



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

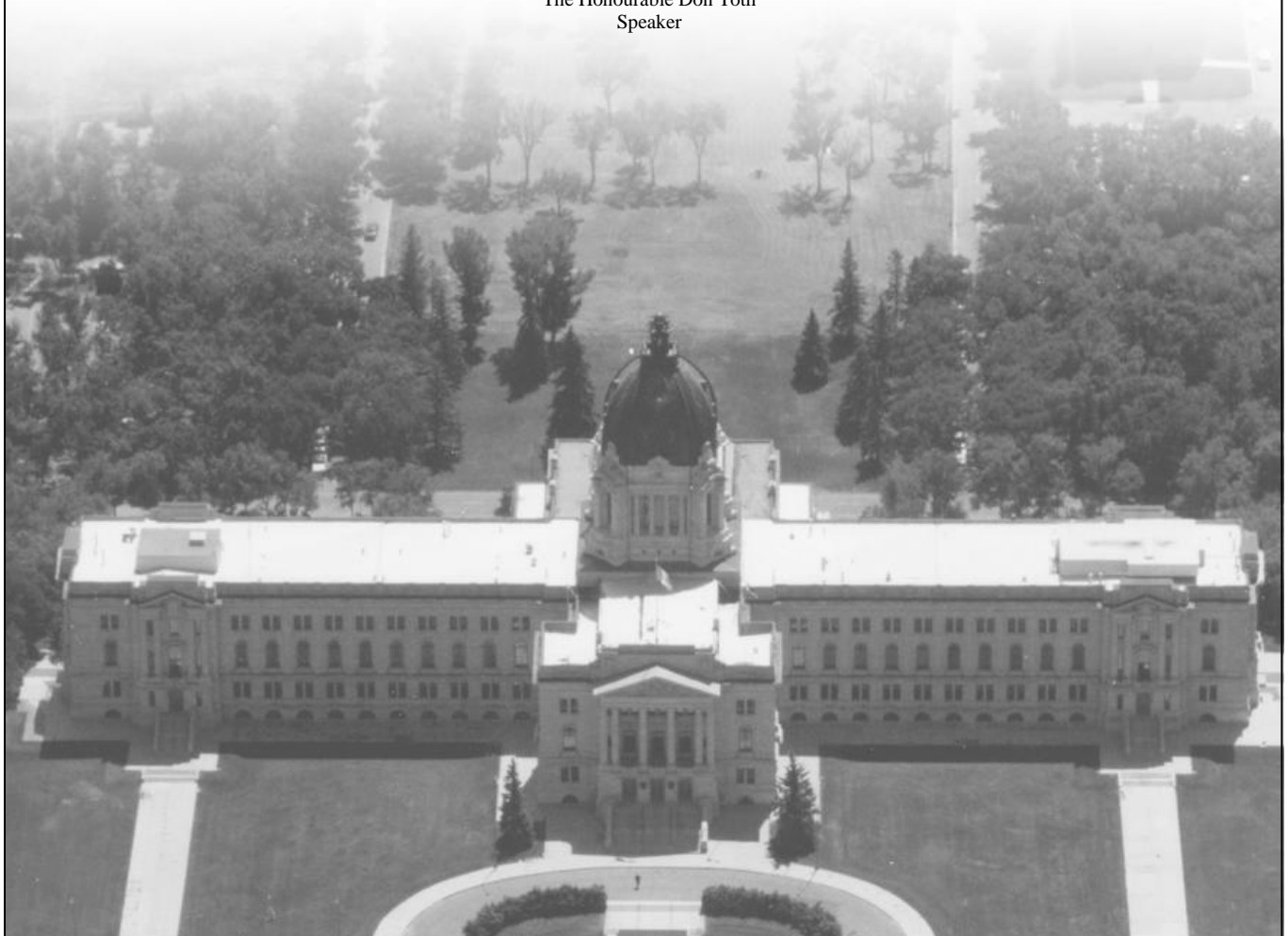
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
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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
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Morgan, Hon. Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
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Nilson, John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
Norris, Hon. Rob	SP	Saskatoon Greystone
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Wall, Hon. Brad	SP	Swift Current
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Wilson, Nadine	SP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Wotherspoon, Trent	NDP	Regina Rosemont
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney
Vacant		Cumberland

[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members of this Assembly, it's a pleasure to introduce some very special guests that have joined us in your gallery. I'd like to introduce to my colleagues here in the Assembly young Brandon Malcolm. Brandon, if you'd stand and give us a wave maybe, please. His mom, Tracy Malcolm, is joining him and his grandma, Dianne Holo, is also here. And Jennifer Johnson from our office is also accompanying them in the gallery.

Mr. Speaker, Brandon is an amazing seven-year-old who cares so much about the environment that he has set an example that many of us who are many times older than he is will not be able to meet, I fear. He's been picking up garbage and recycling for more than a year now, Mr. Speaker. He takes bags with him to school to clean up his schoolyard and he spends hours wandering around his neighbourhood picking up the garbage and the bottles, even though he's not yet allowed to cross the street on his own yet.

He also has encouraged his family to recycle more at home. Brandon says cleaning up the city is not something he was taught; he just rather knows that it's something that he wants to do. Recently Brandon's mom, Tracy, entered him into the Sunlight Eco-Action Kids contest. That's a national contest for environmentally friendly kids. Brandon was one of 18 of 200 finalists, of 250 entries. He didn't capture the grand prize. I think I'm a little biased, but I think he should have. But he didn't capture the grand prize, but it has not slowed his efforts at all.

Over the past year Brandon has saved more than \$400 by turning in bottles and cans. He donates the money to kids' charities like the donation collection jars at Tim Hortons, for example. And one of the things he wants to do with the money he's raised is to buy extra garbage cans for his neighbourhood. Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that the new government I think is going to help with that a little bit today if we can.

There are sure to be more great things that we'll all expect from this young environmentalist.

And if I may, young Brandon's also a published author, and he's published a book called *How to Clean the Earth*. And if I can just share with hon. members his conclusions. The first step is to never litter. The second step is to recycle. The third step is to always shut the light off when you're leaving a room. The fourth is always shut down your computer when you're not using it — something I think I could do a little better job of, frankly, Mr. Speaker. Take a bath instead of a shower. Open your blinds in winter and close them in the summer. Use rechargeable batteries. Walk or ride a bike, but don't always

drive a car. Use reusable bags for grocery shopping. Drive only a small car — I say to the member for Kindersley. And finally, use cold water instead of warm or hot water when you're doing the laundry.

Mr. Speaker, to you and to all members of the House, a young environmental hero, Brandon Malcolm.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you and to you to the rest of the Assembly, I'd like to once again introduce a group from Milestone. But I want to clarify it as a different group today than it was yesterday. It's a group of grade 4's from the school in Milestone. There are 17 grade 4's in the gallery today. Their teacher is Mary-Jo Steve — hello, Mary-Jo — and chaperones, Jamie Schmidt and Denise Nagy.

I'll certainly be having an opportunity to visit with them after, I believe, question period and explain the goings on of this House, and certainly glad to see them. It seems to be a very popular time in spring sittings that a number of the school groups get to come to visit their Legislative Assembly. So I'd like all members to welcome them again to their Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, thank you. 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 labour relations in the province.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The petitions are signed by people from Saskatoon, Cut Knife, Lloydminster, Davidson. Mr. Speaker, I so present.

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

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's with a great deal of pleasure that I present a petition on behalf of Moose Jaw residents that will help to improve health services in our city and in the surrounding area and our health district of Five Hills. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon.

Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to provide funding for the expansion and renovation of the Moose Jaw Union Hospital.

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

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

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition that has been signed by a number of residents in the city of Saskatoon, where they are petitioning the Legislative Assembly to cause the government to immediately restore funding to the Station 20 project in the city of Saskatoon. This is signed by a number of residents that live throughout Saskatoon.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk Assistant: — According to order the following petition for a private Bill has been reviewed, found to be in order, and is read and received of Caronport schools of the province of Saskatchewan praying for An Act to amend The Caronport Schools Act.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Saskatchewan Motion Picture Association Nomination

Mr. Bradshaw: — Mr. Speaker, recently nominated for the best performance by a Saskatchewan Motion Picture Association is Nipawin-born actress Shannon Jardine. The awards ceremony will be held today at the 2008 Showcase Gala in Regina.

Shannon has been on several episodes of *Corner Gas*, *The Englishman's Boy*, *Little Mosque on the Prairie*, *The Velvet Devil*, *Moccasin Flats*, *The Delicate Art of Parking*, and *Jeremiah*.

On top of acting, she also writes. Prairie Threat Entertainment Inc., her production company, is in the process of developing a half-hour TV series as well as a miniseries. Shannon is also anticipating the release of a big screen feature, *Surveillance*, in which she is proud to be performing all of her own stunts.

Shannon has won many awards over the years, some of which include the Most Outstanding Performance People's Choice Award from the Theatre BC North Shore Zone, Most Promising Actor from the Saskatchewan Drama Association, Best Female Performer at the Victoria Fringe Audience Awards, just to name a few. Mr. Speaker, we look forward to seeing much more of Shannon in the upcoming years. Her hard work and passion will undoubtedly continue to make her very successful.

We ask all members to join me in congratulating Shannon Jardine on her nomination and past accomplishments, and in wishing her well and all the best in her future undertakings.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Saskatoon Firm Wins Environmental Leadership Award

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask all members to join me in recognizing Jim Finnigan of Digital Environmental, Saskatoon, for winning the SEIMA [Saskatchewan Environmental Industry and Managers Association] award for environmental leadership this year. Jim moved to Saskatchewan in 1978 to complete a graduate degree in archaeology, and as he says, forgot to go back to Alberta. Originally working with the Saskatchewan Research Council, Jim created Digital Environmental in 1995, a firm specializing in satellite imagery and remote sensing.

Digital Environmental supplies most of the satellite imagery used here in Saskatchewan. They have mapped Saskatchewan's forests for forest fire purposes and now they are mapping all of Saskatchewan's pasture land. They have had project support from the Canadian and European space agencies and will be one of the first recipients of RADARSAT-2 data this summer. In the past, Digital, they have brought delegations from China, Israel, Nigeria, and Poland to work in this province and they are currently doing a research project on rice fields in the Philippines.

Digital Environmental have offices in Alberta and Manitoba, with plans to expand into northwestern Ontario, but their head office remains in Saskatoon.

Now Jim has worked hard to grow SEIMA. He continues to serve on the executive and is a supporter of SEIMA's efforts in promoting innovation and expertise, and many of us may have met him last night at their reception.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating Jim and all the folks at Digital in Saskatoon. I wish them the very best. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Swift Current Team in Western Hockey League Playoffs

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, the second round of the WHL [Western Hockey League] playoffs are set to begin this weekend and there remains only one Saskatchewan team that is left in the playoffs. That's of course the Swift Current Broncos. The smallest market to have an actual CHL [Canadian Hockey League] team is in Swift Current. The Broncos won what many described as one of the most exciting first-round series of the playoffs, beating the Regina Pats in six games. Bronco fans were there to support their team in full force, selling out the newly expanded Credit Union iplex in Swift Current and loading up fan buses for the road games here in Regina.

Regarded as one of the most balanced teams in the league, with eight 20-goal scorers in the regular season led by the likes of

team MVP [most valuable player] Zack Smith, Levi Nelson, and Erik Felde, a solid defensive core featuring Michael Wilson and Eric Doyle, and the stellar goaltending of netminder Travis Yonkman, Mr. Speaker, the Broncos are now set to take on the Hitmen for game one on Friday night in Swift Current.

Things are looking very good in Bronco land and we know that WHL fans who would normally cheer for their teams in other Saskatchewan centres will want to join the Bronco bandwagon and cheer for the Swift Current Broncos as they continue through the playoffs.

Congratulations to the head coach and GM [general manager], Dean Chynoweth; the assistant coach, Tim Kehler; assistant general manager, Elden Moberg; the board of directors, the staff who make Bronco hockey possible in Swift Current, everyone in the front office, the scouts, the volunteers; the play-by-play team, Jon Keen and Ryan Switzer. And good luck to the Broncos the rest of the way.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

National Poetry Month

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. April each year is National Poetry Month, and tonight the Saskatchewan Writers Guild, along with a number of others, at the special invitation of the Lieutenant Governor, are having a special poetry reading at Government House. All people are invited. It's at 8 o'clock.

The poets who will be reading tonight will be the Poet Laureate of Saskatchewan, Robert Currie, as well as poet Tom Wayman from British Columbia. The Lieutenant Governor will read a poem. And late flash has it that Councillor Clipsham from Regina will also be reading a poem. I encourage all members to be part of this event.

Robert Currie, our Poet Laureate, has been a writer and poet in Saskatchewan for a long time. And I would just like to take this chance to read another Saskatchewan poem. This one's called "Intimations."

Striving to make them sense
their own mortality
I gripped the shrunken head,
a rubber toy but grisly,
addressed it as Yorick,
and no gorge rose.
But after class
one boy shied towards me:
"I was just wonderin if . . . well . . .
Howdja like a real skull for that part?"
Trying not to think
of what was left headless
I seized upon his offer.
Now when Hamlet holds
the jester's skull,
the classroom grows
quiet as the grave.
They see the end,

and cannot laugh at that.

Mr. Speaker, National Poetry Month. I encourage everybody to buy a book of Saskatchewan poetry. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations.

Wadena Hockey Team Wins Provincial Championship

Hon. Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Michael Jordan is quoted as saying: "Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence wins championships." The Wadena Wildcat Midgets have learned the validity of this statement. For the final game the Wadena rink was packed with over 1,000 fans who came to witness this team maintain its one-goal lead against Balcarres and win the provincial championship. The men's bonspiel even closed down in order for the curlers to watch the game.

Coach Leach told *The Wadena News* that part of the success was a result of the team's desire and ability to support one another. He said, "Right from the beginning the team's unity was something to watch. The players were always looking out for each other and really enjoyed playing together."

[10:15]

Mr. Speaker, these boys didn't just come from one town. They represent Wadena, Elfros, Invermay, Kelvington, Porcupine Plain, Weekes, and Gordon First Nation.

To develop this unity and togetherness is an attribute not only to the players but to coach Lyle Leach, assistant coach Roley Rumbold, and manager Brian Helberg.

The road to the championship started with a two-game total point victory over Wynyard, followed by another victory over Wilkie and a final one-goal victory over Balcarres.

I ask members to join with me in congratulating the 2008 Wadena Wildcat provincial champions: James Nakrayko, Evan Ericson, D'Neil Korolchuk, Jordan Weinhandl, Taylor German, Shelby Gray, Ben Stasiuk, Travis Grisdale, Aaron Ostapowich, Devin Helberg, Cole Rothlander, Josiah Lumsden, Scott Lorenzen, Earl Bohachewski, Drew Ross, Dean Stephanyshen, Derek Leach, and Matt Warburton.

Congratulations to all of you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Fantasy Food Charity Gala

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, on March 29 it was definitely my pleasure to attend the seventh annual Fantasy Food Charity Gala event. This event is a gourmet tasting event involving over 30 fine food vendors of wine, spirits, and brew

in conjunction with a silent and live auction. Proceeds from this event go to the Saskatchewan Science Centre as well as its discovery fund, EYES, educating youth in engineering sciences, and the Ehrlo sport venture program supporting the outdoor hockey league.

I want to extend thanks to all those who attended this fantastic event and participated in the live and silent auctions.

Special thanks to event sponsors, Tyler and Associates Financial, IBM [International Business Machines Corporation], Co-operators, the *Leader-Post*, DirectWest, Z99, Casino Regina, Solvera, the University of Regina, HSBC, Western Litho Printers, Delta Regina, as well as participating sponsors, Culligan, IPSCO, CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan], ISC [Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan] of Saskatchewan, and Mitchell Developments.

Mr. Speaker, I request all members within this Assembly to join with me in extending thanks to the organizers, volunteers, participants, and donors that made this a wonderful evening and successful event.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Good News for Saskatchewan

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well, well, well, Mr. Speaker. More good news for Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, there's more evidence that Saskatchewan's economic momentum is here to stay. This morning RBC [Royal Bank of Canada] released its provincial outlook for all 10 Canadian provinces. RBC called Saskatchewan the new provincial growth leader. They projected Saskatchewan will lead the nation in economic growth in 2008 and 2009.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Huyghebaert: — But that's not all. RBC says Saskatchewan will be the only province in Canada to see an increase in housing starts in 2008. We will lead Canada employment growth in 2008. We will lead Canada in disposable income growth. We will lead Canada in retail sales growth in 2008 and 2009. Simply put, Saskatchewan is the new economic star in the nation, and Saskatchewan's people are enjoying the benefits of this tremendous growth.

Mr. Speaker, it seems fitting that this report comes out on the same day that we will vote on the first Saskatchewan Party budget. The RBC forecast shows that Saskatchewan's economic growth is here to stay. And I will be pleased to support a budget that ensures Saskatchewan is ready for growth.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Drug Plan Administration

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister didn't know the cost of administering his plan to take away drug benefits from seniors. But thanks to *The StarPhoenix*, we now know the plan will cost the province at least a half a million dollars and could cost as much as \$700,000 in administrative costs this year alone. The ongoing administrative costs will be over 100,000 a year, and additional funds will likely be needed for advertising. That's a whole lot of cash, Mr. Speaker.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Health: is the minister so caught up in his political posturing that he would rather spend half a million dollars or more on administrative costs instead of helping all seniors get the drugs they need?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a campaign commitment made, a campaign commitment kept, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — We campaigned on the issue. In fact this whole issue started last year when the government introduced the drug plan, and at that time we talked about we should maybe look at some income testing. We looked at it further and said, if we income tested, we would drop about 6,700 seniors off the drug plan. But what we would add, who we would add benefits to are about 110,300 young citizens of our province, Mr. Speaker. And it was a trade-off that we thought would be a good trade-off, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we're looking forward to the implementation of this plan in July 1. We do know that it costs some money to go through the start-up, initial start-up, and certainly we are willing to bear that cost.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The taxpayers will be bearing that cost.

After last year's budget, you couldn't swing a dead cat in the rotunda here without hitting a Sask Party MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] who was blathering on about the unsustainability of the seniors' drug plan. Just a year later, those same MLAs introduce a budget that includes a seniors' drug plan, a children's drug plan, an administrative cost that total over a half a million dollars this year alone.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: if the plan was unsustainable before and the minister has since added coverage to children under 14 and tacked on some administrative costs, how can the minister believe it is sustainable now? Is it just because it's his plan?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I find it just really passingly curious that that member would stand in the House and criticize the party that is moving some money from a senior drug plan and covering kids under 14 at an administration cost of, a start-up of about \$400,000 in the first year, when that government, when they were in government and trying to regain government ran on a drug plan that was going to cost the taxpayers of this province \$250 million a year, about \$1 billion over the four years. And she has the nerve to stand in this House and complain about a \$400,000 first-time, one-time administration fee to provide benefits to over 110,000 youths in our province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Junor: — The minister hasn't learned that he doesn't refer to me as she. But anyway, Mr. Speaker, the minister has said the government plans to means testing, or to extend the benefits to all children under 14. So much for not picking winners and losers. With the Sask Party in charge, seniors need to prove they deserve help. But families with children — no matter how much they make, even if they make as much as the Sask Party chief of staff — don't have to prove a thing.

The minister has acknowledged to reporters that this is an inconsistency but seems perfectly willing to let it be. We're hearing now that some seniors have missed the magic cut-off by \$1. To the minister, why is he targeting seniors?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, well over, well over 90 per cent, 97 per cent of seniors will be able to receive the benefit of the \$15 prescription fee. Seniors that are over that 64,000 threshold are still eligible for the 3.4 special drug status where if their drugs are over that certain amount of 3.4 per cent of their income, they'll be covered, Mr. Speaker. So they're not left out in the cold as that member would say.

But, Mr. Speaker, it's again interesting that they would call claim and cry foul about a \$400,000 one-time administration fee when just months before the last previous election when their political hopes were not looking very positive, that they could find \$1 million to advertise a health care system that was in trouble, Mr. Speaker, that was in trouble — \$1 million of unbudgeted money to try and prop up their political interests.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Saskatoon

Lakeview.

Nurses' Contract Negotiations

Ms. Junor: — Eastview, but thank you. Mr. Speaker, according to media reports, SAHO [Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations] and SUN [Saskatchewan Union of Nurses] exchanged full proposal packages following a meeting with the conciliator yesterday, Wednesday. The SAHO president and CEO [chief executive officer], Susan Antosh, called the exchange of packages a positive result. Obviously the minister cannot discuss specifics, but hopefully he can provide the public with some degree of confidence that things are progressing in a constructive manner.

To the minister: is the minister as confident as SAHO that negotiations are moving in a positive direction?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that the negotiation process is working its way through. There are going to be high times and low times, certainly, through that negotiation period. There are going to be times when the parties agree on issues. There's going to be times when they disagree. It is not the job of this minister or our government to interject into that. I'm certainly glad that they have been working together through the conciliator and finding some common ground, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, but I do want to refer back to \$1 million spent on propping up that former government's hopes in health care. It was dashed. In four short months, not only have we signed a partnership with nurses; we've attracted nurses from around the world to this province. And there's more to come.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health is quite proud of his MOU [memorandum of understanding] . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Ms. Junor: — Despite the minister not knowing the cost of the MOU or what the SUN-RHA [regional health authority] fund will be used for. The minister has called the agreement historic. He has argued the MOU is an asset to the bargaining process, that he's not inserted himself into, and that it will help smooth relations with nurses.

To the Minister of Health: does the minister have any indication yet that the MOU is contributing in a positive manner to the progress of negotiations?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The partnership agreement that was signed by the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses and our government is an agreement that, certainly, that government could never reach. That government had worked for years to try and find a partnership. In fact we have copies of the recent, the most recent partnership that that opposition tried to reach when it was in government, and it couldn't get it done, Mr. Speaker. In four months, we got it done.

Certainly there's work to be done on the partnership; it is a memorandum of understanding, and that work I am pleased to say will start on Monday morning when Marilyn Smadu brings both sides together and starts working on the terms and references of that partnership.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think Dr. Smadu's first name is Marlene, so we might as well get that right before we start the meetings. The minister is obviously very proud of his MOU. I understand that there's cost involved, that SAHO has suggested that are \$1.2 billion. And I know the minister has asserted in supplementary estimates that he's not inserting himself into the bargaining process, but he has said that this MOU is somehow supposed to smooth the bargaining process. I want to hear from him that he thinks that it is doing that as of today.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — I do want to correct what I said as far as the naming Dr. Smadu; it is Marlene Smadu, and I do apologize for that. I will give her credit for that. But I do want to talk about the partnership and the great work that it will create. We certainly know that over the last number of years the money that was spent and the energy that was spent by the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses to rail against the government that just didn't listen.

That government had 16 years to listen. They had an all-star candidate run in Saskatoon from the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses that was supposed to go into government. She was in as associate deputy minister; that was to carry the message. She didn't get it done, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses have been frustrated for years with the lack of attention, the lack of concern, the lack of compassion, by the former NDP [New Democratic Party] government. Mr. Speaker, we have lots of work to do, absolutely, with the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, and I'm proud to say it starts Monday morning.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Consultation Regarding Labour Legislation

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, this House is often the site of frank debate and fierce disagreements, but one place we share common ground is in our understanding of how poorly the Minister of Advanced Education has been in communicating his actions and the actions of his government.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Broten: — We know what members of the press gallery think. We know that the minister himself admitted a few weeks ago that, quote, "I could have been more informative." And we know that the Premier is disappointed in his minister. According to an email I have here, even the government's own executive director of communications isn't impressed.

Mr. Speaker, they'll get no disagreement from this side of the House, but here's the minister's chance to redeem himself. To the minister: what communications took place between members of his government and stakeholders about essential services legislation prior to Bills 5 and 6 coming to this Assembly?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[10:30]

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the question. What we did, Mr. Speaker, is obviously we sat down. We said that we would table the legislation. From there we would move forward with stakeholder consultations, Mr. Speaker. We advertised in nearly 100 newspapers across the province. We sent out 84 letters inviting feedback, Mr. Speaker. We had meetings with nearly 100 people — either myself or the deputy minister, Mr. Speaker.

Those stakeholder consultations were very informative, Mr. Speaker. What they've allowed us to do is offer that we'll be moving forward with amendments on the essential service piece, Mr. Speaker. Because the key question, Mr. Speaker, is that when the people of Saskatchewan turn and say, why is Saskatchewan the only province not to have in place or have tabled an essential service Bill, the answer looms over on the other side — because they would not move forward on such a bold piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is where the future is. It's balancing the right to strike with public safety, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, it seems like he's pretty selective about who he talks to. When the minister was first confronted with evidence that consultations did take place, he feigned

ignorance. Days later he declined to give any real answers to reporters until he had a chance to speak with Bonny Braden, the Premier's communications adviser who waded into this debate by acting inappropriately.

When asked if Ms. Braden's contact with the president of the U of S [University of Saskatchewan] during the middle of the CUPE [Canadian Union of Public Employees] strike raised any concerns or issues, the minister said to reporters, quote, "It certainly does, and it's something I plan on addressing in the coming days."

Well it's been two weeks, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister tell us what discipline, if any, has been given to Ms. Braden? And can you tell us what other actions he has taken to cover for their missteps?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Norris: — You know, Mr. Speaker, what is amazing is that the member opposite fails to begin to understand the significance of the essential service legislation, Mr. Speaker. That is, during the recent strike at the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina, the CUPE strike, nearly 400 people per day were being turned away from medical assistance, Mr. Speaker. The key question is, how do you come up with a system that ensures that people . . .

The Speaker: — Order. The Minister Responsible for Employment and Labour.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was just saying, the key question is, how do you ensure that the people of this province are able to have public safety and security during labour disruptions? The answer is, we can look across Canada. We can see other provinces and what they've done — and that is establish essential service legislation, Mr. Speaker. That's what we're moving forward on, Mr. Speaker.

And the key question, Mr. Speaker, is, will the members opposite be voting for that piece of legislation?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Broten: — Mr. Speaker, the nonsensical ramblings of the Minister of Advanced Education have sadly become the best we can expect. He and whoever is advising him still don't understand how problematic the government's communications with President MacKinnon really were.

Let's recap. Problem number one, the discussions were one-sided, only occurring with fans of the legislation. Problem number two, discussions took place smack dab in the middle of a labour dispute. Apparently their quiet diplomacy wasn't so quiet. Problem number three quite simply is that the revelation

flew in the face of government claims not to have consulted with anyone.

To the minister: why on earth was Bonny Braden in contact with President MacKinnon about essential services right while he was in the middle of a labour dispute, and why was Bonny Braden lining up support for a Bill which the government claims wasn't even written yet?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, I guess one of the key questions is, I'm not certain what the member opposite has against President Peter MacKinnon. And I guess because . . . The reason I say that is, Mr. Speaker, is that because President MacKinnon is on the record that he was not consulted regarding any of the substance of the legislation, Mr. Speaker. He is on the record, Mr. Speaker. Again, Mr. Speaker, we go back and ask the question . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Norris: — You know, Mr. Speaker, in order to establish a broader dialogue, Mr. Speaker, what I did is, in weeks past I invited the member opposite for lunch. And that lunch occurred last week. That way we could establish a dialogue relating to students, student funding, student housing, and, Mr. Speaker, instead of addressing the key questions that were raised during that lunch, Mr. Speaker, he continues to go back to an issue that's already been addressed on the public record, Mr. Speaker.

The key question, Mr. Speaker, it relates to the key question, why is Saskatchewan the only province not to have essential service legislation either in place or tabled? And, Mr. Speaker, the key question is, will you be supporting the legislation or not?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Broten: — Well, Mr. Speaker, lunch was . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. The Minister of Justice will come to order. The member for Saskatoon Massey Place.

Mr. Broten: — Lunch was just fine, Mr. Speaker, but I felt the relationship was just moving a little too quickly for my liking. Mr. Speaker, let's review the timelines here. In the days following the CUPE strike, the Minister of Advanced Education bragged there had been quiet diplomacy during the strike.

A week later, still before the agreement was ratified, the Premier's staff was in contact with Mr. MacKinnon about essential services legislation. Again our problem here is about the process.

Mr. Speaker, you don't have to be a high-rolling Saskatchewan Party chief of staff or communications officer to know that this isn't right. The minister has had several weeks to mull it over, and he's had time to consult with Ms. Braden. Can he tell this House, plain and simple, was it appropriate that Bonny Braden allegedly went behind his back and communicated with one side of a labour dispute?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Norris: — Mr. Speaker, I'm going to speak very slowly because maybe we were moving too fast. You know, sometimes the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, sometimes they even go in reverse. But we'll get to that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the key premise of the question actually relates to legislation, and President Peter MacKinnon is on the public record as saying that he was not informed of or attentive to any aspect of the legislation. So that's already on the public record.

The key question, Mr. Speaker, relates to the substance of the essential service Bill. What we did is we went forward; we held consultations. Again they were quite extensive, Mr. Speaker. As I've said in this House, we'll be coming forward with amendments on that.

And the key question, Mr. Speaker, as we look across Canada — as we look and see that other provinces have essential service legislation — then, Mr. Speaker, the key question is, what are the members opposite going to do? Are they going to vote in favour of the people of Saskatchewan and . . .

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Revenue Sharing with Municipalities

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, immediately after hearing the Sask Party provincial budget, Mayor Fiacco knew what was in store. I can tell the citizens of Regina that there will definitely be a property tax increase this year — a property tax increase. With more than \$1 billion in the bank, the Sask Party cannot manage to fund municipalities to the point that property taxes in Regina will not have to be raised.

My question is to the minister: how do you justify sitting on such a huge surplus and forcing Regina citizens to pay more?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the minister of Municipal Government.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are a couple of essential points that need to be made here. What the member opposite fails to remember, and never reminds this Assembly, is that the primary reason that there are tax increases in this decade is because that former government clawed back hundreds of millions of dollars from the revenue-sharing fund.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Shameful, inappropriate, disrespectful to municipalities in the extreme, Mr. Speaker. In Regina's case alone, \$100 million was clawed back by that former government over the decade. Not just over one or two or three years, Mr. Speaker — it went on for an entire 10 years. That's the reason we're looking at property tax increases today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Higgins: — Well, Mr. Speaker, Donna Brothwell, the manager of the Yorkton Chamber of Commerce, also made a prediction for her community following the budget. The 7 per cent increase going to the city probably isn't going to be enough to not to have to raise local property tax. This is sounding like a pattern is developing, Mr. Speaker.

On Monday, city council in Yorkton introduced their budget, and the council was forced to propose a property tax increase for Yorkton necessary to offset the shortfall of funding from the provincial government. To the minister: how do you justify sitting on a huge surplus and forcing Yorkton residents to pay more?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I expect that we'll hear other similar announcements for preliminary budget projections and discussions. The city of Saskatoon came out with one in the last 24 hours, I understand. The fact, the fact that the hon. member opposite would confuse initial budget projection talk with final budgets accepted and passed by city councils betrays an unbelievable ignorance of how cities do their municipal finances.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I recognize that the member may bring little if any relevant experience to the role of critic for Municipal Affairs, but I do find it astounding that after four months the questions are at the basic level that we're seeing here today. In order to avoid future such embarrassment, I suggest the member actually get out from Regina, go to visit cities, towns, villages, RMs [rural municipality], and northern municipalities, as we have and actually find out how these people do their job.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Higgins: — Well, Mr. Speaker, so here the minister stands up and he's lecturing me as he gives up . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Ms. Higgins: — He stands up and gives an answer. His big explanation for underfunding municipalities was going back to 1991, when over the last five years there's been a 55 per cent increase in municipal revenue sharing in this province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Ms. Higgins: — And the money that this government is putting into the municipalities is less than what they received last year. They talk about growing the province, building for growth, but they're stifling any growth that there is and any possibility in municipalities. The minister needs to appropriately fund the municipalities.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Again, Mr. Speaker, I'm surprised at the tone of the question from the member opposite. It's not my habit, it's not my habit to do, to you know to give lectures, but perhaps a tutorial is needed. And if the hon. member would like to meet me for lunch, I'd be happy to explain once and for all how the business of municipal finance is actually conducted. I think we would see a remarkable change in the questions from the member opposite.

With respect to revenue sharing, they broke it; we're fixing it.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Higgins: — Well, Mr. Speaker, it's fine for the minister to stand and be smug and condescending, but that's inappropriate way to treat the municipalities. Mr. Speaker, every municipality across this province is being forced to raise property tax to fund infrastructure and build communities that are growing. When is this province and when is this government going to get off that big, fat surplus they've got and actually support the municipalities that are building this province?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Hutchinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Smug and condescending were the only two words I heard from the

opposite member before the cackling and the squawking drowned out the rest, so I'm just going to have to fill it in as best I can.

Mr. Speaker, for 16 years the members opposite were in fact smug and condescending. They have defined arrogance. They have defined disrespect to the municipalities. Again, Mr. Speaker, they broke it. It is our job to fix it. We fully intend to do so. And again I'll offer my . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. Will the members come to order.

[10:45]

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

The Speaker: — Order. It's difficult for the Speaker — and the Clerk is close to the Chair — to hear exactly what the order is being called. Special order.

[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 Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I am very pleased to have an opportunity to participate in this budget debate which, I if may say, Mr. Speaker, as one who has listened to a number of budget debates, would report that I think this has been a very, very good debate.

I have listened, Mr. Speaker, over the course of this debate to contributions to the debate made by my colleagues in opposition, and I have noted, Mr. Speaker, something which in my experience is rather unusual. We have seen in this budget debate a number of members of this opposition stand in their place and actually recognize components of this budget which we believe are good for the people of Saskatchewan.

We have not simply stood in our place in opposition and criticized this government and this budget. We have in fact stood on occasion and recognized components of this budget which we believe are good for the people and the communities of Saskatchewan. That's not been the experience we've seen in the last number of years when the Sask Party was in opposition, and that I think, Mr. Speaker, tells you something about the difference between our two approaches to governance in this province.

In fact some in opposition and if I may say, some in the media have gone so far as to say that this is almost an NDP budget, almost an NDP budget. That's been observed by members on this side of the House and if I may say, it's been observed by members in the media. In fact one of our members just in this debate recently said it appeared to him that in fact — I believe he was the member from Athabasca — he said it appears that the Sask Party has been NDP-ized, NDP-ized, that they came to government, didn't have a lot of plans of their own, and so would just adopt the NDP plan. In fact there is some argument about that, Mr. Speaker, when you look at this budget.

Those who have supported the Sask Party and those who look forward I think for dramatic new initiatives, especially in a budget that contains this amount of financial resources, they are somewhat disappointed. Those who come from the right supported the Sask Party. Because what we have seen in this budget, Mr. Speaker, is a budget which essentially is last year's budget with more money. And the more money that's been added, of course, was money provided by the former government. So we have an NDP budget. We have NDP money making this budget even better in some regards for the people of Saskatchewan.

I do want to say there's one element in this budget that you would never have seen in an NDP government, and that's the contribution of \$8 million to foster a bureaucracy called Enterprise Saskatchewan. You would never have seen that, Mr. Speaker, an \$8 million ticket item for fostering and paying for this bureaucracy which is called Enterprise Saskatchewan.

So there have been, Mr. Speaker, elements of this budget which we have welcomed and in fact which we have applauded. Now let me say though, Mr. Speaker, there are — and these again have been identified very clearly in the debate — there are some very glaring deficiencies within this budget. And in my view, Mr. Speaker — and this is the approach that I want to take today — this budget fails on three very significant questions. It fails on three very significant questions.

The first question is this: does this budget demonstrate a government that has the competency to manage the treasury and the treasure they have been given? That's the first question. Does this budget demonstrate competence?

Secondly, does this budget demonstrate a government that is willing to stand up for the province of Saskatchewan, that's willing to stand up for the interests of Saskatchewan people? That's the second question.

And the third, and the perhaps most important question, Mr. Speaker, is this: does this budget, with the mountain of money that this government has available to it, does this budget provide real and tangible benefit for the families of Saskatchewan, real and tangible benefits for the families of Saskatchewan? And, Mr. Speaker, does this government share that wealth in a fair manner? Does it provide a fair share of the wealth for all of the people and all of the communities of Saskatchewan?

So those, Mr. Speaker, are the three tests that I want to apply to this budget. The first test, does it demonstrate competency in the delivery of public services and the collection of large public

revenues? Does it demonstrate competency in the way this government has managed the affairs of the province of the past four months? Secondly, does it demonstrate a government that's willing to stand up for the people of Saskatchewan? And thirdly and most importantly, does this budget, does this budget provide real and tangible benefit from this mountain of money that they've got? Does it provide real and tangible benefit for the people of Saskatchewan and the families of Saskatchewan, and does it fairly share the wealth?

On the first question of competency. Now even the most partisan member over there, even the member for Moose Jaw North can't deny this fact: no other incoming government in the history of the province of Saskatchewan has inherited from a former government a stronger economy, a better fiscal picture, and a larger financial surplus than the Sask Party government inherited from the former New Democratic Party government.

It cannot be denied. Everybody knows that, Mr. Speaker. Everybody knows that. Even the member from Moose Jaw North knows it. He knows it; he can't deny it. No other incoming government has ever inherited a circumstance like this SP [Saskatchewan Party] government has inherited from the former NDP government. Whether it's in terms of the economy, whether it's in terms of resource royalty rates and prices, whether it's in terms of 16 straight credit rating upgrades, 16 straight balanced budgets, no other government has ever inherited this kind of treasury. Everybody knows it; no one can deny it.

Now the test, Mr. Speaker, the test is, how will they manage it? That's the test. How will they manage the treasure that's been put in their hands? How will they do it?

Now we all watch with interest, Mr. Speaker. In fact, this was brought to my attention by a friend last night just out on the street. We all watch with interest how this new government is going around trying to take credit for that which they've inherited. I mean we've all seen the Minister of Social Services out cutting a ribbon on a housing project, trying to take credit for a housing project as if that housing project sprung out of the ground in the last three months.

We've seen them trying to take credit, Mr. Speaker, for population growth, for population growth. As if 16,000 people were all standing on the border somewhere just waiting for the SPs to take over here. I mean, it's laughable, Mr. Speaker, because they do this.

Get this, Mr. Speaker, get this. I read in this budget document a great big commitment from this government, right here in the budget document — the critic for Highways knows all about this — right in this budget they promised . . . Do you know what they're going to do as a result of this budget? They're going to complete the twinning of the No. 1 Highway. They're going to complete the twinning of the No. 1 Highway.

You know what's left, Mr. Speaker? I think you know this. But you know what's left? I can't engage the Speaker, I know. You know what's left, members of the House, in terms of twinning of the No. 1 Highway? Well it's the completion of the intersection at Moosomin. I think they have to complete the intersection there, maybe put up one or two signs, and the job's

done.

But you mark my words: some of these days, the Premier and the Minister of Highways, they'll get a great big cavalcade going. They'll go down the highway, the flags waving. They'll throw out news releases everywhere they go, and they'll say, look at us. We completed the twinning of the No. 1 Highway. Mark my words, Mr. Speaker.

So when the people of Saskatchewan see this government trying to take credit for all the good work, well we smile because we're pleased with the inheritance we've given. We're pleased. We walked away from government and we have our heads held high. But it's a bit laughable when they try and take credit for that which is already in place.

So, Mr. Speaker, this government has inherited more work done, a stronger economy, better resource prices, balanced budgets, and if I may say, a treasury that contains \$1.3 billion — \$1.3 billion. A mountain of money. And the test is, the test is now, Mr. Speaker, can they manage it? Are they competent to manage the treasure that the people of Saskatchewan have given them, the treasure they've inherited from a former government?

Well now the member from Moose Jaw North says, no comment. Well that's fair because his friends are commenting on it. And I'll have a word to say about that in a moment. Because, Mr. Speaker, to date, to date in this four-month experience we've had of this SP government, to date they have demonstrated that little assurance can be given to the people of Saskatchewan that they in fact are competent to manage the treasure they've been given.

I mean, Mr. Speaker, it is hardly competent, it is hardly competent when on the night they were sworn in, the very night they were sworn in, the Premier of the province steps in front of the cameras and says to the people of Saskatchewan with a very glum look on his face that the fiscal situation of Saskatchewan is stark, he said. Stark, he said. Well you know, right then, right there, right across the province of Saskatchewan, people scratched their heads. How can this be any sign of competence when everybody knows oil's at \$100 a barrel, when everybody knows there's hundreds of millions of dollars in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund? We didn't quite know how much till we got the third quarter. It's hardly a sign of competence when a newly sworn in government and its leader, the Premier, comes in front of the people and says, oh but the situation is stark, friends. Well not since that night have I heard that word come out of the Premier's lips again. That word seems to have disappeared from the vocabulary. It's gone.

It's hardly competent, Mr. Speaker, it is hardly competent when a government comes to office and then goes around firing long-term, non-partisan, valuable, experienced public servants — senior public servants who have served this province through governments and changes in government, who bring that wealth of that experience to their work. This government comes in and just starts firing those people. And firing, Mr. Speaker, without cause, without cause.

So, Mr. Speaker, we're yet to see what this is going to cost the taxpayers of Saskatchewan. We're going to see what this costs the taxpayers of Saskatchewan. It's hardly competent to come

to government and just rid yourselves of some of the best assets in terms of public policy that this province has — hardly competent.

It's hardly . . .

The Speaker: — Order. It will only be appropriate for members to allow the Leader of the Opposition to place his comments without interference. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, it's hardly competent to stand up in front of the people of Saskatchewan the night you're sworn in and say, well by the way the fiscal circumstances here is stark, and then about the very next day announce to the same people of Saskatchewan that, I tell you what, we're going to give our senior political staff in our ministers' offices these great big raises, great big raises. That's exactly what they did, Mr. Speaker. It hardly speaks to competence.

Then we witnessed over the course of these past four months and even over the course of this budget debate a minister, a part-time Minister of Labour or Minister of Advanced Education and Employment and Labour, whatever his title is, goes about firing the Labour Relations Board, again without cause. Not even a hint of a cause. Right in the middle of a Labour Relations Board hearing. Is incapable or will not respond to a very simple question — what has happened to the 30 cases now before the Labour Relations Board? And will not respond to the question, how much is this going to cost the taxpayers of Saskatchewan? How much will these, these ill-advised severances cost the people of Saskatchewan?

Is this competence, Mr. Speaker, to destroy the Labour Relations Board right in the middle of its work? To interrupt a hearing that's ongoing? To fire the board without cause and therefore accept even further expense to the taxpayers of Saskatchewan?

But even worse, Mr. Speaker, to then take what has been the tradition of an open and competitive process to fill the role of the Chair of the Labour Relations Board and instead remove that open and competitive process and appoint your political friend, Mr. Ken Love. And then what, Mr. Speaker? Give him a \$60,000 increase, a \$60,000 increase. How, Mr. Speaker, can this be described as the competent management of the public purse? How can this be described as the competent management of the treasure that they have received?

I tell you it's hardly competent, Mr. Speaker. And I'm going to have more to say about this later, but I tell you it's hardly competent when the Minister of Finance goes to the editorial board of *The StarPhoenix* in Saskatoon and says, we are shutting down the funding for Station 20 — you know why? — because those folks have to raise 12 or \$14 million, and they've only raised 75,000. Well, Mr. Speaker, that is so completely wrong. So completely wrong. How can the Minister of Finance be out millions of dollars about a very significant project like this? It's just so wrong. Does that tell you about competence, Mr. Speaker?

[11:00]

And here again we've had another example today, right on the

front pages of the newspaper. They institute a plan that will cause our seniors in this province to have to declare their income if they're going to reap the support of the drug plan. Now to put this plan in place it's going to cost them hundreds of thousands of dollars. Now the Minister of Health is saying today publicly, well it's more than he thought it was going to be — more than he thought it was going to be. A big surprise about what was supposed to be a major campaign promise. Now they get in office; it's a great big surprise. Is this competent, Mr. Speaker?

And you talk about competency. We have watched and the people of Saskatchewan have watched how this Minister of Social Services, this current Minister of Social Services agrees — at cabinet, at Treasury Board, at the caucus — agrees to a plan that will make a huge transition in the provision of social welfare workers and social welfare services in this province. She agrees to it. She had to agree to it because the Minister of Finance put it in his budget. You can read right in the budget documents: this is the plan; this is how much money it will save. Then when this plan is announced to the workers in Social Services, when this plan is announced — as it should be when such a plan is in the budget — what does the minister say? Well I knew nothing about it. I woke up this morning on budget day and now here's something I apparently know nothing about.

And what does she try and do? She signed off three times. Now she tries to say, I don't know anything about it because she's been caught, she's been caught. And what happens then? Well then she tries to blame senior public servants, tries to put the blame on senior public servants in her own department. It's their fault. It's not my fault. They can't hear or something. Well, Mr. Speaker, this does not speak to competency. This does not speak to competency, Mr. Speaker,

I will give this budget a failing grade on this first point. This is not demonstrating to the people of Saskatchewan a group of men and women who are competent to manage the treasure they've been given. But, Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you what. I'm not alone in this. I am not alone in this assessment.

Members will be interested to see I have here the assessment of this budget by the Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce, the Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce, a group of men and women who traditionally have shown significant support for the Sask Party.

I mean, the member from Moose Jaw North, he comes directly from the chamber of commerce, and they've done a very thorough assessment of this budget, a very thorough assessment, if I may say so. And what is their assessment of the competency of this government, of their government? F. They give this budget an F. They do give it some E's. They do give it some D's, and when they get really enthusiastic, they give it a C. They give this budget an F. This is the Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce. This is not the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour. It's not the New Democratic Party. It's not the opposition. It's the Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce. It says right here in their report. They get an F for competence — an F. But they're overspending, says the Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, it's not just the chamber of

commerce in Saskatoon. It's not just Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. It's not just people all across the province who are recognizing the incompetency that's being demonstrated by this government. It's the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix*. It's the editorial board of the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* who wrote this editorial after they met with the Minister of Finance. This is what they said. This is what the editorial board of the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* says about this budget and this government's competence. And I quote:

If, as is generally the case, the Saskatchewan Party used its budget to set the tone for its administration, the province has a growing list to worry about.

The budget should set the tone for an administration. *The StarPhoenix* says if the tone that's being set is what we're going to look for, for the next four years, we have a lot to worry about. And then note these words, Mr. Speaker. This is directly quoting the editorial from the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* after the Minister of Finance met with them:

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.

Extravagant, ham-handed, and incompetent. That is, Mr. Speaker, the review not of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, not a group who are politically partisan, but from an editorial board which generally has been supportive again of the SP. They say this group is extravagant, it's ham-handed, and it is incompetent. On the first test, Mr. Speaker, of this budget, this government fails, fails to deliver competent management of the treasure they had been given.

The second test, Mr. Speaker, my second test is this: does this budget stand up for Saskatchewan? Does it stand up for the people of Saskatchewan?

An Hon. Member: — It sure does.

Mr. Calvert: — Well somebody from the backbench over there is saying, it sure does. Well I'm going to ask him a few questions, and maybe he'd like to answer these from his seat since he's so verbal from his seat — not so much from his feet, but often from his seat.

Mr. Speaker, I need to turn now to the revenue side of the budget, to the revenue side. Not many members have touched the revenue side of this budget. One or two of the opposition members have. I've not heard one member of the government opposite talk about the revenue side of this budget. They're not wanting to talk too much about that because, you see, Mr. Speaker, there isn't a tax decrease in the thing, not a tax decrease in the budget. That's not what I want to talk about.

Now I listened with interest to the member from North Battleford in his budget presentation point out to this legislature, the people of Saskatchewan, if you look on the revenue side of the budget, this government is predicting, is predicting that from all sources of taxation in this province that affect individuals and business, all personal and business tax will raise exactly \$4.68 billion. That's all taxes in — sales

taxes, corporate income, corporate capital, personal income, fuel, tobacco. The whole range of taxes will raise for this government \$4.6 billion.

Now if you turn back to the expenditure side, if you turn back to the expenditure side and put in one column the expenditures into the department of Health and expenditures in the department of Education — just those two departments — what is the total? Four point six billion dollars.

Now what does that tell us? It says that every tax dollar collected by this government will be expended just to provide health and education. So how do we then pay for highways, justice, social services, post-secondary education? How do we pay for the legislature? How do we pay for our international expeditions? How do we pay for Enterprise Saskatchewan? Because all of the tax dollars from persons and individuals and business goes directly to health and education.

Well I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, how we've paid for it. We pay for it from resource revenues. That's the revenues we collect from oil and gas, uranium and potash, which by the way, Mr. Speaker — as the Minister of Finance has now admitted — can be very volatile, very volatile. How do we pay for it? Well we pay for those other services from transfer money from the national government, transfer money from Ottawa.

Now I want to make a point here, Mr. Speaker, because members opposite try and confuse this issue. That transfer money from Ottawa, those dollars that come from Ottawa, are dollars that originally came from Saskatchewan. That federal treasury is filled with dollars from the taxpayers of Saskatchewan. These are our dollars that are in Ottawa. These are our dollars in Ottawa. And when they're transferred back, they should be transferred back to the people of Saskatchewan and all of its provinces in an equitable and fair manner. Because those dollars, Mr. Speaker, pay for essentially everything but what we take from resource revenue and what we spend on health and education.

So I've done a little comparison, Mr. Speaker, comparing the budgets of the province of Manitoba with the province of Saskatchewan. I think a fair comparison — similar in our demographics; very similar in our population; similar in our resource base. Exceptional resources in Manitoba around hydro. We have some non-renewable exceptional resources. A fair comparison, I believe.

Now the Government of Manitoba have not introduced their new budget. It will come in April. So I'm back to the budget of last year. Note these figures, Mr. Speaker. The Government of Manitoba in its budget last year received from the Government of Canada and the Canada Health Transfer, monies from Ottawa to fund health, \$807 million. That's the transfer to Manitoba. This budget of this government says that we can expect \$810 million in CHT [Canada Health Transfer] transfer for the people of Saskatchewan. That's understandable. That's fair — 807 to Manitoba, 810 for Saskatchewan. Similar population, that's relatively fair.

The Canada Social Transfer to Manitoba, in their last year's budget, will likely be similar this year, \$341 million. This budget document tells us that this government expects, in this

year, \$335 million. So 341 to Manitoba, 335 to Saskatchewan, that's fair. But here's where it goes wrong, Mr. Speaker. You take the Government of Manitoba's budget — last year's budget, never mind this year's — and look under the category of equalization payment from Ottawa to the province of Manitoba. What's the figure you read? One point eight billion, \$1.8 billion, and all the projections say that in this year's budget that will reach \$2 billion; \$2 billion from Ottawa to the people of Manitoba.

What does it say in this Finance minister's budget for equalization for this budget? What does it say? Zero. One big fat zero. So the people of Manitoba are receiving transfers of their money back — last year 1.8 billion; this year likely 2 billion. And the people of Saskatchewan, whose non-renewable resources are being extracted from the ground on a daily basis, are not able to retain the value of those resources. We achieve a big fat zero. You will know, Mr. Speaker, and the people of Saskatchewan know that we've been fighting this for years up until, up until these last four months when this new government has given up the fight, given up the fight for what everyone has agreed on is a \$800 million a year benefit for the people of Saskatchewan. Now I know the Premier says and the government opposite says, well lookit here: we're going to give peace a chance and we're going to achieve great things. In fact he promised that he would achieve more than equalization.

Well let's see what we've achieved so far. We've achieved a \$240 million deal for a clean coal experiment. A \$240 million . . . [inaudible] . . . deal for a clean coal experiment. Now the Premier is quick to bring out that 240 number. What he doesn't bring out is that this 240 million is over six years, over six years. Now I can divide 240 by six. What do I get? About \$40 million a year for an experiment, an experiment in clean coal. Now I've supported the government and I've supported the concept of clean coal and I continue to do so, but I also support the matter of accountability.

So he somehow signed us up on a deal down there in 24 Sussex. I've been there, Mr. Speaker. I know what it's like. They have napkins but they're linen. So if business was done on a napkin, as someone suggested, it was a linen napkin, you can be sure. We got a \$240 million commitment now over six years; \$40 million a year for an experiment in clean coal.

For this, for this, this government without any study, without any signed agreement, has signed the people of Saskatchewan into a deal that commits the people of Saskatchewan to \$800 million — \$800 million — and the whole thing falls apart unless they find a private sector partner who has got \$400 million. And it's pretty clear from the answers we've been getting they don't know who the private sector partner is. They have no idea what they're going to charge for the carbon dioxide. And they have no idea what this is going to mean to the power bills of the people of Saskatchewan because that \$800 million is going to be paid for by the power consumers of Saskatchewan.

So instead of a situation like Manitoba where you've got \$1.8 billion coming in here — probably 2 billion this year — we're getting zero. And the Premier and his government says we ought to be real happy because we got \$40 million this year, 240 overall, putting us on the hook for 800 with another

missing 400.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to challenge . . . I know the Premier is going to be on his feet shortly. Let's assume that this is, you know, real money, this \$240 million. I ask the Premier when he gets on his feet today show me, show us, show the people of Saskatchewan where this \$240 million is in the budget. Show me where the money is. Show me. Show us all. Where is the money? Or is it still in Ottawa? Or is it in Ottawa? Oh is it just a promised bit of money? Is it just a promised bit of money? Is that money in this budget? Do we have the 240 in the bank, or is that money still in Ottawa?

[11:15]

And is it just a promise? Because I want to warn this Premier and I want to warn this government and I want to warn the people of Saskatchewan, a promise from this federal government, a promise from this Prime Minister isn't worth the news release that it's written on.

He better have the cash in the bank, this modest amount of cash in the bank, because I tell you, I tell you we've learned a bitter lesson about the promises from this Prime Minister. And it's not only Saskatchewan people who have learned this lesson. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador learned the lesson. The people of Nova Scotia learned the lesson. The people of Ontario are currently learning the lesson. This Premier should stand up today and tell us this money's in the bank, that he's got her locked down, it's no longer in Ottawa, it's here.

But again, Mr. Speaker, let's just put this in context. So we get, this province gets \$240 million for an experiment — a national experiment, by the way, Mr. Speaker. I don't know why the people of Saskatchewan have to be on the hook for the majority when it's a national experiment, but nevertheless we get 240 million over six years. What will Manitoba get over six years? What will Manitoba get? Twelve billion — \$12 billion. Can you imagine what we could do to make our taxation regimes in this province even more competitive, what we could do to provide services to our people with that kind of resource?

Now the members are saying it's a have province. You know who made that a have province over here? This government, this government working with the people of Saskatchewan made this a have province. Now I'll tell you what. And what they say, what they say is . . . Look, look, Mr. Speaker, the member from Moose Jaw North is going to jump right out of his chair. I wish he'd stand up once in a while and speak in this legislature. And you know what, Mr. Speaker? I'll tell you what. I still have a lot of colleagues and friends in the city of Moose Jaw, a lot of colleagues and friends in the city of Moose Jaw.

You know what they're talking about? Why is Moose Jaw not represented in the cabinet of this government? Why is Moose Jaw not represented in the cabinet of this government? This is the first time in decades that the city of Moose Jaw, one of Saskatchewan's four largest cities, has no representation in the cabinet of the province. And the member from Moose Jaw North sits in his chair and hollers.

The Speaker: — Order. It appears that members are paying

attention to the speech by the Opposition Leader; however we need the opportunity to hear that speech. So I ask the members to give the Leader of the Opposition the opportunity to speak without interference.

Mr. Calvert: — Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'm going off the topic. Let me go back to my topic. On the question, are they competent to manage, Mr. Speaker, we give them a failing grade. So does the Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce. So does *The StarPhoenix*.

Are they standing up for the people of Saskatchewan when they've completely abandoned the right for us to keep our resource revenues available to the people of Saskatchewan? No. They're failing. They're not standing up for the people of Saskatchewan.

Let me move on to the third and perhaps the most important test. Does this budget, does this budget with its mountain of money make a real difference in the lives of Saskatchewan families? Does it make a real difference in the lives of Saskatchewan families? Well you've heard my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, on the deficiencies of this budget. They have so eloquently pointed out that in fact this budget does nothing, nothing to address the single most significant environmental challenge facing the families of Saskatchewan, Canada, and the globe. That's climate change. They've adopted our targets; they've thrown out all of the resources to accomplish those targets.

You've heard the colleagues on this side of the House talk about the deficiency in this budget when it comes to housing, Mr. Speaker. We're in the midst of a housing crisis in this province, and what do we see in this budget? Less support for housing. How can that be, Mr. Speaker? We're sitting on a mountain of money. We've got a housing crisis in our province, a crisis that's affecting not just inner-city neighbourhoods, but a crisis that's affecting young families and seniors, not just in cities but in small communities. We've got a mountain of money on one hand. We've got a crisis on the other. And this budget puts nothing in the hands of new housing development.

Well again the member from Moose Jaw North has a lot to say from his seat but little from his feet. Mr. Speaker, he asked what have we done about it. Well his own . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . oh that was the member from Northwest in Saskatoon. Well the two of them are kind of colleagues over there. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Members know that they're not to draw other members into the debate. Allow the Leader of the Opposition to speak.

Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member from Saskatoon reminds us yes, they're in government; we're not. You're right. They're in government. They should be, ought to be doing something with the privilege of being in government, doing something with this mountain of money they've inherited. The member says we'd done nothing about housing. But the Minister of Social Services is out cutting ribbons on housing projects we built. How does that work?

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues have pointed out the deficiency,

they've pointed out the deficiency around housing. They have equally and eloquently pointed out one of the most significant deficiencies in this budget, and that is its lack of emphasis on training spaces. Mr. Speaker, they call this a budget that wants to get the province ready for growth. How can they make that argument when the key component in making Saskatchewan ready for growth is the training of our young people and the provision of training spaces? That has to be the key component. We hear that from every sector. We have the shortages.

So last year, Mr. Speaker, what was in the budget? Over 2,000 new training spaces, 2,000 new training spaces. What do we find in this budget? A 50 per cent, more than a 50 per cent cut to training spaces. Mr. Speaker, with the resources available to this government and the needs of our young people and the needs of our economy, this should be the budget where there's a huge investment in training and expansion of training, particularly for Aboriginal young people. It's not here. My colleagues have pointed it out as a significant deficiency that affects real families in real communities in a real economy.

And, Mr. Speaker, my colleagues have so eloquently pointed out how this budget with \$1.3 billion in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, the fund they've now fallen in love with, how this budget with 1.3 in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund provides to the average home in Saskatchewan — get this, Mr. Speaker — an average benefit of \$27.

An Hon. Member: — Half a pizza.

Mr. Calvert: — Now my colleague from Dewdney says that's half a pizza. Well where I go, it still gets me a pizza, but that's it. One pizza for the year. One pizza for the year.

And the minister of Municipal Government jumps up and down today saying, isn't this wonderful. We're giving the property tax payers relief of \$27. Mind you they promised, Mr. Speaker, they promised relief of \$450. They give us \$27 — \$450 promise — the people of Saskatchewan are going to get \$27 benefit. But watch out, Mr. Speaker, because that benefit is going to disappear faster than it appears because they're also forcing the municipalities in Saskatchewan to raise property taxes. They're forcing our municipalities to raise property taxes. We've heard it now — Saskatoon looking at a eight-point-something increase; Regina looking at four; Yorkton looking at closer to 10. It's sweeping the province. The municipalities do not have a choice. They've been shortchanged by this minister and this government.

That \$27 benefit is going to evaporate and be gone. And the fact of the matter is, the fact of the matter is this government, this government is going to force a tax increase on the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, I need to take my chair. I need to take my chair soon.

So let me go through again the three and then conclude with another observation. Have they demonstrated competency in the management of this treasury they've been given? No. Have they stood up for Saskatchewan, the rights of Saskatchewan people to keep the benefits of their resource revenues? No. Have they provided real and substantive benefit to the young people of Saskatchewan of training spaces, to the future of our environment, in housing, or in property tax relief? And the

answer is no, not at all.

But, Mr. Speaker, I've been around budgets a long time. And I tell you an interesting thing can often happen with a budget. You know, we have a . . . I think it's a \$7 billion budget now, isn't it? Seven billion.

An Hon. Member: — Nine billion.

Mr. Calvert: — Nine. You know that represents between 7 and \$9,000 per person in this province. They will spend 7 to \$9,000 per person in this province. But sometimes a budget comes down to one decision, and everything you ever needed to know about a budget can be found in one decision. The irony this year, Mr. Speaker, the irony in this debate is the one decision they've made, that I believe in some ways colours this entire budget, is not even a part of this year's budget. It was a part of last year's budget.

They have through this budget process announced that they are going to take from the community of Saskatoon \$8 million that was in their bank account to build Station 20 West. They say, Mr. Speaker, that community, the inner city primarily but engaging the entire community of Saskatoon — and I'm watching it engage the entire province of Saskatchewan — they say that money that was in their hands they don't deserve. They're going to pull it out. It's a mistake, Mr. Speaker. It's a mistake. It's an ill-advised, it's an ill-advised mistake.

And we've listened with interest how this government has endeavoured to defend this. First thing we heard was from the Minister of Finance. He went to *The Star Phoenix*. He said, well we can't continue with this project because they need to raise 12 to \$14 million, and they've only raised \$75,000. The fact of the matter is — and he's been corrected and he's admitted his mistake — that in fact this project in total will be 11.5 million; that the provincial contribution of 8 million means there's about 3 million, three and a half to raise. And when the Premier then repeated the error by saying they'd only raised \$75,000, it's now become clear that the organizers have raised and have in place commitments up to 1.5 million. The fundraising's there. So it surely wasn't a financial reason that caused them to pull the plug on this project.

So then I listened carefully to the Minister of Health and his explanations of why he won't fund Station 20. Well what does he say? Well you know what? We need the money. We need the money to do other important things. We need the money for fire extinguishers or supplier programs over there at St. Paul's. We need the money for chillers in another hospital. We need the money, he said. You know, we need the money.

Well I want to tell the Minister of Health, just like the Minister of Finance was wrong in his numbers, the Minister of Health is wrong too. He doesn't need the money. The Minister of Finance has it. The Minister of Finance has it. He doesn't need to go get that \$8 million from the inner city of Saskatoon. He goes over to the Minister of Finance. He's got 1.3 billion sitting over there in his growth stabilization fund. He's got the money. Just go get it.

Why doesn't he do the same thing that the Minister of Social Services just did? Admit she made a big mistake and without

any consultation with the Minister of Finance or anybody, she just says no; we're putting the program back. We're putting the program back and I don't care what it does to the budget. I don't care what I committed to. You don't need the money that belongs to the inner city community of Saskatoon. You've got the money. Just go get it from the Minister of Finance.

Then the Premier says we don't need this project because, you know what, it's a mall. It's a mall.

Now somebody over there . . . Yes, I missed . . . The member from Wood River, he's hollering from his seat; it's a grocery store. He ought to come down and meet the folks. He ought to come down and meet the folks that are building Station 20 and find out the facts, to find out the facts.

The Premier says it's a mall. The member from Wood River is chirping from his seat. Mr. Speaker, here's the fact of the matter. There will be space within Station 20 to provide health services — dentistry services, medical services, immunization services, addiction services, and dentistry. These are provided by the College of Medicine.

Members opposite are shouting from their seats, these services already exist. I would like the member from Wood River to come down to Riversdale and show me where the community has access to community-based dental programs. I'd like him to come over and just show me where that is.

The Station 20 concept, Mr. Speaker, came out of the community. It's not the idea of the NDP. It's not the idea of a provincial government. It's not the idea of the city. It's an idea and it had its genesis in the community. People have worked for years.

The Premier says it's a mall. The Premier says it's a mall. Okay.

Mr. Speaker, this week the Premier of Saskatchewan said, in what I think is some pretty good advice to the FSIN [Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations], you know, decisions can be reversed. He said, you know, even after you've gone out and made a definitive statement, decisions can be reversed.

Now I tell you . . . Now the Premier says there's no moral equivalency. I tell you he ought to walk up and down 20th Street. He ought to talk to the people. He ought to talk to the people who cannot get the dental services for their children. He ought to talk to the people. When he said, when this Premier says this is a mall, he ought to say what his real plan is.

Because, Mr. Speaker, let me say this. Let me say this, Mr. Speaker. Let me say this. Let me say this. Let me say . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I recognize the Opposition Leader.

Mr. Calvert: — Let me say this, Mr. Speaker. When the Station 20 people came together last week and held a press conference, there was a pastor there. There was a pastor in that press conference. And this pastor asked the following question. He asked this following question. He says, is this a government that cares about people and need, or is it a government that cares about profit and greed? Mr. Speaker, that's the question

he asked in Saskatoon.

You know, we could take a little advice still from Franklin Delano Roosevelt who said, way those many years ago, that the test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much, but whether we meet the needs of those who have little. That test, Mr. Speaker, when I apply that test to this budget, it fails. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, therefore it fails in my view on competency. It fails, Mr. Speaker. It fails on standing up for Saskatchewan. It fails to deliver real benefits to real families, and it fails to meet the needs of people in my own constituency, Mr. Speaker. Therefore I have no choice — no choice. I will support the amendment. I will vote against this government's budget.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[11:30]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to enter into the budget debate here today in the legislature on the day that I think this budget is going to pass in about an hour from now. I'm pretty certain that this historic budget will pass the test of this Legislative Assembly and so it's a pleasure to enter into the debate.

If I may very quickly, Mr. Speaker, just acknowledge again the great privilege that I have of representing the constituency of Swift Current, an honour that is mine to represent neighbours and friends and family. And those many new residents to the community I have not yet met, it's an honour to represent them.

And let me also, let me also say for the record, Mr. Speaker, that I appreciate, as always, the support and love that I can find at my home through Tami and our kids. Obviously none of us can do this job very effectively if we don't have the support of those who are closest to us. And so let me just say again for the record that I'm so very grateful for Tami and Megan and Colter and Faith.

And, Mr. Speaker, you know, I have also noted some of the comments from members opposite as they've entered into the budget debate. I think it was the member for Dewdney, for example, who acknowledged at the beginning of his speech that there are elements of the budget that he thought were good. I doubt that will translate into him joining us and voting in favour of the budget.

An Hon. Member: — Maybe.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Maybe it will.

An Hon. Member: — Maybe it will.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — And Minister of Energy . . . Maybe it will. We don't know. I noted, I noted similar remarks by the former premier, but now Leader of the Opposition, with respect to the fact that there were many good elements in the budget. And so I think, by the way, that sort of debate is helpful and a welcome thing.

And I hope it's true of this side of the House that we can also point to things that were done in the past by the government that we have replaced that were, that have led, that have been in fact helped with the momentum that we seek for the economy and have certainly been in the interests of Saskatchewan people. And so let me just make those observations at the outset, Mr. Speaker, before moving on to the substance of what I wanted to raise today in the budget debate.

You know, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't very long ago we were all campaigning. Everybody that's now in this room were on the hustings. We were involved in an election campaign. And I think very much one of the central questions of that campaign was at the beginning and actually strengthened through the course of the writ, this notion of this question: which party that was contesting the election — that actually had a chance to win the election — which party, which team, had the best plan, offered the right vision, were committed to the right actions, that we might be able to see what was at that time a shorter term boom translate, transition into long-term prosperity for the people of Saskatchewan? I think that was the central question of the election campaign.

And I'm very proud today because I think we've been working very hard as a new government — imperfectly to be sure, imperfectly to be sure because we are new to this. And as I said on November 7, we're going to make some mistakes. But we've been working very hard as a brand new Saskatchewan Party government to answer that question in the affirmative. That we have the right plan and the right vision and the right team. That we would be able to see this current momentum we see in the economy last for the long term. That we would maintain have-province status. That we would first boldly state that that ought to be the plan and the goal and the vision of any Government of Saskatchewan given our resources, and that we would execute a plan to carry it out.

And so early on in the mandate of the government we set out to keep promises we made that also would answer this key central question. The day after the election, the day that I met with the now Leader of the Opposition and we planned transition — and I'll again acknowledge the co-operation we received from the member for Riversdale and how that was appreciated — we met that day after we actually had a press conference, the day after the campaign, to keep our first promise to set the next election day for November 7, 2011.

And since that time, since that time we've set out to keep still more promises. In the fall sitting of the legislature in December we introduced much-needed changes to the labour legislative environment of the province that we had committed to in the campaign. We had the Minister of Justice get a lot tougher in terms of our laws against those who still drink and drive. We kept that promise early on. We kept the promise to eliminate the used car tax that the NDP had imposed on this province some time ago. We kept that commitment as well very early on.

In January I was very proud to be at the Allan Blair Centre with the Minister of Health. And you know, Mr. Speaker, that was a highlight for me in what has been a number of . . . there's been a lot of great days, a lot of highlights, but that one stands out. When we were able to, at a press conference attended by family members and some who those are still struggling against

colorectal cancer, when we were able to stand in our places there together with those from the Blair and the Minister of Health and say, we made a promise with respect to drugs that will help extend the lives of those who are battling colorectal cancer, that our government had a hard time trying to put a price on what another 150 sunsets might mean, or what another Christmas might mean. And so we said we'd rather not try to put a price on that; we'll just go ahead and keep the promise with respect to Avastin and provide that for the people of the province who need it.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

An Hon. Member: — It was a humbling experience.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — It was very humbling experience to be sure. And it was a reminder of why all of us are in this Assembly today.

It was a reminder of why we need the economic momentum to continue. Because as we said in the Throne Speech, Mr. Speaker, and again reinforced in the budget we debate today, we don't, on this side of the House, see growth for the sake of growth. That's not why we're pursuing growing economy. It's not why we want to attract more oil and gas investment — and more on that in a moment. It's not why we want to see responsible oil sands development go ahead. That's not the reason even why we want to see us pursue the whole uranium value chain, the nuclear opportunities that exist for what this province is — the Saudi Arabia of uranium.

The reasons that we seek that kind of investment are not represented in economic statistics or in GDP [gross domestic product] rates of growth — and we heard more good news from the Royal Bank today. It's not the reason why we're pursuing it. We're pursuing this, Mr. Speaker, we pursue long-term growth for the province so that Saskatchewan can continue to offer all of Canada and North America the best possible quality of life, that we would have . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, that we would have the capacity, the fiscal capacity, in this budget to pay for Avastin — that's why we want growth. That we would have the fiscal capacity to keep our promise to improve what was a woeful record in terms of child poverty and child hunger, and actually invest more in school lunch programs — that's why we seek growth, Mr. Speaker. That's why. So we can fund those.

We seek growth in this province so we can do things like keep our promise to the food banks of this province for 5 million new dollars for job skills and life skills training so people in the core neighbourhoods can find full-time employment in this economy, Mr. Speaker. That's why we're pursuing growth.

And that's why the central point of debate today on the budget isn't about all the numbers and all the 40-plus promises that we made that are kept in our very first budget, Mr. Speaker. It's not about that. This budget debate we have today is about the central question of how do we, how do we as a province sustain the growth we see so that we can do these things — that we can fund health care and education and fix a few roads, maybe, and

provide accessibility to post-secondary education. That's what the budget debate is all about.

So in terms of answering that question specifically . . . And I'll get into some of the details in the budget, although my colleagues have done a very good job of covering that ground. And on budget day of course the Minister of Finance tabled all the details and did an excellent job in a very hot speech that he gave with respect to the budget, cooled down by his friend, the member for Kindersley, from time to time.

How do we do it, Mr. Speaker? How do we keep things going? Well it strikes me that first of all a government has to realize that they don't create jobs in the economy. That's the first realization we have to make. The first realization that we have to make in terms of how do we keep the momentum going is that the government of the day, which happens to be a Saskatchewan Party government, that the government of the day would understand with clarity, with absolute clarity that it's not its role to create jobs directly, to get into the business of running business. But rather that its role in the economy is to get the fundamentals right, to make sure there's infrastructure available to accommodate growth, to keep taxes as low as possible and as competitive as they can be, to ensure our labour legislative environment is balanced and competitive with other provinces, to fully engage First Nations in this economic growth through training. And again we've heard the historic levels of investment with respect to training for First Nations and Métis people that were in this budget.

That's what a government can do and should do. And that's certainly the vision that is going to be required on the part of a government that wants to sustain some economic momentum.

And so what is the vision then on that count, Mr. Speaker? What is the vision of the alternative to the current government? Because the alternative, small and battered though they are, still sits right over there. It's the New Democratic Party. They've been very successful in politics in this province. And anyone that takes the New Democratic Party, in terms of their political abilities in this province, for granted will make a major mistake. But there they sit as the alternative.

Today, today, certainly battered and diminished in number from the election in November 7, what is the vision that they're now espousing? If the central question is how do we keep the economic momentum going, what are they saying about what is their vision for growth? Do they also believe . . . Do they understand that a role of the government is to not invest directly in business?

They advocate for it every day, almost every day in question period. This new member from Prince Albert, this new member from Prince Albert seems to advocate every day that the Government of Saskatchewan would take \$100 million of taxpayers' money and invest in an industry that is unfortunately under great stress and under siege from external factors. And we've had more bad news we will be working on with respect to the Hudson Bay area.

They continue to advocate for that kind of a thing unless they get tough questions in a scrum outside these walls. And then they kind of back away and just want to put out the fire that

they're involved in.

What about the vision of this government with respect to what we should aspire to here in Saskatchewan? Because that's an important part of answering this question that the budget is about, the *Ready for Growth* budget.

Well on this side of the House we believe then we will need a government if we're going to sustain growth, that says, with the resources that we have, with the people that we have in the province of Saskatchewan, this province should aspire to being a have province permanently, permanently.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — And I heard the Leader of the Opposition moments ago stand in this House and take credit for the fact that we have become a have province recently — amazingly. Because when we did attain have-province status that member, then the premier, came back to this province and was interviewed and then quoted in the *Leader-Post* about the new have status of Saskatchewan.

The media would have obviously asked him, I'm guessing from his answer, well what do you think about our have province? You know, what do you think of that? This is now the then premier of Saskatchewan who is now taking credit for have status, asked the question about your province finally, finally attaining have province status.

And do you know what he said? He downplayed expectations about the future. He kind of lowered expectations about what this province could achieve. That member, when he sat here as the premier said, "We will," quote, "always be in and out of equalization." That's what he said.

The province that has this inventory of natural resources that would be the envy of any nation in the world, that has the resources, by the way, that the world wants right now, had a premier at the time — at the time; they've made a change — but at the time they had a premier that said, we're always going to be in and out of equalization. Yes, we're a have province today. Yes, we're a have province today, he said, but we never know, next year we could slide back.

I want to tell you, if we are going to sustain the economic momentum in this province right now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we will achieve that through this budget and through a brand new government getting the fundamentals right, we have to — and Saskatchewan people have — categorically reject that kind of defeatist attitude that we've seen come from the New Democratic Party.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — So you have to have the right vision. The government, if we're going to sustain growth, in addition to having a good budget you need the right vision.

What else should a vision contain with respect to trying to sustain economic growth? I think there should be a fundamental belief by a brand new government that wants to sustain economic momentum that we can exceed the national average

in Canada in many economic categories, that we can do better than what's going on in other provinces. Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think that should be part of the vision. And by the way, that is part of the government's vision. That is very much part of the vision.

Retail sales growth right now I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're leading the nation in January '08. Wholesale trade, we're leading the nation in January '08. Population growth in the fourth quarter last year, we're leading the nation. And by the way, by the way, Mr. Deputy Speaker, last year we saw population growth at 1.7 per cent. So does the Saskatchewan government believe we can keep that going? Do we believe we can lead the nation or be certainly in the top three provinces? Absolutely we do. And we need that vision as well if we're going to sustain growth.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[11:45]

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Now what have the members opposite said on this point for example on population? What is the vision that has been described and articulated by those who sit opposite, diminished and battered, but who aspire I presume one day to be the Government of Saskatchewan? They have said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they have said this. The New Democratic Party has said, a sitting NDP MLA, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has said this.

When the Saskatchewan Party said not too long ago that we ought to aspire to have the same growth in population as the national average, which is 1 per cent a year . . . And remember we just came through a year where we did 1.7. When the Saskatchewan Party said, in opposition then, we ought to have a plan to grow this place by 1 per cent a year, that's the national average — why wouldn't we want to be at least as good the national average? — do you know what the NDP said? Do you know what the NDP MLA said? And it was reported in, well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it was reported in a paper that comes from your constituency if memory serves, so you may remember this well. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what the NDP said at the time is, it was preposterous that Saskatchewan would have this plan to try to achieve even growth at the national average, that it was, quote, “statistically impossible.”

But I would say this to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I also believe that the New Democratic Party got a little bit arrogant towards the end of their term, that they believed it was statistically impossible for them ever to lose the next election, for them to be fewer of them than there are of us. Well, Mr. Speaker, we found out that it is very much statistically possible that the people of this province would say, we've had enough of that kind of defeatist attitude and they ought to be sitting over there, Mr. Speaker. And they are.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — And this may be the only example where the previous minister of SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company] was right. And we know now we have in the legislature SPUDCO 2, and we look forward to more questions from that member. But the first minister, the first

minister of SPUDCO also had this to say about Saskatchewan when we were losing population — and mercifully we're not any more — but when we were he said, don't worry when people leave because there's more left for the rest of us.

Well I think there's perhaps only one example in Saskatchewan when you could actually lose some people and still have more left for the rest of us — and I think we saw it on November 7 — when less on that side is more for Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — So vision is pretty important. Vision is pretty important, but you also have to have actions to back up that vision, Mr. Speaker, if you're going to want to stimulate the economic growth. If you're going to sustain the economic growth in the province, we need to also back it up with actions. And I think I heard my friend from Regina Dewdney just chirp about property taxes. Am I right on that?

An Hon. Member: — Yes, yes.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Right. Well, well let's consider then, Mr. Speaker, the issue of property taxes in terms of being the right action to take to sustain economic momentum.

Saskatchewan under the NDP government — that we had for way too long — relied more on property to fund education than where? Anywhere in the Dominion of Canada. Any other province in Canada, we compared poorly to. That is the record of the member for Dewdney. It's the record of the Leader of the Opposition when he was the premier. It's the record of now the seat mate — is she the deputy leader? — the member for Nutana and our friend from Regina who . . . Actually I think we may have a lot in common with him. I wouldn't be surprised if he would stand up and vote for this budget at the end of today's proceedings.

But at the time, Mr. Speaker, when they had the chance to make a difference, when they had promised to make a difference with respect to property tax, when the now Leader of the Opposition marched into SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] and promised real action on property tax for this province, what did they deliver? What did they deliver? They did not deliver the property tax they promised. And in the last election campaign, when it comes to action again reflected in this budget, what did both sides, what did both parties offer on this issue of property tax?

Well the Saskatchewan Party committed to a phased-in rebate increase and the long-term solution that we so desperately need, when we would move the reliance of funding education from property to general revenues and make a significant, lasting, and permanent shift. And by the way, that's another promise that we intend to keep with our help . . . with our friend the member for Rosetown-Elrose.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — But our plan — let's be very clear, Mr. Speaker — was for all of Saskatchewan. Our plan was for people who lived in the city, people who lived in towns, and oh, by the way, those who are most affected by high education

property taxes, people on farms, people in rural Saskatchewan who arguably brought this to the attention of the province even before it became as significant an issue as it is — and it is — in urban Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, what about the NDP? I remember that campaign. I remember that day on the campaign when we announced our plan and they announced their property tax initiative. Was there a dime of property tax relief for agriculture? Nothing. Nothing. No new measures for rural Saskatchewan. I think they had decided, look we're going to lose this election; we've got to try to consolidate what we can in the cities so we will do what we've done for 16 years — we will ignore rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

This side of the House understands that rural Saskatchewan is an economic engine with the resources that are there that will help answer the question about sustained growth in our province. And we will not now, neither will we ever, ignore rural Saskatchewan, unlike the members opposite.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — So those are some of the actions I think that we need to focus on in terms of this budget. And there are many more. The property tax relief certainly was one of them.

But I think the top of the list of initiatives in the budget is the ready-for-growth initiative, the ready-for-growth initiative that garnered attention from right across the country. The ready-for-growth initiative got attention . . . Frankly we were able to talk a little bit about it to the ambassador from the United States. He was very interested in what the Saskatchewan government was saying in its budget.

We believe it is important to be ready for the growth that is coming, to learn from the mistakes and also the successes of the province next door because let's also be reasonable. Alberta — yes, they've had challenges, but they've also made a lot of the right decisions in terms of the role of the government and how to attract investment. So we don't just learn from the mistakes they've made. We also learn from the successes they've had. And we have in our budget highlighted an historic \$1 billion fund for infrastructure.

Why would we have to do that? Why would we have to do that, I wonder? Because you know there was a lot of money in the till when they were in office. When the NDP were here, they were sitting on their mountain of money. So dating back a couple of years, they could have started to deal with the infrastructure deficit in the province. So the question then is, Mr. Speaker, did they do it in their budgets? And the answer is no. They didn't do it in their budgets.

We know that they commissioned a study in the Department of Health. We know that the NDP commissioned a study in the ministry of Health that said, what is our infrastructure deficit? How bad are the facilities out there? How much would it cost to actually just fix what we have? Never mind build that hospital in Moose Jaw, never mind the children's hospital that we also seek for Saskatoon — never mind any of those. Just to maintain what we got, just to maintain what we have, how much would that cost? Was it a billion five?

An Hon. Member: — Pretty close.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Pretty close to 1.5 billion. Maybe a little less, a little less than 1.5 billion. What about in Saskatoon alone, where we have had this Station 20 debate? What about in Saskatoon alone? What was the infrastructure deficit that the NDP knew they were sitting on but didn't release? Four hundred-plus million dollars.

And in education, Mr. Speaker, what was the track record of that party when they were in power with respect to just keeping up the schools that we need, fix the ones we have, build some where there are communities that are growing? What did the NDP do on that count? I'm looking over at the Deputy Premier, the now Minister of Education.

An Hon. Member: — They were short 555 million.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Short \$550 million deficit in our schools, Mr. Speaker, where the kids of this province need to go to get that education so that they can be part of the prosperity of the province long term.

So we said very clearly, Mr. Speaker, in this budget . . . And my colleague from Melfort did an excellent job of highlighting the problem. But more than that, this government said, here is the beginning of the answer. The beginning of the answer is more action and less talk. The beginning of the answer, Mr. Speaker, is a ready-for-growth initiative, an historic \$1 billion investment in infrastructure in this province — nothing like you've ever seen.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Nothing like you've ever seen. And you know, Mr. Speaker, we could break it down in terms of health care and education, but we also better talk about the highways of this province because we've heard about them for a very, very long time.

And again, for the last number of years, the NDP government that we have replaced was sitting on a lot of money. They were sitting on a lot of money. They certainly could have made some more investments in highways. They could have repaired the crumbling highways of the province. They could have taken action so that the middle- to upper-middle- aged men of southwest Saskatchewan would not have had to pose in a calendar — a fundraising calendar with only cameras and things covering stuff — to try to draw attention to Highway 32.

We subscribe to the radical notion, on this side of the House, that the people of Saskatchewan who live in an area where there is oil and gas being produced and helping to balance the books here in Regina — oil and gas royalties that are paying for health care and education — that when people live in that kind of an area and the road's been falling apart and ignored for 16 years, we subscribe to the crazy notion that they ought not to have to pose nude in a fundraising calendar to try to get the attention of the government, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — In fact I know them. I know a number of

them, and I have said it is absolutely one of my goals as the new Premier of the province that they would never ever do that again. So how would we achieve that goal, Mr. Speaker? Well here's another radical idea. Let's fix Highway 32.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Let's fix the highway to all of those short-line manufacturers who provide jobs and pay taxes; 368 — let's fix that highway.

Mr. Speaker, we'll continue with the twinning. We'll continue with the projects, but you know, we are going to take a practical approach when it comes to infrastructure. If it is broken and we need it to sustain the amazing economic momentum of this province, if it is broken, let us be the kind of government that fixes it, Mr. Speaker. And that's what we intend to do.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — What are some of the other actions in this budget that back up this notion, what I posit today, and that is that the new government has what it takes to keep the momentum going in the province? Well we need to make sure we have the kind of investment climate to attract businesses. And so what you won't find in this budget for example is an increase in royalties in Saskatchewan.

Now we know, I know, and I've noted this . . . And by the way this is not good for the economy. And so I would ask the Leader of the Opposition to be very, very careful, even in opposition. The industry, business understand that the NDP from time to time have provided government for this province over a certain number of years. And when they, and when they make it . . .

An Hon. Member: — The majority of time.

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Well, and the member for Dewdney says the majority of time. Yes, including the times that really scare and put a chill through the business community. And we saw it with respect to the royalty policies of the NDP of the past. We've seen it with respect to their decision to nationalize the potash industry in their decisions of the past. And thank goodness we've taken care of that little matter.

But I urge great caution to the Leader of the Opposition and to the NDP, Mr. Speaker. Because at their convention very recently here, at their convention they debated a motion to increase royalties in Saskatchewan. At a time when we are seeing . . . And I would say to the Leader of the Opposition, that debate should happen, I guess. But what I hoped, what I hoped when I saw this debate occurring, when I knew that would be happening, is that the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Riversdale . . . And the member for Dewdney who fancies himself as a bit of a business guy — Kevin, I can't wait to find out the businesses you've been involved in, but we'll have that discussion some time. I think, by the way, he might be the voice of reason on this issue. I don't know why he didn't . . . I hope he stood up at the convention.

And I hope the Leader of the Opposition will stand up soon to his party and say, we can't do this. Let's not risk the prosperity we see. Let's not risk the math, the hundreds of millions of

dollars of exploration that are moving from Alberta to Saskatchewan here in the first quarter — let's not risk that.

We just met with a number of oil companies when I spoke at an energy conference in New York, did the Minister of Energy and myself. And company after company said, we're going to be ramping down things west of you, and we're coming to Saskatchewan; we like your announcement that royalties would stay the same — we like it. That's also in this budget.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — And I asked the minister. I said we can't release a lot of this information because it has to do with the markets, and we want to be sensitive to that. But he was, the minister was sort of keeping a running tally of the commitments that were being made. Comments were being made.

And when we were done after the meetings, I said, Bill, I said — I'm quoting myself now, Mr. Speaker — how much money? What was your tally, because I lost track at about \$700 million in money coming into the province right now — \$1.2 billion because we said we won't increase royalties. And they would risk it, Mr. Speaker. They would risk it even having the debate and not defeating the motion, because what happened to that motion? It was tabled. They'll talk about it again.

[12:00]

And then, and then I was very alarmed this week to see the former premier of the province standing beside a placard outside this legislature that said, stop the tar sands. Stop the tar sands. Mr. Speaker, what message does this send to the hydrocarbon industry, to the oil and gas sector, when just months after being booted from office the now Leader of the Opposition, the then premier, would join a protest of an industry that he said he supported, that he said he would provide policies to support?

Mr. Speaker, it's not helpful at all. And if the hon. member wishes to attend those kinds of things and stand beside a placard that says stop the oil sands — that even in their exploratory stage are creating jobs right now in northwest Saskatchewan for First Nations and Métis people — if he's going to do that, then, Mr. Speaker, we would ask that he not then try to portray his party as one that understands what it takes to grow an economy. We would ask him not to try to make a charade out of any understanding they might have on how to keep the investment coming to the province and ensuring that people can work in the energy sector in this province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, there are so very many initiatives in this budget that we could talk about, I know, and I've said my colleagues have done a great job of that. There's a couple of things I want to highlight though in terms of promises kept.

We campaigned on a plan to implement a tuition rebate program for this province. We wanted to say to Saskatchewan students that you could earn all of your tuition back if, when you graduate from any post-secondary institution, if you

graduate from a post-secondary institution in the province of Saskatchewan, you can earn all of your tuition back up to 20,000 — for many that would cover all of it — if you will but stay in Canada's best province and help us continue to build our future here. And we kept that promise. It's in the budget, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — We committed to the training seats for the Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission so that we could help deal with the shortage of those seats and continue to deal with the labour shortage. That promise was kept as well.

With respect to physician training seats, and this one is interesting because for how long in the province have we all known that there is a doctor shortage, that there are other provinces who've made the right decision? Next door in Manitoba — about the same size province — I think they've always had about 100, or for a long time they've had 100 training seats for doctors. One hundred.

How many have we historically had under that government when we were going through doctor shortages — 50? Well they've increased a bit in the last budget. We in our campaign platform said, you know, in Saskatchewan we ought to be as effective as Manitoba, not just on Labour Day but in health care and in recruiting doctors. And so, Mr. Speaker, we said there needs to be more doctors, in the election campaign, and we have backed that up with action. There's money in the budget, Mr. Speaker, for new doctors.

There's money in the budget for the nursing, the partnership with SUN and our nurse recruitment and retention plan. And I can't help but note that only a few months in office after we had set a goal for 800 new nurses, we sent down the member for Regina Qu'Appelle along with some great officials and staff from the health region, and we're over a third of the way there already in just a few months, Mr. Speaker, in terms of what we've got for Filipino nurses.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is full of measures to help families. This budget is full of measures to help those who live in our core neighbourhoods, those who perhaps are on, have lower incomes. This budget doubles the caregiver tax credit that we want to afford to families who take care of those who in turn take care of disabled loved ones or the elder and the infirm. And we've kept the promise. In fact we went beyond the election promise we made there.

We have kept the promise, as I've said, for school lunch programs — a half-million dollar increase investment there; 45.3 million for child care and early childhood development including 500 child care spaces in this budget. I haven't heard it from members opposite.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, with respect to the core areas of our cities that are certainly under some stress as a result of economic growth — and I heard the Leader of the Opposition raise Station 20 again — I want to be very, very clear that no one ought to doubt the resolve of this government, because it's

backed up by action and investment in this budget to deal with the issues of health care, for example, in the inner city, Mr. Speaker, that may exist either in Saskatoon or Regina, that deal with the issues of affordable housing.

So let's do a bit of a fact check with respect to Station 20 because we don't hear very many facts on the issue coming over from members opposite. First of all, I just heard the Leader of the Opposition say that this is about increasing the access to health care in that area. So I would then ask the question of members opposite, the many who have stayed to listen to this speech. Mr. Speaker, I would ask each of them to point out where there is additional health care facilities in the Station 20 proposal.

Because what we have in the proposal is the relocation of an excellent community clinic, that Westside Clinic, from one location that they own and from where they didn't even want to move originally, a location that that Westside Clinic owns and operates today, they would simply relocate them to a brand new bricks-and-mortar building that this government would have, if they would have been the government, would have paid \$8 million towards. That's point number one.

So is there increased health care access? No. It's a relocation, Mr. Speaker. That's the truth of what this project would have been. What else would have been achieved? Would the housing initiatives in Station 20 be lost as a result of the decision of this government? Not one. We will finish the job. What about the library, an important part in terms of literacy in the core areas? Is that lost as a result of the government's decision? No. It's going to be finished, Mr. Speaker. It will be finished.

No, there will not be a plaza development that includes a grocery store. There will not be that because government is about choices. And if we have a choice in terms of \$8 million for a plaza to house a grocery store and more affordable housing, we'll choose housing. If we have a choice to make between, Mr. Speaker, between ensuring that we can continue to provide operations in the heat of summer because the air conditioner actually works in the surgical theatre, we will choose operations over a grocery store every single time, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — The members opposite are still heckling what is not the truth about the decision the government has taken. I'm going to say it again. I'll say it very clearly, Mr. Speaker. The decision that the Government of Saskatchewan has made with respect to Station 20 in no way, in no way impacts the affordable housing initiatives that are a part of this plan. The actions that the new Government of Saskatchewan has taken with respect to Station 20 in no way impacts the library that is also part of this project.

The decisions the government has taken is that we will focus on housing, Mr. Speaker. We will focus on providing those school lunch programs. We will focus on providing investment to food banks who already have facilities and an amazing track record of not just giving people fish but teaching them how to fish. These will be the priorities of this new government. And no matter what misinformation that side wants to spread about it,

this is the fact of the matter, the truth of the matter.

And you know what? As that message gets out there, Mr. Speaker, there is an understanding and support for that position. Because again we back up our words with action, action like we've seen in this particular budget.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — I'm anxious to hear from the Minister of Finance. And so we ought to. Certainly we want to give him the opportunity to speak for really as long as he wants about the budget.

But there have been some comments from the budget. We've seen the reviews come in very strongly from almost every single third party group in the province. They've said, you know the government understands what we've got to do. We've got to invest in infrastructure. We've got to sustain this momentum. We have to answer the question.

And do you know, others understand it as well. It was very interesting to hear the opposition leader use, for the most part, the Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce, who had some problems with our budget. They would've liked to have perhaps seen more tax cuts than infrastructure investment. And I would say to them that tax reductions will be coming from this government. But we're going to deal, first things first, with the infrastructure deficit we've inherited from the NDP. But it was interesting because the Leader of the Opposition was quoting from the chamber of commerce of Saskatoon in his attack of the budget.

I want to read to you the third line in the provincial budget 2008 report card, for immediate release March 19, 2008. Here's the very first line — and I admit that they had some concerns with the budget — but here's how they start: "While the grades improved from the previous government . . ."

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — So the Leader of the Opposition has to kind of scour all of the papers and the Internet. He had to dial up the Internet and find, and find somebody that didn't really didn't like the budget. And he found the Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce, and they raised some good points. And we'll have a debate with them, to be sure.

But even that piece, he didn't read the whole story. The whole story of course is that, even though they didn't necessarily like all of the Saskatchewan Party budget, they liked it a lot better than anything they saw from that party opposite, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Others have weighed in. You know, it was interesting, it was interesting to see in the London *Financial Times* . . . And there's a debate in the province right now about, well you know, it's all commodity prices, and does it have a lot to do with government?

And as I said at the outset, it does have a little bit to do with government. We need a government that understands the

fundamentals, a government that won't sit on, that won't put \$100 million, by the way, into Crown Investments Corporation, waiting to bail out a Domtar, to risk it in that mature industry. It takes a government that says, we're going to use that money in CIC to actually pave some roads and fix some schools and do some work with respect to our hospitals. So it does impact on the government.

And you know, and you know, Mr. Speaker, I think we've seen, we've seen the comments from across the country. We've even seen them from over the seas. We've seen them with respect to the London *Financial Times*, that highlighted the fact that . . . Here's a quote from the London *Financial Times*, from someone in Saskatchewan interviewed by that UK [United Kingdom]-based operation:

"The business community has high hopes for the new government. A prominent Regina businessman predicts that [quote] they're going to move in a direction to make Saskatchewan more competitive than any province in the country," [Mr. Speaker].

That's an interesting quote.

Not very long ago, last week in fact, in the *Leader-Post* and *The StarPhoenix* there was a guest editorial, an opinion writer from Alberta who had this to say about the governments — and we know about commodity prices — but about the governments. Here's the quote:

The political climates in both Saskatchewan and B.C. have changed, too, in recent years. Where once both were in the grip of high-tax, anti-development NDP governments . . .

And we see that old face starting to emerge again with respect to royalties and oil sands and uranium development. I interrupted myself. Let me just read that part again.

Where once both were in the grip of high-tax, anti-development NDP governments, both [Saskatchewan and BC — both] are now governed by more growth-friendly administrations. The pent up demand for more exploration and development has finally been released [Mr. Speaker].

That's to close the quote.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wall: — And what a great place to close. Because I'll tell you what, Mr. Speaker, that's the sense that Saskatchewan people have right across this province. The pent-up potential of Saskatchewan that we've all understood has been there for a very, very, very long time — probably since they first discovered oil and then uranium and then potash — that pent-up potential is being released, Mr. Speaker. The pent-up energy and potential of the people of our province — First Nation, Métis, non-First Nations, rural and urban, north and south — that too is being released, Mr. Speaker.

And the good news is there is a government now in Saskatchewan that understands how to keep it going. It's reflected in the budget document so capably presented by the

Minister of Finance. And it will be a great pleasure for me — and dare I say my colleagues and friends on this side of the House — to stand up and vote for sustained growth, for Saskatchewan to continue to lead the country.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. It's my duty, pursuant to rule 52(3), to warn the Assembly that the Minister of Finance is about to exercise his right to close the debate. Afterwards, all members will be precluded from speaking to the question. Therefore if any member wishes to speak, let him do so now. I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a very great pleasure for me to rise today and to be able to close the debate on this budget. One of the most difficult things in this whole process is not the work that went into preparing the budget. It's certainly the most difficult challenge to follow the eloquence of the Premier in his address and to be able to make comments that would compare favourably. But, Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have this opportunity.

You know over the four months we've had to prepare this budget, I would like to extend some moments of gratitude and appreciation for the process. We were a new government on November 7 with much to do and a great agenda moving this province forward. We recognized that there was momentum beginning to build in this economy, and we were very, very concerned to make sure that we did everything that was reasonable and responsible to do to make sure that that momentum was sustained going forward.

[12:15]

And so my colleagues and myself reflected on what were the priorities. And the first priority we thought was important to do was something relatively new for Saskatchewan, is actually reflect on the promises and commitments we made to the citizens of Saskatchewan when we campaigned leading up to November 7. And we have thought out those programs. We've thought out those commitments very, very carefully leading up to the campaign. And the first thing we said we had to do in order to move this forward is to do something rather unique for Saskatchewan, and that was to honour the promises we made to the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Gantfoer: — And so the very first thing that I had to focus on when we prepared our budget, and when our colleagues worked on it, was to keep those promises. And, Mr. Speaker, as we went through the process with four short months, we knew that we had — in order to maintain the calendar for the rules of the House — we knew that we had to meet a mid-March deadline for the presentation of the budget. That was sort of a fact. And so what we did is had to work very, very diligently in our ministries and in our caucus and in our government to make sure that we could bring those promises to reality in a very, very time-sensitive way and a very short period of time. And that was one of the very strong priorities that we had in the preservation of this budget.

And I was so delighted as it all came together, that we were able to honour 40 promises that we made during the campaign in this budget document. And I think we can stand very proud as a government and as a caucus that we were able to achieve that result.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Speaker, the other reality that I would have to share with this Assembly is that this whole process would have been a much easier process if it was a question of comparing good ideas to bad ideas. All of us could have a pretty easy time knowing the difference between a good idea and a bad idea, and it's pretty easy to choose the good idea.

The reality of a budget process is not that simplistic. What it is, is choices between competing good ideas to be able to balance different good ideas and be able to prioritize them and rank them in terms of when they're reasonable to implement.

The members opposite have suggested alternatives that we might consider as a budget. Some of them are good ideas, and they're competing good ideas and I note them. Others are bad ideas and I dismiss them. But over all I'd say that the people of Saskatchewan understand that it's a balancing of priorities that is the most difficult challenge. Black and white is easy; shades of grey are much more difficult to balance out.

And I'm very, very proud of this government in that we were able to, I think, come up with a very, very good balance of good ideas and initiatives that we needed to accomplish in this budget cycle.

There is much more to be done in this province going forward, and I look forward to the opportunity for our government to meet those challenges going forward and to make sure that Saskatchewan's growth momentum is sustained in the years that approach us.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Speaker, one of the other realities that we had is that we had to say to ourselves and the people, what is the single most important initiative that we can do over and above keeping our election promises?

And we talked to people in this province. We talked to companies. We talked to companies and businesses and government people to our west who have experienced incredible growth for a good number of years while we were languishing. And we asked them really many simple questions.

One of them is, is to recognize all of the successes that they have achieved. But we asked them a simple, fundamental question. If there was anything you could go back and do over again in the incredible growth that your province has experienced, what would that be? And they told us, virtually unanimously, if it was government, if it was business, if it was companies or individual citizens, they said, do not forget to put some emphasis on infrastructure. Don't focus just on debt retirement. Make sure you remember to invest in infrastructure, so you don't curtail the ability of your province's economy to grow.

And I thought it was pretty good advice and particularly good advice when I recognized how poorly the previous administration had looked after infrastructure. You would hear stories from the Education critic of leaking school rooms and falling down facilities. You'd hear in health care that there was a need for badly needed equipment and emphasis on repair so that needed surgeries and procedures could go forward.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we talked about providing chillers for the hospitals. Well it isn't to keep the executives comfortable. What it is, is to make sure the operating rooms can operate in the heat of the summer. It's those kind of fundamentals.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Speaker, when we talked to the people in industry, they said you simply have to do something about the roads because we need access to our transportation networks to haul the oil that is being pumped out of the ground to the places where it's collected. We need to make sure that companies like St. Brieux who have an incredible GDP have access to move their cultivators out and sell them across the world.

Those fundamental, simple realities of a major investment into highways needed to happen — not only just on the roadways between our major centres but also in those economic hubs and also to make sure that bridges and culverts and things of that nature are properly attested to because they're getting to the end of their lifespan, and they've neglected by that previous administration for far too long.

Mr. Speaker, when we went through all of these programs . . . And the speakers that have gone before me have certainly outlined many of the individual programs, and the ministers that have talked about their own ministries have talked about the specific details of the investments we made.

But, Mr. Speaker, I am so proud of this \$1 billion investment. I have to simply say, we are ready for growth because we are investing \$400 million for highways, \$200 million for health care, \$160 million for education, \$140 million for municipalities, and \$100 million on other badly needed projects in this province for a total of \$1 billion in this budget, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Speaker, we've also said that we have to be mindful of a fundamental commitment that we've made to the people of the province in terms of long-term debt strategy. We promised that we would invest \$250 million — a quarter of a billion dollars — to reduce the debt, and in this budget we've realized that promise.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Gantfoer: — We also, we also, Mr. Speaker, have promised to have an ongoing, sustainable approach to debt reduction. In legislation that we have tabled, and we look forward to debating in The Growth and Financial Security Act, we have promised going forward that 50 per cent of any surplus in the years going forward will automatically be applied to

long-term debt. And so we are optimistic, that with the good results, that we're going to achieve from the growth that we are supporting, that that'll be a realization going further, that there'll be much more of the dollars that will be applied to long-term debt. And it's going to be on a sustainable, balanced basis.

And the other thing that I'm very proud of, the final thing that I'd like to mention and I'm very, very proud of, we're able to achieve all of these things and balance the budget this year in real terms, in real dollars, and a balanced budget initiative, and I'm very, very proud of that.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Gantfoer: — You know, there have been comments by some that say, why don't you use more of the money and spend down the \$1.3 billion that sits in the Growth and Financial Security Fund? Well, Mr. Speaker, I look at the balancing of the responsibilities of a province similar to the balancing of a family income. You know, we are a family that has a long-term debt. That's true. It's not any different than a family with a house mortgage that they have. They also have some money in the savings account, and many families have money in the savings account. And so they have to choose and balance out, do you take the money out of your savings account and apply it to your long-term debt? That's not a bad idea. It's one of those competing good ideas.

But what if your income is not stable? What if that family's revenue coming into the family is uncertain? What if, instead of a stable monthly income, that family operates under contract? And in one year you have a very good contract that actually provides a surplus of money compared to what your family needs. Another year it might be short. Is it not fiscally prudent to make sure that you've got money in the savings account so that you don't have to, in the years when you don't have the same resources, isn't it wise to not put all the money against debt payment so they have to go and talk to the bankers about making sure your family has food on the table?

I think it's a responsible balance that we are trying to strike because we are mindful of the fact that while commodity prices in agriculture for example are very good right now, the crop is not in the bin as we speak. And we never know. There is certain uncertainties about the weather. I worry about the storm clouds that are looming in the economy of our neighbour to the south. I worry about the storm clouds that are predicted to the east of us. And certainly to be fiscally responsible and prudent is what the people of this province expect of this government.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Speaker, I could go through some of the positive comments that have been made about this budget. Many of my colleagues have done that already, and I won't repeat it.

But I will say that I had the pleasure last week to take three or four days to travel around the province to talk to people about this budget. And I very proudly went to these meetings and went to these opportunities and breakfasts and lunches and other occasions to talk about the budget, and people were

genuinely interested. We had very good turnouts at these events.

And they were very, very pleased, I think, particularly about the budget. But they're also pleased about the fact that I said to them that this was actually the beginning of the next budget cycle. This is the opportunity I had to listen to what they were saying about this budget and also to listen to them for what they had to say about what our priorities should be about the next budget. That is an ongoing process that we are looking forward to with a great deal of enthusiasm because we're actually going to have 12 months of time in order to thoughtfully and professionally and excited and enthusiastically prepare the next budget for the province of Saskatchewan.

People in this province are excited. People in this province are ready for growth. They demonstrated on November 7 they were ready for change. Mr. Speaker, I couldn't be prouder to stand in this House and say that I will oppose the amendment and very proudly vote for this budget.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the amendment brought forward by the member from Regina Dewdney, seconded by the member from Saskatoon Meewasin:

That all the words after "that the Assembly" be deleted and the following be added:

condemn the government for stockpiling a \$1.3 billion surplus without addressing the most pressing needs of Saskatchewan people, in particular property tax relief, skills training, the environment and the ongoing housing crisis.

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

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — I believe the nos have it. The question before the Assembly . . . The amendment's defeated.

The question before the Assembly is the motion brought forward by the Minister of Finance, seconded by the member for Saskatchewan Rivers:

That the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Is it the pleasure of the adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — All those in favour say aye.

Some Hon. Members: — Aye.

The Speaker: — All those opposed say no.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — I believe the ayes have it. Call in the members.

[The division bells rang from 12:28 until 12:58.]

The Speaker: — Order. Before we proceed with the vote this afternoon, I want to remind members that there should be quiet to allow the Clerk to be heard so the member can hear the vote call. If there is interruptions, we will pause until that eruption ceases.

The motion before the Assembly, moved by the Minister of Finance, seconded by the member for Sask Rivers:

That the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Those in favour, please rise.

[Yeas — 36]

Wall	Stewart	Elhard
Bjornerud	Draude	Krawetz
Boyd	McMorris	D'Autremont
Hickie	Cheveldayoff	Heppner
Tell	Gantefoer	Harpauer
Norris	Morgan	Hutchinson
Huyghebaert	Brkich	Hart
Kirsch	Schriemer	Allchurch
Weekes	Chisholm	Wilson
Duncan	Michelson	LeClerc
Ottenbreit	Ross	Reiter
Bradshaw	Harrison	McMillan

The Speaker: — Those opposed to the motion please rise.

[Nays — 17]

Calvert

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Just to remind members, I'd like members to pay attention as the opposition did for the government vote.

Harper	Junor	Trew
Van Mulligen	Atkinson	Nilson
Yates	Higgins	Belanger
Iwanchuk	Forbes	Taylor
Quennell	Brotten	McCall
Wotherspoon		

Clerk Assistant: — Mr. Speaker, those in favour, 36; those opposed, 17.

The Speaker: — Motion carried.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Being the time of adjournment, this Assembly stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. this coming Monday. Enjoy your weekend.

[The Assembly adjourned at 13:00.]

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Premier

Hon. Bob BJORNERUD
Minister of Agriculture
Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan Crop
Insurance Corporation

Hon. Bill Boyd
Minister of Energy and Resources
Minister Responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs

Hon. Ken CHEVELDAYOFF
Minister of Crown Corporations

Hon. Dan D'Autremont
Minister of Government Services
Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan Liquor and
Gaming Authority
Minister Responsible for the Information
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Hon. June Draude
Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations
Minister Responsible for Northern Affairs

Hon. Wayne Elhard
Minister of Highways and Infrastructure
Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission
Provincial Secretary

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Hon. Nancy Heppner
Minister of Environment

Hon. Darryl Hickie
Minister of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing

Hon. Bill Hutchinson
Minister of Municipal Affairs
Minister Responsible for the Saskatchewan
Gaming Corporation

Hon. Ken Krawetz
Deputy Premier
Minister of Education

Hon. Don McMorris
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Hon. Christine Tell
Minister of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport
Minister Responsible for the Capital City Commission