



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

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The Honourable Don Toth
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

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

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased today to introduce four individuals who do very important work within the CBO [community-based organization] sector. With us today in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, we have Ms. Karen Moore who's the regional director of the Saskatchewan Abilities Council. We have Mr. Ken Howland who is the Chair of the United Way of Saskatoon and area. We have Mr. Paul Merriman, the chief executive officer of the Saskatoon Food Bank — I'm having trouble here — and Learning Centre. And we have Mr. Mike Richter, the executive director of South Saskatchewan Independent Living Centre.

I would ask everyone to join me in welcoming these hard-working individuals to their Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to join in the minister welcoming these friends of the people of Saskatchewan here to the Legislative Assembly. We appreciate all the good work the CBO sector does for this province. Thank you very much and welcome everyone. Welcome these people to this House. Thank you.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you six individuals seated in your gallery. They are teacher Andi Schenk and five students from the Rainbow Youth Centre. Of course it's raining today, Mr. Speaker, but that's what maybe brings the rainbows. So it's good to see them here at their Legislative Assembly, and I look forward to meeting with them right away. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the west gallery today I'd like to introduce Dave Marit, president of SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities]; Jack Hextall, chairman of the Cattle Association; Ed Bothner, president of the Stock Growers Association; Orin Balas, past president of the Stock Growers; Lloyd Thompson, Saskatchewan Stock Growers board member;

and Chad MacPherson, Stock Growers general manager.

All these producers are interested in the announcement that we're going to have later today to do with many of the areas. Whether farm land, ranch land, pasture land — whatever it is, they're very interested in what's going to happen today. And I'd ask all members to welcome them to their legislature.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Furber: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again with a petition in support of public safety and security in Saskatchewan. The petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government, in the interest of the safety and security of Saskatchewan families, residents, and communities, to immediately cause the Minister of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing to undertake a thorough consultation with a broad group of stakeholders, including the policing community, the corrections community, and community agencies, organizations, and educators that interface with gangs and understand the risks and challenges that gangs present to our communities.

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of residents that are concerned with the implications of property tax reassessment that will take place in 2009 and the negative impacts that they feel should be mitigated through broad-based relief, being as the government has substantial resources and the circumstance with billions of dollars in surplus to offer relief. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to stop withholding and to provide significant, sustainable, long-term property tax relief to property owners by 2009 through significantly increasing the provincial portion of education funding.

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

Mr. Speaker, I so present.

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

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to present petitions in support of child care in Saskatchewan. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government, through consultation with the child care community, to immediately invest in growing the capacity of the early child care community to enable new child care spaces. This investment must include infrastructure funding for new facilities and expansion, funding to significantly increase the number of early childhood diploma and certificate training seats, and funding to ensure that the sector is able to increase its wages and benefits to attract and retain needed personnel.

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

These are signed by good folks and concerned citizens of Regina. I so present.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition in support of Station 20 and opposed to the cuts made by the government to the funding. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Legislative Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately restore funding to the Station 20 project.

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

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by people of Saskatoon and Colonsay. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

2008 Family Physician of the Year Award

Mr. Furber: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Prince Albert physician, Dr. Brenda Hookenson, is Saskatchewan's Family Physician of the Year for 2008. Dr. Hookenson was honoured during a banquet on September 26 during the annual Family Medicine in Review conference in Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. Hookenson began her distinguished service to the community of Prince Albert in 1976 at the Prince Albert Community Clinic. And in 1985, she moved to the Associate Medical Clinic where she continues to practise today. In addition to family medicine, Dr. Hookenson performs surgery at the Victoria Hospital. Over her career she has provided emergency care, anesthetic care, obstetrical care, and as a

preceptor for rural family medicine residents.

Her colleagues and patients alike are full of praise for Dr. Hookenson and the work that she does, and we in Prince Albert know full well that she is most deserving of this award.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join with me in extending our congratulations to Dr. Brenda Hookenson on being Saskatchewan's Family Physician of the Year 2008. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Multi-Faith Plaque Unveiled at Craik

Mr. Brkch: — Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to stand today to recognize an important event in the history of our province. On November 1, Multi-Faith Saskatchewan, SaskCulture, Craik Sustainable Living Project, and Three Rivers Trail Association came together to unveil a plaque marking Saskatchewan's first multi-faith designated sacred space. Attending this ceremony in Craik on Saturday and assisting with the unveiling of the plaque were the Minister of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport and the Minister of Enterprise and Innovation.

Mr. Speaker, this plaque unveiling marks the beginning of an ambitious project located at the Craik Eco-Centre. When complete, the sacred space will contain permanent markers displaying teaching and reflections of the faiths represented within Multi-Faith Saskatchewan. The sacred space overlooking this picturesque Arm River valley provides a setting for tranquil reflection.

Mr. Speaker, this initiative will help promote understanding between faiths and appeal to the common bond of humanity that we all share. I encourage all citizens of our great province when travelling on the Louis Riel Trail to stop by the Craik Eco-Centre, check out the Craik sustainable living project, and pause and reflect at our newly designated sacred space.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Share the Warmth Program Receives National Recognition

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in June of this year, Moose Jaw SIAST [Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology] Palliser Campus was recognized at the Canadian Environment Awards for a Green Home initiative program started by the architecture program. Attending the gala were Regina's Heather Newton, an architecture student, and Palliser's program instructor, Reg Forbes. The best part of the Shell Canada-sponsored awards for Newton was the networking with representatives from other environmental projects from across Canada. Newton said, "It was very inspiring to be with other people making a difference."

Share the Warmth, a venture project between SIAST, SaskEnergy, and the Salvation Army, provides a \$200 package of energy-saving products and weatherstripping. College students volunteer to install the products for low-income Saskatchewan residents. The Share the Warmth program, off to a start with the Salvation Army identifying those eligible for the program . . . and SaskEnergy provides the supplies that equip the homes for optimal energy efficiency. Each SIAST campus participates in the project within their particular communities across the province.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very worthwhile project that has won national recognition. And I ask that all members join me in thanking SIAST's campus across our province and in congratulating Palliser campus architectural technology program for the environmental award that they received. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Murdoch Carriere

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, saying the same thing over and over again doesn't make it true. In March and April 2007, the former premier, the former deputy premier, and the member for Dewdney told this House and the people of Saskatchewan 29 times that Murdoch Carriere was fired or terminated. The problem is it wasn't true, and they knew it. Their government had already signed an agreement stating that Carriere had resigned in February 2007 and that he would receive 275,000 taxpayers' dollars for his pain and suffering.

Mr. Speaker, here's what the NDP [New Democratic Party] said after the agreement was signed. March 7, 2007, the member for Nutana, and I quote, ". . . the government of the day responded and Mr. Carriere was fired . . ." March 8, same member quote: "We did not want him in our employment. He was fired." March 12, same member: ". . . Mr. Carriere was fired for cause." April 12, same member: "Mr. Speaker, he was fired. He was fired." April 17, same member: "Now we didn't like the way Mr. Scott punished Mr. Carriere. He was fired."

April 11, the former premier quote: "Mr. Murdoch Carriere was terminated." April 5, member for Dewdney: "Mr. Carriere was fired. The right decision was made." Same day, same member: "Members of the opposition urged the government to fire him. And yes, yes, we fired him."

The Speaker: — The member's time has elapsed. I recognize the member from Regina Northeast.

Celebration of 68 Years of Service by Municipal Employee

Mr. Harper: — Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, October 11, the community hall at Hyas, Saskatchewan was the scene of a celebration of 68 years of service to the RM [rural municipality] of Clayton by Mr. Alex Lysuik. The member from Yorkton attended and brought greetings from the Premier, Deputy Premier, and the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Alex started working for the RM on a part-time basis at the age of 16. At the age of 18, the RM council of the day recognized Alex's talents for operating and repairing heavy equipment, and they hired him on a full-time basis for the summer. In the winter Alex would travel to northern Manitoba to operate a Cat train pulling sleds of goods and material over frozen muskegs and lakes to isolated saw mills and bush camps.

In the 1960s the RM bought a patrol with a snowplow and a blade for opening the main roads in the winter. At that time Alex could stay home and either open roads, push bush, or repair machinery in the RM shop. During Alex's 68 years he worked on every road in the RM, some of them many times.

I had the opportunity of sharing 10 of those years with Alex when I served as councillor for division 5. Alex is truly an amazingly talented person when it comes to operating heavy equipment, building a road, or being a dedicated employee. He would do whatever was needed from operating an open air Caterpillar tractor in the sweltering July heat or lying in the snow under a patrol changing a hydraulic pump in the subzero weather of January on some isolated municipal road.

Mr. Speaker, this was not a retirement party, because after 68 years of service and at the age of 84, Alex still does projects for the RM. Just last September Alex, with his D7 Cat, finished off a new grade.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Murdoch Carriere

Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the victims of Murdoch Carriere are speaking out about how they were deceived by the former NDP government. One of the women said the only reason they allowed themselves to be pressured into signing an agreement for so little was because they had been told by the NDP government that Murdoch Carriere had been fired. She said finding out that that wasn't true was like the disbelief you feel after hearing a friend has died. "That's the disbelief we feel (after finding out Carriere hadn't actually been fired)," she said. "We feel like fools."

Mr. Speaker, these women are demanding an explanation why the NDP said over and over again that Carriere was fired when that just wasn't true. They are demanding to know why Murdoch Carriere received \$275,000 and a full pension top-up for his pain and suffering.

One woman says, "We've been lied to from Day One." Mr. Speaker, these women deserve an explanation and they deserve an apology from the NDP, their former government. Are they going to receive that today? Thank you.

[13:45]

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

Saskatoon Indian and Métis Friendship Centre

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On October 20, the Saskatoon Indian and Métis Friendship Centre celebrated its 40th anniversary. I was delighted to attend this very important event.

The theme for the evening, Home Fire Away From Home, was indeed very fitting as Saskatoon's Friendship Centre, 11 others in Saskatchewan, and over 100 other friendship centres serve to support Aboriginal people in urban Canada. It was a night of celebration and remembering those who helped make Saskatoon Friendship Centre a reality.

Louise Oelke, Saskatchewan president of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, gave a wonderful overview of the history of friendship centres over the past 50 years in Canada, starting out around kitchen tables in the '50s and '60s, a time many would remember that across North America hard-fought struggles for basic human rights were taking place. Louise told the audience, and I quote:

There is much work to do, but the Friendship Centre has quietly marched towards providing our people with independence and helping them realize their dreams.

Friendship centres believe that we are all connected as one people. When there are people that can't afford to eat, pay rent or find a job, friendship centres believe that it affects all of us. It is the fundamental belief that we are our brothers' and sisters' keepers that makes this movement work.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in congratulating the Saskatoon Indian and Métis Friendship Centre and wishing them the very best as they keep the home fires burning for those not at home. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

QUESTION PERIOD

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

Availability of Shelter and Housing

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, as we head into the second winter of this government, many of those facing massive rent increases will be forced to seek emergency shelter. And it's increasingly clear that not enough is being done to address many people's immediate needs. Just last week we heard about the crisis at the YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association] Saskatoon Crisis Shelter where 1,500 women and children have been turned away over the last year because simply there was no room.

To the minister: how can she justify sitting on 60 per cent of this government's historic surplus when 1,500 women and children have been turned away from shelter?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for the question. Since we have formed government, we have increased the funding for emergency shelters by 20 per cent. In addition we have expanded capacity in Regina with Harbour House. We have also had hopes — and we're working with Saskatoon and the Salvation Army — to significantly increase the capacity within Saskatoon. Unfortunately they've met with a challenge and there's been a delay in that increase of capacity. But they are assuring us that they are still going to be able to go ahead, which will add a number of additional beds to Saskatoon.

Are we going to stop there, Mr. Speaker? Absolutely not. We're going to forge ahead in helping the people find emergency shelter within our province.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Forbes: — Well, Mr. Speaker, YWCA Saskatoon Crisis Shelter executive director, Barb McPherson, cites rising rents and a lack of affordable housing as two of the reasons why more and more people have nowhere to turn. And the minister's own task force reported back in June that the number of apartment rental units in Saskatoon has fallen from over 17,000 units in 1997 to just 13,500 last year. No wonder so many low-income families are struggling to find affordable rental housing.

Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Social Services: at times like these one would expect people to turn to Sask Housing for help. Can she tell us how many people are on the waiting list for Sask Housing units in Saskatoon?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, we recognized that there was a housing issue, a crisis within the province, immediately upon the election. Actually we knew it before the election, unlike the members opposite. They had no clue that the province was growing. Not only that, they were in denial that it even could grow. And that is why, Mr. Speaker, from 1992 to 2005, they only increased the shelter allowance by — guess what, Mr. Speaker? — \$5. That's all they did.

We acted very quickly. We struck the task force. They came back with recommendations. We responded to all of the immediate recommendations, of which includes an increase to shelter rates to 70 per cent of the average market rate. We increased the rental supplement to an additional 30 per cent, which is indexed to the market rate, Mr. Speaker, and we will revisit those numbers every six months. That's unprecedented in our country.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Forbes: — Well, Mr. Speaker, here are some real numbers concerning people. We've been told that there are more than 560 people on the waiting list for social housing at Saskatoon Housing Authority, including 181 families and approximately 300 seniors. And it seems to me that a government that continues to nest on 60 per cent of a historic surplus has the money to do something about it.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: can she tell us how many people are on the waiting list for affordable and social housing in Prince Albert?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sadly I think what that member needs to acknowledge is we are dealing with their government's waiting lists. There was waiting lists prior to the election. We have invested, since the election, \$67.9 million into housing. Of those, Mr. Speaker, 205 units have been completed, 429 units are in construction, and we have an additional number of units that are being developed. Mr. Speaker, that will bring almost 1,000 units on stream for the people of Saskatchewan.

We also announced \$1.5 billion for infrastructure in our province. In that amount of money, when we do the budget, Mr. Speaker, will there be additional money for housing? Absolutely.

We are addressing this issue. We are addressing it with those most in need with the shelter rate and the rental supplement. We are addressing it in building units, Mr. Speaker. We are taking action, unlike the previous government which sat on it and didn't acknowledge that we had a problem.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, we're told that there are approximately 55 people on that waiting list for affordable housing in Prince Albert, and 78 people on the waiting list for social housing. And we're told there are approximately 200 approved applications for affordable and family housing in Regina, along with approximately 100 seniors.

And meanwhile, Mr. Speaker, this minister cut \$5 million out of the Sask Housing Corporation budget and then tries to take credit for the social and affordable housing projects set in motion by the previous NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: what new social or affordable housing projects, if any, has she initiated since becoming the minister? Not projects already in the hopper thanks to the NDP, but brand new projects. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, it's interesting how little the member opposite understands this file. These were not projects that were just sitting in the hopper. The expression of interest was just out in November, as well as there was an expression of interest put out this year for First Nations and Métis Nation's housing. So their projects were not sitting in a hopper.

In addition, if the member opposite understood, there is a transfer of money from Social Services into the Sask Housing Corporation, but due to prudent financial management, we didn't need to transfer as much money. It did not discontinue any of the programs . . . [inaudible] . . . goes towards funding. The previous year they spent \$9.7 million in the programs that that transfer covers, so therefore this year we only budgeted 10 million. Why? Because it would cover the expenses of those programs.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Decline of the Forestry Industry

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, conditions in Saskatchewan's forestry industry keep on going from bad to worse. Late last week we learned that another NorSask saw mill in Meadow Lake will be ceasing operation and 62 people will lose their jobs. And in my home community of La Ronge, 10 people are losing their jobs with the closure of Zelensky Brothers.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister responsible for forestry: when will we see this government's long-term plan for forest industry?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I would want to thank the member for his question. I believe it's the first occasion he's had to ask a question in the legislature. We also understand that this is very difficult news for the 62 families involved in this layoff notice. It's also our understanding through company officials that the decision has been based on market realities. The US [United States] housing market has slumped dramatically, lumber prices have not rebounded in any fashion, and the US forestry market and lumber market is obviously very important to our forest industry here in Saskatchewan.

Company spokespeople have said that they are optimistic that they will be reopening in the spring. And there is one other thing that we want to keep in mind here. In Saskatchewan we have a very buoyant employment market, and as a result of that there are other opportunities for these folks — in other locations perhaps, but there's certainly other employment opportunities that they may want to take advantage of.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, local United Steelworkers president, Paul Hallen, had this to say about the latest developments quote:

“Neither the provincial nor federal governments have shown any interest in finding meaningful solutions to the ongoing disintegration of one of our province’s most vital industries . . . Governments have tossed up their hands and turned their backs. Workers, communities and many Canadian forest companies continue to pay the price.”

That’s not me, Mr. Speaker. That’s the workers in the forest industry saying that. Mr. Speaker, to the minister: what will he do to give Saskatchewan forestry workers some hope?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Member, I think if you go on in that P.A. [Prince Albert] *Herald* editorial that you’re quoting from, you will find . . . Mr. Speaker, if he goes on in that article that the rhetorical question is answered by the P.A. editorial staff where they say, what is it that you would want a government to do?

What is that you would want to do in the condition where we have an absolute collapse in the lumber market in North America? Would you want to have the government put resources into that? And that question was answered as well by the other P.A. member when he said no, he would not.

So what is the position today of the NDP? Would they want the Government of Saskatchewan to invest resources into that as you are alluding to, or would you follow the advice of the other P.A. member when he says no, that’s not a good idea.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, this government tore up a deal that would have reopened the Prince Albert mill, and still has nothing to replace it. This was after the member for the P.A. Carlton promised his voters, “A vote for Darryl is a vote for the mill open . . .”

And they have done nothing to offer workers and their families in the communities like Big River, Carrot River, Hudson Bay, and others any hope. Now workers in Meadow Lake and La Ronge are suffering.

Mr. Speaker, this government has had a year. They rejected the previous government’s idea because presumably they had a better idea. Mr. Speaker, to the minister: how much longer do people have to wait? What is their plan for forestry?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I have said earlier, it’s a very difficult time for the families involved. In terms of the forestry industry, it’s certainly as a result of market conditions, as company spokespeople have said.

However, what we on this side believe is, is that investing taxpayers’ money into this venture would not have been a good idea. And given the collapse, the absolute collapse of the lumber market in North America, the \$100 million that your party pledged, one can only wonder where that investment would have gone today.

I would say to the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, I would say to the member opposite, perhaps he would want to clarify on behalf of his members where you stand today, where that member stands and the NDP opposition stand. Would you have the Government of Saskatchewan invest \$100 million given the current market conditions that exist?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:00]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party says that the Crown sector should invest in quote “Saskatchewan first.” This is the same political party that decided just a year ago to tear up the CIC [Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan] plan to invest in the forestry industry in our province.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: if the Sask Party really believes that the Crown should invest in Saskatchewan first, why does it not apply that to the forestry industry?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, given the NDP’s track record in terms of investments, it should be no surprise that they’d want the Government of Saskatchewan investing in another money-losing venture because that’s what happened in terms of out-of-province investments. In Saskatchewan, absolutely we have an investment policy that says Saskatchewan first when it comes to electrical programs here in Saskatchewan, when it comes to cell telephone stations here in Saskatchewan. We are going to invest into the priorities of Saskatchewan people.

But what I can say to the member opposite as well, Mr. Speaker, is this is a very troubled industry — there’s no question about it. But if we were to invest \$100 million as the members opposite would have, one could only imagine where that investment would be today.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Reuse of Syringes in Health Care Facilities

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's only because of the discovery of the reusing of syringes in Alberta hospitals that an investigation was launched into the practice in Saskatchewan. Since the discovery in Alberta, we've learned that syringes have been reused in the Prairie North and the Prince Albert health regions.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister outline to the public today, through this Assembly, what steps he has taken to address this serious issue?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, first of all I want to say that patient safety and security is number one priority for this government. Mr. Speaker, we learned early last week that the Alberta Health Authority had some issues with reusing of syringes. At that time our Ministry of Health started to poll all the health regions within Saskatchewan to see what was happening in their particular health region.

Mr. Speaker, since that time, when we learned that there was a possibility of reusing syringes in Lloydminster and P.A., we sent an alert to all the health regions that this practice was to be stopped, that best practices should be conducted in our province. That is what we have done in a very short time.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister is in damage control mode. Across the province, a genuine sense of fear is growing in patients. They have the right to know the possible risk of being infected.

Will the minister show some leadership today and outline the practices he is putting in place to notify Saskatchewan people who've been put at risk through the reuse of syringes?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, on October 30 we put out an immediate alert to all the health regions that this practice was to stop, that patient safety and security was paramount, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is a situation that we don't want to see happen and will not be happening from now on in the province. It came to light in Alberta. We thought that in Saskatchewan that practice in most all hospitals is not conducted. But, Mr. Speaker, upon asking the health regions . . . And we'll certainly commend the doctors for coming forward and saying this was a practice. We've corrected it, Mr. Speaker, last week.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Junor: — I think the minister missed the question. I asked him what practices he is putting in place to notify Saskatchewan people who have been put at risk from the use of these syringes.

He's had no clue that the syringes were being reused in Saskatchewan hospitals. And he's no idea how many patients are at risk for being possibly infected. What he does know, that he does need to go into damage control and try to convince Saskatchewan patients that the risk to them is extremely low.

How long will it take to complete the investigation? Who's going to do it? And will the results of the investigation be made public?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, this is a practice that had been going on in the province for a number of years under — you could count how many — Health ministers from that side, Mr. Speaker.

There are tentative guidelines put in place a couple of years ago. They weren't permanent guidelines or finalized guidelines, but under that NDP government, they enacted some temporary guidelines that they never followed through on, Mr. Speaker. We will be following through on guidelines that make sure that this type of medical equipment is only used once.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Public Notification

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing: how many reviews of prisoner handling are currently under way in his department?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the member opposite for the question. He wants to know how many reviews are ongoing for prisoner handling right now. Every day multiple inmates are handled and moved throughout our province, Mr. Speaker. If he wants to know the reviews that are going on right now for the incidents from August on, we have four, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to quote from the

Government of Saskatchewan news release dated August 26. “Effective immediately, if there is an escape from any provincial correctional . . . [facility], the public will be notified immediately through the media.”

To the Minister of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing: is that the policy of the department as he understands it, or would he like to check his email first?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank the member opposite for the question. The member opposite wants to get into details today, Mr. Speaker. Well he wants to show his great concern about policy. Well I’ll tell you what, Mr. Speaker. When that member was a minister under this ministry, there was no policy, Mr. Speaker — none at all.

Twenty-one escapes from 2002 to 2007, not one time did that government take on the responsibility of telling the public a dangerous offender was outside of their walls, Mr. Speaker. I’ll tell you right now, Mr. Speaker, 16 years, Mr. Speaker, over 16 years, we have to wonder how many other incidents took place that were never reported.

Mr. Speaker, after the escape, the policy was established from myself to the deputy minister to make sure that public notification takes place in concert with notification to the police, Mr. Speaker. That has taken place. We’re very happy with the new policy, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Yates: — So, Mr. Speaker, this news release says the public will be notified in the case of any escape. I would like to quote from the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* from October 31.

. . . a spokesperson for the Ministry of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing confirmed [that] a young offender escaped custody from a Prince Albert facility earlier this month. The minister was notified in a timely way, said the spokesperson. It was not deemed necessary to . . . [inform] the public . . .

To the minister: how does that reconcile with the policy from the August government news release? Wait, let me guess. There’s going to be a review. Right, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Hickie: — Mr. Speaker, the policy statement from this government back in August was very clear: adult secure corrections facilities, those will be reported, Mr. Speaker. I will tell you very clearly, when it comes to young offenders, Mr.

Speaker, we are ruled by legislation on releasing information.

We have young offenders every day sentenced to open custody facilities in this province by our justice system. They are a low risk, Mr. Speaker, as deemed by the judges who issue the sentences. I will tell you now, the most dangerous offenders that escaped from secure custody facilities or are released inappropriately . . . Mr. Speaker, this government takes public safety very seriously. We will ensure that they are notified, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Yates: — So, Mr. Speaker, this news release said the public will be notified in the case of any escape, yet in Saturday’s paper we find out about even more escapes. I quote from that article: “Two males who escaped from a Regina youth facility were apprehended after a short foot chase in Saskatoon Friday afternoon.” Mr. Speaker, these youth are reported to have been carrying concealed weapons when apprehended.

So two people broke out of a Regina facility and made it all the way to Saskatoon before being apprehended. And again there was no notice given to the public. Mr. Speaker, to the minister: can he give us a single example of his policy working the way it was supposed to?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is concerned about public notification. And I think that considering we’ve heard a lot of questions today, I think there’s some answers that we deserve from the NDP on their policy of public notification. They’ve stood in this House 29 times and told us that . . .

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

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite, including the member who just asked that question, stood in this House 29 times and told us, told the public, and told Murdoch Carriere’s victims that they had fired him. That is absolutely not correct. We know from the settlement agreement that he resigned, Mr. Speaker. I think the NDP have to explain to us why they stood in this House and told us that they fired him when they did not.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Members will come to order. The member from Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, I know the minister is waiting on review, but the only review that this minister should be concerned about is the review of his performance. Now let me tell you, these reviews are in. *The Globe and Mail* quote: “. . .

chaos in Saskatchewan Corrections Ministry . . ." *The StarPhoenix* quote: a "string of . . ."

The Speaker: — Order. The member from Regina Dewdney.

Mr. Yates: — *The StarPhoenix* quote: a "string of embarrassments." The Canadian Press quote: "Saskatchewan government officials . . . [were] red-faced . . ." But the *Leader-Post* sums it up, Mr. Speaker, quote:

Hickie failed . . . He may have failed more miserably than any Saskatchewan cabinet minister in recent history.

To the minister: why doesn't he just accept these reviews and resign?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Ms. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe the people of this province did a performance review on the NDP last November and made their decision. And if we further review the NDP's performance, perhaps they could explain to us why they paid Murdoch Carriere \$275,000 for his pain and suffering. What about the pain and suffering of his victims? And perhaps they can also explain to us why the member from Saskatoon Nutana, the opposition leader, and the member for Regina Lakeview actively hid this settlement agreement from the public last year when we asked for it through a freedom of information request. Perhaps they could explain that, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Diplomatic Mission to Focus on Saskatchewan's Economy

Hon. Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise today to announce not only a policy change for the province of Saskatchewan in terms of protocol, in terms of inviting and receiving guests and diplomats from other countries to our province, but also, Mr. Speaker, to confirm that something historic is under way in our province here today and will be happening for the next number of days.

For the next three days, ambassadors and high commissioners from 23 countries have gathered in Regina. This is an historic occasion. It is the first such mission where a large group of diplomats has visited our province with their interest focused on the provincial economy.

They will be learning about the dramatic economic transformation that is taking place in our Saskatchewan and about our government's plans to ensure that that momentum continues, about our government's plans to create what the noted author and columnist Thomas Friedman describes as an ecosystem of innovation.

Delegates to this week's diplomatic mission represent some of

Saskatchewan's most important and significant trading partners including France and Germany and the United States and Russia, to name but a few.

Saskatchewan is a major player in the global marketplace. This fact was driven home just a few weeks ago when figures for the month of August showed the value of our international exports rose by a whopping 104 per cent compared to the previous August. That's the highest percentage increase among provinces and more than 10 times the national average, Mr. Speaker. It's also the biggest percentage increase since the province began tracking these statistics in 2001. The value of Saskatchewan's exports in August totalled over \$3 billion.

We're encouraged by that result, Mr. Speaker, but we know as a government and as a province, we have to do better. We know we have to forge direct links with other countries and with markets around the world. We know we need to diversify away from too great of a dependency on our trading relationship with the country immediately south of us. That's why, Mr. Speaker, our government is going to be aggressively seeking opportunities like this to tell Saskatchewan's story, to promote unique relationships with countries around the world.

[14:15]

Mr. Speaker, it's worth noting that, in the past number of months even, Alberta has been hosting numbers of these kinds of missions — 50-plus missions of this type — while over the last period of time we have only hosted one, Mr. Speaker. This has been an area of opportunity overlooked by governments in the past. The policy of this new government is that we will not overlook these opportunities. We're going to use these opportunities, including in the area of protocol for the government, in the area of trade, to tell Saskatchewan's very, very compelling story and to forge even stronger relationships with countries from around the world.

I know that members on both sides of the house I'm sure will have a chance to meet with a number of the diplomats who are joining us in Saskatchewan over the next number of days. I hope they will warmly welcome them to our province, understanding that the friendship and the relationships that we continue to build with those countries means economic opportunity for the future of the province. It contributes to the diversity of our Saskatchewan — something that is welcomed, Mr. Speaker, in a new policy of the government that I believe will be well received by the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the official opposition, we're very pleased to welcome all of the diplomats to Saskatchewan again. We were very pleased to host the diplomatic forum which included a strong economic part to it in 2004. I think there's some of us have material that we received from that particular diplomatic event.

I know that I was involved in a number of events that were there. And in that particular event a few years ago, there were

very many people who learned a lot about Saskatchewan. One of the reasons that they've come back — and in talking with some of the diplomats over the last couple of days — is how well received they were in 2004.

The Speaker: — Order. I believe I recognized the member from Regina Lakeview.

Mr. Nilson: — So, Mr. Speaker, I think that Saskatchewan can be proud of the way that we have hosted diplomatic groups that have come to Saskatchewan over many, many years, and we know that this has happened over many times.

Also, Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of the economy in Saskatchewan and what's happening, but it's also important to learn from all of our guests what's happening in their economies across the world. And I had the pleasure yesterday to be part of an event with the ambassador from Norway where he met with a lot of the Saskatchewan Norwegian and Scandinavian community. One of the things that he mentioned was the important investment made in Saskatchewan by one of Norway's major companies, Yara, when they paid \$1.6 billion for the Saskferco operation at Belle Plaine.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if the members opposite know this, but Yara is a descendent company from Norsk Hydro. Norsk Hydro is the SaskPower of Norway. A Crown corporation and a private corporation work together, whereby government investment has allowed for things to go international.

Mr. Speaker, when we heard the member opposite's policy earlier this week about retreating and having our companies collapsed into Saskatchewan, I think that the members opposite could learn a lot listening to the diplomats who are coming here this week. Mr. Speaker, we're very happy to have them . . .

The Speaker: — Order. For some reason there seems to be periods of time when all members want to get into debate while on the floor. We recognize one. Member from Regina Lakeview will wind up his comments.

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, we're very happy to have all of the diplomats here in Saskatchewan. We know that they're going to see some of our most important investments that have taken place over the last number of years, and they're also going to look at what's the future for Saskatchewan. I also encourage the members opposite in their conversations with these diplomats to learn from them and about their countries and about investment. I think there's a lot to learn.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Recommendations of Community-Based Organizations Implemented

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when our government was elected, we made a promise to host a summit for Saskatchewan's community-based organizations. CBOs play an important role in providing a variety of human

services to some of the most vulnerable citizens in our province. These CBOs operate shelters, group homes, daycares, crisis units, and many other needed services. Our goal in hosting these summits was to listen to what our CBOs had to say about how we could better serve Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, our government has once again kept our promise. Approximately 800 CBO representatives attended the five events spread across our province. I want to thank everyone who attended for their thoughts and ideas, for their enthusiasm, honesty, and passion. They provided us with a great deal of feedback, Mr. Speaker. The unedited feedback, comments, and evaluations we received at each of the summits is available on the Government of Saskatchewan Ministry of Social Services' website.

And, Mr. Speaker, they challenged us to respond, not with shiny reports to sit on a shelf, but rather with concrete action. Today I am pleased to report that our government has already begun to respond. Last Thursday's announcement of a major initiative to address the wait-list faced by people with disabilities for services and our commitment to create a new income support program for people with disabilities were two recommendations heard loud and clear at the summits. Participants at the CBO summit stress the need to support Saskatchewan's most vulnerable residents in dealing with some specific challenges currently being faced.

Mr. Speaker, as a result we are also pleased to announce that in response to the tax cuts announced by the Premier, any 2008 income tax refund and any tax credit received through the Saskatchewan low-income tax credit will be excluded from all income calculations.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, they will be excluded from all income calculations used in the Saskatchewan assistance program, the transitional employment allowance, and the new income support program for people with disabilities. As a result, all social assistance recipients will keep any 2008 tax refund resulting from last week's historical tax cuts.

Effective October 1, 2008, the mileage rate under the Saskatchewan assistance program increased 5 cents per kilometre to address the rising fuel costs.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — In the future, Mr. Speaker, social assistance mileage rates will be reviewed semi-annually. On October 1, 2008, clients of the transitional employment allowance saw their home heating allowances increase by 20 per cent in response to the higher utility rates. Effective November 1, 2008, they will see additional dollars to cover the basic monthly charge.

Recipients of the Saskatchewan assistance program will continue to see their full actual utility costs paid.

As a result of suggestions made at the summit, the Saskatoon United Way and the Saskatoon Food Bank & Learning Centre have partnered in a proposal to complete a full business plan to

develop this service. In response, the province is contributing \$30,000 to assist them to develop a strategy to bring a 211 phone service to Saskatchewan. This will help individuals and their families across our province to access human services that are available in their community.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — A second element, Mr. Speaker, of their proposal is to develop a website directory of agencies and services in support of the call system. This project would afford significantly enhanced opportunities for CBOs to interact. It allows them to share best practices and work collaboratively in building stronger communities. Mr. Speaker, a common theme at the summits was the need for longer term, predictable funding for CBOs. In response, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce today that our government is committing to begin entering into long-term funding agreements with CBOs starting in the next budget year.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, as we discussed at the summits, we will continue to work, to review all of the feedback that we received, to find opportunities to make improvements, to respond to good ideas, and most of all to make things better for those most vulnerable in our province. Today's announcement is just the beginning. Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to creating a better life and to ensuring all people share in the province's prosperity. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and before I start my comments, I want to . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Before we move forward, I will ask members to respect the individual on his feet. I have to admit in this position of independence sometimes it's difficult as well. However I will recognize the member from Saskatoon Centre for their comments as well and recognize the . . .

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And before I start my comments, I want to thank the minister for sending over the copy of the comments so that I could be prepared. I too want to say that I attended the CBO summit and it was a great process. And it was great to see so many people out as we travelled throughout the province, getting an idea of what this very important sector had to say about where we are in Saskatchewan, what we can do to make things as best as we can for those who are vulnerable in our society.

They often work in challenging circumstances, but they always step up to the plate and do the right thing, so I want to say thank you to them and this process. I want to say that many of these announcements have already been made, and as the opposition we are very supportive of many of these things. In our role as opposition, we will look to see how we can make these as best as they can, asking appropriate questions, but we want to make

sure for the citizens of Saskatchewan they are the right policies.

I want to say that I'm particularly excited about the 211 and the website initiative. I think this is a very creative initiative and a very worthwhile initiative, and I think this is a project that we should support. I look forward to more details on this.

I do want to say though there are a couple of things I did hear. One thing I did hear in Saskatoon that I have yet to hear the minister talk about, clearly there was a call, I know, in Saskatoon — and it should be on the website because all the documents are on the website — a call for a poverty reduction strategy.

What is the big plan here? We have a lot of these things happening. There is a lot of money, and it's good thing to be doing, like the mileage. But we want to see an overarching vision about how we're going to reduce poverty in this province.

Also last week, Mr. Speaker, we did read in the paper three unions were out staging a little demonstration. They were very thankful about the wages that happened this summer, but they want to see that happen many times because there is such a catch-up that they have to do. Mr. Speaker, I look forward to seeing more details on this and thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Agriculture Crown Lands Sale Program

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I'm announcing the agriculture Crown lands sale program. Many lessees have wanted to purchase the Crown land they have farmed for many years. Today's announcement provides incentives that will help lessees make this a reality.

The agriculture Crown lands sale program will begin November 15 and will continue for the next five years, concluding at the end of 2013. We are offering a 10 per cent discount on the sale price of the land in the first year of this program. This discount will gradually decrease to 2 per cent in the fifth year of the program.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Agriculture expects to sell 600,000 acres of cultivated land and 1 million acres of grazing land throughout this program.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — The government, Mr. Speaker, will still retain several million acres of agriculture Crown land. This includes land with conservation attributes, with important subsurface minerals, land located near major water bodies, or land without public or economic values beyond agriculture. Details of the program will be sent this week to all agriculture Crown land lessees.

Mr. Speaker, in December 2007 Throne Speech, we promised to create a plan for lasting and permanent economic growth. Today we are keeping that promise by returning the direction of

the economy to the hands of Saskatchewan people.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, farmers and ranchers are the best stewards of the land. This program will help ensure a stronger Saskatchewan and a better life for farm and ranch families. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[14:30]

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

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the minister for sending over his ministerial statement to the opposition earlier.

Mr. Speaker, we understand from the minister that he expects to sell approximately 1.6 million acres of cultivated land and grazing land. That's not what his ministerial statement indicated to me. He's indicated in the ministerial statement that I got that he estimates that there's 1.6 million acres of land that's eligible under the program.

Mr. Speaker, we notice in his statement that there will be an incentive, a discount on the sale of agricultural and grazing land. The question that we have, which we think will need to be articulated by the minister, is this incentive only for those people who are presently leasing that land, or will this incentive also be available for those large investors that are now in the province assembling large tracts of land for sale at a later date on behalf of their investors?

Mr. Speaker, we know from speaking to farm families and ranching families from across the province that there are a number of holding companies that have come into the province, assembled large tracts of land, and that land is no longer farmed by the people who own that land. It's farmed by basically tenant farmers, Mr. Speaker.

So I guess the question will be, is this land only going to be available for those people who presently lease that land? Are farmers and ranchers on that land, or is this land going to be put into the open market for large holding companies to come in and buy Saskatchewan farm land? That's the first question.

And the second question, is this discount only for those people who farm and ranch that land presently, or will these discounts be available for the holders of these large holding companies that have assembled tens and tens of thousands of acres into a holding company?

So those are the questions. I understand the details will be available later this week or shortly, and we're looking forward to seeing what the details of this sell-off of Crown land are indeed, what they are. Mr. Speaker, I think the minister would have been very helpful if he could have put a little more detail into his ministerial statement.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Taylor: — Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The member may state his point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think you are aware, Mr. Speaker, that prior to the 2007 election, members of the Saskatchewan Party or representatives of the Saskatchewan Party and representatives of the New Democratic Party met to discuss the rules of this Chamber. Mr. Speaker, the results of those meetings between the representatives of the party came to effect a number of changes to our rules.

One of those rules, Mr. Speaker, is rule 19(3), which I read in its entirety here. It's very short, Mr. Speaker. This is a new rule of the Assembly, rule 19(3), responses . . . This has to do with question period, Mr. Speaker:

Responses shall be relevant to the question, but a Minister may decline to answer or may take notice of a question. Questions taken as notice may be answered at a subsequent Question Period.

Mr. Speaker, I would argue under point of order today that during question period today questions directed to the minister of corrections, public service and policing relating to public safety, Mr. Speaker, were answered by the Minister of the Environment in a fashion that was irrelevant to the question asked.

The Speaker: — Order. The Opposition House Leader has the floor.

Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I simply point this out to you with the request that the Speaker, who is here to enforce the rules, review the question period, and after review, instruct members of the government about what the rule 19(3) means and ask the members of the government to respect the rules negotiated by members of this Chamber. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to respond using Beauchesne's *Parliamentary Rules & Forms*, 6th Edition. On page 123, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make note that replies to oral questions, point no. 418, states that "The Government decides who will answer." And again in 420:

The Speaker has stated, "Of course, the Chair will allow a question to be put to a certain Minister; but it cannot insist that that Minister rather than another should answer it."

So I would like the Speaker to take that into consideration when he rules on this point of order. The opposition cannot insist on which minister answers the questions.

The Speaker: — I want to thank the member for his point of order and . . . Order. Order. And the Government Deputy House Leader for the response. And I want to also acknowledge that I was actually in the rule book, and I did miss some of the

comments. And I will be making a comment tomorrow in regards to a couple other things I heard that I wasn't quite sure of. But I will certainly take time to review *Hansard* to indeed make the appropriate comment in regards to the point of order. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the answers to questions 1 through 7.

The Speaker: — Questions 1 through 7 tabled. Question no. 8 has been ordered for return. The Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you. Question no. 8 ordered, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Question no. 8's been ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the answers to questions 9 through 39.

The Speaker: — Questions 9 through 39 tabled. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Mr. Speaker, 40 through 52 are ordered.

The Speaker: — Questions 40 through 52 ordered. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Weekes: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the answers to questions 53 to 73.

The Speaker: — Questions 53 to 73 tabled.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Mr. Duncan, seconded by Ms. Schriemer, and the proposed amendment to the main motion moved by Mr. Calvert.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Batoche.

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I begin, I would ask the House special leave that if I cannot remain standing due to the surgery I had that I can finish my speech while I'm sitting.

The Speaker: — The member has asked for leave to be able to sit down should he not be able to continue to stand. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Agreed. I recognize the member from Batoche.

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleagues for the honour to respond to the magnificent Speech from the Throne. I would also like to thank again the people of Batoche for their honour and privilege of speaking on their behalf in this esteemed House.

Due to a recent surgery, I have found myself temporary relying on the use of a wheelchair, and now I more fully understand the challenges faced daily by people confined to wheelchairs. I think of the old adage, don't judge a man until you've walked a mile in his shoes — or in this case, wheelchair. I salute these people with a new-found respect and admiration.

I would also like to publicly thank my wife who is seated up in the west gallery, who has dedicated countless hours to enable me to be here to do my job at the legislature.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Kirsch: — And, Mr. Speaker, I'm thrilled to proudly announce that this past Saturday, November 1, was our 33rd wedding anniversary.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Kirsch: — I would also like to take the opportunity to thank my CA [constituency assistant] Mary Anne Telfer. Her loyalty, dedication, and friendship are second to none, and in my mind, she is undoubtedly the best CA in the province.

Today and until November 11, we wear the poppy. Let us not forget what it stands for. Wear it with pride and dignity for the men and women of yesterday and the men and women of today who toil on the battlefields around the world. Their causes are still the same — freedom of the oppressed. God bless our troops, wherever they may be serving.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And now I enter into the debate of the Throne Speech. Before we get too deep into what this Throne Speech has accomplished for this province, we must look at where we have come from.

In 1905 when Saskatchewan was born, we were ahead of Alberta and had so much, if not more, potential than any other province in Canada. By 2005, our centennial year, our population was declining, our resources were relatively untouched, and our province was in debt to a tune of almost \$7 billion. Our greatest export was our children. And our then premier referred to us as the wee province that would always be in and out of equalization.

In that same time frame, Alberta, our sister province, grew to be a powerful province of over 3 million people with surplus money in the bank. In short, they were a have province and we were a have-not province. What went wrong in Saskatchewan?

Saskatchewan was conducting an experiment, an experiment in socialism. For the last 60 years, left wing governments tried to control every aspect of life in this province. They tried to build walls to keep out competition. They tried to build walls to

protect government companies. They even went as far as taking away the potash mines from private corporations to fulfill their socialistic dreams.

In order to try and bolster the sagging economy, they started making absurd investments both within and out of the province. I am referring to dot-com companies, potato companies, bingo companies, and many, many more. The total money lost by some is estimated as much as \$2 billion.

At the time of the 2007 election, the highest taxed poor people in all of Canada was here in Saskatchewan, by a party that had claimed to be the protector of the little guy and the caretaker of the old and infirm. Yet the seniors of this province had not seen an increase in provincial government assistance since 1992.

The only shining light the NDP could hold up in its birth is medicare although, at the rate of decline they were in, with 800 nurse shortages, doctor shortages, hospital beds closing, rural hospitals being closed, waiting lists getting longer, the NDP soon would've been known for the death of medicare. And now, Mr. Speaker, these same people whose party is responsible for so many of Saskatchewan failures now stand in opposition and ridicule this magnificent Throne Speech that does so much for all the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, in listening to the speeches from the left, two main themes keep coming through: no. 1, they oppose the Throne Speech; no. 2, they claim the ideas were theirs. Mr. Speaker, they can't have it both ways. If the ideas were theirs, why not support them?

[14:45]

They floundered around for 16 years and didn't get any of their four-term tenures completed with these tasks. Even in baseball, you only get three strikes and you're out. Yet they had four chances, all because they hit a foul, and that foul sadly enough was a disgusting campaign of fear. And, Mr. Speaker, the people have spoken out. They are out.

So what is the job of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition? Is it to oppose everything just for the sake of opposing? Is it the opposition's job to condemn anything and everything the government brings forward or has the job of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition changed to oppose anything contrary to the socialistic rhetoric of the Regina manifest?

The people of this province expect more from the opposition than just opposing. They want someone to support what is right for the children of this province, for the working class of this province, and for the seniors of this province.

Things have changed in Saskatchewan over the past year. There is a new attitude in Saskatchewan. In order to be a success, you have to have the right attitude just like our beloved Saskatchewan Roughriders. Like our Roughriders over the past decade, Saskatchewan has floundered. The people of Saskatchewan have had the ability, but they didn't have the leadership. We kept coming up short on third downs. Also like our Roughriders, you have to have a game plan and work hard. A wise man once said, the harder we work, the luckier we get.

The people of this great province once again feel that they are back on track. This province is going to move to the forefront of this great country of Canada. People can now see a future that is filled with hope and opportunity for them and for their children. This Throne Speech is the gateway to that future.

This Throne Speech provides the largest income tax cut in all of Saskatchewan history. It removes 80,000 people from paying provincial tax. It also gives income tax credit to all low-income earners. This historic tax break comes from what the NDP call a right wing government. If that is the case, Mr. Speaker, it proves that you don't have to vote for socialism to get social justice. In just one year, our Saskatchewan Party has provided more social justice than the past government did in its entire 16 years.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Kirsch: — That bears repeating. In just one year, our Saskatchewan Party government has provided more social justice than the past government did in its entire 16 years. How can any socialist vote against this Throne Speech if they're truly the advocate of social reform?

In the same time frame, we are making the largest investment in infrastructure in Saskatchewan's history. In order to shore up the crumbling highways, schools, and hospitals left by years of NDP neglect and mismanagement, we will invest \$1 billion this year, and \$1.5 billion next year into Saskatchewan's infrastructure.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Kirsch: — We still have many, many miles of rural highways in disrepair, but at least, Mr. Speaker, we have made a start and mile by mile they will be repaired. Already this year, 1,500 miles of highway have been repaired.

Mr. Speaker, the world looks at a looming economic crisis. Our government is well aware of the perils of such a downturn; therefore we are holding in reserve \$2 billion to see us through these tough economic times. The difference between the Saskatchewan Party's Growth and Financial Security Fund and the former NDP's rainy day fund is this: ours has real money in it.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Kirsch: — It's not just another loan on paper. This is a very wise and prudent move that will provide much confidence in Saskatchewan, and carry us through the future.

But, Mr. Speaker, one of the heaviest burdens Saskatchewan carries on its back of every citizen is that crushing debt load which is a debt of almost \$7 billion. The NDP continually blame Grant Devine's government for that debt, but what did they do in 16 years, Mr. Speaker? They didn't shrink that debt. They grew it and grew it until it reached the staggering amount. Our government in one year has struck the debt by a tremendous — may I repeat that — a tremendous 40 per cent which is unprecedented in Canadian financial history, perhaps even the world.

Mr. Speaker, the member from the other side thinks he's a wit, but he's only half right. Mr. Speaker, this paydown of the debt reduces the burden on the Saskatchewan taxpayer by \$5,000 a minute, \$5,000 a minute — phenomenal, isn't it? It almost makes you giddy, and you just bubble with pride and excitement to think of what the Saskatchewan Party government has accomplished in just one year.

Mr. Speaker, in my address before this House, I referred to the parallels between the new Saskatchewan Party and a sailing vessel embarking on a new voyage of discovery. I mentioned that the good ship Saskatchewan would be besieged by pirates of the left. Mr. Speaker, in this Throne Speech, the good ship Saskatchewan is in full sail, and our course has been set. Our navigation is true, and our captain is at the helm. The winds are blowing fair, and sure enough, Mr. Speaker, here come the pirates of the left.

They are trying to use the old weapon of fear to blow our ship off course. They're firing broadsides against this Throne Speech but to no avail. The good ship Saskatchewan will not be deterred. We will bring home this Throne Speech for the people of this province so all can share in the bright future of this great province.

Mr. Speaker, this Throne Speech is giving more to the average man and woman on the street than any Throne Speech in the history of this province. With the record of this new Saskatchewan Party government, they not only promise, they will deliver.

Mr. Speaker, we will soon be voting on this Throne Speech and my question is, how will Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition vote? Will they vote for what is good and right for the people of this province? Or will they stand there and vote nay like a bunch of socialist puppets with little or no concern for the people of Saskatchewan? Mr. Speaker, it is with a great deal of pride I will definitely be supporting this magnificent and historic Speech from the Throne. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At the outset of my remarks I want to just take a moment to congratulate the member for Cumberland for his election to this Legislative Assembly. The member for Cumberland, as we know, has a distinguished record of service in and to the people of the North, and that is a record of service that will stand him in good stead as he now serves all the people of Saskatchewan. And we look forward to his contributions to public dialogue and to public policy in the many years to come.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I want to welcome you back for another term in this Legislative Assembly. We know that your experience in this House will stand you in good stead, stand all of us in good stead as you seek to continue to provide leadership and stewardship for the members of the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, as I listened to the Throne Speech, I was — how

shall I put this? — profoundly disappointed. It started off well enough — the rhetoric was there — but the Throne Speech failed in my view to address in any coherent or concrete way what should be an urgent priority for all of the people of Saskatchewan and certainly for the members of this Legislative Assembly.

And that priority, Mr. Speaker, is a plan to broaden the base of Saskatchewan's economy. A plan that will reduce Saskatchewan's dependence on non-renewal resource activity to create jobs in our economy, a plan that will reduce Saskatchewan's budgetary dependence on non-renewal resource activities.

A plan that will ensure that we will become a true have province in the Canadian federation based on more than non-renewal resource activity and non-renewal resource revenues. A plan that will give hope to the people of Saskatchewan that our young people will always have opportunities for meaningful employment here in their province.

The reality is that Saskatchewan's economy is doing very well at this time, and contrary to the comments of the previous member where he would leave the impression that somehow Saskatchewan's economy began to really boom and take off with the election of the Sask Party government a year ago . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — And they may profoundly believe that, Mr. Speaker. The fact is that the current economic renaissance — can we call it that? — began under the NDP; the population growth began under the NDP; the economic growth and the increase in jobs in this province began under the NDP. That is a situation that has been inherited by the previous government. But yet that member and many members believe it's something that began with them and is a result of the things that they have done in government, Mr. Speaker, which calls to mind that old baseball metaphor, Mr. Speaker, about the guy who was born on second base but thought he hit a double.

Mr. Speaker, the fact is we are doing very well in Saskatchewan because of activity in our non-renewable resource sector. We are doing well because of activity in oil. We are doing well because of activity in the natural gas area. We are doing well because of expansion in potash. We are doing well because of increased interest and activity in uranium mining.

And it hasn't always been the case that the demand for Saskatchewan non-renewable resource was that strong, Mr. Speaker. Oil prices haven't always been that high, and the same for natural gas. And the same holds true for potash, and the same holds true for uranium.

And chances are that relatively speaking, Mr. Speaker, chances are that relatively speaking that oil prices will go down. Mr. Speaker, already oil prices I think, if I remember correctly from Friday's close, are trading in the area of about 65 to \$70 a barrel — let's say high sixties dollars per barrel — contrasted with the \$119.78 a barrel that the government has now booked into its budget in which the current budget is now based, Mr. Speaker, based on first quarter results.

So already we've seen a tremendous swing in oil prices, Mr. Speaker, in the course of a few months. And chances are that other commodity prices will also cycle lower. And we know that for Saskatchewan, that given our dependence on commodities, given our dependence on commodities, Mr. Speaker, that as commodity prices go down, economic performance for Saskatchewan will go down, Mr. Speaker. That is the reality.

Economic cycles, notwithstanding all protestation by the members opposite, economic cycles are a fact of life. And I know it doesn't sort of fit well with their sort of wholly optimistic view of our world, Mr. Speaker, but the fact is, the reality is we've seen it in the past; we'll see it again in the future. Economic cycles are a fact of life.

I see with interest, Mr. Speaker, that David Clayton Thomas, who's a well-known Canadian singer — and I refer to him also as a well-known Canadian philosopher — is going to be in Regina I believe later this month, performing at the casino show lounge. And it's Mr. David Clayton Thomas who so famously observed that what goes up must come down. The spinning wheel goes round and round, Mr. Speaker. And so it is with economic performance, Mr. Speaker. And the members would deny history, the members would deny history, if they say that this will never happen again in Saskatchewan.

[15:00]

The question, Mr. Speaker, the question is, what exactly does the Throne Speech say about a plan, a plan to position Saskatchewan to have a strong economy when the non-renewable resource sector is not strong, Mr. Speaker? Where is that vision in the Throne Speech? Where is that plan in the Throne Speech?

Mr. Speaker, we had expected more from the government, more from a party that prides itself, prides itself on its ties to the business community and prides itself on its so-called understanding of the economy. We had expected that upon election, in their first Throne Speech, they would have outlined that vision because again that is the single greatest challenge that Saskatchewan faces, Mr. Speaker.

And here we are one year later, two Throne Speeches later — no plan, no vision, no nothing, Mr. Speaker. And this is the right time to be asking this question, Mr. Speaker. The Saskatchewan government has the surplus funds to invest in a vision. They have the surplus funds to invest in a plan to diversify our economy. But first we need a plan. And, Mr. Speaker, there is no plan.

Mr. Speaker, whatever criticisms . . . And we've certainly heard criticisms from the members opposite, although somewhat were overblown, and they hearken back to a speech by the now Premier that he made in 2002 in his speech in reply to the Speech from the Throne. Whatever criticisms there were of the previous NDP government, no one doubted that they had a plan, Mr. Speaker: a plan to position Saskatchewan's economy to take on the future, a plan to build up those sectors of the economy that we will need to lessen our dependence on oil, Mr. Speaker, to lessen our dependence on non-renewable resource activities. At least the NDP had a plan to do that and invested in

that plan over the years, Mr. Speaker.

Early on the NDP cleaned up a huge financial mess so that business and industry could have stability in provincial finances when making investment decisions. And contrary to what the member opposite says, Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the member says about debt going up under the NDP, there's not a person outside of that caucus who believes anything like that, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan. Not one person, not one sane person would believe anything like that, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, not even the credit rating agencies believed anything like that about Saskatchewan. It was under the NDP, Mr. Speaker, when the NDP took over, they took over an economy, they took over a fiscal house that had the NDP, at least at one point, reverting to junk bond status in terms of its credit rating by at least one of the credit rating agencies, Mr. Speaker. But over their time, because it was able to . . . [inaudible] . . . its resources in a prudent way and to use it to lower debt, under the NDP, the Government of Saskatchewan was able to increase its credit rating, Mr. Speaker, and to increase it in a hugely significant way — something that we haven't seen lately, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, early on the NDP cleaned up a huge financial mess, contrary to what their member said.

Early on, early on the NDP made major changes to taxation for industries involved in manufacturing and processing. Since then . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Because we understood that manufacturing and processing, if we are to diversify the economy, we needed to invest in manufacturing and processing. Since then, manufacturing output in Saskatchewan has outpaced all the other provinces in Canada, Mr. Speaker. That is because of a conscious decision by the NDP government to support that sector, Mr. Speaker.

The NDP also invested massively in our universities. Mr. Speaker, we have not seen a building boom in our universities the likes of what we've seen these last 10, 15 years, Mr. Speaker. We've seen massive expansion that is obvious to all of the people in Saskatchewan, massive expansion at our universities.

The NDP also invested massively in research and development. The NDP invested in the synchrotron in Saskatoon. The NDP invested in the Petroleum Research Centre in Regina and the forestry research centre in Prince Albert, Mr. Speaker — all investments made by an NDP that wasn't booking in budgets at \$119 per barrel, Mr. Speaker. More like \$20 per barrel, Mr. Speaker. So far less in resources but nonetheless seeing it important to make those kinds of investments.

The NDP understood that these were the kinds of investments needed to build a knowledge-based economy. If we're looking at expanding our economy, Mr. Speaker, to diversifying economy, surely we have to make those kinds of investments in a knowledge-based economy. We're not seeing anything from the Saskatchewan Party.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party government, one year later, is still talking. Still talking, no action. Two Throne Speeches to articulate a vision, opportunities lost, Mr. Speaker. Why is the Saskatchewan government so slow off the mark, the Saskatchewan Party government, Mr. Speaker? The government gives the impression that its strategy is, simply put,

let the good times roll, and that's the total extent of their economic strategy and their economic plan going forward. As long as the oil revenue is coming in, why worry about anything else? But we know that the single largest real challenge that faces us is to lessen our dependence on oil, lessen our dependence on non-renewable resource activities.

Has there been an internal conflict in their approach, we ask ourselves, Mr. Speaker? We know that the Premier's only approach has been lower taxation — a belief that if taxes are low enough across the board, that economic growth will follow. Others may have pointed out to him that's not how it solely works in the real world. To be sure, Mr. Speaker, as the NDP also made sure, taxation policy is a consideration in economic development, but there are many other factors.

Alberta in the '60s and '70s — and the member fondly talking of Alberta in the '60s and '70s when it sought to transform its economy — did not rely solely on taxation, Mr. Speaker. Alberta used its resource wealth, made investments in sectoral growth. Whether it's irrigation in southern Alberta, a petrochemical industry in Red Deer, or encouraging the move of the meat processing sector from Winnipeg to Edmonton, Mr. Speaker, Alberta had a sectoral strategy. A sectoral strategy to transform its economy to lessen dependence on non-renewable resource activity.

Today Alberta's economy has diversified and grown to such an extent that, even if oil and natural gas were to collapse tomorrow, Alberta would still not require equalization. And when will we be able to say that about Saskatchewan? When will we be able to say that about Saskatchewan, and how will we get there? That is the real question that I am posing today, Mr. Speaker.

I note with interest that Alberta is changing its tune with respect to direct investment. Having used that approach to help it to diversify and grow its economy, it is now signalling through TILMA [Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement] that it wants to discontinue that approach, and that provinces should only rely on low taxes to stimulate economic activity. That's kind of like using one set of rules to get ahead of the competitors, and then saying, let's change the rules of the game now that we've achieved that. Well they must be laughing themselves silly in Edmonton, Mr. Speaker, to see it's Saskatchewan Party Premier and government that agrees with them on those new rules going forward.

I note however that, pending the adoption of TILMA, the Alberta government continues to make sectoral investments, whether it's in the health research field — significantly, the Alberta government is doing that — and also note that Alberta continues to invest massively to support its livestock industry. Saskatchewan livestock producers, on the other hand, have a Premier and a government that does not support such an approach, leaving Saskatchewan producers to compete on what I'd see as an uneven playing field, Mr. Speaker.

Perhaps the announcement of Innovation Saskatchewan is a sign that practical thinking in cabinet has finally prevailed over the Premier's rigid, ideological approach. But we will have to watch this new approach because again it's one in which the politicians will be making the investment decision, Mr.

Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, before I close I just want to point out that one of the sectors the Sask Party government will not be investing in is the Crown sector, Mr. Speaker. To absolutely no one's surprise, the Saskatchewan Party is now engaged in a shrink-the-Crown-sector strategy. Having swallowed, having swallowed their deeply held convictions of strong dislike of Crown corporations and promising to never sell the Crowns in order to ensure their election, the Saskatchewan Party outlined a strategy that will start the process of gutting the Crowns, Mr. Speaker.

Well guess what, Mr. Speaker? We expected it. We expected it. The wolf is back. The wolf in sheep's clothing is back, Mr. Speaker. The sheep's clothing in this case is an innocuous sounding Saskatchewan-first for the Crowns policy. But the public should not doubt for a moment, Mr. Speaker, as to what is taking place here. The Saskatchewan Party government is engaged in a campaign to shrink Crown corporations. Why else would the government take steps to sell off profitable, money-making subsidiaries' profitable assets? Is the government short on liquid assets? I don't think so — not with \$2 billion in the bank, Mr. Speaker. We all know that in this they are running true to form.

Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, we expected no less. We were deluded in thinking that they would save the Crowns. Selling the Crowns is one thing which they promised to not do; saving them, Mr. Speaker, is something else. The wolf is back.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I want to indicate it's a shame that the Sask Party government has not been able to articulate a clear plan, a clear vision to transform Saskatchewan's economy. The means to do so are at hand, and the massive resources required to do so successfully will not come our way that often, Mr. Speaker. The opportunities don't come our way that often.

In opposition they led the public to believe they had a clear plan to grow our economy, not just simply to coast along on non-renewable resource activity and non-renewable resource dollars, Mr. Speaker. In government they are dithering. And that is why the Throne Speech is such a huge disappointment, and I will not be supporting it, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise in the House today to voice my support for the 2008 Speech from the Throne. Like my colleagues and my constituents, I am so impressed by the strength and promise of the programs that this speech outlined. It makes me proud to be part of this government and to be representing the great people of Regina Wascana Plains.

This is truly a transformative time for Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. All forecasts now are for sunny conditions with an abundance of fresh air. The doom and gloom we endured for such a very long time is now gone. The Throne Speech gave us that refreshing and positive feeling, and what is really and

actually happening in Saskatchewan reinforces this. I have since spoken to many people about it — my family, my friends, my constituents. They were all impressed, not only with its ambitious agenda, but also with the compassionate social stance it takes.

They also said to me that they were surprised and pleased when they were actually asked to voice their opinions last summer on how to make the best use of this unprecedented surplus. They are not accustomed to being consulted or listened to, Mr. Speaker.

The Throne Speech gave my constituents a feeling of optimism and of security in the midst of uncertain times around us. They approved of our prudent handling of the revenue surplus and our promise to maintain fiscal stability with our growth and financial security fund.

They also responded to another commitment that we made clear. We are committed to ensuring that our new prosperity will reach everyone in the province. We want everyone to participate in the benefits of our strong economy, especially the more vulnerable people in our province — the ones at the less-fortunate end of the economic ladder, the low-income individuals and families. We will make sure that they feel the benefits.

We have already heard announcements in the opening days of this session that are part of a plan to fulfill those commitments. A few days ago the Minister of Social Services announced that the seniors' income plan benefit would be more than doubled, from \$90 to \$190 per month. It's really hard to believe that this is the first increase these folks have seen since 1992, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Social Services also announced a \$76 million investment in a new income plan for people with intellectual disabilities which will help improve their lives.

But the benefit that will affect most families in the province is coming to them in the most practical form — tax relief. Taking decisive action, our Premier raised the tax exemption amount from 8,945 to 12,945 per year. This is the largest ever, single-year tax cut in the history of our province. This plan gives the most help to the people who most need it and gives them the freedom to choose how to use the money they save.

The tax change means that 80,000 people are now no longer paying income tax which they simply could not afford to do. These are the best, most-generous tax advantages in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

Many people commented that they were reassured to see the large payment toward reducing our provincial debt. By doing this, we are saving 900 million in interest payments over five years — 900 million that can be used to repair roads, build schools, and add possibly more hospital beds.

Under *The Growth and Financial Security Act*, one-half of our surplus will be dedicated each year to paying down the debt. We put \$2.6 billion or over 40 per cent of the total toward that debt this year alone, Mr. Speaker. With current economic conditions continuing, it is entirely possible that we could be debt free by the end of our first mandate.

We are painfully aware of the infrastructure deficit that we inherited and now must attend to. Again this government is showing leadership in taking the kind of strong, decisive action that our province has long been waiting for. To respond to the infrastructure needs, we have committed \$1.5 billion towards rebuilding our roads, hospitals, and our schools.

In the past few days we have heard my colleagues tell us situations that went disregarded for 16 years and have already — in one year, Mr. Speaker — begun to improve. My colleagues in the House have been telling us about roads that were allowed to totally disintegrate for 16 years and are now seeing a paving machine for the very first time.

In June my ministry announced further funding towards the much-needed facility upgrade of IPSCO Place. Facility improvements must be done if we expect to compete with other centres in hosting events, events which attract visitors and bring revenue into our city and into our province. The actions our government is taking will build a stronger, fiscally sound Saskatchewan and will have a profound benefit on us and on our next generation.

But the Throne Speech also spoke of a better life, and I'd like to address that aspect of it. An important function of the Ministry of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport is to focus on quality of life issues and on building pride in our great province. That pride, Mr. Speaker, sadly needs to be built up, to be restored from the beating it has experienced over the last 16 years. We used to be a province of apologists, Mr. Speaker, hanging our heads because we were a have-not province. Well no longer, Mr. Speaker. We are now leading the nation in so many areas, and we need to raise our expectations, to encourage people to dream a little about the things that make community life more enjoyable and more attractive.

I frequently say that economic success will bring more people to our province. I don't think that's in dispute, but it will be the quality of life that makes them want to stay right here. How do you measure quality of life? It needs to be measured in more than concrete numbers, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly tied to economic success, but it goes beyond that. It is measured in the enjoyment of cultural and social amenities such as art, music, dance, theatre, sport and recreation, music, museums, and films — all the things which give meaning and joy to our lives.

A province which cannot offer a range of artistic and cultural activities is a stale, barren place to live, Mr. Speaker. That is why my ministry is concentrating on bringing new structure and strength to our arts and cultural sector. We recently announced the release of a cultural policy framework which will give much-needed structure for funding and program delivery to the sector.

We are offering predictability, support, and new confidence to our arts and culture community so that artists and performers can thrive and find success right here at home. We are in fact telling the province, we believe in a vibrant, cultural, arts, and heritage sector.

We will also be introducing the arts professions Act which will require written contracts between engagers and artists and will protect the intellectual rights of artists.

Quality of life is also enhanced when one can enjoy the natural beauty around us, and we in Saskatchewan are truly blessed with many gorgeous parks and lakes. I have to report, however, that some of our parks are in a state of considerable disrepair from years of neglect, and one such park being Blackstrap—the park the NDP forgot.

To improve infrastructure and services in our provincial parks, we have budgeted \$20 million over four years. Last spring we committed to creating an additional 1,000 electrified campsites over a four-year period. And we already have 442 done, almost half the total number well under way.

Quality of life also means taking pride in the character and distinctiveness of our communities, our heritage and history, and our culture. In this regard, we have been working with other partners, such as the regional tourism authorities and Aboriginal Tourism Association to ensure that we highlight the 125th anniversary of the 1885 North-west Resistance rebellion, a very important piece of our history, Mr. Speaker.

We have doubled the funding to the Saskatchewan Heritage Foundation, allowing them to increase the number of grants to worthy heritage projects.

We have begun consultations with rural and urban municipalities to develop new tourism, sport, culture, and recreational infrastructure programs.

At the same time, we are promoting our province to the new West. We are excited to be working on the cultural Olympiad for the 2010 Olympics and Paralympic Games, and we will ensure that Saskatchewan has a strong presence. And we will showcase the true Saskatchewan to the world.

We also place great importance on offering sport and cultural activities to raise healthy, well-rounded children, so we introduced the active families benefit. Beginning in January 2009, families will receive a \$150 tax benefit to help them with the cost of enrolling their children in sports, recreational, or cultural activities. We anticipate that this will apply to about 120,000 children with a tax savings to families of approximately 18 million.

My own constituency, which takes in communities of White City, Balgonie, and Pilot Butte, is undergoing phenomenal growth these days. There are more and more young families moving into the area. And young families want their kids to be able to participate in hockey, dance, swimming lessons, soccer teams, basketball—you name it, Mr. Speaker. They have told me how much they appreciate this benefit.

There is new life, new vibrancy out there, not the same old, tired defeatism. Instead of apologizing, Mr. Speaker, we are looking to be the best—the leaders. And we're saying, come to Saskatchewan. See what we have to offer. And we know, Mr. Speaker, that Saskatchewan does have a lot to offer.

We are looking to the future, and we are seeing exciting times ahead. The creation of Innovation Saskatchewan demonstrates our desire to be at the forefront in the energy sector, in securing the knowledge economy of the future, and in undertaking programs toward a greener environment.

These are indeed exciting times, Mr. Speaker, and my constituents feel the momentum. They gave us a solid mandate in November last year, and they remain absolutely confident that a Saskatchewan Party government is the right choice to lead us into the great times ahead. Mr. Speaker, I do not support the amendment, however I proudly support the 2008 Saskatchewan Speech from the Throne. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members:—Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Higgins:—Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it truly is a pleasure to rise and join in the debate on the Speech from the Throne. And before I really get started on my comments, I'd really like to pass along, first and foremost, a thank you to my constituents in Moose Jaw Wakamow for their input, their advice, and their wonderful support over this past year.

And I'd also like to pass along a huge thank you to my staff in the constituency office in Moose Jaw, Stacey and Charlene, who do a wonderful job and work hard providing information and good advice and direction to the constituents in Moose Jaw. And also, Mr. Speaker, I have to say they give a fair bit of good advice and direction to the MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] also, which is always appreciated.

And most importantly I'd like to thank my family. And I think there isn't one of us in this Assembly who will dispute the fact that without the patience and the understanding of family, none of us would be able to do the job we do and represent our constituencies. So a huge thank you to family.

Mr. Speaker, whenever we have a Throne Speech, a budget, or a piece of legislation that comes into the Assembly, my first thoughts are always to my constituents. I think of Moose Jaw Wakamow and the people that live there, and I always ask the question, how will any of these new proposals or initiatives affect them? Will these new initiatives being proposed, will it benefit the people that live in Moose Jaw Wakamow? And how will these new initiatives that are being proposed or announced improve their lives?

And with the Speech from the Throne and this past week—which is continuing, by the looks of it, this week—of an announcement a day, these same questions have crossed my mind numerous times. And while there's no shortage of comments that could be made as to the priorities and the areas that this government has chosen to focus on, today I'd really like to make a number of comments and give thoughts to the answers to those questions that run through my mind.

First and foremost, over the summer I think all of us spent time talking to constituents, attending community events. And I have to say, Mr. Speaker, not once throughout the summer did I hear the call for lower income tax.

People have spoken often of property tax and the overreliance on property tax for education funding. People expressed their concerns that they have for the lack of funding for our school division, Prairie South, that they receive from the provincial

government, but not once has income tax been raised as an issue.

Many believed that the government's focus on property tax while in opposition and in their first Throne Speech would translate into quick, substantial action. A number of folks asked me why the flip-flop from government. Was property tax not an issue any more? And as I explained to them, that this government is purely on a political timetable, and we won't see any permanent solution to education financing and an end to the overreliance on property tax until the year of the next provincial election in 2011.

This government has decided to study the issue even though they complained many times that it had been studied to death and it was action that they wanted to see. But they decided to study the issue one more time, and give themselves purely an excuse to delay any permanent solution. Even though they wanted changes made while in opposition, and even though there are options ready to address the issue, they are delaying making a decision on this issue and have instead focused on income tax. And I guess, Mr. Speaker, income tax, which I might add is more in line with the right wing political parties who believe lower income tax is a panacea for all ills.

Will my constituents feel some relief from the changes to income taxes? They more than likely will, but it won't be until next spring when they fill out their income tax and maybe, just maybe, it will be enough to help pay property tax. But definitely it's not at all what was hoped for by either residents or businesses in my community of Moose Jaw.

Now the new announcement for increased infrastructure funding has been met with some skepticism in my community, and rightly so. Last year the minister used the Moose Jaw Union Hospital project as an example in the budget speech when he was announcing infrastructure funding but, Mr. Speaker, there has never been an announcement made to say that our project received any of the funding that was announced last year. I guess Moose Jaw Union Hospital project was purely an example and nothing more.

[15:30]

The member from Moose Jaw North said in the local newspaper that, and I quote, "Capital was in place for the Moose Jaw project," but there has been no clear answers from the Ministry of Health and no concrete signs of any advancement of the project in our community. So the jury is still out as to whether this announcement will improve the lives of Moose Jaw and area residents, and we'll just have to wait for details to be released and continue asking questions.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have to say that the announcements made this past week concerning the seniors' income plan, the disability funding, and CBO funding are all very welcome. These are areas that needed attention and are appropriate investments to be made when the government is sitting on huge resources that are calculated in the billions of dollars. So, Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate and I do applaud those announcements.

But, Mr. Speaker, over this past summer in the events that I've attended, other comments that I received have reflected poorly

on this government's lack of action in our provincial agricultural sector and the lack of support for producers across the province. For a government who believes they are the only ones that understand rural Saskatchewan, they seem to be totally ignoring — and worse yet, taking for granted — the folks they believe are their main support.

I've heard issues raised over the vague nature of the crop insurance review. I've heard concerns raised over the lack of proactive programming for water conservation and storage. And this is especially in areas that are suffering from no spring runoff and drought. I've also heard concerns from Saskatchewan livestock producers that they've been left to struggle through some tough market situations while producers in other provinces have received program support from their provincial government.

Commodities are down, prices have been dropping all summer, and inputs are climbing at a staggering rate. Fuel, fertilizer, and natural gas costs are all up, and with electricity soon to follow and, Mr. Speaker, not a word from the minister.

This government expects farm families and producers to be happy with an increase to their personal exemption when they calculate their taxes next spring. Despite a year of good crops and many, many difficulties, despite the year of good crops, Mr. Speaker, many difficult issues are knocking on producers' doors.

The minister who, and I quote, "said just about anything" while in opposition, is now strangely quiet, saying and doing nothing. There is absolutely nothing in the Speech from the Throne that I can see that improves the lives of my constituents in the rural area of Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Now, Mr. Speaker, another area where there has been a sad lack of action is on the housing file. The government is quite happy to cut ribbons and to take part in photo opportunities on projects that were begun and funded by the previous government. But what initiatives have they started to address the wait-lists that are right across the province? Well the answer is easy. It's easy to remember but not easy to take. It's zero. \$3.1 billion in surplus and not one project has been begun to address the issue of wait-lists. Wait-lists for seniors, wait-lists for affordable family housing, and wait-lists for low-income housing are growing across the province, but we've only seen a limited response from this government.

The few initiatives that have been announced only affected the major cities. Now, Mr. Speaker, we've seen and a couple of months ago the government come out and made a huge response to the affordability of housing across the province. It sounded like a good announcement until we actually started to look at the details and realized that there was nothing in the shelter allowance for families struggling in Moose Jaw. There was nothing in the shelter allowance for citizens struggling in Swift Current, nothing in the shelter allowance for families struggling in Estevan. There was nothing in the shelter allowance for families struggling in Weyburn and nothing for families in Yorkton.

It's a travesty, Mr. Speaker, that this government sits on the surplus that it is — \$3.1 billion — and families across the

province can't find or can't afford a decent place to live.

Mr. Speaker, the most common comments that I've heard recently, just probably over the past few days, have without a doubt been over the Sask-first policy imposed on our Crown corporations. Restricting the Crowns' ability to operate as a business really devalues an asset that belongs to the people of the province. The Crowns are an investment made by the people of Saskatchewan, an investment that has seen Saskatchewan at the leading edge in providing high-quality, low-cost service all across this province, and an investment that has returned dividends to the people of this province.

The Crown corporations will now with this policy be expected to operate in competitive markets, handcuffed by a right wing political ideology and the heavy hand of the Saskatchewan Party government. Resources have been stripped from the Crowns already. Now profitable subsidiaries are flagged for sale, and core responsibilities are being peeled off in the guise of working with partners. Many media reports express concern over the policy, and citizens, Mr. Speaker, citizens need to be extremely concerned and vocal in opposing what is the beginning of the privatized utilities in our province.

Mr. Speaker, there is some good things that come out of the Throne Speech, though. I've mentioned a couple. And the province, as we've all seen, has accumulated some huge surpluses over this past year, and I was very pleased to see the government designate the funding using a formula that was established by the previous government that has three basic pillars: debt paydown — which is always good, paying less interest — tax reduction, and programming. This has been a basic policy that has been used for many years, and I'm pleased that the Saskatchewan Party has again decided that this is the best use of a surplus.

Previously though, with this large of an increase in spending and the week of announcements that has followed and looks like it's continuing, we would expect to see some projections, a four-year projection of revenue for the province. These projections really would address any concerns that we have for the sustainable nature of the announcements and would show in fact that the books are in order and that there's proper planning in place. But, Mr. Speaker, there has been no projections for revenues forthcoming. And an unsettling part of the announcement that was made on tax reduction was the comments and the admission that revenue numbers had, and I quote, "not yet been nailed down" and a comment that they would be released later.

Well, Mr. Speaker, how do you make long-term tax reductions and hope that they are sustainable without clear and concrete projections on your revenues? They go hand in hand. And to make your announcements and do a week or so of good news announcements, it's all fine, but what's the sustainability of all of the programming and the tax reductions that have been announced? We have to wait to see until they have nailed down the revenue numbers.

And it's also a little more unsettling when we see the economic conditions across the world, because Saskatchewan is not an island. We are not without influences from outside forces, and when we see concerns in economies across the world, there are

concerns for what happens here in Saskatchewan. But, Mr. Speaker, we will just have to wait and see.

But I have to say it is a concern, and making announcements before we see any of the four-year projections for revenues is kind of like putting the cart before the horse, and it's so bad that we're not sure if the cart even has wheels or not, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, only time will tell.

And I know the member from Indian Head would love to get up and speak. I wish he would wait till it's his turn if he has so many comments to make, but he doesn't like the comments I'm making. He doesn't like the comments I'm making, and I wonder why. Have we hit too close to home when we have concerns over the four-year revenue projections?

Mr. Speaker, time will tell. But for now there are way too many gaps and unanswered questions in this Speech from the Throne, and I most definitely will be supporting the amendment. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education, the member for Canora-Pelly.

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is indeed an honour and a privilege to stand in the Legislative Assembly again to reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Speaker, the Canora-Pelly constituency is a great constituency, and I want to begin by thanking all of the constituents right across from Hudson Bay to Yorkton, because that's the extent of the constituency, for continually offering their advice, offering their help, and offering the advice and suggestions, Mr. Speaker, to be able to move the province of Saskatchewan forward.

Mr. Speaker, I have lived in or near the Canora-Pelly constituency all my life, but I haven't really moved from the place that I lived for all of my life, Mr. Speaker. And the reason for that is, and I want people to understand, that in 1995 when I was elected, the community of Invermay was in the Canora-Pelly constituency. But when the NDP did their redrawing of boundaries, of course that area was moved out of the Canora-Pelly constituency. But I've been fortunate that the people of Canora-Pelly recognize that the hard work that I put in, that I try to put in, is for their benefit, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to extend my appreciation also to my staff. Mr. Bob Blahay has been with me for well on to 12 years, Mr. Speaker, as my constituency assistant. He comes from the community of Preeceville and travels daily to my office in Canora and understands the many communities — we have about 19 urban communities in our constituency — and he understands the activities. He understands the makeup of councils whether they be urban councils or rural councils, and he has the ability to pick up the phone or to do an email to so many of my constituents.

I also want to extend my appreciation to two of my part-time staff, Carol Sleeva and Brandi Zavislak, who do just an

outstanding job. Carol also works for me here as a ministerial assistant part-time, and is providing that link between the constituency and the job that I now have as Minister of Education.

I also want to, you know, maybe apologize to a bit of a degree to the people of Canora-Pelly because now as a minister in the government it's more difficult to get back into the constituency for events on a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday. So the fact that I have not been present physically as much as I would like to be is of concern, and we're going to try to work on that.

I also want to extend my appreciation to my family. As many of my colleagues know, my spouse, my wife Gail, has recently superannuated as a teacher in this province after having taught for nearly 36 years as both a teacher and a principal. So while her education career has ended, now we have the opportunity of course to do many more things together that were put on hold before.

I want to extend my appreciation to my children as well. My son, Bryce, and his wife, Olivia, and our little granddaughter, Willow, will have now taken up residency in Yorkton. And Bryce's move as a teacher from Strasbourg to Churchbridge, while difficult, of course he's looking forward to the future as well. And I wish them well. And of course I want to extend my appreciation to Lindsay, our daughter in Calgary, who does email me and calls me to ensure that I'm listening to her as well.

Canora-Pelly constituency relies on agriculture, Mr. Speaker. And this year the agricultural community, especially in the grain sector, we have had a phenomenal harvest. There have been examples, of course, of hail storms and other situations, but the overall return for farmers, the yields, the quality has been outstanding . . .

The Speaker: — Why is the member on his feet . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I recognize the Minister of Education.

[15:45]

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have had the comment from many of our farmers in the Canora-Pelly constituency who said, after dozens and dozens of years of farming, that in fact this year was the best year ever. And it will allow farmers the opportunity to catch up on some bills, to deal with some of the conditions — the high input costs — and maybe even make a dollar or two.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to also mention that the Canora-Pelly constituency is in the centre of some very interesting developments. We now have two different companies who are exploring for shale gas in the constituency. A company referred to as Nordic Oil and Gas Ltd. has recently, through drilling for shale gas, discovered oil just north of Preeceville. And of course, the oil has been discovered but we're not sure yet, and they're doing testing as to see whether or not this has commercial viability.

And of course, Mr. Speaker, as I've mentioned in the Assembly before, Panterra resources has been drilling wells, test wells for

a great number of months now — in fact it's I believe over a year and a half — and they have exploration wells. They have continued with a fracture process so that they can determine whether or not these gas wells indeed are going to be able to supply a much needed natural resource, Mr. Speaker. So those are exciting developments.

But one of the other developments regarding agriculture and our reliance in Canora-Pelly on things that go on in other parts of the province are the examples of the canola crushing plants that are going to be built in the city of Yorkton. Mr. Speaker, the Canora-Pelly area grows a lot of canola and with the possibility of two canola crushing plants, the opportunity to ensure that there's a market will indeed be profitable for those farmers as well.

Mr. Speaker, before I begin on the full context of my remarks, I do want to extend my congratulations to the member for Cumberland. The member for Cumberland recently elected in a by-election and having served on the Board of Education of the Northern Lights School Division as its Chair — I know it means now that the board of course is going to be filling that vacancy — but he does come with a strong commitment to community, a strong commitment to ensuring that the students in the Cumberland constituency and in the Northern Lights School Division . . . So I wish him well in his tenure here as the member of the Legislative Assembly for Cumberland.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to outline a number of actions my government is taking to ensure a stronger Saskatchewan and a better life for all through investments in education.

In the 2008 Speech from the Throne we promised that efforts to engage First Nations and Métis students will extend throughout the education system. As you know, in Saskatchewan we have a young and growing First Nations and Métis population. We have committed to ensuring that instruction on the history and content of the treaties is mandatory in the provincial kindergarten to grade 12 system, and we are moving forward on this commitment.

We are working closely with the Office of the Treaty Commissioner and have recently released new treaty education materials to be field tested in schools throughout the province as one way to help students achieve a better understanding of treaties. As well, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's renewed provincial curriculum will place First Nations and Métis content, perspectives, and ways of knowing throughout the curriculum.

I am pleased to report that Saskatchewan will also be leading the Aboriginal Education Summit in 2009. This summit will bring together education ministers and officials from across Canada, as well as national Aboriginal leaders. An invitation will also be extended to federal government representatives.

We value the strong relationships with First Nations and Métis partners that focus on improved outcomes and achievements for all learners. Part of this includes our work with all of our education partners through the Provincial Panel on Student Achievement.

Mr. Speaker, improving and maintaining our province's

infrastructure is closely linked with growing our economy, improving our quality of life, and taking pride in where we live. I am pleased to report that this government has already made significant progress in addressing the infrastructure deficit created by years of neglect in the education system. So far over \$117 million has been committed in the budget to new construction and refurbishing existing schools. This includes moving forward school capital projects in Maple Creek, Saskatoon, Regina, Prince Albert, Oxbow, Duck Lake, Humboldt, Porcupine Plain, and La Ronge.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in addition to those projects announced already we also announced approval in principle of another \$60 million which are projects that will start in 2009. These projects, Mr. Deputy Speaker, include Elrose comprehensive, Hafford Central, Regina's Arcola Community School, Regina's Douglas Park Elementary School, and Campbell Collegiate, Saskatoon's St. Mary Community School, and the Weyburn Comprehensive School. My colleague from Weyburn will appreciate that announcement, Mr. Speaker. Funding was also committed to support Humboldt Elementary and Turnor Lake in 2010-11, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Our government has made a commitment to take a forward-looking approach to any government surpluses, using half to pay down debt and investing half in our province's infrastructure. This is the first year of a three-year development and implementation plan for a comprehensive school facilities strategy. This strategy will help ensure high quality, right size schools where they are needed that support students in learning for their futures.

Under the NDP, Mr. Deputy Speaker, under their watch, there was very little done to address school capital. That's why we are facing a \$1.2 billion school infrastructure deficit crisis. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the major capital list for 2008 to 2012 is published during the summer. And I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the projects that are listed here, there are 96 projects, and the School Boards Association is looking at in fact even a larger number than what we have indicated but that is nearing \$1 billion or, as the School Boards Association has said, \$1.2 billion of infrastructure deficit that that NDP government left behind, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, with the commitment we have demonstrated and the investment we have put forward in the first year of our mandate, the Saskatchewan School Boards Association states, and I quote, "... [it] is encouraged by the government's commitment to provide a long-range facility planning framework." Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation Dianne Woloschuk said, and I quote, "When was the last time K-12 education has seen such increases."

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to continuing to move forward with new capital projects. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the number of projects moved forward thus far demonstrates that our government understands the importance school infrastructure plays in supporting continued economic growth in Saskatchewan. Mr. Deputy Speaker, 16 years under the NDP there was no economic growth so they did not have to deal with overcrowding issues.

In the 2008 Speech from the Throne, we also noted that we

would soon be making an announcement that would benefit the technological infrastructure of schools and libraries.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on Monday, October 27, to kick off Education Week 2008, I had the pleasure of announcing \$10 million in funding for technology improvements for Saskatchewan schools, public libraries, and regional colleges.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, by investing in technology infrastructure, our government wants to ensure that all citizens have access to information, resources, and learning opportunities that prepare them for the future. The province is investing \$5.2 million over four years to implement a single integrated library system, or SILS. This includes \$1.3 million for purchasing local branch library computers.

SILS is a cost-effective, sustainable computer platform that allows the 317 local public library branches in the province's 10 public library systems to share their resources. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm just going to mention the public libraries within my constituency that will now have the opportunity to upgrade their hardware and ensure that they can take part within SILS — Pelly, Norquay, Preeceville, Sturgis, Canora, Kamsack, Togo, Springside, and Buchanan. And I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, right across the government, and including some of the members opposite, they will have the opportunity to see the investment of this government actually helping the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, the new system will allow for easier and equally accessible library services for the province's 500,000 registered users. That's right, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There are 500,000 users of the public libraries within this province, and they are going to be able to benefit from this announcement.

Allan Johnson, director of the Southeast Regional Library, characterizes this announcement as the most significant since 1967 when regional libraries were first developed, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's how important it is to the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — The education technology infrastructure funding of more than \$4 million will benefit three primary infrastructure components: the live satellite network, CommunityNet, and the blackboard learning management system.

The live satellite network will now provide audio and video conferencing interactive broadcasts and will be expanded so all pre-K to 12 [pre-kindergarten to grade 12] schools can participate in education programming delivered through the network. CommunityNet connections across the province will be upgraded in many locations and made available in all schools, public libraries, and regional colleges. Mr. Deputy Speaker, also the Blackboard Learning Management System will be available to more students and teachers and will offer

new features such as collaborative tools, courses, and resources.

Ernie Cychmistruk, executive director of the Saskatchewan School Boards Association said, and I quote:

Our association is particularly pleased with the expansion of the LIVE Satellite Network. The fact that the satellite hardware and supports will soon be in every Saskatchewan school — rural and urban — holds a great deal of promise for enhancing learning opportunities for our students.

So, Mr. Speaker, you can see the reaction right across the province, from all of the 10 public library boards, from the 317 individual libraries, from our partners in the school system, and who will be ensuring now that we can provide the same equitable resources to all students, no matter where they live in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our youngest citizens and their parents also need our continued support. More and more families are recognizing the benefits of quality early learning and child care. The growth in our economy is increasing the need for child care spaces. In the 2008-09 year, we have invested 500 new child care spaces that are now opening up in communities across the province. The total number of licensed child care spaces is now 10,400, reflecting the 2008-09 increase of 1.7 million. This will allow more parents to work or further their education and participate in our province's economy.

I am pleased to report that we have also increased the number of pre-kindergartens in the province by 38. That's 38 new programs, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This means that there are now 193 pre-kindergarten programs across the province serving over 3,000 children, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Our commitments to early learning and child care are works in progress, and this is work that will continue.

[16:00]

Mr. Speaker, as you know, an important priority of government is our promise to reduce the education portion of property tax. Our commitment to reducing the education portion of property taxes by doubling rebates over the next four years is on track. This year the agricultural property tax credit was increased from 38 per cent to 47 per cent, and the commercial and residential property tax credit was increased from 10 per cent to 12 per cent. In the 2009-10 budget, these credits will be increased to 56 per cent and 15 per cent respectively, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's a promise that we made during our election campaign, and that's a promise we intend to keep, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — While this is a tremendous first step, and I recall the former premier of the NDP when he said at a convention that . . . And I believe it was about four years ago when he said status quo was not acceptable to the NDP. And they did nothing, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We are getting around to it now and we're going to deal with this on a permanent basis, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — This is a good first step in shifting the tax burden from property owners to the provincial government. As you know, my colleague, the Legislative Secretary and Rosetown MLA has been tasked with conducting the review of the current Saskatchewan K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] education funding program and property taxation regimes. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that he has been hard at work, unlike what some of the members opposite are suggesting. My colleague has consulted with over 30 different groups from across the province as well as Alberta and Manitoba, including school divisions, education stakeholders, business groups, municipal organizations, and government officials from other jurisdictions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a request for written submission from Saskatchewan citizens was also made in early summer. A final report will be delivered to me in early 2009. We expect that this report will form the basis for reforming the education tax system and reducing the education portion of property taxes.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, those are a few of the things that have been highlighted in the Throne Speech. They've been highlighted last spring. They are the first steps of a government that isn't even one year old yet, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we have a number of incentives and programs within education that I'm so very proud of.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in my mandate letter from the Premier, one of the first things that the Premier pointed out to me was, he said that the following initiative must be undertaken. And it was to revise *The Education Act* to improve the consultation and assessment process before significant changes are made to school facilities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want the people of Saskatchewan . . . And I've said this already a couple of times, but you have to ensure that everyone hears about it because not everyone watches the legislative channel or reads articles that are in the *Leader-Post*. The *School Review Handbook* was worked on by all stakeholders in the province of Saskatchewan: the Teachers' Federation; the School Boards Association; the League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents. And they have worked diligently to come up with, I believe, a handbook that will assist. It will assist a number of communities, and it will help.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are four paragraphs in the opening page that I want to put on the record so that everyone in the province of Saskatchewan — whether they be a student, whether they be a teacher, whether they be a parent, whether they be just a taxpayer in the province of Saskatchewan — understands the handbook and the reason for it. And I quote from the handbook, and it says this:

Saskatchewan's economy and population are growing and along with this growth comes hope and optimism for the future.

However, in some parts of Saskatchewan, demographic shifts and decreasing birthrates have resulted in declining enrollments. With very small student numbers, it becomes

difficult to provide a complete educational program that responds to the needs of all students, to provide elective courses, and to attract administrators and specialist teachers. In some situations, aging school structures are an additional factor that must be considered.

As a result, boards of education must make decisions about the viability of schools in some communities. In order to maintain the quality of educational programming, it is sometimes necessary to close schools with very small enrollments or reduce the number of grades or years offered. When grade or year reduction occurs, it is typically high school or middle years programs that are discontinued.

This handbook was developed to provide information to communities, boards of education, school community councils and schools that may be facing the review of a school. This handbook describes the school review process, addresses practical matters associated with closing a school, defines a school of opportunity, and outlines the process that may lead to designation as a school of opportunity.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, those few paragraphs, I think, tell the people of Saskatchewan that there is a process in place, that there are numbers, there are enrolment numbers where the ministry believes . . . that are needed to deliver a quality education program. There is also a consideration of distance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so that we can ensure that students, especially at the very young age, are not travelling huge distances by school bus to attend a school. And that is why we have instituted schools of necessity funding for those communities that are more than 40 kilometres away, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from the next school.

But we also have put in place a handbook, so that people understand that when an enrolment declines, when an enrolment of a particular school this year — that ended last year, at the end of June 2008 — the enrolment I believe was about 35 students in a K to 9 school. And the opening enrolment of that school this year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is nine. Now the school board with that particular school within its school division boundaries is going to have to make a decision. And they have placed that school under review because *The Education Act* and the changes that we made clearly have extended the length of time that the board has to take to inform the public, to make its decision about school closure.

One of the decisions, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was that by October 15 — after the enrolment numbers are known, which is the September 30 numbers — by October 15 the board of education must decide to either place the school under review or not. And again it is the purview of the board to make that decision.

In the province of Saskatchewan there are four school divisions who have placed schools under review. That doesn't mean that those schools are necessarily closing, but the board now will be following a process outlined in this document where now they will be able to communicate with the public. They will be establishing a committee, a review committee with members of the municipal councils as part of that review committee, to ensure that the public has an opportunity to describe what they

see as the potential school for their community.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that we have helped. We have helped the rural communities, especially, understand what is needed to have a school that will be providing quality education.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are so many things that have happened in this province in the education communities — the great things that have happened with community schools, the nutrition program, the child care spaces, the pre-kindergarten. I can go on and on.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can see . . . I think you can see that I'm very excited and very pleased with the Throne Speech that has been delivered by our Premier on behalf of this government. And I will be supporting the Throne Speech.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the minister for Industry and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's certainly my pleasure to enter the Throne Speech debate and speak about the priorities of our government here in Saskatchewan.

Clearly the three priorities that were outlined in the Throne Speech, the major ones at least, were tax cuts, debt paydown, and infrastructure. Very important initiatives on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan. Clearly the tax cuts were historic in nature, the largest tax cut in the history of our province. Each and every person in Saskatchewan will benefit from these tax cuts. There will certainly be a great opportunity for people now to make priorities within their own lives and households, businesses, etc. in terms of the priorities that they have for themselves and their families.

Debt paydown, of course very historic in that regard as well. We are moving, albeit gradually, but moving in a very positive way towards retiring the debt of the province of Saskatchewan — some 40 per cent of the debt paid down in one year in office. I think it's a pretty good track record, I would say, for the province of Saskatchewan to see that kind of thing going forward. We've got a ways to go yet, but this government is clearly . . . puts that as a priority moving forward, to eliminate the debt here in Saskatchewan.

In terms of infrastructure, we see a tremendous amount of resources being dedicated towards infrastructure, whether it's highways, education facilities, health care facilities, the kinds of things that the people of Saskatchewan have been calling for, for some time.

And I look towards the colleagues on the other side of the House and you look at the infrastructure deficit. I think the departments have looked at it, and it's something in the magnitude of \$15 billion of infrastructure deficit that there is in Saskatchewan just in highways, health care, education.

And I couldn't help but note, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that when the NDP were speaking about the Throne Speech, each and

every one of them that has spoke so far talked about how if only the people of Saskatchewan knew what all of the good things that the NDP had done for them, that they'd still be in office.

And the fact of the matter is, is the people of Saskatchewan last year in November judged that administration, it judged them as wanting. It judged them clearly and said that the direction that they were taking for the province of Saskatchewan was the wrong direction, that the people of Saskatchewan wanted a new future in this province.

The people of Saskatchewan were tired of an administration that said things like we are the wee province. We are constantly going to be in and out of equalization. We are a province that, you know, simply cannot compete with other places in the world or indeed even in Canada. The fact of the matter is, is people are tired of that kind of attitude. And that's why, members opposite, that you sit right where you are today.

People want to see some optimism. People want to see a future that they can look towards for themselves and their families as a positive place to be, and that is exactly what they are seeing.

In Saskatchewan, all across this province, we see a level of optimism that we haven't seen probably in our lifetimes. People are looking at Saskatchewan in a much different way. And all you have to do is talk to some people from outside of the province. We have a huge group of ambassadors and high commissioners from around the world in Saskatchewan today and in the next few days, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And they are saying that to us. In talking to them last night and this morning — at the reception last night and the event this morning — they're saying that they are seeing a very definite change in Saskatchewan, a change in attitude, a level of confidence that they haven't seen in Saskatchewan in a long, long time, if ever.

They are looking at Saskatchewan and saying, this looks like a great place to invest. This looks like a great place to do business. This looks like a great place to work and be employed. And clearly that's the message that they are seeing, and we are seeing, coming in from across the world.

People are, in an unprecedented fashion, investing in Saskatchewan. In the area of cabinet responsibility that I have, Mr. Deputy Speaker — the energy and resource sector — again we are seeing that same kind of unprecedented growth. One billion dollars in land sales this year so far. We still have one more land sale in this calendar year and two more land sales in this fiscal year. And the previous record, I think, was in 2005 — \$200 million. We're \$800 million over that right now, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And we'll have another, at least one more in the calendar year and two more in the fiscal year. And we will continue to see that kind of growth.

In addition to that, we are seeing in Saskatchewan about \$1 billion of extra resources coming in from the potash sector alone. And it's interesting — when the NDP talk about the resource sector, they are very close to now saying that the province of Saskatchewan should be doing what Alberta did in terms of changing royalty structures. And I would caution members opposite, if you want to stifle the kind of growth that we are seeing in Saskatchewan, embark upon that trail because that's exactly what happened in Alberta.

It's not where we want to go as an administration in Saskatchewan. We want to see that growth continue. We want to see that growth that we're seeing all across Saskatchewan in the resource sector. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's certainly the direction that this government is going to take. We've just barely got it started here in Saskatchewan.

Our resource sector is very small in comparison to Alberta's resource sector. But we've got the pump primed now, Mr. Speaker. The companies are coming in in an unprecedented fashion. We see, as I said, \$1 billion worth of land sales so far. The multiplier effect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in terms of land sales, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers estimate that the multiplier effect from land sales is about seven or eight times. Because naturally the companies don't just buy the land, because they clearly want to have producing wells on that land in order to get back their return on investment. So they get to work and do the exploration and then production and then obviously, you know, start paying back the land sale costs that they've encountered. So clearly we are going to see more and more growth in this sector for some time to come.

[16:15]

In the potash areas in our province, Mr. Speaker, we are seeing again unprecedented growth. And the companies, I believe it's something in the magnitude of eight to eight and a half billion dollars worth of announced expansions in the potash industry. Tremendous activity again, once again for our province — employment opportunities, business activity — and a tremendous investment and an investment into the economy. And clearly they have a confidence level in Saskatchewan that we haven't seen in a long time.

In the resource sector, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you would know that the NDP never anticipated any kind of growth in this area. And evidence of that is really quite clear that when it came to the opportunity for a new mine in Saskatchewan, a new potash mine, the NDP never anticipated that, and so the royalty structure is this sliding formula that doesn't make any sense to almost anyone. The companies are taxed at different levels, which seems bizarre in itself. And they simply didn't anticipate the fact that we would see any kind of growth or any kind of opportunity for a new greenfield mine, a new mining operation in Saskatchewan. So the resource tax on that is set at zero. If there is a new mine constructed, the resource tax is set at zero. So that's something that as a government we're going to have to deal with.

We're talking to the potash companies about that, what would be a fair and equitable system, what would be the appropriate levels of taxation for a new and emerging mining interest here in Saskatchewan. And we want to make sure that we get this right because we want to ensure that the companies look at Saskatchewan, as they have been, as a great place to invest rather than as a place that's going to tax them out of existence as has happened in the past by the NDP administrations opposite.

Last year in legislation we passed the potash repeal Act to repeal the legislation that was put in place in the '70s and nationalized the industry. And the members opposite, it was interesting their reaction to that, kind of not wanting to really go

there. There was a few members — I can see them across the way from locally here in Regina — that were very, very defensive of the nationalization of the potash industry. Coronation Park comes to mind as one of them that was very, very adamant that they'd made all of the right decisions with respect to that. As a member of the NDP and someone that firmly believes in the *Regina Manifesto*, it's no surprise to me that he'd be in support of that. The fact of the matter is, is the world has passed the members opposite by in many, many ways, Mr. Speaker.

And I can think of again in the Throne Speech debate, we've heard a lot about the Crown corporations here in Saskatchewan. We have made the commitment that we're not going to privatize the Crown corporations. And somehow out of those kinds of statements in the legislature and outside of the legislature, the NDP have concluded that somehow we're going to just watch them wither away and work towards the elimination of them in a backdoor fashion. It couldn't be further from the truth, Mr. Deputy Speaker, could not be further from the truth.

I remember in speeches over the years, listening to members opposite about Crown corporations, and I have to admit it made a little bit of sense. They were saying that, you know, there isn't that much in terms of low-hanging fruit in terms of investments in Saskatchewan; maybe we have to go outside of Saskatchewan as Crown corporations and invest. And they assured the people of this province that they were going to be very, very prudent in those investments.

They were going to go across the world, and they were going to critically assess these things. Due diligence was the buzzwords that I heard from every single member of the NDP opposite. They were saying that they were going to make sure that they made these investments in a very prudent fashion. And they were going to go into these other jurisdictions and make these investments and bring home money to invest in turn into Saskatchewan, thereby strengthening the Crown corporations and thereby building a better future for Saskatchewan people. And it made some sense, you have to admit. It made some sense that that would be a good investment strategy if you were good at making investments.

The fact of the matter was, is that these so-called captains of industry opposite — the boys that are sitting at the back of the room there — were largely responsible. I think the gentleman on the left extreme, in many ways on the left extreme over there, was one of the ones that would go across the world, take a flight out of Regina, and head off down to Chile or other places in the world. And they would sit down and they'd do that critical assessment of these industries that they were going to invest in. And they would come back and they would say, we've found another one. We've found another great investment for the people of Saskatchewan.

And what was the track record after that was all done? Out of 26 investments, you have an absolutely perfect record — a loser in every occasion. A loser in every occasion, and that's the part that is just so galling to the taxpayers of Saskatchewan, they were sold a bill of goods. They were told by these people, by the NDP opposite, that they were going to invest taxpayers' hard-earned dollars and they were going to make a tremendous

rate of return for them — 15 per cent rate of return. That was what the benchmark was going to be.

You know, when you're going to make an investment you sit down, you critically assess it. You say, here's all of the benchmarks that we have to meet in order for this to be a successful investment, just as any investor would do — whether they're investing in a mutual fund, whether they're investing in a business, whether investing in any type of any investment opportunity that might present itself.

So the NDP went through all of that due diligence and everything else. And then they came back and at the end of the day come back with losing 22 per cent. So a negative return, a negative return to the people of Saskatchewan — some \$500 million invested and that's the rate of return that they came back with. And members opposite still say, they still say from their seats and they still say in their speeches in the legislature here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this was the right investment strategy.

Well I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that anybody that would invest those kinds of dollars on behalf of the taxpayers of Saskatchewan and come up with that negative rate of return, it's been an absolutely colossal failure on behalf of the taxpayers of this province. It is shameful. It was the wrong thing to do, your assessment in terms of all of these things. I can only imagine the projects that you invested in across the world on behalf of Saskatchewan taxpayers. They must have been laughing at you as you left the building. They must have been thinking to themselves, we were finally able to find a sucker to unload this business opportunity on, and it came in the form of the former premier sitting over there. That was the type of thing that we saw in Saskatchewan.

So what did we did do, Mr. Deputy Speaker? We've taken the initiative to assess these investments. We've taken the opportunity to sit down. We've invited in a nationally recognized accounting firm to do an assessment of them. They've come back to us and said, here's the track record. The numbers don't lie. The numbers speak for themselves.

If you'd have made the 15 per cent rate of return, if you'd have made the 15 per cent rate of return that you said you were going to, then you could say this was a successful investment strategy. But if you were an investment manager, I can tell you that the difference between private sector investment and the kinds of investment that you guys made as a government on behalf of taxpayers, if you were a private sector investment fund manager, you would've got fired after the very first one. You wouldn't have had the opportunity to invest time after time after time after time.

And I can see the member from North Battleford shaking his head and saying, that isn't the case. Well I don't know what is the case then. I don't know what is the case then. You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think when people pay their taxes, I think when they see on their cheque that there's been a deduction to the provincial government, I think what they think is going to happen with those resources is, first of all it's going to be invested in services here in Saskatchewan, whether it's health care, whether it's education, whether it's highways, whether it is any other of a myriad of functions that government

provide. Those are the types of things that they, I believe, think that they . . . You know, they look at their cheque and they say, well as long it's going to these areas, I can agree with that.

But when you have a government opposite that decides that they're going to all of a sudden become investment fund managers on behalf of them, I think that's a very, very different situation, Mr. Speaker. I think they look at it and say . . . I think that people of Saskatchewan are very, very prudent in terms of those kinds of things, very, very cautious, very, very small "c" conservative in terms of these. They're saying, all right, as long as you've got the investment criteria down as you have said, you know — 15 per cent rate of return — as long as you're going to very critically assess these ventures, as long as they're going to be for the benefit of Saskatchewan, I can go along with it.

But the fact of the matter was, is that, as I've said earlier, it's resulted in a colossal failure, a tremendous loss of resources for the people of Saskatchewan. And you look at the kinds of opportunities that that \$500 million of investment would have had for Saskatchewan. We'd have seen things like a children's hospital. We'd have seen much better highways in Saskatchewan. We'd have seen a much larger investment in educational institutions here in Saskatchewan. All of those kinds of things. And you know what drove that whole philosophy was that they felt that they were smarter than the average investor out there.

They had that level of confidence in themselves that was unerring, and the NDP can do no wrong, Mr. Speaker. And we have heard that time and time and time. That comes through as a common thread in all of their speeches — the NDP can do no wrong. After all if the people of Saskatchewan would have only been paying closer attention, we wouldn't be sitting on the opposition benches: that's what you hear from them.

And they're saying that the ensuing good fortune that Saskatchewan has gone through in the last year since the election has had nothing to do with government policy. It has everything to do with what they did in the past.

Well it's a very, very sad commentary. In fact, Mr. Speaker, what it says to the people of Saskatchewan is, essentially what it says to the people of Saskatchewan is, if you were only smart enough to understand what we were trying to do, you would've probably re-elected us. And the fact of the matter is that the people of Saskatchewan were much smarter than they thought they were, than the NDP gave them credit for. They took a look at some of these kinds of things and said no, we don't want to be a part of that any longer. We want a change in attitude here in Saskatchewan. We want to see a government that takes the steps necessary and puts in place the building blocks to build a much stronger Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would argue that this Throne Speech does exactly that.

And the reviews across the province are clear with respect to the Throne Speech and other initiatives that the government has put in place. All you have to do is read the editorial content from paper after paper after paper in Saskatchewan and sense to the people of this province that this is the right direction for government to move in, that we are moving in the right direction for the first time in a long time — that the old, tired

NDP philosophy of the past was a failed philosophy. It's a philosophy that has resulted in a stagnant economy for years and years and years. It's resulted in the young people of this province leaving our province in droves to places like Alberta.

And it's interesting when you're out there talking with people, many of the people are friends that I grew up and went to school with through the years that have now moved on and made tremendous careers for themselves outside of Saskatchewan. They may have left 25, 30 years ago, but when you talk to them, they say to you something that's a very important fact that we should never forget. They say to you, you know, I still think of Saskatchewan as home. Even though they haven't lived here in 25 years, they still call Saskatchewan home. They still do things like they cheer for the Riders. You know they're very, very conscious of the political activity here in Saskatchewan. And now, what we are seeing is, is those people are saying there's opportunity in Saskatchewan; they're coming back home.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the other things that's a very interesting phenomena is that we see in Saskatchewan today is, when you look at . . . many of us, if not all of us, opposition members included, get opportunity to attend graduation ceremonies. I remember very distinctly in my constituency for years and years and years, and the members opposite if they were truthful with themselves, they would have heard this also. They would know that many of the young people would say that they, unfortunately in the past, can't see an opportunity in Saskatchewan. They see their opportunity in Alberta, British Columbia, or other jurisdictions. Used to be something in the magnitude of 95 per cent of any graduating class would look at it and say, I'm moving out of this province as soon as I've got my education completed.

Now we see that reversing trend, Mr. Speaker, where you're talking to these school groups and graduating classes, and they're saying the exact opposite. Saskatchewan is where I want to stay. Saskatchewan is where I want to build a career. Saskatchewan is where I want to be employed. Here's where I want to build a life for myself and my family. That's the kind of thing that we're hearing across Saskatchewan, and that's the kind of optimism, the unprecedented level of optimism that we've seen in Saskatchewan.

[16:30]

It's also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's built on a level of trust. The people of Saskatchewan, yes, have voted the NDP in on a number of occasions. But in recent years, we've seen in a party, a political party that's lost its way in many, many ways, Mr. Speaker. And I think this most recent situation in terms of the Murdoch Carriere incident is probably one of the most damning that I can ever imagine that a political party has to go through.

And when you look at it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, here was an individual, here was an individual that abused some fellow employees in a horrendous fashion. Here were people that were . . . And then when it was found out to be the situation, the NDP did everything in its power to cover it up, right up to and including telling the people of Saskatchewan — after it became a full-blown public affair after that — that they fired Murdoch Carriere.

Well the fact of the matter is, is that every single one of the members opposite know that that isn't the case, and they took all kinds of steps to ensure that the people of this province did not know what the truth was. It's only recently, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the people of this province are starting to see the true NDP for what they really are. The fact of the matter is, is they covered it up. The fact of the matter is, is they told the people of Saskatchewan something that was clearly not the truth in terms of whether this individual was fired or whether this individual actually resigned.

So people in Saskatchewan now are seeing the NDP for what they are, Mr. Speaker. And what they are, parliamentary language does not allow for me to say what they really are. But the fact of the matter is, is people are looking at it and saying they were not told the truth by the NDP opposite, and I think this is going to be a very, very difficult time for the NDP opposite to explain this to the people of Saskatchewan for the next number of years about how you were not . . . You were not accurate in your assessment of all this I think would the most charitable way of putting it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this brings me back to the Throne Speech debate. The people of Saskatchewan have seen the type of priorities of this new administration. They like those priorities. They like those priorities here in Saskatchewan. We are very proud of what has happened in the last year in this province. We are very excited about the potential of our province for the first time in a long time. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be, along with my colleagues here, voting very much in favour of the Throne Speech.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great privilege for me to stand in this House and speak on behalf of the residents of Regina Lakeview, and I will have a number of comments, I think, from the residents of the whole of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I especially want to congratulate the member from Cumberland as he has taken his place here in this legislature. He follows in a long line of very capable members from that particular constituency. And by what we've seen so far, he's showed the same kind of diligence and mettle and good judgment, and we look forward to working with him for many years.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say on behalf of the residents of Regina Lakeview that there are many issues and positive things that come in this particular Throne Speech, but there are a number of difficulties as well.

Mr. Speaker, many years ago I was a student of history, and one of my favourite topics when I was studying history at university was a subject called historiography. And many people don't know what the definition of historiography is, but basically it's the history of history. And the important thing about historiography, when you study that particular subject, is that you can see how the story changes depending on the time and

the decade. And, Mr. Speaker, I would have to say that the things that I've heard over the last number of days . . .

The Speaker: — Order. The member from Regina Lakeview has been given the floor.

Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I would have to say that the things that I've heard over the last number of days describing the situation in our province and how things have been done remind me of that particular course, where you were continually looking out for the revisionist historians, and your job was to go and see who was telling the story and why they were saying things and why they were emphasizing particular points.

And I think the speaker who just spoke to the House, the member from Kindersley, is a good example of somebody who has been around this particular place for a long time, but his perspective seems to shift. There are many kinds of things that we remember from the time that his party was in government and even from the time when he was leading that crew that . . . Well the stories kind of shift.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I think the people of Saskatchewan have understood that basic perspective. I always say that the voters in Saskatchewan are very careful, and they look and they make some decisions about what should happen. They also recognize that everybody should have a chance.

One of the things that I heard after the election just about a year ago was that, well we kind of voted with our fingers crossed this time. We're going to give these guys a chance to see how it works. And I'd have to say that when I travelled in southeast Saskatchewan with the member from Rosemont and the member from Douglas Park, right into the heart of the constituencies of a number of the members including the Speaker, that we ended up hearing from many people that, well we're watching very carefully. And the sense that I got in talking with people was that they're still watching very carefully. And I think that the members opposite need to be very careful.

Now what I would say is that this Throne Speech has a number of very careful policies in it that build on the work that was done over the last 30 years. And those kind of policies are good. And I talk about some of the things that happened in the highways and transportation. The members opposite have taken the good work that's gone over the last number of years of the NDP government and expanded on that. Mr. Speaker, I think that in education we just . . .

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

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that when some new members are in this House, they forget what it is that we're elected to do. And so I think part of it is, you know, to listen to the ideas that are exchanged in this place. And so I think that we should proceed that way.

Mr. Speaker, a number of the things that were set out by the Minister of Education today reflected a building on things that had happened over a number of years. Clearly there are more opportunities to do things this particular year because of the

revenues. We know that that can go up and down.

Mr. Speaker, I would also say that within the Health portfolio, there's been many things that are being done that are building on the previous work, and I commend that. But I think that the people of Saskatchewan are watching very carefully because the key message is, we took a chance to see whether this new crew had the ability to move forward. We're still holding judgment on that, and we're watching every year. The one year anniversary will come up very soon. I think there are a number of people who are really questioning whether they did the right thing. And so we will continue to do that.

Now there are some areas, Mr. Speaker, where there's some problems that have arisen. One of those areas relates to the whole issue of how the new government seems to deal with the world. And it basically is this perspective that somehow we in Saskatchewan are our own entity. And, Mr. Speaker, I get the impression from a number of the statements made by some of the members opposite that they don't recognize how much we've become a global community.

I often remind my colleagues that when I was elected in 1995 — and some of them were elected in '91 as part of the new government — I was enthusiastic, and I was convinced there were many things that we could do. What I learned over many years as a minister of the Crown, working within our caucus and within our cabinet in developing policy, is that each year we had less ability to influence what was happening here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I would say that the ability to make decisions that reflect what happens in Saskatchewan is less today than it was a year ago or so when these guys across were elected. And so, Mr. Speaker, if you don't take that into account when you look at your long-term policies, you will get into major trouble.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Douglas Park earlier today was talking about some of the policies around the Crowns. We know that the policy that was announced last week has already been panned by both the *Leader-Post* and *The StarPhoenix*. I wasn't surprised, Mr. Speaker, but I think that the members opposite were very surprised. They saw this as a new, sort of, bright perspective.

But I know from talking to my neighbours, talking to the people that I know within the Crowns and within the provincial government that when you start retreating into yourself, like a hermit crab retreats into its shell, you start losing a perspective on what's happening. And, Mr. Speaker, I think there are a number of policies that this government is getting itself into — which are included in this Throne Speech — which reflect that kind of a perspective of retreat. And that's exactly the wrong thing to do for a province like Saskatchewan which relies on incredible connections around the world.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think that if I have any word of advice for the members opposite is that they need to go and see what's happening in other places. When people come here to visit, listen to them carefully about how things are organized because some of the things and some of the perspective that they've presented are so inward-looking that they're going to stunt the economic growth of Saskatchewan in ways that are quite

incredible.

Mr. Speaker, when one looks at a corporation that you want to operate in a business-like fashion and you tell them that there's no opportunity for growth or that the growth is going to happen in a place where they can't see that that's going to be a major revenue changer, you end up eliminating the possibilities and therefore eliminating the hope of building.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think that there are a whole number of policies that have been set out and that are included in the Throne Speech but are set out other places that are not fully thought through. And I know that unfortunately some of the senior policy people who can provide some good, strong advice are no longer in the provincial government. I'm not sure. Hopefully there are some new people that have been hired that can provide that good, solid, independent advice, but what I've seen so far raises a lot of concerns for me.

And I guess what I would say is, when you're looking at the policies in Enterprise Saskatchewan, when you're looking at how you step into working with business that you don't throw out all of the things that we learned as a government about how you do some of these things. Frankly, people don't believe it when ministers of the Crown now stand up and say we did this or we paid down that or we did this. They always come and they say, well we know where this really came. It was all of us working together and that the economic situation has presented some really good opportunities for the new government. So I encourage the members opposite, when they're going forward and looking and developing this, that they actually build on some of the things that we've already done.

[16:45]

Now another aspect that causes some concern for me relates to some of the responses around the climate change file. Very quickly the government took away close to a \$300 million resource which was allocated for working on the climate change file. We haven't seen much yet. We're hoping that something is going to be coming. But, Mr. Speaker, there were some plans and some things that were set out where the resources have been removed and put into some other places.

Mr. Speaker, it's quite interesting that the Minister of Environment has lots of things to say from her seat. We would prefer if she set out her plan and what she's going to do.

I think what happens is there's a whole number of areas in this Throne Speech where there are some clear plans that need to be laid out, but they're not being laid out. The public knows that and they're asking questions, and they do need resources to do some of those things.

Another area that comes up no matter where I travel in the province relates to housing, and this is a challenge that is there in every community. When we were in Estevan — well I think it's about a month or so ago — one of the points that they made was that there were close to 1,000 jobs in that area. People would come in from other places because they'd heard about this, but when they couldn't find a place to live, they had to move on. I've heard that in other communities. We see that in the paper on a regular basis. And that is a serious issue that

requires a co-operative government response, and we haven't really seen anything yet that is going to deal with that particular issue. So you will hear from us that, as opposition, we'll be reflecting what we hear from our constituents in that whole housing area, because you can't build a community without having decent places for people to live and to make a commitment to being part of the community.

Another part of this Throne Speech that seems to have some real difficulties relates to some of the discussions around one of the most challenging aspects of the future of Saskatchewan, and that's the area that's been described in working with First Nations and Métis people around the duty to consult, dealing with resources, and how we allocate resources to make sure that many of the people who have been left behind in our community are included.

This is a complicated area that's not going to be solved in any simple fashion. It's going to take a lot of work and co-operation from the federal government, provincial government, local municipalities, RMs, and cities, but it's going to take some leadership from within this legislature, within this place. There are some very clear signs of hope. But I think there are also some great misunderstandings, and there are some frustrations or dashing of hopes that have taken place over the last year where we need to make sure we get a little different perspective that allows for a solution.

And I'm not certain, Mr. Speaker, where and how one gets the answer, but I'm convinced that it will come through co-operation and working together with all people, including many of us on this side of the House who have many years of experience in trying to solve some of these particular problems. And so there's an example, Mr. Speaker, of where you can say words, but basically it's going to come down to what are the relationships and how they build.

And that brings me on to another area where I think that this particular Throne Speech glosses over or doesn't reflect a major concern of many people in Saskatchewan. And that relates to this government's relationship with working people and with labour. And, Mr. Speaker, it serves no good purpose to be at war with working people's representative agencies, because it causes difficulties on a whole number of levels.

Mr. Speaker, it may be that it's time for some new leadership within some of those files or some new perspective within how this happens, but it is a time where there needs to be some discussion and some change in attitude, because the province will not grow as long as people are fighting or feel like there's a threat to some of the things that they've worked very hard to develop.

And, Mr. Speaker, that's an area which is obviously one where there aren't the skill, or maybe the will, to try to sort out some of these problems. But I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that one of the things that should be part of the agenda of the government as we move forward is to figure out another way to deal with a number of the issues that they've raised in the whole area of labour, because what they're doing so far is not getting a solution that is of benefit to the people of the province.

And ultimately everything that's done by a government relates

to, what will the ultimate benefit be for the people of the province? And that's one area where you can have your strong positions, but you need to develop relationships that can work over the longer term. And so far it's been just stick your finger in the eye or trade another problem or ignore some very legitimate concerns, and not deal with some of the real issues. So that's not necessarily directly in this Throne Speech, but it is an underlying theme that causes problems in a whole number of other areas.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when you've spent a number of years around the government and around the legislature, you have the option of becoming very cynical or you have the option of becoming somebody who believes in the structures and the way we solve problems. I think that my colleagues on this side of the House are all people who believe that the legislature, whether you're in government or in opposition, there are roles that you have which are of benefit to the people of Saskatchewan. And I know for myself, but I know also for my colleagues, we are continuing to raise the issues that we see. We'll be putting forward ideas and suggestions. We'll be asking hard questions about a number of the policies that are being developed in this Throne Speech. And I think that it's probably a good idea that — especially some of the newer members opposite but all members — that they would listen carefully to what we say, because we're not saying this in some fashion to get at a particular person or to deal with a particular relationship. We're talking about what's going to be of benefit for the province in the long term. And, Mr. Speaker, if the listening can happen in that context, I think that we'll all be better for it.

Now the public's watching, as I said before. They've said to the present government, we'll give you a chance. It's been almost a year. They're kind of on the theme so far of that they haven't messed it up totally, and I think the message in the long term is, don't mess it up.

Now the judgment will be pretty harsh if in fact they get that impression, and clearly we'll be identifying those areas where they haven't met the mark. But ultimately it will be the people of Saskatchewan who say, hey, you came in with some trepidation, with some hope, but you haven't sort of met what's going on.

That's what I'm still hearing, that people are waiting. They're holding their judgment. I think they'll be holding their judgment for another couple of years. And I think that practically we'll all look back and as historiographers, as people who look at the history of history, we will look at what kinds of messages have been sent in this year. We'll look at what the long-term results have been of many of the policy decisions that were made over the last 30 years, but we'll also look at the kinds of changes and the kinds of missteps that have been made and some of the positive steps. But all of those things will be judged in the context of the results for the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I have difficulty being in favour of the Throne Speech as presented because of a number of the deficiencies that I've outlined. I am in favour of the amendment that's been proposed, and I hope to vote accordingly later today. So thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Chisholm: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Firstly I would like to welcome our newest member to the legislature from Cumberland. And welcome to the House.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Chisholm: — It's an honour to have the opportunity to speak to the Speech from the Throne and with the theme being "A Stronger Saskatchewan. A Better Life." We members of this Assembly have each of us come to this place under different circumstances, faced different challenges, and had different life experiences. But I truly believe that what brings us all here is the commitment to leave this Assembly having made this province a better place; a better place to live, to prosper, to enjoy — and not for ourselves, but for all of the people of this province and for our children and our grandchildren.

I cannot speak to the circumstances and the challenges or the life experiences of other members, but I would like to take this opportunity — and this is certainly not intended to be about me, but — to speak a little bit about how I came to this place. I wish to take a few moments to just show how time has played this out in relation to this, to the time, that time when I became interested, and this time now, 2008.

Going back a little, my great-grandfather immigrated from the United States in 1904 and settled in the Maidstone area. In fact our original homestead is now under the twinned yellow highway, No. 16. He obviously had dreams for the territory which would take another year to become a province. He had dreams not so much about himself, but for a better life for his children and his grandchildren — dreams about opportunity, education, religious freedom, democracy, a better life — and here in Saskatchewan, a better life. And with the hardships that endured — prairie fires, severe weather, devastating hailstorms, disease — they did prosper.

The Speaker: — Order. It now being 5 p.m., the Assembly will recess until 7 this evening.

[The Assembly recessed until 19:00.]

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Minister of Energy and Resources
Minister Responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs

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