars, but the lip service isn't cutting it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As such, the minister should move past petty politics and strive to answer questions fully and accurately.

I'll start off with an easy one. Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the Minister of Health. According to the SUN MOU, the first transfer of resources from the health regions was supposed to take place yesterday. Tick-tock, Mr. Speaker. The clock is ticking. Will the minister please tell the taxpayers today how much money was transferred from the regions to the SUN-health regions fund as of April 1?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And yes, the clock is running, and the nice part about that clock is every time it ticks or it tocks, there are more nurses working here.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, we set a goal of increasing the number of nurses by 800 over the next four years, and we're well on our way to meeting that goal. Part of that goal was sign a partnership with the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, which is precedent-setting across Canada, Mr. Speaker. I have answered the question many times, that there are many details of that partnership that need to be worked out.

I am very proud to announce that early next week the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, along with SAHO [Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations], CEOs from the different health regions, with the facilitator of great ability, Marlene Smadu, will be holding their first meeting next week, and work will start on that partnership, which we're very proud of, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The question

again: how much money was transferred from the regions as of yesterday, according to the MOU, to the fund? And the second part . . . How much money from the regions was transferred; it was 40 per cent. Now 60 per cent of that is to come from the ministry itself. The MOU states, and I quote:

Effective April 1/2008, each Health Region shall contribute funding to each Health Region/SUN Retention and Recruitment fund equal to 40% of the monthly salary and benefit costs of each RN and RPN vacancy that existed on November 1/2007, with Saskatchewan Health contributing the remaining 60%.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, will the minister please tell the public how much money was transferred yesterday from the health regions to the SUN-RHA [regional health authority] fund?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, we're really looking forward to the results of the meeting early next week between the partners — Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations, the CEOs, as well as SUN — through the work of Marlene Smadu. As I said in previous answers, that there's a number of issues that have to be worked through, including the issue around vacancies and what does that exactly mean, Mr. Speaker.

But the one thing that I will say that I'm very proud of our government is not only have we talked about it but we put the money behind it. We have put \$60 million into a fund that will be used to fill the vacancies going forward.

Unlike that government, which number one, Mr. Speaker, would never set targets. Because why? Because we wouldn't meet the targets, Mr. Speaker. What an absolutely ridiculous excuse not to move forward. You know, Mr. Speaker, we have set a target of 800 nurses to recruit into Saskatchewan. We have to set those targets. Provinces like Ontario have set targets of 9,000 nurses, Mr. Speaker. We need to be competitive.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have asked the minister two simple questions about money. He has been able to answer neither of them. I guess he doesn't know the answer, so I'm just going to ask him if he could actually maybe pick a number. Some of his colleagues tend to do that — say, the Minister of Social Services; she can do that on the fly. So to the minister: can you pick a ballpark number for the funds that were transferred yesterday since you don't know a real number?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, this opposition . . . this government . . . that opposition is certainly scared of picking numbers, Mr. Speaker. For many, many years when we saw a health care shortage, whether it's doctors or nurses, they wouldn't pick a number because they couldn't reach it. We said, well try 50. Can you attract 50 nurses to this province? And they didn't want to set that target because they wouldn't reach it, Mr. Speaker. This government, this new Saskatchewan Party government is certainly not afraid of picking numbers. We set the target of 800 new nurses in the next four years; we're well on our way.

As far as the money going into the partnership — I've answered it many, many times and I wish she would listen to this — is that the fact is there's many details that have to be worked out. That meeting starts next week, Mr. Speaker. We're certainly looking forward to the results of that meeting.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Labour Relations Board

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Canadian Association of Labour Lawyers is an organization consisting of more than 300 lawyers who represent working people across our country. According to an open letter they recently sent to the Minister of Labour, the government's interference in the Labour Relations Board, I want to quote this:

Public confidence in the Labour Relations Board is eroded when its decision makers are removed before the scheduled end of their terms for what appears to be political reasons. For tribunals to be able to interpret laws impartially and without fear of reprisal, security of tenure must be respected.

Will the minister admit that his political interference has undermined legal rights of people who work in our workplaces across the province?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:15]

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring that the Labour Relations Board delivers timely, responsive, and effective services to Saskatchewan's labour relations community.

Mr. Speaker, in fact as we look back to previous cases in the Labour Relations Board — and this has recently come out in a court case — we can see that obviously there were delays, that the people of Saskatchewan were not being well served. As part

of our renewal, Mr. Speaker, a leadership change was required at the Labour Relations Board. Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan are being well served by the new board Chair who's capable, competent, and qualified to serve in that capacity. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Ms. Atkinson: — Well the minister has had over a month to fix the mess that he created when he decided to damn the torpedoes, axe the Labour Relations Board, and hire a Sask Party buddy to fill the void. He's never been able to explain some pretty fundamental questions to the public but today we're going to ask him a simple one. Can he at least provide the members of this House with an update as to how close he is to a settlement with the outgoing fired members of the Labour Relations Board — the Chair and the Vice-Chairs. Can he finally explain to the taxpayers how much his bungling is going to cost the people of our province?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, obviously those negotiations are still under way but I think the more important question, Mr. Speaker, and when we talk about labour relations in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, we can turn and say, are the members opposite going to actually be supportive of essential services, Mr. Speaker? Are they going to actually come forward and step forward and say that public safety balanced with the right to strike is going to be a priority not just on this side but on that side, Mr. Speaker? These are the kinds of questions this province wants to know answers to.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Ms. Atkinson: — Outside the House a couple of weeks ago the minister admitted that he had absolutely no idea what was going to happen to the 30-some cases that are before the Labour Relations Board. And in fact there's one case that was in mid-hearing. We don't know if those cases have to start over from scratch. Do they continue hearing from the new Chair? Do they continue with the old Chair? What is the status of those cases? And I wonder if the minister could shed any light on the status of those cases.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, as I've said in this Chamber, as I've said I'm not prepared to speak about individual cases, Mr. Speaker. That's not appropriate, Mr. Speaker, obviously. What we see, Mr. Speaker, is that the people of this province

are being well served by a capable, qualified, competent board Chair, Mr. Speaker. That's what we see. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, there are employers and employees that were before the Labour Relations Board and are waiting to hear on 30-some cases. There was a hearing that was . . . There was a hearing, Mr. Speaker, that was in the middle of the arguments from both the employer and the employees.

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order, order. I recognize the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Ms. Atkinson: — So, Mr. Speaker, there are 30 cases before the board. One was in mid-hearing. These people are waiting to hear. They have not heard from the new Chair of the Labour Relations Board. Do they have to start over? Are the outgoing members, the fired members, going to hear these cases? What is the status? And can the member confirm that they have to negotiate a settlement with the Vice-Chair and the Chair before there'll be any work done on those 30 cases?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the member opposite is so attentive because then she'll know that some of the cases went back to 2004, Mr. Speaker. Obviously there was a change required, Mr. Speaker, as far as renewal. That's what this government is about, offering elements of renewal. Mr. Speaker, thank you.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Enterprise Saskatchewan to Lead Business Enabling Initiative

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the Enterprise Saskatchewan interim advisory board met earlier this week for the first time and is already helping our government push the competitive envelope.

First it moved quickly to begin work on refining one of the best practice examples of professional governance for a board in partnership with government. A governance committee was immediately struck along with other key boards, committees, and processes.

Second the new board has already reviewed the future organizational design of Enterprise Saskatchewan. They are satisfied with our current plan, Mr. Speaker.

Third, Mr. Speaker, the Enterprise Saskatchewan board has agreed to accept my recommendation to oversee and monitor a major new initiative which will be soon launched. That is, Mr. Speaker, the business enabling initiative which will focus on ways to enhance the quality and ease of customer service to business, especially for smaller sized enterprises. Mr. Speaker, the initiative will also examine ways to minimize excessive red tape and modernize and streamline our regulatory systems.

In the coming weeks, Mr. Speaker, a new advisory council will be created to work with Enterprise Saskatchewan board and staff to directly assist them as a focus sounding board to take up this challenge. We see the new business enabling initiative encompassing a number of specific outcomes. The overall intent is to make Saskatchewan one of the most customer friendly and responsive places for small business and other enterprises to interact with its government, as well as one of the most modern and streamlined regulatory environments in which to do business.

Mr. Speaker, a few key areas and specific projects under this Enterprise Saskatchewan-led initiative will be measures and targets for reducing regulatory burden to business; facilitating and streamlining the process of registering a business; improving service delivery, including one-stop web services; reducing unnecessary red tape and paperwork, and modernizing our regulatory framework. The end result will be more consistent and high quality service standards for business, more one window service, and less time and pain for smaller businesses trying to navigate through the current maze of red tape and complex regulations.

Mr. Speaker, this is a large but important undertaking and will not be accomplished overnight. In future months, both Enterprise Saskatchewan and the government will make further announcements. But, Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased with the immediate strategy already identified with the Enterprise Saskatchewan board's first meeting as a major indication of how committed this talented new board is to making real progress and guiding economic development in Saskatchewan. And may I say on a personal note, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be associated with this board of fine people.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member of Saskatoon Meewasin.

Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to first of all thank the minister for providing me with a copy of his ministerial statement. If his cabinet colleagues had been half as interested in it as I was, I would've been able to hear him deliver it, Mr. Speaker.

I note that, I note that early in his statement he says that the board has already reviewed the future organizational design of Enterprise Saskatchewan and that the board is satisfied with the government's plan. And that seems to be the tone of the statement, Mr. Speaker, that the board is taking direction from the government very well. The statement goes on to state that the board has accepted the minister's recommendation to oversee and monitor a major new initiative which will soon be launched — the business enabling initiative — again taking

direction from the government very well, Mr. Speaker.

The only people, according to a government press release, that have given any direction, information, or strategic advice to the board to date are the Premier and members of the government cabinet, Mr. Speaker.

Now to accomplish this streamlining that the minister spoke about — and I think maybe his seatmate might have been able to hear him, Mr. Speaker — there is going to be an advisory council to what the Premier has assured us is only an advisory council. Enterprise Saskatchewan is nothing to worry about. It's just an advisory council to government. The advisory council now has an advisory council on this streamlining initiative. I assume when that advisory council has an advisory council, that the government will drop the characterization of Enterprise Saskatchewan as fleet of foot.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition continues to look forward to other bureaucratic encumbrances added to Enterprise Saskatchewan in its efforts to streamline business in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Chief Commissioner of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to inform the members of the legislature that Marilou McPhedran, Chief Commissioner of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, has accepted a position at her alma mater, the University of Winnipeg. To help with the smooth transition to a new Chair, Ms. McPhedran will step down from her position effective June 15 of this year. This is an exciting opportunity for Ms. McPhedran, and we wish her well in the new challenge.

Mr. Speaker, Ms. McPhedran was appointed Chief Commissioner in October 2007. Although her time with the commission has been quite brief, she has been busy working with staff to promote the objectives of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code and representing the commission at various conferences and events. Just this week she launched two, new electronic outreach initiatives to employers, as part of a concerted, proactive approach to human rights education.

The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, led by Chief Commissioner McPhedran does important work for the people of this province. It advances the principle that every person is free and equal in dignity and in rights, and it promotes understanding and acceptance.

Mr. Speaker, today I wish to express my strong support and confidence in the good work of the commission and Chief Commissioner McPhedran in particular. I'm certainly disappointed to see her leave; however her reasons are understandable.

Ms. McPhedran was born and raised in rural Manitoba and attended the University of Winnipeg. She is presented with an exciting new opportunity to return to the University of

Winnipeg in her home province, and I respect her decision to do so.

With her departure we will now be faced with the task of appointing a new chief commissioner. Mr. Speaker, I can assure my fellow members of this Assembly that I committed to an open and competitive process that will see the best candidate hired for the job. We will follow the same process that resulted in the selection of Ms. McPhedran.

On a personal note, I want to wish her the very best in her future endeavours. Ms. McPhedran is seated in your gallery today, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to ask my colleagues in the House to join me in expressing our appreciation for her commitment to human rights issues in Saskatchewan and to wish her well in her future endeavours. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the official opposition, I'd like to also say thank you to Marilou McPhedran for her work here in Saskatchewan. And I know that she has brought some new ideas, some new energy to the role that she took just last fall and that the things that she has started will continue. And I know that the minister is anxious to get another person of the same high calibre through a very open process to allow us to continue to make sure that the Human Rights Commission work, which is extremely important in our province, is done.

So I want to say all the best in Winnipeg. I think that it's not dissimilar to some of the good events that we had in Saskatchewan in the fall which you participated in, and I'm thinking about the Grey Cup, where our coach ended up moving on very quickly and he's going to be successful. But I know you will always keep the good work here in Saskatchewan in your heart and that you will use that as you teach new people at the University of Winnipeg.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to end with just a little advice to the Minister of Justice. He is seating with a seatmate there who requires a little more assistance in how you get new, independent people to be involved . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. The member is entering into debate. Just acknowledge our guest. I would just allow the member to finish his introduction and no more.

[14:30]

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll continue with my response to the ministerial statement. I just make the simple comment that I appreciate that the Minister of Justice in this particular situation will use the very open process and competitive process that has been developed over many years. And I would hope that that will be the standard for this government. Some places we haven't seen it.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 18 — The Public Service Amendment Act, 2008

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Highways.

Hon. Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 18, The Public Service Amendment Act, 2008 be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Highways has moved first reading of Bill No. 18, The Public Service Amendment Act, 2008. Is the Assembly prepared to accept 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. Elhard: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

Bill No. 21 — The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Amendment Act, 2008

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 21, The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Amendment Act, 2008 be now introduced and read a first time.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Education has moved first reading of Bill No. 21, The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Amendment Act, 2008 be now read the 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 this Bill be read the second time?

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

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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 Weyburn.

Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I was able to . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Duncan: — I was able to enter into the debate last night, but I had a few, a few more points that I wanted to put on the record on behalf of the people of Weyburn-Big Muddy, Mr. Speaker.

The one thing that I looked for in this budget, Mr. Speaker, that our government has come through on is the graduate retention program, Mr. Speaker. This is the program that we campaigned on. It was one that I campaigned on. I was very supportive of this plank in the platform, Mr. Speaker. This is the program that will provide for graduates of post-secondary, whether that be university degree or some other program through our post-secondary institutes, Mr. Speaker. And this would, in the case of a university grad, would provide up to \$20,000 in tuition rebates for post-secondary graduates, Mr. Speaker. And that's if they've graduated from a Saskatchewan institution, an educational institution, Mr. Speaker. And I think that this was a good plank, Mr. Speaker, in the platform. And it was one that young people I think are very positive on, Mr. Speaker.

But there's one other person that was very positive on this, Mr. Speaker. And I wanted to reference something that a constituent, somebody that I've come to respect in our community, Mr. Speaker . . . He's very well regarded in Weyburn and throughout the Southeast in the field of education, Mr. Speaker. And that gentleman, and I spoke about him a little bit last night, Mr. Speaker, was Graham Mickleborough.

Graham's the president and CEO of the Southeast Regional College, Mr. Speaker. And here's what he had to say on this commitment, this promise that we kept, Mr. Speaker. He said that, he called it “. . . an aggressive and attractive program for our youth.” He said, “I am glad to see efforts to retain the youth of our province in this budget,” Mr. Speaker. So I was very happy to see Graham at the budget that day and welcomed his comments on that part, Mr. Speaker. In fact he went on — and this is in the *Weyburn Review* — he went on to talk about . . .

And there was some discussion — before I get to that point, Mr. Speaker — there was some discussion from members opposite in terms of the funding in this budget for regional colleges. And I think that members on this side of the House are very supportive of our regional colleges, and I would say that members opposite are too. They see the value of the regional colleges.

Mr. Speaker, I happened to be able to take my entire first year of university staying at home in Weyburn through the regional college, was able to get all of my classes in for my entire first year, Mr. Speaker. So I certainly on a personal level appreciate

the role that our regional colleges play.

But, Mr. Speaker, there was some questioning from the members opposite. I know the member from Elphinstone, he had some views on the budget in terms of regional colleges. But again, I would go to the experts in this field, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Mickleborough, president and CEO of the Southeast Regional College, he says, quote, “From this investment, one can see that the government does understand the potential in regional colleges . . .” Mr. Speaker. That’s what he had to say.

And he is looking forward to working with the government in terms of some longer-term funding for our regional colleges. And I certainly want to work with Mr. Mickleborough on that, and I know that this government will, Mr. Speaker. And overall, Mr. Speaker, he was very pleased to see . . . and called wise, wise decisions by the government when it came to both secondary infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, and very, very glad to see his remarks on that, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know that there are other members that want to enter into the debate. I’ve had certainly my fair share of the time, last night and today. I know that, Mr. Speaker. But a couple of other points that are pretty key to my constituency, Mr. Speaker: the \$20.7 million in nurse recruitment and retention and what that means, Mr. Speaker, for Weyburn-Big Muddy.

And this government has certainly . . . on a good start, Mr. Speaker. Four months in and we’re already seeing close to 300 nurses come from the Philippines, Mr. Speaker. We’re going to see those over the next few months. But this money for going into recruitment and retention, Mr. Speaker, it’s not only the smaller communities. I know that there’s concerns in some of the smaller communities about whether they can staff, and that has simply been because there haven’t been enough nurses and doctors, Mr. Speaker. And so services have been cut over the last few years under the former government, Mr. Speaker. And so this budget provides hope for those people. But it’s also what we would consider our bigger services, Mr. Speaker.

You cannot on a non-emergency basis have a baby delivered in the city of Weyburn, Mr. Speaker, in the Weyburn hospital. It’s a service that was ended temporarily under the NDP watch, Mr. Speaker, in the last year. It’s one that I know the region is working hard to return that service because we’re a growing community. We’re a community of 10,000, Mr. Speaker, in the area around it, the trading area.

And I know personally, Mr. Speaker, many of my friends that because that service is no longer offered in Weyburn, that they have to come to Regina. And the Regina hospital can’t handle that extra load as well as they need to, and so there’s difficulties in getting beds. And I know of people that they were told that there’s no beds even though the mother is very close going into labour. And then when they do deliver, there’s unfortunately a move to free up those beds, Mr. Speaker.

But the problem that the region has encountered is that they couldn’t get enough staff to operate both, Mr. Speaker — ICU [intensive care unit] and the maternity — and keep all of these services operated, Mr. Speaker. And so they had to make a tough choice, and that’s the choice that they make. And I

certainly will be talking with the region, going forward. I’ve already met with the board to discuss this and some other things, Mr. Speaker, and I’ll be doing what I can for the people of Weyburn and area on this, Mr. Speaker.

The other thing that I am really in favour of in this is 6.1 million for more physician training seats, recruitment, and retention. Mr. Speaker, this is something that affects the constituency.

Coronach is in a situation where the doctor there is looking at retiring. He’s put in, many years of service in. He’s in his, I believe, late 60s. He’s trying to cut back his practice, Mr. Speaker. And the people of Coronach are concerned that there won’t be a physician there in that community, particularly when you look, Mr. Speaker, at what happens in Coronach.

Mr. Speaker, Coronach, it’s a SaskPower town, Mr. Speaker. It’s a coal town. Not only is it the location where, for the Poplar River Power Station, but also the coal mine there, Mr. Speaker. It’s heavy industrial activity. And, Mr. Speaker, I think the people of Coronach and the people that work in the mines and people that work at the power station want to feel comfortable that in the event of a — and it would be an unfortunate tragedy — that somebody is seriously injured, that they have access, close access, Mr. Speaker, to medical care, to a doctor. And that is a concern and one that I hear about when I’m in Coronach. I was just there last Friday, Mr. Speaker, and that’s something that they wanted to talk to me about.

But it’s not only that, not only Coronach in my constituency. It’s also Bengough. Dr. Wong is covering a very large area and, Mr. Speaker, he’s doing the best that he can. But as services are restricted or cut back in Coronach, Mr. Speaker, Dr. Wong is probably going to be asked to take in that larger area, Mr. Speaker, and it is a concern.

And while we know that these training seats don’t mean that there’s going to be doctors right now, Mr. Speaker, we had to start somewhere. We couldn’t wait in this province. We couldn’t continue under the manner of the former administration that really couldn’t provide enough training seats for these valuable medical professions, Mr. Speaker. And so this budget is a good start to getting us on to a long-term plan of increasing the numbers, Mr. Speaker.

The other thing that I do want to briefly mention, Mr. Speaker, the \$10.7 million for increase in cancer care, and I touched on this a little bit, Mr. Speaker. This is going to be going to people that, people that we really need to help in this province. Whether you talk to people that are now covered for Avastin, the cancer drug Avastin for colorectal cancer, Mr. Speaker, which was something that we committed to . . . And we got that done, Mr. Speaker, almost as soon as we could, Mr. Speaker, as soon as the cancer agency could take care of those patients once the drug was funded because there were many patients . . . I have constituents, Mr. Speaker, that paid out of pocket as long as they could under the NDP and then they just, they couldn’t afford it. So that drug will now be covered, Mr. Speaker, and so this is such a great development, Mr. Speaker. And we look forward to seeing more good work from the Health minister in cleaning up a lot of the problems that were left behind by the former government, Mr. Speaker.

Now those are some of the reasons why I support the specifics of the budget — specific reasons why I support the budget, Mr. Speaker. But I'll tell you overall, Mr. Speaker, why I support this budget for all of those things, Mr. Speaker — from the highway spending, from the health care spending, from the cancer funding, Mr. Speaker. Overall though, Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to support this budget because this is a budget that we campaigned on. This is a budget, a plan that we took to the people that we would do if we were elected to the government, Mr. Speaker. This is a plan that keeps 40 commitments, Mr. Speaker, that we made during the election, not including nearly — I believe it was — a dozen commitments even before the budget ever came out that we made to the people of Saskatchewan and that we now are keeping or have given our word that this budget will take care of those issues, Mr. Speaker.

And so, Mr. Speaker, for that reason, for the overwhelming support that I get from my constituents in favour of this budget, in favour of the highway spending, Mr. Speaker, in favour of the health care spending, and in favour of a plan that will build, that will make this province ready for growth, Mr. Speaker, for all of those reasons I will be supporting, voting in favour of the budget and I will be voting against the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased today to enter into the budget debate. The budget of 2008 may be characterized by some as a New Democratic Party budget but also it has Sask Party gaps. There is very little for affordable housing, very little for property tax relief, very little of a green strategy to address climate change, and not enough training spaces. It is hard not to like spending on needed program enhancements and infrastructure, like highways, hospitals, and schools — basically mom and apple pie for the province.

[14:45]

However it isn't hard to criticize that what wouldn't fly when the NDP did it and now can clearly get a big pass when the Sask Party does the same thing. I'm referring to the renamed Fiscal Stabilization Fund, the fiscal growth and stability fund now and its payload of money — over \$1 billion — targeted over the next three years to backfill what the Finance minister admits are deficit budgets coming soon to a wallet near you, starting next year to be exact. It's passing strange that this announcement would have met with howls of outrage last year but merits nary a whimper this year.

In the *Leader Post* on March 20, Bruce Johnstone says that, quoting the Minister of Finance, this year quote:

“... it truly is a balanced budget. We're close to balanced for next year. We're optimistic our revenues will improve sufficiently enough that we will be balanced next year.”

Now to get to be able to say that you have a balanced budget this year, you have to have a Fiscal Stabilization Fund or

something like it. So technically speaking, the Finance minister had to concede that the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, which his party roundly criticized as a make-believe fund with no money, had allowed the previous NDP governments to balance the budget. And now he could say that he had the 15th consecutive balanced budget.

This is of course, as everyone says, the honeymoon period for the Sask Party. But we should remember what happens on most honeymoons — a lot of frenzied action that is rarely sustainable. When everyone comes back to reality, there needs to be eyes-wide-open time. What looked good on a beach in Hawaii doesn't look that good cutting funding to the Station 20 project in the core area of Saskatoon. It doesn't do much for homelessness, and high condo-conversion rates, and lack of affordable housing. It'll take more than two mai tais to deal with the lack of training spaces for the tight labour market. Even a sunset cruise won't help reduce the property taxes for Saskatchewan families.

Lots of promises are made on honeymoons. Cash, committees, and cronyism are evident promises for this honeymoon with the Sask Party. Cash is coming easy. It's flowing in with the Sask Party not lifting a finger, except the one they've given Station 20 in Saskatoon. Committees are evident to study everything — housing, done and done again by the previous government as recently as last summer. And cronyism so appallingly rampant that Grant Devine must be very pleased with this protégé from Swift Current.

News flash for the Premier: the honeymoon is over. According to the editorial in *The StarPhoenix*, who are not exactly New Democrat, it says, I'm quoting from the editorial of March 29:

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.

Rather than appear to be competent managers of the public purse, Premier Brad Wall's team has been extravagant in its spending, ham-handed in its communication strategy and incompetent in its delivery.

The latest in a series of embarrassing events include a budget-day announcement of the disruption of hundreds of jobs that now apparently was made in error, and the deliberate cancellation of a much-lauded inner-city redevelopment project in Saskatoon.

That no one from Wall to Health Minister Don McMorris to Finance Minister Rod Gantfoer [and I'm quoting] can get their stories straight about why a previously made provincial commitment of \$8 million to the Station 20 project, which would bring, among other things, medical, dental and community services to one of the most stressed neighbourhoods in Saskatchewan's largest city, does little to foster confidence in their ability to manage public money.

Going on, to quote:

Until now, the government has requested patience from Saskatchewan citizens, suggesting the four months since it

took office wasn't enough . . . to properly redirect the flow of cash. But this excuse is wearing thin.

And there's other business people who have more to say, including the chamber of commerce who doesn't give this budget more than a C:

The Greater Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce has given the provincial government a "C" for the 2008/09 budget released today. Education property tax . . . [is] still a problem.

And to quote Kent Smith-Windsor, executive director of the Greater Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce: "This province risked bankruptcy just a decade ago." And well all know why that was. And he goes on to say:

In this context, the Government of Saskatchewan is spending well in excess of population growth and inflation. As our province saw just a short decade ago — this is unsustainable.

The president of the chamber of commerce says:

This province needs a comprehensive amendment to education property tax policy . . . The province needs a strategy to get our entire tax system to a competitive level.

Also when we talk about what the budget is, Murray Mandryk from *The StarPhoenix* and the *Leader-Post* said March 20, he said that, when we talked about the government, the budget being much like an NDP government ". . . Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery." But that being said, Mr. Mandryk went on to say:

. . . what was likely maddening about Finance Minister . . . Gantefoer's 40-minute address is that it did outline the same old jiggery-pokery we've seen for the past 16 years. The big difference is, the new Saskatchewan Party government already seems every bit as good at the jiggery and perhaps even better at the pokery.

The new government boldly proclaims the province's 15th consecutive balanced budget, even though the Saskatchewan Party decried in Opposition last year that the budget wasn't balanced . . .

But even more critically, the government's own projections say this will be the last budget surplus Premier Brad Wall will deliver this four-year term."

So this is damning with faint praise indeed, and of course the mayors of the big cities are on record saying that they will be certainly having property tax increases in their cities. Also from the people that represent poor people and poor groups in the province, they complain also that there's nothing for them:

A lack of affordable housing is causing a crisis in Saskatchewan, and Wednesday's budget, [this is according to Heather Polischuk from the *Leader-Post*] which offers a largely status quo agenda for low-income earners, and does little to help, [most of them].

"I don't think that this budget deals seriously with the question of poverty in Saskatchewan and it certainly, in and of itself, is not dealing with the crisis of affordable house quality and affordable housing."

"What we're really not seeing in this budget, given a very good financial position for the province, is a significant commitment to a social agenda."

And more interestingly, "Many of the affordable housing dollars in the . . . budget come from existing housing programs . . ." which our government put in place.

The Station West funding reversal that I just mentioned in Saskatoon is a clear indication of the real Sask Party. The Premier's snappy one-liners fell flat as a pancake with the people of Saskatoon after the ill-advised, insensitive, and dismissive remarks about priorities in Saskatoon.

I can understand the Station 20 West project meaning nothing to the member from Indian Head-Milestone, the Minister of Health, or the member from Swift Current, the people's Premier, but I do think the project should mean something to the members from the Saskatoon ridings of Silver Springs, Greystone, Northwest, Southeast, and Sutherland. I don't hear their voices in support of the health and well-being of the inner city and core neighbourhood residents of Saskatoon. So much for the softer side of the Sask Party. There never is a sheep around when you need one.

To hear the Minister of Health say that the Sask Party priorities are fire alarms and chillers really does send a chill through Saskatoon. The types of comments made by the minister and the Premier should signal to all people of Saskatchewan that if you live in a core neighbourhood, in an urban centre, you're not a priority for your government. And the big chill is really going through the civil service, where everyone is afraid for their job, afraid of repercussions for decisions, and now apparently, there's email tracking for everyone back two years.

Highways do need to be built and repaired. Schools and hospitals need to be built and repaired, but not at the expense of the poor and the disadvantaged. These decisions faced our party in government as well, Mr. Speaker, and the decisions we made with the money we had always were made with everyone's needs in mind including those that were most vulnerable — projects like White Buffalo Youth Lodge in the core neighbourhoods of Saskatoon; \$100 million recently in affordable housing, much of that money in Saskatoon; new schools for the west side — W.P. Bate Elementary, Bethlehem and Tommy Douglas high schools.

When the announcement of pulling the funding for Station 20 was made, the Finance minister had one set of wrong facts. The Minister of Health had really bad advice. And the Premier had a flippant spin. It seems that not only does the right hand not know what the left hand is doing; they don't even know their hands.

It's quite easy to spend money when you have it and a lot of it — 1.2 billion left in the bank when the Sask Party took over as government in November '07. I know the new Premier thought that this was a stark financial situation, but there has never been

such a lucky stark financial situation from any new government in Saskatchewan or anywhere else.

I want to talk a little bit more about Station 20 because it's a project that I've been involved in, and it's been going on for probably five years. And the Health minister said, among other goofy things that have been said, the Health minister suggested that it was an 11th hour announcement. This project has been going on for five years. Money was in the budget last year, and he spoke about that at estimates and asked the then minister of Health about it. So everyone knew the money was given.

And it was said by the . . . I have this article from the paper that talks about the approval that the NDP government gave Station West and gave the money to the health district to hold in trust until the project was ready to move forward to the stage where it would need the 8 million. And that's:

The NDP had approved the funds for Station 20 West, which would house a low-cost dental clinic to train senior dentistry students, a medical clinic, public health and counselling clinics, a co-operative grocery store and other community organizations.

Jean Morrison, vice-president of performance excellence and chief nursing officer for the Saskatoon Health Region, said the provincial government had given the health region \$8 million to hold in trust for Station 20 . . . while the organizations involved worked on more detailed plans.

So the money was already there. It was not a last-minute, last-minute project.

And when we talk about this question about the grocery store, it just amazes me when members from the opposition talk about the grocery store — that's all this is going to be. None of them obviously have been there. Even the member from Saskatoon, from Northwest, talks about the grocery store being across the street . . . or this complex being across the street from Giant Tiger. It is not across the street from Giant Tiger. That's just about as clear as his rant the other night, his sense of direction.

This is not about a grocery store. And even if it was about the grocery store, most of us can go to Sobeys and Superstore and the Co-op and extra-value foods and all those other things because we can drive there. And we can carry our groceries in our cars and our trucks and our SUVs [sports utility vehicle] and whatever else we're driving. These people have to walk, and they have to take children, and they have to come home with their groceries. So talking about five more blocks or ten more blocks isn't reasonable. And it isn't just about a grocery store, and the dismissive comments are really insulting.

And the "Letters to the Editor" are . . . I mean there's an outpouring of support for this project because it was developed by the community.

The organizations that are there have not just relied on the housing, which is already up and running, so it had nothing to do with the election in November. The library is there, which had nothing to do with the election in November. But the whole project depends on the interconnectivity of all the things that will go there to address all the needs of people — an

interdisciplinary, a holistic approach, not a one-off. It isn't about groceries. If you're talking groceries, you're missing the point. And it doesn't really surprise me.

"Wall has a strange idea of 'mall'" is one letter to the editor, which I think is interesting:

Premier Brad Wall thinks [I'm quoting] 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.

. . . [This province Wall has said] At the recent Mayor's Prayer Breakfast . . . this province would leave no one behind in this period of prosperity. Here's a news flash [he goes on to say]: people are being left behind in the community who would be served by Station 20 West.

There are many, many, many of these letters. And honestly it was really an ill-conceived decision to take \$8 million from this project, which was set aside in last year's budget, and basically put it into chillers and fire alarms and say those were the priorities, and to talk to the people of the core neighbourhoods and say you are not a priority of this government. That's really chilling, I think. I think it's a real statement of the heart of the Sask Party, and I don't know where we come to talk about the softer side.

Autism, we put more money in autism last year, too, in case somebody would like to look at that.

Anyways I'll go back to my speech, Mr. Speaker. I do know first-hand, and the Minister of Health is always talking about how closely I've been tied to SUN. I do know really a lot about bargaining and a myriad of other health issues that we're dealing with on an ongoing basis. And as the minister often points out that I had been president of the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses for five years. I'm a registered nurse. The unique perspective that I have from there has given me . . . And I've also been working as a nurse for many, many years — more than I care to say — and I've been leader of the provincial nurses' union and been in government for almost 10 years So that gives me a perspective, including serving as the associate minister of Health, it gives me a perspective that the minister will never have, and he will never enjoy this.

I can comment on nursing recruitment and retention and specifically talking about how many nurses are here and the SRNA [Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association] talking about how they're looking forward to this government paying attention to nursing recruitment and retention.

I have the exit surveys that are done for the nursing education program in Saskatchewan, and they talk about how many students receive government bursaries and how much the government bursary program has contributed to the students that are in these programs, and they're finishing the programs, and they're actually entering the programs. And we also talk about . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh you want to know how much.

[15:00]

Well three quarters, three quarters of the NEPS [nursing education program of Saskatchewan] students receive scholarships or bursaries, and this percentage is approximately constant over the last few years. More than 7 in 10 receive their main scholarship or bursary support from the government, and this is not anything about the election in '07. This is about when the NDP was in government, all the things we put in place to encourage people to enter the nursing profession and to make it somewhat easier for them to do that.

The respondents, when they talked about how their job searches would be when they were graduating, 85.4 per cent said that they confirmed a job in nursing, and they also are in Saskatchewan. 96.6 of the respondents intend to work in Saskatchewan. That's a lot of nurses staying here, and it has nothing to do with the November election.

I also have some statistics and trends from the SRNA that talks about the number of RNs [registered nurse] in the province has increased in the last year — and this was given out in March of this year — over 2 per cent, bringing the total number of RNs to an all-time high in the last 10 years of 9,151. For the first time in over a decade, they were confident that the RN shortage is getting the attention it deserves. That attention didn't start November 7. These things have happened because of things we have done as a government through several ministers of Health and hard work with very little money.

In the past five years, the age distribution of practising RNs has moved decisively to an older age group, and we all know that. But it's evident now that there are more young people under the age of 30. It's increasing that from the last few years. That has been increasing, which is really, really good to see. So we're seeing some of the results of the things that we have put in place, and I'm really pleased to be able to report that.

We talked a lot, the Minister of Health has talked a lot about his sponsored trip to the Philippines, and I want to talk about how this was started under the minister of Immigration, the member from Saskatoon Nutana. And that work was started in '06 and the results of that work has allowed the health districts and the department to go to the Philippines more than once to get skilled workers to come over here. That is something that has been built on because of this. And I think there has been recognition that this is not something that has been just done by this government, but it has been done by our government when we were in power in the last few years.

And, Mr. Speaker, I also would like to talk about the MOU that has been done with SUN, and I asked the minister some questions today about that because the clock is ticking. April 1 was yesterday. The MOU signed in February stated April 1 money would start being put into a fund to deal with recruitment and retention. I didn't get any answers today about that. I don't know how much money will be put in and I think the public deserves to know. I think we need to know where the money is, what's going to be done with the money. It's all fine and well to say you're getting somebody in there to help you with the planning but if you can't even tell us where the money is, that's pretty hard to swallow as a public. I think the public is really not that excited about incompetency and basically evasive techniques.

I also want to say that this budget . . . Even though we have said that we're talking about many things that the NDP have done and the program enhancements basically built on things we've done, as my colleague from Rosemont said last night, a lot of the programs were set in place so more money could just be enhanced into them and I think that that's very significant.

I think what happened, the people of Saskatchewan on November 7 voted for change, but they didn't vote for change from competent to incompetent. They didn't vote for change from compassionate to mean-spirited, and if they wanted a comedy routine, *Corner Gas* is still the best place to go. So I think that when we hear a lot of the gloating about what people said in November '07, the honeymoon is over. It's time to realize that you can't be both government and opposition. Mr. Speaker, the government now likes to duck behind being opposition, pretending they're opposition and saying, well it was your fault; you did it so now we can do it. But it doesn't fly any more. You're responsible now as government for what you say; you're responsible for it. What you do is your fault.

It doesn't matter when you say, what would you do? What happened then? You are responsible. People did elect you. They elected you to be responsible, not to be flippant, mean-spirited, incompetent. They elected you to be government, and by all reports I've seen, you're not living up to their expectations. Because of that, Mr. Speaker, I will not be voting for this budget but I will be voting for the amendment.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to rise today to be able to enter into the debate on the budget. Mr. Speaker, I heard the member from Saskatoon Eastview talk about why people were elected and the type of commitments that were made. This government was elected to fulfill a variety of promises and that's what this budget does, Mr. Speaker. We are proud of the commitments that were made prior to November 7, 2007 and we are proud that we fulfilled many of those things. I'm proud to be a member of a government that keeps its word; that delivers exactly what it promised during the election campaign, and is focused on a plan that will put Saskatchewan on the road to sustained growth.

For many years promises were made and then forgotten after the election. It bred a cynicism that is counter to the expectations of the Saskatchewan people. I'm proud that as a government we're giving people a reason to believe in Saskatchewan's future.

We all know that Saskatchewan is ready for growth, but our infrastructure was not ready. It was neglected for a long time under many years of NDP rule. We are moving to fix that and build a stronger province. And the first step is keeping our promises.

As Justice minister and Attorney General, I was very happy that one of the first promises kept was the establishment of a fixed date for elections, Mr. Speaker. No longer will the most basic and vital democratic right be held hostage by political considerations and influences. Everyone knows when the next

election will be, and all Saskatchewan residents are better served by that knowledge. No more delaying going to the polls. No more judging the political winds, trying to guess when the best time to face the voters is. We made a promise and we kept it. Mr. Speaker, I can stand in the House today and I can say, the next election will be held November 7, 2011.

Mr. Speaker, we also made a promise to make our communities safer from drinking drivers. That is another promise that was kept back in December. It was kept in time so that we were able to keep drunk drivers off the road during last year's holiday season. We've let drunk and impaired drivers know that we will hold them accountable and that repeat offenders will not only lose their driver's licence but that we will also seize their cars and sell them. Saskatchewan is leading the fight to keep impaired drivers off the road and make our community safer.

The keeping of those promises and many others laid the groundwork for a budget that kept 40 more promises. Provincial tax property rebate is also worth almost \$160 million. Contrary to what some of the members opposite were talking about, buying a pizza or something like that, this is real and substantial amounts of money that will make a significant difference to the homeowners of our province.

We've developed a graduate retention program. We have a prescription drug plan that will offer a \$15 cap for children. We provided money for crop insurance. We provided funding for a nurse recruitment and retention program. And I'm exceptionally pleased that my colleagues have travelled to the Philippines to try and arrange for 300 new nurses to come to this province. Mr. Speaker, those nurses will soon be walking the floors of our hospitals, delivering proper and quality health care to the citizens of our province, working with their colleagues who are already . . . that are also high-quality, well-educated individuals that are providing quality health care. And I'm proud that we're able to give them some relief because they've been working too hard for too long.

Many of my cabinet colleagues will speak about the ready-for-growth initiative, a billion dollar program that will help us grow in a way that is sustainable for the long term and keep Saskatchewan in its new status as a have province. This budget brings with it the largest capital investment in the history of Saskatchewan.

We all know how the NDP planned for growth. They would ignore it, neglect it, and then blame outside forces. But, Mr. Speaker, we are now doing things differently in our province. We are taking a careful, planned, reasoned approach. We want to try something new and radical. We want Saskatchewan to have success. We want everyone in our province to share in that success.

That's why my colleagues will talk about the \$400 million that's going towards the backbone of the Saskatchewan economy — our highway system. They will highlight the \$200 million that is going towards building better infrastructure in our health care system that meets the needs of a growing province. They will also point, Mr. Speaker, to the \$160 million that is going towards constructing the education infrastructure that we need to meet the challenge ahead. And, Mr. Speaker, that is just the capital side.

This is a budget that will bring new levels of transparency to provincial spending. No more hiding or shifting taxpayers' money in some elaborate shell game. Now everyone will know exactly where their hard-earned tax dollars are going.

We want to take steps to keep our youth here in Saskatchewan, which is why we've introduced a tuition rebate program and maintained the university tuition freeze.

Mr. Speaker, these initiatives are designed to help meet the demand for skilled workers right here in Saskatchewan. And you know what else attracts new workers? A health care system that works, that people believe in, that delivers quality, timely health care. That's why in this budget we are expanding the number of training seats for health care professionals in order to fix the crisis that was allowed to fester for years under the NDP.

I can't believe the previous member that was up to speak, a former president of nurses' union, a former nurse herself, would be able to stand up here and say that she has done anything over the last 16 years to try and make our health system work.

Mr. Speaker, we have a crisis in health care and this is the government that's going to work towards fixing those problems. We want a health care system that works and you get that by careful planning and careful allocation of your resources.

There's very much more to talk about in this budget, Mr. Speaker, but, Mr. Speaker, right now to move on and take some time to talk about some initiatives in the Ministry of Justice.

During last fall's election campaign we made a promise to make our communities safer. This budget will provide funding to ensure that we are able to keep that promise. There are funds for more prosecutors, funding for another domestic violence court in Regina that is now open. There's an increase in the victim surcharge fee to provide support to victims of crime. We're expanding video conferencing in our court system. We are adding a large number of new police officers. We've made it clear that the guilty in our province are going to be punished. However we also know that the court system needs to have a degree of restorative focus through innovations like the domestic violence court.

Mr. Speaker, we've also ensured that the various alternative measure programs continue to have funding and continue to be able to deliver the services that they provide.

We are also pleased to provide \$430,000 for the implementation of a domestic violence court in Regina to address the underlying causes of criminal domestic violence and to work permanently to alter the behaviour of offenders.

The people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, have an expectation that the administration of justice will be fair and matters will be dealt with as efficiently as possible. That's why we are adding three additional prosecutors to public prosecution.

As former head of the Saskatchewan Legal Aid Commission, I'm very pleased to announce that the commission will receive an additional \$900,000 to support the commission's ongoing operations and its share of funding for an additional lawyer dedicated to the domestic violence court. I should say . . .

[inaudible] . . . Mr. Speaker. As well, a further \$450,000 is transferred from the court services budget to Legal Aid for court-appointed counsel services to young people.

There's more than \$3 million of capital funding for courts in this province. Video conferencing has worked well, and it's allowed court and law enforcement resources to deploy more effectively, so there's \$300,000 to expand video conferencing. There's \$700,000 to complete the planning for a new court facility in La Ronge. As well — and I speak from experience in saying this is a project long overdue — there is \$1.8 million for planning an addition to the Saskatchewan Court of Queen's Bench in Saskatoon. There is another \$250,000 for improvements at various circuit court sites.

As well, the victim surcharge will increase effective July 1, 2008 to ensure and strengthen the many programs and services that it provides to victims of crime. That was a promise that was made during the campaign and, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say it's another promise kept.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be able to say the Saskatchewan Party government has taken real, concrete steps to making communities safer. As our province grows, that sense of safety and community is absolutely vital.

As a lifelong resident of Saskatoon, I am well acquainted with that community's spirit, the belief that we can achieve so much by working together. That's why I look on pride as the MLA for Saskatoon Southeast, as my hometown continues to grow and be a leader in this province. Saskatoon is one of the country's fastest growing cities. It is a magnet for investment and innovation, and this government recognized the important role that Saskatoon will play in the future. That's why you can see more than \$21 million worth of capital budget projects for Saskatoon in this budget. We want to make sure that Saskatoon is ready for growth. And I will list just a few things that are going to Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker.

[15:15]

Saskatoon mental health will get an additional \$3.5 million for capital; Oliver Lodge long-term facility, \$8 million; St. Paul's Hospital will receive \$400,000 for renovations to allow for a fifth MRI [magnetic resonance imaging]. And I'd like to commend the St. Paul's Hospital Foundation for raising funds to purchase the MRI. The University of Saskatchewan is receiving \$5.9 million for the InterVac program. It is helping to keep the University of Saskatchewan a leader in research and development. In addition, Mr. Speaker, there is \$2.2 million for the Saskatchewan provincial correctional centre and as I mentioned earlier, \$1.8 million for planning of capital changes to the Court of Queen's Bench in Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, one of the goals of all politicians should be to make sure that we leave this province a better place and that the next generation is prepared to meet the challenges ahead and, most importantly, that we have the infrastructure to allow for growth. In the past, Mr. Speaker, the NDP government ignored Saskatchewan's future and instead worried about their political present. Budgeting was done on an ad hoc basis by way of crisis management. It was not only a disappointment but it was an incredible waste of money. I am very proud that we have a

budget that has vision, that offers a road map for Saskatchewan's growth and makes it clear where the province is heading and how we're going to get there.

The future is bright in Saskatchewan. We set a new employment record in February with nearly half a million people working in this province. We are leading the country — not just the region but the entire country — in a host of economic indicators from wholesale trade to construction permits to new vehicle sales, not to mention football. And the Canada West Foundation predicts a Western province that will again lead the country in economic growth in 2008 but this time it won't be Alberta and it won't be British Columbia, Mr. Speaker. This time it's going to be Saskatchewan. This province is ready to grow and we have a budget that allows for that growth to happen. Mr. Speaker, this is a budget that reflects the promises we made in the election. It's a budget that we can be proud of and it's a budget that we can use to grow.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I would like to thank all of my government officials that worked in preparing this budget but I'd like to specifically recognize an ADM [associate deputy minister] that's now retired, a long-term civil servant, Keith Laxdal. I recently attended a retirement dinner on his behalf. It's through work of a committed civil service that allows the government to do its duty and allows us to position our province so that it is ready to move forward and onward and to meet the challenges of growth that our province has.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to be supporting the amendment. I am going to be supporting the budget. And, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be supporting this budget.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Michelson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise and speak on behalf of the budget presented by the hon. member for Melfort, the Minister of Finance, and on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. I'm speaking in favour of the budget of opportunity. I'm speaking in favour of the budget of growth. And I'm speaking in favour of prosperity and the benefits to all.

Mr. Speaker, this budget has vision. This budget has direction. This budget begins to fix the infrastructure of the province, making it ready for growth and sustaining the economic momentum that we're experiencing right now. This budget offers hope and a brighter future for us and for our children and for our grandchildren. And after all, who can deny that?

Recently I had the opportunity of attending a school board meeting in my home constituency in Moose Jaw North, when a comment was made to me in just a few words that sums up the feeling of the people of Moose Jaw. Mr. Speaker, just in a few words, the simple statement, the simple little comment was an expression of the people of Moose Jaw. And I think it reflects the people of Saskatchewan, the thousands of people throughout this province, about the optimistic attitude that emerges in the minds of many. That statement was simply this: it's nice to be able to dream again.

I think that's pretty powerful — it's nice to be able to dream again. People are now dreaming of their future here in this province. They see opportunity and they see growth. They see prosperity. This is a vision that was not prevalent for generations under the NDP. In fact back in 1999 a study performed by the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce found that kids as early as grade 7 were planning to leave the province after they finished school.

You know, this was a devastating finding, to learn that people at 13 years old could not see the opportunities in this great province. Really the message that our kids were receiving was, if you want to have a comfortable future, you'd better leave the province. To fulfill your dreams, you'll have to move out, move out of this province to find meaningful employment and probably settle down, raise a family, and consequently grow the economy in another part of the country.

You know, Mr. Speaker, and it's sad that the government of the day would accept, in fact they would endorse, the idea that prosperity couldn't be achieved in this province.

Mr. Speaker, the amenities of this province have been here for a lot of years, thousands of years, but the NDP failed to see the potential and let it be developed. After all we've got 47 per cent of the arable agricultural land in this province. We've got the world's largest deposits of uranium and the world's largest deposits of potash, the richest coalfields in Estevan and Bienfait, and the magnificent forests of northern Saskatchewan besides the oil and gas reserves that we have.

Yet in the past 60 years, mostly under the socialistic government, we've had no strategy for growth. All these resources, a province filled with wealth and riches, and little to show for it, led by a government of negative thinking, visionless, lacklustre performance who rejected the idea that we could lead the nation in quality of life and wealth. Too long has this province drudged through the wilderness of mediocrity and deprivation brought on by a lack of vision and a lack of leadership by the NDP government stuck in the past with a negative vision and a negative attitude toward growth and prosperity. Too long have they accepted the fact that Saskatchewan will be in and out of equalization and have status.

For years that government has failed the people of the province and turned their back on growth initiatives by ignoring the suggestions of business and agriculture and the industry opportunities. Now who could deny that good social programs can only come and be provided if there is good economic programs to support that social network?

You know, it has been long said that we really don't need markers when you enter the province on any roads or the highways because the highways and roads have a telltale story of crossing the borders. Yes, we must be in Saskatchewan again; there's a lot of potholes we have to dodge. Hundreds of miles of roads and highways were left to crumble and become not only a transportation deterrent for products and services but also a huge safety hazard for passenger cars and trucks and school buses.

Now we have hope and security in our highways with over \$400 million, \$400 million for roads and highways across this

province. This presents safety and opportunity for investment and jobs in towns and cities and farms so products manufactured, and goods, can be serviced. And we'll be able to move throughout this province on roads that are passable to get our products to markets around the globe, growing the future of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this province provides \$160 million for new school projects from K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] and post-secondary capital projects. If we want to grow this province, we cannot afford to neglect the education needs and the care of our children. This budget includes funds for daycare spaces, a tuition fees freeze, and up to \$20,000 tuition rebate for post-secondary graduates. That's all part of a plan for growing the province and sustaining economic momentum.

We will add more physicians' and nurses' training seats. And this is a huge step in ready-for-growth strategy. We all know the strain of the health care system due to the shortages of these professionals that the NDP created.

I want to tell you about Catherine Guillaume, who assisted me in my campaign last year. Catherine applied to enter the nursing profession, only to be told that she would have to wait for five years to get into the nursing program. Mr. Speaker, a five-year waiting list, when we are in desperate needs of hundreds of nurses. Catherine was told to wait for five years or get out of the province. That was the growth strategy of the NDP.

As part of our province being ready for growth, this new Saskatchewan Party government has increased the number of training seats; \$10.5 million will be committed toward increasing the number of training seats — and that's a huge step.

Yet, Mr. Speaker, the audacity of that party who sits on the opposite of the House, who neglected the situation while in government, and now, and now gets up on their soapbox and starts chirping that more should be done. In fact, Mr. Speaker, one of our meetings, a former minister of that defunct government, a member, the member from Saskatoon Eastview, had the very gall, had the very gall to challenge our Health minister, asking if he thought he should take the credit for hiring 300 nurses.

Mr. Speaker, I say yes. This government, this Minister of Health, deserves the credit. We did it in less than five months. The former NDP just did not get it done. If they needed four months, they had that option. They had that opportunity. Mr. Speaker, they didn't get it done and our minister did.

Instead they spent close to half a billion dollars in the six months leading up to the election with monetary gifts to buy votes. They even spent part of the Health budget to promote their political agenda. I say, shame on them.

Mr. Speaker, in my home city of Moose Jaw, the Moose Jaw Union Hospital is in desperate need of upgrades and expansion. The Moose Jaw Union Hospital has not had significant upgrades since the '50s — the 1950s — and surgeons are asked to perform operations using old, antiquated equipment in crowded operating rooms. Even the structure of the hospital requires patients after surgery to take the elevator down and

across to the recovery room. It's not an efficient system, and there are significant challenges in quality of health care in these facilities.

Yet, Mr. Speaker, these challenges aren't new. These concerns have been there for years, and they have been requested for improvements from the former NDP government. The nurses, the doctors, and the staff take their responsibilities very seriously, and they do a commendable job, Mr. Speaker, but for years their pleas were ignored.

Their pleas were ignored by two cabinet ministers sitting on the government side. And not only two cabinet ministers, the former premier, who was a representative of one of the constituents in Moose Jaw, also ignored it. So you've got ministers and the premier that are ignoring the pleas for help for the Moose Jaw Union Hospital. It is a lack of leadership on the former government's part.

When it came to health care, Mr. Speaker, there was no care with the Moose Jaw Union Hospital. And you know what? Now again they get up on their perch, chirping that the position of the Moose Jaw Union Hospital should be made clear in the budget, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I say it is clear. It was made clear on November 7 when the good people of Moose Jaw North said, we've had enough of the lack of representation on the part of the elected officials. We've had enough of being taken for granted and treated second class while the NDP were sure of two safe seats in Moose Jaw.

Mr. Speaker, the Moose Jaw Union Hospital can now begin planning for the health needs of the community and the region after 16 years of NDP neglect. This vital structure, with its dedicated professional staff, can now look forward to the upgrades that are long overdue.

And I'll say it again for the members opposite so they can comprehend it. The Moose Jaw hospital is now in a position it has never been in the past 16 years of NDP mismanagement and ignoring the situation. It is now on a priority list for expansion, for upgrades, and the plans can begin.

I'll even repeat it especially for the two members of Saskatoon Riversdale, who was the former representative from Moose Jaw Wakamow, and the present Wakamow representative, who have ignored it completely while in government. And now they stoop to petitions from friends and hard cores, and who uses his free radio time displaying a little bit of a lack of class to take cheap shots that try and put down the progress that has been made for the Moose Jaw Union Hospital by this Saskatchewan Party government in less than five months, where they, the NDP, ignored the needs for decades.

[15:30]

And, Mr. Speaker, while we're talking about class, I might mention a comment from one of the members, the member from Regina Coronation Park, that was made on Monday. Let me say this to that member, Mr. Speaker: the electorate is always right. And on November 7, they made it . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Seems the level of interest and participation has increased; however there is one individual been recognized to speak at this time. I recognize the member from Moose Jaw North.

Mr. Michelson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll say again about a comment from the member for Regina Coronation Park on Monday. Let me say this to the member, that the electorate is always right. And on November 7, they made that decision for change.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of respect for my predecessor for his dedicated 21 years of service. But let me say this: you know, even the Liberal candidate had enough class to come and express his congratulations on election night. I didn't get that from any NDP counterpart.

You know, I would say this to the member as well: there are other good people who perhaps should be here, who would have added significant value to the leadership of this province. But the electorate is always right, and the electorate chose differently. But on November 7, the people of Moose Jaw North spoke. And to that, I say to the member, the Moose Jaw North people are right, and I am pleased to be here.

Mr. Speaker, health care is important, and the Moose Jaw Union Hospital has been in need for more than a decade, and for decades it was ignored. But now we can start the planning. And as the process for the planning and preparation commences, the funding will be made available.

Another area that defies logic is the lack of action taken on the part of the NDP administration in regard to property tax, Mr. Speaker. Funding education through property tax is unfair and has been for generations. In fact, as was brought out earlier on, one of the statements that Tommy Douglas had made in 1944 was to do away with the education on property tax. Mr. Speaker, that was 63 years ago. And over 47 of those years was under CCF-NDP [Co-operative Commonwealth Federation-New Democratic Party] and they didn't get it done.

A few years ago, just before the '03 election, they commissioned a report, the Boughen report, only to ignore the recommendations. Oh pardon me, all but one. There was a recommendation to raise the PST [provincial sales tax] and they did that. But the other part of that recommendation was to direct that raise in the PST toward the property tax, but they failed to do that. So where was the leadership in that, Mr. Speaker? Well there was none. There simply was none and again they didn't get it done.

Mr. Speaker, true to our election commitment, the property tax rebate is being increased. In just five months of being elected, we are keeping the promise. Furthermore the Saskatchewan Party government is researching meaningful resolutions to substantially reduce the unfair tax on property. Yet all we get from the NDP opposite, as they get up on their little perches and start beaking about how much more should be done.

After 47 years of failing to find a solution, 47 years of studying the problem, asking for suggestions, then ignoring them and doing nothing, they didn't get it done. And now they have their little temper tantrums on the issue and they say enough studies

have been done and that we're not doing enough, while they did nothing, Mr. Speaker.

Well they might say the money wasn't there. Yet there was money; 35 million for SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company]. There was 72 million plus for Navigata, 8 million for mega bingo. They even had \$275,000 for Murdoch Carriere, fired for harassment and convicted for assault.

You know, the money was even there for Domtar, an attempt to buy votes last fall. Thank goodness smarter heads prevailed and better decisions were made, Mr. Speaker, which saved every person in Saskatchewan — man, woman, and child — on the average of \$100.

The Saskatchewan Party is doing some things. It made the promise and is now keeping it and we'll be doing more. This is a budget of keeping promises, Mr. Speaker. This budget is a huge growth to benefit all the people. You know, I've only touched on some of those benefits.

I've talked about the roads and the highways where the NDP couldn't understand the necessity of vital transportation links. And now the Saskatchewan Party is upgrading highways to help sustain economic momentum. I've talked about education provisions and the assistance to retain our youth in this province. I've talked about the health care and the NDP neglect of the health needs, and the Moose Jaw Union Hospital for over 16 years and the commitment for the Saskatchewan Party to put the Moose Jaw Union Hospital on a priority list and begin expansion plans.

And I've mentioned property tax, Mr. Speaker — the property tax relief that the NDP had pledged to do away with since 1944, but again they didn't get it done. Well the Sask Party has increased the rebates to the property owners and is seeking solutions to a more permanent answer.

Mr. Speaker, this budget may be defined as the most significant budget in decades toward growth and sustaining the economic momentum, and ensuring all Saskatchewan people will benefit. It starts, Mr. Speaker, by fixing the infrastructure of this province, which creates more wealth and economic benefits, and will translate into a positive, sustainable, social structure that will benefit all.

Mr. Speaker, for the well-being of this province, I cannot accept the amendments to the budget. But, Mr. Speaker, for the well-being of this province I do support a budget for growth and benefit for all. I will support the budget that was presented by the minister. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to enter debate on the budget. I'd first like to thank the constituents of Saskatoon Fairview who have again put their trust in me to represent them here in the legislature.

Mr. Speaker, these are truly interesting times, and certainly it has been quite an eye-opener to see how soon the Sask Party has shown their true colours. Not only, Mr. Speaker, have they gone back on their word by saying one thing before the election and doing another after being elected, their legislative agenda is exposing their true colours. Mr. Speaker, it is becoming quite clear on this side as to who they are pandering to.

Mr. Speaker, I'm amazed as I listen to the speeches at the number of members on the government side who seem to think that they have created the perfect economic storm. Somehow all these economic essentials have just miraculously appeared after the Sask Party was elected and Saskatchewan began to grow.

Mr. Speaker, this is beyond political partisanships, and perhaps they're sliding into a bit of historical amnesia. Sometimes, Mr. Speaker, you have to repeat, repeat, repeat. Mr. Speaker, it was the NDP who fixed the economic basket case that Saskatchewan was at the end of the '80s. Mr. Speaker, it was the NDP tax policies, the NDP programs that brought this province to this present growth.

Mr. Speaker, there are members on the government side who immediately after the election said the finances were stark. They said the finances were stark after the election, and now after the budget we see they have increased the overall budget by 10 per cent. And, Mr. Speaker, they announced that they are sitting on a \$1.3 billion mountain of money. These are also the same people who are calling, who were calling our last budget unsustainable. Unsustainable, they said, and now they increase the budget by 10 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, just yesterday members opposite were taking credit for the population increase. I want to remind them that the population increased over 1 million people in September of 2007.

Mr. Speaker, they used to talk about our Fiscal Stabilization Fund as a slush fund. Now they have a fiscal Growth and Security Fund to balance the budget.

Mr. Speaker, I will be making four points on this budget. Number one, this government has \$1.3 billion and all they were able to give Saskatchewan residents was an average of \$27 of property tax relief. A two-for-one pizza. What does this mean? It means, Mr. Speaker, an increase of taxes to our cities — Yorkton, Saskatoon, Regina. It's in the newspapers and everyone is talking about it.

Number two, housing. Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party's answer to housing is to study. The member from Athabasca said it best. The Sask Party is cutting ribbons on NDP housing projects, taking bows, and smiling for the cameras. Mr. Speaker, there is no plan, and initially they wouldn't even admit there was a crisis. Mr. Speaker, there is a shortage of affordable housing in Saskatoon, and that is a fact and you don't need a study to know that there is a crisis. Mr. Speaker, people are demanding action.

Number three, the environment. Mr. Speaker, they diverted \$320 million we had set aside for the environment in the Green Future Fund to help our province meet our emission targets. The Sask Party has put in a paltry \$10 million toward climate change. Of all the ministries, this is certainly the most

disappointing.

And number four, Mr. Speaker, training. To allow this province to continue having the required workforce, we need training spaces. The Sask Party with their pile of money have only designated 1,100 training spaces. Mr. Speaker, we say we should have created 2,000 training spaces which we did in our last budget.

Mr. Speaker, we also have just heard that we have done nothing for 16 years. Well let me tell those members opposite what the constituents of Saskatoon Fairview . . . what has happened since I have been elected in 2003. The constituents of Saskatoon Fairview appreciate the two new high schools, Bethlehem and Tommy Douglas which opened in the fall of 2007. They appreciate the new family holiday in February. They appreciate the tool tax credit, the increase to the minimum wage. They appreciate the 2 per cent cut to the PST, the income tax reform. Mr. Speaker, I could go on but I just mentioned a few to attempt to correct some of the misconception on that other side. Mr. Speaker, this does not sound like nothing for 16 years. This is not what the constituents in Saskatoon Fairview think.

Mr. Speaker, I must comment on Station 20. Particularly on this issue, the Sask Party are starting to show their true colours. They are taking away from the community a project born in community and they are taking away from the most vulnerable in our society. And they are doing it and saying this government does not subsidize grocery stores or malls. Mr. Speaker, if this wasn't so serious, it would be pathetic. Mr. Speaker, their comments and actions speak volumes to the people of Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party terminated the Chair and Vice-Chairs of the Labour Relations Board. They have no answer, Mr. Speaker, as to what will be the financial or legal ramifications of their actions and what message their actions are sending to the practitioners in this field, the message regarding the impartiality of the Labour Relations Board. Mr. Speaker, as we heard earlier, the member from Regina Lakeview has indicated that there are ways to do transitions and then there is the example with the labour board. What is the message when you make statements that this board will be more in line with the thinking of the Premier?

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance inserted in his budget speech two short sentences. "We promised to introduce changes to ensure greater democracy in the workplace and to protect essential services. We have kept these promises."

[15:45]

Well, Mr. Speaker, these two short sentences, the minister felt these legislative changes important enough to insert in the budget speech. But I would ask the minister when it was that his party promised essential services. Was this promise in the Sask Party platform? Was this promise made in a public speech or was it whispered behind closed doors? Or sent in an email? Or sent in an email? And when did the Sask Party promise essential services legislation to the people of Saskatchewan?

Well, Mr. Speaker, quite the contrary. They said essential services legislation was not on. It was not necessary. It was not

an option. They said all this before the election, and we all know differently now.

Mr. Speaker, as for democracy in the workplace as proposed by the Sask Party, I can only say that it is not going over well with a good portion of the citizens of this province. And if this is a definition of democracy, then it would be foreign to most labour relations regimes in this country.

Mr. Speaker, in his budget address, the Minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour said that his party will ". . . be fostering a more fair, balanced, safe, and competitive labour environment, thereby ensuring essential services are available [to] . . . families during labour [disputes] . . ."

An Hon. Member: — He hasn't taken any steps in that direction.

Mr. Iwanchuk: — He has not taken any steps, as the member says. He said, we plan to partner and foster strategic partnerships.

Mr. Speaker, working families of the province have played a significant role in returning Saskatchewan from the dark days of the '80s, a return so that today we can speak of population increases surpassing 1 million. We can speak of the \$1.3 million mountain of money. We can speak of paying down the debt by 250 million. We can speak of a return to brighter days so we can build hospitals, research facilities, schools, roads, invest in infrastructure.

And, Mr. Speaker, what are the thanks that the good working families of Saskatchewan receive? What are the thanks that they receive? The thanks, Mr. Speaker, is to get democracy in the workplace and essential services legislation Sask Party style. Mr. Speaker, this is not the thank you they were expecting.

Mr. Speaker, on essential services legislation the minister talks about being in the middle of the pack. Mr. Speaker, this is absolute nonsense. It lacks any clarity or any understanding. There are only different models, Mr. Speaker. There are models that are in place throughout the country within which collective bargaining is done. Mr. Speaker, to speak of being in the middle of the pack is nonsense and it should be withdrawn and we should quit talking about that. Discuss the various models, that's what should be happening. Have consultation. Have debate. But, Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party — and perhaps because they are completely unaware of this Act, act as if there are no essential services provided during strikes in Saskatchewan.

And here is what Rosalee Longmoore, president of Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, had to say. Mr. Speaker, in a posting on the SUN website, March 18, Rosalee Longmoore says:

Premier Brad Wall, when the Saskatchewan Party was sitting as the Official Opposition stated in a January 10, 2007 letter addressed to myself, Rosalee Longmoore, SUN President:

"I want to emphasize that it is our view that in the past, the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, on their own volition,

has been responsible for protecting public safety by agreeing to provide essential services during a strike.”

That’s what the Premier said when he was in opposition.

SUN has now said:

On five occasions in the past 34 years, SUN has taken job action to obtain a fair collective agreement for members. During job action, SUN members are on call, either on site and or nearby, ready and willing to respond, if requested by the employer.

Mr. Speaker, she goes on to say:

SUN members do not require government intervention to fulfill their professional obligation to patients and the public . . . Therefore it is clear the true intent of the proposed Bill No. 5 has nothing to do with respect to ensuring public safety, but rather is intended to strip union members of their right to strike.

An Hon. Member: — Who’s that from?

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Rosalee Longmoore, president of Saskatchewan Union of Nurses . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Absolutely.

Mr. Speaker, there are in excess of 37,000 employees in the health care alone which essential services will affect, not counting the countless other workers contemplated in the government’s essential services legislation. Mr. Speaker, what in particular do these groups want?

The Health Sciences Association, they would like public hearings. Service Employees International Union has a campaign 365 — no legislation without consultation. The Saskatchewan Union of Nurses state:

As a matter of fundamental fairness at least, the Government must afford deep and meaningful consultation to those affected by such legislation . . .

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, quoting from the Grain Services Union:

. . . it is our firm belief that the legislation proposing to change the dynamics of labour relations should be enacted only after extensive consultation with the affected stakeholders. In addition, the proposed stakeholder dialogue should be accompanied by appropriate opportunities for open public . . . [debate].

Mr. Speaker, from the Canadian Union of Public Employees:

“If the genuine objective is to [be established] ‘fair and balanced’ labour laws,” then the new government should establish an independent committee of review to hold public hearings . . .

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we have is instead a government ramming and pushing legislation down people’s throats, and there’s nothing other than that happening here. Mr. Speaker,

these workers are calling on the government to hold meaningful public consultations and public hearings.

Mr. Speaker, the minister is speaking of fostering relationships. And here I would think that he would have a wonderful opportunity to allow for meaningful dialogue and meaningful consultations. Allow the public hearings on the issue of democracy in the workplace and essential services during strikes. Mr. Speaker, workplaces require a co-operative approach, particularly in the area of health care. The residents of this province expect nothing less than professional care.

And I would ask the minister: exactly why is the Sask Party bringing this legislation? Why the mean-spirited approach, Mr. Deputy Speaker? The Sask Party says, people won’t come to Saskatchewan because of the unions and the labour laws. Mr. Speaker, our population was growing before any changes to the labour legislation were proposed.

And what signal does this send to the labour force we so dearly need to come to our province during this period of rapid growth? Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are in a competitive environment. Working families are not interested in mean-spirited workplaces. They want to work, earn a living, and raise their families. What is the message we are sending to our workforce?

The Sask Party said business wouldn’t come to Saskatchewan because of labour laws. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are on an economic roll under our present labour laws. Saskatchewan is blessed with natural resources, agriculture, scientific research, and working families take a back seat to no one. And now we are number one in Canada — the number one economic engine in this country. Why then has the Sask Party singled out working families? Why have they singled out working families? Why the mean-spirited attack? Why has it come to people having to say, this is the worst labour legislation in Canada? Why derail the economic roll that we are on?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would ask the minister to rethink his approach. Allow a thorough discussion of the legislation through public consultations and hearings. What is he afraid of? What is he afraid of, Mr. Speaker?

And with this, I would like to end by saying this. It takes all the people in Saskatchewan to make this province work, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I want to thank the working families of this province for all that they do. And I want to thank all the people of this province because we in the NDP are an inclusive party and, Mr. Speaker, we govern for all.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be supporting the amendment and voting against the budget. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it’s certainly a privilege to join in the

debate on this, the first Saskatchewan Party budget in the history of this province, Mr. Speaker, and it truly is a historic budget.

Mr. Speaker, there is a lot that has happened over the last four or five months. And, you know, I just want to recap a little bit starting back on November 7, on election day. That the people of Saskatchewan on that day decided to certainly go from a party that was tired, was old, looked back to the past all the time, that really wasn't forward-thinking, really had no new ideas, Mr. Speaker. And they voted for something new, something youthful, something forward-looking, and a party that had a lot of great ideas and you're certainly seeing come to fruition in this provincial budget.

But, Mr. Speaker, I have been sitting and listening off and on to many speakers on that side of the House which you know interestingly, as long as those speeches are, they have been old, they have looked to the past, they haven't looked to the future. You know, they've been complaining and the one thing that I have really noticed over the last day and a half, couple days of people speaking is that they haven't figured out that they lost.

Mr. Speaker, on November 7 there was 38 seats elected for the Saskatchewan Party and just 20 for the NDP. And I heard one of the members back when the Speech from the Throne, yes but if you'd looked at popular vote and if we would have got a few more votes here and a few more votes there, we might have almost won. They lost, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They lost, and they haven't really learned. Obviously in their speeches . . . speech after speech they talk about, well this is almost an NDP budget and everything that's good in the province is because of what we have done when we were in government. They lost.

In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on November 7 people of Saskatchewan gave them enough credit to have 20 members in this Chamber. And in four months, they've dropped down by one already. They're at 19, and it will be very interesting to see in the next couple of years how many more realize that they didn't lose this election — I truly believe, with a budget like this, they've lost the next election and possibly even the next election, Mr. Speaker.

And I think they're seeing it. I mean it was only a month and a half or two months after the last general election where you saw the member from — is it Cumberland? — Cumberland decide that she wanted to try her chances in the federal election, which we certainly saw how that ended up.

Am I correct when I say that the NDP Party in the federal election finished third? It was the chosen candidate by the Liberal Party, and she didn't do very well. Didn't do very well at all, Mr. Speaker. And it's interesting that in such a short time, I mean she was elected by the people and within about a month and a half, she realized the writing was on the wall. She realized what was happening within that caucus which really was not productive. It was a lot of navel gazing and saying, poor us, and I think the people made a mistake and if we keep the shag carpet and the lava lamps, I think people will come back to that eventually, Mr. Speaker, and they will elect us the next time.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I would say that she was probably the wisest of them all so far. I would say that the former member from

Cumberland was probably the wisest of them all. Realized that the . . . well quite frankly, under the leadership of the former premier, that the future wasn't real bright. And from some of the rumours, quite frankly, of people that are looking at putting their names forward, some of them sitting in the opposition bench right now, I think she probably looked at that and said, what are the chances moving forward that we're going to do well in the next general election? I don't think we're going to do that well. Personally I think my only opportunity of being elected on any sort of a string again now, well maybe if I entered into federal politics on the Liberal side of things, maybe that will help.

Because quite frankly when you look at the issues that that opposition has been raising, the questions that they've been asking, and the speeches that they have been giving in this budget debate, it really is old. It's tired. It isn't looking to the future, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it quite often tells me that they just quite haven't got it yet. They just quite haven't learned that they lost the last general election. Thirty-eight will be 20 and now 19. Probably, I'm going to predict, in about six months to a year it could be down to 18, might be down to 17.

[16:00]

And we're certainly looking forward to those by-elections because when people realize . . . You know, there was certainly a lot of fearmongering that went on during the last general election about private health care and about senior homes that were going to be closed down and about all sorts of things that were going to happen. And they see the first budget of this new government, and people are saying, man, they're putting money towards infrastructure. They're putting money towards human resources. They're putting money towards education. They're putting money towards highways. They're dealing with issues in social services, social programs. They're hitting on all cylinders. So we're looking forward to, when the by-election is called in Cumberland, of doing very well.

And as I said, in the next six months to a year or two, as a couple more realize that the future is so dark on that side and they step down, and the people of Saskatchewan realize how bright under this new government and this new budget that the future looks in the province, I think you're going to be seeing more members join this side of the benches than will join on that side of the benches, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what I do want to talk about in the half-hour that I have is the numbers around the Ministry of Health, the numbers around the Ministry of Health. Certainly it's been a very, very positive budget in many, many different areas.

But when we campaigned and when we were in opposition for eight years and learning certainly the way the government ran and some of the pitfalls that the former NDP government were running into, we knew that human resources in health care was a very important issue. And we've talked about that — when I was a critic, and before myself when the member from Melfort was a critic in health care — that human resources, the shortage of nurses, was going to be a huge problem.

And had the former government listened to ourselves at that time — which I certainly don't expect them to — had they

listened to ourselves about eight years ago and started dealing with the nurse shortage, I don't think we'd be in the dire straits that we're in right now. But I can certainly understand. I mean, being the NDP Party, they wouldn't want to listen to what the Saskatchewan Party had to say.

But maybe they would have listened to the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, who called on them year after year to deal with the nursing shortage. And I think the NDP figured when they had the now critic of Health, who is the former president of the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, well that should quiet down the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses. We've brought this person onside. We've got her. She's been elected, and it will be just a panacea.

But you know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker? It went the other way, quite frankly. It was really a slap in the face because that government didn't listen any more after they had somebody come from the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses than they did prior. In fact when you look at the criticism from the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses over the last eight years, it has only increased year after year after year. And the frustration level — I've had the opportunity to meet with the nurses on many different levels, whether it's leadership to whether it's people on the floor — the absolute frustration they had with the previous government is astonishing.

And it's interesting to listen to I think the critic, the Health critic who was talking a little bit about it earlier, and I want to kind of revisit some of those comments in a little bit. But we certainly talked a lot about health care, human resources. But what we realized when we became government is the huge deficit left in capital, the huge deficit left in repairs, left in buildings that were deteriorating, left in buildings that have seen past their useful life.

And I am so proud. I really think the cornerstone, the foundation of this government moving forward, the foundation of this budget is the \$1 billion — that's with a "b" — \$1 billion that will go to infrastructure in this budget alone. It's absolutely amazing. And, you know, I know after dealing with a number of the CEOs and the number of health districts — I'm sure the Minister of Education will say the same as he deals with school divisions; I know the Minister of Highways will talk about it — that it's not that this deficit in capital was not known. It wasn't that this all of a sudden sprung up over the last four months.

The former government, the NDP Party, knew exactly the shape of our buildings, whether it was schools, whether it's hospitals, whether it was highways. They knew exactly the shape, but they didn't care. They felt that wouldn't gain any votes. Let's try and put money towards — oh I don't know — 100 million in Prince Albert to shore up that seat or whether it was 8 million towards Riversdale to try and shore up that seat. They never dealt with the key infrastructure issues and problems that were facing the province.

And within four months, within four months of our government being named to office, we absolutely realized the infrastructure deficit that we had been left. And instead of doing what the former government did and try and hide from it and think that there isn't a problem there, our government has put money towards that — \$1 billion towards infrastructure.

Now I can understand that the opposition will probably vote against the budget. In fact pretty much anyone that spoke or everyone that spoke says they're going to support the amendment; they won't support the budget. And isn't it surprising because in 16 years they knew this deficit was there. In the last eight years, they knew that deficit was there. And in particular in the last year they knew that deficit was there because they spent \$2 million on studying all the health care facilities we have in the province and realized — \$2 million on this study, this VFA study — they realized the problems that our health care facilities were in. They know the problem our health care facilities are in. And it'll be very interesting if they stand in their spot and vote against \$100 million that's going to rectify the problem, that opposition . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Are they going to vote against money that is going to go long-term care homes whether it's in Kinistino, that has black mould. Are you going to vote against repairing those long-term care homes, Mr. Speaker? Mr. Speaker, is that opposition . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Oh they're howling because I might be pointing my finger. I said you; I shouldn't have said you.

Is that opposition going to lobby and vote against the fact that we're going to put chillers on top of the hospitals in Saskatoon, and Regina so we don't have to cancel operations this summer like they had to last summer because they simply didn't keep the buildings under repair, Mr. Speaker? Is that opposition going to vote against money that is going to fix those problems? Or are they going to continue to vote against that because they're going to continue to stick their head in the sand because they don't want to acknowledge the problem is there? I think that's certainly what's going to happen, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are so many dollars in this budget that are moving, whether it's health care, whether it's education, whether it's any ministry that is going to move this forward, this province forward, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

When I look at — oh where to start — \$100 million into primary repairs of health care facilities; another \$32 million in capital funding that will continue the work in Regina at the Regina General Hospital; which will help complete the Humboldt hospital; that will certainly do work in Saskatoon, whether it's the Oliver long-term care facility. That money has been put forward because we know that some of these facilities have passed their useful life. We've continued to put that money into the budget so that those facilities will be finished.

Mr. Speaker, we are boosting the spending on nursing recruitment, and retention programs by 20.7 million, bringing the total expenditure in this area to 26 million. That's on top of the 60 million and one-time funding the government recently allocated in its recruitment and retention partnership with the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses.

So I talked a little bit about the money that we put into capital. And it's huge dollars. And it'll be interesting if they vote against that. But I can see they'll vote against that because they have always wanted to deny that the problem is there because

they never addressed it themselves.

In fact as I see the member from Moose Jaw North or Moose Jaw Wakamow listening very intently, I just have to comment on the public record how interesting it has been and how I really will applaud her for standing, day in and day out, reading petitions on the Moose Jaw Union Hospital. That is just really, really quite interesting because I believe that member was in cabinet for five years, six years? Well she's glad that I noticed.

I think the problem is, is the people of Moose Jaw never noticed anything that she did regarding the Moose Jaw Union Hospital over the last eight years, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because it was never mentioned. It became a very important election campaign issue. In fact I think it was the issue that we were on top of, and that's why we have the member from Moose Jaw North joining our ranks . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — I can guarantee and I can tell the people of Moose Jaw that he's carried the message stronger and louder in four months about the need for that hospital in Moose Jaw than two cabinet ministers did in that city for 16 years. In fact the message is being carried louder and stronger by that member as he talks to our cabinet members than any petition read by the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow, Mr. Speaker.

So certainly we're moving forward in a number of areas such as capital. But I do want to talk on just briefly, the time that I have, on the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses and the Government of Saskatchewan partnership and how historic that is and how excited we are to see that move forward.

Now I just heard the member from Regina Lakeview talking about something about, oh there was partnerships before but I just wasn't there. Well I know. I know the work that was done by the former government, the opposition. I know the work that was done, the painstaking work that was done, taken, just prior to the last election to try and sign a partnership agreement with the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, and they just couldn't get it done. They couldn't get it done. They didn't get it done.

And quite frankly, they would never have got it done because it took a new government with a new perspective to get that done. And we signed the partnership within three months of being named government. And I think that's quite significant. Not only did we sign the partnership; we put money behind it. We put \$60 million behind what we said.

Well the member again from Moose Jaw Wakamow has a lot to say, always has a lot to say about health care when she's been in opposition. I didn't hear her raise a word about health care when she was on the government side. But I'd certainly be glad to answer the questions and the concerns that she has about \$60 million and did you transfer it yesterday or did you transfer it tomorrow.

The \$60 million has been allotted to go towards the partnership. But the partnership, it's specific in the partnership that it deals with vacancies and there will be allotments paid to a fund that will be co-managed between SAHO and SUN. But what we have to do is work on the base number of vacancies and move

from there to see, as we fill vacancies, where we're at and how much money should be put towards that fund.

I wish we could have had a meeting with all the partners and groups prior to Monday, when our first meeting with Marlene Smadu will be conducted. I wish we could have had it earlier, but because of busy schedules, we have got it scheduled for Monday. And I look forward to the start of that process, the start of the results that, through Marlene Smadu, the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, SAHO, and the CEOs of the health districts, will start moving ahead. And I think you're going to see great things come out of that partnership.

And I certainly understand that, you know. I've been surprised that they've even stood and asked any questions on nurse recruitment and retention because we've done a very good job in the last four months of recruiting and retaining nurses. And I know they like to take credit. It was interesting that, when we talk about the recruitment efforts that went to the Philippines and how successful that was, and the critic from the opposition would certainly talk about, well that was our initiative, and we've gone a long ways to making that happen. And I know the former minister of Health, when we were in committee a couple months or a month ago, he was saying, well I don't think you can take credit because we certainly went a long ways to that.

And I will say that there is certainly some ground works put in place. But it never would have happened until there was a change of government. It would have never seen, seen the results that it saw if it hadn't been a change of government because there was never a sense of urgency. Number one, they could never admit, the former government could never admit that there was a shortage. And they would never admit that they should set a target. They just couldn't bring themselves to that because, if they did, they would be acknowledging that they had failed over the last 16 years.

So we certainly moved on it immediately, and we brought 300 nurses. Now the member from Regina Lakeview's mumbling. I know he's frustrated, and he's angry that we've been so successful in recruiting so many nurses. But we brought 300 nurses within four months. We will be bringing 300 nurses from the Philippines.

The interesting part is, the interesting part is that the critic of health care is quoted as saying, well we're not so sure that we should be doing it because it could be unethical recruiting, in one breath, and then she stands in the House and says, but they can't take credit for it because it was really our idea. So how do you do that? You say it was our idea to recruit the nurses from the Philippines in one breath, and then you stand over here and you say, but I don't think you should really do it — because we've done it — because it's unethical recruitment. And then she stands in the House today and says, but now that they've done it, it really was our idea.

They didn't get it done, Mr. Speaker. And they didn't get it done, whether it was on human resources. They didn't get it done, whether it was on capital. And within the first four months of a new government and the first budget of a new government, we've got it done, Mr. Speaker.

[16:15]

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — We will continue to get it done whether it's on human resources. We'll continue to get it done whether it's on infrastructure, Mr. Speaker. I am extremely proud to support the first budget of the new Saskatchewan Party government. Mr. Speaker, it's the first budget of many that I'll be looking forward to.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McMillan): — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure to enter into the debate on the 2008-2009 provincial budget, the first budget delivered by a Saskatchewan Party government.

It's a budget that clearly outlines our plans to make sure that the province is ready for growth. But not only does it plan for growth; it sets out our plan to sustain growth in the many, many years into the future. It sets out a plan for lasting prosperity, something that Saskatchewan people have been looking for for many, many years and, I'm sorry to say, have been disappointed for the last 16 years under that NDP government.

Every person I talk to, Mr. Speaker — and I mean every person — can't think of a better time to be living in Saskatchewan than right now, Mr. Speaker. I've talked to NDP supporters. There's still a few of them out there. I've talked to Liberal supporters, even Green Party supporters, Mr. Speaker. And what do they say? Every one of them says that we're off to a good start and that it's the best time to be living in Saskatchewan.

We are leading the nation in many, many economic sectors. We're leading the nation when it comes to statistics about the province. And I can say that I'm very proud to be part of a government that's involved with that. We had a pretty good year in 2007. We'll agree to that. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, 2008-2009, it's going to be going gangbusters in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, we will set records. We will keep our promises for growth and security, and we will keep all our election promises, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and talk about the great job that the Finance minister did. He took his first opportunity as a budget and he made history. It is a record budget.

Before I go on and talk about my opinions on the budget, I just want to talk about what some of the people had to say regarding this budget. Marilyn Braun-Pollon from the CFIB [Canadian Federation of Independent Business] . . . and I know that the members from the opposite, from the opposition, they quote her as well. So I know that they'll be very interested in hearing what she had to say. She said, "I think small business owners will be glad that the government has listened to their priorities." That's what Ms. Braun-Pollon had to say.

Dave Marit from SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities]: "It's pretty nice to see infrastructure is one of

the focal points . . ." Jayson Clunie, Saskatchewan roadbuilders association: "very pleased with the provincial budget." Sandi Urban-Hall, Saskatchewan School Boards Association:

There has been a significant increase to capital . . . It's a very encouraging . . . step . . . with the billion dollar backlog in capital in the province right now, boards are excited to see that being recognized and that that message has been heard by [this new] government.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Very encouraging words. Very encouraging. Steve McLellan, Sask Chamber of Commerce:

The fact that they're investing as much into infrastructure of this province which will allow us to grow the way we need to grow strategically . . . is a very positive thing.

Yes. And it goes on and on. I can talk about the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region. The Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region is thrilled with the building dollars, Mr. Speaker. Yes. Here we have Mr. Dave Dutchak, a good boy from Blaine Lake, Saskatchewan, with the chamber of commerce: "Clearly, we've got to plan for the next 20 years and proper infrastructure needs to be in place. So that was good to see."

We've got quotes here from Marlene Brown of SUN: "I'm sure that you would be aware of all the situations occurring right now in health care and how desperately we need to retain nurses in the workforce." I'm glad to see that the government is doing that, Mr. Speaker.

Okay. Ken Rasmussen, director of the Johnson-Shoyama School of Public Policy: ". . . a huge under-investment at all levels of government over the last decade." It's good to see the government is addressing that, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — That's just what some of the community leaders from across Saskatchewan have had to say about the situation and about this very, very positive budget that the member from Melfort was able to deliver.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of being, I had the privilege of being the Finance critic in this House in the last legislature. So I was very involved in going out to the rotunda and talking to people after the budget, talking to stakeholders and seeing what they had to say. And I can honestly say that I've never seen a budget that generated more positive reaction than I saw on March 19, and that's a credit to my colleague the Finance minister for the work that he's done. And I know he'll work hard to improve upon it next year to have an even better budget. But this is a terrific budget. This is a terrific budget to see.

You could hardly find anyone that was critical, that had anything critical to say. Even — even, Mr. Speaker — even the NDP found it difficult to say anything critical about the budget.

Now I know being Finance critic isn't the easiest job in the world. However what was the stinging criticism? What was the

smoking gun, the stinging criticism that that NDP government came up with? What did they have to say? Well they said, it was an almost-NDP budget, Mr. Speaker.

Well normally that would be a severe criticism, Mr. Speaker. Every member of the House and certainly every member of the government side and most people watching at home know that nothing could be further from the truth. The Finance critic, he failed to realize — the member for Regina Douglas Park — he failed to realize one thing: that people remember what NDP budgets were like. They remember what NDP budgets were all about. You can't fool Saskatchewan people very often. And the NDP tried, but it usually backfires on them.

Now let's have a little trivia question here. It's not exactly *Are You Smarter Than A 5th Grader*, but it's close. Who can remember the NDP budget of 2004? Can I see a show of hands? Who can remember the NDP budget of 2004? The member from The Battlefords can remember, and I'm glad to see that. What is the first thing that that . . . Do we remember the election first of all? It was an election where the NDP, they squeaked out an election win with a fear-and-smear campaign. So what was the first thing that that newly minted NDP government did? And of course not one word about this during the election campaign. What did they do? What did they do? They raised taxes, Mr. Speaker. The first thing they did of any importance was they raised the PST. They created \$135 million in revenue. They had the Boughen report to look at. They only read every other page, just when it talked about increasing. But nothing for property tax.

When asked, of course, what did the then Finance minister, the current member from Regina Douglas Park said . . . What did he say? He said those famous words, that governments don't talk about raising taxes at election time because it's not popular, Mr. Speaker. That's what the member from Regina Douglas Park had to say about their first real financial endeavour in that new government.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke many times as a Finance critic in this House, and I also spent time as Post-Secondary Education critic. I can remember asking the Post-Secondary Education minister at the time, Mr. Thomson, why tuition rates in Saskatchewan rose 217 per cent from 1991 to 2005. Yes, Mr. Speaker, it's not a misprint. I'm not misspeaking — 217 per cent increase. And it was outlined in the University of Saskatchewan USSU [University of Saskatchewan Students' Union] annual report. It was one of those reasons why the NDP drove the youth out of Saskatchewan for 16 straight years, Mr. Speaker.

Compare that to our \$12 million graduate retention program. This program will give back up to \$20,000 in tuition rebates for post-secondary graduates of Saskatchewan, and it will provide \$125 million over four years to post-secondary institutions in our province. Record setting, Mr. Speaker. Record setting contributions. Again, Mr. Speaker, this is hardly an NDP budget.

Now speaking of education — and I know the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow will be very interested in what I have to say — no more is there a striking difference between the NDP of old and the new Saskatchewan Party government.

I can remember being in this House day after day presenting petitions asking the NDP government to address the infrastructure deficit in K to 12 education. The need for capital dollars was very evident. Schools were crumbling around the province, roofs were leaking, walls were falling down, and the NDP would throw very little money, very little money and even less support. They would provide very few dollars for much needed repairs and hardly any new construction.

Areas like Arbor Creek in my constituency had received no, no support from the NDP government. We had one of the only places that under that NDP government was actually growing in the province. People were moving into Saskatoon. They're paying the highest property taxes in the country, and you know what the NDP did? They not only ignored the citizens like the Arbor Creek initiative group. No, they did much more than that. They did much more than just ignore them.

When the Saskatoon public school board made Arbor Creek school their number one priority, the Department of Learning, on the direction of the previous minister, through her deputy, what did she do? She sent an intimidating letter to the school board demanding that they change their policies. Of course the school board did change their policies, and the schools were never built in Arbor Creek. And that's why, Mr. Speaker, the NDP enjoyed less than 20 per cent support in Arbor Creek in the last election. And I intend to make sure that it stays that way, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it's a sad situation under that NDP government. But fast-forward, fast-forward to a new Saskatchewan Party government that we have in this province — a new Finance minister, the member from Melfort of course, and a new Minister of Education, the member from Canora-Pelly. And what do we see? A record setting — well members opposite I think would like me to fast-forward through the whole speech, but that's not going to happen because I know they don't want to hear what I have to finish up with here — a record setting \$164 million for K to 12 school projects and capital initiatives, a record amount of money.

What does this mean for Saskatoon Silver Springs? What does this mean for rural Saskatchewan, for urban Saskatchewan, for places like Willowgrove in Saskatoon? It means no more pleading with the government. It means that moms and dads can do things with their kids in the evenings, instead of going to meetings to try to lobby a government that wasn't listening like the NDP government. They didn't need all the meetings. They just needed a Minister of Education that understood what it means in Saskatchewan to support infrastructure in K to 12 education.

Yes, barely four or five months into this new government the government is delivering for parents. It's delivering for students. It's delivering for rural Saskatchewan. And yes, it's delivering for urban Saskatchewan. It's delivering for growing places like Willowgrove and Saskatoon Silver Springs. And as a result of the budget, school boards and the residents of Willowgrove can now plan for their school. Their neighbourhood will have a community centre, and their neighbourhood will have a cohesiveness that needs to be built around a school.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as I'm getting to the end of my speech, I want to talk about a very important lesson that we learned in the last election. Now who can forget our Premier's impassioned speech on election night? Now, Mr. Speaker, I'll be honest with you. I heard from people . . . That was live on television across the country because they knew that something very, very significant had happened in Saskatchewan. I heard from people from Ontario, people from Prince Edward Island, people from British Columbia. Never before had they heard such an impassioned speech from a new Premier coming into Saskatchewan.

Members opposite, some of them may not have listened. They were busy at the time trying to recount some numbers, but the theme of that was hope beats fear. Yes, Mr. Speaker, hope beats fear.

The NDP . . . You know, the fear has worked in the past for them, and nowhere has it been more pronounced than with Saskatchewan's Crown corporations. We all heard on the doorsteps when we door knocking how the NDP would incite fear to the employees in Crown corporations, how they told Crown corporation secretaries that had not a political bone in their body that they may not have a job after the Saskatchewan Party gets in. The stories of how the NDP tried to incite fear are quite disturbing, Mr. Speaker.

Here in contrast, here's what we promised as the Saskatchewan Party government. This is a document that I'm sure many, many people are familiar with. The Saskatchewan Party will ensure Crown corporations continue to provide Saskatchewan people with the highest quality utilities at the lowest cost while directing Crown dividends to priorities like health care, highways, and education. Mr. Speaker, that's what we promised. That's what we promised the people of Saskatchewan, and that's what we delivered on March 19.

[16:30]

The Crown corporations were an important part of that — \$200 million dividend from the CIC to the GRF [General Revenue Fund]; \$365 million special dividend, 215 million of that for debt reduction, Mr. Speaker, keeping our promise of \$250 million in total; \$140 million for highway infrastructure; and \$40 million, \$40 million to be used for green initiatives, Mr. Speaker.

And I know members opposite will be interested in this next point: \$1.4 billion clean coal project. It came up in question period today. And it's just very interesting: where does the NDP stand on clean coal? Where do they stand? There was some concern about members opposite. But after question period, I just had a chance to come across some things that were said by the member for Regina Lakeview.

And this was April 19, 2007, on CBC news, and you know it was something. He said people would pay more for power to help the environment. And I quote, "Saskatchewan people are saying they're prepared to pay higher power rates if that's the cost of fighting climate change, Environment Minister [and I'm quoting] John Nilson said."

So there it is, Mr. Speaker. I don't know what's happened.

That's not even a year ago — April 19, 2007 — and they're trying to change. It is a flip-flop, Mr. Speaker. I could go on and on about it.

But Mr. Speaker, what are the Crown corporations doing under this government? We're working with the private sector. We're working on hydroelectricity, wind generation, and heat recovery. We are improving our transmission system. We are working on a cross-Canada grid. The Premier has talked to the Prime Minister and has made it a priority. And yes, Mr. Speaker, we are not afraid to talk about nuclear power generation in Saskatchewan. That's something that the NDP has kind of talked about, but really nothing, nothing, nothing has been done.

We're providing high-speed Internet service and cellular coverage to more Saskatchewan residents than ever before, investing in digital technology. We're bidding on the wireless spectrum auction. We're making strategic infrastructure investments in gas distribution, transmission, and storage services. We are protecting our environment by partnering with the private sector in flare gas capture, extending benefits of natural gas to more residents, helping customers use less energy, updating SGI's [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] aging and complex computer system, enabling Saskatchewan residents to do their own online searches for vehicles at SGI. We're offering quality water and waste water services infrastructure and development to communities. Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on.

What sums it up though, Mr. Speaker, is an email I received from one of the people that work in the Crown corporations. And they said, and I quote:

I didn't know what to expect from the Sask Party. All we ever heard [in the Crowns] is about the NDP.

Now in your first four months, I can see that you intend on running the Crowns like a Business.

No goofy investments.

No political agenda.

Just provide service at the lowest possible cost.

Mr. Speaker that's exactly what our commitment was to the people of Saskatchewan and that's exactly what we were intending to do.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, it was one of the many, many thousands of people that are coming to learn more about the Saskatchewan Party government and their comfort level is . . . And I know it upsets, it upsets members opposite when they hear things like that, Mr. Speaker.

That's what we are delivering. And, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan residents like it. Saskatchewan taxpayers like it. And yes, even to the consternation of members opposite, Crown corporation employees like it.

Mr. Speaker, it's another reason why hope beats fear. It's another reason, Mr. Speaker, why members on this side of the

House will continue to stay here for a long, long time. And, Mr. Speaker, it's a reason why members over on the other side, even though their numbers are dwindling, will stay there for a long, long time.

With that I would like to take my seat and indicate that I will be voting to defeat the amendment and to support the budget. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. It's indeed a pleasure to enter into this budget debate. It's time, time to have some good, level-headed debate about this very important decision that we're going to make in the next few days and weeks ahead. And this decision, of course, will have long-lasting effects. And as the member opposite said, we will remember this budget, I'm sure.

Before we start though, I just want to say that I want to reflect on an event that many of us were at a few weeks ago in Saskatoon — the Saskatchewan Elocution and Debate Association. Many of us were there and were watching the kids and high school kids debate. And we were talking and we were joking amongst ourselves how we were going to learn some lessons from these debaters, these high school debaters, some of them as young as grade 5.

And one of the main themes or one of the main practices you have is what you call ad hominem. You attack the argument and not the person. You rely on the logic and not the emotion to get you through that. And of course over this past few days we've seen a lot of emotion. People get wrapped up, but they kind of ignore the logic. And I think that's what some of the problems with this, this debate on this really important budget misses the point. Of course there's some good points that . . . I have to say I appreciate the emphasis on infrastructure. Infrastructure's clearly very, very important and they've made their choices. Some of the choices we would have to disagree with very much and one that I have to talk about and it's a headline from *The StarPhoenix*, March 20. It talks about no funds and I quote:

No funds for St. Mary replacement

Greater Saskatoon Catholic Schools is bitterly disappointed Wednesday's budget included no replacement money for a crammed and crumbling inner-city school.

At the heart of a city-driven plan to revitalize the neighbourhood of Pleasant Hill sits St. Mary Community School, which was so crowded earlier this year classes were held in the teachers' lounge and the library doubled as a homeroom. A failing boiler frequently leaves the gymnasium freezing.

"Disappointed probably really underscores our feeling towards the St. Mary project," Don Lloyd, the school division's superintendent of administrative services, said Wednesday. "(It's a) very valuable project for that

community."

And I agree. So there are some points like that that were missed and I have to say it was a real disappointment.

I also have to say, you know, it's interesting the members opposite say they don't want to look in the rear-view mirror. They don't want to talk, and the next line they talk about is 16 years. But yet at the same time I've seen the press release that talks about the 15th balanced budget. Kind of interesting how you put those together. It's kind of a, kind of a odd thing.

And I had to say the member from Silver Springs, one the favourite things I heard from him last year was we're sitting on a mountain of money and this year they are sitting on that mountain of money — \$1.3 billion — and what have they chosen to do with it? I have some very, very grave concerns about.

But we'll go to some of those quotes. And I do want to say and reiterate that our side has identified four major concerns. The first of course is the property tax or what we might call the pizza rebate, the \$27 that we might see. But with the, what the city officials from many cities are saying, they're very worried that this will be eaten up. For example here's another headline from *The StarPhoenix* again on March 20. This headline is:

Budget shortchanges city: Atchison

Gov't revenue-sharing . . . coming to city won't be enough to stave off tax increase . . .

Now what does he say. Here's the quote:

"The province was saying that they were going to put in seven per cent (more) in revenue sharing, and in fact it is seven per cent for the cities — so that's about \$1.2 to \$1.4 million. [That's] What we've been asking for, though, is approximately \$5 million from the province. So we're short about \$4 million at this time," Atchison told reporters at a press conference after the budget was delivered.

"So what that means for taxes this coming year is it's going to be a very, very difficult year for us — because last year we did receive \$5 million, and people have to understand that for every \$1 million, that's one per cent on taxes."

Now it's interesting. That same article goes on to quote Roberta Fehr, a homeless woman who works for . . . This is quote:

Roberta Fehr, a homeless woman who works for a community group helping people coping with extreme poverty, was incredulous to learn Saskatchewan Housing Corp. will receive \$5 million less than last year. The province's newly-created task force on affordable housing is a waste of resources because homelessness has been studied to death, she said.

So this is a problem about the property taxes.

Another one of course is training spots. This is a real weakness

and for somebody, a minister who has direct experience in this, we should have expected more.

Our third concern focuses around environment. And I have to say that it's a sad, sad day that we have a Minister of Environment who won't champion environment causes but seemed delighted and happy to have our green initiative fund gutted — gutted, Mr. Speaker — and diverted to other projects. Other projects that are worthwhile, but when you see green funds going to highways I have to wonder what's going on. And she seems very happy with the paltry amount that's in there.

And today we had a discussion about clean coal and all those energy things. And I think the key word — and this is one word I would ask her to learn — is sustainability because sustainability is the key. They're taking many of our reports — the green strategy, the climate change action plan — very important, but learn about sustainability, sustainability.

And of course, Mr. Speaker, our fourth concern, and this is so important, is about housing. And of course I was really disappointed, I was really disappointed that the day before the budget the Minister of Social Services announces the establishment of a housing affordability task force. Well my shock and disappointment continues, Mr. Speaker.

And we've been talking. Many people have approached me and they'll say, how do you make contact with this group? How do you make contact with this group? Well, Mr. Speaker, I've learned on the website that actually they have a little web page, and you write them. And if they are so inclined, they'll invite you.

But I have to tell you I'm very disappointed in the minister for not announcing public meetings and a public consultation. Here she took three months, three months to organize a two-month task force, and so this is really, really disappointing.

And of course we know that Mr. Merriman when he said, you can't sit back and do nothing, and we're going to look and see what those folks actually produce out of this report. It's a very interesting thing. And of course we can see the headlines, and they are shocking. Here we go. "Milroy tenants up in arms." That was the February 16, 2008. A couple facing \$215 rent increase in apartment. What's happening? We get a study, another study. "Student protest out in the cold." Students aren't even included in this group. So what's happening there? And little done to address the housing crisis. It's very, very sad.

But, Mr. Speaker, we were equally shocked not to hear that part of the attention on the task force would be on First Nations or Métis housing, both on- and off-reserve. This is a very important area, and not a word about that. And of course the North. And one area that I think is very, very important is dealing with people living with disabilities and their housing needs. Clearly ignored. Clearly, clearly ignored. Well as I pointed out a few weeks ago, our government in February a year ago announced over \$100 million for renewing our communities. Sixty million of that were going specifically for housing initiatives.

And I said then, and I'll say it today, and I will continue to say

it, and I will ask this government to have the same brave, bold, strong leadership for our inner cities in this province — not only for Saskatoon, but for Moose Jaw, for Regina, Prince Albert, all the cities and communities. You know it was interesting when I was phoning around after the budget was delivered. People were talking about housing even in small communities. When you announce training spots, you have to have places for people to be.

Well, Mr. Speaker, in many ways this Throne Speech was described by one journalist as a bit of job jar. They had a list of things they were going to do. Didn't really make a lot of sense. They're high on the hype. They've got a lot of hype going into it, but really there was no overlying vision that people could understand. Where was this government going? Now you know what, Mr. Speaker? This budget looks like a bit of a Pandora's box. We're opening it up and we're getting a peak inside and we're really starting to understand what is happening with this government.

Did they really take the time to plan out some of these things that they're getting into a little bit of trouble about? For example, the other night we were asking about the highways, how many more kilometres were actually going to be paved this year than last year. The minister was very evasive on that. Wouldn't answer it. Wouldn't answer it. And it turns out, and it can't be denied — and if it is, that'd be great; I'd love to hear it — but it turns out it's something like 28.5 more kilometres, 28.5 more kilometres. That's pretty sad for all the hype that we're getting here.

[16:45]

And of course we're talking . . . And we've had some interesting news today about the modernization strategy of Social Services. Of course this now looks like it's ancient history, a bit of a train wreck. You know, it's a Doppler effect coming down the road. You know something's not very pretty about what's happening here.

And of course the press release today was even more alarming because all the little code words . . . like really, what does it mean? It talks about layoffs not due to this strategy, but what's really, really happening? We see in the budget book — and, Mr. Speaker, I just want to take a minute — we see in the budget book the employment support and income assistance section goes from last year, 310 million down to 298 million. That's a change of over \$12 million. And then in their book over here it talks about a savings of \$1.1 million. Now what's happening with that, Mr. Speaker?

Now I do have to say there's some very good things that are happening, but we need to know more about it, because there may be problems with it. For example, the 1.1 million for increased funding for transition houses and sexual assault centres — very well received. And I think the government deserves kudos if they deliver on that in a meaningful way that helps all centres and all people who are in that area of need. Very important. So I will give them credit for that.

I am also looking forward to the 500,000 one-time funding to host a summit of CBO [community-based organization] organizations. I am looking forward to that because I think it is

very important to involve people from the CBO sector in their planning. I think it is good, and I think that a lot of credit deserves to go to government for that.

But I do have some questions about that. Will those be public meetings? When we did the green strategy, I know the critic came to every meeting at the green strategy. Will the same thing be happening with the CBO summit? Or will we or others who might have a different point of view be frozen out? So I will be looking for how those CBO summits will be handled. I think it's a very important initiative, and if we can get people to work, that's very, very important.

Again, Mr. Speaker, getting back to this strategy, modernization strategy, I do have some deep, deep concerns because of where the government was going. And I don't know what kind of consultations happened in January, February, and December after the disabilities council was disbanded in the dark of night. But the minister assured us all that she was talking to different groups, and that's good.

But clearly, clearly anybody who's been involved in this area of Social Services knows that, over the course of the past few years, one of the most important areas are dealing with people who are living with disabilities and disability income supports.

The information is out there. Over 70, 75 per cent of the people on a static caseload are people with disabilities. So if the minister wants to make a big impact, a big impact in that area, consult with those folks on disabilities, those people living with disabilities, so they can have supports that have dignity and respect and can help those folks get to work.

There are many problems with Social Services that are always trying to be refined and improved. But I would say and I would recommend to this government, take a look because, if you talk to a lot of groups across Saskatchewan, the issue around disabilities is very, very, very important. And so to ignore that and say, we just want to refine, we want to polish up the Social Services, that area of employment support and income assistance . . . You know, if you want to make something really happen for this province in a big way in the next four years, take a look at how you can support people living with disabilities — huge, huge stuff there.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that I do have some concerns about what's going to be happening in this area of Social Services. The minister has not established her credibility very well. She's had some issues since January, starting with the disabilities council, then going to the housing task force the day before the budget came out, the modernization strategy. That's a bit of . . . I don't know how else you describe it. But the government got caught, got caught trying to lay off people, and now they're backtracking.

And when you read this press release — and I was trying to make sense of it — I got to tell you, they should get somebody over there who can write plain English. Plain English would go a long way because this is . . . What is this? Do you want to hear it? The minister's over there, I mean, and it's all . . . Well they can get it on their website. It just came out before, before House.

But, Mr. Speaker, there are concerns, huge concerns about this. But I do want to say, another headline here, "Little in budget for poor, groups complain." This is again the day after, and this is what Peter Gilmer said in that. The headline is, "Little in budget for poor, groups complain." It starts, I quote:

"I don't think . . . this budget deals seriously with the question of poverty in Saskatchewan and it certainly, in and of itself, is not dealing with the crisis of affordable house quality and affordable housing . . ." said Peter Gilmer with the Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry. "What we're really not seeing in this budget, given a very good financial position for this province, is a significant commitment to a social agenda."

And then it goes on:

"It didn't go far enough to include the things that would make sure everyone can participate, especially those with low incomes who cannot afford the skyrocketing prices of housing in Saskatchewan," he said.

Both Forbes and Gilmer welcomed the announcement that \$5 million will be set aside for food banks and community-based organizations (CBOs) for life skills, development and job-skills training for under-skilled individuals.

So we can recognize the good stuff, but there are some serious issues. Even the Minister of Finance, even the Minister of Finance recognized the day after that there were some questions. And I'll read from the *canada.com* network. And the headline is "Saskatchewan housing situation needs more than the budget provides: Gantfoer." And this is in the *Leader-Post*, Wednesday March 19, 2008. It goes:

Regina — After announcing a budget that focuses largely on areas such as highways, health care and education, Finance Minister Rod Gantfoer admitted the budget didn't go as far as he would have wanted to address some social issues.

"We've addressed many of those issues in our platform of commitments and we're certainly doing that," he said on Wednesday. "There are some things that are still undone and I recognize that. For example, we need to get a good handle on what needs to be done to improve the housing situation more than is provided for in this budget."

Well, Mr. Speaker, I can go on, and I can go on, especially about the *Health Disparity by Neighbourhood Income* report that the Minister of Health assured me that he was going to read but seems to be more interested in the infrastructure report. Should have read this report because I tell you the whole issue around Station 20 would be clear as day why they should be putting money into Station 20.

But I see my time is almost up. I just want to end with a quote here from *The StarPhoenix*: "Government's actions signal trouble ahead," and clearly it does. And I will quote now: "If, as is generally the case, the Saskatchewan Party uses its first budget to set the tone for its administration, the province has a growing list to worry about." Mr. Speaker, I couldn't agree

more. Mr. Speaker, I will be voting for the amendment and against the main motion. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly pleased to be able to enter into this budget debate. As many of my colleagues on this side of the House have said, it is certainly a historic budget. History will regard this budget as a pivotal budget, a turning point for this province when this province . . . a turn to the future and let the past be behind it, Mr. Speaker.

A record investment of \$1 billion into infrastructure. A budget that's entitled *Ready for Growth*, Mr. Speaker. And in order to grow, as the Minister of Finance and many of my colleagues have said, you require the things that, the infrastructure and the services that support growth, Mr. Speaker. And of course highways comes to mind. And we're seeing record investment in highways, the biggest investment in capital construction in highways in the history of this province, Mr. Speaker.

I noticed with some interest what some of our local media outlets had to say on budget day. And on one of the websites, Mr. Speaker, this was the headline of one of our media outlets. It said, "Torrents of cash and wet concrete are coming," Mr. Speaker. And they went on to praise the infrastructure investments because they realize that for far too long those members opposite neglected the infrastructure needs of our province. We were living on our depreciation. And you can only do that for so long before things completely crumble and your economic growth which provides the revenue for social service programs and services that the people of our province need, Mr. Speaker . . . You can't continue to live off of your depreciation without reinvesting. And this is what we on this side of the House are doing, Mr. Speaker.

And why have we given such importance to infrastructure at this time of prosperity in our province? Well I'm going to tell you. As the Minister of Finance has said and many of my colleagues have said, because some of the additional dollars and some of the prosperity that this province is seeing at this time is coming from our resource sector, and those resources are not endless. They will be depleted over a period of time, so we have to treat that revenue from those resources very carefully. And they are one-time dollars that we are receiving, Mr. Speaker, and so we need to be careful. We cannot take that revenue and use it for ongoing programming.

So the Minister of Finance very wisely has decided, along with his cabinet colleagues, to take those one-time dollars and invest them into infrastructure which will provide growth for many years to come, Mr. Speaker. And this has given increased optimism across the province. We have seen it in our major urban centres with increased demand for housing, increased retail sales, investor confidence, and the list goes on.

Quite often what members in this House and in particularly on that side of the House don't realize that this optimism also transcends into rural Saskatchewan. We see a very strong

agricultural economy, commodity prices at record heights.

But we also are seeing it in our smaller communities — some of the communities that I represent, Mr. Speaker, communities like Strasbourg, where there aren't any lots available. The same can be said for Balcarres. The town of Ituna has seen people from Calgary selling their property in Calgary, buying homes in Ituna, very happy to relocate. Of course the friendliness of rural Saskatchewan is making those people feel right at home. The services are there.

Certainly we need to improve some of the services, and I know one of the concerns that has been raised with me is over Internet service. And I know the minister responsible for the Crowns is working on that and so on. But there is a community, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. We have such a short period of time left, that it would be appropriate to allow the member in the time he has to at least be heard. I recognize the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly appreciate the members coming to order to hear the good story of the community of Markinch in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. It's a small community located on Highway 22, and I know the Minister of Municipal Affairs knows exactly where that community is because he had the privilege of visiting it here on the weekend.

And it was a community who was undergoing change for many, many years. It was sandwiched in-between two larger communities. Thirty years ago or more they lost their school. Slowly other services left their community, but the community hung on and they stabilized at a population of about 65 people.

And the people living there seem to be very content because . . . frankly, Mr. Speaker, I've represented that community for the last nine years, and I never seem to get any inquiries or calls for assistance and so on. They seem to be able to look after their affairs very adequately and have a lifestyle that is enjoyed by the residents there.

Well I'll tell you what's happening there, Mr. Speaker. There isn't a lot available. There's a number of vacant lots, but there isn't a lot available because they've all been bought up. Investors have seen the opportunities in that small community, bought up the lots. Now they're looking for vacant homes that can be repaired or are livable to move them onto the vacant lots so that people . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Being the time of adjournment, the Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 17:00.]

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